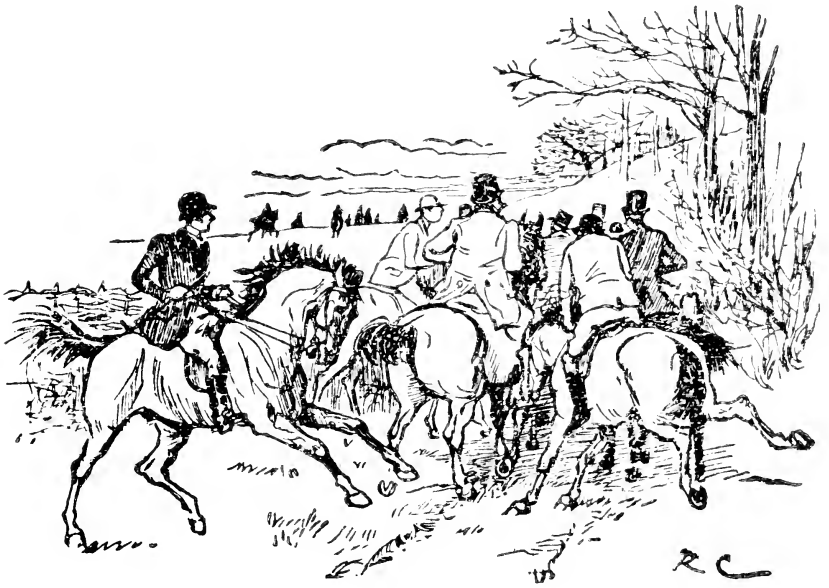
HUNTING

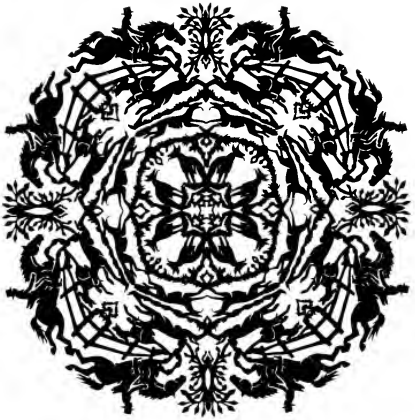
AND PRACTICAL HINTS

FOR

HUNTING MEN

George F. Underhill





JOHN A. SEAVERNS

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HUNTING

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE

Dedicated

TO

G. S. LOWE, Esq.,

The Editor of 'The Sporting Life'

AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE FOR HIS KIND ADVICE WHILE THEY WERE BEING WRITTEN, AND FOR HIS ASSISTANCE IN CORRECTING THE PROOF-SHEETS FOR THE PRESS

BY

THE AUTHOR

HUNTING

AND

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR HUNTING MEN

BY

GEORGE F. UNDERHILL

AUTHOR OF "IN AT THE DEATH," "IN AND OUT OF THE PIGSKIN,"
"THE HELTER-SKELTER HOUNDS," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE

To a small book, which aims at being essentially practical, a Preface is hardly necessary, and my only object in penning these lines is to thank the Editor of *Country Sport* for giving me permission to utilize the articles which I wrote for his paper during the past hunting season, 1896-97, under the heading "In the Pink."

GEORGE F. UNDERHILL.

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INTRODUCTION

LET us beg our readers, in our first sentence, to remember that this volume is written for the tyro in the hunting-field. There are many good sportsmen, who cannot afford to hunt more than one day a week, or at the most three days a fortnight, and who for lack of practical information never hunt at all, but devote their energies to some other sport or pastime. Very often these men have not only the time and money, but stables and horses at their disposal, yet dislike to make their maiden appearance in the hunting-field, because they know nothing about hunting. They are afraid of making themselves ridiculous, or of spoiling the sport of their neighbours. There is also a numerous class of men who receive invitations to country houses, where the rule is to hunt by day and to talk about hunting by night. We have often been approached with some such tale as this: "I am going down to stay with the Blanks, and they have offered me a mount. Now I never went out hunting in my life. Do give me a wrinkle!" Such a wrinkle it is one of the objects of this volume to supply.

In the sections which deal with "The Hunter" and with "Stables and Stable Management," we have not written for the man who keeps a giant establishment,

and gives three hundred guineas for a hunter, but for the man who keeps his two or three horses, and wishes that both horses and stables should be as near perfection as is compatible with a moderate income. It may appear to some that we have descended to trivial details by giving lists and prices of stabling and grooming utensils with hints as to how long they should last, and by stating the proper allowance of hay and corn *per diem* for a hunter. But it is in regard to these details that a man, when he first begins to hunt, is entirely at the mercy of his groom. Nothing in or about a stable is so trivial as to be beneath the notice of the master. A careless master makes a careless man, and the two together make a dirty untidy stable and ill-conditioned, badly-groomed horses. If these pages help the novice in the slightest degree to learn how to become his own stud-groom, another of our objects will have been attained.

Our third object is to supply information to the numerous class of people in every country of the globe, who take an interest in the most popular of British sports, to many of whom the *rationale* of fox-hunting is an enigma, as it is to many of our own cockneys. "You English are all hunting mad," an American said once to us; but within three months he was as hunting-mad as any Englishman.

Even in a book, the aim of which is to give practical advice to the tyro, it is necessary to state briefly the history of the sport with which we have to deal. Lord Wilton says, in his "Sports and Pursuits of the English," "about the year 1750 hounds began to be entered solely to fox." But the custom was little practised. In Pye's "Sportsman's Dictionary," 1807 edition, we read: "The fox is taken with greyhounds, terriers, nets,

and gins," and a terrier is defined as "a kind of mongrel greyhound." It would seem that fox-hunting at the beginning of the century was almost exclusively confined to the squires, yeomen, and tenant-farmers, and that regular Hunts with regular packs were few and far between. The general custom was, when a fox was discovered to be afoot, to decide to have a fox-hunt, then the squire and the neighbouring farmers brought what dogs they might possess to the meeting-place, which had been agreed upon, and this canine collection of all breeds and sizes constituted the pack of foxhounds for the day. There were no hunt servants, but each man cheered on his own dog. The sport began early in the morning, when the fox was tired after his nocturnal ramblings, otherwise he could never have been caught by such a motley pack. The sportsmen returned home about two o'clock in the afternoon, and the rest of the day was usually devoted to a deep carousal. Readers of "Handley Cross" will remember the indignation of the immortal Jorrocks, when he became the master of a pack, hardly superior to the one we have described; and the first edition of "Handley Cross" was not published till 1843. Besides Jorrocks arrived at Handley Cross by train, so that the system must have prevailed till the commencement of the present reign. Up till within the last twenty years, it was the custom for every member of the Hunt Committee of the Wheatland Hounds to carry a horn and blow it.

But not only was fox-hunting not pursued in a scientific manner as a sport, but the fox was not regarded as a sacred animal and chartered thief. If no hunt could be organised after the discovery of a fox, a meeting of the country yokels was summoned, generally by the ringing of the church bell. They then attempted

to find and kill the fox with sticks and stones. It is hardly conceivable that a dog-fox could often have fallen a victim to this method of hunting, though probably a vixen with her unborn or new-born litter of cubs was constantly sacrificed. We must also remember that the practice of late hunting, *i.e.* of not hunting the fox till he had had time to recover from the fatigue of his nocturnal wanderings and to digest his food, would have been almost impossible with the horses which our forefathers rode. The thoroughbred hunter was unknown, except in the stables of a few of the nobility, and the squire's saddle-horse was a heavy animal, whose pace and galloping powers were limited in the extreme, however great his staying powers may have been. A fresh fox would have raced away from the field in the same way as the modern foxhound would have done.

Such was the rule as to fox-hunting; but there were notable exceptions, which ultimately gave birth to the present system. The Berkeley Hounds have the reputation of being the oldest pack in England. They had kennels at Charing Cross when Berkeley Square was a snipe marsh; but there are hardly any authentic records about them, and we may be sure that they were not entered solely to hunt the fox, but, on the contrary, were more accustomed to hunt hare. According to Sydney, than whom there can be no better authority (*vide* 'Sydney's Book of the Horse,' 1893), the Brocklesby Hounds are undoubtedly the oldest pack of foxhounds in the kingdom. They have been in the Pelham, better known perhaps in hunting circles as the Yarborough, family for over 150 years, and have had a written pedigree for over 120 years. It was from the Brocklesby kennels that Mr Hugo Meynell, commonly

called the father of English fox-hunting, founded and recruited the Quorn, early in the fifties of the last century, and to this day the Brocklesby Hounds are branded with a P. Mr Meynell hunted the Quorn till 1795, and under his rule two important customs were introduced. He initiated late hunting, or drawing for the fox, instead of dragging up to his lair, and Mr Childe, known as "the flying Childe," initiated "riding to hounds," much, as we are told, to Meynell's disgust, so that it would seem that previous to Mr Childe's time the field did not follow the line of hounds, but rode from point to point, probably on account of the poor jumping and galloping powers of their horses.

But Hugo Meynell has been handed down to posterity as the father of fox-hunting, chiefly on account of the number of young sportsmen whom he educated to follow his system. From all parts of the country men came to hunt with Meynell, and then went back to try to do as he did. He had reduced fox-hunting and the breeding of hounds to a science. At first it was only the wealthy few who could afford to imitate him, for in those days men hunted their own hounds, and the modern subscription pack was unknown. Certainly in 1770 the famous Tarporley Hunt Club became a fox-hunting club; but it was not till 1796 that the "Cheshire County Subscription Hounds" were founded by Sir Peter Warburton on account of some quarrel amongst the members of the Tarporley Hunt Club. Long previous to 1762, however, hunt clubs were in existence, as in that year Boodle's Club was founded as a London eating-house for members of hunt clubs, but it was long before the hunt clubs lost their character for social exclusiveness, or that fox-hunting became the reason of their existence. Indeed they

seem to have been quite as much political as they were sporting. To give a history of the rise of subscription packs would involve a history of English country society; but the rapidity of their growth may be seen by the fact that in 1874 there were only twelve non-subscription packs out of 137 packs of foxhounds in England and Scotland. It is worth our while to mention these twelve packs:—Belvoir (Duke of Rutland); Brocklesby (Earl of Yarborough); Badminton (Duke of Beaufort, Marquis of Worcester, M.F.H.); Berkeley (Lord Fitzhardinge); Duke of Grafton's; Earl of Fitzwilliam's; Earl of Coventry's; Cottesmore (3rd Earl of Lonsdale); Lord Leconfield's; Earl of Portsmouth's; Lord Tredegar's; Sir Watkin William Wynn's. But it may be remarked of the gentlemen who hunted these packs that they not only maintained their own hounds but also bred their tenant farmers. It would be impossible for a man to hunt and maintain his own hounds unless he were a popular landowner.

If Hugo Meynell and his pupils founded the present system of fox-hunting, it was not till after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo that it showed signs of healthy development. Soldiers are always to be found in the van of every branch of sport, so now that our young officers were no longer engaged in pursuing the French, they devoted themselves to pursuing the fox. Continental experience had done much to enlarge their minds, and they were no longer content to stagnate in the old-fashioned grooves. The members of the old hunt clubs might grumble, as no doubt they did, but they had to recognise the truth of the proverb that "the old order changeth," or pay the hunting expenses of their younger relations with those packs which had adopted the new system. Hitherto fox-hunting could

by no means have been looked on as a recognised public institution. It had been confined to "the natives," and the stranger who ventured to join in the sport was regarded with suspicion. The hunting-field was the club of the neighbourhood: a club to which the tenant farmer was as welcome as the Lord-Lieutenant, but still a club; now every man or woman who could behave decently in the hunting-field was to become eligible for it.

But the new system could never have been founded or developed if it had not been for the great improvement in the English breed of horses. The question is often asked, Did fox-hunting improve the breed of horses, or, did the breed of horses improve fox-hunting? We have heard no satisfactory answer to this question. Probably it was six of one, and half-a-dozen of the other. The breed of horses was originally improved for racing purposes. The Arab strain had been introduced by Lord Godolphin, through a sire known as "The Godolphin Arabian," with such success that his example had been rapidly imitated. Therefore when the demand arose for hunters which possessed speed as well as endurance, the source of the supply had been in existence for over fifty years, even in Hugo Meynell's early days, with the Quorn. Perhaps the best way of answering the vexed question, is to say that racing introduced the improvement in breeding horses, and hunting encouraged the improvement. But, for the present purpose, it is only necessary to point out that the breed had improved.

By 1850 fox-hunting had become an important factor in the political economy of the country. To hunt meant to encourage horse-breeding, to put money into the pocket of the farmer, by increasing the

market for hay and corn, and to give employment to an army of grooms and stable helpers. Hunting had assumed the character of a business. Farmers, horse-dealers, veterinary surgeons, tailors, saddlers, hotel proprietors, and even railway directors found a profitable customer in the hunting man. Towns sprang up where there had only been villages, and hunting, described by Burke as "one of the balances of the constitution," now became one of the bulwarks of commerce.

It may seem extraordinary that the railways, which have done much to destroy shooting and fishing, should have served to increase the popularity of hunting, by diverting wealth from towns into the country. If it had not been for the plutocracy, fox-hunting must have continued to be a rural pastime, instead of becoming a popular sporting science. Take for example, a meet of the Quorn, with its field of between two hundred, three hundred, and often considerably more sportsmen and sportswomen! Here you see "the pomp and circumstances" *par excellence* of fox-hunting, combined with everything that hunting science has taught us. But it would be almost impossible for such a pack to be maintained by resident landowners. The money to support such establishments must come from the towns. So, if the towns have absorbed much capital from the country during the last fifty years, hunting may lay claim to be one of the important channels through which money flows back from the towns to the country. But it is not our intention to invade the domain of agricultural politics by treating of the politico-economical side of hunting. It is sufficient to have pointed out that hunting, at the beginning of the century, was the

pastime of residents in the country, and that now it is a recognised institution of English life, involving the circulation of capital, and the employment of labour. Thus, the people who rail against hunting, as being the amusement of the wealthy few, must be absolutely blind to the financial utility of the sport. The incontrovertible fact, that hunting has, through successive generations, increased in popularity, amongst all classes of the people, pleads more in its favour than all the books which have ever been written on the subject.

With these introductory remarks, we will now proceed to the practical part of our work.

PART I

The Modern Practice and Etiquette of Hunting

CHAPTER I.

THE RATIONALE OF HUNTING.

FIFTY years ago, the question, Why should fox-hunting, or any other form of hunting exist? would have met with universal ridicule at the expense of the questioner. But, alas! the old order changeth, and new prophets have arisen, whose sermons are inspired by the teachings of our old enemy, "the dog in the manger." This expression is not original on our part, for on Saturday, April 3rd, 1897, at the annual dinner at Windsor, given to the farmers in the Queen's country, Sir George Russell, who was in the chair, remarked that the antagonists to the sport consisted only of those who were unable to enjoy the sport, which was a polite way of calling the said antagonists so many dogs in the manger. This meeting, we may add, was in favour of sport without a single dissentient, whether the sport consisted in hunting the carted deer, or riding after Mr Garth's foxhounds, and was considered of such importance as to demand attention, and in some cases leading articles, from the London daily papers; a result which could hardly have been acceptable to the faddists, who, with no knowledge of the subject, decry sport in general and hunting in particular.

The effect of the disturbance has been to call forth

a self-preservative reaction, necessitated by the sporting affective elements of the human brain, stimulated by the strange and unfamiliar phenomena, nascent from the processes of incipient insanity, in themselves nascent from morbid selfishness. To a certain very limited extent we, as believers in the creed of sport, may be thankful for the activity thus displayed by our antagonists, since a certain amount of difficulty tends to sharpen the edge of desire, and to add to the zest of pursuit. But at the same time we like to fight against logical consistency, and not to write about the relations between higher and lower volition. So much for the faddists, who may be able to understand the philosophy even if they are unable to indulge in the practice of sport. We apologise to our readers for making these allusions, but the temptation to rebuke the enemies of hunting was too strong to be resisted. Let us now base our arguments upon the solid foundation of fact, instead of imitating our opponents by painting imaginative pictures upon a canvas stretched over a problematical framework.

In the first place let us consider the direct material advantages which accrue to the farmer and the agricultural interest through hunting. Briefly, they may be summarised as follows: (1) a market for horses, and the consequent encouragement of horse-breeding; (2) a market for fodder; (3) the circulation of money by hunting men in the country, a large proportion of which otherwise would be spent abroad. If it were not for hunting, the horse-breeding industry would become practically extinct in this country, and we should lose a large proportion of national wealth. Let us for a moment particularise. Roughly, there are 150 packs of foxhounds in England; in each pack we may

assume that on the average, there are 100 horses used exclusively for hunting purposes, that is, 15,000 horses are kept in England for fox-hunting. Take the average life of a horse in the hunting-field at five years, and the average price paid for him £100, we find that £300,000 is annually spent in England on horses used for fox-hunting, a large proportion of which sum must go into the pocket of the breeder, *i.e.* the farmer. Then we must take into consideration the enormous number of horses, which, though not used exclusively for hunting, would not be bred, purchased, and kept if it were not for hunting. We allude to covert hacks, trappers, and the numerous class of horses who do duty both between the shafts and in the hunting-field. It would take the work of a Royal Commission receiving reports from every county in England, to arrive at any approximate number of the horses indirectly taking part in hunting. Suffice it to say, that if hunting were abolished, this country would lose its position as the first horse-breeding country in the world, and agricultural depression would be succeeded by the extinction of agriculture. These are people, no doubt, who would not regard this extinction as being of much importance to our national welfare, and would not be sorry to see England a huge workshop, or a large market garden. But England could never be the workshop of the world, on account of the want of raw material, and every costermonger who has been to Covent Garden market knows that it could never be a market garden, when, as it is, fruit is left to rot on the trees, because it is not worth the price of picking. The importation of foreign meat has done much to militate against profitable cattle-raising, and the price of wheat is so low that the English farmer can hardly grow wheat at a profit. Horse-breeding,

however, is still left to him, encouraged by hunting in many ways. For, not only does the hunting-field provide him with a market for his horses, but in most hunting counties there exists an Entire-Horse Fund for the benefit of farmers over whose land hounds cross, so that a farmer having a brood mare, from which he wishes to breed, may have the services of a stallion gratis, and save the initial cost of a covering fee. Finally, it is no exaggeration to say that, owing to the encouragement given to horse-breeding by hunting, England stands out as the market for horse flesh for the whole world.

In regard to the second item, namely, the market for fodder supplied by hunting, we will again place figures before the reader. Every one of the 15,000 horses used exclusively for hunting purposes costs in fodder ten shillings a week to keep: therefore, £7500 is spent weekly on hunters' fodder, or £390,000 per annum, out of which sum at least £350,000 goes into the pocket of the farmer, to say nothing of the money spent on fodder for horses not used exclusively for hunting. This is allowing a handsome commission to corn-dealers, corn-factors, *et hoc omne genus.* Of late years it has become the fashion to do away with this commission as far as possible, for the benefit of the farmers. Lord Lonsdale, than whom the farmers have had few better friends, when he accepted the office as Master of the Quorn, at the end of the season 1892-1893, at once devoted his energies to doing everything in his power to assist the landowners and farmers. Two sheets weekly of the *Melton Mowbray Times and Loughborough Advertiser* were filled up with four columns as follows:

First Column.	Second Column.	Third Column.	Fourth Column.
Names and Addresses of Vendors.	Description of Provender.	The Quantity.	Remarks on Quality.

These columns were under the personal revision of Lord Lonsdale, whose theory is, that the money of the hunting man should go direct into the pocket of the farmer. Some people doubt the utility of any registration of provender in the hands of farmers, on the ground that many hunting men have no knowledge of the quality of corn and hay, and of the value of it; but the doubt to our mind seems foolish, as the ignorant hunting man has only to direct his dealer to buy direct from a farmer resident in the country in which he hunts. However, we hope that the chapter in this volume on "Stables and Stable Management," may cure some of this ignorance which certainly is not bliss to the hunting man.

Passing now to the circulation of money by hunting men in the country in which they hunt, it is impossible to estimate the amount with any degree of accuracy, but it certainly amounts to more thousands per annum than outsiders think it does hundreds. Some writers assert, and we are inclined to agree with them, that the abolition of hunting would involve the ruin of the rural population of England, already harassed by low prices and general agricultural depression. If there be a single particle of truth in the assertion, that particle of truth is alone a sufficient reason for the existence of fox-hunting, since it proves that fox-hunting affords a channel through which the money of

the capitalist reaches the peasant, passing necessarily on its way through the hands of the farmer. Occasionally a farmer, forgetting that individual prosperity is the result of collective wealth, will exclaim, "I do not hunt; and hunting damages my land, and damages me in other ways. Why then should I allow hounds to cross my farm?" The practical answer is, "Because you receive compensation for all the damage caused to you by hunting."* The *crux* of the matter, however, is that the modern farmer cannot afford to hunt, and therefore it is difficult to make him comprehend the advantages which he derives from a sport which he cannot personally enjoy. There are few farmers now who are so keen on preserving foxes as the old South Staffordshire yeoman, who, on Christmas eve, used to place raw meat outside the earths on his land, so that the foxes might enjoy their Christmas dinner without the trouble of working for it. The old order changeth, and the new order thinks it incumbent to get as much as possible out of the hunt. But to hark back to the methods by which the non-hunting farmer is benefited by hunting indirectly. If it were not for hunting, what capital would there be in the country? The large landowners would not spend their time in a place where they could not enjoy their sport, as has been proved in certain districts in Ireland, where fox-hunting was boycotted. The large country seats would either be closed, or let to tenants between whom and the farmers there could be no sympathy,

* For to state a case which is of frequent occurrence, suppose a fox raids a poultry-yard, the farmer has only to send in his claim to the Hunt Secretary, or Master of Fox-Hounds, and he will receive a cheque by return of post.

and the owners of the soil would refuse to sink money in the soil from which they derived no pleasure. Farms would fall into decay, and the capital, without the use of which the small farmer is helpless, would be diverted into foreign channels. Agricultural towns, like Melton Mowbray and Market Harborough, would become pauper-villages, and the tradespeople, who made a profit out of the owners of hunting-boxes, would throng to the towns or the county workhouse. Flourishing hotels would become pot-houses, and finally, the small farmer would find himself without a market. The truth is, that fox-hunting must exist, if only for the reason that it is the principal factor in our agricultural economy. We almost feel justified in stating that the abolition of hunting means the abolition of English country life; for the landed gentry, if they could not enjoy their sport, would go abroad during the winter months, and the money which they now circulate in England, would go into the pockets of foreign nations. Therefore, all classes of people, from peer to peasant, derive a substantial pecuniary advantage from the sport.

Nor should we forget to mention that bond of social union which unites all classes in the hunting-field. The same bond exists on the race-course, the cricket field, the football ground, and wherever English people are gathered together to enjoy sport, whether as participators or as spectators, in the same degree as in the hunting-field. But at the present day no institution which tends to tighten the bonds of unity between the different classes in the country should be allowed to be lightly handled by the pessimistic agitator. Therefore, hunting, which materially increases the commercial prosperity of the nation, which binds together the

different classes of the people with a bond of social union, and which adds firmness to the national character, must commend itself to any intelligent man who believes that the vitality of a nation lies in its outdoor life, and not within doors. We ourselves are convinced that a country village is more symbolical of national life than a manufacturing town; but whether our convictions are right or wrong, England can never become one large manufacturing town, or, in other words, the workshop of the world. The lungs of England are situated in the country and not in the town, and hunting, as we trust that we have shown, instils the breath of life into those lungs. Therefore, the result of hunting is healthy both for our national economy and our national life.

The demand for horses has been a sensational subject for very many years, but at no period has it exceeded that of the present, when the demand is so great that we have to go to Canada, South Africa, and Australia for our supply. Apprehensive of disappointments, our agriculturists at home have in many instances abstained from breeding, and consequently have not paid attention to the numerous observances necessary to promote success. Hunting, or rather hunting-men, have to a large extent come to the rescue, and reserved the national industry by providing breeders with limited incomes with sires; but we should like to see the extent largely increased, for there is no doubt that the subscriptions of many hunting men are entirely disproportionate to the sport which they enjoy.

How to force the hunting man to contribute his fair quota towards the sport which he enjoys is a question which becomes more important every season owing to

the increased facility in railway travelling, which enables a man to breakfast in Jermyn Street, and turn up at the meet in the shires or the home provinces. There are hundreds of men who hunt from town as the phrase goes. The real interpretation of the phrase is that these men pay flying visits into any country according as their fancy dictates, though they are careful not to give one hunt the benefit of their presence too many times in succession for fear of being asked for a donation. If they are asked, they will unblushingly reply that they hunt regularly with another pack, and have only run down for a bye day, and, naturally, it is presumed that they subscribe to this other pack, and accordingly meet with that welcome which the members of one pack always give to the members of another. In other words, they obtain sport under false pretences, and are as much guilty of poaching as the yokel who snares a hare on a moonlight night.

