

OVER TURF
AND
STUBBLE





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OVER TURF AND STUBBLE

BY

‘OLD CALABAR’



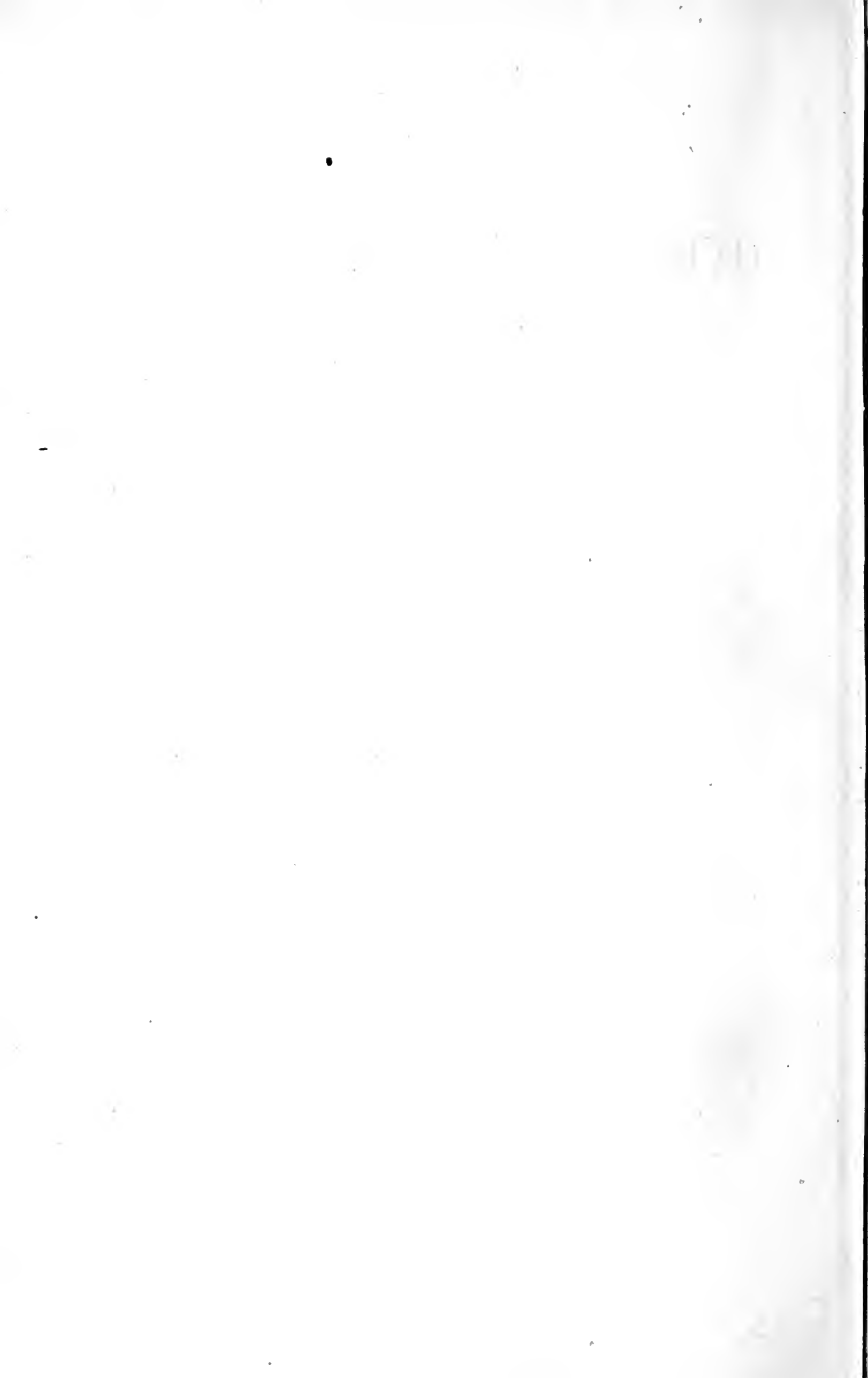
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DEDICATION.

MANY, many years have passed over our heads, my dear father (mine has become somewhat mildewed, and yours silvery white; still the thatch is there, and our "knowledge boxes" do not yet quite resemble a large-sized billiard ball), since you first took me out hedge shooting with you. How well I remember trudging at your heels on a snowy day; with what delight I rushed forward to pick up the redwing, or fieldfare as you knocked him over, or a hatfull of sparrows in the rick-yard. Later, how I was initiated into the mysteries of the cricket-field; how satisfied you were when I played "Dodger Pizzey," the great village bat, for half-a-crown and beat him; and how angry you were, as you and my cousin, then a young

cornet who had just joined the "Greys," appeared one morning and caught me in the midst of my thirteenth round with "Slenderman," old Miller's fighting butcher boy, the terror of the village lads, with about a hundred young rascals around me shouting out "Go in, young cap'n, and win;" how you came up as I was sitting gasping on "Dauby Todman's" knee, having my bleeding nose sponged by "Nipper Skeat," the washer-woman's quondam son, and whispered in my ear, "This is too bad of you; if you don't lick him in two rounds more I'll give you the best thrashing you ever had in your life, you young blackguard;" how the cousin advised me "not to rush, but to wait for him, hit out straight with my left, and polish him off in two rounds;" how I did hit out and settled him in one.

All these, my boyhood memories, can never be forgotten: the day I made over my pony, single gun, and spaniel to my brother, and took to a double barrel; how I mounted the pink and tops, played in the county eleven, was a dab at pool and billiards, could run my hundred yards in ten seconds, do my mile under five minutes, and never, never can I forget how when

the Baddlestone sparrow club had their annual dinner and pigeon match I won the fat pig, was made chairman at that dinner, proposed your health, and sang with great *éclat* "The Fine Old English Gentleman;" how I got screwed, and backed myself to ride "Poppet" over four miles of fair hunting country against Jemmy Alders' "Mad Moll" for ten pounds aside, owners up and catch weights.

The agony of my poor mother when she saw the doeskins and tops with the scarlet of the satin racing-jacket peeping over the collar of my great-coat, her pride when her darling boy returned victorious, or her misery when "Bogy Butler," the Adonis of the village, in a fit of jealousy told her he had caught me walking in the lanes with "Pretty Jane," the beauty of the place. I believe this is why I learnt "The Bloom is on the Rye," in a maudlin fit of spoon.

Such dear old memories I can never forget. Yes, years have passed away; instead of riding nine stone eight, I pull down the scale at thirteen seven. Notwithstanding all this, I can yet play a pretty straight bat, swing along with a

pack of foxhounds, knock my birds over, take my day's walking, whip a stream, handle my billiard cue, tell my story, sing my song, tool the drag—if pushed, run a hundred yards in a certain time, and use my bunch of fives pretty effectively yet. But Time, "Old Father Time," has changed us all: grown grey is the curly-headed boy that used to sit on your knee, with open mouth and fixed eyes, listening to your famous story of the "Baron von Bromenstine," that story that used to send us all breathless and wondering to bed—(A fellow has just come in and is interrupting me in one of my finest passages, asking for a light for his infernal pipe—there it is, and I may as well light my own at the same time).

Yes, time has changed, and yet I see a curly-headed little dog sitting on your knee (I've not lost the thread, I'm coming again, like a famished hunter close at home rushing to his gruel) listening to that self-same story, but who? my second son tormenting grandpapa to tell him that tale I was so fond of hearing; whilst the eldest is wanting to know all about papa's famous fight, another sturdy little urchin

is squaring away at his mother, and bawling out at the top of his voice, "I'm a Young Man from the Country," and "Slap Bang."

