

O'ER CRAG
AND TORRENT
WITH ROD AND GUN

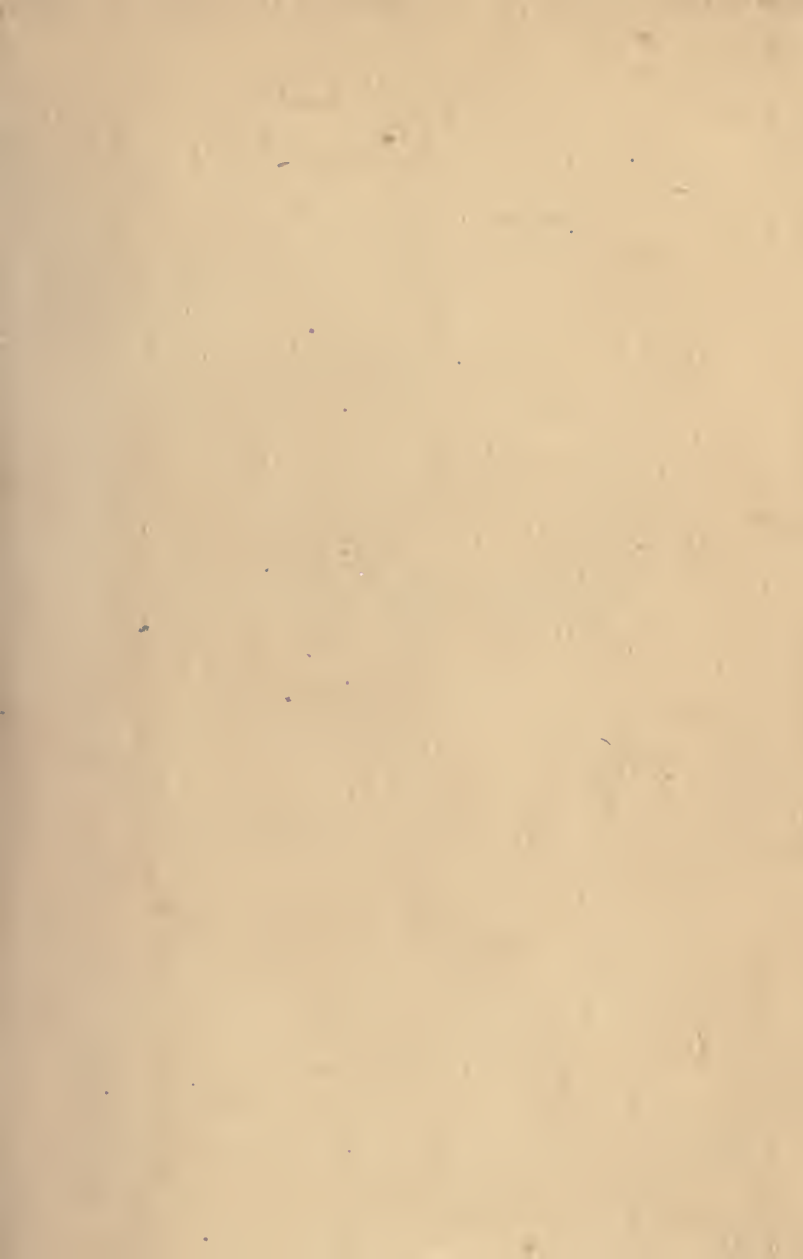
By

W. STANHOPE-LOVELL



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O'ER CRAG AND TORRENT



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O'ER CRAG AND TORRENT

With Rod and Gun

SHOOTING AND FISHING

BY

W. STANHOPE-LOVELL

LONDON

R. A. EVERETT & CO.

42 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1904

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To

JOHN A. DOYLE, Esq., J.P.D.L.

AND

FELLOW OF ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD

THESE UNPRETENTIOUS EFFORTS ARE DEDICATED

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF REGARD

AND AS

A SMALL TOKEN OF APPRECIATION

OF THE

MANY HAPPY DAYS OF SPORT I AND MINE HAVE SPENT

THROUGH HIS

INSTRUMENTALITY AND KINDNESS.

WM. STANHOPE-LOVELL

(Fiery Brown).

Pendarren Cottage,

July, 1904.

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PREFACE

SOME of the reminiscences recorded in the following pages were originally written for *Land and Water*—to whose editor I am indebted for unvarying courtesy and kindness—and for other papers.

The idea of publishing some of my recollections in book form was suggested in the smoking-room, after a very pleasant shoot, by some keen old friends, well known in the world of sport, who urged me to write a series of short anecdotes relating to various forms of our common pleasure, based on personal and practical experience.

Well, I have made this attempt to interest those with sporting tastes and proclivities, and if I have failed, I feel sure that brother

sportsmen, who are at all times manly and generous, will forgive the shortcomings of my effort.

In saying "Vale," I must beg my readers to overlook my apparent "egoism," for I can assure them I had much difficulty "to overcome the just repugnance of my own modesty"; but I found it well-nigh impossible to write personal experiences without dragging myself in "neck and crop."

In what I have written, the heart has in a measure guided the pen, and I sincerely hope that those who read the following pages may derive some pleasure from an old sportsman's recollections.

"FIERY BROWN."

OTTER HUNTING



OTTER HUNTING

CHAPTER I

OTTER hunting is a most interesting, attractive, and charming form of sport. It occurs at a time of year when "all Nature looks smiling and gay"; it appeals to the sporting instincts of both sexes; it is essentially conducive to health. The early meet, the pure, fresh, sweet-scented morning air, the sound of the rippling river, and the songs of the birds, all make for happiness. Old friends, new friends, bosom friends, and staunch friends meet together, each brimming over with good fellowship and anticipation of good sport. What better pleasure can be

wished for? But—there is always an interloping qualification where pleasure is concerned—beyond the actual members of the Hunt, how many of the “field” really know much about the otter, or the work of the hounds, or appreciate the perseverance, patience, anxiety, and incessant hard work of the Master and his whip? I fear not a very large proportion. I am therefore tempted to accede to the request of some old friends, that I should write an account of this particular form of sport, but I do so with some little diffidence, relying on the indulgence of my readers, and in the hope that they may be in some slight measure interested.

The otter (*Lutra vulgaris*) is a semi-aquatic animal, active and agile on land, and equally at home in water. It has a long, lithe body, short legs, with webbed toes; the tail is long and flattened, strong

and broad at the base, and tapering at the end. The head is comparatively small and flat, with a broad muzzle; eyes large, round, and rather prominent. The fur is beautifully sleek and soft; there are two coats; the under fur consists of short, soft hairs, of a sandy hue, whilst the upper or outer coat is of a rich brown colour, and the hairs longer and stiffer. Otters lie up during the day in holts or hovers in the banks of the rivers or ponds; a hollow under the roots of a tree in a quiet back or side stream is a favourite resort, and the neighbourhood of a weir is also a favourite spot for them. Their food is fish, frogs, and they are particularly fond of eels, demolishing a prodigious number.

And in passing I would here enter a plea on behalf of otters. Eels and frogs are fearfully destructive to salmon and trout spawn, and they devour hosts of small and

immature fish. I would therefore submit to all anglers, water bailiffs, and keepers that the good offices of otters in destroying these pests should be considered a fair set-off against the destruction of a salmon or two—indeed, it is a moot point whether otters do kill many salmon, provided they can procure a good supply of eels and frogs; and I think it may be taken for granted that the large majority of salmon killed by otters are weak, spent fish and old kelts, so that as a matter of fact they are Nature's instruments for carrying out the fundamental law of the survival of the fittest. Hunt otters, by all means, in a legitimate manner, for then they have a fair and square chance; but to shoot and trap otters in those hideous and brutal gins is worse, or as bad, as shooting foxes.

I fear I have made a digression to air my own sentiments and opinions. In days of yore otters were thought to be partly beast

and partly fish; and it has been said, so prevalent was this opinion, that good and devout Catholics eat its flesh on fast days. Izaak Walton, in his "Compleat Angler," refers to this fishy idea:

"PISCATOR: 'I pray, honest huntsman, let me ask you a pleasant question: Do you hunt a beast or a fish?'"

"HUNTSMAN: 'Sir, it is not in my power to resolve you; I leave it to be resolved by the College of Carthusians, who have made vows never to eat flesh. But I have heard the question hath been debated among many great clerks, and they seem to differ about it, yet most agree that her tail is fish; and if her body be fish too, then I may say that a fish will walk upon land.'"

Otters travel quite considerable distances at night hunting their prey, and their

movements, both in the water and on land, are quick and silent ; they make a peculiar whistling sound, which can be heard a good distance. This reminds me of a much respected Devonshire parson's story of an old dame whose cottage was close by the riverside. The good lady—a spinster, by the way — and the otters were on such amicable terms that a gallant old otter used frequently on a summer evening to come up quite near her, and whistle “No one coming to marry me ; no one coming to woo.” I believe this parson in question was made a rural dean. Young otters are quite easily tamed, and are intensely amusing pets ; if carefully trained and treated kindly, they can be taught to catch fish for their owners. In China, and I believe in some parts of India, they are frequently used for catching fish ; and Mr. Thompson, in his work, “Indo-China and China,” says :

“ We noticed men fishing with trained otters in this part of the river. There were a number of boats, and each boat was furnished with an otter tied to a cord. The animal was thrust into the water, and remained there till it had caught a fish ; then it was hauled up, and the fisherman, placing his foot upon its tail, stamped vigorously until it had dropped its finny prey.”

The hunting of otters with hounds is of considerable antiquity, and is mentioned in several old works. The best account, however—or perhaps I should say the best description—is given in Tuberville’s “*Arte de Venerie*,” dated 1575, to which I will presently refer ; but at this point I think I should say something about the hounds used in otter hunting. In days of old the southern hound was employed, and judging from the descriptions of both ancient and modern writers, he was a large, rough

coated animal, marked like the fox-hounds of the present day, very slow, with excellent nose, and a melodious and bell-like note. Devonshire is credited with being the last county in England to possess a pack of the pure old southern hounds. It is now generally admitted that the modern otter-hound is descended from the above old southern hound. To describe him shortly, he is a big, rough coated hound, with a conical-shaped skull somewhat like a blood-hound's, with big, dark, and intelligent eyes, a powerful well-ribbed body, straight, heavy-boned legs, and large, well-formed feet; the stern carried gaily. He is marked rather like the fox-hound, but generally white, with greyish black or grizzly patches; he is slow, and has the beautiful bell-like voice alluded to as possessed by the old southern hound.

At the present day, however, very few packs (if any) consists of all-pure otter-

hounds ; in Devonshire, at any rate, the pack is generally composed of draft stag or fox-hounds, with a few couple of pure otter-hounds to leaven the pack. Mr. J. C. Carrick, of Carlisle, had an entire pack of pure otter-hounds, which used to provide most excellent sport. The stag and fox-hounds when duly entered to otter answer the purpose in our mild Western Counties, where the climate is not so cold and biting and boisterous ; but personally, I question whether they would stand the racket and trying ordeal in the Northern Counties. However, I may be entirely wrong, so that on this point my private opinion is of little worth. In days gone by, otter hunting was conducted much on the same lines as it is at the present time ; that is, as far as the main principles of the actual hunting is concerned ; but nowadays the otter is not so much interfered with by the huntsman and his

coadjutors, for the modern sportsman glories in his hounds' sagacity and good work. I will, however, in my next chapter give an extract from Tuberville's description of an otter hunt in the sixteenth century, and my friends can compare it with what we all enjoy at the present day.

CHAPTER II

OTTER hunting is intensely pleasurable from "find to finish"; it is a sport that all can join in with little expense, provided they can rely on strong shoe leather, and possess good walking powers. There are, of course, certain regulations and rules which people coming out with the hounds should consider it a matter of honour to conform with: 1. To be most careful not to do damage by breaking fences, trampling down mowing grass or standing corn, leaving gates open, etc. 2. To strictly carry out the wishes and instructions of the Master, for naturally he is always desirous of showing good sport, and it is upon his shoulders the responsibility chiefly rests. The "field" should always

keep well behind the hounds—at least fifty yards—and on no pretence whatever should they get in front of the Master or whips, whose trained eyes and practical experience are seeking and noting the various signs, such as “spur” (foot) marks, “wedges,” and other indications of the wily otter, which guide the action of the Master.

The “field” should therefore consider it a point of duty to assist in the only possible way they can to lessen the anxiety and cares of the Master by not crowding round or treading on his heels, by keeping as quiet as possible, and by cheerfully carrying out his wishes promptly and implicitly. It seems a characteristic of English men and women to love the twang of the horn and the heart-lifting cry of hounds. It would be difficult to suggest more genuine pleasure and enjoyment than a day with otter-hounds. Follow them through the long meadows, golden

with buttercups; over the rocky boulders, coated with the loveliest and greenest of moss; on past the beds of yellow iris, forget-me-nots, and water ranunculas; through the bog myrtle, and amidst the wealth of those royal ferns so aptly named "*Osmunda regalis*."

In my previous chapter I promised to give an extract from "*Arte de Venerie*"—Tuberville's account of an otter hunt in the sixteenth century. I will now do so, and in my next and concluding chapter on this subject I will describe to the best of my ability a modern hunt, so that those who feel interested can compare the methods of our forefathers with those of the present day. Tuberville says: "The otter is a beast well knowne; shee feedeth on fyshe and lyeth neare unto ryvers, brookes, pooles, and fishe pondes, or weares. Hir lying-in commonly is under the roots of trees, and sometimes I

have seene them lying in a hollowe tree, foure or five foote above the grounde." After describing the otter, Tuberville states there is "great cunning in the hunting of them," and in the succeeding chapter he describes the process: "When a huntlesman would hunte the otter, he should first send foure servants or varlets, with bloodhoundes, or such houndes as will draw in the game, and let him sende them two up the river and two doune the river, the one couple of them on that one side, and the other on that other side of the water. And so you shall be sure to finde if there be an otter in the quarter; for an otter cannot long abide in the water, and muste come forth in the night to feede on grass and herbes by the water's side. If any of theyr houndes finde of an otter, let the huntlesman looke in the softe grounde and moyst places to see which way he bent the head, up or doune the river. And if he

finde not the otter quickly, he may then judge that he has gone to couche somewhere further off from the water, for an otter will sometimes seeke his feede a myle (or little lesse) from his couche and place of reste.

“ Commonly he will rather go up the river than doune, for goying up the streame the streame bringeth him sent of the fyshes that are above him ; and bearing his nose into the winde, he shall sooner finde any faulte that is above him. Also you shall make an assemblie for the otter as you do for the harte ; and it is a note to be observed that all such chaces as you draw after, before you finde them, lodge them or hebor them, you shoulde make a solemne assemblie to heare all reportes before you undertake to hunte them, and then he which hath founde of an otter, or so drawen towards his couche that he can undertake to bryng you unto him, shall cause his houndes to be uncoupled a

bowshotte or twayne before he come to the place where he thinketh that the otter lieth. Because they may cast about a while untill they have cooled their baulting and hainsicke toyes, whiche all houndes do lightly use at the first uncoupling. Then the varlets of the kennell shall seeke by the riverside and beate the bankes with their houndes untill some one of them chaunce upon the otter.

“Remember always to sette out some upwards and some doune the streames, and every man his otter-speare or forked staffe in his hand. And if they perceyve where the otter cometh under water (as they may perceyve if they marke it well), then shall they watche to see if they can get to stand before him at some place where he would vent, and stryke him with their speare or staffe, and if they misse, then shall they runne up or doune the streame as they see the otter bende, untill they may at last give

him a blowe. For if the houndes be good otter houndes and perfectly entered, they will come chaunting and trayling alongst by the riverside, and will beate every tree roote, every holme, every osier bedde, and tuft of bullrushes; yea, and sometimes also they will take the ryver and beate it like a water spanielle, so that it shall not be possible for the otter to escape; but that eyther the houndes shall light upon him or els some of the huntessen shall strike him, and thus you may have excellent sporte and pastime in hunting of the otter, if the houndes be good, and that the ryvers be not over great. Where the ryvers be great some use to have a lyne throwen over-thwart the ryver, the whiche two of the huntessen shall holde by eche ende, one on the one side of the ryver and the other on that other. And let them holde the lyne so slacke that it may alwayes be underneath the water. And if the otter

come dyving under the water he shall of necessitie touche their lyne, and so shall they feele and know which way he is passed, the whiche shall make him be taken the sooner. An otter's skinne is very good furre, and his grease will make a medicine to make fyshes turn up their bellies as if they were deade. A good otter hounde may prove an excellent buck-hounde if he be not olde before he is entered."

So much for my old friend Tuberville's quaint description of how to circumvent the wily otter. I need hardly point out to my readers that in mentioning blood-hounds I think it probable the old southern hound, which I have before mentioned, was referred to by the writer of ancient days. Neither do we now use a spear or forked staff for striking the otter; but an otter pole is used for assistance in getting over awkward

places, and also for letting daylight into a "holt" or "hover," for an otter will soon "clear out" if light is "let in." As I stated earlier, a Master of otter-hounds interferes as little as he possibly can with his hounds, for in otter hunting, as in all other branches of hunting, one of the greatest charms to a sportsman is to see clever hound work—in other words, to note the clever and sagacious and patient manner in which the pack will unravel a difficulty and use their brains. Of course, at times it becomes imperative on the Master to help them, and then, if he is a good Master and the hounds are attached to him as they ought to be, it is simply beautiful to see how they will gather round him at the first sound of the horn.