Unfortunately, these poachers, who wear the outward garb of gentility in the shape of a pink coat, are the very men who arouse the ire of the farmers, and, innocently let us hope, act in every way both directly and individually against the welfare of fox-hunting. They ride helter-skelter over the land without any regard to the harm they may do to the occupier. Growing crops are an unknown quantity to them. To break down fences by needlessly attempting to jump them is their pet diversion. To close a gate so that cattle may not stray is beyond their powers of thought. Yet they are the first men to accuse the farmers of taking up an adverse attitude towards fox-hunting. Their complaints in the smoking-room of a London club are as loud as the bellowings of the bull of Bashan, till they dwindle

into asinine hee-aws beneath the question, "How much do you subscribe to hounds?"

Now, if fox-hunting is to hold its own as the most popular amusement for English sporsmen, some method will have to be devised by which the hunting man will have to pay for his sport. A man can neither race for nothing, shoot for nothing, nor fish for nothing, but at the present time he may go fox-poaching with impunity, and inflict his presence upon good and true sportsmen. Why, then, should we not have hunting licenses? These licenses could be issued by the Hunt Secretary, for it would be manifestly the last straw on the camel's back to ask the M.F.H. to issue them; and in the same way as a game license entitles the holder to shoot anywhere, so would a hunting license entitle the holder to hunt with any pack he liked. All covert owners, farmers, and occupiers of land should receive their licenses free. In regard to the price of a license, we would suggest £5 for a resident inside a hunting country, and £7 for one outside, and the funds collected by the Secretary should go towards defraying the expenses of his own particular hunt. Licenses might also be granted at lesser sums for specific periods for the benefit of visitors, officers on leave, and others who only get a limited time for hunting during the season.

These licenses ought not to seriously interfere with the subscription list, any more than a game license debars the shooting man from tipping the head keeper, or, if it really were a burden, the subscriber could deduct it from his subscription, for, though I know one gentleman who hunts in pink three days a week, and invariably brings his wife out with him, on a £5 subscription, such cases are happily rare. Still, the standard subscription of £20, which in most countries entitles the

subscriber to don pink, might be lowered to £15. In some countries this subscription of £20 is arbitrary. Thus, at a meeting of the members of Mr Fernie's Hounds on the 19th of December 1889, it was resolved that no sum under £20 should be considered a subscription to the hounds, but should be credited to the covert fund, and that the subscription to the wire fund should be £3 per gentleman inside the hunt, and £2 for gentlemen outside. Yet Mr Fernie's Hounds only hunt five days a fortnight. It would be well if members of other hunts were to follow this example, and pass arbitrary resolutions of a similar nature, or the glory of a pink coat would sink into the same insignificance as did that of Mr Soapy Sponge when he arrived at Nonsuch House. Alas that Mr Sponge should have so many prototypes in modern times!

But if you impose a tax you must also impose a penalty for the non-payment of the tax, and it would be impossible to impose a penalty without the sanction of the legislature. Here comes the rub. For, supposing an Act of Parliament was passed taxing the hunting man, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would wish to have something to say about its collection and distribution. At all events, he would not entrust these duties to a hunt secretary without stipulating that the hunt secretary's accounts should be officially audited. Now, hunt secretaries are invariably honorary, and would very naturally object to becoming Government officials. Again, who is to undertake the unenviable task of asking a stranger in the field for his license? Neither the master, the secretary, nor any of the hunt servants could be expected to turn excise officers, and if the stranger did not possess a license, what should be the course to pursue? A rough-riding, obnoxious horse-

dealer might prove himself to be an unspeakable nuisance. The difficulty, therefore, is to collect the tax in such a manner that it may benefit fox-hunting, and, *a fortiori*, agriculture, since fox-hunting is one of the bulwarks of agricultural prosperity.

It would be well if all M.F.H.'s were to follow Mr Fernie's plan and lay down a fixed rule as to subscriptions. A man going into a strange country may not wish to be mean, and, on the other hand, may not wish to parade his wealth by subscribing more than his neighbours. What would be considered a generous subscription in one country would be considered a paltry one in another. Thus in some countries in the provinces £10 is considered an adequate subscription for a man who only hunts one day a week, and £20 is deemed a liberal subscription for a three-days-a-week man. In the shires such subscriptions would be thought paltry to the extent of meanness. Of course the experienced hunting man can tell at a glance what his subscription ought to be. He has only to go out one day with a pack to note how the hunt servants are mounted and turned out, and to judge whether the kennel *menage* is smart or slovenly. The late Major White Melville used to declare that he could tell a Leicestershire man by the way he put on his breeches, and in the same way it is easy to distinguish a crack hunt from a scratch hunt by the appearance of the huntsmen and whips. Naturally, the smarter the turn-out of the hunt servants, the greater must be the expenses attaching to the masters. Every self-respecting M.F.H. wishes to see his servants turned out as smartly as money will work the oracle, and he spares no reasonable expense in their liveries and mounts. The Frostyfaces and Watchorns about whom Surtees

wrote belong to a past generation of huntsmen, and are as obsolete as a hunting establishment carried on upon the principles of Mr Jorrock's hounds. Even during the last twenty years the expenses of a hunting establishment have considerably increased. On November 6th, 1875, a writer in the *Field*, discussing the expenses of an M.F.H., laid it down as a rule that £620 per annum for each day of the week was the average cost of a pack of hounds. Thus a pack that hunted three days a week would only cost £1860 per annum. Such an estimate at the present time is absurd.

We have expressed ourselves thus strongly, because experience has taught us to act on the maxim, "*si vis pacem para bellum*," and not because we have any fear for the future of fox-hunting, which we believe will exist so long as a green field remains between London and York. But the pessimist who says that hunting as it has been known in these islands for upwards of a couple of centuries will cease to exist, is often a man who has a shrewd idea of how things are tending. The mistake he makes is that he takes a tendency for an accomplished fact, and does his utmost to exaggerate the dissensions between farmers and fox-hunters, ignoring the fact that depredations are invariably followed by compensation. Hunting is the image of war, without its guilt, and the hunting-field is the training-ground which has enabled Englishmen to hold their own against all rivals, so

> "Let us drink 'Fox-hunting,' boys,
> And pass the bottle round.
> Here's to the horse,
> And the fox of course,
> And a bumper to the hound!

We'll toast him with a 'halloa,'
Such as Reynard dreads to hear,
When his brush is draggling sorely,
And no friendly earth is near."

CHAPTER II.

FOX-HUNTING.

NATURALLY, the first object of the novice must be to choose the pack of hounds with which he intends to hunt. In his choice he must be guided, to a large extent, by the advice of his friends. If he lives in the country he will probably hunt with the local pack, where he will be known to many members of the hunt, who will give him more information than we can. One piece of information, however, they will not give him unless he asks for it, namely, the amount which he ought to subscribe to the hunt funds. This amount varies in different packs, but a general rule may be laid down, that a man who hunts one day a week should subscribe ten guineas; three days a fortnight, fifteen guineas; two days a week, twenty guineas. If he hunts more than two days a week, he may adopt a sliding scale, remembering that it is always best to err upon the side of generosity. In some provincial packs the amount may be less which he is expected to subscribe. In the shires, *i.e.* the Belvoir, the Cottesmore, the Quorn, and the Pytchley, it is more, twenty-five guineas being the lowest subscription for a man who rides in pink. This subscription should be sent to the secretary of the Hunt before the

opening day, which is generally the first Monday in November. In some hunting countries it is not "good form" to ride in pink unless the rider subscribes a certain sum; but the novice need not trouble about this etiquette, since no man should ride in pink unless he is a first-rate man to hounds, or an old member of the hunt. We have already given an old estimate of the cost of maintaining a pack of hounds—£620 per annum for each day of the week on which they hunt, *e.g.* a pack which hunted three days a week would cost £1860 per annum. We have not the figures before us upon which this estimate is formed, but we have credible information that the actual cost in many packs is no less than £1000 per annum for each day of the week on which they hunt. It is not advisable for us to state here the various items which render this expense necessary. We need only call the attention of the novice to one item, namely, "Compensation for damages done by *horsemen*," for that is the item which it is in his power to decrease or increase, according as to whether he rides judiciously or thoughtlessly.

We have felt it to be our duty to mention the subject of subscriptions again, because of the numerous complaints which we have received of the diminution of subscription lists. We must now revert to the choice of a pack.

If a man does not live in a hunting country, he should choose a hunt where he has friends, good men and true, who will give him a welcome. It is what Charles Kingsley termed "the wholesome feeling of being at home amongst friends," which constitutes one of the chief pleasures of hunting. The Duke of Beaufort declares that "the true pleasures of hunting

are known only by those who hunt from home." Our advice is, "Hunt in the same country as your friends hunt." If any one of our readers be so unlucky as to have no friends who hunt, then we must refer him to railway time-tables, only remarking that unless he be a good rider and have a first-rate horse, he had better choose a provincial pack, and not one in the shires. In the latter, hounds will probably race away from him in the beginning of the day, and he will see no more of the sport, while in an enclosed country containing large woodlands, he will be able to see a great deal of what hounds are doing, without jumping a fence. To a fine rider on a fine horse, a gallop over Leicestershire means the keenest pleasure which this world can give, but the fine rider will use bad language if his horse cannot go another yard, and hounds are disappearing in the dim distance.

As the fox lives in an earth or underground home, and only comes out at night on his foraging excursions, it is necessary to "stop out" the earth while he is absent on his nocturnal wanderings. So when hounds are going to "draw," or try to find a fox in a particular country, due notice is given to the "earth stoppers" of the district to "stop out" the earths. In every hunting country there are "earth stoppers," who are responsible for "stopping out" the earths in their particular districts (which are called "stops") upon receiving notice from the M.F.H., or person acting upon his authority. This work should be completed by an hour before sunrise. Then when the fox comes home he finds the door closed and has to make his bed for the day in a covert, gorse, or any other place which will afford him warm shelter. Being a cunning animal, he is doubtless aware of what is in store for him, and makes his plans accordingly,

which plans are constantly frustrated by another "earth stopper," whose duty it is to "put to" the earths on his "stop" upon receiving due notice. The earths are "put to" early in the morning in that district or "stop" to which it is likely a fox will run for refuge, so as to prevent him "going to ground," and saving his life, or, as it is termed, "saving his brush," for it is extremely difficult to dislodge a fox from his "earth," and many M.F.H.'s consider it unsportsmanlike to dig them out, with which opinion we cordially agree. The fox has run well to save his brush, and should be allowed to live to run boldly another day.

It will be seen that the success of the day's sport depends in the first place upon the efficiency of the "earth stopper." We must now proceed to the meet, which takes place either at 10.15 a.m., 11 a.m., or 11.15 a.m., according to the convenience of the M.F.H. and the time of year. Sometimes, though not often, it takes place at 11.30 a.m. during the latter end of March. But at 10.45 a.m. the fox has had time to rest himself, and, unless he has not gorged himself during the night, is fit to run for his brush.

To the foreigner, the social aspect of a meet of fox-hounds is one of the most wonderful sights which English society can show. At no other function can he see such a genial *bonne camaraderie*, and yet there is a certain air of business about the gathering which tells one that every member of the crowd has come out to hunt, and not to enjoy a winter picnic. But he will have to make his observations quickly. The old system of hunt breakfasts and coffee-housing is disappearing, or has disappeared. Little law is given to late comers. Punctuality is the order of the day, or, as Mr Jorrocks observed, "the perliteness of princes;" and within a

few minutes after the advertised time for the meet, the Master gives the word to the huntsman, who at the head of his hounds * trots off to the first covert which it is intended to draw.

The order in which coverts should be drawn is settled between the Master and the landowner, for though the former is absolute monarch of all he surveys in the hunting-field, he will consult, and generally defer to the wishes of the latter, but the method in which a particular covert is drawn is usually the same. Hounds are put into covert to draw either up wind or with a cheek wind in an open country, or down wind in an enclosed country with large coverts. The Duke of Beaufort has explained the reasons for this in his volume on "Hunting," in the Badminton Library, with his usual perspicuity: "In an open country, to draw down wind means to get a bad start with your fox, for even those that have never been hunted will be very apt to move and be off, and one that knows what hounds are is sure to take the hint very quickly. Should the country be an enclosed one, and the coverts large, the same rule as to drawing up wind applies." But the method is open to numerous exceptions, since it is often desirable that the fox should not "break" covert, *i.e.* leave covert, on one side. The owner of land adjacent to that side may not want hounds to cross his land on that particular day, or the Master may have other reasons, and as we cannot too often state, the Master is supreme in the hunting-field.

The novice must now be guided to a large extent by the conduct of his neighbours, but in the case of small

* Hounds are counted by couples. A pack in the field would comprise 20 or 25 couples, *i.e.* 40 or 50 hounds.

coverts, he should never let his zeal persuade him to follow hounds into covert. In most packs his attempt to do so would be stopped at the outset by a peremptory request to keep outside. *It is the hounds, under the guidance of the huntsman, who are hunting the fox, not "the field," or people who follow the hounds.* When any of "the field" follow hounds into covert they worry the hounds in their work, worry the huntsman in his work, and worry the fox, if he has not gone away, in his work. There is also the risk of their horses kicking hounds. In large coverts "the field" should always keep in the "rides," or paths, and at least fifty yards behind hounds. Should the novice view the fox, his best plan is to raise his hat, and *not* halloa, for his halloa may frighten the fox back into covert just as he was going away, and prevent a good "run." If there is nobody to see him raise his hat, he should gallop to the huntsman and tell him the news. A fox provides just as good, if not a better "run," if he has three or four fields' start of hounds. "Silence is golden" should be the motto of the novice in the hunting-field, where speech is but too often spurious copper.

It is, perhaps, necessary to state for the benefit of the uninitiated that hounds hunt a fox through the *scent* which he leaves behind him, and which he is popularly supposed to carry in his brush. They hunt him with their noses, not with their eyes. The peculiar nature of this scent has baffled the most expert huntsmen. It will be strong on one day and weak on another, though the atmospheric conditions of the two days are precisely similar. Sometimes it will lie on the ground, sometimes it will rise beyond the reach of hounds' olfactories, and sometimes it will rise and then settle down again. One thing, however, is certain,

namely, that it is a most ravishing perfume to the hound, though the human being would hardly consider it *eau de Cologne*. When a hound comes upon this scent he will "speak to it," *i.e.* give a short bark of delight. The rest of the pack will hurry to him, and if they too "speak" to the scent, then a fox is afoot. The first object is gained: a fox is found; the next is to catch him.

If he be an old stager who has baffled his pursuers before, he will probably have stolen quietly away as soon as hounds entered covert. We will assume for the present that this has been the case, that he has "gone away," and that hounds have either hunted his scent through covert, or hit upon his scent outside covert. Now the enjoyment of the field may be said to commence, and the novice will receive his first lesson in the art of "riding to hounds."

With the rare exceptions of professional jockeys, it seldom happens that the English tyro in the hunting-field is a first-rate horseman. Therefore our first remarks are intended for foreigners, many of whom may justly lay claim to being fine riders, and others who, though good horsemen, are novices in the hunting field. Never ride directly in the wake of hounds, but on one side or other of them, and quite forty yards behind. The sound of horse's hoofs in the wake of hounds will make them nervous, and prevent them from devoting the whole of their attention to the scent. If possible, keep to the windward side of hounds, as a fox will generally run down wind, though he has been known to run straight in the teeth of a gale. Another reason for not pressing hounds by riding in their wake, is that if they check, *i.e.* lose the scent, horses may be amongst them before they can be stopped, while in any

case they have galloped over the line of scent, doing much to destroy it, so that if it is advisable to "cast back," *i.e.* take hounds back to pick up the scent, the scent will be very faint or altogether destroyed. The tyro should remember that the man who jumps the biggest places is not necessarily the best man to hounds. The best man to hounds is the man who manages to see most of the work which hounds are doing. Nor is the hunting-field a steeple-chase course. The man who is continually trying to cut down his neighbour, and who forces his way through gates, without the slightest attention to the ordinary rules of courtesy, only gains the unenviable reputation of being a "thrusting scoundrel." A good man on a good horse should never lose sight of hounds—if he can help it—but that is no reason why he should feel an inward delight because his neighbour loses sight of them. Repose of manner is quite as desirable in the hunting-field as in the ball-room.

For the English tyro the foregoing remarks will probably be superfluous. Not in one case in a thousand is he a good horseman on his first day to hounds. If he keeps in his saddle over an easy fence he feels proud, and we don't blame him if he does make the fence a foot higher when he tells us about it after dinner. It is no disgrace not to attempt a feat which one knows is beyond one's powers, though very often failure brings with it ridicule. There are plenty of old members in every hunt, who, from their knowledge of the country, manage to see most of the sport without jumping anything bigger than a sheep hurdle, and who are not worshippers of Macadam. They know every bridle-path and gate in the country, and their knowledge prevents them from ever getting in front of hounds

which the roadsters often do at the risk of "heading" the fox, *i.e.* turning him from his line. The novice cannot do better than take one of these men as his pilot, for if he is not actually in at the death, he will not be far away. If he joins the ruck of the field who follow in the wake of the straight riders on the chance of creeping through the gaps which they have made, he will see no sport, and when he next sees hounds will probably be told that they killed their fox an hour ago.

But it is seldom that hounds run from find to kill without a check, *i.e.* without losing the scent. Sometimes they pick it up again; sometimes they lose it and, *a fortiori*, the fox altogether.

But a check is the occasion for the huntsman to display his science, and for each individual hound to display his powers of scent.

The reasons for a check are too multifarious to mention in detail, so we will reduce them into three classes:

1. *The natural cunning of the fox* which often enables him to elude hounds, *e.g.* after creeping through a fence he will constantly, more especially towards the finish of a run, turn at right angles, and go down the ditch or bank on the further side, or cross a flock of sheep, so that the stain of the sheep may destroy his scent.
2. *The hatred of the fox to being seen.* A ploughman, a shepherd's dog, a carriage in the road, *et sic ad infinitum*, will make him turn from his line; he has been "headed" in other words.
3. *The mysterious qualities of scent.* Allusion has already been made to scent rising above the olfactories of hounds, and setting down again.

Some huntsmen seem to have a natural instinct for hunting a fox, and rarely make a mistake in their "cast," *i.e.* in taking hounds to a point where they think they can pick up the scent; others have the unfortunate knack of always making the wrong "cast" first. The pity is that the former are unable to tell us on what principles they act: indeed they act on different principles in similar cases. To quote the words of the Duke of Beaufort: "As to telling a man what he should do when hounds come to a check after running hard—say twenty minutes—it is impossible; but the first thing to do, if, happily, no horseman were near them when they checked, is to leave them alone and let the hounds swing and cast forward, back and round; then the huntsman must exercise his keenest sense of observation and his natural intelligence." *Experientia docet.* We have often heard a huntsman say: "It's the same fox, I'll stake my life, that escaped us the other day," and we believe that that huntsman was generally speaking the truth, though there may have been a dozen earths in or near the covert where the hunted fox was found. But such men are as rare as they are reliable, and, we may add, invaluable. Should the novice be fortunate enough to hunt with one of these, and be close to the hounds when they check, we advise him to observe every movement of the huntsman, while keeping a good distance from hounds so as not to disturb them in their work. When he sees a hound begin to "feather," *i.e.* when his "stern," or tail, becomes violently agitated, it means that that hound has got an inkling of the scent, but is not sufficiently certain to "speak to it." Directly he does speak to it the other hounds will join him like a flash of lightning.

There may be several checks in a run, so as to

constitute what is termed a slow hunting run. To the "first flight man," *i.e.* the man who is determined to keep near to hounds at any cost; a slow hunting run is almost as great an infliction as a "blank" day, *i.e.* a day on which no foxes are afoot; but to the novice it will have given more enjoyment than a quick run, and enabled him to gain some practical knowledge of the sport. If he has the good fortune to see hounds run into and kill their fox, as we sincerely hope he may have, let him mark the day as a red-letter day in life's calendar.

The fox is far from being a coward. Not only does a fox never lose his head while he is being hunted, which a coward would most assuredly do, but he dies as pluckily as he has run. No cry of pain escapes him. He merely gnashes his sharp teeth, and does his best to make them meet in the foremost hound, in which attempt he generally succeeds. He knows that he has no chance against twenty or twenty-five couple of his arch-enemies, but he does his best to punish one—sometimes two—severely, before he is rolled over. We are glad to think, with all humane sportsmen, that his death agony only lasts a few seconds.

In the majority of packs hounds are now whipped off while one of the hunt servants cuts off the brush, mask, and pads of the fox before giving him to the hounds with the familiar "Tally-ho! Tear 'im and eat 'im, lads!" But some M.F.H's., amongst them the Duke of Beaufort, object to hounds being whipped off during the cutting-up process. The Duke of Beaufort used to hunt the Badminton pack at his own expense, and needed only to regard the efficiency of his hounds, who will be keener after blood, and will therefore hunt better, if

they know that they will have their blood directly they have earned it, while to whip hounds off, may, and probably will, make them sulky. In subscription packs, however, the M.F.H. wishes to be popular with his subscribers, and is unwilling to risk his popularity by adopting a course which prevents them from gaining the trophies of the chase. The custom of cutting up the fox dates from time immemorial. Addison, in the 115th number of the *Spectator*, writing of Sir Roger de Coverley at home, says, "His stable-doors are patched with noses that belonged to foxes of the knight's own hunting down." Up till a very recent period, it was usual for the Master to give the brush to the man who had ridden best to hounds throughout the run: now the gift of the brush is purely complimentary. It is generally given to a schoolboy who manages to be in at the death, especially if it be his first day with hounds, or to "a fair Diana" who has shown that she is a good woman to hounds. We should add that the huntsman expects a sovereign from the recipient of the brush, that the first whipper-in expects ten shillings from the recipient of the mask, and that the second whipper-in expects five shillings, or at the least half-a-crown from the recipient of a pad. Perhaps it is needless to say that hunt-servants are in favour of cutting up the fox.

We trust that the reader, who has not been initiated into the mysteries of fox-hunting, will now have gained some idea of the modern *modus operandi* of the sport, so far as the hunting-field is concerned. But much is required to be done before hounds, horses, and men are fit to appear in the hunting-field.

To *breed* a perfect pack of hounds is the labour of a

lifetime, for puppies are like all children, inasmuch as it is impossible to tell whether they will inherit the good qualities of their parents. To recruit a pack of hounds is an annual labour. A hound begins to hunt at eighteen months, and his average life in the hunting-field is five seasons; therefore at least twenty per cent. of the full strength of the pack must be entered annually to fox, *i.e.* taught to hunt fox only, for it is the nature of the hound to hunt any animal which carries a scent. It is not our province to teach an M.F.H. how to breed hounds; but it is our experience, that however careful an M.F.H. may be in breeding hounds, only half of the whelps will eventually be of any use in the hunting-field. It must also be remembered that the finest judges in the world cannot tell whether a whelp will develop into a good hound. The breeding of hounds is a lottery, but it is a lottery which subscribers to hounds should take into consideration when they are thinking about increasing or decreasing their subscriptions. We will now give a brief summary of the life of a good hound.

A good hound should be born in February or the end of January, and be suckled by his mother as long as her milk lasts, which will be for about six weeks, unless she is allowed to rear a large litter, which is undesirable. We believe that no bitch should be allowed to bring up more than four puppies. By May it will be time for him to go to his "walk," where he will remain for the year of his puppyhood. "Will you walk a puppy?" is the constant request of the M.F.H. to farmers and landowners towards the end of the hunting season, which means, "Will you take care of a puppy for twelve months?" Most people are only too

glad to accede to the request, though the foxhound puppy is a mischievous beast, with a partiality for scraping up flower-beds, and other freaks of a similar irritating nature, and he must be allowed to run loose. But we willingly pardon him for these little peculiarities—

"For he'll grow into a hound,
So we'll pass the bottle round,
And merrily we'll 'whoop' and we'll 'halloa.'"

At the end of twelve months he returns to the kennels, where he will probably take a prize at the puppy show, to the delight of his temporary master or mistress. These prizes are given by the M.F.H. for the best puppies; and as it is the ladies who generally have to be consulted about "walking a puppy," the M.F.H., if he be wise in his generation, should take care that the prize be something pleasing to the feminine mind, *e.g.* a silver coffee-pot or tea-pot.