A fair-headed little thing is crawling along the floor, their baby sister. I can hardly realise I am a "Benedict," and that these little brats are mine—yet so it is, they are papa's pets (by George! there's the pet of all arrived, the baby boy; I'd forgotten him).

Now one wants to be told why grandmama died, and where she is gone to. "If grandpapa will burn the bits of the nasty gun that he keeps in his dressing-room that blew poor papa's fingers off."

Oh, Time, "Old Father Time," how you change! but change as you will; till death claims me, I can never forget my childish days, my boyhood's happy hours, my youthful dreams, or manhood's trials—good or bad, happy or unhappy, sad or gay, I remember all.

I am not much given to the *cacöethes scribendi*, but I trust this little volume may be useful, and amuse those who read it. A few sketches and experiences of a man who has devoted a life to sporting in all its wild and

exciting scenes, far away from home and friends.

The little book must stand or fall on its merits. I do not deserve much *Kudos*, but such as it is, you must allow me to dedicate it to you, my first master ; and that my sons may become as good men and sportsmen as their grandfather, is the earnest wish of

Your affectionate Son,

“ OLD CALABAR.”

INTRODUCTION.

IN presenting this little volume to the public, I am buoyed up by the hope that it may not only be amusing, but instructive. Most of the anecdotes happened to myself. They have of course been dressed up in the garb of narrative to make them presentable to the reader, but all the incidents contained in them are *true*.

To make a *good* sportsman, you must devote much time and attention to its practice. Many men, from their different occupations, cannot afford this time, and many, very many who have nothing on earth to do, are too indolent to display any interest in it; it is beneath their notice, or they are too swell and grand to attend to any of its minor details. Such men

are, in truth, only *feather-bed sportsmen*, in fact no sportsmen at all. They go out, blaze away, and consider their part is done. A man with a very moderate income may have his manor and his keeper, or even two; but then he must work the oracle, so that his amusement costs him little or nothing. The game must be sold, or at least the greater part of it. Nothing pays so well as keeping rabbits, I mean a rabbit-warren; which are now worth tenpence apiece on the ground, and their keep costs nothing.

Hand-reared partridges only require attention. The pheasant is a different thing; it is a man's whole time and work to look after these birds, especially if there are any quantity of them; and the cost of their feed forms a very large item in the yearly expenditure.

Guns are sold at fabulous prices. These for the rich man are well enough, he can afford it, and may indulge in his fancy; but the man with moderate means must content himself with a less expensive article; he may have as good a gun as can be made or shot out of for twenty-five pounds, or even less; the case and finish may not be so handsome, but after all, what is

that to the true sportsman? he does not shoot with the case, neither will the finish of the gun make him hold it the straighter. Put a good weapon in his hand, and that is all he wants or requires.

The same may be said of your dogs; there is no necessity to give enormous prices for them—good ones, good looking ones, and good bred ones, are to be had at reasonable figures.

I would never advise an ugly, bad bred, or badly broken dog to be purchased; they are not only a nuisance to yourself, but to those who shoot with you, and fatal to sport; but how often do you see this? Good dogs are to be had; the cost of rearing, breaking, &c., &c., I shall mention in another place.

It is not my intention in this little volume to go into all the details connected with the dog and gun; that has often been done before by far abler pens than mine. But something may be picked up by the young in this volume in the various tales I shall bring before you, and here and there I may diverge and give a few instructions as to vermin-catching traps, and how to use them.

Steeple-chasing and racing will be introduced here and there, more especially in my "Trip to France." Fishing will be also mentioned; but though all this will be merely in reference to myself, still I trust some information may be gathered from it.

I may compare this little work to a regular *Pot-pourri*; but that it may while away an idle half hour of the reader in a pleasant manner,

Is the sincere wish of

"OLD CALABAR."

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EXPERIENCES OF SPORT.

CHAPTER I.

OWLS—A STRANGE WINTER NIGHT'S STORY.

THESE birds are well known, and there are many species ; but I intend to confine myself merely to two—the barn owl, commonly called the screech, or white owl, and the brown owl. Both these species are generally destroyed by gamekeepers as vermin. What amount of mischief the white owl does I am not prepared to say ; but the brown owl I have seen take away young rabbits and leverets. The softness and looseness of the owls' plumage enables them to fly without noise, and come on their quarry in a most unexpected manner. I watched one brown owl many nights before I could shoot him, and

when I did, he had a leveret in his claw. That they are fierce and very determined sometimes I have not the least doubt. They have, probably, not changed their character since Shakespeare wrote—

“A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.”

He is a bird that finds favour but with few. A great deal of superstition is attached to him, and from what I can learn, from research and inquiry, has always been looked on, more or less, with a sort of dread or evil presentiment. The “Popular Encyclopædia” remarks, “When it flies or alights it doles out certain lugubrious notes, which, added to the solemnity of the scene, especially when near churchyards, often inspire awe and apprehension in the minds of the ignorant.” This idea may, in some measure, be taken from the lines of Spenser, who speaks of this bird as

“The ill fac'te owle, deathes dreadful messenger.”

Coleridge again :—

“Forth from his dark and lonely hiding place,
(Portentous sight!) the owlet Atheism,

Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,
Drops his blue fringed lids, and holds them close,
And hooting at the gloricus sun in heaven,
Cries out, Where is it?"

But enough of quotations. That the owl is a mischievous bird to the game preserver I can prove indisputably. Some short time back I was witness to a battle between an owl and a weasel, in which a young rabbit formed the bone of contention. It happened in this way. I was out one day in my duck-boat on a Somersetshire moor (famous for duck and snipe), accompanied by a friend's keeper. Landing on a bit of heath where there were a few firs, I was astonished at hearing a noise in one of the trees, and seeing some brownish feathers flying about, which the keeper at once pronounced as owl's feathers. Presently an owl tumbled from a tree to the ground uttering piercing shrieks, but holding a bundle of fur in his claw, which he would not quit his hold of. A weasel nimbly came down the tree after him, and a tremendous fight ensued, the owl lying on his back and fighting with his one free claw in the most determined manner, whilst with the

other he still held a small rabbit. We were watching this fight with intense interest—fur and feather flying gaily about—when another actor made his appearance in the arena in the shape of a stoat, who immediately rushed on the weasel; the latter fought very pluckily, but was soon forced to succumb to the superior size and weight of the stoat. As the weasel scudded off I laid him low, and the keeper polished off the stoat. On looking at the owl we found he was just dead, having been bitten badly about the neck; his claw was so deeply embedded in the skin and flesh of the rabbit that it was with difficulty we could get it out. No doubt had he been able to use it he would have proved too much for the weasel, who must have crept on him unawares. The following curious anecdote, which appeared in the “Weymouth and Dorchester Telegraph,” shows what a bird, not naturally one of prey, will do when pushed by hunger:—

“During the snow storm of last week, Sergeant-Major Collins, of the Dorset Militia, observed a common starling (*sturnus vulgaris*) perched upon the top rail of a fence in the

neighbourhood of the barracks. Suddenly it pounced upon something in the snow, and evidently swallowed it. The sergeant-major resolved to see what this was, and immediately shot the starling, when, on wringing off the head after the most approved style of doing execution on these peculiar birds, what was his surprise to find projecting from the thorax the sharp head and eyes with the two fore claws of a nimble lizard (*lacerta agilis*) three or four inches in length, which the starling had swallowed entire. The sergeant-major exhibited the lizard alive in Dorchester market on Saturday; for, strange to say, after remaining dormant for twenty-four hours, it revived."