CHAPTER III

“THE Dartmoor Otter - hounds (water permitting) at Teigngrace Station. By invitation.” Such was the announcement in the *Western Morning News* which cheered us all, and heralded what proved a successful and highly enjoyable day's sport. The morning of the eventful day dawned fair and auspicious, and at the appointed hour fourteen couple of hounds, with terrier “Jim,” the ever-genial Master, and his two painstaking whips—Arthur and Johnnie—with a strong contingent of the members of the Hunt, detrained, having travelled up by rail. Outside the station a large “field,” including a goodly number of ladies, looking happy and bright, and fresh as the morning

dew, had assembled to welcome the gallant Master and his hounds. Five minutes' grace being granted for the interchange of greetings and to enable the laggards "to make their number," a move was made for the marshes. The Master decided to try down the canal, so hounds were put to water just below the lock gates. No trail being touched all the way down to the Teignbridge Cricket Ground, they were called off, and taken across to the River Teign. At what was termed the Hay Stack Pool hounds were cast on stream, and hardly had they begun to hunt the water when they picked up a trail, which they carried slowly up for about half a mile, and on under the bridge. About 100 yards or so, just where the back water on the left bank enters, the trail became much stronger, and a burst of hound music announced the fact. Hunting closely, they carried the trail merrily up to Fishwick

Weir, which they dashed over, and up the long pool above, and nearly to the Orchard Pool. Here, just where the river takes a bend, good old Clinker made a strong mark at a big holt under the oak tree, that was seldom without a tenant, and the whole pack solidly proclaimed a "true bill." Dear little Jim was underground in a "brace of shakes," and like the plucky little fellow he was, precious soon served a forcible ejection order on the quarry. Suddenly there was a heavy swirl in the water, and a chain of bubbles rising to the surface gives evidence that the otter has slipped out of his hover and indicates the direction he has taken.

"Look out below!" shouts the Master, the eager hounds swimming the line with the keenest enjoyment as they wined the chain. Arthur, who had been posted at the Weir, was now joined by two other men, who knew their work and how to keep

silent and still, but the otter does not reach them just yet, for he has taken refuge in a small holt, from which he is speedily evicted, and was momentarily viewed making for his former quarters—a stronghold he appears loth to quit. “Jim’s” services were again called into requisition, and exclaiming—in dog Latin, of course—“*Ecce iterum,*” or “Here we are again,” requested the varmint to “clear out of that,” which it did expeditiously. The whole pack winded him, and with a joyful merry chorus swam the line down the pool. Again the cry, “Look out below!” rings out. I must here explain that just above the Weir, on the right bank, is the flood-gate of a small stream or brook connecting the canal with the river. At this point Arthur stands patiently waiting. A minute passes—two—three, and then his watchful eye notes the chain approaching, and almost as quick as thought a large otter

slips quietly over the bank from the river into the smaller stream. Arthur's welcome "Tally-ho!" had scarcely passed his lips when the Master is at the spot, and at the sound of his horn every hound is with him. No need to cheer them on—the bonnie creatures that they are. They dash in a clustering, living mass into the small stream. The "field" are now wound up to an immense pitch of excitement, and with very few and insignificant exceptions, instantly conform with the Master's orders—"Keep back, please, gentlemen," or "Give the hounds room"—for they know well that the Master never spares himself in any possible way to show good sport, but that nothing on earth annoys him more than the "field" or some draper's assistant interfering with the work of his hounds. The otter is now viewed by a veteran with a voice like "a bull of Bashan,"

and his gruff "Tally-ho!" in our present mood sounded as the sweetest and most dulcet melody. Up and down the brook, the hounds sticking close to him, the otter kept moving; at last he makes for an old partially submerged barge lying at the junction of the stream with the canal—a most difficult place from which to dislodge him—but he is eventually compelled to evacuate his quarters by several welter weights jumping on that portion of the barge not under water, the oscillation of his "City of refuge" caused by the gymnastics of these modern Daniel Lamberts proving too much for his nerves, so he vacated his position. Being deep water, the otter slipped out without showing himself; the first intimation we have of his departure is the Master's quick eye viewing him half-way across the canal as he vented, but he disappeared instantly. The only possible way

over the canal is by the lock gate, a couple of hundred yards or so above, and there is a pell-mell rush of some of the over-eager followers, but they were a wee bit too previous. Sultan, Vestal, Clinker, and Senator must have also viewed the otter, for they swam across, and hitting the trail in the rushes, stuck so closely to him, that the wily one doubles back to the stream he had just vacated, and entering it and disdaining the rolling insecurity of the barge, he made towards the river, but the Master, not wishing him into the big and heavy water of the pool again, requested some willing hands to hurry quickly down and man the brook across to prevent the otter reaching the river.

I really am compelled to recount an amusing and ludicrous episode that now occurred. One of the stops told off to line the stream was energetically and grandilo-

quently admonishing each one of us, if we felt the otter against our legs, not to feel in the least degree nervous, and on no account to open our legs, as the otter would assuredly slip through. We stood like martyrs in a just cause, our nerves at extreme tension, biting our lips, and each mentally resolving that his legs should be eaten off piecemeal before he would open them. Presently our heroic mentor—our guide, philosopher, and friend—gave a nervous, gurgling gasp, exclaiming, “Ugh! I feel the otter,” at the same time promptly opening his legs, which the otter took advantage of and slipped through. For a week after, at least, our friend was the most silent and humble man in the three kingdoms.

Fortunately, notwithstanding this contretemps, the otter failed in his effort to reach the main river, for a few yards further down, as he vented, Charmer spots and nips him,

and for a second there are "ructions" between them, but it had the effect of turning him up stream. However, the end is rapidly approaching—time and again he is viewed. At last, at the bend of the stream he takes to land, and makes a bold dash across the marsh to make his point on the main river; but Nemesis, in the shape of one of the best packs of otter-hounds in England, is too close, and he is rolled over. "Whoop-whoop" after two and a half hours of real good hound work. He proved to be a very large dog-otter of 22 lb., and was duly broken up amidst great excitement and congratulations. And thus ended a rare good day's sport.

And now, in saying "farewell," I can only express a sincere hope that these halting chapters may have given a little pleasure to some few who have screwed up sufficient interest to wade through them—if so, I am

well satisfied. As for myself, it has been a pleasure and a labour of love to me to revive memories of many bright, happy days, and of dear, good old friends, some of whom, alas! have joined the ever-increasing majority.

FOOT HARRIERS

FOOT HARRIERS

IT is a somewhat difficult task, nowadays, to draw a distinction between beagles and foot harriers, for the former may measure up to 15 or 16 inches, whilst the latter vary from 16 up to 21 or 22 inches. Formerly the harrier was, to all intents and purposes, a dwarf fox-hound or a cross between a beagle and fox-hound. Of late years, however—say within the last twenty-five—great care has been exercised in the selection and breeding of harriers, so that now there is *not* such a great difficulty in procuring a change of blood; whereas in the old days fresh blood could only be obtained through the beagle and fox-hound cross. As regards

size for foot harriers, I think it is generally admitted that about 17 inches is the most suitable, for if much over this size they are too fast; they will race away and slip the field, pressing the hare too much, which is detrimental to true sport, from the pedestrian's point of view. The larger hounds of 18 to 20 inches would keep good horses galloping hard, and would kill a fox as quickly and certainly, and with as much dash, as many a pack of pure foxhounds. It is therefore obvious, and surely not presumptuous, to assume that great pace and dash are not necessary or required in foot harriers; for the great charm, and what makes hunting on foot so thoroughly enjoyable, is to see the close hunting of the pack, following the line and puzzling out all the intricate artifices adopted by the hare to save herself and baffle her pursuers. We want them, then, to "pack

closely," or in other words, not spread too widely. They should hunt patiently and slowly, working out the line of their own accord and on their own initiative, without "lifting" or "casting," except in the case of emergency or a bad "check."

As regards the hare, I think we may accept it as an axiom that she goes away *straight*, after being put up, as long as she is in view, and then commences to perform a variety of antics and dodges, such as doubling, crossing and recrossing her line, or taking a series of prodigious jumps to one side or the other; if near a broad bank, such as is common in the west of England, she will spring from a surprising distance on to the top of the bank, travel perhaps its whole length, and then take another enormous jump off it. On two occasions—once when out with the Roborough Harriers and once with the Taunton Vale—the writer has seen

a hunted hare take to water and "foot it" a considerable distance down a shallow running brook before emerging on *terra-firma* again. It has recently been my good fortune to inspect a remarkably smart, level, and workmanlike little pack of foot harriers—"The Crickhowell Harriers"—and I am indebted to the courtesy of the hon. Secretary for the following particulars concerning them, which I trust may prove of interest to my readers. The pack consists of fifteen and a half couple of old hounds and five and a half couple of new (this season) entries, and their standard of measurement is 17 to 18 inches for bitches, and $17\frac{1}{2}$ to $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches for dog-hounds. The country they hunt is so mountainous and hilly that riding to hounds would be neither pleasurable nor practicable, consequently they are hunted on foot. In passing, I may remark that the high ground

and summits of the hills afford a vantage-ground from whence the work of the hounds can be seen and their heart-stirring melody be heard by members of the fair sex, and those whose locks are sprinkled with the silver threads of Time, and whose activity is not commensurate with their will. The Crickhowell Harriers hunt two days a week, with an occasional by-day. Last season was very much broken by frost and impossible weather, but nevertheless thirty-nine hares were accounted for, and in 1900-1 there were forty-seven hares killed. Hare hunting with them ends about the first week in March, and after resting the hounds for a month, they hunt fox for a few weeks, and hunt to kill, as the foxes do such an immense amount of damage amongst the young lambs. On these occasions they meet as early as 5 *a.m.*, and kill every fox they possibly can. Foxhounds rarely, if ever, hunt the district.

The pack was established about twenty years ago by the present Master and two other gentlemen, the nucleus being a few couple from the north, augmented by drafts from Ireland, Llandovery, etc.

About the year 1894 the sole responsibility devolved upon the present Master, and he immediately, with characteristic energy and determination, set to work to improve the pack, sparing no pains to get the very best blood; and to quote the hon. Secretary's words—"He has greatly improved them both in appearance and working." The fact that impresses one most strongly on viewing these hounds on the flags is their wonderfully good legs and feet, and grand shoulders. It would be most difficult to pick out a single hound that does not possess these important points, and their symmetry catches the eye instantly. The thought at once flashes through one's mind

that infinite care and attention must have been taken to have made this pack so even and symmetrical and full of quality as it now is. I must now refer to individual hounds. Two dog-hounds—viz., “Landsman” and “The Clifton Dandy”—have done splendid service in transmitting their sterling qualities to their progeny in a marked degree. “Lecturer,” a four-year-old son of “Landsman,” out of “Wishful,” has, like his sire, been a great success at stud. “Domino,” by “The Clifton Dandy,” out of “Laughable,” is a very beautiful compact hound full of quality. Of the bitches, “Warbler,” by “Vagabond,” out of “Waggery,” caught my eye as a charming stamp; “Mermaid,” an all-white bitch, has a marvellous “cut-and-come-again” appearance, and I understand she is untiring, and no day is too long for her—she is by “Boddington Borderer,” out of “Brecon Merry Lass”; “Musical,” the

winning bitch puppy of this year, is an exceptionally taking and symmetrical hound, with irreproachable shoulders, legs, and feet. However, it is a hard and somewhat invidious task to pick out the plums from amongst such a galaxy of good ones. All connected with the Hunt are very proud indeed, as well they may be, of their little pack; but I must not omit to mention how much I was struck with the "apple-pie" order and most perfect cleanliness of the kennels all through; it was strong evidence that the Huntsman considered his duties a labour of love, and certainly every detail connected with his charges reflected the greatest credit upon him.

In conclusion, I must point out what I conceive to be the real secret of the success of this beautiful little pack. It is due to the simple fact that the Master is esteemed and respected by non-hunting

equally with hunting men, and his popularity is due to his happy knack of creating round him a wave of sympathy, and of saying the right thing at the right time and place. The tangible result is that a sportsmanlike spirit prevails and permeates through the whole district, and therefore hares are carefully, strictly, and loyally preserved by the farmers and others over whose lands the hounds hunt. The prospects for the coming season, I am pleased to hear, are quite excellent, as there are a goodly stock of hares about.

[I should have mentioned that "Landsman" is by "Lakeside Chorus," out of "Laura," who came from Mr. Martin Edward's pack.

"Clifton Dandy" was by Mr. Barclay's "Coroner," out of the Bentley "Damsel"; "Coroner" by Barclay's "Concord," out of Vaughan Pryse's "Judy"; "Damsel" by Heronder Hill "Pillager," out of Heronder Hill "Dewdrop."]

PSEUDONYMOUS FOOT BEAGLES

PSEUDONYMOUS FOOT BEAGLES

IN the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to describe what immense pleasure can be derived by pedestrians with a pack of small hounds that have been improved and brought to a high pitch of perfection by judicious management, and knowledge gained by experience. Let me now ask my readers to look at the other side of the picture, and allow me to show, by an imaginary description, how easily an established and good little pack may be broken up, and a number of people's pleasure be spoilt, by an inexperienced and vain fool taking upon himself duties which he does not understand, and for which Nature never intended him. I

cannot conceive that any man could possibly try to "fit the cap on," but as "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of," I feel constrained to point out that the following pages should be read *cum grano salis*, and as only intended to point a moral—"Pass the salt, please."

"It is a far cry to Loch Awe," and so it is to that delightful county of tin and pilchards, whose varied scenery and natural attractions are well-nigh unrivalled.

Let us assume that in this far west portion of bonnie England a delightful little pack of genuine foot beagles had been established for many a year. Suddenly, by some mysterious influence of Nature, a new Master of this pack has been projected into prominence—we will, for conciseness' sake, suppose that his elevation to such a giddy sphere of influence was due to feminine caprice. Again, let us imagine that, previous to his promotion by woman's

whim, he was also a Master—of caligraphy—and now, as then, he claims that *nihil quod tetigit non ornavit*.

Having, like the mushroom, suddenly and unexpectedly come to the surface, the soaring ambition of this masterful Master (he being a “Roturier,” with the usual *mauvais gout* of his class) looked upon *foot* beagles with contempt, notwithstanding the fact that for years before *he* “rose in the firmament” they had satisfied and given unmitigated pleasure to numbers of his betters (socially and mentally) of both sexes, who were unable to afford the luxury of a horse to ride. Wretched *foot* beagles were not good enough for him; he could afford *horses*, or at least the partner of his joys—who had been attracted by his kilt and caligraphy—could; and had he not, since his elevation, been practising riding a “Gee” (privately), so that he could really stick on a quiet horse if it went peacefully and smoothly,

and no evil-disposed person stuffed the back of his saddle with springs? Besides, of course, when he went a-hunting, someone would always catch the Master's horse when he kicked the animal over a fence before him; so why should he not blossom forth into a Master of something bigger and grander than those miserable little hounds which, poor devils, with a limited supply of the almighty dollar, ran after on foot? Ah! the pathos of it. We must now suppose that his—I mean his wife's—almighty dollars carried the day, and to gratify the ultra-snobbishness of one person who had been dragged up from his proper level to a position for which he was eminently unfitted—an individual, furthermore, who hardly knew one end of a hound from the other—the decree went forth, and a charming little pack was ruthlessly broken up and converted into a nondescript lot, which were neither harriers nor beagles, though by

a despicable misnomer they still retained the name of—Foot Beagles. Can one wonder that all classes of hunting men sneered, and that the better class were disgusted at such *gaucherie*? But what *does* it matter to our mushroom Master? He can now ride-a-cock-horse. Ride, did I say? Well, I will qualify that by saying that he can stay on a horse until, by the sweet will and gentle effort of the animal, he is deposited either in a furze bush or the mud from which he sprang. “To the West—to the West!” hasten, gentlemen, I pray you, if you possess hunting proclivities, and you will witness such a parody—a burlesque—of a good old English sport such as you cannot possibly imagine or conceive. If you cannot go, you will miss a unique revelation. But come, let us endeavour to describe, ever so lamely, one day’s experience for your edification.

“The Beagles will meet at the

Old Inn, at o'clock," has been announced, so "a-hunting we will go." On the appointed day, having donned knickerbockers and the most comfortable pair of old boots we possess, and having got outside a goodly portion of cold beef-steak pie and the contents of a coffee-pot, we make a start for the "rendezvous," and arriving punctually at the time appointed, found—ne'er a one. The weather was keenly cold, and it was useless to ape indifference, so we betook ourselves to the cosy inn, there to await developments; and the wait was long. At length we were roused from a pleasant reverie by the untuneful sound of a horn, unskilfully blown—a quaver—a semibreve—and a halt too many. . . . A hideous, blood-curdling yell followed, which sounded like—"Drop it, you brute; leave it, Gay-boy!"—then the crack of a whip, accompanied by the yelp of a wretched animal, assailed our ears.

We hastened out, and our astounded gaze fell upon a long, scraggy man, with a face like an east wind, seated, like a pair of animated tongs, on a meek-looking quad. But the pack, good lack!—we saw it not; surely that two and a half couple of wastrel harriers could not be *the* pack! Ah, no! for presently there came pottering up a few more so-called beagles, and then after an interval some more, accompanied by the two whips, riding in most delightfully leisurely fashion. Our scraggy friend with the face was wrathful.

“Hulloa! where the —— have you been? Why the —— did you not keep the hounds together? Don’t try your games on me. . . . I’m nae cannie to be trifled wi’,” etc., etc.

About half-a-dozen mounted men, chiefly farmers, came dribbling up. One stout old fellow, on rather a nice-looking mare, was

very merry about things in general. Bending over, he said in a low voice :

“ Look out for a show presently ; he ”— jerking his thumb towards the Master— “ knows less about the handling of hounds than my old mare does,” and then he gurgled and chuckled to himself till I feared he would roll out of his saddle.

At length the Master swung his eye round, and having noted that the whips had somewhat collected the pack and restored order, gave the signal, and we moved off down a short lane, then up over a granite boulder-strewn hill, and eventually on to a fine broad expanse of moor with two grand old tors in the distance, looking like giant sentinels keeping watch and ward over the wild expanse of moorland and bog. Shortly after commencing to draw a rabbit jumped up in view, and notwithstanding the efforts of the whips and the “ tootling ” of the

Master, more than half the pack ran "Brer rabbit" right merrily till he took refuge in a clitter of rocks. A short interval followed, and then a young farmer on the extreme right moved a hare from her form in a bunch of rushes. She sank the hill, and took a line across a nasty boggy bit of ground into some cultivated enclosures, which looked like an oasis in the midst of this bleak, wild stretch of country; she took us through three enclosures on to the moor again, and then made a ring back to the other side of the rising ground, near where she was found, thence into a furze brake, where she was unaccountably lost. Up to this point I am bound to confess the pack carried the line fairly well, and with plenty of music, though owing to the dismal inequality of size it was of the extreme straggling order, not at all like the proverbial "flock of pigeons," as the larger hounds simply raced away from their

smaller *confrères* till there was a fortunate check, then the "little 'uns" crept up singly and in couples, and it was one of the smallest, if not the smallest, that eventually hit off the line. It was lucky that the Master had not the remotest idea of either lifting the pack or making a cast, for had he attempted to do so, all would have ended in chaos and confusion there and then.