The holiday life of puppyhood is now over, and the puppy has to be subjected to discipline, in regard both to diet and to exercise. As the hunting season approaches he is exercised to a large extent on the roads, so as to make his feet hard, and by the first week in September he is fit to go "cub-hunting," *i.e.* to hunt the young foxes. Many hunting men regard cub-hunting with contempt, but foxes have to be thinned and young hounds have to be blooded, else they will "run riot," *i.e.* hunt other game than the fox. Cub-hunting commences at the end of August and continues till the beginning of the legitimate hunting season (which lasts from the first week in November till the last week in March), and the hours for the meets vary from 5 A.M. to 10.30 A.M., according to the time of sunrise. When a hound once knows the

"ravishing perfume" of scent and the taste of blood, he will seldom "run riot."

The tyro who intends to hunt cannot do better than go out for a few mornings' cub-hunting. It may not be pleasant to tumble out of bed into a cold bath in the small hours, but the ride to covert in the fresh air of an Autumn morning more than compensates for the previous discomfort. But besides the enjoyment begotten of the early ride, and the feeling of superiority to the lazy people in bed, the tyro will gain three advantages: he will get himself into condition, he will get his horse into condition, and he will learn the rudiments of hunting. Certainly he will not get a quick gallop; in any case his horse will not be in a condition to gallop. Nor will he be called upon to jump; indeed, the fences are so "blind," *i.e.* covered with foliage, that it would be dangerous to jump them, for neither horse nor rider can tell the nature of a blind fence. We have always regarded the cub-hunting field as the best school in which to teach the young rider, the young horse, the young hound, and the young fox how to hunt.

Although we have already dealt with the subject of subscriptions, and laid down general principles in regard to their amount, we have not answered the question which is often asked us in much the same words as these: "I do not intend to hunt regularly; I do not care to see my name in the subscription list opposite to a small amount, but I do not want to hunt for nothing, and am willing to contribute my quota towards the expenses of the sport. What am I to do?" In most hunts they have a poultry fund, separate from the ordinary hunt fund, for the purpose of compensating farmers and others for the loss of poultry destroyed by

foxes, to which a man may subscribe his one or two guineas. There is in some hunts also an entire horse fund, to which we have already alluded, supported by similar subscriptions. Further, in countries where wire is a predominant feature, there is a wire fund to defray the expenses of the farmer for taking down the wire at the beginning, and putting it up again at the end of the season, also supported by similar subscriptions. So the modest or impecunious man who only hunts four or five days during the season need not be afraid that small donations will not be thankfully received and graciously acknowledged. Probably, after a non-subscriber to the hunt has been out three or four days, the secretary will suggest a subscription to one of these minor funds; but we strongly advise the non-subscriber not to wait for the suggestion. If a man is invited to a day's shooting, he does not wait till his host's keeper asks him for the usual tip. We firmly believe that all true sportsmen, whatever may be their favourite sport, are generous, though they may be doubtful about the form which their generosity should take; therefore we deem any apology superfluous on our part for entering into these financial details.

There are no definite rules which regulate hunting in the same way as there are rules which regulate racing, yet there are certain unwritten laws. The man who in a hunting country shoots or traps a fox purposely must make up his mind to be boycotted socially for the rest of his life. "Vulpecide is more criminal than manslaughter," is a common aphorism amongst hunting men. Certainly a man who deliberately destroys the sport of his neighbours deserves the severest censure. We do not dispute for one moment that every man has a right to his own convictions, one of which may be a

rooted antipathy to foxes and fox-hunting, but that is no reason why he should shoot the fox.

We have often heard a man say that he would rather be an M.F.H. than a Peer of the realm. The social prestige of an M.F.H. is undoubtedly great; indeed in many counties it is second only to that of the Lord-Lieutenant; but his labour is still greater. Many good sportsmen are apt to think only of his work in the field, and to disregard his work in the kennels and in the study. His correspondence alone is enormous. He is deluged with letters claiming compensation for damages done by foxes or by horsemen. He is in continual communication with covert-owners and land-owners. He receives complaints of every sort, kind, and description. Upon his shoulders lies the anxiety of maintaining, and, if possible, increasing the standard of his hounds by the judicious breeding, drafting, and purchasing of puppies. He has to choose not only his own horses, but the horses of the hunt servants. He has to propitiate the farmers and covert-owners, and must take care to offend nobody interested in the hunt. It follows, *ex necessitate rei*, that he must have plenty of money and plenty of time to spare, and must enjoy a large personal popularity to enable him to fulfil his multifarious duties. The debt of gratitude which we owe to him is too great to be paid, but we can by courtesy and thoughtfulness do much to lessen his worries in the field, and prove our appreciation of the sacrifices which he has undoubtedly made on our behalf. For a man who devotes the major portion of his time to providing us with amusement ought to receive more courtesy than that which is generally extended from one gentleman to another. Don't hesitate to catch his horse for him if he gets a fall

and his horse gets away, even if it happens in the middle of a quick run. Don't ride in front of him if he be a hard riding man. Should his remarks be occasionally severe, remember that he has to manage the whole field, sometimes numbering over two hundred people, and in fashionable hunts approaching to five hundred, and that it is his object to show them as much sport as possible.

The next precept, which it is our duty to inculcate, relates to the farmers. We assume without fear of contradiction that the existence of fox-hunting is dependent upon the goodwill of the landowners and tenant farmers. Yet this fact, patent as it must be to everybody, is constantly forgotten by hunting men, who often treat the farmers with scant consideration. It is the Cockney sportsman who is the greatest sinner in this respect. Having no practical knowledge of agriculture, he leaves gates open, breaks down fences unnecessarily, and rides over growing wheat with indifference to the damage which he causes. He is a perpetual thorn in the side of the M.F.H., who knows full well that he is rendering useless his own efforts to propitiate the farmers. Finally, he often commits the unpardonable error of attempting to snub the farmer. We will do him the justice to believe that he does not mean to be guilty of insolence, but his ignorance may be as exasperating as if it were insolence. The following practical rules should be strictly adhered to:

1. *Never leave a gate open, unless there is somebody immediately behind.* The effect of gates being left open is that cattle may, and probably will, stray all over the country, though in what

direction the farmer cannot form an idea, so that he will probably be compelled to waste a day in finding and driving them back. Should young colts or fillies get loose, they may damage themselves permanently.

2. *Never jump fences unnecessarily.* Unnecessary jumping leads to the formation of unnecessary gaps, which have to be filled up by the farmer with much time, labour, and expense.
3. *Never ride over vetches, young clover seeds, winter beans, or growing wheat,* unless the farmer leads the way.
4. *Second horsemen must follow the second horsemen of the hunt servants.* The latter will most probably have had instructions from the M.F.H. to keep to roads and bridle paths, and never to jump, as the duty of the second horseman is to bring his master's second horse *fresh* to him at the end of the first run, or in the middle of the day.

It will be seen at once that the observance of these rules will diminish considerably that important item in the expenses of the hunt, namely, "compensation for damages done by horsemen." Lord Lonsdale, on accepting the mastership of the Quorn's hounds, declared that he should enforce 2 and 4 as rigidly as he could, and on the first day of his mastership, severely censured a man before the whole field for unnecessarily jumping a fence while hounds were trotting to covert. In regard to 4, we have often been asked whether a pad-groom, *i.e.* a lady's groom, should be allowed to follow his mistress. We must answer the question in the negative, always excepting

the case of a little girl out in charge of the family coachman. A lady has, invariably, some male relation in the field to come to her rescue should she need assistance; and a pad-groom, who conceives it his duty to be always close to his mistress, is an unmitigated nuisance in the field. Even in the absence of the male relation, a lady may be sure of getting all the help, and more of it than she requires, in the case of an emergency. Therefore we fail to see the slightest necessity for a pad-groom in the field. Of course we class those ladies, who merely come out to see hounds draw and to trot along the roads for an hour or so, in the same category with the little girl and the family coachman.

It is, perhaps, needless to tell the tyro that, if he is riding a kicker, he should avoid any crowd at a gate or gap, or while standing outside covert; but if his horse be a confirmed kicker—and many good hunters are so—he should wear a conspicuous label on his back, marked K—I—X, which he can get from his saddler. If he discovers the kicking propensities for the first time in the field, he should not only avoid crowds, but, if he hears anybody behind him, should raise his whip-hand behind his back.

A mistake which not only the tyro who is a fair rider, but many men who ought to know better, often make is, that when they elect to follow a man, *i.e.* take him as their pilot, they ride too close behind him, or, to use the technical expression, they "ride in his pocket." The result is that if the pilot's horse makes a blunder, the man who is following him is on the top of him, with consequences more or less disastrous, and, if the pilot is able to speak, the language will generally be unfit for publication.

We cannot by means of our pen teach a man how to ride, for the task is beyond the powers of any writer. An hour in the saddle is worth more than a library of books. We have only attempted to teach a man how to ride in the hunting-field. We will give him, as a concluding word of advice, a favourite maxim of Assheton Smith's, which is equally applicable, whether the obstacle be a sheep-hurdle or a Leicestershire oxer, "Throw your heart over, and your horse is sure to follow." Then will he be able to re-echo the stirring words of Mr W. Phillpotts Williams:

"Welcome the chase with its balmy November!
Welcome the colours of scarlet and grey!
Welcome the friends that we meet and remember,
Year after year on our opening day!
Blame me not, reader, nor say I'm romancing:
Phantom-shaped horsemen I seem to discern,
Riding among the gay squadron, advancing,
Each one equipped for the chase in his turn;
Close by the side of each sportsman is riding
The shade of some friend who has loved him in chase,
Rousing him, helping him, stirring, and guiding
The hunter who bears him with mettle and race."

CHAPTER III.

STAG-HUNTING.

The inhabitants of Devon and Somerset will, doubtless, blame us for having given the priority to fox-hunting over stag-hunting, and will tell us with truth that the deer was a fashionable and favourite beast of venery long before fox-hunting was dreamt of. On the other hand, the men who follow hounds in the fashionable shires are sometimes apt to sneer at stag-hunting, forgetting that hunting the wild red deer on Exmoor and the Quantocks is very different to galloping after the carted deer in the neighbourhood of Ascot. But we will not compare the quality of the two sports. Our order of treatment was based on quantity, and as there is much in common between fox-hunting, stag-hunting, and hare-hunting, we shall confine ourselves, while describing the two latter branches of hunting, to pointing out how they differ from fox-hunting. First of all, we will describe stag-hunting proper, *i.e.* the pursuit of the wild red deer, and afterwards, hunting the carted deer; though we state at once that we shall not take any part in the controversy anent the Royal Buckhounds. The controversy is brought annually before our notice, like Christmas bills and Christmas boxes, which we either delegate to the waste-paper basket or grumble about. Whether hunting the carted

deer is, or is not sport, is a question which we must ask the readers to decide for themselves, but there is no man who has ever followed the Devon and Somerset stag-hounds over the wild moorlands of Exmoor, who will not confess that the pursuit of the red deer beats fox-hunting. Even such an enthusiastic fox-hunter as the Duke of Beaufort has declared that few things can compare with a run after a "warrantable" stag, at the stern of the Devon and Somerset Hounds, though he adds with humorous satire, that there is probably nothing more difficult than to keep there. Of course, we admit that the fox now holds pride of place in the opinion of the majority of hunting men, always excepting those of Devon and Somerset, if only for the reason that the fox affords more amusement to the greater number of sportsmen. There are over 150 packs of fox-hounds in England, but it is only with the Devon and Somerset hounds that stag-hunting can be seen as the hunting man ought to see it. Exmoor is the home of the red deer, and though naturalists differ as to whether or not the red deer is indigenous to English soil, it has been made evident that he has lived in Devon since the Norman Conquest, so that if he came as a visitor, he must have liked his quarters.

For the convenience both of our fox-hunting readers and the novice, we have arranged our description of Exmoor stag-hunting in the following succinct form:—

1. *Difference between stag and fox for hunting purposes.*

2. *Difference between finding a stag and drawing for a fox.*

3. *Difference between riding to stag-hounds and riding to fox-hounds.*

1. *Difference between stag and fox for hunting purposes.*—With the exception of a vixen in cub, or suckling cubs, a fox is always runable, *i.e.* fit to be hunted. A stag is seldom hunted before he is five years old—never before he is four years old. Hinds, *i.e.* the females of the stag, are hunted as soon as they are strong enough to run before hounds. A "warrantable" stag means a stag fit to be hunted. The age of a stag can be told at a glance by his horns, as under:—

Yearling, no horns; two-year-old, a short spire; three-year-old, spire lengthened and "brow-antler" projected; four-year-old, horns eighteen inches in length and "bay antler" projected; five-year-old, "tray antler" projected and two points on the top of one horn; six-year-old, brow, bay, and tray, and two points on each horn; seven-year-old, brow, bay and tray, and two points on one horn and three points on the other; eight-year-old, brow, bay, and tray, and three points on each horn.

The expressions "two on top" and "three on top" mean respectively a seven-year-old and an eight-year-old stag. A stag sheds his horns annually in the spring, and they are replaced in about fifteen weeks. During the period of replacement the stag suffers great agony and weakness owing to loss of blood.

Stag-hunting begins in the second week of August, and continues till the first week in October. Then the rutting season, *alias* the stag's honeymoon, commences, and, like that of the human being, lasts for about three weeks, after which hind-hunting commences, and lasts till the beginning of April. It must be further

remarked that the fox is monogamous, and that the stag is polygamous; also the stag carries a much stronger scent than the fox, though he is his equal in cunning, and infinitely superior to him in fleetness and staying powers. The last two qualities demand a larger hound than the ordinary fox-hound. Twenty-five inches is the standard for a stag-hound, as against twenty-three to twenty-three-and-a-half inches for a fox-hound. Again, a stag-hound must possess more stamina than a fox-hound, since the runs are longer and the ground rougher. With hardly any exceptions, stag-hounds are the fox-hound puppies which have been rejected by the M.F.H. at the puppy show on account of their size, but a hound that has once been entered to fox or any other quarry is of no use to hunt stag.

The two chief artifices which the stag makes use of to elude pursuit are "to take soil" and "to run to herd." By a curious anomaly, which we are unable to explain, "to take soil" means to take to the water, and by going up or down stream for some two hundred yards, destroy his scent before taking again to the open. When hard pressed a stag will even take to the sea. "To run to herd" means to push up another stag out of covert and lie close, on the chance of hounds hunting the disturbed stag. The most trustworthy hounds are constantly deceived by this stratagem, and it requires the utmost vigilance of the huntsman to discern it. When the stag is finally brought to bay he will get his back against the bank or a rock in a stream, and woe betide the hound who comes within reach of his horns. The older hounds take the matter very quietly, for they know the *coup de grace* will be administered by the knife. Two men seize the horns, and a third—the huntsman, if he be up—cuts the jugular vein. The

"head," *i.e.* the horns, is cut off, and the "slots," *i.e.* the feet or pads of a fox. The carcass is severed from the venison, cleaned, and given to the hounds. We have only to add that the venison is distributed amongst the supporters of the hunt according to the directions of the Master.

2. *Difference between finding a stag and drawing for a fox.*—The duties of an earth-stopper in fox-hunting are child's play in comparison with those of an "harbourer," *i.e.* the man whose duty it is to "harbour" the stag or to discover what covert he has chosen for his temporary home. After the earth-stopper has discovered what earths exist upon his "stop," his duties are merely mechanical, though, of course, he may perform those duties either carefully or carelessly. But to "harbour" a stag is far more difficult than to hunt him. Experts declare that it requires more skill to harbour a wild red deer on Exmoor than to stalk a deer in the Highlands, even if the conditions were equal. But "harbouring" has to be done in the grey dawn, and the nose of the red wild deer of Exmoor is more sensitive than that of his northern cousin. Besides, it can hardly be called pleasant work to sit in a tree for two or three hours in a drenching rain on a cold September morning, waiting for the appearance of a "warrantable" stag, or to examine the ground for the marks of his "slots." Some harbourers are so shrewd that they can tell the age of a stag from his slots. Even when his patience is rewarded, he can never be sure that the covert won't be disturbed before the "tufters" are put in.

Unlike fox-hunting, the whole of the pack is not put into covert, but only a few experienced old hounds, which are called "tufters." The number

of tufters varies from two couple to six couple, according to the size of the covert to be drawn. While the tufters are drawing covert the remainder of the pack is housed in any barn or outhouse which may be conveniently adjacent. When the stag has taken to the open, the pack is immediately laid on the scent as rapidly as possible, for a stag moves so quickly that it does not do to give him any more law than can be helped; therefore, directly hounds are clapped on the line, the huntsman should push them along as fast as his horse can carry him.

3. *Difference between riding to stag-hounds and riding to fox-hounds.*—Not only the tyro in the hunting-field, but the hardest riders who ever rode over Leicestershire, must remember that in riding over Exmoor "discretion is the better part of valour." A stranger in the land should never attempt to take his own line, but should follow a pilot. Exmoor is the wildest moorland in England, intersected by deep combes, and covered with treacherous bogs. We believe that no man can ride to stag-hounds on Exmoor in the same way that he would ride to fox-hounds; indeed, no sane man would attempt to do so. The man who follows stag-hounds must ride from "point to point"; he can *not* ride on the stern of hounds.

One final hint we would give to the reader, who may wish to make a flying visit to Exmoor during the end of August or September, before cub-hunting has risen to the dignity of hunting. Let him *not* take his own horses with him! The deep combes and bogs of Exmoor would ruin the legs of a horse accustomed to the flat pastures of the shires. For ourselves, we have always been able to see most

of the fun, when mounted on a stout Exmoor pony. These ponies are marvels of endurance, and as sure-footed as goats. Besides, they are on their native heath. Curiously enough, they have generally proved disappointing when translated to fox-hunting countries.

In a book intended to be of practical utility, an historical retrospect is out of place, but we cannot refrain from calling attention to the fact that long before the Brocklesby, Burton, Blankney, or Rufford packs were thought of, the Earls of Lincoln hunted the stag over the ground now devoted to fox-hunting, while the green plush worn to-day by the hunt servants of the Badminton and Heythrop Hunts is a relic of the days when the Dukes of Beaufort hunted the stag. But wild woodlands and moorlands have disappeared beneath the ploughshare, and stag-hunting in cultivated districts had either to disappear or to be carried on artificially. When a stag is roused, a run is sure, or nearly always sure, to follow, a truth in which lies the popularity of stag-hunting to-day. So the latter alternative was chosen, and the quarry was taken to the place of meeting in a cart. The deer-cart was probably first used about 1775; but we read that in 1715 one of the Houghton deer was "let go."

The deer-cart was described by Tom Hood, as differing only from a hearse in that it contains the "deer alive, and not the dear deceased." Others have described it as a bridal chariot out of which the deer proudly steps like a bridegroom. However, whatever may be its outward appearance, it is sufficiently comfortable inside, resembling more than anything else a luxurious loose box on wheels. Indeed, in every detail connected with this branch of hunting, there is

an entire absence of cruelty, the tendency, if anything, being to pamper the deer. That the prominent sportsmen who have been masters of staghounds during the present century, to say nothing of the thousands of good men who must have followed them, would have calmly sat down and sanctioned the perpetration of cruelty, as the extraordinary band of persons who are agitating for the abolition of the Royal Hunt allege, is not for one moment to be imagined, nor would anybody, except people who know nothing about the details of stag-hunting, ever suppose that cruelty has any place in hunting the carted deer.

Let us now state briefly the difference between fox-hunting and hunting the carted deer.

The carted deer is brought to the rendezvous in his cart, and having been let go and given a certain law, leads the hounds and their followers for a gallop till he thinks he has had enough of it. The whole affair is merely a cross-country run on horseback, and of hunting in the true acceptation of the term there is none. There is no necessity to find landowners who will preserve deer, nor to find your deer before you can hunt him. Now, in fox-hunting, hours may elapse and numerous coverts have to be drawn before hounds find the scent of Sir Reynard, and during that time a huge field, most of whom know nothing about agriculture, are trampling upon seeds, and larking over fences, and generally causing that damage which makes the farmer antagonistic to sport. But the deer, when released from the cart, immediately goes away and avoids coverts, or, at all events, does not dwell in them. Thus he saves the farmers' fields from constant trampling, because, as a rule, he merely crosses the holding *en route* for somewhere else, instead of running in

rings all day. And, as the gallop seldom lasts more than a couple of hours, it follows that much less land is crossed than when foxhounds meet at 11 a.m. and remain out till four or five in the afternoon. Thus it will be seen that in the home counties, where for many years the carted deer has found his headquarters, stag-hunting can be indulged in without serious damage to the farmer, though fox-hunting would be so ruinous as to be wellnigh impossible, though, of course, in parts of the home counties we find good fox-hunting and wild scenery. Indeed "Brooksby" stated only in 1880 that the wild stag might be allowed to roam between Aldershot and Windsor, and be trusted to do no more harm than on the hills of Devon and Somerset.

To the man who hunts to ride, whether he be a novice or an old stager, few things are more enjoyable than a gallop after the Queen's or Lord Rothschild's hounds. The etiquette, at all events with the Queen's, is to ride in pink; and Lord Coventry, the present Master of the Buckhounds, is desirous that this rule of etiquette should be obeyed, if only out of compliment to an ancient, royal, and national institution, which nominally provides its followers with sport for nothing. We say nominally, for the novice who hunts from London with the Queen's will find his training expenses heavy, and his hunting will cost him quite as much as if he lived in the country and subscribed to the local pack. But money, and the want of money, are generally matters for after-consideration with the hunting man, who, in the excitement of a run, only says, "Hang the expense!"—the word is not always "hang"—if black care sits behind him in the pigskin. We must warn the novice who hunts with the Queen's, however, not to join that band of men

who hunt only because they think it the correct thing to do, or for the sole purpose of wearing a scarlet coat, and who are in a state of fancying themselves, and admiring their boots *en profile* all day long, until they get a fall — when they don't. But these men, fortunately, are in the minority, and the novice will find that, in spite of the sneers of a section of fox-hunters, there are many good sportsmen who do not think it beneath their dignity to gallop after the carted deer.

CHAPTER IV.

HARE-HUNTING.

"Hast thou pursued the timorous flying hare?
Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles,
How he outruns the wind, and with what care
He turns and crosses with a thousand doubles.
The very musets through the which he goes,
Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes."

FROM commencing the present chapter with the above quotation, our readers will judge beforehand that we are not in favour of hunting the hare, and with certain exceptions, their judgment will be correct. To see puss on her last legs, limping slowly along under a hedge, while hounds are ringing her funeral knell in the field above, is a sight to move the pity, and not the ardour, of the sportsman.

"Her very grief may be comparèd well
To one sore sick, that hears the passing bell."

Most works on sport ignore this branch of hunting altogether, but, as in the absence of fox or stag, a quiet canter after harriers may be better than nothing at all in the opinion of some of our readers, and as the sport is undeniably a branch of hunting, we think that a short account of it is indispensable in the present volume.

The position held by hare-hunting in the category of sports may be gathered from the fact that it is etiquette for a Master of Harriers or a Master of Beagles to consult the M.F.H. or M.S.H. before holding a meet, should there be a pack of foxhounds or of staghounds in the neighbourhood. As we have already made use of the expression "a quiet canter," it is hardly necessary to add that one can see as much of the sport on a pony or a covert-hack, as if one were mounted on a thoroughbred hunter, and almost as much on foot, as if one were mounted on a pony. We will, therefore, at once describe the hounds which hunt the hare.

1. *The Harrier.*—The Harrier is an undersized foxhound, in the same way as the staghound is an oversized foxhound. His average height is from eighteen to nineteen inches. He is not nearly as fast as his bigger brethren, though he appears to have as keen a nose. In appearance he is a miniature foxhound.

2. *The Beagle.*—The beagle is not unlike the harrier, but he has a thicker throat and body, and stouter limbs. His height varies from twelve to fourteen or fifteen inches. Whatever may have been his origin, he can now lay claim to a breed of his own, and must not be confounded with

3. *The Rough Beagle,* which is a cross between a harrier and a rough terrier, possessing the sharp yap of the terrier, instead of the musical sound of the harrier. He has a coat of stiff wiry hair, and stiff whisker-hairs.

4. *The Dwarf, or Rabbit Beagle* is delicate in form and aspect, but he has a good nose, and is swift of foot. His height is only ten inches. These beagles are universally followed on foot.

It is an inviolable rule when hunting with harriers never to halloa. The reason for this is the timidity of the hare, for if the hare is frightened by a halloa, he will probably turn back into the mouth of the pack, which is obliged to hunt him closely on account of the weakness of his scent. As he runs in a circle, he will constantly return to his own "foil" or "form" from which he was aroused, and thus, by mixing the fresh with the stale scent, occasionally manage to baffle his pursuers. But, as a rule, his life is doomed directly he is aroused from his "foil." Such is the timidity of the hare, that he has often been known to drop dead of a broken heart before hounds have run into him, and if hounds run into him alive, his piteous squeal is a sound not to be forgotten.