The following curious "owl incident" happened some eighteen or twenty years ago, when I first went to France. On reading it, many of my readers will doubtless say, Bosh, humbug, an after-dinner yarn! An after-dinner yarn it may be, but nevertheless it is *true*, and I am quite certain my old and much esteemed friend, James Grant, Esq., who is now living, well and hearty, at St. Servan, Ille-et-Vilaine, France, and who told it to me, will vouch for its accuracy. I give it to you as he gave it to me:—

“One cold winter’s afternoon, in the middle of December, many years ago, when I first took the *Champsbullant*, a friend of mine, a Mr. MacA., an Irishman, and myself were returning home through the forest of Q——n, after a hard day’s shooting, where we had been rapping at the cocks with tolerable success. It was getting dusk, and being in the middle of the forest it looked darker than it really was. Suddenly a large white owl flew out of an ivy stump with a plaintive ‘too-whoo,’ and perched in a tree a little way ahead of us. ‘By my sowl, it’s an owld witch,’ cried MacA., cocking his gun to bring it down. ‘Hold,’ said I, ‘it is a rare bird in these parts; it is a white owl’ (I knew he wanted it, for besides being a most superstitious person, one who would never dine at table with thirteen, go a journey on a Friday, &c., &c., MacA. was an enthusiastic stuffer of birds).

“It was the first white owl I had seen in France, and somehow or other, whether it was for the sake of contradiction or what, I know not, but my wish was to spare the bird. As we approached it flew on with the same melancholy too-whoo as before, and continued doing so till

we were close out of the forest, when MacA. exclaimed, 'Ye blackguard, 'tis die ye shall,' and before I could prevent him up went the gun and down came the bird. But instead of lying dead it walked up to us as MacA. was loading his gun! 'Faith, 'tis not shot that will kill ye, that's clear,' said he, 'so here goes again;' and he kicked the unfortunate bird over, and pressed the but-end of the stock of his gun on its breast-bone. The bird was, to all appearance, dead, so I took it up and put it into my *carnassière*. We trudged on, amusing one another with tales of the *chasse*, but on turning round some little time after to see if all the dogs were at heel I missed a favourite old setter of mine. I whistled, and whistled, but no, the dog was not to be found. We were now in the middle of a large heath; there was no help for it but going back, as I would not have lost him for fifty pounds. Setters, at the time I speak of, were very scarce in France, though there is now a superabundance of them, such as they are. After proceeding a quarter of a mile, I saw the old dog at a dead stand, and as it was too dark to shoot I whistled again,

and walked up to him, when lo! about five yards in front of him was the owl! He had, in some way, managed to get out of the game-bag, and there he sat, looking the old dog in the face as unconcernedly as could be. I never saw a man in such a stew as MacA. 'By the powers, Grant, I kilt that bird; I'll take my oath I pressed his breast into his backbone, and look at the divil there. Sorrow's the sup I'll take again if iver I do it any more harm; it is an illigant fairy, so we will take it home, and instead of adding it to my collection, I'll trate it like one of my own kindred.' Well, we put it into the bag again, wrapped a silk handkerchief round it, and buttoned up the *carnassière* close, and in due time arrived at home, housed and fed the dogs, and went into the kitchen to hand over to *Le Comte* our day's sport, and the wonderful owl to be put into a place of safety. When we turned him out he was, to all appearance, without a mark, nor could we discover any blood on his feathers; had there been any we might easily have seen it, as he was white. On being touched he never offered to bite or use his claws, which are most formidable in all

the owl tribe, and we agreed, 'nem. con.,' that he was a most wonderful bird.

"Le Comte put him into the game larder atop of some wood, and he sat there as knowing as possible. Poor MacA. was in an awful state, and he really did not get through his *chablis* and oysters so quickly as usual. He had always a good twist of his own, and was certainly no bottle shirker. Before we went to bed, which was somewhere about two, he insisted on drinking the owl's health, with 'three times three,' and rolled upstairs more jovial than I had seen him for some time.

"The next morning we went to have a look at the owl; but he was gone, and nowhere to be found. We hunted high and low, but to no purpose; the bird had evidently taken its departure. That day we had splendid sport, killing ten couple of cocks, and came home tired and wet, for about three o'clock it had set in with snow and sleet. We got through our dinner as usual, but about twelve o'clock, as we were half dozing before our huge wood fire, we heard three knocks at the front door. 'Who can that be,' said I, jumping up, 'come at this

time of night? Some of our friends from *Rennes*, I'll be bound.'

“‘By heavens, Grant,’ said MacA., turning as white as a sheet, ‘something tells me it is that horrid owl. I have done nothing all day but think of him.’ Of course I laughed at the idea, when three knocks were heard again. I went to the door, and called out, ‘Who’s there?’ but no answer was given. ‘MacA.,’ said I, calling out to him in French, ‘bring me my pistols, and I will soon know who this is.’ He instantly came with them, and I opened the door, when, instead of seeing a beggar, as I had expected, or some friends, in hopped the owl, but oh! how changed. His tail, wings, and back were completely stripped of feathers, and nothing but the head remained untouched, and his unfortunate body was all raw and bleeding.

“‘This is a most extraordinary thing,’ said MacA., and he seemed to think so too, for there he stood, with amazement and horror written in every feature. We moved towards the dining-room, and the bird hopped after us, as if nothing had happened. We sat down, and took our seats in silence, the owl ensconcing himself in the chimney corner, looking us full in the face.

‘I’m floored,’ said MacA., at last breaking the silence, ‘this beats cock fighting; where the deuce has the bird been to get into this plight? He looks for all the world like a skinned rabbit.’ Well, there the bird sat, and there we left him when we went to bed; in the morning found him on the wood where we had first placed him.

“We stayed at the *Champsullant* a month, and the owl was always about the house; he was as tame as a dog, and cared for no one. I forgot to tell you that some days after his midnight arrival amongst us we found his feathers in the pen where the geese were kept. It appears that they, disliking ‘the illustrious’ stranger, had evidently plucked him. On leaving for home the bird was put into the bag again, but he managed to get out; as it was in the day time I soon discovered it, for on turning round he was running as well as he could after us, for he could not yet fly. He managed to get out two or three times, and had an evident dislike to being shut up. As we approached St. Pierre, a village about four miles off, where we were to find our *voiture*, we met the old village apothecary, who had been a prisoner of war of ours many years, a curious old fellow, but who spoke English per-

fectly. I had began to tell him the story of the owl, when he exclaimed, 'My poor lost bird for a thousand Louis!' It appeared he had missed it about five weeks before, and had deeply regretted its loss, as he had brought it when quite young some years back from Lower Brittany. The bird was produced, and a queer article he looked, with his feathers just beginning to grow; he put me in mind of a French poodle with the hair shaved off his back, but with his woolly head left. However, the doctor knew his bird, and the bird knew him, and he went off highly delighted. This owl lived for eight or ten years after, and never went away again, generally sitting in the same place, an old recess over the kitchen door.

"I often asked MacA. about pressing the stock of his gun on the bird's breast-bone, and he always assured me he *fancied* he did so—at any rate it was a most curious circumstance."

NOTE.—Since I wrote the above, I have very carefully studied the owl, and I have come to this conclusion—that the owl does more good to the game preserves than harm. I have watched them beat a stubble and quarter it as well as any setter, in search of mice, moles, &c., &c.

CHAPTER II.

A BRUMMAGEM GUN.

ALTHOUGH I am getting into the “sere and yellow leaf,” or, as a friend of mine terms it, “my thatch is a little mildewed,” still I have a most lively, and I may add painful, recollection of my first double-barrel.

Experientia docet is a “wise saw,” and as my experience has been pretty dearly bought, I trust none of my readers or young beginners will ever be weak enough to invest in a *cheap Brummagem gun*.

The accident which I am about to relate happened to myself, and my shattered left hand is a most convincing proof of my assertion.