After puss was lost, then "the fun of the fair" commenced. The pack broke up in sections; some wandered hither, some thither—they were all over the moor. One whip was after two couple of hounds in one direction, the other was at another point of the compass, trying to turn another couple or so who were evidently heading for mutton, there being many sheep grazing in sight. Our elongated Master, with a purple-hued visage, was a sight for the gods, alternately blowing his horn and rating hounds, who

paid as little heed to him as they would to a lamp-post. It beggared description, and was too funny for words, but at the same time utterly pathetic to think that a grand old English sport should be prostituted by such an ignorant person. One gentleman, who had been a Master of Harriers for five-and-twenty years, said: "Good Gad, sir; good Gad! I have seen a sight such as I shall never forget as long as I live . . . the man must be mad or a born fool! He cannot ever have handled the pack before."

I corrected him on this point, as I had myself seen our Nimrod more than once, accompanied by his wife, exercising the hounds *himself* from the lofty eminence of a dog-cart, and it was currently reported that only a small portion of the pack returned to kennel with him, the result being that divers and sundry people complained of meat, butter, eggs, etc., being purloined and

demolished by *them basely 'ounds*. Think of it, fair sirs and noble huntsmen! Is not a man a genius who *can* exercise hounds from a dog-cart? Poor foot beagles! If they could speak, would they not tell the man that *La grande sagesse de l'homme consiste à connaître ses folles?*

BADGERS

BADGERS

CHAPTER I

FROM considerable correspondence that has from time to time appeared in the Press, it would seem that there is a wide divergence of opinion as to the destructive proclivities of the badger (*Taxus meles* or *meles vulgaris*). The writer having had some experience of this most interesting animal, is opposed to the theory that badgers are so destructive as is frequently represented, or that they attack poultry, and most naturalists whose opinion carry weight describe them as quiet, inoffensive animals.

The common badger is so completely nocturnal in its habits and so exceedingly

shy, that it is comparatively little known. It is a somewhat clumsy-looking animal, short-legged, with a tapering muzzle, a short tail, and covered all over with long, bristly hair of a dark grey colour; the head is white, except a black band on each side, extending nearly from the nose back to the ear, including the eye. The badger, like the bear, is "plantigrade"; it is a most rapid digger, and is provided with strong curved claws. The food of badgers consists of roots, fruit, small mammals, frogs, beetles, larvæ of sorts, and they vary their *menu* with pheasant, partridge, and other eggs, when they can get them. Hence many keepers whose beats are in a locality frequented by badgers consider them vermin, and wage war on them accordingly; but this is regrettable, as the mischief caused by badgers is really infinitesimal as compared with the destructiveness of winged and

other vermin. The badger makes a large burrow or earth, at the end of which there is a considerable space bedded with grass, hay, and leaves. The female, about March or April, produces three or four young, and when these are about eight weeks old they are delightful little creatures, and can be easily tamed. Though quiet, retiring, and inoffensive in its habits, it defends itself skilfully, and with great courage, biting savagely, and retaining its grip with tenacity, the muscles of the jaw being immensely powerful, and its strength very great. On account of its vigorous fighting powers, it was used in former times for what was termed "badger-baiting," a hideously cruel proceeding, which happily is not now either permissible by law or countenanced by public opinion.

Where badgers are supposed to do mischief, or when a specimen is required for scientific

purposes, there are several methods of taking them, but the usual plan is either to hunt them by night with hounds, after first stopping the earths, as they do in East Devon and West Somerset, or with good game terriers, as they do in rough, broken ground and rocky districts. The second method, where the earths or burrows are favourably situated for the purpose, is to dig or trench for them by day, a good terrier having first been sent into the earth to prevent the badger from digging and burying himself, which he can do rapidly and skilfully. The terrier, if he is a good one, and well entered to badger, "lies up," as it is termed, to the badger, and the sounds of conflict indicate to the pursuers in which direction they must trench for their quarry. In both these methods of attack with terriers it is essential, and of supreme importance, that the dogs used should be well entered to

badger, and thoroughly game, reliable and enduring. In order to illustrate these methods of taking badgers, the following description of a night hunt with terriers will give a fair idea of the usual procedure, and a successful day's trenching may prove of interest in another chapter.

On the south-eastern fringe of Dartmoor there is a quaint little moorland village, and situated due south of the village is a charming little shooting-box, perched on very high ground in beautiful wild scenery, surrounded by thickly-wooded goyles, with here and there huge masses of grey rocks piled one on the other in fantastic confusion. Among the rocky boulders that lie scattered about this neighbourhood in such profusion, a colony of badgers have for years made their stronghold; and in the deep and dark woods which abound on either side of the goyles or valleys they make their nightly excursions in search

of sweethearts, food, and such like dainties. From the nature of the ground it is absolutely impossible to trench for the badgers, and therefore the only plan is to "go for them" with terriers at night. One morning a communication was received from a good old sporting Devonshire farmer, one of the real genuine old stamp, that there were evident signs of a good many badgers about, and that his old sheep-dog had a rare "rough and tumble" with a big one in one of the goyles. Preparations and minor details having been satisfactorily arranged with a couple of friends, intimation was sent to good old Farmer Tom to meet on a certain night and to bring the badger tongs (for "tailing" a badger on a dark night is something more than risky).

On the appointed night three of us started just as the moon began to rise, for we had an

uphill four-mile drive before us. We were accompanied by three terriers, viz., Trap, a smooth fox-terrier, with a soupçon of bull in him ; Blarney, a well-bred young Irishman ; and Turk, as plucky and smart a wire-haired fox-terrier as any man could possibly desire. These three were "old hands," and well up to their work, and from their exuberant expressions of delight seemed to know what was up. "All things have an end" is a trite but true saying, and the end of that four miles of hill at last showed up. To give an idea of how formidable this was, one of the party, who hailed from Galway, pathetically inquired : "Does this hill go down the other side?"

Tom was waiting, so we lost no time in taking out the mare, and the moon being then well up, our guide thought we had better keep the dogs in, go down to the biggest earths and stop them, then

come back, loose the terriers, work the woods above the road first, and then, if we did not find, cross to the lower wood and on to the goyles below it. The top or upper wood was drawn blank ; in the wood below the road Blarney and Trap got a line (Turk at the time was hunting to the right), and away they went down the footpath leading towards the brook, where they were joined by Turk, and the three dashed across the brook and up over the mound which separated some comparatively open ground from a small narrow goyle, thickly covered with undergrowth and huge boulders of rock.

The dogs apparently divided here, Blarney going down the goyle, and the other two keeping along the ridge of the mound ; but presently we hear Blarney has found and got him. Ye gods ! what a row. Growl, grunt, grunt ; worry, worry, worry ! Trap

and Turk hear the shindy, and down they fly to their pal. We bipeds scramble down as best we can through briars, over boulders, and slip into all manner of diabolical holes and crevices ; and how on earth we reached the scene of action without becoming fit and proper subjects for a coroner and his jury, goodness only knows. However, we got there, and what do we see?—a struggling mass of vitality—rolling, twisting, and tumbling about ; we hear a disgraceful amount of dog swearing, and we smell—well, there's not a particle of doubt about it—we do smell an awful aroma, thick enough to cut with a bread-knife, which is not *Ess Bouquet* or *Frangi-pani* ; but not a sound do we hear from Brock. (This, I should mention, is the old Celtic name for the badger, and is used to this day in Scotland and the north of England.) He is “biding a wee.” Presently Habet ! for Blarney, in

trying for a better grip, lets go, and immediately gives vent to a sound of mild expostulation and astonishment, the badger having seized the opportunity, given by a roll over a small rock, to nail Blarney by the fleshy part of his hindquarters. But Blarney stuck to his work with a vengeance, the result being that in a few moments the badger began to what Tom terms "squawle," so we watched an opportunity, got the tongs on him, tailed off the dogs, and dropped friend badger into an empty sack.

Our next proceeding was to overhaul, inspect, and repair damage sustained by our plucky little four-footed allies. Poor old Trap had a nasty one right over the eye; Blarney's only severe wound was in the least honourable portion of his body, but was of little consequence; nor was Turk much damaged, though he seemed to have

a considerable amount of paint and patch-work across his nose, he and the badger having evidently been dovetailed. We carried Trap, and started back to have the mare put in, but *en route* Blarney and Turk disappeared; we heard them with another badger close to the earth we had stopped. We hurried up and found it was a young one, about half-grown, which we promptly rescued. This was probably the one Turk and Trap took the line of when the dogs divided, just before Blarney got hold of the big one. Haying got the mare in, dogs made comfortable, badgers safely stowed away, and bade good old Tom "Good-night" and "*Au revoir*," we started homeward, well content.

I may mention that six months after capture the big badger effected his escape from durance vile, but the really curious incident was that the young badger became

very tame, and on most amicable terms with Turk, his captor. Turk never lost his temper with his odd chum, but woe betide a strange badger that crossed his path.

CHAPTER II

TRENCHING FOR BADGERS

THIS plan of taking badgers involves harder manual labour than hunting them by night, but as the actual work is done in daylight and the whole process is apparent, it is certainly much pleasanter and is nearly as exciting, especially towards the finish. It need not be assumed that cruelty is involved in the proceedings, for the badger is so well protected by Nature with means of offence and defence that it is seldom if ever that one is injured, even slightly. The terriers certainly do get touched up a bit occasionally, but not more, if as much, than in an ordinary "scrap"—for friendship's sake—

with one of their own kith and kin; and one has only to notice their demonstrations of pleasure when in the proximity of a badger's earth to feel assured that they enjoy the excitement equally as much as a healthy young fellow does a keenly contested game of football.

As I mentioned in my previous chapter, plucky, reliable terriers are a *sine qua non*, and essential to success in trenching for badgers, for they have to enter the earth and follow the run or runs until they find, and when they find must communicate the fact by "giving tongue." Many people imagine that the terrier, the moment he gets up to the badger, enters into a sanguinary and deadly conflict with it, but this is an utterly erroneous idea; a terrier that would "tackle" in such a manner would not be "worth his salt" for trenching work. The duties of the terrier are—first, by

incessant barking to guide the trenchers to the position occupied by the quarry; and second, to rivet the badger's attention by barking and snapping at it to prevent it from digging and burying itself. As a matter of fact, a terrier is wanted and intended to harass its enemy, not to seize and hang on like a bull-dog. It frequently happens that a large, fierce badger will make repeated rushes at the dog to try and "drive" him. There is nothing tests a terrier's grit and pluck so much as this, for if the terrier should be soft and not thoroughly game, these tactics of the enemy simply demoralise him, and he "throws up the sponge" and comes out. On the other hand, a plucky and reliable dog will slowly retire before the rush, disputing every inch, and when the badger returns to his old quarters, will follow and resume his former attacking

position—this is what is termed “lying up” well.

The necessary tools in trenching are picks, shovels, and crowbars, and the badger tongs should not be forgotten, for often a badger is located in such a position in the earth that it is a sheer impossibility to “tail” him, *i.e.*, to lift him up by his scrubby, short tail, head downwards and at arm’s length, to be dropped expeditiously into a sack. In digging your trenches, the utmost care should always be taken to keep the runs and means of exit perfectly clear and open, as well as all the branches from the main run; any carelessness or disregard of this may involve the loss of a good and valued old four-footed friend, by unintentionally stopping him up in some side run. Never permit more than one dog in the earth at a time, for “as sure as fate,” if two dogs get into the same earth together they will fight

like demons and neglect the badger, who will assuredly bury himself. The best and safest plan is to keep all the terriers, except the one in use, chained up at a distance from the earth. The above are general details, but will serve, perhaps, to make clear the following particular account of a memorable day's trenching.

"The boy is waiting for an answer," was the announcement as a note was handed to the writer asking him to join with his two terriers, Slick and Turk, in a trenching expedition on the following day. The scene of operations was in South Devon, not a hundred miles from Totnes. Needless to say, the invitation was accepted with alacrity. The following morning saw four of us and five terriers driving to the "rendezvous," where men with the requisite tools had been ordered to meet us. During the drive we experienced the truth of the

old adage that "dogs delight to bark and bite," for it required some little exertion on our part to maintain discipline, and keep the peace amongst our four-footed coadjutors. Having reached our destination and found the men waiting, we interviewed the keeper as to the prospect of a "find," and were assured by him that there were several badgers about. There were two separate earths on the side of a lovely valley, through which ran a charming stream, well stocked with good trout, the earths being about half a mile apart. It was decided, after some discussion, to make a start at the smaller and nearer one, and a terrier named Grip having been selected, the others were coupled up, much to their evident disgust.

Grip, a rough terrier, with good head and jacket, but wretched legs and feet, went to ground in good form, and we waited anxiously; in a minute, or perhaps less,

he came back, unable to find. In order, however, to make doubly sure, Turk was called up and put in to make further investigation, but he also returned and reported "not at home." Pipes being duly set going, we made our way to the big earth, and on arrival there was not the shred of a doubt that it had been used a good deal and quite recently, so our hopes promised to be speedily realised. To Grip was again accorded the honour of primary investigation, and he disappeared with eagerness; we listened intently, but for a few minutes could hear nothing. Presently we heard him lifting his tongue, and there was an immediate and general exclamation, "He's found, thank goodness!"

The earth, though a large one, was easy and good trenching ground, and ran in straight as far as we could see, inclining slightly upwards under a broad bank, which

divided the field we were in from another. To our immense disgust, hardly had we commenced to open up the entrance of the earth a bit when Grip reappeared, not a scratch on him; but disinclined, for some reason or other, to go to earth again. No time was to be lost, so we hastily decided that old Slick, the hero of a score of badger hunts, should be entered. No sooner said than done, and Slick was on his way rejoicing. We felt there was no question as to his "lying up" and staunchness.

Precious soon we hear the old fellow's music, and the work of trenching commenced energetically. How those men did work! One would think they were digging for diamonds. We each and all took a turn with pick or shovel, but the men who were used to the tools did more in five minutes than our united efforts could accomplish in treble the time. We had opened up a good

length of the run, and now stopped work for an instant to listen. Yes! the old dog was still at it, but now and then we heard a rattle and rush; then after an interval of a second or two Slick would be up at him again. His tongue seemed further away, and we discovered the run bent to the right, passing under the bank dividing the fields. On getting over the bank and listening we could hear them; so we decided to sink a trench in the next field, and at last we got down to the run, and found all clear both in front and behind.

Slick had been underground for nearly an hour, so we wished to get him out and rest him and give another terrier a turn. At last, after much calling and whistling, the old dog came out, very hot, and bearing evidence that he had done his duty, and kept the badger too much occupied to dig. Now, we knew Turk was reliable and

staunch, but a wish was expressed to try the other two terriers we had brought with us, and who, like the algebraical letter "x," were unknown quantities. Well, to cut a long story short, they were tried, and both proved utter frauds, and were found wanting in every attribute of a working terrier, though with pedigrees as long as a rope-walk; so the only solution of the difficulty was to let little Turk go in, and in half of no time we fully realised that he, at any rate, was quite "at home," but evidently, from the sound, a long way off. Our only chance, until we could hear them more distinctly, was to follow on the "run," and we worked like niggers. It is well known that an iron bar, if one end is placed in or on the ground and one's ear rested on the other end, will convey sound from underground in a remarkable manner. One of the party had been trying with a bar along the supposed direction of

the "run," when suddenly he exclaimed: "Here they are, right under me!" and there was not a particle of doubt about it.

It is always dangerous to sink a trench right over the animals, for there is a chance of burying or damaging the dog, but by cutting a cross trench you leave a free exit, and get to the dog and badger without danger. We started the cross trench, and each minute the sounds became more and more distinct, until at length we cut fair across the main run, and there, about a yard in, we could see Turk's tail. Carefully we opened up, and took the little chap out, much to his disgust, and then we could see the badger—a regular father of all badgers. Now was the critical moment, and excitement ran high; we had the badger tongs, but the beast was in such a position that it was impossible to effectively use them. An

opportunity, however, offered, which was instantly seized, and so was the tail of the badger, by a good man and true. Then followed a prodigious tug-of-war, which ended in favour of the six-foot-two son of Anak, and the badger was neatly deposited in the sack awaiting his reception.

Before concluding, a short digression must be made to point out a peculiarity to the reader. If two badgers are in one earth, and one is taken out, the second will, nine times out of ten, bolt. So it was in this case. Whilst we were congratulating ourselves and letting loose our faithful little allies, Turk thought he would investigate a little further. Suddenly there was a row, and out bolted badger No. 2. There was a wood not a hundred yards to our right, on the further side of which was a rough and very steep path, bounded by a high bank. Towards this wood the badger made for all he was

worth, followed by the terriers (even the frauds) and men. The writer ran as hard as he could leather along the top of the wood and down this path to cut off the retreat. He could hear the musical cry approaching, when suddenly pursued and pursuers—a tangled mass—came rolling like animated furies towards him. His frantic efforts to escape only landed him in fresh difficulties, for as Fate decreed, a treacherous bush hurled him backwards into misfortune and the midst of the shindy. With unprecedented agility, but with a pallid cheek and dewy brow, he arose, and notwithstanding his abominable funk, tailed the villainous badger, amidst peals of rude and boisterous laughter. And so ended a jolly day.

CHAPTER III

SINCE writing the foregoing chapters, certain facts have come to my knowledge which have quite shaken my belief in the harmlessness and innocence of badgers as regards destruction of poultry ; indeed, I have received such strong proofs of their guilt in this respect from an unquestionable and unimpeachable authority, that to my great regret I have to admit a very strong case has been made out against them. I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. J. P. Murray, of Welcombe, Bude, for supplying me with information which forms the basis of a severe indictment against them, and I cannot do better than quote half-a-dozen of the charges which this gentleman

has most kindly taken the trouble to authenticate and verify :

“At a place called Bradworthy, several farmers complained to the clergyman of the parish of the serious damage done by the badgers amongst their poultry, and showed the remains of partially eaten fowls.”