But it must be remembered that in some parts of the country, notably in Norfolk and Suffolk, it is a question of either hunting the hare, or no hunting at all. The Suffolk foxhounds do not possess a single covert, and when the Master, Mr Barthropp, at the annual meeting of the hunt in April 1897, proposed that they should celebrate the year by purchasing a covert, or, at least, that something might be done in hiring coverts, the chairman said that directly a covert was to be let, it was taken for shooting, and thus more rent was given for it. But the preponderance of hare-hunting over fox-hunting in East Anglia is not due so much to the unpopularity of foxes

amongst the farmers and landowners, as to the unpopularity of the country amongst the foxes, who never seem to thrive on the cold broads of the eastern coast, though hares abound as, so far as our experience has taught us, they always do in a country where wild fowl are plentiful.

But East Anglia is far from being the only part of the country devoted to "currant jelly dogs" and "puss 'unting." Doubtless, many of our readers have been initiated into hare-hunting while staying at Brighton. As "Brooksby" wrote nearly twenty years ago, there is something harrier-like in the atmosphere of Brighton. Brighton, ever since the days of the Regency, has been associated with sport, but the sport has never been of a vigorous nature. Thus, hare-hunting seems to suit the Brightonians, for the most ardent lover of harriers could hardly call hare-hunting a vigorous pursuit. It is a good fox-hunting school for boys and girls, and affords exercise for old gentlemen who are no longer strong enough to enjoy the real thing. Moreover, it is a sport without a literature, and the pen of the readiest writer could not make the pulse of his reader beat quicker by an account of harriers, any more than he could forge a romance out of the art of dribbling a ball into a series of little holes in the ground in fewer strokes, than had been known before in the stirring annals of golf. Yet to the jaded Londoner, or to the invalid, a gallop on the Sussex Downs is full of health, even if it lacks excitement. Another point in favour of a pack of harriers is that the expense is small in comparison with the expense of a pack of fox-hounds, and so they are often maintained for the amusement of farmers, in which case the stranger should be very careful how he rides over land, or the familiar question, "Why comes this

prophet amongst us?" may be translated into language not generally used in a lady's boudoir. However, if only for the reason that we advise a man to see different methods of hunting in different countries, so as to enlarge his knowledge of sport and make new friends, with whom at least he has one object in common, we advise the novice to see harriers once. Then he can judge for himself whether he wishes to see them again. But we must conclude this chapter lest we dip our pen in bitter ink.

CHAPTER V.

OTTER-HUNTING.

THE otter-hunting season is popularly supposed to take place during the months of April and May, when fox-hunting is over and hunting men are unable to relinquish the pleasure of hunting some beast of *venerie.* Yet, in the strict sporting sense of the term, the season for otter-hunting may be said to extend throughout the whole year, for so great is the ignorance about the habits of the otter that opinion is divided as to whether there is a breeding period to constitute a close season, or whether otters breed indiscriminately all the year round. Indeed we might almost say that nobody knows anything about the habits of the otter, except that he is a persevering foe to fish, and has such a sensitive palate that he will only eat the most delicate parts of the fish, except when compelled by hunger, leaving the coarser parts on the bank for rats and other vermin to feed upon. For this reason otter-hunting is fast becoming an obsolete sport, and, indeed, is described as such in the later editions of the "Britannica Encyclopædia," and "Wood's Natural History," though our own experience is that it is more popular than ever amongst the small clique of sportsmen who are privileged to enjoy it. Yet, if the otter and otter-hunting tend to destroy the fisherman's sport, it can hardly be expected

that riparian owners will encourage the preserving and hunting of the otter. Further, we think that the keenest otter-hunter must admit that it would be selfish to rob hundreds of anglers of their enjoyment so that a small field may get a few hours' excitement. So the otter now is only hunted in small streams where a rod is seldom seen, and the Masters of Otter-Hounds have to take their packs from county to county like wandering gipsies, and be thankful if they only get a week's sport in one district.

To revert for one moment to the prevalent ignorance about the otter and his ways and habits, it appears, upon the authority of the Duke of Beaufort, that the otter has a stronger objection to being seen than even the fox has. Yet in India trained otters are almost as common as trained dogs, and we have heard of two gentlemen in England, namely, Mr Richardson, and a gentleman at Carstree, who possess, or did possess, otters which run about the house, and generally behave themselves like ordinary house dogs. One curious fact is that the tame otter is perfectly docile, with the exception that he will not allow his snout to be handled, while the wild otter is both more nervous and fiercer than any other English beast of the chase. One of the few things that is certain is that the otter is not an amphibious creature naturally, but only takes to the water in order to procure its food.

Now let us consider the otter-hound before dealing with the present recognised methods of otter-hunting. The thoroughbred otter-hound is really a Welsh harrier, bearing much the same resemblance to the English harrier as the Welsh terrier bears to the fox-terrier. At the present time, however, the so-called packs of otter-hounds are invariably mixed packs. We

have seen a half-bred Airedale terrier and a water spaniel in the same pack, and it would appear that any dog with courage which will take to the water can be made into an otter-hound. We have been told that the pure otter-hound is such an incorrigible fighter that it is almost an impossibility to keep a pack of them; for in default of otter they will fight amongst themselves, apparently for the fun of the thing, like Irishmen at a wake. Mr Wood, who has had as much experience of them as anybody, gives an instance where half the pack were killed during the night in kennel, owing to one of these free fights.

To a certain limited extent the habits of the otter are like those of the fox, as he spends all the day in his "couch," which answers to the earth of the fox, and issues forth at night in search of his food. As a rule, the "couch" is a natural hole in the river bank, overlooking the water, for the otter seldom takes the trouble to make a home for himself. Therefore, in otter-hunting, the first thing to do is to track the otter to the "couch," where he may happen to be resting for the day, for, except when he is filled with parental anxiety, he will change his "couch" according to his whim. In order to track him, it is necessary to examine the ground minutely for his "seal," a peculiar mark left by the round ball in his foot. Then a sudden rush to a hole, among some tree roots, where the overhanging bank almost touches the water, followed by a loud outburst of music from thirteen couple of hounds, proclaims the welcome fact that a find has been made. Every nerve thrills with expectation and with hope. The hounds themselves seem to draw in fresh life with every breath. They cluster round the hole in a great confused mass, a score of heads endeavouring to

squeeze into an opening, originally too small for one. They attack the banks with claws and teeth, and make frantic efforts to penetrate the stronghold, but their progress is slow, as the roots are many and provokingly thick.

Having successfully tracked him to his "couch" and roused him, when he will immediately dive, it is necessary to keep a sharp look-out for the "vent," *i.e.* the slight ripple caused by his coming to the surface to breathe, when he only shows a small portion of his snout above water. Hounds, we should say, will follow his scent even in the water, for he carries a stronger scent than any other beast of the chase, nor is it repulsive to the human olfactory nerves like that of a fox. But as an otter can swim faster than any hound, a portion of the pack should always be kept on the bank in readiness for the next "vent," for the otter's method of eluding his pursuers is to "vent" and dive again, thus continually keeping himself hidden from view until he either finally baffles his pursuers or becomes exhausted.

Should he be so unfortunate as to get into shallow water, his "chain," *i.e.* the ripple left behind him, immediately betrays his whereabouts, and the death is then only a question of time in the true sense of the term, for few animals die harder than an otter. Endowed by nature with peculiarly sharp teeth to enable him to hold his slippery food, he can make them meet through bone, and even through wood. The most courageous hounds hesitate to go in to him, and, as the stag receives his *coup de grâce* from the knife of the huntsman, so the otter receives his death stroke or strokes from the spear or spears of his human pursuers.

The otter-hunter, unless he wishes to catch his death from rheumatism, must have a kit suited to the surroundings of the sport—to wit, big boots, well cut and slashed, so as to let the water out as soon as it gets in, stockings, breeches, and flannel, and plenty of it. The sport is a favourite one with ladies, who adopt short skirts and dispense with petticoats in favour of knickerbockers. Clad like this, neither man nor lady need fear the after-effects of a plunge into mid-stream.

The chief part of the science of otter-hunting, after hounds have challenged the holt, proclaiming that an otter has couched there very recently, is to prevent him slipping away into deep water. To do this effectually, as many of the followers as are necessary to make a line across the stream must jump into the water, and, by joining hands, form a barrier against the otter; but it is necessary in this case that you should keep your feet together, and hold tight, for the otter is just as likely as not to dive between your legs and upset you and all your neighbours. Such accidents, of course, only increase the fun of the sport, but we have always derived keener enjoyment from this fun when we have witnessed it from the bank. In any case, it is advisable not to take your station next to a novice, for the result will probably be baptism, coupled with total immersion. The novice means to do his best, but is apt to lose his head amid the splash and *mêlée* of struggling hounds around him.

Besides, the old proverb that too many cooks spoil the broth applies to otter-hunting as it does to fox-hunting, though in a lesser degree, and a Master does not like every member of his field to take promiscuously to the water, when they can see the sport just as well from the bank. Nor should a novice be

too anxious to holloa when he thinks he views the "chain," for the chain may prove to be only eel bubbles, in which case he would find himself in much the same position as the fox-hunter (?) who halloaed to a hare.

As packs of otter-hounds now are, more or less, peripatetic, and pay flying visits into various counties, it is impossible for us to tell our readers where they can view the sport at any specific time; but during April, May, and the beginning of June there is always plenty of otter-hunting in the Midlands, especially Leicestershire and the borders of Staffordshire and Shropshire. However, the fixtures as a rule only come within the ken of the local sportsmen, the outside information being confined to the news that the otter-hounds are in the district, and the actual sport being confined to a privileged few, as it would obviously never do for a crowd of foot-people to run helter-skelter over land during these months of the year. But we venture to say that when once any of our readers have seen an otter "tailed," he will become a keen votary of the sport, and echo the song of the Bucks otter-hunter:—

"So rise with the morn,
Take whip, pole, and horn,
For we hunt him quite early, the otter.
The dew's on the grass,
'*C'est bon pour la chasse.*'
He's a devil for scent is the otter.

Chorus:

"So here's to the beast called the otter!
He's wily and canny, the otter.
No sport is more thrilling,
No beast takes more killing,
Than the varmint that's known as the otter."

PART II.

The Accessories of Hunting.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNTER.

"I'd a lead of them all when we came to the brook,
A big one—a bumper—and up to your chin;
As he threw it behind him, I turned for a look,
There were eight of us had it, and seven got in."

It may seem an insult to the hunter to call him an accessory, but we use the word in its literal sense, as meaning, "that which accedes or contributes to," and nobody can deny that the hunter accedes or contributes to the pleasure of the hunting man. It is the first accessory which he requires, the most difficult accessory to *make*, and the most difficult accessory to buy *ready-made*. As this article is intended for the tyro in the hunting-field, we shall not discuss the various arguments which refer to the "making" of a hunter. The finest riders who ever rode to hounds differ in their opinions; but we firmly believe that this difference of opinion lies in the fact that these fine riders forget that horses are like human beings, inasmuch as no two horses are exactly similar. A system which may succeed with one horse may result in failure with another. Our own experience has taught us that a good horse is often made a bad hunter,

though a bad horse *may* be made a good hunter. We use the terms "good horse" and "bad horse" in reference to the shape and breeding of the horse, since it may be objected that a good hunter cannot be a bad horse. Our object in making these remarks is to warn the novice never to purchase a horse, however good his appearance may be, unless he has been ridden to hounds and has the character of being a good hunter. He can *not* make him one, since he probably has had no experience, but he may spoil the horse, and break his own neck in the attempt.

Gallons of ink must have been expended over advice to novices how to buy a hunter. Our own advice is brief and simple: "*Make up your mind what you want and the price that you are willing to pay for it, and see that you get it.*" In horse-dealing, as in any other business, a man should remember that it is the duty of the vendor to sell what he has, and the duty of the purchaser to buy what he wants. These sentences may sound like copy-book maxims, yet men are tempted, and daily yield to the temptation of buying horses which they do not require. "He was so good-looking, and the price was so small," is the usual explanation, an explanation which is a good defence for a horse-dealer, but an indictment for lunacy in regard to a gentleman who wishes to buy a hunter for his own riding.

The first two items, which a man must consider in the choice of a hunter, are *his weight* and *the length of his purse.* A man who rides 14 stone (riding weight includes weight of saddle and bridle; the difference between riding weight and walking weight may be

roughly estimated as 1 stone) will have to give twice as much for a hunter as a man who only rides 12 stone. A thoroughbred, six-year-old, sound, made hunter, capable of carrying 14 stone to hounds, is not to be bought under £150, though the same class of horse, capable of carrying 12 stone to hounds, can be bought for £60, or even less. We do not mean to tell the novice who weighs over 14 stone that he cannot get a horse to carry him to hounds under £150; we only repeat that he cannot get a perfect hunter under that sum. Therefore let him remember when he hears of a perfect hunter up to 14 stone to be sold "dirt cheap," that the horse may be as cheap as dirt, and as useless and inconvenient.

If money is no object, we recommend the tyro to put himself into the hands of a respectable horse-dealer. If he does not know the dealer personally, but has been recommended to him, he should tell him three things:—

(*a*) Riding weight.

(*b*) Riding qualifications, *i.e.* whether he is a hard riding man, or a man who only wants to see sport with no risk to his neck.

(*c*) The price he is willing to give.

We have heard and examined many complaints about horse-dealers, and are convinced that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is the complainant who is to blame. If the purchaser tries to "best" the horse-dealer, the horse-dealer will try to "best" the purchaser, and it is a monkey to a mouse-trap on the

horse-dealer, as the phrase has it; but, if the purchaser avows his ignorance of horse-flesh, candidly states his powers of horsemanship, and states the price which he is willing to give, telling the dealer that he relies upon his judgment to procure the necessary horse, the dealer will find and sell him the horse which he requires at a fair price. We admit that it is a hard trial to many men to confess ignorance; but it is wiser to confess one's ignorance than to expose it. It is not to the advantage of the horse-dealer to defraud his customers, and the horse-dealer knows such to be the case.

Very often a man does not know what his riding qualifications are, therefore, when possible, he should go to a dealer who has seen him in the saddle. The dealer will know the class of horse he wants, and will see that he gets it. We strongly recommend every man to buy thoroughbreds for hunting; their bones are firmer and more compact, and though they look small, they are heavier than their half-bred cousins, and will do more work with less fatigue to themselves and to the rider than a hackney will do. But we must warn the novice against buying "weeds" from racing stables, for should the "weed" pass the examination of the veterinary surgeon, the probabilities are that he—or she—has developed temper. Very often a horse is "weeded," *i.e.* discarded for want of pace; but our advice is: Don't buy a horse from a racing stable unless you know the trainer, and discover from him his reasons for parting with him. Again, horses bought out of a racing stable, *though they may be safe jumpers*, are invariably "pullers,"

so long as they see another horse in front of them. But they seldom are safe jumpers, as they have got into the habit of brushing their fences and galloping through hurdles, and regard a water-jump in the hunting-field as that

> "Shallow dug pan with a hurdle to screen it,
> That cocktail imposture, the steeple-chase brook."

Owners of racing stables will doubtless blame us for making these remarks, but they know perfectly well that they don't get rid of horses unless they have sufficient reason for doing so.

Never buy a horse without having the opinion of a good veterinary surgeon. We have heard and read many statements to the effect that "vets" are constantly bribed by horse-dealers. This may be so, on the principle that every man has his price and that there are black sheep in every fold; but we do not suspect our doctor of poisoning us when he gives us medicine; why, then, should we suspect our "vet." of swindling us when he gives us an opinion about a horse? Now, we hold no brief for the defence of "vets," nor do we know that there is any necessity for defending them, but we warn the novice that there are certain facts in regard to a horse which nobody but a professional expert can enlighten him upon. For example, we do not believe that anybody but a "vet" can judge the eyesight of a horse. Therefore do not grudge your "vet" his fee.

If a man buys a horse during the hunting season, he should stipulate that he has at least one day's hunting on him before completing the purchase. Unless the

intending purchaser is known personally to the dealer, the dealer will probably object to this stipulation; but as most dealers are willing to let out hunters on hire to probable customers, the objection can be easily surmounted by hiring the horse. We do not believe that it is possible to judge the qualities of a hunter without riding him to hounds. Besides, we must recollect that in hunting there exists a partnership between the rider and the horse, and that it is within the range of probabilities that the horse may object to the partnership. The price which the novice should pay the dealer for the hire of a horse for a quiet day's hunting must depend upon the extent of the dealer's business, the weight of the rider, and the reputation of the hunt; but it should never exceed two guineas.

Even if the length of his purse will not permit the novice to buy thoroughbred horses, he should be careful to see that the dam was well-bred. A thoroughbred mare and an underbred horse will produce a better foal than a thoroughbred horse and an underbred mare. Many explanations of this fact have been given involving the natural laws of heredity; but apart from heredity, we think that the foal learns a good deal from its mother after parturition in the paddock. At any rate, it is a curious coincidence that foals not only inherit the jumping qualities of their dams, but very often their jumping cleverness as well. Therefore, in buying young horses it is always well to find out what sort of character for jumping the dams had. If the dam possessed the trick of going hard at her fences, and suddenly swerving in her last stride, for no tangible reason, the foal will probably possess it as well. It is

almost impossible to break a persistent refuser of the trick of refusing. Therefore such a horse cannot become a good hunter, for the first requisite in a hunter is that he should be able and willing to jump. The second requisite is that he should be able to stay Now, the staying powers of a horse will depend largely upon the condition in which he is, which subject we intend to deal with at a later period under the heading of "Stable Management." We need only state here that light-ribbed horses are invariably deficient in staying power. The distance, either horizontally or vertically between the back-rib and the hip bone, should never be more than four inches. We prefer the distance to be three-and-a-half inches. If the distance is less than three-and-a-half inches the horse may gain some additional strength, but he will lose activity. He will be too compact, or, as it is termed, "too tightly coupled," and will not be able to gallop or to extend himself over his fences as well as a less compact horse. We have made these calculations on the assumption that the horse stands fifteen hands, two inches.

Although we have advised the novice never to buy a horse without having the opinion of a good veterinary surgeon, yet we wish to save him the trouble and expense of constantly employing a "vet" to examine horses which are worthless for hunting purposes. We hope that the following hints may be of service to him in the preliminary choice of a hunter.

The forefeet of a horse should be *exactly* similar in shape and size. The *slightest* dissimilarity means lameness, either past or present, and either alternative means future lameness. The crust, *i.e.* the wall of the

foot, should be nearly round, the inner side being slightly more oval than the outer side. From the top of the crust, *i.e.* the "coronet," where the hoof and the hair meet, to the bottom or toe, the angle should be 45°. As the feet have to carry the horse and the rider, good feet are more essential than anything else.

The shorter the distance between the knee and fetlock joint, *i.e.* the cannon or leg-bone, in comparison with the length of the forearm, or, in other words, the greater the length of the forearm in comparison with the distance between the knee and fetlock joints, the stronger the horse. The circumference of the distance between the knee and fetlock joints should be the same at any point. The fetlocks must be free from puffiness or any enlargement of bone, and the pasterns should be sufficiently long to be pliable; short pasterns are also apt to develop enlargements of bone.

The shoulder of a horse should be set as far back into the back as possible, for the further back the shoulder is set, the more of the horse will there be in front of the rider.

The body or "barrel" of the horse should be deep and curved like the beams of a ship, not flat. To be able to judge the curve of the "barrel" the purchaser must stand in a perfectly straight line behind the horse. As already stated, the vertical distance between the back rib bone and the hip-bone must not exceed four inches; if it does so exceed, the horse will be slack-loined, *i.e.* wanting in strength at the very place where he will most feel the weight of the rider. In other words, a slack-loined horse is never up to carrying much weight, and is apt to rick his back.

The hips of a hunter cannot be too wide; "ragged" or prominent hips may offend the eye, but they certainly do not tend to lessen the strength of the horse, and the hunter must have propelling power to carry him over any reasonable fence.

We trust that the novice will find these few hints to be of practical use to him in the preliminary choice of a hunter. We have purposely omitted to mention the head of the horse, because the difference between a good head and a bad head is apparent to anybody who is not blind. We would only say that the forehead should be straight; a prominent forehead, in nine cases out of ten, means vice and stupidity. Nor have we said anything about colour, for "a good horse cannot be a bad colour." Of course if the purchaser has any preferences or objections in regard to colour, he should state them to the dealer in the first place; but we see no reason for holding any such preferences or objections.

Though we shall have to speak of bits later on in Part II., it will not be out of place to mention here that the purchaser should always ask the vendor in what bit he has been accustomed to ride the horse, for a horse may be as gentle as the proverbial lamb in one bit, and exhibit the temper of the arch-fiend in another.

We have often been asked what is the best height for a hunter. The inquirers might just as well ask us what should be the height of a wife. We can only say that tall horses are more pleasant to ride than short lobby horses, and, what perhaps is of more interest to the novice, easier to sit over fences.

Besides, it is surprising the difference which a hand—*i.e.* four inches—makes to a horse in regard to his power to see what is on the other side of a fence. The result is that tall horses seldom blunder on the landing side of a fence. Digby Collins says, "In a big flying country the height of a hunter is of little consequence, so long as it is over fifteen hands one inch."

In conclusion, we do not advise the tyro to be persuaded to buy an old hunter, under the impression that the horse will be able to teach the man to ride. As a rule, old horses are far too clever, and are apt to judge their distance at a jump too accurately with nothing to spare; and, when they do fall, it means a nasty accident, for they lack the spirit of young horses, and instead of rising quickly, lie on the rider. The treatment of the hunter will be dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

STABLES AND STABLE MANAGEMENT.

When a man first commences to keep horses his chief difficulty is his stable. This arises from the fact that unless he is the freeholder of the land on which the stables are to be erected, he is naturally unwilling to erect a permanent building at his own expense upon another man's property, while the stables already built are probably worse than useless. House-agents are in the habit of describing an ill-drained, ill-ventilated, ill-lighted barn as a stable. We agree that it is a stable—for rats, mice, and other vermin; but to place a valuable hunter in such an erection is cruelty to the horse and madness on the part of his owner, for such filthy stables are only hot-beds of disease. We, therefore, strongly advise any man who rents a stable to thoroughly examine it, and to insist upon the landlord making the necessary permanent improvements before he allows a horse to enter beneath the roof. We further strongly advise the landlord to make these necessary improvements, as the outlay need not be heavy, and the result will materially increase the value of his property. Should it be found impossible to make these improvements

without incurring great expense, then we advise either the landlord or tenant to consult Messrs Humphrey's, of Knightsbridge, of whose stabling we shall have more to say later on.

The *aspect* of a stable should be south or south-west, so that the horses face north or north-east. The stable will thus gain the greatest possible amount of light with the least possible amount of glare to the horses.

The *situation* of the stable should be on a dry soil. Many architects with antediluvian ideas seem to have forgotten the deluge. They advise stables to be built in a valley, pleading that warmth and shelter are necessary for horses. If the windows and doors fit properly, and the ventilators act properly, so that there is no unhealthy draught, the question of shelter need not arise. In regard to warmth, the temperature of a stable should always—winter and summer—be 60°, but it is not necessary to build a stable in a low valley in order to obtain this temperature. The groom who keeps his stable hot to make the coats of his horses shine is like the Chinaman who burnt his house to roast his pig.

The *construction* of the outside walls of a stable, should, if possible, be of hard stone. Bricks absorb moisture, thus making a stable damp. In the absence of a stone quarry, we recommend the corrugated iron lined with wood, but there must be ample space between the iron and the wood—the more ample the better—which space should be filled up with saw-dust, or some non-conducting material. If the buyer patronises a good firm, these remarks are superfluous, but, as very often he is seduced into employing a local

tradesman, we advise him to superintend the work personally, and to see that such hints as we are able to give him are rigidly acted upon. For example, if a careless builder neglects to use sufficient non-conducting material, the corrugated iron will, in hot weather, turn the stable into a furnace. Many people prefer painted cement to wood for the inside lining of the walls, for the reasons that it is easier to keep clean and more economical. We doubt the truth of both reasons, while the appearance of wood is far superior to that of cement. We feel certain also that horses do not care to live in a place resembling an Ebenezer chapel, and in regard to stables, the horse is the first person to be considered.