As a boy, I was fitted out by my father with

a capital single gun, bought of Reilly, then living in Holborn, but now of Oxford-street. This was in every respect a useful weapon, and many a snipe and rabbit have I laid low with it. *O tempora! O mores!* I could not be content with it, notwithstanding. I sometimes, nay often, brought down a "rocket" and got into a "hot corner." A double-barrel was my ambition. A double-barrel I must have, and, to my cost, a double-barrel I did have.

Money then was an object to me, and, to tell the truth, so it is now; but this fact I am not always disposed to admit. After dinner, by the side of a blazing fire, with my glass of whiskey toddy, and thinking over a day's shooting or a hard run with the foxhounds, "money is not of the slightest consequence."

However, in those days I did not often drink whiskey and water.

One eventful Saturday evening I had sneaked away into the harness-room to smoke a stolen pipe of very mild tobacco with the under groom, when our occupation was interrupted by the entrance of a certain half-bred vet. who rejoiced in the cognomen of "Knock 'em Down." Whether

he was a proficient with the "cheese," his fists, or gun, I know not, but I never knew him by any other name than "Knock 'em Down." He had generally a spaniel or pointer for sale; sometimes he flew at higher game, and had a pony, or, if he was in full feather, a nag to dispose of.

This Saturday night he made his appearance, and was unusually mysterious.

"Young captain" (the name I went by—my father was *the* colonel), "I should like to speak to you. I've a got something I think as will tickle your fancy."

"All right, Knock 'em Down," I replied, as well as I could, between whiffs of tobacco which was gradually making me very sick and giddy, but which I would not allow. "Peg away."

"Well sir," he said, "I've got a gun, a good'un, too, for sale, and a prime span'el. The party—a friend of mine, a keeper, as 'as been blowed upon, and 'as 'ooked it—will sell cheap, but won't part the lot. I can take three sovs for them; or, if paying the chips now ain't convenient, say in a month's time. You can see 'em to-morrow and decide."

Well, on the morrow I became the purchaser.

The gun, to my young fancy and small experience, looked good, and all that could be desired. Proof marks were not wanting, and though the locks went a little hard and coarse, "Hang it," thought I, "keepers never do have their guns in good order. When I have taken them to pieces they will be first chop and all right." The spaniel was both good and handsome.

My purchase was kept quiet, cleaned, and oiled; and as the next day was the annual pigeon match of our village sparrow club, I determined on coming out in force.

This pigeon match was always shot in one of my father's fields, and at two p.m. the traps were set, and all in readiness. I suppose there might have been fifty farmers, and others, there.

The sides were made, and the match began.

"Young captain's side wins, for a *crowm*," shouted old Mathew—our keeper. "I are with 'um. I taught 'um how to shute (shoot) and he can shute, too—darned if he can't. I'll bet 'ee a bob he kills his first bird."

I stood at the trap in all my pride, with the famous new gun in hand.

"Now, young measter," shouts Mathew,

“hold ’un straight, and mind what I told ’ee about the trigger finger—now then.”

I brought the gun up in readiness below the elbow. “Pull,” I exclaimed.

Heavens! what a bang. Am I dead, or what is it? A dreadful feeling of numbness up my arm.

“Great God! the gun has burst,” was my thought, as I reeled and tumbled headlong to the ground.

When I came to myself and senses I was sitting on old Mathew’s knee.

“Don’t ’ee die, Measter Julius,” screamed the old man, “don’t ’ee leave us. By ——! he shan’t,” he exclaimed fiercely, “he be only fifteen. What will the colonel say, and the poor missus; she’ll go mad. For the love of God look up, Measter Julius. His poor left arm be knocked to smash, his eye be cut out, and he be a dying. Lord help that b——d ‘Knock ’em Down,’ when I catches him, the thundering thief.”

By degrees my senses returned, and I understood the terrible catastrophe that had occurred.

The whole field were standing round—the ranks were thrust aside, and my father rushed in.

“My darling boy,” he exclaimed, falling on his knees before me, “it’s your father; don’t you know me?”

“Curses on it!” he exclaimed in his passion, “whose gun has he been shooting with?”

It was all explained to him, and I was carried in.

I shall never forget the scene—my mother, my sister, and brother, friends, and relations around my bed.

My left hand was knocked to shatters—that is, I had two fingers blown off, and the rest of my hand was terribly crippled.

After some years I got the use of it again; but I was laid up seven months before I got about.

Dr. Smith, of Chertsey, the late much lamented Albert Smith’s father, with whose family I had always been on the most friendly terms, saw me through this serious illness, and carved the remnants of the fingers off.

The old keeper was one of those who held me under the operation.

“Don’t ’ee winch, Measter Julius,” exclaimed he; “remember, I taught ’ee how to shute; thee shall shute as well as ever again in a month, for ’ee be all right in the trigger finger.”

Years have rolled on since then. The lad of fifteen has become a gray-headed man nearly fifty years of age, but still as fond, and, if possible, fonder of sport than ever. My life has been spent abroad, following up the excitements of “flood and field,” and many a strange incident has befallen me in my wild and venturesome life.

Last year, after more than twenty years’ absence, I returned to the old country, to home and friends.

In the servants’ hall, before the fire, in a comfortable cushioned arm-chair, sat Mathew—an old, very old man, over four score.

His eye glistened as he welcomed me. “Oh Measter Julius” (I was always Measter Julius, or young captain with him), “this does my old eyesight good. I be happy noo; I taught ’ee how to shute; and if what I hears be true, ’ee

can shute—and though that darned Brummagem gun, and that infernal ‘Knock ’em Down’ well nigh killed ’ee, thee be all right in the trigger finger.”

Some months later, the old man was driven in the pony-chaise to see a great pigeon match in which your humble servant was to figure, not with a Brummagem gun, but with a 12-bore breech-loader by Needham, of Birmingham, the hardest shooting gun I ever took in hand.

“I don’t like them ’ere new-fangled *breeze-loaders*,” soliloquised the old man, “but I ’spose the young captain knows what’s what noo.”

I was in great shooting form and luck that day, and the stakes to win were heavy.

“Hurrah!” shouted my old friend, to the great amusement of the field, as bird after bird fell before the 12-bore. “I taught ’un how to shute. I be old Mathew, the keeper, gentlemen, four score and three come next Candlemas.”

I won the first prize.

“Three cheers for the young captain,” shouted the old man. “I taught ’un how to shute, and

though he be a bit crippled by a Brummagem gun, he be all right in the trigger finger."

Yes, years have passed by since that terrible accident happened to me, and my children, clambering on my knee, will ask, "What is the matter with poor papa's hand? How is it he has only three fingers, and the rest are so ugly looking?"

I answer their inquiries—a *Brummagem gun*.

Nearly all those who stood by me that day and saw the accident are dead and gone; "Knock 'em Down" is under the sod, but, above and dearer than all, my mother has long since been taken to her last home. "Knock 'em Down" had bought the gun of a cheap Jack, and acknowledged it. The old keeper often comes in after dinner to have his glass of *poorte* (as he calls it) and talk to the Colonel, my father, an old man (still older than Mathew), whose white and silvery locks the brats are endeavouring to curl and put into all sorts of shapes. The eldest, an intelligent lad of nine, will commence teasing the old keeper and mockingly ask him to teach him how "to shute." "He must; mustn't he, grandpapa?"

The old man will good-humouredly place him on his knee, and say—"I be too old, my little duck, and can't see right well, but when 'ee do begin, do 'ee have a good gun, and not a Brummagem one, or, ware out for the trigger finger."

CHAPTER III.

A PIKE STORY.