“In the adjoining parish of Morwenstow a lamb was killed and partly eaten—two badgers being caught in the act.”

“In the same parish—and this case is vouched for by the clergyman of the parish—a farmer was much troubled by the badgers which got into his mangold fields, and caused a great amount of damage to the mangold. He took his gun with him on one occasion, and sighted *three* badgers in one of his fields ; he shot one, whereupon the other two attacked him savagely. He had to defend himself with the stock of his gun, which he broke in so

doing, and got away with difficulty. He afterwards secured the one he had shot, and presented the skin to the above-named clergyman. This case is peculiarly interesting to me, as I never remember hearing of any one being attacked by badgers in such a manner before; probably this one the farmer shot was a young one, and the others the parents."

"In the parish of Welcombe there are a great number of badgers, owing to the fact of there being good cover, and they are never hunted, and seldom disturbed in any way. A number, however, are annually caught in rabbit gins—those most horrible instruments of torture. One farmer stated that he had caught at least half-a-dozen in this way—by placing the *gins* carefully hidden and well secured—round his poultry houses. Another farmer living at Well Farm lost fowls and turkeys to the value of several pounds in a

comparatively short space of time. Nine young fowls which he had placed together, intending to take them to market the following day, were killed and partly eaten by badgers in one night. They always managed to "clear out" before the farmer could get a fair shot at them, till one Sunday morning he saw one in the yard, close to the poultry house, so seizing his gun and loading as he ran, he took a short cut to the place where he knew the badger would pass, and shot him. This was several months ago, and since then he has lost no more fowls."

"Another farmer at Lana, in the same parish, hearing his fowls making a great row early one morning, looked out of his window and saw a badger. He got his gun and ran out just in time to shoot the marauder in the act of tearing a hen to pieces."

"A woman called Elizabeth Box had lost

a considerable number of fowls, which the badgers got at by burrowing under the coops and tearing down wire - netting. Early one morning she got down in time to secure the badger in the coop by pushing it against a wall. Her young son went to her landlord, who lived a short distance away. On his arrival they could not persuade the badger to leave the coop, so he just placed the muzzle of his gun into the coop and shot the creature where he was."

The above cases seem to leave no possibility of doubt as to the destructiveness of my friends the badgers, so regretfully I have to admit that precious strong evidence has been brought to bear against them. I am sorry, because from their nocturnal habits they are so little known to the generality of people, whilst to those, like myself, who are more or less intimate with them, they are

intensely interesting, so that I would infinitely rather have continued to believe that they were not guilty, and incapable of such evil deeds. Like the man of Argos, I am brought to my right senses, and can only say :

“ Pol, me occidistis, amici,
Non servastis ” ait, “ cui sic extorta voluptas
Et demptus per vim mentis gratissimus error.”

GROUSE SHOOTING IN IRELAND
OVER DOGS

GROUSE SHOOTING IN IRELAND OVER DOGS

AT the latter end of August of the year 188— I was staying with my old friend B—— in Ireland, and by good fortune the grouse had done fairly well that year, the breeding season having been favourable, and we had had two or three good days' sport previous to the one I will now endeavour to describe. The scene of operations was a short range of mountain-land well covered with heather, the plateau or table-land being undulating, though in places broken by sharply-defined ravines and short, rocky valleys. As the bottom of these ravines the ground was generally boggy, and good holding ground for snipe, and an occasional

cock later on in the season. A brace of Irish setters, named Rake and Quail, were sent on in a cart with the lunch to the extreme point of our day's beat ; whilst another brace, Darby and Moll, and a grand, steady old retriever called Darkie, accompanied us, to commence operations. I must not omit to mention Mat, our game-carrier, a most active fellow, brimming over with the love of sport, which is so characteristic of most Irishmen.

We duly arrived on our ground, and Darby and Moll were cast off ; both were fast and fairly wide rangers, but perfectly staunch and reliable. B—— took the right, and I was on the left, Mat walking in between us and working the dogs. First blood fell to B——, who got a long shot at five birds which got up wild on his right front without a point, and he nailed one. About three hundred yards further, at the

base of a steep mound or big hillock, Moll "roded" some fifty or sixty yards and then came to a beautiful steady point, Darby backing in fine style about twenty paces to the rear. It was a most charming sight to see those two beautiful creatures standing as if carved out of stone, not a hair or muscle moving, except a slight motion of dear old Moll's muzzle as she inhaled the scent of the birds. A nice little pack of some dozen birds rose, out of which I, being better placed, was lucky enough to get a brace. B—— accounted for one, missing a difficult low crossing shot with his left. Passing over this rising ground, we came on the other side to a comparatively bare space of about a couple of acres, where the heather had been burnt the previous year, and out of a patch of heather which had escaped the flames a single bird rose, which B—— stopped. We now had to

cross a small valley, and on the way over this boggy piece, B—— got a couple of snipe, wiping my eye handsomely over both of them. For the next quarter of an hour, though we passed over some likely-looking holding ground, not a point did we get nor a feather did we see. Working upwards, Moll at length pegged birds, and out of about a dozen which rose, we each got a brace. The birds here were evidently more numerous than we had hitherto found them, for in a comparatively short time we had added four-and-a-half brace to our bag. Time was also flying, so we headed straight for lunch, and *en route*, both Moll and Darby got independent points at the same moment. This was an *embarras de richesse*, but the difficulty was solved by B—— serving Moll's point, and I attended to Darby. The result was a brace of birds to B——, and I got a single old cock which got up with an awful

clatter and fuss; he was a very dark and ancient gentleman, and paid the penalty of, for once in his life, having been caught napping. Our invigorating exercise had induced a splendid appetite and a most excellent thirst. A keen sporting old friend of mine used to say that he ate to shoot. I cannot endorse his sentiments, and must confess to more epicurean tastes. B—— also was a degenerate disciple of the pleasant old philosopher, and between us a goodly store of viands imparted their cheerfulness.

I really must ask permission to say a few words about our game-carrier and kennelman, for if ever a man could flatter in a shameless and flagrant manner that was the man. He seemed to think it his duty to lay it on thick, and that we were like a certain sportsman of fiction, whom we all venerate, and who said: "I can stand a

wast o' praise, you can h'oil me h'uncommon," for the amount of macassar Mat applied when either of us made a tolerably decent shot was astounding and enervating.

On one occasion a single bird got up on B——'s right, giving him a moderately easy shot, which he promptly availed himself of. Mat immediately exclaimed: "By this and by that, it's your honour's the beautiful gunner; troth, it's no use the crathers gitting up forninst ye at all, at all, for they just come down agen at wanst, quiet and aisy." However, with all his blarney, Mat was an honest, hard-working, decent boy.

After a restful smoke we made a fresh start, working over fresh ground and round a rather high peak, which rose from the farther edge of the plateau. Moll and Darby were taken home, and Rake and Quail were put to work; the former was rather a small and mean-looking dog,

with a white blaze down his face and four white feet, but he was a demon for work, and had a splendid nose. Quail was, as far as looks went, the handsomer of the two, but a very shy animal, though staunch enough, and had a habit which I detest of dropping flat on her "point." This is all very well on open ground, but in thick heather or high turnips it is an abominable nuisance; one loses sight of the dog, and wonders where on earth the animal is, and after hunting for it till your patience is exhausted you stumble into the birds, which rise all around you only to be clean missed, and there's your lost dog "pointing" within ten yards of where the birds rose. To lose your temper will only make "confusion worse confounded," so the only thing to do is to register a solemn vow never again to own a dog which drops to its "point."

We had gone about a quarter of a mile

when Quail stops dead and slowly sinks down. Rake comes rushing along, but a sharp whistle and upheld hand checks him instantly, and catching sight of Quail's head, and perhaps winding the birds at the same moment, he becomes rigid as a graven image. We both walk up, and a splendid lot of birds—about fifteen or sixteen—get up. I get a brace, and B—— killing his first bird turns on another, and just as he pulls the trigger another bird crosses the one he is aiming at, and down comes both. Both my birds were gathered, and then I witnessed a real clever performance on old Darkie's part. We went straight to where B——'s first bird fell, picked it up, carried it across to where the other two birds fell, and after making a cast or two, found them and brought all three *together*—two by their necks and one by the wing—to B——'s hand. I had heard of several instances where retrievers had done

similar clever work, but though I have seen thousands of heads of game shot, this was the sole and only instance in my life that I had personally witnessed such a sagacious and clever act on the part of a retriever. Mat had fortunately marked down this last lot of birds in some high heather, so we marched straight for them, and finding them a bit scattered, we accounted for two brace more out of them, and ought to have had another had I not missed a right and left disgracefully. However, I must curtail my account, or I fear I shall utterly exhaust my readers' patience and interest. Before reaching the end of the beat, Rake had found two lots more, but we only got a brace out of the first, and a brace and a half out of the second lot; however, as can be imagined, we were right well contented, for the birds had lain well, and the whole four dogs had worked

admirably. Our total bag was eighteen brace of grouse, the couple of snipe, and a mountain hare which I shot just after lunch, but forgot to mention. Of course, this is really not much of a bag, but for a moderate-sized shoot where the birds are none too numerous, and considering that we were shooting it a second time over dogs, I think we were almost justified in being somewhat elated; at any rate, B—— and I were well pleased.

In conclusion, may I, as an old-fashioned sportsman, be granted an indulgence for expressing a belief that there is infinitely more real happiness and enjoyment to be got out of shooting over dogs than *can* be obtained in grouse driving. I admit, most fully, that an immense bag can be made by driving if conducted in a methodical and tactical manner, but does the big head of game killed compensate for the pleasure of

seeing your well-broken, intelligent dogs work? Do the men who shoot, or perhaps I should say the majority of men who shoot, know one atom or tittle about the habits of the game they slaughter? Would they know even where to look for their game if they were dependent on themselves? I'm afraid my opinions are rank heresy to the modern shooting man, but I've loved dogs all my life, and my pleasure has been to see them work and note their sagacity and cleverness, and I hope as long as I live to retain the same sentiments and opinion.

ST. GILES' DAY

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THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER

THE First of September. Years come and go. Old friends whose hearts and hopes beat time with ours are gone to their long rest; white hairs mingle with our black or brown locks, yet our pulse beats quicker, and youthful hopes and anticipations revive with the perennial return of the First. Many years ago the First was looked forward to with quite as much interest as the Twelfth of August is now by the same class of sportsmen, but railways have brought the heather into competition with the stubble, perhaps to the slight detriment of the latter as regards the attractiveness of the sport to be obtained

thereon. What the Twelfth is to those favoured by fortune the First is to the many ; it is the staple amusement of middle-class sportsmen, or the great mass of them, at all events, and of many, too, of the higher rank. It is a great day in English sporting life, and long may it continue so, especially as other kinds of shooting become less and less accessible to the general public, for partridge shooting can be indulged in and enjoyed, not on a grand scale, of course, but by every owner or lessee of five or six hundred acres. Yes, it is in truth the shooting man's festival. There is an ineffable charm about the month of September, with its keen, bright mornings, the fragrant air, the woods changing—red, russet, and brown ; the orchards rich with their burthen of ripe fruit, and the hedges and brakes hung with their harvest of luscious blackberries. ' All Nature wears " a sweet, attractive grace."

The pursuit of the partridge has passed through a variety of phases; changes in agriculture have so altered the conditions of the sport that Poor Sancho and Carlo are now in a great measure discarded, instead of being welcomed and valued as intelligent coadjutors. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis.* Alas! my years are progressing all too rapidly, for I can remember the days of the muzzle-loader, of the long hand-reaped stubbles, tangled turnips, straggling hedgerows, and patches of rough, sedgy grass, and then I was filled with keen and genuine delight by the spectacle of my dog's work, for there was a fair scope to test their abilities and sagacity. This is the kind of shooting to which many good and genuine sportsmen even now look back with regret, but this generation of old sportsmen is gradually having its ranks thinned by that "devourer of all things—

Time." About one generation has passed away since the first signs of the approaching change, and the process contemplated by "The Northern Farmer" with such horror has become general — "the huzzing and muzzing of the blessed fealds" is rampant in the land, so the fascination of shooting over dogs has well-nigh departed except in some few favoured districts. Years come and go, and fresh faces appear, and the old days have vanished, but it is pleasant in these modern days to hark back and ruminate over the methods adopted in the departed days of our forbears in the pursuit of the partridge. Our ever-beloved Sir Roger de Coverley netted them, and netting with setters was continued down to the end of the Nineteenth Century, and a good description of the plan adopted may be found in the "Sportsman's Dictionary or Country Gentleman's Companion." Then came the flint

age, a slow but sure process as far as the killing was concerned, but somewhat erratic if the annoyance of miss-fires is considered.

Gilbert White mentions that in 1740-41 partridges were so plentiful in Wolmer Forest that parties of unreasonable sportsmen killed twenty and sometimes thirty brace in a day. Flint and steel locks were used by Pitt in his happy days at Wolmer, and Fox, when he went out early in the morning at Holkham, and took so much milk-punch before breakfast that he was obliged to return home and go to bed.

The next forward step was the percussion cap, which marks a distinct advance. The guns were also made much lighter, and could be raised to the shoulder quicker. This would be somewhere about the year 1830. Men then became adepts at flying shots. The next forward movement came approximately about thirty years later, and

with the introduction of the breech-loader for game shooting, driving was adopted. This plan of killing game could not have been practised with the muzzle-loader to any great extent ; but directly it was found that with the new weapon a man could get many more shots at a driven covey than he could at one rising in front of him, partridge shooting was revolutionised, and dogs—*i.e.*, pointers and setters—were no longer looked upon as necessary ; indeed, they are now, I am afraid, except in rare cases, relegated to the limbo of things useless and unfashionable. Was it not Mr. Stuart-Wortley who lamented that in average partridge shooting the pointer could no longer be employed, because he has become unfashionable, and unnecessary to the large and carefully organised parties which go in for killing five or six hundred brace in a day by an entirely new process? Now this is the

very crux of the argument against driving partridges adopted by old-fashioned sportsmen; but I must, in justice, say that modern writers of authority on field sports who are genuine and good all-round sportsmen know that both the old style and the new style have a good deal to say for themselves.

ON THE BORDERS OF DARTMOOR
WITH THE PARTRIDGES

ON THE BORDERS OF DARTMOOR WITH THE PARTRIDGES

LAST season, towards the end of September, I received an invitation from an old friend, who has a large extent of rough shooting on the fringe of Dartmoor, to come and shoot a wild outlying beat with him. In his note my friend stated: "I can show you a very fair lot of birds, but they know precious well how to take care of themselves, so we shall have our work cut out to circumvent them; but you are sound on your pins, and won't shy at that." I am a poor man, and though not absolutely destitute, am very far removed from being overburdened with the good things of this world, so, needless to say, I mentally blessed my friend, and hastened to

accept his kind invitation. I was quite prepared for a pipe-opener, for I knew the ground; and my friend the Skipper, in addition to being a nailing good shot, was a rare fast walker, and as good a stayer as a Grand National winner. The eventful day arrived, and such a day as it was—blowing a perfect hurricane—and with heavy torrential showers at pretty frequent intervals; in fact, the sort of day one would infinitely rather be looking out of one's club-room window than braving the elements on Dartmoor, and chasing wild partridges up and down goyles and hills.

A short railway journey, and I detrained to find a trap waiting for me, and soon I was bowling along to my destination. The Skipper and his wife gave me a kindly welcome, the latter murmuring something about a lunatic asylum, and demented to dream of shooting in such fearful weather;

however, my host was keen, and so was I. We therefore proceeded at our best pace to do justice to the hospitality of my hostess, in order to lay in a good foundation for the hard day's work ahead of us. Having sent round word to Charles, the keeper, that we were ready, and to bring on Sam and Don, a brace of rare good-looking English setters—the former a first-season puppy and the latter a third-season dog—we started, and in due course reached our beat.

The first field we tried—a stubble on the edge of the moor—was blank, as was a rough grass field adjoining. Our idea was to beat all the cultivated ground under the lee or sheltered side of a big moorland stretch, which was crowned by a grand and venerable-looking tor, and then work back over the moor itself. The third field we entered was a large swede turnip-field, and hardly had the dogs commenced to range

when a covey of nine rose out of shot, wild as the proverbial hawk, and proving the truth of the old adage—"Wild day, wild birds." However, these particular birds were most accommodating, for they swung round the brow of the hill on which the turnip-field was situated, and dropped in the lower end of the same field. Both dogs had dropped to wing, so "hold up" was the order of the day. Our second venture at this covey met with more success. Don found them beautifully, and was equally well backed by the puppy. We each dropped a brace, but unfortunately one of mine was a runner, and luckily the only strong runner we had all day. This contretemps caused us some slight delay, as the wily little beggar had gone to earth in a rabbit burrow, but was duly brought to bag. Three more fields were blank, with the exception of a land-rail, which was considerate enough not to run

much, and getting up an easy shot, was promptly cut down. Now we came to a long, rough grass field with rushes at the bottom, and the keeper opined we might find two coveys. Well, we found one large covey; the Skipper got his right and left, and I killed one bird, and tailored the other shamefully, and this occurred three or four times. Old Charles looked mighty indignant, and shouted in smothered anger: "Better miss 'em right out; them birds be gwine awaay to doie." The Skipper remarked: "What's up, old chap? That's not your usual form." Suddenly it flashed through my mind that I had in my hurry probably brought away some lightly loaded cartridges which we had used for young rook shooting, and on investigation this proved to be the case. My cartridge bag was emptied and sorted out, the offensive cartridges being deposited in Charles' capacious pocket.