In regard to *roofing*, many people are in favour of a thatched roof, for the reason that it is warmer in winter and cooler in summer. We hold many objections to thatched roofs. In the first place, it is extremely difficult to find a good thatcher out of Dorsetshire, and a badly thatched roof is useless. In the second place, they absorb more damp than any other kind of roof, as anybody who has ever lived in a thatched house can testify. In the third place, they are expensive in regard to the initial cost, and constantly need repairing. In the fourth place, they serve as breeding-places for vermin; and in the fifth place, they are a source of danger from fire. The only argument in their favour which we have ever heard is that they look pretty. We agree that, to the artistic eye, a thatched roof is a pleasant appendage to a country parsonage, though the parson's fat cob may differ from us; but a thatched roof on a gentleman's stable always reminds us of a

dilapidated farm-building. Slate roofs are so hideous to the eye that we constantly wonder why they should be used for any kind of building, more especially as they are continually getting out of order, and during a high wind the slates are often either completely torn away or loosened, the serious consequences of which we need not emphasize. Good tiles, well laid, form the best roof of which we know.

In regard to *drainage* we need only quote a passage from Major Fisher's admirable book entitled, "Through the Stable and Saddle-room": "Let the gutters from each stall or box run direct into one common gutter which traverses the stable from one end to the other, and the further this gutter is extended beyond the stable in its open form before it is received into any underground drain, the better. As far as stable drainage is concerned, nothing further is necessary." We perfectly agree with this opinion, and warn our readers against any elaborate system of drainage. As in human habitations, so in stables, it is necessary beyond all things that the drainage and ventilation should be perfect. Ventilation means the ingress of fresh air and the egress of foul air. Yet not only a large majority of grooms, but a large proportion of masters, labour under the delusion that ventilation means draught, which will cause the horses to catch cold. Consequently, we often find stables reeking with foul air, with the result that the horses suffer from every imaginable form of lung disease. Major Fisher, whose long experience of cavalry stables gives additional weight to his opinions, states in the following words the best method to ensure perfect ventilation :

"There should be one or more (according to the size of the stable) ventilating shafts in the roof itself, and one or more on each side of the stable near the top of the walls. These should have what is termed 'louvre boards' and cords to allow of their being opened or closed, wholly or partially, as desired. Furthermore, there should be ventilating gratings a few inches from the floor on all the walls, and these should also be furnished with closing bars, so that they can be kept open or shut." So far, so good; but if there were a hundred ventilators in the stable many grooms would never dream of opening one of them. As to which ventilators should be opened and which shut must depend upon the state of the weather and of the wind. But we presume a groom has sufficient common sense to know that the ingress of fresh air causes the egress of foul air, and that he must regulate his ventilators so that the rush of fresh air expels the foul air without causing a draught.

The windows of a stable should be behind the horses, *i.e.* facing south or south-west, providing that the aspect of the stable is such as we have recommended; but if the aspect be north or north-east, they must be placed in front of the horses, and as near to the ceiling as possible so as to prevent any glare in front of the horses' eyes. Lattice windows are preferable to those made of squares of glass, and have a more sportsman-like appearance; but in either case they should be made to open upon pivots, and have holland blinds to shield the glare of the sun when necessary. One window to three stalls, or loose-boxes, is sufficient, unless the aspect is closed in by trees or other buildings.

We have often been asked whether the forage loft should be between the ceiling and roof of the stable. We think it should be so placed, as it is the most convenient situation so far as the grooms are concerned, and also serves to keep the stable warm.

The door of the stable should be at least six feet, or, if possible, seven feet in width. Passing through a narrow doorway, horses are apt to knock themselves against the side-posts, and to do themselves serious injury. The doors should be half-doors, *i.e.* cut horizontally in the centre. There should be no projections of any sort in the door. Sunken bolts and ring handles obviate any necessity for these projections, which are apt to, and often do, injure a horse.

We have now to consider the flooring of a stable. The substance undoubtedly should be the hard corrugated or grooved blue bricks, specially manufactured for the purpose, so carefully laid that the grooves fit into one another and thereby form a miniature system of drainage. The gangway should be as wide as space permits, but certainly not less than eight feet in width, and the ground surface should be perfectly level. We do not think that there can be any difference of opinion between the relative merits of loose-boxes and stalls. Unfortunately, space often prevents the use of loose-boxes; but it is easy to improvise loose-boxes by placing strong bars of oak from the stall posts across the gangway to the wall, a method which is now constantly adopted in old-fashioned stables. The economical objection to loose-boxes, namely, that they take more straw with which to litter them than stalls, has long been exploded, since

it follows that the greater the space to be littered, the less amount of straw will be soiled and trodden upon and have to be removed. In regard to size, twelve feet by thirteen feet is a fair size for a loose-box, and thirteen feet in length by eight feet in width for a stall. Nothing is more dangerous than for a horse excited by the idea of leaving the stable to be obliged to turn round in a narrow stall.

The slope of the surface flooring of a stall has long been a subject of disagreement amongst men of the greatest experience in all matters connected with the stable. We state at once that we think the gradient should be five and a half inches in thirteen feet. If the rider wants to stand still by covert-side or anywhere else, and leaves the position to the horse, he will choose to place his forelegs on an elevation on a proportionate gradient to the one we have given with his hind legs. We contend, therefore, that this position is the most natural and the most comfortable one for the horse. We have noticed that where the surface is flat, horses contract the pernicious habit of "standing over." In most hunting and racing stables a gradient such as we have described is now usually found.*

We have now completed our survey of the *structure* of a stable, and have endeavoured to make that survey embrace either a two-stall or a twenty-stall stable. We further trust that those of our readers who have stables ready provided for them will have learnt how

* We ought to mention that the Duke of Beaufort is in favour of the flat surface, and that such a surface is invariably used at Badminton.

they can make certain structural alterations without incurring a great expense. But as the owner will, doubtless, consign to a local builder the task of making any such alterations, we warn him that personal supervision is necessary, or the last state of the stable may be worse than the first. Still, if the alterations are merely confined to proper ventilation, we venture to think that the benefit will be found to be great; while drainage can be made perfect at a very small cost. Besides, a man who can afford to buy hunters ought to be able to afford, at least, a healthy stable in which to keep them. It is now our duty to consider the interior fittings of a stable.

We will start by saying that there should be nothing superfluous in a stable, and that all the fittings should be as simple as possible. The more superfluity, the more dirt and dust and the more things to be kept clean. Again, the greater the simplicity the greater will be the tidiness. *Simplex munditiis* should be the motto for a stable.

The stall partitions should be made of oak or pitch-pine boards. It is false economy to use deal, which is liable to splinter, and has, therefore, to be constantly renewed. These partitions are now made so as to be movable; thus by removing the partition and putting up the oak bars already referred to on the two adjacent partitions, a loose-box, sufficiently roomy for the most capricious animal, can be made in a few minutes, and the hunting man may be sure that after a long day his tired horse will appreciate the luxury. Besides, though space may not permit the use of loose-boxes, there should always be, at least, one spare stall in the stable,

and so the movable partition enables the owner to gain a *multum in parvo*. The pillar reins should be made of stout leather, and always looped up when not in use. Many people prefer chains, because they wear for ever. Our objection to them is that they make a noise. If a restless horse is fastened to chain pillar reins he rattles them, makes himself more restless, and disturbs the other horses. Besides, there should be as little noise as possible in a stable. Also, there should never be any hard, unnecessary fittings in a stable against which a horse could, by any possibility, knock himself. Other people prefer the white eight-plaited cord pillar reins, but they require constant pipe-claying, and then do not look as smart and sportsmanlike as the leather ones. We may add that the preference for the former is chiefly among military men; perhaps there is some subtle attraction in pipe-clay.

We believe that the mangers should be made of enamelled iron, *not* wood. Wooden mangers are apt to make horses crib biters. Besides, they are not so easy to keep clean as those made of enamelled iron. But whether made of wood or enamelled iron, they should be constantly scrubbed with salt and water, for the manger is to the horse what the plate is to the human being. The rack should be as close to the manger as possible, and not above the horse, for a horse should be able to eat his food in a comfortable position, and not be obliged to stretch his neck like a giraffe when he wants to eat. Many men have discarded racks and let their horses eat their hay from the ground; but we do not agree with

this custom, for it is apt to make horses "stand over," and to encourage them to eat their beds. One modern improvement which we strongly urge our readers to use is an enamelled basin or water-trough, which can be bought and fixed in a stall or loose-box at a trifling cost, so that the horse can drink when he is thirsty. The habit of giving horses their water out of a bucket at stated intervals is barbarous. One might as well tell a groom to drink his allowance of beer at a draught as another groom wanted the jug. The stomach of a horse is not like the boiler of an engine, though many people fail to see the difference.

There should be no cupboards in a stable, only shelves, on which nothing but the actual grooming utensils should be placed, and a peg for the dung basket. Where carriage horses are kept, another peg, or two pegs, are necessary, upon which to hang harness, while harnessing or unharnessing. Everything except the actual grooming utensils should be kept in the saddle-room. We even object to the presence of a corn bin in the stable.

We take the following list of necessary stable utensils from Major Fisher's work, already referred to. The list is composed for a stable of one or two horses.

One stable fork . . .	£0	3	0
One bass broom . . .	0	2	0
Three birch brooms . .	0	0	9
One wheelbarrow . . .	1	0	0
One shovel . . .	0	3	6
Carry forward . .	£1	9	3

	£	s.	d.
Brought forward . .	£1	9	3
One dung basket . . .	0	3	6
One wooden bucket . .	0	5	0
One iron pail . . .	0	3	0
One stable lamp . . .	0	5	0
One half-gallon corn measure .	0	1	0
One corn sieve . . .	0	2	0
One iron corn bin (2 sacks) .	1	7	9
One iron corn bin (1 sack) .	0	18	0
	£4	14	6

We append to this list Major Fisher's list of grooming utensils. Then we shall add such remarks as seem to us to be most advisable for the guidance of the amateur. As in the list of stable utensils, this list is composed for a stable of one or two horses.

	£	s.	d.
One body brush . . .	£0	6	6
One water brush . . .	0	5	6
One dandy brush . . .	0	2	0
One curry comb . . .	0	0	6
One mane comb . . .	0	0	6
Two sponges (one at 2s., one at 1s.)	0	3	0
One hoof pick . . .	0	0	6
Three rubbers . . .	0	1	6
Two chamois leathers . .	0	4	0
One burnisher . . .	0	3	6
One clipping machine . .	0	8	6
One singeing lamp . .	0	2	6
One pair of stable scissors .	0	2	0
Two sets of woollen fawn-coloured bandages . . .	0	11	0
	£2	11	6

We thus get a total of £7, 6s. for the necessary stable utensils for one or two horses. A good saddler will

supply a good serviceable article at the price we have quoted. Having already said that *simplex munditiis* should be the motto of a stable, whatever the size may be, it is perhaps needless for us to say that all ornamental gear should be avoided. A stable is not a lady's boudoir, and any superfluous ornament is unsportsmanlike. Such superfluous ornament is only seen in the stables of an elderly lucky Throgmorton Street speculator. A sportsman detests such superfluities.

We must advise the novice to see that his brushes have *screwed, not glued*, backs. Glued backs soon come off, and then the brushes become useless. We have quoted the cheapest price for sponges, because experience has taught us that the expensive sponges last no longer than the cheap ones.

Where gas is available it should be used for lighting the stable. Where it is not available, "hurricane" lamps, which burn oil—but not paraffin—should be used. Tallow candles are uncleanly and unsightly; besides grooms are apt to take the candles out of their sockets, thereby creating a dangerous risk of fire.

In regard to this danger of fire, we cannot write too strongly. In every stable smoking should be strictly prohibited. Not only the grooms, but the master and his guests should never smoke in the stable. Let our readers consider for one moment the amount of inflammable matter which necessarily exists in a stable—the straw beds, the fodder, and the woodwork; let them also remember that horses will not leave fire, and that it is an impossibility to make unharnessed horses leave a burning stable; then we feel sure that they will agree with us that every

precaution should be taken in order to guard against the slightest risk of fire. We have no objection to grooms smoking in the saddle-room, even while at work, but a pipe in the stable should be strictly forbidden.

Before quitting the stable for the saddle-room, we will give our judgment on horse-clothing. As we are writing about hunting, we presume that the horse has been clipped and singed, *i.e.* that his natural clothing has been removed; and we take this opportunity of stating that we disagree with the habit of leaving the "saddle" of the horse unclipped. The habit promotes heat, and consequent soreness of back. A good saddle should require neither a natural nor an artificial saddle-cloth. We have to provide the horse with artificial clothing, made of kerseymere. The colour and pattern are, of course, matters for the master's taste, in the same way as the colour and pattern of his own clothes are; but, like his own clothes, the clothing of his horse should fit well. This statement may appear to be an unnecessary aphorism, but, unfortunately, few saddlers take the trouble to fit a horse. It may be their incompetence, or it may be their laziness, but the fact remains that horse-clothing is seldom made to fit properly. How often do we see sore withers and ugly bare spots caused by badly-fitting clothing! Especial care should be taken to see that the clothing fits well round the chest where the buckles meet. A full suit of kerseymere, including hood, quarter-sheet, pad, roller, and fillet strings, can be bought for £4, 4s. Initials will be extra. The underclothing should consist of ordinary fawn striped

rugs, guaranteed to be *all wool*, and weighing about 8 lbs. These are sold at 2s. per lb. The groom must use his own discretion in regard to the amount of clothing, but it is never necessary, even during the hardest frost, to use more than three rugs. Of course especial care should be taken to see that horses are well clothed after clipping or singeing, at which time they are likely to contract colds, and always the clothing should be carefully adjusted, and not thrown on in a slovenly fashion.

The head-stalls should be of broad, strong leather, with brass mountings, and with no other materials about them, such as brow bands of white enamelled leather. The latter soon crack, and even when new have not, in our opinion, a sportsmanlike appearance. A good average price is 7s. 6d. The lead-lines should be of strong leather, and cost between 4s. and 5s.; the logs cost 1s. Many people prefer chain lead-lines, and they are almost universally used in cavalry stables, but we hold the same objections for the same reasons to chain lead-lines as we do to chain pillar reins; the noise may not affect cavalry chargers, but we are sure that it affects nervous hunters.

The saddle-room must be adjacent to the stable, and, like the stable, warm and dry. As a rule, it is kept too warm, and for that reason we prefer a stove to an open fire. The inner walls should be lined like those of the stable.

The *necessary* saddle-room fixtures are as follows:—

1. Racks on which bridles should be kept separately, and protected from dust by holland curtains.

2. A case with glass doors in which to keep spare bits and stirrup-irons.

3. One, or more, saddle racks, slung from the ceiling, which, when lowered, become saddle horses. Those patented by Messrs Musgrave, of Bond Street, and invented by Major Fisher, are the best. We recommend these racks in preference to the wall racks commonly used, as they keep the saddles constantly in view, and prevent any damage from damp or vermin.

4. A few movable shelves which can be easily cleaned.

5. Two cupboards: one large for ordinary use, and one small for medicines and drugs.

6. A plain deal table, a bench, a short pair of steps, one or two chairs. All furniture should be made of wood *only*, so that it can be easily scrubbed.

7. A bar, with hooks upon it, slung from the roof, on which to clean bridles.

8. A large chest, for spare horse-clothing.

Where the forage loft is over the stable, there is generally a groom's room over the saddle-room. This room should be comfortably furnished, on the principle that a good groom is worthy of a good lodging. Besides, the greater the home comforts of the groom, the less will be the attraction of the ale-house.

There are few things which present more difficulty

to the novice than the choice of saddlery. We will begin with the choice of a saddle. Every saddler professes to be able to make a good saddle, but not one in a hundred can act up to his profession. The best judge in England is unable to tell a good saddle at sight. He can give an opinion on the shape and the quality of the leather, but the "tree," which is the foundation of the saddle, is hidden from view. Now, the manufacture of the "tree" requires the greatest skill, and the lightest and strongest wood. Hence, it is impossible to get a new good saddle at a low figure, and a bad saddle should never be in a gentleman's saddle-room. Let us for a moment examine the structure of a "tree." There are four parts, viz. the two side boards, the pommel, and the cantle, and the whole must be so fitted together as to follow the outline of the horse's back as closely as possible. Now, in order that there should be no cross-grain, but that the grain should run true throughout, it is necessary that the tree should be made of several pieces of wood dovetailed into one another, so scientifically that there should be no cross-grain, for cross-grain causes weakness. Then pieces of metal, called the front and back arches, are closely riveted to the pommel and cantle, and the bars for the stirrups are riveted to the side boards. Then the wood is covered with a coating of canvas and glue, and the tree is complete. In a recent law case it came out in the evidence that a good tree-maker can easily earn from £3 to £4 a week. Hence the impossibility of getting a good saddle at a low figure is apparent. From £5, 10s. to £6 is a fair price for a thoroughly well-made saddle for a gentleman;

ladies' saddles are far more expensive, some London firms charging from £13, 13s. to £14, 14s. But in either case, if economy be an object, it is better to buy a second-hand saddle made by a good firm, than a new saddle made by an unknown one.

Now, it is obvious that the nearer a man is to his horse, the firmer will be his seat in the saddle. The connection between man and horse should be as close as possible, so long as there is sufficient stuffing between the inside of the tree and the back of the horse. For every imaginable reason there should be as little on a horse in the shape either of saddle or bridle as is compatible with the comfort of the rider. Of course, a big, stout man, with round thighs, requires a larger and a more deeply-cut saddle than a thin man. If it be possible, it is best for a man to be measured for his saddle.

We shall not enter into a discussion regarding the relative merits of "knee-rolls," and "plain flaps." We prefer the latter, for they look smarter, and are to us more comfortable than the knee-rolls; but if a man has been accustomed to ride with knee-rolls he will miss their support at first over a drop-fence. However, he must use his own judgment as to whether or not he sacrifices comfort to appearance. In the case of a man with round thighs, who is naturally obliged to ride with short stirrups, perhaps knee-rolls are a necessity. But then no man cares to confess that he has round thighs.

In regard to girths, it is only sufficient to say that there should be a finger's breadth between the girth and the horse. If the rider dismounts at the meet—

which we advise him to do—or has had his horse sent on, he should look to his girths, as many horses blow themselves out when they are being girthed, to prevent the groom girthing them too tightly. A man never looks so foolish as when he is attempting to mount a horse and the saddle slips round.

Stirrup-irons should fit the foot. If too large, the foot may slip through them; if too small, the foot may become wedged; in either case the rider is apt to be dragged in the event of a fall. There are many kinds of safety stirrup-irons; but, except for ladies, we fail to see their utility. The rider should always see that his stirrup-bars, from which hang the leathers, are *down*, and not fastened.

The use of breast-plates has now become antiquated, for the reason that a horse should have nothing superfluous about him. Besides, if a horse has been carefully saddled and girthed, there should be no risk of the saddle slipping back.

In regard to side saddles, it is only necessary to say that the side saddle should fit the horse, if possible, better than a gentleman's saddle. Also, in every case, a lady should be measured for her saddle, for if the saddle be too big she will slip about in it; if too small, she is forced back over the cantle with discomfort to herself and her horse. The saddle should be straight-seated, with backstays, for the best horsewomen are apt to give their saddles an occasional side twist, with the probable result of a sore back. As most ladies rise sideways in the saddle, and not truly forwards, the backstays are necessary. If ladies would only remember to keep their shoulders square to the front,

and their elbows close to their sides, and their feet flat to the sides of their horses, they would never cause sore backs. Unfortunately, as a rule, they have either forgotten, or never learned to do this. We believe in patent safety stirrups for ladies, as everything should be done which can be done to avert an accident, or to lessen the danger of one.

The bridle should be as simple as is compatible with strength, and be entirely free from superfluous ornament. Nothing looks worse than a coloured brow-band. We have already stated that in buying a horse it is advisable to discover what bit he has been ridden in, for the number of bits is legion, and a man may buy all the contents of a saddler's shop and then not get the bit which is best suitable to the horse. As a rule, the simpler the bit the better, and as the novice will hardly be likely to buy a confirmed "puller" on which to make his first essay in riding to hounds, we advise him not to be tempted into buying fancy bits. Our experience is that, in nine cases out of ten, they are more apt to spoil a horse's mouth than improve it. The simplest bits are:

1. Snaffle.
2. Double snaffle.
3. Ordinary bit and bridoon.
4. Pelham.

If a horse won't go easily in one or other of these, his owner had better get rid of him. Of these, the snaffle is the lightest, but it is hardly safe to ride a hot-blooded horse in one alone, though, undoubtedly,

it is the best bridle for a temperate horse, as it neither fidgets him nor hurts his mouth. The double snaffle is simply two snaffles with a single rein attached to each. This bridle is of great advantage to the young rider in cases where the single snaffle is not sufficient, for it takes long experience before one learns how to use a curb properly, and the novice may feel thankful if the experience is not gained at the cost of many falls, for the injudicious use of the curb while jumping is very apt to cause a horse to make a mistake. The ordinary bit and bridoon consists of a steel mouthpiece, with an arch, called the "port," rising up in the centre, and the higher the "port," the more severe is the bit. At each end of the mouthpiece are welded on the shanks or cheeks, to the upper ends of which are sewn the head-piece, and to rings in the lower ends are fastened the reins, while on the upper ends are hooks for the curb-chain, which can be tightened or loosened, according to the temperament of the horse. The Pelham has the mouthpiece of an ordinary snaffle instead of the fixed bar with "port" of the bit, and the shanks with curb-chain of the bit. Thus it is lighter than the ordinary bit, and more powerful than a snaffle or a double snaffle, owing to the curb-chain. Where curb-chains are used a curb-save and a lip-strap should also be used; the former prevents the links of the chain cutting the horse's jaw, and the latter prevents a horse tossing the bit up over his nose.

It will be seen that the action of the four bits above described is simple. Most of the fancy bits are combinations of the above, contrived for horses possessing

exceptional peculiarities in their mouths. Unless the former owner has used one, we do not recommend the purchaser to do so.

We may add that for cleaning the leather of saddlery, common yellow household soap should be used, and not soft soap nor any of the countless concoctions sold by saddlers for the purpose. It may be argued that we are severe upon saddlers. We are justly severe upon local saddlers, whose goods are generally made to be sold, not to be used. The master should tell both the groom and the saddler that he forbids the latter giving the former any commission on the saddlery bill, on pain of withdrawing his custom and dismissing the groom; for these commissions are a direct encouragement to the groom to cheat his master.

We must now consider the important point of forage for the corn bill is necessarily one of the largest items in stabling expenses. We think it the most convenient plan to divide forage as follows:

1. Hay.
2. Oats.
3. Straw.
4. Bran.
5. Beans, peas.
6. Linseed.
7. Carrots and green forage, etc.

1. *Hay* should be natural hay in good condition, and, at least, be six months, if possible twelve, months old before it is given to hunters. It is sometimes sold by the load, some-

times by the ton. The measures are these—

A truss of old hay = 56 lbs.
A load of old hay = 36 trusses or 18 cwt.
A ton of old hay = 40 trusses.

The price varies, so the purchaser should consult the corn market quotations in his daily paper, but the average price is £5 per ton. The hay should be of a light colour, as nearly as possible the colour which it was when first stacked, and not a rich blackish-brown colour. The latter colour denotes that the hay has been overheated. It should contain a fair mixture of grasses and flowers, smell sweet, and its texture should be soft, not brittle. A hunter in condition should be allowed ten pounds per diem, or even less, according to the work he is doing, but its total allowance of hay and oats should be twenty-two pounds. Hay should be stored in the centre of the loft, and not against the walls, for if stored against the walls it is apt to get hot and damp, and lose condition.

2. *Oats.*—Black oats, whether English or foreign, are preferable to white oats. A few grey oats are grown in England which are better than either the black or white, but they are both difficult to procure and more expensive. Oats are sold by the quarter, and the measures are these—

40 lbs. = 1 bushel.
4 bushels or 160 lbs. = 1 sack.
2 sacks, or 8 bushels, or 320 lbs. = 1 quarter.

Oats should be crisp and floury, and have a milky taste, and the larger they are the better. Sound second season oats fetch about £1 per quarter. As already stated, a hunter should be allowed ten pounds, or even less, per diem.

3. *Straw.*—Wheat straw should, if possible, be used for bedding. Unfortunately, owing to the decrease in English wheat-growing, it is expensive. The measures are as follows—

1 truss = 36 lbs.
36 trusses = 1 load or 11 cwt. 2 qrs. 8 lbs.

It is sometimes sold by the load, sometimes by the ton. The average price is 60s. to 65s. for good wheat straw. The allowance should be eight pounds per diem for a stall or loose box, at the least.

4. *Bran* is chiefly used for mashes and poultices. It must be clean, and can be obtained from any miller at 1s. per bushel.

5. *Beans* should be old and hard and given to horses *crushed*, and in small quantities. A double handful is amply sufficient per diem, and they should never be given for a longer period than a week at a time. Beans and white peas are only given to horses in low

condition as a stimulant. They cost about 5s. 6d. per bushel.