MANY years have passed away since the following adventure with a pike happened to me:—

I was staying in one of the western parts of England, on a visit to some old friends; there were a large party of us assembled, shooting and hunting was the order of the day, and after dinner we adjourned to the billiard-room, where pool and yarns ruled the evening. Amongst the company was a certain cavalry captain, who had pretty well pigeoned some of us youngsters—I believe I was about the only one who he had not got an I.O.U. out of—I had always been a pretty good hand at taking care of myself, and I determined this

man should not get the better of me. I was aware that he disliked me immensely, from the simple fact that I had beaten him in a pigeon match which had been held in the park some few days before, and at which all the ladies had been present. This had much piqued the captain, who was still more embittered against me inasmuch as a very pretty black eyed young lady was making me a silk jacket, which I was to perform in at the annual steeple-chases held close by, and in which our host, Sir F., had a horse entered that I was to ride.

One evening the conversation turned on fishing. "By Jove," said Sir F., "I believe I have down in the rush pool, close by the decoy, the largest pike in England, it is a family fish, he has been there before I can remember, and we begin to look on him as a sort of heirloom; scores have endeavoured to take him—spinning, trolling, live and dead bait, have been tried, but to no purpose, he won't have them." (Spoon baits were not invented in those days.)

"Indeed," said the captain, "pretty fishermen you must have had. Five to four in tens I take him."

“How do you mean?” said Sir F. “Of course you can take him. You may pump the pond out, or net him, neither of which methods I will allow. Catch him fairly by rod if you can. I won’t take your bet, captain, but I will have a three dozen case of claret with you.”

“Done,” said the captain, “I’m on,” and the bet was booked.

“This fish,” continued Sir F., “I have often seen in the summer lying on the weeds. Such a one I never yet saw elsewhere; I believe him to be forty pounds, if he is an ounce.”

“Well,” exclaimed the captain, “I will have him.”

“Hold,” said Sir F., “there is one thing to be mentioned; what time are you to do it in? I give you ten days from the hour you first commence with him.”

“All right,” replied the cavalry gentleman, “I shall not want ten days, but I will take them all the same. I rather think,” he continued, looking round on us, “I shall give you gentlemen a lesson in fishing, though I was rather unfortunate at the pigeons, and got all the fast birds.”

Various bets were made in the course of the

evening, and in a day or so a complete fishing tackle shop arrived for the redoubtable captain for the capture of the family pike.

The day after its arrival we were all down at the rush pool. This was a largish pond, close to a decoy ; into which a small stream emptied itself. It was a dark, dangerous looking place ; part of it was covered with alders and rushes, and looked the very spot for a heavy fish to lie in.

The instant I saw him put his tackle together, I was certain he was no pike fisherman. Reared as I had been in the country, and "entered," if I may use the term, at all kinds of sport, I was as familiar with every sort of fishing as I had been with my Latin grammar. (I know which I liked the best, and found the most amusement in.)

The day was cold, and not a run could he get. We walked about smoking our pipes and cigars, the captain working away to no purpose.

"It's no use, D.," said a young county squire, "you will never run him. You may do very well in a Thames punt, in a roach or gudgeon swim, but pike fishing is not your *forte*, my boy."

“We shall see,” sulkily returned the military man. “If any one can take him I can.”

“I’m damned if he will,” whispered Sir F.’s keeper in my ear, “not if he fishes a month o’ Sundays. Dashed if his tackle would hold a six-pounder, let alone such a whopper as this be. He won’t take un, and he be as bad a shot as he is a fisherman, always a-firing into the brown on ’em. I can’t think why master has such chaps as he; he do more harm to the coveys and bags less birds than I ever see a gent do, notwithstanding all his brag. He’s fitter a nation sight for a dinner table, or knocking them ’ere balls about up at the house. No, sir,” he continued, “this ’ere fish ain’t to be took by he, nor no one else; he’s been tried far too often; he’s up to snuff, and a pinch over I reckon.”

The captain fished away day after day, but not a run did he get, and he had to stand a pretty good amount of chaff—the same thing every day, “What, no fish for dinner?”

The last day passed, and the fish was uncaught.

“I say, D.,” said Sir F. after dinner, “send for a good brand, and a good vintage.”

“And we will drink it,” I rather unceremoniously put in.

“You drink it, sir,” returned the captain, scowling on me. “You ought not even to smell a cork, much less drink wine, at your age.”

This insulting remark nettled me immensely; it wounded my boyish vanity.

“The devil I should not,” I retorted. “Why not? A man,” I added rather pompously, “who can take the shine out of you at pigeons may, I imagine, drink claret?”

It was now the military man’s turn for a rap at me.

“I tell you what, youngster, I will bet you a hundred sovs to ten you do not take this said jack in ten weeks, fish as you like.”

“Done,” I passionately answered; “I will take your hundred to ten; and if I do not win, there is one consolation, I cannot do much worse than you have.”

“Hold on, old fellows,” put in Sir F. “I do not like all these bets. We are not here to cut each other’s throats. You are too hard on the

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youngsters, D., upon my soul you are. Charley," (to me), "you are a young noodle. I tell you all the fish is not to be caught napping. Look here, D., Charley shall give you five sovs and cry a go."

"I'll be damned if I do," replied the captain; "these youngsters must be made to pay for their knowledge; I had to do it, and I hold him to his bet."

A cloud seemed to have fallen on the company, for I was a bit of a favourite with most of them, which the *militaire* was not. He was well known, and it had been said once ruined a young fellow on the voyage home from India at backgammon. He won all his money and effects, but generously allowed him to keep his clothes till he got up to London, when he was to give them up, or allow their full value.

After the usual pool and so on in the billiard-room, we each took our way to our respective bed-chambers.

I was sitting by the fire, thinking how I should tackle the pike, and how I should begin with him, when there was a tap at the door, and to my invitation to come in, Sir F. entered.

“ My dear Charlie,” he began, “ how the deuce could you be so foolish ? I do not like this sort of a thing, upon my soul I don't ; I told you before, D. is always on the look out for such young fry as you. This infernal fish is not to be caught, and these bets breed ill feeling, and all that sort of thing. You are a good fisherman, I know, and a good sportsman for your age, but this fish has beat 'cuter hands than you are. Now do you go down to Bridges to-morrow morning—you know where he lives, at the end of the village ; he is the only man who can put you up to anything to tempt this fresh water shark.”

Bridges, or the “ major” as he was usually called, was an old half-pay officer—a bachelor, and a rare fisherman. I knew him slightly, and on the morrow presented myself at his breakfast hour, and found him busy in setting up a flight of hooks.

After having given him the outlines of my business, the old gentleman said,

“ My lad, look here, this fish has been worked at again and again. I have never had a shy at the fellow myself, but I feel quite certain he is

to be taken, but it will be with no ordinary bait. Roach, bleak, dace, and minnow he knows far better than we do ; we must give him something else. You say you have ten weeks from the time you begin ; now don't you commence as all these muffs have at once, but wait till a little rain comes. I know the rush pool well ; as I tell you, wait for a little rain, and then fish when the water is slightly coloured. He is short of food," he soliloquised, " he must be there, for it is not a little that will feed or fill him. The eels will begin to run then, and he likes them very well, I'll be bound, for want of better, but we will tempt him with something nicer.

" Now, my boy," he continued, " I tried a dodge the other day, and what do you think" (slapping me on the back), " I say, what do you think of a gold fish, not an artificial one, but a real one, one out of six I shall take down to the rush pool with me, carefully put away in a bait-kettle, all alive ? If that will not tickle his fancy, you are done, and must pay the money ; but if you have any luck, you will hook him. Fish about a dozen or twenty yards where the stream comes in, and you will have him, as sure as a gun.