After this things were satisfactory both to myself and the birds, for I killed them clean and well, notwithstanding their wildness; indeed, when they got up and went down-wind one needed to be almost as quick as greased lightning. Up to lunch-time we had very pretty sport, the chief drawback being, of course, the abominable weather. Scent, however, was good, and in sheltered places the birds lay fairly well, the dogs worked admirably; the Skipper shot, as usual, like a book. Our bag for the morning was twelve and a half brace of partridges, one land-rail, and a couple of rabbits. After refreshing the inner man, and negotiating the necessary digestive pipe, we made a start again.

Our beat now lay over a considerable portion of the rough unenclosed land, composed of gorse and heather, with here and there huge boulders — their grey

heads towering skywards, and looking weird and dignified amongst the yellow and purple bloom of the gorse and heather. We did not now find nearly so many birds as we did on the cultivated land, but those we did find lay very well. It was delightful to watch the work of the dogs, to note how carefully and systematically they quartered their ground, fair independent range, as staunch on their point as possible, no jealousy, and promptness in backing. Only once did I notice Sam fail to instantly "back" Don, and then it struck me the puppy, who was carrying a high head, had winded the birds without being able to exactly locate them, and did not see Don, who was below him, until he was almost atop of him, but he dropped like a shot to hand, and when he saw the old dog standing as stiff as a poker, poor Sam looked most wretchedly ashamed.

I noticed a rather unusual peculiarity that day—at any rate, one that had never struck me so vividly before—and it was noticeable in a very marked degree, whether owing to the very high wind, I cannot say: it was that in nearly every single case each bird that was killed, the instant they were struck, seemed to balance themselves on their wings for a second, and jerk their legs straight out before tumbling head over heels. I made one very pretty shot (I suppose, like all old sportsmen, I make a mental note of any personal performance that gratifies me.)

We were going down a heather-clad mound, when suddenly Sam turned almost on his tail into a beautiful circular “point.” The Skipper was some distance off to my right and rather below me, and he beckoned me to go and serve the puppy’s “point.” As I neared the dog I heard a bird get up behind me which I must have almost trod

on. I swung round and cut him down, and in the act of pulling the trigger I heard another bird get up in front of Sam, so I twisted sharp back and bowled it over with the second barrel. The Skipper was delighted, and shouted his congratulations. There were only these two birds, and we came to the conclusion that they were part of a covey we had broken up on the higher ground. The day was on the wane, and I was getting terribly leg weary, so I was anything but sorry when the order was given to make homewards. On the way down the Skipper killed a single old bird and I nailed a rabbit, and this was the final shot. I was tired, the dogs had had enough, Charles said he was dead-beat, and all his "westcut buttins was blode horf." The Skipper, a six-foot specimen of humanity, said he could go on for another hour, but I rather think he was bouncing a bit. Our

bag was eighteen and a half brace of partridges, one land-rail, three rabbits—not a bad day for two guns in a wild country, and with wild birds and a wild day.

PHEASANT SHOOTING

PHEASANT SHOOTING

AN inspection of an old Shooting Diary revives most pleasant memories of a very enjoyable day in December, 189—. I was then staying with my old friend B—, and one morning he received an invitation—in which I was most kindly included—from his relative Lord B—, who requested that we would come on Tuesday evening in time for dinner, sleep there, and shoot on Wednesday and Thursday. Wednesday morning found us making a start to shoot some detached outlying coverts, which were in a somewhat dangerous locality as regards the proximity of poachers.

With the doings of this particular day, however, I will not concern myself.

Thursday was the day which had been arranged to shoot the home woods, and it is with a description of the sport we then had that I will endeavour to describe, and I hope interest my readers.

We were six guns altogether, each with a louder and second gun. The first beat was a wood of about 150 or 200 acres, almost in the shape of a new moon well advanced in its first quarter; the beaters commenced at one horn and terminated at the other, which was made "the hot corner." A considerable portion of the wood consisted of high oak and fir trees. Towards the middle or widest part of the covert, however, there was a wide patch of fifty or sixty acres which had been cleared of heavy timber some two years previously, but it was covered with holly-bushes and dwarf or copse oak, and beyond this patch, forming the other horn of the wood, there were high oak, fir, and larch

trees. The wood, I should mention, was situated on the side of a gradually sloping hill, and through the centre of the cleared portion, where the hollies grew, a broad ride ran from top to bottom. The guns were divided, three going along the top and three at the bottom; two of the top and two of the bottom guns went forward to line the centre ride, whilst one gun on either side walked a little ahead of the beaters. Upon the signal being given the beaters advanced, keeping excellent line. Before many yards had been traversed a single bird rose, then a little further on three or four got up together, some being accounted for, others "carrying on" to the far end. Presently a shout from the top side, "Mark cock!" put us on the alert, when suddenly, like a flash of brown, a woodcock swept over the lower gun ahead of the beaters, and was dropped in excellent style

Pheasants were now rising at pleasant intervals, and as the beaters got amongst the hollies a couple more woodcock were flushed. One was brought to bag, but the other doubled back and escaped for the nonce. The birds were rising more thickly now, and the shooting became pretty lively. At length this first beat was finished, and the result given as fifty-three pheasants, two woodcock, and five rabbits. On the beaters making a fresh start—four guns having again gone on to the end—it was soon evident that the birds had run forward as only an occasional shot offered. Another woodcock, however, got out of the lower boundary fence of the wood, and the gun with the beaters cut him over. Where the wood began to narrow slightly, the beaters were halted and instructed to keep perfect silence, but to keep their sticks constantly tapping, whilst all the six guns went on, and took up their

respective stands, forming a semi-circle round the horn of the wood, which had been arranged to give the "bouquet." Everything being in readiness, the signal was passed, and the advance was resumed. The pheasants began to rise more thickly and frequently, and the shooting was almost incessant. At length the head-keeper again halted the beaters, and with only an under-keeper accompanying him advanced quietly, giving a tap here and there with their sticks: this was in order not to rise too large a number of birds at a time, which would have been the case had all the beaters continued to advance together. As the guns were well out in the field below the wood, the ground being sloping, the birds came out very high, and gave difficult and sporting shots; but most of the party could handle their shooting-irons rather better than well, so the result of this second beat was satisfactory,

amounting to seventy-eight pheasants, one woodcock, and two rabbits.

The next wood we had to shoot was about a quarter of a mile distant, and was celebrated as being one that gave very lofty, difficult shooting ; for the birds, after being put up, came right across a small valley and over the guns, who were posted on a level stretch of ground opposite the covert across this valley. As can easily be imagined, when the birds came over the guns they were going not only very high, but at a most tremendous pace. Each of the shooters, with his loader and second gun, having taken up his numbered stand, a start was made, and for a short space of time nothing could be heard. A few minutes elapsed when we heard the tap, tap, tap of the beaters, then an old cock pheasant came out very high ; but suspecting danger, I suppose, doubled round and back instead of continuing his

course straight over us ; presently another wily old chap came across, but sailed away too wide for No. 1 gun to put in a shot.

The beaters' sticks at length could be more distinctly heard, and presently five birds headed straight over, and four fell. Soon the fun became fast and furious, and the birds came over in clusters tremendously high, and at an awful pace. Personally, I can only say I shot very moderately, but the gun next to me was a nailing shot ; he dropped his birds so cleanly and methodically that it was a pleasure to watch him, and I was tempted to ask him what shot he was using. To my intense surprise, he replied, " No. 7," and afterwards showed me his cartridges. I was using No. 6, and had been laying the flattering unction to my soul that my shot was not large enough to stop such lofty and fast birds, but this reply quite knocked the idea endways, and gave

me something to think about for many a long day afterwards. Finally, I arrived at the conclusion that No. 7 was the best sized shot for general use, and for all game bar grouse and black game, and for years I have seldom used anything but No. 7 till late in the season, and then I prefer No. 6. This beat yielded eighty-eight pheasants.

After lunch we shot a wood called "The Nursery," a boundary of the Park. In reality, it was a series of small coverts, with plenty of undergrowth and some magnificent beech and oak trees. Though we did not get very many pheasants, we had some rare good fun with the rabbits and wood-pigeons, and these very wide-awake birds took an amazing amount of shooting. The way they would spot a gun, and in one second arrest their course and dash away in a totally different direction, was disconcerting to a degree, and tested our shooting powers to

the utmost. However, we accounted for eleven of them and twenty-seven rabbits, but we only got nine pheasants. We finished our most enjoyable day by walking across the Park in line, and in this way added three more pheasants and sixteen rabbits to the bag. I do not remember a more charming day in every respect. The weather was simply perfect, the men cheery, good fellows and thorough sportsmen, and the whole natural surroundings most beautiful. Our grand total was two hundred and thirty-one pheasants, three woodcock, fifty rabbits, and eleven wood-pigeons—or a total bag of two hundred and ninety-one head.

B—— and I had a very pleasant drive home that night, and as is the usual custom of the shooting man, we compared notes, and in our minds' eye shot a good many of our birds over again.

SNIPE SHOOTING IN IRELAND

• SNIPE SHOOTING IN IRELAND

How trebly blessed is the man who can procure, nowadays, good snipe shooting without having to seek it in foreign climes, far distant from the land of his birth. When I say "good" I don't mean three or four couple, but a bag of from ten to twenty couple to a single gun. Of course, abroad immense bags of snipe are made, as in India, Burmah, and Ceylon, where one hundred couple to a single gun has on several occasions been recorded.

Again, in Albania snipe as well as woodcock used to be very numerous, and I remember my father mentioning that a brother officer of his, a Captain Murray, undertook for a bet to row himself over from

Corfu to Butrinto, twelve miles distant, starting after breakfast, shoot fifty couple of snipe, row himself back, and be present at mess the same night, and he won his bet "hands down," having shot sixty-three and a half couple. In England a bag of fifteen or twenty couple is well-nigh unheard of to a single gun. Of Scotland I can say nothing; but even in Ireland, with its wide areas of bog and marshland, so attractive to snipe, it is only in some few favoured localities that there is a chance of getting such a bag; and indeed *chance* enters very largely into the prospect, for our well-beloved little bird is as uncertain in his visits as he is erratic in his flight. Anticipation, it has been asserted, is the delightful stimulant of all sport. It may be so; but from a pretty long experience, I can say that in snipe shooting the result mighty seldom compares favourably or comes up to our anticipation.

For all that, it has an immense fascination for most genuine sportsmen, due, I think, to the fact that it involves hard and not altogether comfortable exercise, and requires a steady hand and a quick eye to bring the alert little bird to bag.

Yes; the snipe is an attractive though diminutive aristocrat, quick as lightning in his movements; no sooner is he flushed than with a sweep of his wings he is off like an arrow from a bow; then just as you imagine you have covered him and are about to pull the trigger, he gives a tantalising little twist, as much as to say, "No, you don't;" then he flashes to the other side, showing his white breast for just a modicum of a second, and so he continues his vagaries till at a safe distance, gradually mounting higher in the air, to prospect for another suitable and safer haven of rest. Indeed, he is a sweet, bonnie little bird, hard—extremely hard—to shoot,

and when shot most truly delicious to eat. The very sight of him nicely cooked on a piece of toast creates a longing within you to make him your own, and part and particle of yourself. I can almost fancy I hear someone say, "What a gourmand that fellow is." As a matter of fact, I'm not; but will anyone deny that a snipe properly cooked—cooked the same day he's shot, mind—is simply exquisite? However, we must shoot our wee friend before we can eat him. My dear brother, who lately in company with so many other gallant fellows gave up his life for his Queen and country, used to stay with me as much as he could in Ireland, and as I then resided within easy reach of a large extent of exceptionally good snipe ground, we had many successful days after the long bills.

A limited number of the common or full snipe (*Gallinago media*) used to breed with us, but the majority, like the little jack

(*Gallinago minima*), were foreigners, and began to arrive on our bogs in October, though the principal flights did not come in for a month later. We always imagined that we could distinguish the foreigners from the home-bred birds by their size and colour, the latter being larger and lighter. If we happened to go out within a day or two of the arrival of a large flight we generally made a very decent bag, varied with teal, golden plover, and occasionally a mallard or woodcock. I will endeavour to describe one of our good days.

One evening, Christy, our kennel-man, game-carrier, and general factotum, came into our gun-room and reported that his brother Mike had been to look after some sheep, and whilst crossing the Big bog had heard and also flushed a lot of snipe. My brother and I quickly decided to put in a day after them, and arranged for an early

breakfast and a start betimes next morning. At that time I had an old setter bitch, rejoicing in the name of "Sally," who was a perfect marvel on snipe. She was as quiet as a cat on a bog, and when "roding" a snipe, if she came to a pool of water would, in order to avoid splashing and making a noise, carefully creep round it and resume her line, though at other times she seemed perfectly indifferent whether she was in or out of water. So we ordered Christy to meet us at the lodge with "Sally." It turned out a fairly fine but rather windy day, which was a nuisance rather, as snipe twist so confoundedly in wind.

Having finished our breakfast, we made a start, and an easy half-hour's walk brought us to a small bog of about a hundred acres or so. "G." (my brother) took the right, I the left, and "Sally" was told to "hold up," but before she had got into her stride a snipe

rose and fell to "G.'s" right barrel, and at the report two or three others got up out of shot. A hundred yards or so further on "Sally" commenced to "draw on," and then came to a dead point, and another snipe rose, which "G." dropped; and a second one, which got up between us, gave me a not very easy low crossing shot which I missed. Shortly afterwards I made amends by nailing three in succession, though the last took two barrels out of me to bring him down. "G." missed one and got one, and thus it went on till we had beaten out the bog, when we found we had got four and a half couple, and we missed at least three couple more.

Another quarter of an hour's walk over a small, heather-clad hill brought us to the Big bog. It would have been awkward to beat it in the orthodox and approved manner, *i.e.*, down wind (snipe generally fly head to wind) so we decided to beat it

across, backwards and forwards. We soon discovered that Mike's information had been reliable, for snipe were getting up all round us every fifty or sixty yards we walked, and as we were both shooting fairly straight, though "G.," as usual, the better of the two, our bag increased steadily; and when we stopped to have a "snack" and a pipe we found we had, including those killed on the small bog, eleven and a half couple of full snipe, and one couple of jacks.

Towards the higher end of the bog there was a pond or big bog-hole partially surrounded by a fringe of rushes, which was a favourite place for teal, and now and then a mallard. "G." suggested it would be a good thing to let Christy take up "Sally," and that we should stalk the pool, one gun on either side of it. This we proceeded to do, and were well rewarded, for a bunch of teal sprung, and we nailed four out of the seven

that rose. After this bit of luck we resumed our attack on the snipe. The wind had gone down, and a fine drizzly rain had set in; whether owing to the latter or not I cannot say, but the birds certainly lay better, and seemed to go away straighter when they rose; at any rate, we were doing good work, and our bag began to exhibit quite respectable proportions. Presently "G." gave a whistle and stooped down, at the same moment pointing to his right front. On looking in the direction he indicated, I saw a flock of golden plover wheeling and sweeping towards us, but they must have spotted us, for they suddenly executed a series of aerial evolutions, and swept away in another direction.

The afternoon was drawing to a close, and the light, which had been none too good since the rain commenced, was not improving, but we seemed to walk up snipe in every direction, and were fortunate in dropping a good

proportion of those that got up in shot. When we reached the end, or rather side of the bog nearest home, and where we had decided to stop shooting, we told Christy to turn out the bag, and found we had twenty-three and a half couple of snipe—of which one and a half couple were jacks—and four teal. This was to us, at any rate a very satisfactory day, and as the rain was coming down “hard all” we steered for home. In overhauling my old diaries, I find my brother and I killed twenty-seven couple of snipe on another occasion in the west of Ireland, but my readers must please understand that these two we always considered exceptionally good days; in fact, we thought anything over ten couple of snipe in a day was worth recording.

TROUT FISHING IN WICKLOW

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WICKLOW is one of the most beautiful counties in Ireland, and with its densely wooded glens and boisterous little rivers, tumbling over innumerable moss-clad rocks, reminds one forcibly of Devonshire, the resemblance being heightened by the bold range of Wicklow Hills which recall Dartmoor, and add to the enchanting scenery. A fishing trip in this delightful portion of the Emerald Isle brings back such happy and pleasant memories to my mind that I am tempted to share the recollections with my friends and brother-anglers.

We were three—and three very enthusiastic fishermen—and had many a time and oft made excursions together in all sorts of odd corners and out-of-the-way places of the world. My friends as well as myself had relatives living in Wicklow, and had fished every available stream in the county, so we were in a position to anticipate a good time with friends and fish.

There is really a considerable choice of water for those who know the county well, so having duly discussed the matter with an earnestness and gravity befitting the subject, we decided to fish the Dargle—Glencree and Glencullen the first week; to devote the second to the Anamoe River and Lough Dan; and to leave the third week an open one, and not fix upon any particular locality.

The River Dargle, or at least the fishable part of it, is from the waterfall through

Lord Powerscroft's most beautiful demesne, on through a long thickly-wooded glen which takes its name from the river, passes the village of Little Bray (in reality, a suburb of the town of Bray), and empties into the sea just beyond.

The Glencree River and the Glencullen, sometimes called the Enniskerry River, are tributaries of the Dargle, and all contain considerable numbers of trout which, in point of size, are similar to those in the Devonshire rivers, so that, as a rule, the fisherman has to content himself with quantity, not quality.

As arranged, we fished these three streams during our first week, and with the usual result—good baskets in point of numbers, but mighty few fish over six ounces—the largest of the fish killed during the week being an ugly, big-headed brute, weighing a pound and a quarter, and he

was grassed after a very poor show, as far as fight and gameness was concerned. The Glen of the Dargle being so very beautiful, I think I ought to describe it. Its length is rather more than a mile—the river flowing through it between rugged rocks and forming a succession of miniature cascades, such as *salmo fario* love—the high banks on either side being densely wooded; viewed from above, the union of rock and wood is extremely happy.