6. *Linseed* must be carefully cooked for ten or twelve hours before it is given to horses. Taken as a mash, it is an invaluable tonic to hunters after a long day.

7. *Carrots and green food, etc.*—Two white carrots per diem, cut lengthwise, are sufficient for a horse. They are a luxury to him, not a necessity. Their price is about 40s. to 45s. per ton. During the hunting season green food must be used very sparingly, and only when a horse requires a mild purgative. Indeed, a hunter in sound condition never requires it. Oatmeal for gruel must of course be kept. As it is advisable to give a horse gruel on his way home from hunting, the master should know how to make it. Place two double handfuls of oatmeal in a bucket, pour boiling water over it, and stir it till it becomes a thick cream, then pour sufficient cold water over it to reduce it to a blood heat. Some men add gin or ale, either of which acts as a restorative if the horse will take it.

Every stable should possess a good stable cat, to destroy or scare away mice. Also, there is a strong friendship between a horse and a cat. We have seen a vicious horse playing with a kitten in its manger, like a little girl in the nursery playing with her first puppy. Mice are most destructive to forage, so a cat is a necessity;

for the use of poisons should be avoided, and though poisons destroy, they do not scare away mice.

The knowledge of the proper management of a stable can only be gained after long and very often bitter experience. Some masters never gain it, but we find, as a rule, that these are men not born to command, and therefore suffer themselves to be persuaded in all things by their grooms. The result is that the master spoils the groom, and the groom spoils the horse. To the tyro we trust that the following maxims will be found to be of assistance:

1. *How to tell if a horse is well groomed.*—Rub the hand firmly over the skin of the body. If the *slightest* particle of dirt, scurf, or grease adheres to the hand, the horse has not been properly groomed, and the groom should be ordered to groom him again. Of course the groom will make excuses, but his excuses are lies, and he knows them to be lies. The mane must be pulled from the *middle* with a comb, *not* with a drag; in fact a mane drag should never be in a gentleman's saddle-room. It is very difficult to comb a mane properly without giving pain to the horse. Thinning a mane is more difficult; it should be done by slow degrees, only a few hairs per diem being removed. The hocks, heels, and ears are the parts most often neglected, so the master would do well to constantly examine these. Dirty heels produce "thrush," or disease of the frog of the foot, which is a

disgrace to any groom. While grooming, the man should stand back so as to groom with a straight arm, which is less exertion to him and produces a better effect on the horse. If the horse is sweating, wisping with dry straw is better than rubbing. We should add in justice to grooms that some horses are not only difficult but dangerous to groom. If a horse is given to "savaging," *i.e.* trying to bite while he is being groomed, the only thing is to muzzle him, for a bite from a horse is a serious matter. But a horse that savages while being groomed is sure to have been ill-treated at some time of his life.

2. *How hunters should be exercised.*—Hunters should always be exercised on turf, and, if possible, in a field adjacent to the stables. If the master does not possess such a field, he can generally hire the right to exercise in a field from a neighbouring farmer for a very trifling sum. Exercising on the road knocks horses' legs about, and is apt to make them fill, besides placing temptation before the grooms. The exercising bridle and saddle should be strong, and both reins of the bridle *sewn* on to the snaffle rings. A groom should never be allowed to exercise, or even to take a horse to the blacksmith, without using the saddle. He dislikes the extra trouble, but the habit of riding without a saddle is dangerous, and is uncomfortable to both horse and man.

Hunters require from two to three hours' steady, continuous exercise per diem at the walk, with occasional intervals of about fifteen minutes at a jog-trot, not exceeding six miles an hour. After a day's hunting, half-an-hour's walking exercise to take away the stiffness is sufficient; before a day's hunting, a gallop is often advisable. When a horse is led at exercise, the groom who is riding the second horse should constantly change the leading side, or the mouth of the led horse will become harder on the one side than the other. Horses should be taken out to exercise as soon after breakfast as possible.

3. *Treatment of the hunter after hunting.*—Remove bridle and put on head-stall and slacken the girths, but leave on the saddle till the last moment. Then give him a bucket of gruel. *Brush* off the dirt, and sponge his nostrils and dock. *Use no other water* for washing purposes. Throw a rug over him and give him his linseed mash, which should be ready. Remove saddle, and groom with dry wisp of straw. Put on night-clothing. Bandage legs with dry bandages after hand-rubbing them. (If the legs are liable to fill, soak bandages in vinegar and water, half and half.) Put him in loose box, or improvised loose box, as he will probably want to roll, and feed with corn and hay. *N.B.*—While hand-

rubbing the legs look out for thorns, etc. Many hunting men contrive to visit their hunters in the evening after hunting. It is but common kindness to see how the horse has borne the fatigue of the day.

4. *Farriery.*—From the poet's point of view, the village blacksmith is so replete with pastoral morality as to deserve to live in a better sphere than on this wicked earth; from the point of view of the owner of hunters, he is an ignorant man, who does not know his trade, while the village forge is often a favourite lounge for grooms, in which to waste their time, and, not improbably, bet and drink. The village blacksmith's idea of shoeing is to cut a horse's hoof to fit his shoe, instead of making a shoe to fit the horse's hoof. It is impossible for us to examine the system of farriery; volumes have been already written upon the subject. We can only say that most veterinary surgeons have a forge, and it is far better to send hunters to one of these forges than to allow them to be experimented upon by the local blacksmith. If it should be necessary to patronise the blacksmith's forge, the groom should watch the smith throughout the whole of the operation. He can, at least, warn him against pricking the horse, or paring off too much of the horn. The groom should always examine a horse's shoes carefully on the day

before hunting. As there are various patent shoes, it is best, when purchasing a hunter, to ask the vendor what shoe the horse has been in the habit of wearing, for a sudden change in the nature of the shoe is apt to cause lameness.

In concluding this chapter, we must apologise for the terse manner in which we have made our remarks. But the hints which we have felt it to be necessary to give to the inexperienced owner of hunters are so many, and our space is so confined, that we must beg the forgiveness of the reader, if we have sacrificed literary style to utility of information. It has been our experience that many men, at the outset of their hunting careers, have been deceived by those to whose advantage it was to deceive them. This experience has been our reason for entering minutely into financial details. Besides, men who have kept horses all their lives constantly ask us what their corn bills and saddlery bills ought to be, so we sincerely hope that the statistics which we have given may enable them to gain some practical knowledge.

CHAPTER III.

GROOMS.

It is hardly necessary for us to state that a groom must be sober and honest. Drunkenness or dishonesty should be punished with *instant* dismissal, and never under any circumstances be condoned. We presume that no sane man would knowingly keep a thief in his employ, but many masters are induced to pardon drunkenness, so that our words "instant dismissal" may seem unnecessarily severe. Now, a drunken groom will not only be careless and untidy, but he will have no affection for the horses under his charge, and take no pride in their appearance. One might as well employ a drunken woman as a nurse for one's children, as employ a drunken man to take charge of one's horses. Besides, anybody who reads the police court reports knows that drunkenness whilst in charge of horses is a criminal offence. Even if the master elects to risk the welfare of his horses by condoning the offence, he has no right to risk the lives and property of his fellow-creatures; if he does, sooner or later he will have to pay the penalty. The groom will ride over a child, or knock down an old woman, then woe betide the master, if it be proved that he had previous knowledge of his servant's habits. Again, a

sot is invariably cruel, and cruelty should never be allowed for one moment in a stable.

For the novice whose stable is on a limited scale—say two hunters and a dogcart horse or pony—one groom and a stable lad should be sufficient. In calculating the number of men required in a large stable, regard must be had to the amount of carriage work. But as we have already stated, it is our duty to speak only of the hunting department of the stable. Carefulness, cleanliness, and tidiness are the first three qualities essential to a good groom. Cleverness and horsemanship are secondary considerations, and very often of doubtful advantage to the master. A very clever groom is fond of physicking horses on his own responsibility, while a careful groom by his care avoids the constant need of physic. Many masters will not allow a groom to physic a horse without first obtaining their consent, which, in our opinion, is a good plan, as a little veterinary knowledge is a dangerous thing to horses. Unless a man keeps young, high-blooded horses, which the novice is hardly likely to do, a first-rate horseman is of no advantage, while at exercise, riding to covert, or acting as second horseman, he will rarely be able to resist the temptation to lark. It is difficult to blame him, for, to a good rider on a good horse, the temptation to jump is wellnigh irresistible. Still, it is not the duty of the groom to jump. We have often heard a man complain that his second horse is not fresh; nor is he likely to be, if the second horseman has been larking him over fences all the morning.

Assuming that our previous hints on grooming have been of use, we advise the novice, before definitely

engaging a groom, to first watch him groom his horse. At all events, he will be able to judge if he does his work thoroughly, and he ought to be able to form an opinion as to whether he is kind to his horses or the reverse. There are many degrees of conduct between kindness and cruelty. For example, a hasty blow is often the result of a hasty temper, not of cruelty. Horses can be as aggravating as human beings when they choose. We advise the master to mark particularly how the new groom grooms the ears, hocks, and heels. If he grooms these thoroughly he *knows* his business and it will be the master's duty to see that he performs it.

It must be borne in mind that a careless master makes a careless groom, and that the more personal supervision a master gives to his stable, the better will the groom do his work. A good groom will work more thoroughly if he knows that his master appreciates his work; it is only untrustworthy grooms who object to the constant and unexpected presence of the master in the stable, and it is best to get rid of such men as soon as possible. Nor do we consider it to be beneath the dignity of any gentleman to take off his coat, and show the groom how he wants certain things done, *e.g.* the cutting of a horse's tail, or the pulling of his mane —that is, if he himself knows, for these operations are not to be attempted by any novice.

In regard to wages, a groom for two horses, and a dogcart horse or pony, will ask from 22s. to 25s. a week if an outdoor man. He is, in our opinion, worth the 25s., if, in addition to grooming his horses and cleaning his harness well, he turns out his carriage and

himself smartly. Indeed, a man who is smart in his own personal appearance will generally see that his stable, horses, harness, and carriage are in smart condition. When we see an unshaven groom with dirty boots we should know that his stable and horses would also be dirty. It is not permissible for any gentleman's servant to wear a moustache. It is a question admitting of much doubt as to whether or not the master should provide the groom with stable clothes. We think that a groom in livery should be provided with a suit of stable clothes twice a year, as he can then have no excuse for his appearance being untidy during his working hours. It is far from pleasant to take guests, especially ladies, into the stable, and find the groom in worn and shabby clothes. The novice must remember that though stable clothes are the property of the groom, liveries, including breeches and boots, are the property of the master; still it is wisest to impress this fact upon the groom when he is engaged. Some gentlemen will not allow their grooms to remove their stable clothes upon leaving their employ. But these are matters for the master to determine for himself, so long as he makes the arrangement with the groom clear beforehand.

If the groom is required to act as second horseman his riding weight should never exceed $9\frac{1}{2}$ stone, and the less the better. In any case it is desirable that his riding weight should not exceed 10 stone, as he has to exercise horses and ride them to covert. If it can be managed, it is best for the master to see him scale before engaging him, for all riders—both masters and men—are apt to pervert the

truth in regard to their weight. The age of a groom and whether he be married or single are matters which a man must decide for himself. We recommend him not to engage a married man unless he has a lodge or cottage on, or immediately adjacent to, his property, for day and night the groom should be as near to his horses as possible.

Allusion has already been made to the stable lad in a three horse establishment. A smart lad from the village school, willing to learn, will serve the purpose, if the groom is willing to teach him. We never knew or heard of a groom who was unwilling to teach a willing pupil. On the contrary, the usual complaint against a good groom is that he is too stern a schoolmaster; but the stable lad may bear this in mind, that the sterner the groom is under whom he serves his apprenticeship, the better groom he himself will be in his after days. We once had a complaint from a lad that he had been kept in the saddle-room cleaning harness till eleven o'clock at night, because he had not cleaned it properly in the first instance. "Was the groom there all the time?" we asked. "Yes, sir." "Then he was taking more trouble in teaching you than you were in cleaning the harness; you ought to be extremely grateful to him. Go away, and learn to do your work properly." Juvenile nature may not like such stern lessons, we admit, but still juvenile nature is the better for them. Of course a groom should never bully a lad, but a man who is kind to dumb creatures is not likely to be cruel to a human being.

"WANTED—A GROOM." Such is the advertisment

which constantly appears in metropolitan and provincial newspapers with such regularity that it would appear that a good groom is as rare as the dodo. A writer in *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* states that a good groom should have served five years in a racing stable, five years in a first-rate hunting stable, and two years as factotum to a dealer. Personally, we should object to engaging a groom either out of a racing stable or out of a dealer's stable, as we do not wish to glean our knowledge of the turf from our groom. Nor do we wish him to initiate us into the mysteries of horse-coping. We want a man to groom our horses, and though we cannot undertake to engage such a man for the novice, we trust that the foregoing hints will enable him to find a man, who at least will not ruin his horses.

CHAPTER IV.

HUNTING CLOTHES.

"Buckskin's the only wear fit for the saddle,
Hats for Hyde Park, but a cap for the chase;
In tops of black leather let fishermen paddle,
The calves of a fox-hunter white ones encase."
—*Egerton Warburton.*

Tempora mutantur. The cap now has become almost as extinct as the dodo, and is seldom worn except by the M.F.H. and the Hunt servants. In fact anybody now wearing a cap would be taken by the stranger for a Hunt servant, so that many masters of hounds object to see their followers wearing the velvet cap. On one occasion, when the question of the members of his Hunt wearing caps was mooted to a well-known M.F.H., he replied: "Well, gentlemen, there is no law to prevent you wearing velvet caps if you like to do so; only if you do I shall put my men into white hats." The cap is popularly supposed to have been abolished owing to the fatal accident which happened to the Marquis of Waterford, whose death was supposed to be due to his having worn a cap, and the theory was established that a man's neck is safer in a hat than a cap. This is a pleasant reflection for Hunt

servants, but we do not think that the theory has any reasonable basis. At all events, poor "Bay" Middleton was wearing a high hat when he broke his neck. Again, buckskin breeches have gone out of fashion for many reasons. In the first place, they are extremely difficult to clean, taking a great amount of time and trouble and no small amount of knowledge. In the second place, they are far more expensive than white cords, since it takes two hides to make one pair of breeches, and the hides themselves are becoming more expensive every year. In the third place, we do not think that they are as comfortable as cords, and in the present day hunting men dress more with a view to comfort than to smartness. Even the Melton Mowbray man, who pays 7s. 6d. to have his breeches sent up to London to be cleaned, would hardly care to wear the buttoned-up swallow-tail coat in which our forefathers used to ride. It was a smart garment certainly, but on a wet day afforded no protection to the thighs, and at the best of times was cold and comfortless. We admire the look of it in old sporting prints in the same way as we admire Egerton Warburton's verses, but admiration is not succeeded by imitation.

It is a curious fact that many men who are careless and even slovenly in regard to their ordinary clothes, take care to be as smart and sportsmanlike in the hunting-field as tailors, breeches-makers, and bootmakers can make them. This may seem an anomaly, but really it is only in accordance with the eternal fitness of things; for the man who has taken immense trouble over the purchase of his hunters, and over everything apper

taining to his stable, is not likely, if we may use a homely phrase, "to spoil the ship for want of a ha'porth of tar," by disregarding his own attire. He takes as his motto, "The man should be as well groomed as his horse." Often, however, he does not know how to groom himself as well as his groom knows how to groom his horse. He may try to do his best, but ignorance, bad taste, or false economy steps in, and the result is disastrous or ludicrous, or both. The truth is that nobody but a sporting tailor can make hunting clothes, and *vice versa*, a sporting tailor cannot make everyday clothes. There can be no better evidence of this truth than the fact that West End tailors constantly recommend their customers to breeches-makers. Therefore, the novice should go to a first-rate London maker for his breeches; above everything, he should never trust to local talent.

Let us commence with the breeches, because they are in our opinion the most important garment in a man's hunting "kit," and a pair of really well-cut breeches is probably the scarcest article of attire in a man's wardrobe. Breeches which fit properly, more especially about the knee, always appear to us to enable a man to have a firmer seat in the saddle, while breeches which wrinkle on the inside muscles of the knee, chafe the flesh, and become extremely painful after the wearer has been a few hours in the pigskin. *Experto crede*, we remember once being unexpectedly offered a mount overnight while staying in a country house, and being compelled to borrow a pair of breeches from our host. We forgot our discomfort during the excitement of the run, but the ride home was agony,

and the insides of our knees and thighs were like raw beefsteak. On another occasion in our experience, a gentleman rider was asked on the course to ride a horse in a certain steeplechase, and had to borrow a pair of breeches, with the result that his legs were so chafed that he was unable to ride again in a race for over two weeks. Hence the peril and inconvenience of ill-fitting breeches. In regard to the material, since we have discarded buckskins, white silk cords are preferable to anything else, since they are easily cleaned, wear well, look well, and are comfortable. White cotton cords are lighter, but they do not wear well, and we do not recommend them to the novice to whom the weight of a few pounds in his kit should be a matter of little importance. In some hunts it is the fashion to wear drab breeches, but one thing is certain, white breeches are never wrong. There are numerous other kinds of breeches which can be worn when riding in mufti, *i.e.* when riding without pink or black coat and top hat; but there can be little doubt that the correct mufti costume is a single-breasted frock, or cut-away tail, drab box-cloth coat, white cords, and patent leather jack boots, surmounted by a low, black hat. Such a "get-up" is both neat and sportsmanlike, and does not attract invidious attention. We caution our readers against brown cords, as they are extremely difficult to clean, and soon lose their colour, nor do we like their appearance, but that, of course, is only a matter of opinion. In regard to breeches-makers, Messrs Tautz and Messrs Hammond have the reputation of being the two best makers in the world. Of course, the prices of both firms are high, but then their work is the

best, and we feel sure that it is more economical in the long run to go to one of them, though there are many other good firms whose prices are not so high. Some men when hunting in mufti prefer to wear breeches and gaiters, in which case a short coat must be worn. The advantage of these breeches is that they can be used for ordinary riding, and be worn generally in the country. In wearing gaiters, it must be remembered that the buttons should come straight down the centre of the leg, and *not* at the side, so as to correspond exactly with the buttons of the breeches. There is a slight hole in a man's leg beneath the knee-cap, which, to use the language of one of the best men who ever rode to hounds, was placed there by Providence for the top button of the breeches to rest in, and that is the proper position for the top button of the breeches. One final word anent leathers, which some of our readers may think that we have spoken too strongly against: they may be smart in appearance and comfortable in fine weather, but they are miserable wear when wet through, and are conducive on these occasions to severe colds, rheumatism, and other ills. Therefore, we condemn them, if only for the reason that hunting, and all the accessories of hunting, should be conducive to health.

As we have already said, the single-breasted frock or cut-away tail, drab, box-cloth coat is the most correct coat for mufti. Of the two, the single-breasted frock coat is the more fashionable, besides affording more protection to the thighs in cold or rainy weather. The same is the case with pink coats. It is the wiser plan to go to a sporting tailor for a coat than to an ordinary tailor, who is too apt to build it on Hyde Park lines;

but if the ordinary tailor be patronised, he must be told to make the sleeves an inch or even an inch and a half longer than in a morning coat, so that they come well over the wrists, and to make the coat wider than usual in the hips and under the arm-pits. Personally, we are always measured for our coat on a dummy hack, such as most tailors possess. The same advice applies in the case of the short coat worn with breeches and gaiters; for the coat should fit when the wearer is in the saddle, not when he is on the ground, and as the hips are extended in the saddle, the ordinary coat must wrinkle up the back. The art of dressing is to wear the right thing in the right place, and the right coat in the hunting-field is a roomy garment, which allows full play to the limbs. To use a hunting phrase, the coat, like the rest of the "kit," should be pre-eminently workmanlike.

The essence of a good boot is a happy combination of comfort and shape. Hunting boots, whether jack-boots or top-boots, should be of black patent leather. Brown jack-boots are intended for polo, not for the hunting-field. We need hardly say that top-boots are never worn with mufti, though, as we have seen a man in the hunting-field in white cords, top-boots, a drab jacket, and a velvet cap, it would appear that to some people the most rudimentary advice is necessary. All hunting boots should be kept on trees when not in use, otherwise they will soon get out of shape and crack. Peel has the reputation of being the best maker of hunting boots, though he, like most boot-makers, is apt to sacrifice comfort to style. Few men have what is called a good leg for a boot, which means

a straight leg behind, or an absence of calf. Now the recognised acme of beauty in a boot is that it should be perfectly straight; therefore the fashionable boot-maker, in his anxiety to turn out a perfect boot, turns out one which pinches the wearer's calf. Such a boot is not only uncomfortable, but dangerous. We once saw a first-rate rider tumble off his horse, or, in sporting language, "cut a voluntary," while jumping a very small fence. The reason was that when in the act of jumping, and necessarily pressing his legs closer to his horse, he was suddenly seized with cramp. This man was far too good a rider to make a false excuse for his "voluntary:" so we must warn the novice against allowing his boots to pinch his calves, or the result may be dire disaster.

Gloves and ties may seem to be trivial articles, but it is in these minor details that the sportsman's knowledge of dress asserts itself. There is only one hunting tie, namely, that which is a combination of collar and tie, in a single word, a cravat. Strictly speaking, it is a hunting cravat, since it goes round the neck twice. The collar portion may be either stiff or limp, according to the fancy of the wearer, but the colour should always be white, though they are made in other colours, such as light blue. But the coloured cravat is not only unsportsmanlike, but savours of the livery stable keeper, and the horse-dealer. Indeed, it was once christened "the horse-coping cravat." At first the novice will find no small difficulty in tying his cravat neatly, but perseverance will soon come to his rescue. Our recipe is that, as both ladies and gentlemen wear them he had better persuade a hunting

lady to give him a few lessons. The best gloves that we know of, both for riding and driving purposes, are those made by Sleep, of Oxford Street. This remark applies to both ladies and men, but both ladies and men should have their hunting gloves a size larger than their ordinary gloves, for tight gloves cause cramp in the fingers.

In regard to hats, whether for ladies or gentlemen, we have little to say, as the shape must be a matter of choice. We believe that White, of Jermyn Street, is one of the best, if not the best man. In cleaning a hat, one should never use oil. The best way to clean a hat is to brush it with a hard brush, dipped in cold water, and then to brush it with a dry soft brush. This maxim applies both to silk hats and low felt hats.

The whip or hunting-crop should be as light as possible, so long as the handle is sufficiently strong to open gates with. The lash should never be used, except by an experienced man to hounds.

No man who is not a perfect rider should ever wear spurs. A lady should never wear them, for the reason that she should be mounted on a horse which never needs the spur. Our reason for making such an emphatic statement is that we have witnessed several bad accidents resulting from the injudicious or unconscious use of the spur. Thus, a man loses his seat over a fence, and naturally clings to his horse with his spurred heels, thereby unwittingly punishing his horse, who resents the punishment with consequences disastrous to the the rider. Doubtless, a spur finishes a boot, as the saying goes, but if the spur be for

ornament and not for use, then let it be without rowels.

We must apologise for writing at such length upon the question "what to wear," but, unfortunately, we do not live in the day of Roman mythology, when

> "*Ipse deus nudus nudos jubet ire ministros;*
> *Nec satis ad cursus commoda vestis erat.*"

PART III.

Practical Hints.

CHAPTER I.

PERSONAL HINTS FOR HUNTING MEN.

PERSONAL advice is so near akin to rudeness that we approach the subject of this article with more than ordinary diffidence. If a man is told that he ought to train for hunting as he would for rowing or any other athletic pursuit, he invariably replies that he hunts for pleasure, and has no intention of making a toil of his pleasure. To the man who considers it a toil to keep himself in ordinary physical condition there is no rejoinder, for the man who does not deem good health to be one of the blessings of life is beyond the reach of argument. In his case we must paraphrase the proverb, and write, "*mens insana in corpore insano.*" We do not mean to state that the hunting man must train as if he were going to ride a race; we only say that he ought to be in fairly hard condition.

It has been asserted that no man can ride across four fields even, over a line of gates, at a hard gallop unless he is in good condition. *Experto crede.* Let the man who denies the truth of the assertion try the experiment. If he does manage to reach the

end of the fourth field, he will find that his wind is gone, and that he is bumping about on the saddle like a sack of potatoes. Certainly that gallop across the fourth field will have been no pleasure, but rather a toil to him; and, if he has anything the matter with his heart, it may have been dangerous. Yet if he had been sound in wind he would have experienced that keen enjoyment, springing from tingling veins and rapid circulation, which only a gallop can give. As it is, he has had about as much fun as the fat carriage horse of a nervous old lady might be expected to have if he were sent along at racing pace for six furlongs. In hunting it is necessary that the rider as well as the horse should be in condition.