Now the first bait we will try shall be a dead one. I shall kill a fish carefully; not a scale must be bruised or hurt. The muffs," he continued, "rap a fish on the head, and bait with it, and think it all right; but that will not do for this gentleman. The fish must be properly killed, and properly put on the trace. Ten hooks, my boy—that is three threes and a lip hook, not a sliding one. A sliding one is not worth a rap. Make your flight the proper length for your bait; no Limerick hook, or brazed ones. I would not give a farthing for either one or the other. I am an old-fashioned fellow, and have my own ideas. I may be wrong, possibly I am, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and I can catch fish when many cannot. I shall tie a flight or two for you in my own way, three together, but all single hooks, and I shall bait for you. D. made Sir F.'s keeper do the same for him, because, I suppose, he was afraid of soiling his hands, poor fellow! But I shall bait for you, not that I doubt your capabilities, but I will do it myself. Now you will see my bait go through the water without a wobble, and like a streak of greased lightning. Let your bait sink

a little, and then work him gently up stream—that is, towards the head where the little brook comes in. Don't work him with a snatching movement, but evenly and quietly, and if there's any run in this pike you will have him. When you have struck him," continued the major excitedly, "give him the but, and hold on, for if he gets to the alders or those rushes you are a 'gone coon.' You shall use fine tackle, but strong enough to hold an ox. Don't you say a word to a soul. But come here this afternoon, and we will have a quiet couple of hours in some waters not far from this, so that I may have a look at you."

In the afternoon I went down to him. We killed three or four nicish pike, and the major expressed himself quite satisfied, and gave me a few hints as to future proceedings.

That evening the captain asked me when I intended beginning. I answered, as soon as there had been a little rain.

"Then I may wait ten weeks," he said.

"Well," chimed in Sir F., "you know, D., by the bet he can begin when he likes; and as to rain, you will not have to wait long for that, as it is raining already; and," he added laughingly,

“as I suppose I am to keep you all ten weeks, why you must not grumble.”

“Then,” said I, “if the water is not too much coloured, I shall begin to-morrow.”

“And we will all come and see you, Charley,” said the other men.

“I shall bring that little black-eyed puss with Lady F.,” mischievously put in our host. “If it is a fine day we will have a regular bout, and see if Charley *can* run this fish.”

The next morning was all that could be desired—mild, but with a nice breeze. By seven I was at the major’s door, and shown in. He was at breakfast.

“Early bird, you see,” he said, as well as he could with his mouth full of buttered toast. “Been about your affair this morning. Took the net, and had a cast in my little pond for some of the gold gentlemen. Dash me if I do not think they would tempt an angel; such beauties, and as lively as kittens. Now, look at these two flights of hooks I have set up for you, old-fashioned looking ones, but nice square bends. They are the jockeys for me; none of your gimp, either. Good salmon-gut, whipped with the finest wire for a short distance up, to

save it from his teeth ; that is the stuff to hold a big one with. It takes a little more time, but pays for the trouble. Remember, my boy, it may put a cool hundred in your pocket. How old may you be ?”

I told him “just twenty.”

“Dash me,” returned the volatile major, “this hundred if you could land it would set you up with a doocid good dog-cart, horse, and harness ; you will be wanting that now that you are going into the steeple-chase line ; and it is an uncommon pleasant thing to drive to cover in, of a cold morning, instead of riding your hack or hunter, as the case may be. Lord, if we can only pull it off, it will be a grand thing !”

By ten o'clock we were all at the pool. Sir F., his wife, some half-a-dozen pretty bright-eyed girls, my dark one amongst them, the captain, and all the rest of them.

“Now, Charley,” said the major, “fish with my line, a rum one to look at, but a good one, dressed by myself ; equal parts of gold size and burnt oil, soaked in a basin, and then passed through the stem of a tobacco pipe to make it even and level. It would hold an elephant.”

“May I ask,” inquired the captain of the major, “what bait you propose to use, for I see you are this young gentleman’s mentor?”

“What bait?” returned the major. “A curious one, but fish. Look in the kettle, and satisfy yourself.”

The captain opened the lid, and looked in.

“Gold fish, by all that is wonderful. Upon my soul it seems to me to be rather ludicrous. Gold fish,” repeated he, “I never heard of such a thing in my life before.”

“Never mind him, lad,” said the major; “look at this trace, no lead on it; what’s wanted of that I will stow away in the bait.”

The old gentleman then took a fish—one touch of a needle, and it was dead. A sufficient quantity of lead was dexterously placed by him in its jaws. The fish was then attached to the hooks, and the mouth neatly sewn up with a couple or three stitches of yellow silk.

“There you are, my boy,” exclaimed he, looking at it with an air of affection. “Good luck to you, it’s a beauty.”

“Good luck to you, Charley,” chorused Lady F. and her staff.

“Go in and win, Charley,” heartily responded Sir F.; “I shall not regret losing the family pike.”

Taking the rod out of the major’s hand, who seemed loath to part from it, and letting out some line, I swung the bait lightly but dexterously from me.

“That is the ticket,” whispered the major. “When you are working it bring him a little towards the surface, and a little slower as you get near the head of the stream. That’s the style of thing,” he exclaimed, as I brought the bait out of water. “Spins like a top, does it not, Sir F.?”

Sir F. could not but acknowledge that it was perfect. Which it was. In it went again, and working it before me, I said “a perfect”—(bait I was going to add)—when whirr, whirr, went the reel.

“Holy Moses!” screamed the major, “he is hooked, by the living jingo! “Give him the but, lad, give him the but, hold on, but handle him like a piece of silver paper, that’s your sort. Ah, captain, there is fifty of the hundred pounds gone already, and by George, if we have any luck that fifty will double itself in ten minutes.”

All was excitement ; with flushed face and flashing eye I held on, and humoured the fish as much as I dared, in the small and dangerous space. Away he went again, and leapt out of the water like a salmon.

“By Jupiter, what a fish!” ejaculated the major, “he’s as big as a shark!”

“Damnation,” muttered the captain, between his clenched teeth, “to be beaten by a boy ! however, he is not landed yet.”

“But soon will be,” returned the major, who had heard the observation, and who was close by me gaff in hand ; “my youngster has a very pretty notion of handling a fish ; calm and resolute, with plenty of patience. Do not hurry him, my lad, gold fish will bring gold, *hay*, Charley ? Joke, you know, my boy. That’s your sort, easy with him ; he will not fight long in this water. Bring him out, and I will give you the best spinning rod you ever had in your life.” I did not want this inducement held out to me to go in and win. “I say,” he whispered to me, “do not mind what he says, take things quietly, he has got a nasty way of rolling his eye. He would have you out in the park for half a

button. He pays the piper this time, or I am much mistaken, so be still."

I took his advice, and kept very quiet, for I had quite as much as I could do. After some five-and-twenty minutes of breathless suspense, to the great delight of all, save one, the major gaffed and landed my fish.

"There, my lad, you have done the trick handsomely, held a trump card, and won the rub—a good one, too. Let us see," he added, as he dexterously detached the bait from my pike's jaws, "well hooked, but I can get them out though he could not. Now for his weight," and hooking his scale into the upper lip, it turned at thirty-two pounds. I was congratulated on all hands.

"Done again," said the captain, coming up to me, "you are in luck, sir; I have no chance with you, the run is against me. I will write you a cheque when we get back."

"Thank you, Captain D.," I answered, "any time will do for that; but as I do not like to win any one's money without giving them a chance, I will give you one. I heard this morning you are to be up in the same steeple-chase with

me next Friday. I have won my first bet to-day, and not a bad one; I will go you double or quits. I beat you in that race. Mind, I do not say I shall win it, though I'll do my best, but that I beat you."

"I know you will do your best, my dear boy," exclaimed Sir F., warmly shaking my hand. "I know you will; you are both well mounted, and may the best horse win."

"I am on with you," burst from the captain; "an even hundred that you beat me; two hundred for you or nothing. By George! this is getting exciting."

That evening, somehow or other, I left the dinner-table early, and found my way into the drawing-room, and from thence into the conservatory with the dark-eyed little beauty.