On the right bank is a spot called “The Lover’s Leap” (and thereby hangs a tale), which rises to a height of between two and three hundred feet. This legend in connection with “The Lover’s Leap” is that a fair maid, with the fickleness sometimes attributed to her sex, had failed to be “off with the old love before she was on with the new,” and whilst listening to the flatteries of the new suitor she heard the church bells

tolling, and was informed that her true lover had died of a broken heart. She was filled with poignant remorse and grief, and fled from the presence of him who had caused her to perjure herself, and whom she now hated and loathed. Notwithstanding all the efforts of friends and relations to comfort and restrain her, and their endeavours to persuade her that regret was useless, she nightly repaired to the grave, remaining there till morning bemoaning her lost love. At length, unable to bear the strain of excessive grief, her mind gave way, and she informed her friends that her former lover had come to life, and that they walked and talked in the Glen as of old, and that he had promised to come and take her to a place where they would never part. Naturally, all her relatives and friends were most intensely alarmed, so they determined to watch her carefully, but she managed to elude their vigilance and to

escape ; she proceeded to the grave, beside which she knelt, and with clasped hands called upon her lost lover to come and fetch her as he had promised ; then suddenly, before the friends who had followed could prevent her, she rushed to the highest point of the Glen, and without an instant's hesitation threw herself headlong into the deep pool below. The Irish are so full of romance and so rich in sentiment that go where you will in Ireland legends of this sort abound, and are most thoroughly believed in. But to return to our fishing.

The best flies for the Wicklow rivers are : (1) a blue-bodied fly with black hackle and the web of a starling's wing over all for wing ; (2) a grouse hackle tied over either an orange or light yellow body ; (3) a hare's flax body, tied as rough as possible with gold tinsel or yellow silk tip ; (4) a bright red hackle, tied over yellow or purple body,

tied Palmer fashion—this is a good killing fly when the water is a clear porter colour after a flood ; (5) a fly called locally “Grey Coghlan,” which is tied with a grizzle cock’s hackle, slate-coloured silk body, wing light partridge feather.

As I have previously mentioned, our first week was somewhat uneventful. The beginning of the second week saw us established at a small town named Roundwood, well up in the mountains, and centrally situated for both Lough Dan and the Anamoe River. The drive up to Roundwood was simply glorious ; our route taking us past Hollybrook and Kelly’s Cross, branching to the right just before reaching Kilmacanogue, up the valley, with the Big Sugar Loaf on the left and Coolagad on the right, passing Ballinteskine ; on across Calary Bog, leaving the Vartry Waterworks on our left, and into Roundwood—a drive

with grand and varied scenery all the way—especially when we got up to the high ground by Ballinteskin, whence the view of the low ground and the sea beyond towards Delgany and Greystones can only be described by the one word—magnificent. The day after our arrival saw two of us—my third comrade being held in bondage by a rebel molar—sallying forth brimful of pleasurable anticipation. Ah! shall I ever forget that glorious day?

We marched to the village of Anamoe, and then tossed up for choice of water, which my friend won, and elected to fish the stretch above the village to the lough. So the water from the mill downwards was my beat for the day—and such a perfect fishing day it was—a gentle, southerly breeze, fleecy clouds, like a flock of sheep in the sky; and the water good in volume and colour. Without loss of time I put my rod

together and mounted the usual flies. In the first stickle by the miller's garden a nice little plump fish about six oz. was grassed, and a few yards lower down the run by the willow, a good fish rolled up but was not touched, nor could he be tempted to come again. Then, for what seemed ages, not a fish could I rise to my flies, though I could see fish galore—and good ones too—rising in every pool I passed; and even when I made a cast they would rise all round the flies, but deuce a fish would look at them. Now, thought I, what in the name of all the furies does this mean?

Keeping well out of sight and watching carefully, I saw that what the fish were rising so steadily at was a small grey fly like a light dun. The nearest approach to anything of the sort in my fly-book were some Derbyshire "Dove" flies, and a cast of these was soon carefully and tenderly presented to my

charmings. The effect was sublime and instantaneous ; for two solid hours, I declare, I never had such sport in my life, almost every cast I made I hooked good, lusty fish—many half-pounders—and two or three nearer a pound than a half-pound ; the fish were stark staring mad ; they must have had a coronation ; it was a gala day ; a saint's day ; a day never to be forgotten. But the happy moment was approaching—one of the events of my long fishing life that I lock up like a treasure in the deepest recess of my memory. Sauntering onwards I at length met a quiet, dignified old fisherman who, in reply to my query as to sport, informed me that he had six or seven nice little fish. His look of utter astonishment when I showed him my big creel nearly full, and getting uncomfortably heavy, was downright ludicrous. I made the old fellow happy by giving him a pull at my flask and presenting him with a cast of

the "Dove" flies. His gratitude took a practical turn, for he offered to show me the lie of a very large and heavy fish; he assured me it was fully three pounds. He had risen it a few days previously, but had not touched it.

The event of the day and of many fishing seasons was near at hand. We had proceeded about a quarter of a mile down stream when we came to a lovely pool with a small feeding stream on the opposite side just above some alders. The run of the stream was under the opposite bank, and about fifteen yards down from the alders the bank curved out, and was overhung by a large willow. The monster was supposed to lie just above the projecting bank. Carefully I overhauled my cast and put up a couple of new flies, for the lead (or point) and middle flies had done yeoman's service and were somewhat frayed. Getting the right length of line out, I began

casting where the stream came in, most devoutly hoping no small fish would rise to disturb the water. I had got half-way between the feeding stream and the projecting bank when there was a swirl—I had him—one heavy rush, not towards the bank, but up stream towards the alders, and then he settled down to dignified and steady resistance, and for five minutes or more, though I knew I had him on, I never caught even a glimpse of him. At last it seemed to dawn upon my majestic captive that it was time to be up and doing. Shaking himself, with a heavy plunging roll over he tore down stream; the reel shrieked, but I took jolly good care not to have any slack line, so that when he gave another plunging roll and began to bore up stream again I had him well in hand. Suddenly he must have seen me, for he made a desperate rush for the opposite bank under the willow, but thank the Fates, fortune

smiled on me that day, and I stopped him. To show his displeasure at being frustrated, he made a succession of heavy plunges, which caused me to quake with anxiety. However, the end was approaching, and precious glad I was, for I had had him on at least twenty minutes, and I was mighty hot and anxious. My quondam friend, who had given me the introduction to this grand fish, was in the most intense state of excitement, and dancing a sort of war-dance all round me. "Everything comes to him who waits" is a trite but true saying, and at last my beautiful leviathan was fairly and squarely beaten. He turned on his side, then gave a little spasmodic shoot out, but came back again. I had only a small-sized net with me, but good luck was with me all through, for my new, kind old friend had a famous big one, and without an instant's delay he slipped quietly into the water, netted my fish, and

hoisted him out triumphantly. Was I happy?

Great Scott! don't ask me such a question. I was overjoyed, and so was the old chap. We had a drink—emptied the flask, in fact—we shook hands, and then we went to a small farm and weighed the fish. Four pounds and a quarter good, was the announcement. To this day I do not think I should have killed him on so small a fly, but for the fact that in one of his plunges, I suppose, the cast had taken a round turn over his head and behind his gill covers, the hook holding well in his mouth. If I had been offered a thousand pounds I could not have fished any more that day. I counted my bag, and found I had five dozen and three fish, not including my king of trout. I insisted on my old friend taking a couple of dozen of the best of my fish, and then tying the big fellow head and tail

together, and bidding the old chap *au revoir*, I pointed for our quarters, leaving word at the mill that if my friend came back that way, I had gone back to Roundwood, where I duly arrived dog-tired, but happy. My poor old pal, who had used up a whole vocabulary of bad words over his rebel molar, was astounded and delighted at my prize, and always affirms that the sight of the beauty effected an instantaneous cure. My other comrade returned, having had very fair sport, but even putting aside the big chap, not equal to my luck. I think most of the inhabitants of the place came to view what they termed "the father of all fish." This was one of my most memorable fishing days.

The day after the capture of the big trout we made an off day, and went over, by invitation, to a place called "Tiltour," belonging to Mr Nuttal, to inspect some of

his Irish setters—and grand specimens they were; but I'm off the line, and must hark back to the fishing. We burnt the midnight oil with a vengeance that night, and on the following day devoted what little energy was left us to Lough Dan, but we were handicapped from the start by want of a breeze to put a curl on the water. All the morning the surface of the lough was like a mill-pond, but in the afternoon a slight, variable breeze got up, and during a catspaw the "Laird" hooked a really nice fish, but lost him owing to its making a sudden rush under the boat before he could stop it. Out of the three dozen and a half we caught, at least two and a half dozen were killed towards evening, when the glint of the sun was off the water and a nice ripple stirred the lough. Most of the fish were taken on hare's flax and yellow, and yellow bodied grouse hackle flies.

On returning to our quarters at Roundwood we found a note from a worthy baronet most kindly giving us permission to fish two loughs close to a shooting-box of his, situated high up the Glencree Valley. The "Laird" and I held a council of war, for my other friend had been obliged to forego any further participation in the trip owing to his rebel molar, and we decided to devote our remaining week to these two loughs; one day—on the following—march across the mountains to Sally Gap, and fish down the Liffey to Ballysmutton Bridge, thence by road to Blessington for the night, and finish up next day on the King's River, which was reputed to hold very heavy fish. The first part of the programme was carried out; of the latter portion I will have something to say anon.

We drove over to the pretty little lodge nestling amidst superb mountain scenery, and surrounded by heather-clad highlands,

the home of grouse and mountain hares, and on our arrival lost no time in developing an attack upon the finny denizens of the lower lough. A lovely breeze was blowing, and soon we were both hard at it playing and landing or losing fish. The "Laird" got a beauty of about a pound at the second or third cast, which fought most gamely, and gave great sport ere he was grassed ; later on another paid toll of about the same size, and they made a beautiful brace ; the average weight of the fish we caught, however, was from six ounces to half a pound each, and they were game little beggars, fighting to the bitter end.

After a rest and something to refresh the inner man, we ascended to the upper or higher lough, which was supposed to hold fewer but larger fish, and as the breeze held on well we were hopeful of getting a big fish or two. For at least an hour after we started work neither of us got a rise even from a

“pinkeen.” At length the “Laird” got a fish up, and from over-excitement, I suppose, struck too hard and left the fly in the fish. Having repaired damages, he rose and landed a nice little plump half-pounder before he had gone twenty yards from the scene of the catastrophe, and this was followed by another fish somewhat heavier. The luck was all on my friend’s side to-day, for I could not move a fish; suddenly he sang out to me, and I saw by the graceful curve of his rod, which all we fishermen admire so much, that he was into a good one, so I doubled over to give him a hand with the net. Just before reaching him I saw the beauty he had on jump clean out of the water. The “Laird” was cool and collected, and played his fish well, bringing him in without flurry to the net, and he was duly landed—a beautiful fish of a pound and a half.

On returning to my end of the lough, I

had two rises in quick succession, but neither fish would come a second time. A few yards further on, where a little mountain streamlet trickled into the lough, there was a good bulging rise, and my patience was rewarded by grassing a pretty three-quarter-pounder. To cut a long story short, our afternoon and evening's fishing totalled fourteen fish, the lion's share, including the two biggest, being landed by my friend's rod.

Next morning, betimes, we started for Sally Gap. It was a delightful morning, and the old cock grouse were crowing all round us. Now and again a wary old chap would survey us from the top of a rock, and the next instant he would speed away as fast as his wings would carry him, Cuck—cuck—cucking for all he was worth to let his belongings know there was danger about. We duly fetched our point, but having a considerable distance to cover before

reaching Ballysmutton Bridge, we walked a couple of miles or more down the river before putting our rods together, and even when we did make a start our fishing was of a perfunctory character. The Liffey hereabouts is a pretty, turbulent stream holding a goodly number of moderate-sized fish, but the water is bigger and the fish larger below Ballysmutton and on towards "Naas." Ere we reached the bridge we each had creeled a decent lot of fish, but none worthy of special mention; the largest perhaps, about three quarters of a pound, found a resting-place in my basket.

Having taken our rods to pieces and rested awhile, we resumed our march towards Blessington, and there dire and dreadful misfortunes awaited us, insomuch so that we there and then re-named it "Cursingtown," by which name it appeals to our memories even to this day. The

horror of our position was this: In the ardour of our pursuit we had quite forgotten or overlooked the fact that the morrow was the commencement or rather opening day of Punchestown races, and every hole and corner was occupied or had been secured. The principal hostel had been requisitioned by Sir T—— and his guests. Lodging accommodation was unprocurable for love or money. We should have been starved in the midst of plenty had not Sir T—— been good enough to insist on our dining with him and his party, after which we sent ragged emissaries to scour the place for sleeping quarters, without avail. Matters were becoming serious, and I suppose our countenances expressed the acute disquietude of our minds, for our host and his friends dubbed the “Laird” the “Knight of the Rueful Countenance,” whilst my temporary patronymic became “Melancholy Jakes.”

At last we sallied forth ourselves and carried the Constabulary barracks by assault. The sergeant in charge, however, refused to "take us in charge," but looking upon us as "Babes in the Wood," and pitying our hopeless and forlorn condition, he came with us to aid us in our search, finally discovering the abode of a retired car-driver, where there was a room containing *one* large ramshackle wooden four-poster—a relic of ages and past greatness—which we promptly secured, notwithstanding that the charge for its use was equivalent to the value of the freehold of the whole house. Never, if I live as long as Methuselah, shall I forget the horror, misery, and torture of that most unholy night. The heavy cavalry were as big as oysters, with the jaws of Bengal tigers and the blood-sucking capabilities of vampires. I could not stand their attacks, and turned out to pass the night in a chair ;

but the "Laird" was so dog-tired that he slept through it all. The torture inflicted by the attacking squadrons must, nevertheless, have been terribly severe, for by daylight he was verily a "bloated knight of the rueful countenance." That night fairly finished us—no more fishing—the place was hateful to us. We eschewed the attractions of Punchestown and fled to dear, dirty Dublin, to purify our minds and bodies with whisky and hot baths. To this day Blessington is anathema to us, and we shudder to our marrow if we even hear the name.

A RED LETTER DAY ON THE
"CAMEL RIVER"

A RED LETTER DAY ON THE "CAMEL RIVER"

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OWING to the almost Arctic weather we have experienced this spring, I was anything but hopeful that my old friend who, amongst his intimates, is known by the sobriquet of "The Cherub"—though he is a precious ancient one now—would have even fair sport with the trout; however, his letter lay before me announcing his intention of coming down to hunt up summer quarters, and that he'd like to have a day's fishing on the River Camel, to see what he might expect in the way of sport later on. In due course "The Cherub," having got leave,

turned up, looking ruddy and beaming as ever, notwithstanding his arduous China experiences. The night of his arrival we sat and smoked and yarned of happy days that have faded in the vista of time. What delightful havoc those recollections of bygone days made in our memories! We talked about beautiful Corfu—the ripping good cock shooting in Albania, and the lop-sided old boat at Butrinto and its equally lop-sided owner, “Demetrius,” whom “The Cherub” would always insist on calling “Dammie,” because, as he asserted, it was such an expressive and comprehensive word—and so natural, applicable, and musical. We talked about the three weeks in Norway, when we both tried to learn Norse from the fair Gunhild and at the same time catch salmon, an amalgamation of effort that was chaotic, and only conducive to all-round dismal failure. We resurrected the exciting

moment on Lough Corrib when I hooked the enormous trout which turned out to be (excuse the Irishism) a beastly, ill-conditioned nine-pound pike. But at last the thought of the morrow warned us, and we "turned in," though it really was a wrench to stow away all those dear old reminiscences.

"Rouse out, old chap!" and a thundering knock like the knell of doom woke me from a sound and peaceful slumber. "It is a glorious fishing day," the beatific voice continued, "so show a leg." Yes, thought I, but what is the good of a promising day or anything else when it has been so bitterly cold that there are few flies about, and the trout (what few there are) seem disinclined to rise? Still, an hour later saw us putting rods and the angler's usual paraphernalia, not forgetting provender for ourselves, into the pony-trap. My misguided friend was so overtaken by anticipation that he had started

on foot, and we only caught him up half-way to our destination—Gam Bridge. In one respect it was fortunate he had elected to walk, for some of his spirits had calmed down to their normal condition and gave my pessimism a chance. On the bridge “The Cherub” put his rod together, arranged a cast of flies, and looked longingly at the river, doubtless, in his mind’s eye, picturing to himself the capture of monster fictitious trout.

As I wanted to see a man who resided about a quarter of a mile from the river, it was arranged that my friend should fish down, and I should follow him after transacting my business. On my return I was in little or no time ready for action, and had mounted a March brown and a Blue Infallible of my own pattern (I never fish with more than two flies, especially in a river whose banks are covered with such

rank overgrowth as the Camel). The first stickle yielded nothing, nor did the dark run and pool under the overhanging oak by the miniature cliff. It is generally like that, so I was not disappointed. The next fishable place, by the bank of rushes and opposite a farm-house, looked as if it should hold a decent fish. For a wonder it did to-day, and I rose and hooked and "wrestled" with a water monster. After herculean efforts and many falls, I grassed him—3 inches—tenderly and with a sigh I unhooked him, and back into the water he went to grow bigger. In the next two runs I caught three or four salmon—par. Who says there are no salmon in the Camel? These also were carefully unhooked and returned rejoicing to their native element. The river now runs at the foot of a steep gorse-clad hill, and, miracle of miracles! the banks are fairly clear;

mechanically my March brown and Infallible drop lightly under a spreading ivy-clad oak. By the piper! I thought I had hooked the only fish worthy of the name of Trout in the Camel. There he was, boring up the heavy run one moment; the next instant he was down at the tail of the pool, lashing and kicking in all his yellow and red speckled glory. What a beauty! Ah, that was a rush, as he flung himself a foot high above the surface; but he is well and firmly hooked, and by gentle persuasion is induced to come up stream, and is carefully led into some still water, where, after one or two spasmodic rolls, he "throws up the sponge" and turns on his side. I shorten my line a bit, slip my net carefully under him, and there he lies on the mossy bank, a perfectly shaped three-quarter-of-a-pounder. Oh, blessed day! I had fished the Camel for several tedious weeks, and so far, he was the best trout I

had seen in or out of the water ; but this was fated to be my red letter day—a day of triumph—as you will see anon.