In these days when people hunt from London and other large towns, it is not surprising to learn that there are many men who never get across a horse except to hunt. Even in the country, where there is less excuse for not taking outdoor exercise, men, whose daily life lies in sedentary pursuits, arrive at covert-side on the opening day in lamentable lack of condition. Such men cannot enjoy their sport, are ridiculous in the eyes of their neighbours, and often meet with nasty falls on account of their own physical weakness.

Of course, exercise in the saddle is the best training for hunting, as it hardens and strengthens the muscles which we want to use, and, as we have already said, no horse exercise can be better for this purpose than cub-hunting. A man can generally get his morning's

cub-hunting without any serious interference with the business of the day. Besides, if he can afford the time to hunt, he can afford to be two hours later at his business for a few mornings during the latter half of September and October. If he cannot do this, he should, at least, manage to get a few early canters before breakfast. Even if this is denied to him, as it may be to the man who has to depend for his hunting upon occasional mounts from a friend, he can easily improve his wind by going at a jog trot for a mile before breakfast every morning for a week. He will be astonished at the end of the week to find how much better he feels, and what a different appetite he has for breakfast; and, when he hunts, his heart will not be beating against his ribs after the first two minutes of a gallop. We may be laughed at for inculcating such simple and necessary measures, but it is wonderful how often they are neglected by the novice who has not been taking violent exercise during the summer and early autumn.

Many people lay much stress on diet, but, if a man be neither a glutton nor a drunkard, we do not think it advisable for him to make much alteration during the hunting season in the diet to which he is accustomed, except in regard to his food on the actual day on which he hunts, of which we will say more anon. Sudden changes of diet are only apt to disturb the digestive organs, except so far as they are necessitated by the changes of the climate. For example, it would be absurd for a professional man, who only hunts one day a week, to live on underdone

joints for the other six days, when he has been accustomed to a mixed *menu* of lighter dishes. He is in reality eating food which he cannot digest, under the idea that it is giving him muscular strength. It gives him dyspepsia, and veritably makes his hunting a burden to him. Many of the old writers on sport dilate to an alarming extent on the question of food. "Stonehenge" confines the hunting-man to weak tea and dry bread for breakfast, presumably on the grounds that a General should starve his own army before leading them into battle. Others treat the hunting-man as if he were a professional jockey compelled to ride a certain weight to an ounce, and even advise him to have every particle of food weighed, and to weigh himself at least once a day.

Fortunately, the time has passed when athletics and martyrdom were synonymous terms. Now, "plenty of fresh air and what you like to eat and drink" has become the rule. Perhaps the starving advice was necessary when fox-hunters drank two or three bottles of generous port after dinner and swallowed brandy before breakfast. Surtees' description of hunting dinner parties would only meet with contemptuous ridicule if applied to the present day, and are probably exaggerated when applied to the past; still, Mytton was undoubtedly a hero in the hunting-field, and yet "Nimrod," in his "Life of John Mytton," declares that Mytton was drunk for twelve years. If strong diseases require strong cures, then the old writers may have been right in giving the advice which they

did, but in the age when to get drunk means social ostracism the advice is unnecessary.

But one of the chief objects of every hunting man is to be able to ride a light weight, and he regards any adipose food with alarm. Ladies do not forget their ages nearly as often as hunting men forget their weights, and the good-natured man who does not object to mount his friends would do well to keep a weighing machine on the premises. As we do not pretend to any medical science, we do not wish to write a treatise on banting, but confine ourselves to stating that in the majority of cases it is our firm belief that it is liquid, more especially effervescing liquid, which generates fatty substance. We do not suggest abstinence from or any serious diminution of alcohol, but we do protest against the present excessive use of mineral waters. Let the hunting man drink as much whisky as he thinks good for him overnight, but let him drink it with plain water, and not soda water, for not only does the excessive drinking of mineral waters generate fat, but it generates fat round the heart.

Though we have warned the novice against mineral waters, it would be impertinent for us to hazard an opinion about alcoholic stimulants or tobacco. If he wishes to become a first-flight man and always to be in the same field with hounds, he will have to live by rule, but he will discover for himself what that rule ought to be long before he has served his apprenticeship in the hunting-field. We can advise him only to allow any change in his consumption of

stimulants or tobacco to be gradual and not sudden. It is a common mistake for the novice on the eve of a day's hunting to abstain from stimulants and tobacco of any sort, under the impression that such abstention will improve his nerve. It will do nothing of the sort, but it will cause him to pass a sleepless night. By all means he should have a glass of wine or a glass of whisky-and-water less than usual; he should smoke a cigar or pipe less than usual; he should go to bed half-an-hour earlier than usual. But he might just as well—perhaps better—go without his dinner as go without any stimulant or tobacco. Let it be remembered that when we speak of a rider having a good nerve, we mean that he is composed in the saddle, therefore any cause of action likely to injure his ordinary composure must be bad for his nerve as a rider.

Not only the novice, but the experienced man, has often asked us what ought to be the proper breakfast on a hunting morning. Our answer is, "Whatever you like, so long as it is digested before you arrive at covert-side." However, we venture to offer the following suggestions. Now that the old prejudice in favour of nothing but tea or coffee as drink at breakfast is disappearing, we suggest a glass—never more than a couple of glasses—of sound bitter beer, or two glasses of light wine, or a small bottle of champagne—in the last case the cork must be drawn sufficiently long before drinking to permit of the effervescence subsiding—as the best drink for a hunting breakfast. Many men prefer weak whisky-and-

water as being easiest of digestion, and digestion is the main thing to be considered. The familiar B. and S. only makes a man like an inflated air balloon; and the tea or coffee drinker invariably requires a liqueur before he feels fit to get into the pigskin, which proves that the tea or coffee must be bad for him if he needs a "digestive" to correct its influence.

Like the liquid, so the solid food should be both sustaining and easy of digestion, such as the lean of mutton chops, devilled chicken, or cold meat. Dry toast without butter is preferable to bread. Perhaps, if we had to sum up our ideas of a hunting breakfast, we could not describe it better than as the light lunch of the ordinary Englishman, for the hunting tyro must bear in mind that he has to go through a long day's physical exercise with very limited opportunities for refreshment.

But what ought that limited refreshment to be? Certainly the more limited the better. The time when a huge bottle-shaped flask and a sandwich-case like a small portmanteau were common appendages to the saddle is past. Perhaps their absence is a sacrifice to the fashion which demands that there should be nothing superfluous about horse or rider. Some men arrange a compromise by making their second horsemen carry their luncheon encumbrances; but, for those who cannot afford the luxury of second horses, and wish their appearance in the hunting-field to be without a flaw, there is no alternative but the small pocket flask and the smallest quantity

of edible matter which is sufficient to ward off any feelings of faintness. Chocolate, raisins, or bovril lozenges have the advantage of taking up less room than sandwiches, which, if carried, should always be made of toast and not bread. But so long as quantity is sacrificed to quality, both liquid and solid refreshment must depend upon the taste of the rider.

If the novice rides his hunter to the meet, he should allow himself plenty of time, so as not to be obliged to go at the rate of more than six miles an hour. If he is a stranger he should note the geography of the country as much as he can and the nature of the fences, for very often the knowledge thus gained will prove to be exceedingly useful later in the day. He will also by this means gradually train his eye to become what is commonly called "a good eye to a country." Many men during a long railway journey amuse themselves by marking the places they would choose to jump in the country through which they are travelling, though the amusement is modified by the wish to exchange the train for a horse.

We must now "hark forward" to the return homewards. Unless you finish very close to home it is always advisable to "gruel" your horse, and to see that he takes his gruel, before you think about your own refreshment. Always untighten the girths first. If a horse will drink it, a pint of old ale in the gruel acts as a good stimulant; indeed, some men make a point of accustoming their horses to take ale, as it gives a fillip to a tired horse on the homeward

journey. Always see that a rug is thrown over the horse while you have your own refreshment, in consuming which you should lose no time, for fear of your horse getting stiff. Besides, the stables at roadside inns, as a rule, are not remarkable for luxurious or sanitary arrangements. If the stable smells close, insist upon the door being left partially open, for a tired, hot horse used to a healthy stable is apt to get "belly-ache" in a close stable, even during the few minutes he is inside it, especially if he takes his gruel greedily. Also feel over his legs for thorns. Remember that in the partnership between horse and rider during a day's hunting the horse has done far the greater share of the work, so that common kindness and gratitude demand that you should look well after him on the journey home. Walk by his side occasionally for a quarter of a mile; the walk will relieve him and prevent you getting stiff. Finally, bear in mind that the horse is a sensitive animal, fully capable of appreciating kindness.

Let us say a few words about the treatment of the rider!

Before dressing for dinner, he will require a fillip of some sort. For our own part, we prefer a cup of strong, clear soup; but if that luxury is not to be obtained from the culinary authorities, then a glass of whisky-and-milk and a dry biscuit is perhaps the best substitute. Some people prefer tea, in which case the tea should be drunk at least an hour before dinner. We may mention that there are few things more annoying to the hunting man than to have to

hurry over his dinner toilet, and few things more enjoyable than the luxury of dressing leisurely, and having his bath at the temperature which he likes. The hot air box, sometimes called a portable Turkish bath, is now found to be a great boon to hunting men. It only costs between £3 and £4, can be heated in half-an-hour by an oil lamp, and takes up very little room.

Hunt breakfasts given at the meet have now gone out of fashion in most hunting countries, and hospitality at the meet is generally limited to dry sherry, liqueurs, and biscuits. Where the custom is kept up, the object is that members of the hunt may have an opportunity of extending their hospitality to the farmers.

The novice should be careful always to carry plenty of small change, for the requirements for small change in the hunting-field are innumerable. "Paid 1s. for catching my horse" is a constant entry in the fox-hunter's diary, and it is well to be prepared even for unwelcome casualties.

Probably almost as many men object to riding the horses of their friends as there are men who object to lending their horses. We have often heard bold riders declare that they feel nervous when riding another man's horse. We do not allude to that small section of first-rate riders whom owners are only too anxious to get to ride their horses, so as to make them into good hunters. Every hunt possesses at least two, if not more, of such men, who may be termed "gentlemen rough riders." They will make a

hunter for the pleasure of hunting in the same way as a good shot will shoot another man's game for the pleasure of shooting. But, as the most conceited tyro cannot expect to improve his friend's horse, he must do his best not to spoil him. If he is a nervous man, he will make the horse nervous, and not improbably cause him to become a refuser. The man who excuses himself for not jumping because he is riding somebody else's horse is generally at heart "a funk." The man who "sneaks" through gaps and calls it "riding with judgment" does more to ruin a horse than the man who does not pretend to jump, but keeps to bridle-paths and roads. He earns the contemptuous fame of being a "hard funker." To such a man we feel inclined to say, as Mr Pickwick said to Mr Winkle when the latter gentleman essayed to disport himself upon the ice, "A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer if you wish it. An impostor, sir." Therefore, we strongly advise the novice not to pretend to take care of his friend's horse when he is only taking care of himself. He is sure to be found out, and will not again be offered a mount. Should he think that the owner has not volunteered sufficient information about the horse, one minute's conversation with the groom is preferable to worrying the master. Nor should he forget to tip the groom, for that tip will make a great difference to the groom's opinion of the horse's condition on the following morning, and the novice's chances of an offer of a mount for another day. He should also praise the horse to the groom, for the groom who is

worth his salt feels proud to hear his charges praised, and will praise the novice's riding in return. This advice may savour of Machiavelli, but Machiavelli was a clever man, though he did possess Satanic cunning; therefore always praise the horse which has been lent you, unless you intend to purchase him.

CHAPTER II.

HINTS TO YOUNG BREEDERS.

OWING to ignorance and carelessness, the breeding of horses has generally been regarded by the agriculturist as a sure road to ruin, though, with the exercise of a reasonable amount of care, it should be one of the most successful departments of agriculture. Hitherto the selection of sires and dams, the treatment of foals, and their subsequent schooling, have chiefly demanded the attention of large breeders of thoroughbred stock. The tenant farmer and small landowners consider the risks attendant upon horse-breeding to be out of proportion to the chances of profit, and so have not taken the trouble to examine how the risks may be minimised. We ourselves think that no paddock of two acres or more is complete without a mare and her foal; and as many of our readers who are not farmers doubtless possess such a paddock, we address our remarks to them, as well as to the tenant farmers, to whom profit must be the primary consideration. We often hear a farmer urge as an argument against horse-breeding that he has to wait so long for a return of his capital, as if the same argument did not apply with equal, if not with greater, force, to any branch of agriculture. Certainly

the farmer has to be out of his money by breeding bullocks for a longer time than by breeding horses. A bullock is not fit for the butcher till he has attained from three to four years, and the cost of rearing him and fattening him for the market is equal to that of rearing a horse. Then mark the result! A good bullock when fattened—and the process of fattening takes six months—is worth from £25 to £30. An inferior hunter of the same age is worth the same sum; a moderate hunter is worth from £75 to £100; and a first-rate hunter will fetch from £150 to £200, and even more. By the term hunter in this last paragraph we mean a horse bred for hunting purposes. The breeding of thoroughbred stock and of shire horses is not within the scope of this chapter.

These figures tell us that the breeding and rearing of hunters ought to be profitable, if pursued with due care on the right lines, and the incontrovertible fact that no country in the world can breed horses of equal value with those of the United Kingdom ought to operate as an additional stimulus to horse-breeding. Moreover, we are convinced that the failures which are put down to bad luck are invariably the fault of the breeder or his servants. Of course, infallible rules cannot be established for breeding until certain causes are defined, which would insure certain results in reference to the procreation of animals; but discrepancies, which are frequently set down to the caprice of Nature, may often be accounted for if people will only take the trouble to search deep enough for the cause. Men breed from inferior, leggy, bad-actioned,

ill-shaped, and worthless animals, for the simple reason that they possess height and size, though experience has taught us that moderate-sized, or even little mares, are more likely to bring forth valuable foals than are big, gawky ones. Yet how often do breeders sacrifice harmony of proportion to size and substance! Another fatal error which is still more common is to breed from a worn-out mare at the age of fourteen or fifteen years, because she has carried her owner safe and well to hounds. The produce of such a mare is seldom worth rearing, yet year after year hundreds of amateur breeders try the experiment, because they do not like to lose the services of a valuable hunter till she is past her work in the hunting-field. A six or seven-year-old mare is the most likely to produce good foals. Such mares doubtless command big prices, but with care and an average amount of Dame Fortune's favours, the purchaser should soon recoup himself with interest, since from a good, sound young mare you may expect to have ten or a dozen fine colts, which in due time may sell at an average of £100. The greatest care must be taken to find out that the mare is free from hereditary defects by examining through former generations and collateral branches. Cataract, or any form of constitutional blindness, roaring, when not caused by inflammation, spavins, and curbs, since they arise from malformation of the hock, are considered as hereditary defects, but any defect should be regarded with the greatest suspicion.

The choice of a stallion is not only the initial difficulty, but one of the greatest difficulties with

which the young breeder has to contend. The rule briefly is, to correct in the progeny the defects or imperfections of the mare by seeking in the stallion perfection in those points in which the mare is defective. But there is one exception to this rule which is constantly overlooked, namely, that it is worse than useless to try to compensate by the great size of the sire for the deficiency in that respect of the mare. The reason for this exception is that the offspring will partake of some of the proportions of the sire and some of the dam, therefore, if a very large horse be put to a very small mare, the foal may take after its sire in the fore-quarters, and its dam in the hind-quarters, and will lack the exactness of anatomical proportions, without which a horse is comparatively worthless. The surest means of gaining success in the art of selecting suitable crosses is to trace the pedigrees of the best horses of modern times, and make choice of blood as nearly as possible approximating to that which has been conducive to so much excellence. That what is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh, we feel convinced is as true in the equine as it is in the human race. Yet the trouble of tracing pedigrees, indispensable to the successful breeding of racing stock, is often neglected in regard to the breeding of hunters, though it must be the foundation of successful breeding.

It is a well-authenticated fact that the thoroughbred sire is the only available progenitor of the most valuable horses suitable for hunting purposes. Owing to the increase in the breeding of thoroughbred stock,

due to the encouragement given to racing, the supply of thoroughbred stallions is quite equal to the demand, so that neither the amateur novice nor the tenant farmer should experience much difficulty in finding one suitable to the mare from which they wish to breed. Naturally, the tenant farmer will seek in the first place amongst the stallions placed at his disposal by the Hunt Entire Horse Fund, upon the committee of which there is sure to be at least one expert on horse-breeding ready to give him the benefit of his advice and experience. Two points, however, must be remembered. Firstly, many horses which have gained distinction as sires of racing stock are ill adapted for producing hunters, on account of their great length of structure and flat sides. Secondly, the few horses which have signalled themselves out in both departments command higher fees than are consistent with the class of mares to which we are referring, for which the fees should range from three to five guineas. Again, for hunting stock we prefer travelling stallions to the pampered, petted, and inordinately fed horses of the aristocratic stud farms, who are seldom allowed to enjoy any exercise beyond that which can be obtained in the box and adjoining yard. One pernicious habit, however, which the owners of travelling stallions have, must be guarded against, namely, that of allowing the stallion to serve an inordinate number of mares. The number during the season should be restricted to fifty at the outside, and never should more than three mares be presented in one day, and then the times should be equally divided. Yet not only is this number con-

stantly exceeded, but the owner of the stallion boasts of the fact, under the erroneous impression that it proves the popularity of his horse amongst owners of mares. As a matter of truth, it only prophesies debility in the foals. Before leaving the subject of the stallion, we recommend that a mare should never be sent but to the same stallion during the course of her career in the stud, unless it cannot possibly be avoided, provided always that her first foal turned out well, as it is an authenticated fact that a mare has a greater predilection for one partner than another. Finally, it is the usual practice to present mares to the horse nine days after they have foaled, and, if the desired event does not then take place, they should be presented again in a fortnight.

Owing to the rules of the Jockey Club as to the registration of age, it has become the fashion to fix the period when mares are to foal at as early a date in January as can be predicted with any degree of certainty; but the reasons for this fashion do not apply to hunters. On the contrary, there are many important objections to foals being brought forth too early in the year, and the months of March, April, and May are undoubtedly the most favourable periods, when the dam can enjoy the green herbage of spring, which is the best food for the secretion of milk, and the weather is sufficiently warm to allow of the dam and foal being released from their box. Even in regard to weight-for-age races, many breeders of racing stock consider an April foal to be equal to a January foal, for the reason that spring herbage is

far more strengthening than any artificial succedaneum, to say nothing of the invigorating effects produced upon the baby by fresh air and sunshine. On the other hand, a late summer or early autumn colt will not have time to gain strength before the winter sets in, while the dam will be changing her coat, and be therefore more liable to catch cold. Should the novice not have a building suitable as a "lying-in" hospital on his property, a barn, so long as it is sheltered, roomy, and well ventilated, will be sufficient for the purpose, and such a place can generally be hired in country places for the short time that it is required. It should be protected with dry litter, never with new straw, which at this period mares are apt to devour greedily with a morbid appetite. Both food and water should be supplied in moderation three times a day. As the time approaches for the mare to foal, she should be visited every second hour both day and night, as at the crisis attention and watchfulness are most essential. In nine cases out of ten, mares will require no assistance during the act of parturition; but, if assistance is needed, it is better to trust to the services of an experienced shepherd or cowman, who, in the absence of a veterinary surgeon, will generally be available to those of a groom, whose experience, if he have any at all, must necessarily be limited. Moreover, the mare resents any over-officious assistance, and her efforts to resent it are dangerous to herself and the foal. After delivery she should on no account be disturbed or interfered with, especially while she is cleaning the foal. After that process is finished, she should have

a bucket of warm linseed gruel and a bran mash offered to her, the after-birth should be carried away, and the mother left in quietness. Should the after-birth show signs of receding, it must be removed with the utmost gentleness, or the loss of the mare may be the consequence.

The novice now is in possession of his first foal, of which he is probably prouder than its dam is, and he must attend to his duties as a nurse without usurping the duties of a doctor, which should be left to the veterinary surgeon. He must see that his charges enjoy the invigorating influences of fresh air and sunshine, as soon as the foal can stand well on its legs, and the dam is not an invalid from cold or any other cause; but he must use the utmost caution in not allowing them to be exposed to wet, not even to a slight shower, as the woolly texture of the coat of a foal is such that when once it becomes wet through it takes a long time to get dry again. It is owing to want of care in this respect that many foals contract catarrhal affections, which subsequently become constitutional, and often develop into roaring. Signs of constipation should be watched for both in dam and foal, and laxatives administered, which should be always at hand, though we prefer to leave the nature of their composition to the veterinary surgeon. Now we must say a few words about the paddock and paddock buildings, which constitute the nursery of the foal.

As we are not dealing with the case when a breeding stud of any magnitude is to be formed, we shall confine

our remarks to the case of 3 acres and a hovel. The latter should face the south, and the former must be well drained, as, indeed, all land should be. The hovel or box should be 12 feet by 16 feet, or even larger, and must have no angular projections of any kind. The door should open outwards with hooks in the wall to keep it back, and with rollers on the doorcases to prevent accidents during ingress and egress. It should also be cut transversely at the height of 5 feet, or higher than the stable door, to prevent any injuries arising through the mare or foal endeavouring to leap through the half-door. Indeed, to make assurance doubly sure, it is better to have the upper portion secured with iron bars. As in the stables, so in the hovel, ventilation is one of the principal features. Holes in the wall, with little wooden shutters made to slip backwards and forwards, and placed as high as the side walls will permit, are the simplest means of ventilation. Funnels through the roof, made with four boards from 9 to 12 inches wide, and having cupola tops to prevent rain from descending, though not absolutely necessary, will be found of great advantage. According to the calculations of Boussingault, a horse consumes 13 lbs. $3\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of oxygen in twenty-four hours, or about five times as much as a man, and most of the consumption takes place in a confined stable or box. Therefore, it is essential that all arrangements for the ingress of fresh and the egress of foul air should be as near perfection as possible in the case of delicate foals and their dams, in order to supply the vital principles of the atmo-

sphere. The hovel must also be so constructed as to permit of every part of it being cleansed thoroughly in the event of illness; therefore, as in the stable, the fittings cannot be too simple. Mangers are preferable to racks, and the water trough should not be adjacent to the manger, as mares and foals when feeding are apt to deposit portions of the corn in the water, but, if racks are used, the bars which reach nearly to the ground should not be more than an inch and a half apart, or the foals may get their feet or legs entangled in them. The other fittings have been already described in our chapter on "Stables and Stable Management."

A light, dry, sandy soil is evidently the most conducive to the welfare of the equine race, but in any case the land must be thoroughly drained. It is a mistake to think that humid, rich pasture is good for horses; indeed, it is not essential that any grass or pasturage should be cultivated in the paddock, in which, if constantly occupied, the vegetation would soon be destroyed. Air and exercise are the objects of the paddock, and grazing land is not in the least necessary for breeding horses. Many farmers, who occupy arable farms not capable of being made remunerative at all times by the cultivation of wheat and barley, might do worse than turn their attention to horse-breeding, more especially as the manure of horses is far more valuable for agricultural purposes than that of any other class of animals. Modern science has decided that the best system of rearing cattle is to keep them in yards or enclosures sheltered by farm buildings,

because the food goes further, and the cattle are more quiet and less exposed to accident, while the vast amount of valuable manure that is collected and the soakage secured in tanks admits of an increased quantity of stock being kept on a given quantity of land. If the system of confinement is good for cattle, it must be doubly so for horses. The old prejudice that the system is opposed to Nature falls to the ground when we consider that, except in certain parts of Wales and Exmoor, the horse now is a domesticated animal, and is as much liable to incur harm from the vicissitudes of nature as the human being.

The period at which foals may be most advantageously weaned is determined by such a variety of circumstances that the novice ought to consult his veterinary surgeon. Of course the circumstances are mainly dependent upon the quality and quantity of the mare's milk, and the question of her being again in foal; but the laws which govern the quality and quantity of the milk, and the remedies which cure the deficiency, are too complex and multifarious to admit of discussion in these pages. As a rule, September is the best month for weaning foals, and then further precautions must be taken.

A few weeks before the time of weaning a small head-collar with an 18-inch strap for holding and leading should be put on the foal, in case of subsequent illness or accident, besides being a preliminary education. A secure box is necessary for the accommodation of the foal when weaned, at such

a distance from that of the mare that they cannot hear each other, and further care must be exercised to prevent either of them rushing through open doorways. Should the breeder possess more than one foal, a separate box should be assigned to each, or the stronger foal will bully the weaker. A few days should elapse after the foal is taken from its dam before it is let out into the paddock, so that both may have become reconciled to the separation.