"Now you will win in the jacket I am making for you, won't you?" she asked.

"I will break my neck if I do not," I valorously replied.

"Oh, don't; don't do that, for my"—there was a pause.

"I say, Charley," shouted a voice, "you are wanted for pool."

I ran third in the steeple-chase, but I beat the captain, who handed me over two hundred pounds. Years after, on my return to England, I paid a visit to my dark-eyed beauty, then a comely matron with four or five children. Her husband was a capital fellow, one of my old friends.

“Ah, Mr. ——,” she said slyly one evening, “do you remember my working you a silk jacket to beat Captain D. at the steeple-chase? Do you remember being called away to pool? We nearly committed ourselves. You know you were dreadfully spoony on me, and all through catching the Family Pike.”

NOTE.—THE GOLD FISH AND SMELT AS PIKE
BAITS.

A fish to spin well we all know should not wobble too much, and a fish not to wobble should be a narrow one, which is generally the case with the male. I have bought many hundreds of gold fish for ponds and other purposes. Havre, in Normandy, is a famous place for them; the price there is about fourpence each. I noticed, when making any purchase, that

the fish were very closely examined, and I soon found out the cause. There are twenty times more females than males, and had I not kept my eyes open I should never have found out how the male fish was distinguished. No matter if he is a blood-red or a black-backed one, the sign is always the same and always there. It is a very bright star on the back, composed of three or four scales at the end of the back fin. There is no mistaking it. These fish, I always observed, they would never give me, and they were always lean ones. On inquiry I found out that these were the male fish, and much prized, and on insisting upon having a fair proportion of these, I got seven of them to the hundred, and then only by buying the whole number mentioned. I have experimented on these by putting the fish without the star on the back in a pond together, and they have not bred. I then put in those with a star, and the consequence was I had hundreds of fish, and they are increasing very rapidly.

If any of my readers are interested in this subject, I shall be very glad to give them further information.

In my "Pike Story," I should also have mentioned another deadly bait, better, even, than the gold fish, and that is the smelt. Of all killing baits I have ever used, this is *the*

most deadly; he is a lean, long fish, and spins beautifully, and brighter than the finest polished silver. In a very large lake of some hundred acres or more, close to Granville, Manches, France, I have taken pike of an enormous size with the smelt, when no other bait would be looked at. To all anglers interested in pike fishing, I would recommend the trial of a smelt. They are difficult to get, but they pay well for the trouble and expense. One thing bear in mind—they must be *fresh*. As an old and practical fisher, I have no hesitation in saying that they are by far the best bait for spinning I ever used, even better than a small eel about five inches long, which is also a deadly bait.

There is one thing that should never be forgotten by the pike fisherman, and that is, that the pike is fond of change, and will generally run eagerly at any fresh sort of bait.

CHAPTER IV.

CONGER EEL FISHING AT JERSEY.

BRIGHT little Jersey, isle of beauty and pleasure, pic-nics, balls, festive luncheons, dinners, suppers, and quiet flirtations—can I forget them? Never!—the last decidedly *never*. And here I was, after years of absence, returning to the scenes of my youth; to Jersey, to some of my old pursuits, old companions, and old flames (if I should find them there, and still single). I had been at school in the island, but robbing orchards was beyond me now. The principal object of my return was to have a fishing bout with my old friend the conger eel. Oftentimes watching the boats return from off the French coast, Guernsey, and the Isle of Serk, had I looked and

wondered at the prodigious size of these fish : sixteen, twenty, thirty pounds, and even more, had I seen them. To catch a good conger I was determined on. I had been satiated with all sorts of sport. I wanted a little quiet, and so I had resolved on some sea fishing, and hence my visit to "Cæsarea," as it used formerly to be called, the gem of the Channel Islands.

At the British Hotel I was at home, and soon snug and comfortable ; had my bath, dressed, breakfasted, and started for the club. I needed no introduction. My name I knew was in the visitors' book ; so walking in and asking for some of my friends, I was quickly amongst them. It is a pleasant thing to meet old and familiar faces after years of absence. So many things to hear, tell, ask, and be questioned about. All this had to be gone through before I could intimate to them my determination of having a bout with the congers, which I had no sooner done than one of them at once placed at my disposal a nice half-decked boat of five tons, commanded, as he told me, by one of the greatest liars in the place, but a prime fisherman ; not an islander, but a Kentish man.

I soon made the acquaintance of Captain Hubbard, commanding my friend's little cutter, the "Fearless." He was a curious old fellow—sixty-five years of age, somewhere about five feet high, and almost as broad as he was long. He looked, in his pea-jacket, like a goodly-sized beer-barrel stuck up on two large sausages. His name "Hubbard" had been dropped, and he always went by his nickname, Captain "Tar Bucket." As he was a first-rate fisherman I did not care a fig about his personal appearance.

"Going conger ketchen, are you, sir?" he remarked. "Well, I'm glad of it. Werry proud to take you about in this little wessel. A nice dry little boat, sir, tight as a bottle. Pitty Mr. Robert don't go out a little oftener; but he's always now knocking them balls about [billiards] or running after the gals—I means them as goes knocking balls about on the grass, not on a table. Blow me if there's anything but ball playing now!—no fishing, no match sailing, no amoosement of any kind, no pic-nics on the water, nothing a movin'. I reckon I'll 'ave to get the trawl out? Howsomever, it's all ready. We must get some bait afore we goes

a congering. When would you please to go, sir?"

On my giving him to understand the sooner the better, it was agreed we should start on the morrow, and trawl all day for fish with the hope of catching the "scuttle-fish," which is the most deadly bait for the conger eel.

After having procured a sufficient quantity, we were to proceed to the north of the Island of Serk (pronounced *Sark*), a famous place for conger, and fish by night, which is the proper time to take these creatures.

I never had been at this sort of amusement, though I had heard a great deal about it, the tackle necessary, &c., &c. It is very hard work, and when I say that the weight of the leads sometimes used where the currents are rapid is *sixteen to eighteen pounds*, and the line considerably bigger round than the large part of your thumb, you may suppose that, with the addition of a lively struggling conger of say thirty pounds more, great exertion and also some small amount of strength is required in the practice of this kind of sport. The leads used are seldom less than eight or nine pounds; but they vary

according to the depth and the currents. I found that at first I took all the skin off my hands from the weight, and hauling up of the wet line, and they became so sore and tender I could scarcely use them. However, I determined to persevere, which I did, and soon got them all right.

The next day was fine, and at nine a.m. we started in the "Fearless," commanded by the gallant though unveracious Captain Tar Bucket. A lad and myself composed the rest of the crew. My friend was not able to join us, as business kept him chained to his desk. We were provisioned, watered, and grogged, for four or five days. Not that we had any intention of remaining out so long, but we deemed it better to be on the safe side.

We commenced our trawling operations off Gorey, on the east of the island, and had pretty good luck, catching some soles, plaice, and various other species of flat fish, with a few of the much-coveted "scuttle." As there were plenty of other boats about on the same errand, I managed to buy some more baits from them, and "made tracks" on the turn of the tide for

Serk. Having somewhat reduced our canvas, and put the boat under easy sail, we gave the helm to the lad, mixed ourselves a glass of grog each, lighted our pipes, and began yarning. Many of Captain Tar Bucket's stories bordered on the marvellous; and, from what he had done, and where he had been, I put it at a moderate calculation he must at least have been somewhere about two hundred years old. I remember, amongst other things, his telling me, over a jorum of three-quarter grog, that he had once been "a terrible hand at dancing."