In the succession of rather unlikely runs that at this point chase each other down three-quarters of a mile of valley I actually landed five good keepable fish, averaging about a quarter of a pound each, and I should say quite a dozen par and baby-troutlets, which were returned to their watery cradle. The river seemed strange to me; what had happened? Had the river been restocked with thousands of three-year-old trout by some benevolent and large-hearted conservator or philanthropic riparian owner? I began to fish carefully, for I had seen several real good fish rise at a few natural flies, apparently iron blue duns. The deep pool by the fir and pine-tree wood was awfully overgrown, but a fair cast placed my flies under some overhanging hazel bushes,

and close to the opposite bank. Plop!—I had him. The man was excited and the fish very much astonished, and between the two emotions the latter saved his life. No longer was my barbed hook fixed in the nose of a trout, but in a detestable hazel bush. The curious and sharp of sight may see it there, and half a cast, to this day, well out of reach—an ornament to any river and a warning to posterity. Sorry am I to admit the riot of my tongue, but so it was, and earth, river, and sky around me became black, and burned brimstone and blue lights. Misfortune is best regretted and forgotten. The rest of the long pool to the wooden footbridge which here spans the stream gave up two of its finny denizens—hardy, fighting little quarter-pounders.

Below the terror - striking “Notice — Trespassers,” etc., there is some very pretty and good water, but somehow or other no

keepable fish accepted my offering. Perhaps "The Cherub," who, like "Ah Sin," is "child-like and bland," had imposed on their appetites and credulity. A very favourite cast of mine, a little further down, is a deep run which rushes rather than ripples under overhanging hazel and alder bushes close by where a mill leat turns off from the main river ; it is a very difficult cast, and to a novice almost an impossible one ; however, luck was on my side to-day, and I got my flies well under and across—a flashing shadow darted from under the bank, and there was a heavy swirl ; no need to strike, for my rod was almost snatched from my grasp and bent double ; the reel screamed as line was torn off it, and a large fish leaped once, twice, and a third time in the air as he made his terrific rush ; hold him I could not on my little ten-foot rod, and he went down—down—would he never stop or come back ? At last he seemed to

settle down to dogged resistance. I could see his golden sides and shapely form turning and swaying, and now and again he would savagely shake himself and struggle like a valiant knight of old against his fate ; and presently he could resist the strain no longer, for I had been giving him what we fishermen term "the butt" for all my rod was worth, and slowly, inch by inch, he bored up stream, and I was able to reel in and get on better terms with my noble captive. At length I regained sufficient line to fill me with more confidence and give me command over my prize, and I saw what a magnificent fish he was. The battle was not yet over, and he made several determined rushes for his old quarters under the bank, but a steady hand and eye frustrated each attempt. Finally, I brought him fairly played out within reach of the net, and in one second he was landed safely. Oh, how delighted I

was, and how glad that I had, for a wonder, brought a landing net; he was a truly beautiful fish—a handsome patriarch—and weighed over two pounds. I fished no more until I came on the road by the quaint little mill, below which there is some open water (fishing from the right bank) for about half a mile. In this stretch four more keepable fish were creeled, and then I joined my friend and lunch at the stone bridge; and upon my conscience, I was glad, for the exertion of catching several fine oak, ash, and other trees as well as the fish had induced a most excellent appetite:

“*Verum sen pisces sen porrum et caepe
Utere temperato alimento sed poculis magnis.*”

So might Horace have written if he had been a-trouting, and if the words had not shocked his metrical fastidiousness. However, we did enjoy the welcome viands,

and still more the sparkling bumpers. Let no unpiscatorial "watery *Montague*" laugh to scorn our Bacchic orgies—"jolly toping *Capulets*" as we were—for we kept to the virtuous middle path, nor strayed from the golden mean. Our united bag totalled thirty-two fish, the weights of the biggest fish being respectively two pounds, three-quarters of a pound, and three of half-a-pound each. We were well contented, so charged our pipes and sauntered homewards, admiring the varied and beautiful scenery of the Camel Valley.

SEA FISHING AT ST. IVES

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SOME few years ago, owing to the delicate state of health of a member of my family, we were medically advised to go to St. Ives, in Cornwall, for a few months. What can I say expressive enough of this charming, quaint little place, where the scenery satisfies one perfectly, and exhilarates body and mind. No wonder that the place is beloved of artists, whose educated eyes and trained hands are ever striving and longing to faithfully portray the endless and ever-changing glories of Nature. No wonder that they have established a colony in the midst of so much beauty and such glorious scenic environment, which appeals so powerfully to their artistic tastes and sentiments. The magnificent beauty

and grandeur of land and sea is theirs, whether in sunshine and calm or in storm and conflict. But delightfully beautiful as is the surrounding scenery of St. Ives, I must regretfully put its memory on one side for the present, whilst I relate our experience of a day's sea fishing in St. Ives' Bay.

We had carefully interviewed various fishermen, but the professional is a very reticent creature until he has mentally "cast the lead" and fathomed you; and even when you have, in a measure, gained his confidence, you find him a quiet, thoughtful man—very unemotional except where herrings, pilchards, or mackerel are concerned—but the cry of "Heva" acts like magic or a shock of electricity upon him. The moment he hears that cry—which announces that a large shoal of fish have been viewed—the man's whole nature seems changed, and he becomes voluble and excitable. When fish are sighted,

the whole fishing population of St. Ives—men, women, and children—are in a state of frenzy and all talking at once, so that unless one has taken an Irish University M.A. degree in the deaf and dumb language (thunder and turf! that sounds rather like a bull), and can talk on his fingers, it is no use whatever for “friends in council” to walk abroad, for it would be an utter impossibility to hear one another unless with the assistance of a speaking trumpet.

At the time of which I am writing, however, there was no “Heva,” so we were able to approach these “sons of the briny” sedately and without trepidation, and at length one hairy old “shell-back” thawed sufficiently to inform us he owned, and with a son and nephew worked, a herring boat, and that as a particular favour, and for a consideration, he would take us out next day if the breeze, which was then blowing

rather more than fresh, went down a bit. We were instructed not to trouble ourselves about lines, bait, or anything else except "grub," by which he meant provisions, and we were to be down at the quay at ten o'clock sharp, as it was necessary we should be on our fishing ground before the tide began to flow.

Next morning a decidedly fresh breeze was blowing, and we were doubtful whether our old friend would consider it suitable weather to go out; however, to our relief, he was quite willing. As it was slack tide he had moored his boat—a five-tonner, and a smart one too—some distance away from the quay, so we had to go out to her in a dingey, and as there was a nasty choppy sea on we were pretty well drenched, notwithstanding our macintoshes, by the time we got on board the big boat. We made sail without delay, and proceeded across the bay for rather more than a mile, and then let go anchor and made

our first attempt to beguile some of the fishy denizens of the ocean ; but our efforts were not crowned with success, for during quite half an hour we only got one gurnard and several unwelcome dog-fish, so it was decided to shift our ground. Having got the anchor up we tacked out more towards the entrance of the bay and nearer to Godrevy Lighthouse, where we again let go anchor. Now our fun commenced. I should mention that the baits we were using were sprats and a few pilchards cut up in small pieces rather better than an inch square. No sooner were the hooks baited and the lines let down before my son "J." had a bite, and promptly hauled up a gurnard. The fish were well on the feed, and we were hauling up gurnard as fast as we possibly could, and kept one of the hands fully occupied baiting our hooks for us. Now and again, by way of variety, one of us would haul a dog-fish on board, and he was given

short shrift by the boatmen, who killed them by whacking them over the head with the handle of a short gaff, and then cast the body overboard again, "to feed the crabs;" as they said. The fishermen seemed to look upon these hideously ugly fish as their natural enemies, for they said they drove other fish away from the baits, and certainly after having caught a dog-fish it was generally several minutes before we got another bite.

The sport continued good, and suddenly "J." exclaimed, as he began to haul up: "I've got a monster of some kind this time." Our old friend, the owner of the boat said: "Pull up steadily, sir, and don't slack or jerk your line; it may be a cod"—and so it was. He looked a huge fellow as he loomed in sight, and of course the gaff was now put into requisition, for as it turned out he was about sixteen pounds weight, so that it would have been risky to attempt to

lift him over the side without gaffing. "J." shortly afterwards caught a larger cod, and then my turn came, and I got one about the size of the first. We had a further variety in the way of fish, by catching some large-sized chad which the boatmen called "bream," and we also got a few flat fish. Altogether, for quite two hours our sport was fast and furious, and then two adverse circumstances occurred. First of all, a number of dog-fish must have come round us, for the fish we wished and cared to catch suddenly ceased biting, and those we did not want bit freely. I am quite sure in a comparatively short space of time we caught at least sixteen of these horrible creatures.

The second circumstance which militated against further sport was that our bait had run short; so as we really had enjoyed exceptionally good fun, we decided to up

anchor and make for home. When we got in, other fishermen said it was the best catch that had been taken in the Bay for a long time. We had sixty-five gurnard, three codfish, eleven chad or bream, five flat-fish, and we must have caught altogether two dozen dog-fish. Consequently we much appreciated the sport. The day was perhaps rather rough, but nothing unpleasant occurred to either of us, although at one time there was a greenish hue visible on my face, so my son said ; but of course I told him it was a libel, and that it was simply a reflection of the "sad sea waves."

SHEEP-DOG TRIALS

SHEEP-DOG TRIALS

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Most people who are connected with agricultural life know how clever and sagacious collie and sheep-dogs are ; few, however, can imagine, unless they have actually witnessed trials, to what a pitch of perfection these four-footed coadjutors of the shepherd can be brought by careful training. Their intelligence is simply marvellous ; they seem to exercise a reasoning power, and to know by intuition exactly what to do, and how to expeditiously do it in any difficulty that may suddenly arise, even without the assistance of their masters.

Again, their instant and implicit obedience

to any signal or verbal command is quite astonishing, for their watchful eyes must not only be fixed on the flock they are working and controlling, but they see in a flash the slightest signal of the shepherd, and obey it with alertness. I had always a high appreciation of the sagacity of these four-footed allies of man, but I honestly confess that until I witnessed their performances at various trials, I had not the faintest conception that they could be trained to such a pitch of perfection and perform such marvellously clever work, and it really was a fascinating and interesting sight to watch these intelligent creatures performing such duties, and in such meritorious fashion. In the hope that it may prove interesting, I will describe some trials that I witnessed.

The day was an ideal one, as far as weather was concerned—a beautiful clear blue sky overhead and a nice, gentle, southerly breeze

to temper the heat of the sun. There were seventeen entries, but only fourteen actually competed, there being three absentees. The course was a zigzag one, and a very awkward one too, by the way ; the distance actually covered between where the dog had to find the sheep and where he finally penned them was about three quarters of a mile, and the obstacles to be overcome on the way were most difficult. Each dog was allowed ten minutes from the moment he was despatched from the starting-point. Three sheep, each selected from different flocks, were turned out near the top of a fairly high hill ; at the bottom of this hill was an open gateway leading into a large grass field, in which had been placed various obstacles, which I will describe in order as they had to be overcome.

The three sheep having each been taken from a separate flock, were rather hostile

than friendly ; and furthermore, being Welsh mountain sheep, they were exceptionally wild and active. Each dog, as called up by the judges, was at a given signal sent away by his handler or worker to find the sheep, the man not being permitted to move from the spot whence the dog started until it had found them ; the moment they were found, however, the man might proceed to the open gateway at the foot of the hill, but not through it. The dog having gathered the sheep together—which was generally not by any means too easy a task—had to bring them down gently and quietly, for if the sheep rushed through the gateway it was an adverse point, whilst it was a point in the dog's favour if he brought them down so gently that they were not alarmed or excited, and walked quietly through. The sheep having come through the gateway, the man was then allowed to take them in hand, and

assist his dog to get them through the obstacles, and finally penning them.

The first obstacle, though apparently an easy one, was not so in reality ; it consisted of two goal-posts, about a land-yard apart, through which the sheep had to be driven, slowly, in a given direction, and it was essential that all three should pass through in a bunch—not one by one. If two went through and one broke back, the effort was useless and did not count, and the three sheep had to be gathered by the dog, and another attempt made. Some of the sheep were as obstinate as one could well conceive, and I have come to the conclusion that Irish pigs and mules are not half as contrary as Welsh mountain sheep.

Having successfully accomplished this, the dog had to take his charge diagonally across the field to the next obstacle, which was called the single lane, and consisted of

parallel hurdles just wide enough apart to allow one sheep to pass through at a time one after another, in a fixed direction. This was a stumbling-block to many. After negotiating this difficulty, the dog had to drive his sheep to the other side of the twenty-acre field to the most serious obstacle of all, called double or parallel lanes, made with hurdles like the single lane, but forming two distinct passages adjoining; and it was required that the sheep should be driven slowly through one lane, then brought round again, and be made to pass in the same way down the other. This really was a most severe trial, and tested the patience of the man and the perfect obedience and training of the dog most thoroughly—for this reason, that the dog had not only to guard and keep three wild sheep together, but he had at the same time to watch his handler's every minute sign or motion; at one moment

creeping like a snake towards the sheep to urge them to enter the narrow opening of the lane ; at another moment to spring and dash off to round up an erring sheep who had broken away, and yet to do it all so quietly as not to unduly alarm or excite the animals.

The final business of penning was perhaps the least difficult of all, though at times the driven creatures were exceedingly obstinate about entering the pen. I may at once say that out of the fourteen competitors only four succeeded in the task set them within the allotted time.

It would occupy too much space to describe the working of each individual animal, but I will simply say that "Lassie," the first prize-winner, was marvellously clever. She found and gathered her sheep smartly, and brought them down through the gateway steadily, and through the goal-posts in good order.

At the single lane she experienced some difficulty, and likewise at the parallel lanes, but she succeeded in penning her sheep in nine and a half minutes—a very smart performance. “Moss,” the second prize-winner, was an equally clever, patient, and steady worker, but he was handicapped with three very wild sheep ; nevertheless, he got them through the various obstacles meritoriously, though at the parallel lanes he experienced tremendous difficulty, and it proved what a patient, beautifully broken dog he was. He finally penned his sheep at the extreme limit of his time. The third prize-winner was also an extremely clever dog, with rather a refractory trio to deal with. Had it not been for the wild nature of the sheep, he might have penned the sheep in less time than Moss, but he was not so patient in working, and the result was that the time expired just as the last sheep entered the pen.

Of the three winners, I confess my sympathy was with "Moss," for I quite believe had not his sheep made such an erratic series of evolutions, and had not their attitude been so decidedly antagonistic at the parallel lanes, he would have equalled "Lassie's" time, if not bettered it. I know it was a matter of serious consideration with the judges which of the two—"Lassie" or "Moss"—should be awarded the first prize. I do hope that some of my agricultural friends may feel interested in this short chapter dealing with a subject that is so closely allied to their business, and I would further express a hope that it may cause them to regard their four-footed friends and allies as worthy of all the kindness and care that they can bestow on them. Poor old Shep, as a rule, gets, I'm afraid, more "kicks than halfpence," but is he not a dear, good, useful, faithful friend, and worthy a kind word and a happy hour?

A SPORTSMAN'S CHRISTMAS

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CHRISTMAS is a period of junketings, feasting, and frolic. It is an epoch of hospitality and geniality. To the hunting man Christmas is usually accompanied by a weak seat, a bleary eye, and a particular thirst for jumping powder ; wine, however, unfortunately does not—high authority, notwithstanding—always make men of a cheerful countenance. To the shooting man the festive season means an unsteady hand and a whimsical eye, the result of which is that a beater's vocation is, for the nonce, a somewhat precarious one ; in point of fact, like Offenbach's *Gendarme*, "his lot is not a happy one," and not

infrequently involves the attention of a disciple of Galen to probe and extract from his person divers and sundry shot-pellets which had taken an erring flight, and effected a lodgment where they were unintended and unwelcome. Christmastide, therefore, may be anticipated with the certainty of being accompanied by incongruous pleasures and pains, such as nightmare and other nocturnal emotions, which take their origin in an over-free indulgence in gastronomy—especially where the delectable turkey is concerned. And this reminds me that Christmastide is not altogether a “beer and skittle” season in the poultry-yard; indeed, it is a time of sorrow and mourning with the inhabitants thereof for deceased friends. Those who remain “in the land of the quick” wander around the corn-stacks calling disconsolately for their missing great-grandfathers, grandmothers, and other relatives, and wearing a

pensive, melancholy air, doubtless musing upon the uncertainty of mundane matters, and the precarious tenure of feathered existence.

But to return to our noble selves. Do we not all look forward to this joyous season in order that we may, without offence to modesty, exhibit the unstinted generosity of our natures? Is it not an unmitigated pleasure for us to keep our hands perpetually diving into our pockets in order to produce the requisite sixpences, shillings, and half-crowns, yclept "Christmas boxes," which every varlet, from the kennel-boy to the head keeper and huntsman, silently, but not the less imperatively, demands, expressive by the studied courtesy of the manner in which they salute you. Dear me, yes! it is too truly delightful to realise that we are literally fulfilling that precept regarding the blessedness of giving. And then the tradesmen's

bills, how fondly we look forward to their advent, especially when we have a letter from the bank safely buttoned up in our pocket, informing us that we have considerably overdrawn our account. Oh! without doubt it is a ripping good time—duns, dances, and devils (blue).

Some few years ago I spent Christmas week with an old friend at his country-house, which he had crammed full of young people who were intent on keeping up this particular Yuletide in the most festive fashion. As the usual bachelors' quarters were already tenanted, another man—a young Devonshire parson, by the way — and myself were allotted a large room with two beds in it. That year Christmas Day fell on a Monday—on Tuesday there were private theatricals—Wednesday, a shoot—Thursday, another shoot, followed by a dance in the evening—Friday the hounds met close by, and most of

us were expected to ride, as our host was a fox-hunting enthusiast.