We now pass on to the system of rearing foals, which, after they are weaned, should not be kept in confinement more than the weather demands, as they require exercise in order to promote the development of their young frames. A first-rate judge once aptly compared the legs of young horses to willow twigs, which you may bend to any form you please; and so the surface of the land on which they are reared demands attention. An unequal surface is far preferable to a flat surface, as on the former the young horse will gain that elasticity coupled with strength on which to a large extent he will have to depend in the hunting-field, which is not like the flat surface of a race-course, yet the uneven surface must not be hard. Ploughed fields, when not too deep or too hard, will teach a young horse the use of his limbs, as well as uneven turf, while the walking about on the soil has a beneficial effect on the feet. In frosty weather, when the ground is hard and slippery, tan or straw must be used. In all cases, stony places, such as flinty downs, must be avoided, or any place where a horse is likely to blemish himself.

It is the nature of all young children, equine or otherwise, to be frolicsome, and the more frolicsome a young horse is the better is his health. There are few sights at which we would rather gaze than that of a young horse gambolling in the aftermath on a warm autumn day. Unfortunately, his frolics often lead him into trouble, and this trouble we must do our best to guard against. No iron of any sort should be allowed in the enclosure in which the young horse is placed to romp, not even the high iron railings used in deer parks. We once knew a valuable filly to catch its leg in these railings, with the result that the leg was broken and she had to be shot. A high bank with a gorse or furze fence on the top is the best boundary, but in any case the fence should be sufficiently formidable for the horse neither to be able to jump it, nor to attempt to jump it. Of course, at this period anything in the shape of punishment cannot be too sternly deprecated; one might just as well punish an infant. The inhuman savage found punishing a young horse should be soundly chastised and literally kicked off the premises.

The usual months for castrating yearling colts are the months of May and June, as, if operated upon earlier, they will not have shed their coats, and if later the hot weather may be prejudicial. It is not our province to discuss in these pages either the "pros" or "cons" of the operation.

The novice, as we have before hinted, would do well to leave the question of physicking to his

veterinary surgeon, but it is necessary that he and his groom should understand how to administer a ball. Every groom thinks that he possesses the requisite knowledge, yet few grooms do, so that they have to have recourse either to violence or to the cruelty of balling irons, and previous ill-usage when they are foals will often cause old horses to resent the operation. "Cecil's" prescription, in his work "The Stud Farm," an invaluable book from which we have learnt many useful lessons, is the most lucid that we have come across, so we quote it *in extenso:* "The assistant should place his right hand on the nose of the horse in such a manner as not to press on the soft portion or cartilage, and thereby interrupt the breathing; he then inserts his thumb on the bars, and, with two fingers placed on the lower jaw, opens the mouth, which, being performed with tenderness, will not create alarm or confusion. The operator, having his right hand defended by a glove, the two forefingers of which have been cut off, places the ball between those fingers, keeping his hand as flat as possible—not with his knuckles arched, a foolish bad custom; then, by taking hold of the tongue very gently with his left hand, he draws it out of the mouth as far as he conveniently can without causing pain, when, by inserting the ball on the root of the tongue, he quickly withdraws his hand, and immediately shutting the horse's mouth, the ball will be swallowed without trouble." We may add that we regard the use of the switch as a custom to be deprecated, if only for the reason that it involves

cruelty to the horse, and, so far as our experience has taught us, it is unnecessary.

The breeder now has his yearling ready either to be sold or to be made into a hunter; but the making or schooling of a hunter demands a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER III.

HINTS ABOUT SCHOOLING HUNTERS.

"It is from judicious management when young that much of the horse's superiority may be expected, and it is by preparing him by degrees for whatever work he may be required to perform that facilitates his maturity, and brings him eventually to the utmost state of perfection to which he is capable of being brought." Such were the words of "Cecil"; but the methods of preparation for the hunter are so multifarious, and opinions differ to such a degree, that we approach our present task with no small amount of trepidation. One might as well lay down a fixed rule for parents, telling them how to bring up their sons and daughters, as lay down a fixed rule for schooling the young hunter. Individual young horses differ as much as individual boys or girls. We can only give certain hints and inculcate certain principles, amongst which will *not* be found that of "Spare the whip, spoil the hunter."

Now the schooling of hunters is a subject which must be of paramount importance to every hunting man, though we have already stated that the novice

in the hunting-field will not necessarily have the experience requisite to make a horse a hunter. Again, the standard of perfection required by the wealthy hunting man of to-day is far higher than that required by our forefathers. What satisfied them does not satisfy us, and, though they may have been as good riders as we are, yet we may fairly lay claim to being better judges both in breeding, rearing, and schooling hunters. Besides, there can be no doubt that the future of fox-hunting does depend in a certain measure upon the schooling of hunters, for it is obvious that if we have not horses which can live with hounds over a country, hunting would lose its charm at once. We heard on all sides that during the 1896-1897 season the supply of first-class hunters was not equal to the demand. There were plenty of animals suitable for the class of men who "ride twenty miles, head the fox, and go home," but we trust that the novice for whom this volume is primarily intended would scorn to belong to such a class. For really good hunters the demand is greater than the supply, since more men hunt, more men have second horses out, and men on the average hunt more frequently than they did, owing probably to increased railway facilities. It has been our business latterly to frequent the weekly sales of Messrs Tattersall, at Albert Gate, and our experience is that while moderate horses described as hunters are allowed to go for what seem ridiculously low prices, the bidding for a first-class hunter immediately becomes brisk, and he is not allowed to go under

three figures, which often begin with a two, and occasionally with a three. Briefly, in regard to the prices which hunters fetch, it all depends on what the purchaser wants them to do. If he wants them to keep a good place when hounds run fast, he must pay a long price. If he wants them to ride about the lanes he can pick them up at prices ranging from twenty-five to fifty guineas.

But we must "cast forrad," and pick up the scent of our present chapter, taking it for granted that our young breeder has not sold his yearling. Parenthetically, we may remark that the best market for yearlings intended for hunting is to be found in Yorkshire. Owing to mistaken ideas, hackney sires were introduced into Yorkshire some few years ago for the purpose of breeding hunters, but experience has proved that the hackney is the worst possible sire for a hunter, so the Yorkshiremen who "make" hunters have to go from home for the raw material, and as breeders are averse to parting with promising yearlings they have to pay high prices. As it is, the question amongst hunting men now is, "Where shall we find our hunters?" and the question is often followed by "Confound hackneys and hackney shows!" and not infrequently by, "Confound all horse shows!" Certainly we do not advise our novice to train his young horse for the show-yard, for we never yet knew a good horse with hounds come out of the show-yard, and would as soon think of buying a hunter out of a circus.

Now, in schooling the hunter—we strongly object to the term "breaking-in"—the first thing to consider is,

what do we want as the result of our schooling? "Quiet to hounds," is the usual term in vogue with the professional dealer, which means that the horse is a spiritless brute, never seen in a good place, and one that certainly never gets through a good run with credit to himself and satisfaction to his rider. Such a quadruped is no more a good hunter than the pulling, bolting, and refusing animals, which preponderate in every large field of horsemen. We require neither "quiet" horses nor horses of the tearing, rake-away type. We want a "good-mannered" hunter with pace and stamina to live with hounds, in a quick thing or in a slow hunting run. A good-mannered hunter is described by "Marmaduke" as follows: "He is a horse that always answers to his rider's hand, that does not make a rash bolt when some other horse comes galloping past him, and that jumps his fences, no matter what they may be, in collected form, and in the style with which they should be jumped." Such is the standard of excellence which the tutor of hunters must endeavour to attain.

Except to handle him gently, and make him accustomed to the sight and voice of his future human master or mistress, his education need not be begun till he is a full-grown yearling, *i.e.* twelve months old, and not a yearling according to Jockey Club Rules. Thence, until he is a two-year-old, he must be frequently led about, and handled every day, for not only is a horse one of the most nervous animals in creation, but the higher-spirited he is, the more nervous he is. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, refractory

conduct in a young horse arises out of nervousness, not from inherent vice; so, during the second year of his life, everything must be done to make him lose fear of the human species. As a two-year-old he must have his first lessons in being lunged, and in being driven about in long reins, the latter an admirable practice, often neglected on account of the trouble and patience which it involves. But, to again quote "Marmaduke," "There is nothing better than the long reins, when used by a workman, to make a horse have a good mouth, and without a good mouth there is no such thing as good manners."

We believe that both the temper and the legs of many horses are spoilt during the process of lunging. Grooms regard it as a simple process, and professional horse-breakers regard it as a means of subduing horses. "Lunge him till he is tired," the latter say to their factotums, and the poor brute, originally high-spirited, is lunged till he is harassed and overcome with fatigue, frequently accompanied by giddiness, with the result that he develops a temper, characterised by gloomy cowardice. Now, many good judges have declared that lunging is the most severe work that any horse can be subjected to, and some even go so far as to say that young horses should never be subjected to it. We do not agree with the latter opinion, as we know of no other way by which horses can be taught their paces before they are backed. However, as opinions disagree, we will give rules which we think the young breeder will do well to give to his groom.

1. Always set off the colt at first to work to the right hand, so that, if he breaks out of the trot, he may lead with the off-leg.

2. After two minutes, change him to work to the left hand, and, if possible, do not let him break. Let him work to the left hand for a minute and a half.

3. After three minutes and a half, bring him to you and fondle him. Young horses, like young children, must be encouraged to learn their lessons.

4. Repeat the above process two or three times, but stop immediately if the colt shows signs of distress.

5. Never allow the colt to break from the canter into the gallop.

6. Mark whether in certain paces he strikes or hits his legs, in which case he must be lunged in boots or bandages, else inflammation, probably followed by lameness, will ensue.

We have placed twenty minutes as the outside limit for lunging exercise, which we think quite sufficient in any case. We prefer an uneven to an even surface for lunging, for the same reasons that we prefer an uneven to an even surface for the land on which young horses are reared. As the colt grows accustomed to the lunging rein, he may be lunged over little open drains, and butts of fallen trees.

We think that it is advisable to accustom a young horse to jumping before he is backed. Most young horses take kindly to jumping, and look to it as a relaxation after the monotony of being lunged in a circle; but care should be taken not to lunge them over anything which would hurt them if they knocked it, such as stiff oak bars or stiles. Many authorities are against us on this point, and some think it a good plan to place an oak bar before the food of a foal, which can be raised higher and higher. But we are inclined to think that if a young horse once hurts himself in his first endeavours to jump, he will always shirk jumping afterwards, and, not improbably, will develop into a confirmed refuser, than which there can be no more awkward beast to ride in the hunting-field. The advocates of this "bar" system say that it makes a horse clever; but even if he is lucky enough not to get a nasty knock in his baby-hood, he gets into the habit of judging the height of his jumps too accurately, and, sooner or later, is sure to make a mistake and come a nasty cropper, if later, causing dire disaster both to himself and his rider.

Perhaps the most crucial period in a hunter's life is the time when, as a three-year-old, he is first backed. Some horses seem to think nothing of it. We remember a filly by Cucumber out of a thorough-bred mare, who, having been first mounted for some two or three minutes by her mistress on a side-saddle, immediately afterwards allowed a light-weight groom to ride her about the yard, apparently regarding

this new experience as unconcernedly as if it were an everyday occurrence. Yet she was far from being one of the "quiet" sort. Other horses have an invincible objection to being mounted, and with such the greatest caution has to be exercised. How often do we see even old hunters evince this objection by trying to bite or kick the rider as he is mounting, or, worse still, keep turning round and round! Such a horse is not a good-mannered horse, but his bad habit is probably the result of injudicious backing in the first instance, as, indeed, much of the disposition, which characterises the horse in after life may be traced to his early tutorship.

The dumb-jockey has long been abolished as obsolete. At the best it was only a clumsy contrivance; at the worst it was a cruel one; in any case it was useless, since it failed to make the horse acquainted with his master—man. "Cecil" recommends that a boy should be put up and taken down again several times before any attempt is made for the animal to be ridden, but, except with colts who have already shown that they possess the seeds of rebellion, we think that such a precaution is unnecessary, and that the horse may be trusted to move forward with the rider on his back, and even to allow himself to be guided. Such, at least, is our own experience; but the rider must possess light hands, and a rider with light hands is difficult to procure. Grooms, *et hoc omne genus*, rarely possess them. A boy in a racing-stable, if such a stable is handy and the trainer is willing to lend his services, we have found to be the

best rider to mount a young horse, as he generally possesses light hands and a firm seat, and his experience will have taught him to have patience in dealing with young horses, or he would not remain in a racing-stable. But whoever may be the rider, it is essential that he should possess light hands, a firm seat, a light weight, and patience. Of course the process of mounting should take place under the eye of the master. Some grooms, if they be fearless riders, will make the first attempt surreptitiously, not from *malice prepense*, but from that love of recklessness, which most of us possess in a more or less marked degree. To a good groom a previous word of warning will be sufficient, and a bad groom ought not to be on the premises.

The bridle best adapted for use in mounting young horses is the plain snaffle with two reins, one of which passes through a martingale, but in no event should the mouth of the animal be allowed to get sore. A sore mouth makes the horse afraid to face the bit, and causes him to contract a habit of rearing, than which no habit is more dangerous. Some people advocate accustoming a horse to the curb after he has been accustomed to the snaffle, on the grounds that it makes him more handy and improves his action, but except where a horse carries his head badly we doubt the utility of the curb, and much prefer the snaffle bridle and martingale, for the use of the curb premises bad hands on the part of the rider.

On the principle that it is necessary to teach a child

to walk before it can run, horses must be taught to walk, trot, canter, and gallop before they are taught to jump. Some experience they will have gained in their lunging days, but the rudiments of knowledge are not knowledge. It may seem an anomaly, but we believe that the best schoolmaster a young horse can have in the art of jumping is a horse. How often do we hear in the hunting-field that familiar request, "Give me a lead!" And if a lead be necessary to the experienced hunter, how much more necessary must it be to the young horse! The rider can tell a horse to jump, but he cannot show him how to do it. Therefore, in his preliminary lessons at home we advise strongly that the pupil should be accompanied by an old hunter. The spirit to jump in young horses is generally willing, but the confidence is lacking. We both know of, and have heard of, numerous instances of horses whom no amount of persuasion would cause to jump in cold blood, but who never refused in the hunting-field, so it would seem that the force of example will make even an unwilling horse jump. After some three or four weeks in the companionship of the older horse he may be taken out by himself, and larked over small places, but the man on his back must be thoroughly trustworthy. If these lessons have proved satisfactory by the first or second week in September, the horse will be rising four, and may be taken out cub-hunting.

What can be the feelings of a horse when he first sees hounds? Apart from the excitement consequent upon finding himself in a throng of other horses, there

seems to be an hereditary sympathy between horse and hound, as if Providence had ordained that the two should work together. The sight of hounds imparts keenness to every nerve in a horse's body. In the case of a young horse it requires the patience of the rider to restrain his ardour, otherwise he may never get rid of intemperate habits at covert-side. Nothing can be more disagreeable both to oneself and one's neighbours than to ride a horse which is always fidgeting, and never will stand still. Yet such horses are common in every hunt. On examination, we have found that the excitement is due to the horse having been ridden in the first place by an excitable rider. He was infected by the latter's excitement, and has never got rid of the infection. Besides, there are some people who never can be quiet or still at covert-side. Such people spoil their own horses, and other people's sport.

The three-year-old must not be brought out too often in his first season, and then only for short days. Many promising young horses are spoilt by being overworked in their first season, through their owners wishing to show them off in order to sell them. Their strength is far from being fully developed, and they ought not to be subjected to the fatigue of a big day. Mark a three-year-old in the field, and mark the same horse the next season when he is a four-year-old. It is difficult to believe that it is the same horse, so much will he have filled out. But it is merely the difference between the boy and the man, and as nobody expects a boy to do a man's work, so the three-year-old

must not be expected to do the work of a regular hunter. Let this precept be borne in mind, and the four-year-old will be worth double the money of the three-year-old, and, therefore, worth his twelve months' keep to his owner. Indeed, many men buy three-year-olds either to keep for their own riding, or to sell as four-year-olds.

And as a four-year-old we must now leave him.

CHAPTER IV.

CARRIAGE HORSES AS HUNTERS, AND HUNTERS AS CARRIAGE HORSES.

WE feel that in the two preceding chapters we have somewhat diverged from the main purpose of our volume, inasmuch as we have placed before our readers Rothschildean ideas unachievable by the owners of limited incomes, who do not possess landed property; but now we must descend from the exalted perch of plutocracy to the level of practical economy. The novice in the hunting-field is generally a man who possesses one or two horses, designated by the immortal Mr Jorrocks *qui tam'ers, i.e.* horses quiet to ride and drive, which the owner requires to be between the shafts one day, and at the stern of hounds on the next. Not only have we seen, but we have ridden many horses of this description in the hunting-field, and though we have not on these occasions attempted to hold our own in the first flight, we flatter ourselves that we saw more of the *sport* than the "thrusting scoundrel" who would have disdained to mount our humble conveyance. One of the best men to hounds in the Albrighton country once told us that he

could always see hounds hunt better when mounted on a pony than when mounted on the best hunter in his stable, and such must be the experience of most men who ride to hunt, not hunt to ride. A very little trouble will enable the possessor of a trapper, or even a brougham horse, to enjoy a quiet day with hounds. Nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why a horse, ostensibly kept for hunting purposes, should not work between the shafts. Needless to say, the following hints are not intended to apply to first-class hunters, or first-class performers in harness.

In this chapter we must reverse the dictum of Gambado, and add to the theory as much practice as it has been our experience to have. On several occasions it has been our lot to be mounted on harness-horses which had never seen hounds before, and the fact that we have lived to tell the tale is sufficient evidence that harness horses can be made serviceable in the hunting-field without any undue risk to the neck of the rider.

To a certain extent, a horse constantly used between the shafts is always in hard condition, but the condition is not that of a hunter. He may be able to trot all day without turning a hair, but he would not be able to gallop across half-a-dozen fields without its being a case of "bellows to mend." He is like a man who will walk forty miles in a day easily, but cannot sprint a hundred yards without feeling his heart beat against his ribs. It is necessary, therefore, that the carriage-horse at exercise should be indulged

in plenty of short breathing gallops. It is objected that such exercise is liable to cause the horse to break into a canter when in harness, and doubtless it has this tendency, especially with a careless driver. But one must not expect perfection in a general utility horse, and if he is to be sound in wind, he must have galloping exercise, if it is only for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at a time.

Whether or not it is advisable to teach a carriage-horse to jump at home in cold blood is a matter of opinion. We do not think that it is necessary, and the extra work may give a horse a distaste for jumping. From the nature of their work, carriage-horses are less nervous than hunters, and therefore have more confidence when they are first called upon to jump in the hunting-field. Very often their fault is an excess of confidence, as the following experience shows.

We were staying in a country house where our host was short of hunters, but offered to mount us on a trapper, which, to his knowledge, had never jumped as much as a twig in its life, though it had been occasionally used as a hack. We accepted the offer, as, at all events, we should be able to see hounds, even if we should not be able to follow them. As luck would have it, a fox was afoot at the first covert that we drew, and hounds went away immediately at a pace which showed that there was a burning scent. Our trapper was not to be denied, so we went at the first fence with great misgivings as to how we should reach the other side, if at all. Our trapper had no idea of

refusing, but, alas, he had no idea of judging his distance, and made his effort with his fore-feet almost in the fence. If there had been a ditch on the near side we must have come to utter grief. After that, knowing that he would not refuse, we took care to give him plenty of time at his fences, and we got through the day without a fall. In such a case we should recommend placing a stiff guard rail, about a foot in front of a made fence, similar to the guard-rail in front of the open ditch in a steeplechase course. A very few lessons would serve to teach the horse to judge his distance.

Of course it is useless to try to make a hunter out of a heavy brougham-horse, or one of those high-steppers, who put down their feet at the same spot whence they take them up. Lofty-actioned horses are always uncomfortable to ride, and in harness look to be going twelve miles an hour, when they are not going seven. Yet some judges at horse-shows will persist in awarding prizes for high action; they might as well award prizes for string-halt. On the other hand, a fast trapper will invariably make a fair conveyance to hounds. But the big, heavy horses, commonly known as family-coach horses, have long gone out of fashion, and will probably soon become obsolete. They cannot get over the ground quickly enough for modern requirements, besides having to drag their own weight, in addition to the weight of the carriage. We remember the time when a lumbering coach, drawn by a pair of over-fed beasts which ought to have been in the plough, was considered a sign of respectability; now it would

be regarded as the insane prejudice of an antediluvian dowager. Such horses were useless as hacks, let alone as hunters. It is a matter for congratulation that, except for funerals, the funeral dirge has been sung in this country over Flemish horses.

The second question, namely, whether hunters should be put between the shafts, is one that requires deeper consideration; for while a keen man to hounds would not hesitate to ride the best carriage-horse in his stable in default of anything better, many men hesitate before putting a hunter into harness. In the case of a very valuable hunter, *i.e.* a horse worth 150 guineas or more, we are inclined to doubt the expediency of harness work; but then it is seldom that the necessity arises, for the man who can afford to give such a figure for his hunters would always be well provided with trappers. In no case should a hunter, or indeed a hack for that matter, be asked to draw anything with four wheels; the hard pulling work is sure to make his legs fill, and it may take some time before they are right again. But we think that light dog-cart work not only does a horse no harm, but, on the contrary, serves to keep him in hard condition, presuming that his feet and legs are such as we have said they ought to be in our chapter on the Hunter, more especially if the cannon or leg bone is short in comparison with the forearm, and the fetlocks are free from any enlargement of bone. The prejudice against putting hunters into harness is that the "'ammer, 'ammer, 'ammer on the 'ard 'igh-road" knocks their legs about, and, of course, when worked in harness,

more care and attention has to be paid to their legs. Yet we do not think that pulling a dog-cart on the hard road does them as much harm as being hacked on the hard road. But either hacking or harness work will soon make any weakness in the legs apparent, and puffiness will follow in the affected part, which must be attended to at once. A friend, who is only a two-horse man, told us this season that neither of his two horses had ever been idle for a single day since they had been in his stable. One he had had six years, and the other seven years. He regularly hacks them, and drives them in a light dog-cart all the year round, and both of them see hounds at least once a week, often three times a fortnight, during the season. Both these horses are nearly thoroughbred; both are perfect hunters, either with fourteen stone, or a light lady on their backs, and one is one of the smartest trappers it was ever our lot to drive behind. Our friend, who is his own stud-groom, assured us that, even on Sundays, his horses never remained in the stable the whole of the day, and that in this fact lay the secret of their hard condition. "How would you like to remain in the house all day, let alone to be confined in a single room?" he asked us. Besides, as a rule, the two-horse man keeps his horses to work, and not to look at. On the other hand, we know a gentleman who keeps two horses of a similar stamp, which he never puts in harness, and never gets on their backs except on hunting days. His groom, probably, gets more enjoyment out of them than he does. One

or other of them, or both, is always ailing, the cause generally being want of condition.

Again, we have known several instances during the last few years, where gentlemen, who previously kept horses exclusively for hunting purposes, have been obliged to reduce their stabling establishments for economical reasons. It was the harness horses who were parted with, and the hunters had to experience the indignity of the shafts. Only in one case out of several have we heard of the hunter resenting the indignity. As a rule, the horses took kindly to their new work, and instead of being the worse for it, improved in condition. We have also known instances of horses, lame at the end of the season, come up sound again in the autumn after being summered between the shafts. At the annual autumn sales of the London coach-horses, at Aldridge's, many of the leaders are bought for hunting purposes. We have heard experienced judges declare that whatever else may be the matter with them, such horses seldom fall lame during the hunting season.

"Good on the road" would not appear a strong recommendation now to the Leicestershire man, who considers that he has not had a good day's sport unless hounds race at a headlong pace, yet such was the title which Mr H. Atkin selected for one of his best-known drawings, executed some eighty years ago, the original o f which is now in the possession of Sir Walter Gilbey. But hunting, like most other mundane institutions, revolves in a circle. "A good hunter, quiet in harness," is now a common form of

warranty, but we prefer the old term in vogue amongst our forefathers, when financial embarrassments have rendered it necessary for us to descend to keeping a "general" servant. Let us hope that our fox-hunting readers may not have to descend still lower, and be obliged to pad the hoof themselves in order to witness their favourite sport. "Fox-hunting on foot is but labour in vain," says Egerton Warburton. But fox-hunting on foot and fox-hunting on wheels have nothing to do with this volume, which we must now conclude, lest our readers should echo the words of Shakespeare against us: "He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument."

THE END

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