I will pass over Christmas Day, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and narrate my experiences of Thursday night and Friday. I may mention, in passing, that our shoot on Thursday was a success, and we had a capital day's sport ; the total bag I forget, but I know it included three beaters, the pony in the game cart, and a rural postman, who had been up to the house for the letter-bag. The beaters, pony, and postman were all strong runners, and not killed clean by any means ; in fact, the postman was "tailed" rather. Dinner that night was chiefly remarkable for the excellence and prodigious size of the fourth turkey which had graced the board during the week. As a matter of strict accuracy, I may observe that we had lived chiefly upon turkey since Monday. Turkey for breakfast, turkey for

lunch, and turkey for dinner was truly embarrassing; but the way our host's cook prepared a turkey, or any portion of the bird for table, would tempt a dyspeptic vegetarian with a worn-out appetite to eat like a wolf. The dance was intensely delightful, and we kept it up quite vigorously. My bedroom partner slipped off to bed somewhat early, and in due course, after a cigarette and a wee drappie of old Scotch in the smoke-room, I followed suit.

Being pretty tired, I was not long in getting between the sheets, and soon dozed off, but suddenly I was startled by a loud, unnatural "Gobble, gobble, gobble!" "*Hang it!*" thought I, "I'm in for a dose of nightmare." I gave myself a shake, rolled over on the other side, and again dropped off to sleep, and once more was I startled by that hideous "Gobble, gobble,

gobble." "Oh, *confound* that turkey and ham!" I groaned, and again tossed over, but barely had I sunk into the "arms of Morpheus" when that agonising "Gobble, gobble, gobble," for the third time pierced my ear. Flesh and blood could stand it no longer. I sprang out of bed, struck a match and lit the candle, and behold! there was my reverend friend standing up in his bed on one leg, quite purple in the face from his futile efforts "to put his head under his wing—poor thing," and at each of his unsuccessful attempts he raised his face towards the ceiling, and uttered that blood-curdling "Gobble, gobble, gobble."

It is dangerous, I have been informed, to rouse anyone too suddenly when in such a peculiar position. However, I got the longest pin I could find, and rammed it in up to the very head in a certain portion of my divine friend's personality. The effect

was instantaneous and sublime, causing him to jump higher than he has ever done before or since, and to talk Hebrew and Sanskrit for a good solid hour; but these mystic words were like sweetest music after that infernal "Gobble," and lulled me into a delightful slumber.

I must curtail my tale, or an indignant editor will commit my veracious story to that limbo of rhymes and nonsense, the bugbear of all romancers—the editorial wastepaper-basket.

Friday morning saw a good sprinkling of frost on the ground, but the sun soon remedied that drawback, and quite a formidable array of beauty and attendant cavaliers assembled to ride. On our way to the meet we noticed that the fences were big, and we nervously felt to see that our flasks had not been forgotten. As I am still in utter ignorance of the performances of others on that eventful day, I will confine

myself as shortly as possible to my own experiences. I'm perfectly certain that the last drop of old Scotch that I drank the night before had disagreed with the claret-cup. My horse was abominably fresh and the saddle very slippery; in fact, it was terribly elastic, so much so that my mount nearly jumped me clean over his head at the first fence. There were two sets of fences all the way, and the amiable animal I bestrode had four ears and two tails, and I don't know how many feet—probably the fine, cold weather brought them on the same as it does Brussels sprouts. Several men remarked that my horse jumped better than he ever did before. My sole remark was that I thought him a *very* clever hunter, and, by Jove! I think so still.

MY DERBY SWEEP

MY DERBY SWEEP

THIS is a short story with a moral, and a moral so obvious that those who read may learn without the least effort. Fortune has always used me despitely, and declined to bestow even a passing smile upon me; in fact, she has ever tossed her head disdainfully and passed on the other side, leaving me with an aching void in my heart. The treatment, however, that I have recently experienced has been so desperately unkind, that to ease my almost unendurable depression of spirits and misery, I am resolved to take a generous public into my confidence, and expose the cruelty of the changeable jade, feeling quite sure I may rely on *its* hearty sympathy.

I am a most distressfully poor man, and being such an impecunious mortal, I always consider it a bounden duty to make every possible effort and leave no stone unturned to improve my financial position. Surely, I may claim that I merit praise and deserve good luck for my attempts to carry out literally the axiom of an eminent professor who defined the term "luck" as the "taking advantage of opportunity."

A friend wrote to me that a guinea sweep for the Derby, limited to one hundred members, was being arranged at our club in town, and asked me if I would care to take a ticket? Thinking this one of the opportunities that should be promptly seized, I immediately replied "Certainly," and enclosed my guinea. In due course I received a wire with the information that my friend had drawn "Sceptre" for me, and the following morning this was confirmed by

letter. The same post brought letters from five other members of our club asking me if I would care to part with my chance for a *considerable* consideration — indeed, one of them offered me a pony (£25) for my ticket — but I was not to be tempted. The very name of the filly seemed to me to bear a mystic meaning and predict success. Was not *this* Coronation year, and this would be the *Coronation* Derby; was it not therefore only natural and fitting that “Sceptre” should win, and would win? I became superstitious to a degree, and regarded everything that happened as a favourable omen, and I felt absolutely convinced that at last my luck had turned, and Dame Fortune had softened towards me by bestowing upon me this “dead cert.”

No consideration whatever should induce or tempt me to dispose of my ticket either in whole or part. My motto was: “The

whole pig, and nothing but the pig," and I would not risk even a slice of its bacon. Dear me! what delightful airy castles I built. I could not sleep without dreaming that "Sceptre" was winning; sometimes her astute owner, with a tall white hat on, would be riding her himself, *with his face to the tail*; at other times she would be romping home gaily, and the other horses had turned, into motor cars, and were bursting themselves to catch her without avail; at another time I dreamt I had bought a new gun—which I badly want, by the way—with my winnings, and had christened it "Sceptre." I became utterly exhausted from want of proper rest, and my nerves were so unhinged that I determined to go to a quiet little Welsh village I wot of, where I could saunter out with my rod, and fish in peace and solitude until the eventful day arrived. Well! *Tempus omnia monstrat,*

and all things mundane have an end, so the period of my seclusion followed the rule, and I quietly returned to my "hearth and home"; but on my arrival, to my horror and consternation, a telegram was handed to me. I ought to have mentioned that in order to avoid any tempting offer which might be made to me to part with my ticket, I had left strict injunctions that no letters or telegrams were to be forwarded on. When my servant, therefore, handed me the above mentioned telegram, I felt a foreboding of evil or some dreadful catastrophe, and it was with a moisture-laden brow and shaky hands that I tore open the envelope. The contents fairly staggered me, and my cheeks were bloodless. It was from an uncle from whom I had great expectations, and the words ran: "I am seriously unwell, and want you at my side. Come by to-night's mail without fail."

In reply to my feverish inquiries, the servant stated that the telegram had been delivered half an hour after I had started for Wales—more than a week had therefore elapsed since its arrival. I was in the act of sending a wire to inform my relatives that I had been away on urgent and important business when the post arrived, and a letter was handed to me. It was from my uncle, and was short and to the point, for after tersely upbraiding me for my disrespect and brutal want of affection, he added: "The property and money which would have been yours if you had acted in a more affectionate and better spirit will now go elsewhere, for not one shilling shall you have of mine. I have struck your name out of my will, so the property will go to a distant cousin, and my money shall go to the County Lunatic Asylum." And "Sceptre"—ah! the very thought is harrowing, so I will drop a veil over

the too awful *fiasco* ; but even now I have this consolation, that perhaps if I draw "Sceptre" in some other sweep, it will lodge me in the institution to be benefited by my uncle's will, and I may yet have the grim satisfaction of knowing that my *dear* uncle has not quite "done" me, and that his money is being utilised for the benefit of his luckless and disinherited nephew.

ODDS AND ENDS

ODDS AND ENDS

IT will not, I hope, be considered amiss if I give my opinion, after an experience of over thirty years, as to the most suitable habiliments to wear for shooting, fishing, and active sport generally. As a rule, sporting men are abominably careless, and disdain to take ordinary precautions for the preservation of their health. This sort of indifference may be continued with impunity for years, but depend upon it, after the heyday of youth has passed, there is a sure "Nemesis" in the shape of rheumatism, stiff joints, and possibly worse evils. Men get intolerably warm from violent exercise or heavy walking, and then stand about in some bitterly exposed place, and as likely as not with wet feet, trying to

endure, Spartan-like, the piercing cold, or consoling themselves with the idea that they are "as hard as nails." Well, so they may be, but as sure as fate, carelessness, plus exposure, means a painful retribution in some form when our autumnal age approaches. I am not for one single moment advocating "molly-coddling" or effeminacy, for nothing do I detest more, but surely we may consider that a man is a "hass" who does not take any precaution to preserve his health. The chief promoters of disease are wet clothes and damp feet. Flannel should always be worn in the form of shirts or underclothing, and all clothes and boots should be changed directly exercise ceases. A warm bath after violent or hard exercise is most refreshing, and in any case the feet and legs should be well soaked in hot salt and water. As regards the outer clothing—that is, coat, waistcoat, etc.—the

garments should fit well, but at the same time be quite loose, so as to permit perfect freedom of action without the least drag ; and the reason is obvious, for what is more exasperating than a coat which tightens across your shoulders and cramps the free movement of your arms each time that you throw your gun up to your shoulder—it prevents or militates against shooting up to one's true form. Failure undeserved creates irritation in the mind of the most angelic-tempered man, and the consequence is disastrous, for instead of shooting straight, our performance goes from bad to worse. The question of freedom of limbs applies equally to fishing and other active sports. The coat, waistcoat, and breeches or knickerbockers should be of some woollen material, of such texture and thickness as is compatible with the season and temperature.

The next point to be considered is the

question of foot-gear. Under no circumstances be induced to wear ill-fitting or tight boots ; if you do, I pity you, for the agonies of mind and body will be well-nigh unendurable ; there is nothing that contributes so materially to misery and loss of all pleasure in field sports as badly fitting boots. They should fit like a glove, and yet be sufficiently loose not to press, pinch, or gall anywhere—in fact, they ought to feel most thoroughly comfortable. Let heavy, cumbersome boots be anathema to you, especially if there is much walking to be done, for, believe me, heavy boots are suicidal to comfort and pleasure. As to head-gear, I think, personally, that there is nothing beats an ordinary tweed cap, but I like the peak to come well out and straight, or nearly so—some-what like that of a jockey's cap—as it shades the eyes so much better than the small ordinary peak.

I hope my friends will not think me presumptuous for having made the foregoing remarks, but I have known of at least three cases of serious illness—one terminating fatally—arising from want of precaution and care as to dress, and it was this knowledge that has induced me to express my opinion on the subject.

EXODUS

EXODUS

SPORTS can be regarded from many points of view. May we go, good, patient reader, hand-in-hand and visit the sequent vantage-grounds from which vistas of the past and present stretch themselves in homely or in foreign guise before us? Nay, do not refuse; the journey is over no longer road than a few more pages, and if silver-tongued Hermes beguile but our impatience, will pass and end as do all things that have begun.

1. Painted savages, blue and unearthly, come over the hill-brow uttering weird and blood-curdling cries; the woods beneath resound with the deep baying of huge, fierce dogs; a black, bristling animal crashes through gigantic timber, and frenzied eyes

glare as a mightier creature than *elephas* shows on the sunlit ground.

2. "Hoic ! halloo !" comes up through the morning mist of a day in Hellas the old, and there rushes into view a fleet but weary hare ; then hounds vieing with each other in joyful, eager chorus ; then a strange runner, staff in hand, appears. " This young man," says our guide, " is Xenophon ; he has queer notions about wild animals and the chase."

3. Behold ! gay cavaliers course over the pleasant moorland, and to us, the privileged guests of a god, comes the silver sound of tinkling bells, while in the buxom air gracefully hovers a gyr-falcon of the highest breed. Alas ! they have gone as a dream in the night, and in their stead we view the regular rides and clear-cut avenues of Versailles. It is a right royal hunt. The forest-green uniforms and plumed hats flash

as the gallants ride on in decent disorder. A hart of ten points leads them away—hark! surely St. Simon sounds the halali.

4. There below our temporary Olympus stands a quaint old mill, red roofed, with its trees and pleasant gardens, rough, perchance, “with wild thyme and the gadding vine o’ergrown,” and a staid, sober figure—white-laced and “plain in its neatness”—walks nimbly over the shaven green to where a gliding brook is shaded by drooping branches. The figure of the gentle master bends, a rough fly falls lightly on the bubbling surface, the rod is curved, and a bonnie golden trout leaps in the morning sun.

5. Again it is the time of day in which Aurora rises to greet the opening life. We see four men carrying heavy guns, and clumsy—so they appear to us, but sportive weapons at that time were rare and

marvellous inventions — they are in line, and up to their knees in the rough stubble of a field whose expanse may measure some four acres. Why, that left-hand gun is our lusty old knight, Sir Roger, and Will Wimble supports him. “Well met, my dear old friends; may *we* carry our years as lightly.”

6. What is all this yelling and noise? Pandemonium, elusive of sin and death? No; but those dusky hordes of savage Hindus, while they beat the tangled jungle's growth, thus ward off evil. The beautiful striped destroyer glides stealthily from a thicket. Bang! As the smoke rolls away a young sahib appears in red coat and curled wig. Thus does the Maharajah honour his powerful visitor and guest.

7. “Oh, Hermes, one more scene and we have done.” Six gunners in breeches and leggings, each followed by a loader, and here

and there a glossy black retriever, are taking their stands on the confines of a covert. Presently the sound of tapping sticks is heard, and long-tailed, gorgeous cock-pheasants, with grey-brown hens in twos and threes, begin to rocket over; the guns sound, the birds increase in number, and fall in crumpled masses of . . . “Nay, Hermes, thou’rt cheating us: we know all this.” “Well, then, mortals, get ye hence, and down to your present-day powder and shot. Begone!”





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"'Belgrade, the White City of Death,' is the rather grandiose title of a book by Mrs Northesk Wilson dealing with the recent revolution in the Servian capital and the tragic fate of the late King and Queen. The previous history of Servia is set forth briefly by the author—sufficiently, indeed, to render recent events intelligible. The book contains a number of illustrations from photographs, chiefly portraits, and it is to these that it owes much of its interest. People who believe in clairvoyance may be interested in the author's story of a certain fortune-teller who in 1897 is said to have warned Queen Natalie against 'Madame Draga,' and to have prophesied that the last-named would be Queen one day. It is a wondrous story, though not more extraordinary than the 'clairvoyant vision' of the assassination which the author sets forth in full with all the 'evidence' up to date."—*Westminster Gazette*.

"'Belgrade, the White City of Death,' is a brief and sketchy account, by Mrs Northesk Wilson, of the Obrenovitch dynasty of Servia, and more particularly the late King and Queen. It is superficial in the extreme, and by no means well put together, but renders fairly clear the main course of Servian affairs since the separation from Turkey. Most of the interest will centre in the illustrations, which are portraits of the chief actors in recent Servian history; while the superstitious will shake their heads over Mr Stead's medium and her prophecy, and it is certainly curious that the assassination of his great uncle should have been preceded by a somewhat similar event. Mrs Wilson considers that Queen Draga was the author of the ruin that befel the King, nor has she any respect for her either as woman or politician."—*Western Morning News*.

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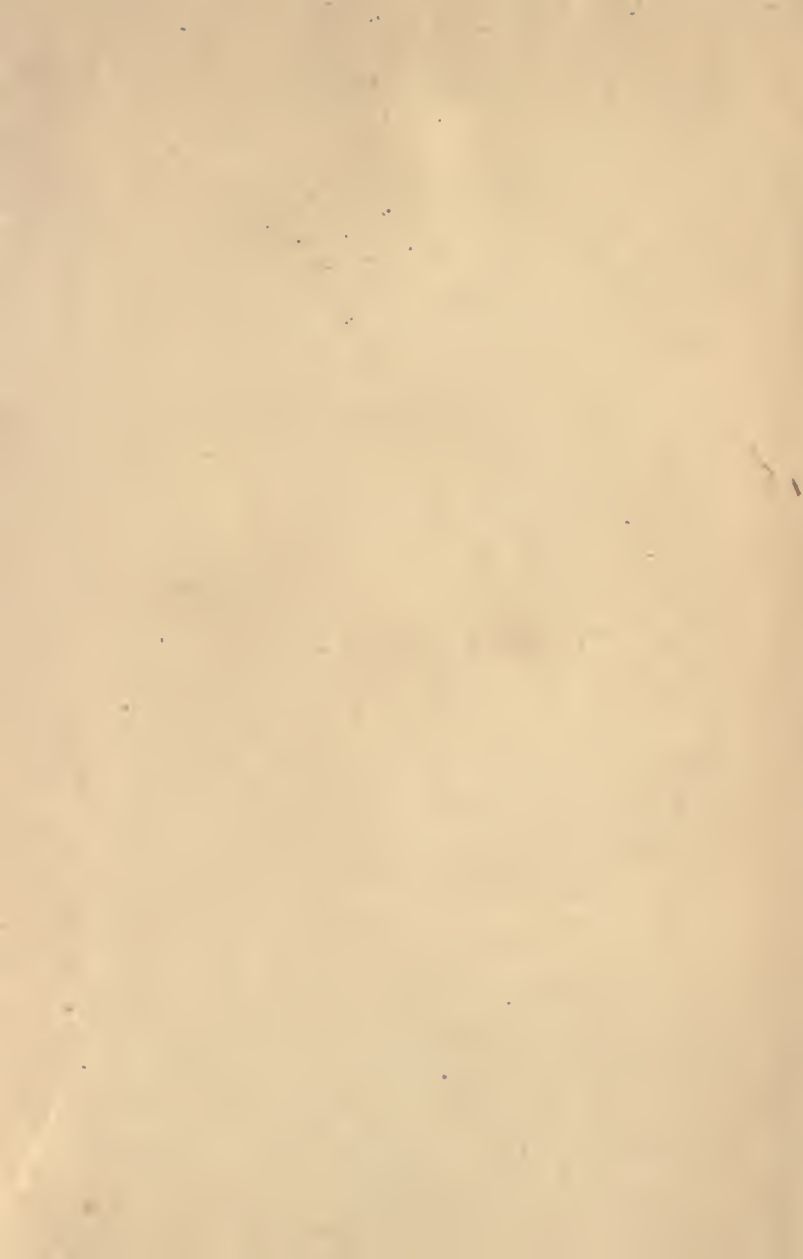
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