"Once in particular," he said, "I call to mind arter I had arrived at Wapping from the West Injes [he had never been there] with the 'Polly Jane' (a terrible woyage we had on it), I went into a dancing crib, and found a proper fine gal; 'Dumpling Bet' they called her. She just could fut it. She was werry much taken with I, and could come the double shuffle; every one was a looking at us. I was a lithsome chap then, and I should had been spliced to she, but I never saw her arter that night; but, by golly, she *was* a proper fine gal, sir."

With these and like stories the time was be-

guided till we reached Serk. Tar Bucket's store of anecdotes still seemed quite unexhausted, and he informed me he could keep on for a "month of Sundays," which, from the specimen I had had of his powers, I was quite ready to believe.

Having made our boat all snug, we prepared for our fishing. It was a wild rocky place he had chosen: nothing but rock above and all around us, and the tide boiling and running into the Alderney Race like a mill sluice.

When all was in order, Tar Bucket put the little yacht in smoother water, and our fishing began. I had an eleven-pound lead on. It was hardly down when there was a tug—tug. Away I hauled, but so strong was the jerking that I almost thought I should not be able to hold on. At last he came up, and was landed in the boat. A blow on the head with a thole-pin settled him—or, at least, it stunned him—the bait was taken out, and the fish at once scaled. It was a white conger of twelve pounds. "Twelve" was at once cut on his skin; the head and tail brought together and tied, making a circle of the fish. The figures are cut in the skin simply

to show the weight afterwards ; it saves trouble and time to the fisherman as well as to the buyers.

There are two sorts of conger—that is, they are the same fish, but of different colours : one is the white, and the other the black conger. The black is the much thicker and handsomer fish (if there is any beauty in the conger eel), and is also considered to be by far the best fish. I have often inquired concerning the difference of colour, and I am told it arises from this : the white is a gentleman who goes roaming about from place to place, feeding where he can, and has no settled home ; the black, on the contrary, finds himself some snug hollow, or hole in a rock, where he lives like a hermit, and fattens at his ease. I cannot vouch for the truth of this statement, but all those I have ever questioned on the subject have invariably told me the same thing, and I think it seems reasonable.

Old Tar Bucket quickly baited again for me.

“Now, sir, lower away, and at 'em again ; they be on the feed, and we'll have the wessel half full before the morning. This be an out

and out terrible place for conger. I remember when I was moored off here about this time last year, I'd got a party aboard, ladies and gentlemen, and some proper fine gals there was, too, amongst them (tho' none on 'em ekal to Dumping Bet). We was a fishing, and singing, and drinking—some on 'em a smoking, all jolly like, and I had just given 'em an old fa-vou-rite ditty of mine,—

“ ‘I asked Miss Betsey Bruiser
To let me sit beside her ’——

Holloa! sir, got him again? haul in, sir, haul in, this be a whopper: dashed if he won't be a towing the wessel off her bearings if you don't get him in.”

“It's all very well,” I replied, “your talking about hauling him in, but hang me if I can, for he pulls like blue murder.”

“Never mind, sir, put your heart to it, and in with him. My eye, but he is a stunner,” added Tar Bucket, as with a jerk and a hoist enough to lift a young crocodile I got the enormous eel into the boat. “If you'd slacked away your line with *him* on it, you'd a lost the finest

fish in the Channel—he's over thirty pounds if he's an ounce. Wot are you a doing on? don't you go anigh him."

"My good fellow, I am only going to take the hook out."

"You leave that to me, sir. If he was to make his teeth meet in you you'd know it, and no mistake. There, take that," he muttered, as he dealt the fish a stunning blow on the head with the tiller. "Now to weigh him. There, sir, you see, thirty-three pounds; that's what I call a fish. I remember, sir," he continued, "a good fisherman who once lost his leg by a conger; it was a large 'un, and to haul in more easy like he went astride on the gunnel, one leg in the water and t'other in the boat, and he got the fish up to the side, when it ketched him by the knee, and nigh made its teeth meet; it festered and broke out awful, and the job ended by the poor chap having his leg off. Bill Bother was his name. Another time we wanted to fry a bit of conger for our breakfast. We cut a large 'un in two bits. One of our chaps was a walloping about in the boat, when I'm dashed if the head bit didn't grab him by the boot and bit him

right through. If you'd a seen how he hopped about the boat, you'd a split your sides with laughing. There you are again, sir! another good 'un, by the piper."

That night we had famous sport and caught a great number — one or two over twenty-five pounds, though none of them quite equal to my second friend. My hands towards the morning were so sore I was obliged to give in; but it was capital fun even watching old Tar Bucket haul them up.

At nine o'clock we were in Gorey Harbour; there was a rush to the boat to see what we had done. As all the fish were the captain's perquisites, he quickly sold the lot at twopence per pound—and there was over five hundred-weight.

"Now, sir," said the old fellow, "there's plenty of wittals, and drink, and backer, and all that; if you be so minded I'll wash the wessel out, and we'll take a sail to the 'Ecréhos,'—that ere line of rocks between us and France. There are three or four islands amongst 'em with some huts on 'em that the fishermen use now and then; these be the right tides, and I reckon we can take some conger and lobsters in the holes."

Nothing could have suited my ideas better, and in an hour we were once more spanking merrily along towards the "Ecréhos." These are a long line of rocks about ten or twelve miles from Jersey, a wild lonely-looking spot. There was formerly a chapel on one of the islands, a famous place for cutting the seaweed or "*vraig*," which the Jersey farmers use largely on their land, and for grass land there is no better dressing. The cows will not leave a bite of grass on any place where it has been put. It is also the best manure you can use for parsnips, which the Jersey farmers excel in; also for mangold wurzel.

In due time we reached this terrible line of rocks, anchored the yacht, and took the small boat and rowed on shore. "Now, sir," said old Tar Bucket, "here we be. Take three of these and come along, we be just in good time."

"He then gave me three sticks, the shortest about four feet long, the next about seven, and the other nine or ten. Each stick was furnished with a large conger hook securely tied on it. He, I noticed, carried three or four more with smaller hooks on them.

“What on earth are these for?” I exclaimed.

“What be they for, sir? Well, I reckon they be to take conger and lobster with, and no mistake we shall find them in the holes. Some of the holes are werry long and werry big; some are not larger than your arm. You see them people standing in the water? Well, they be on a rock waiting for the tide to go down. They knows all the favourite holes, they do, and are just waiting for the tide to unkiver them.”

This was a fact; there were a whole lot of men, fifteen or twenty at least, on the watch, for the holes to uncover. How they could manage to find out these said holes in the vast masses of rock—miles upon miles—I could not imagine, but so it was, they knew every good hole, the length, depth, and in fact everything connected with it. It was great fun on getting near to hear these people going on at one another.

“You be off,” some woman would exclaim in broken English and half in Jersey French.

“*Mauvaise bête*—what for you come to my hole? I, was here *de firse*.”

“You be d——d!” a great be-whiskered fellow would reply; “what do you want here with

your old blue petticoat afloating and ashowing your legs in that scanderlus manner for? Go home to your children, go home."

"Ah, you great ugly brute," she screamed in return, "*sacre!* when I get *chez moi mon mari* punch your *mauvaise tête,*" and the enraged woman moved off as the fellow took possession of her rock. Similar scenes were going on all around us, and a scrimmage or two took place.

"Now, Bucket," said I, "tell me how these hooks on the sticks are to be used."

"Why just this, sir, in course you don't put no bait on 'em, you poke them into the holes—I'll show you—grope about like, you'll be sure to know when a fish is there by the movement of the stick, and most likely you'll feel him; then keep a turning on the stick till you hooks him, don't you haul him out too taut, or the hook'll break, but gentely-like, and arter a bit when he finds he can't hold back any longer, he'll come out like a lamb; but just mind one thing, when one of these holes is small, and you find your arm pretty tight, don't you go on a thrusting him in any furdur; I have knowed people stuck fast in this way and drowned. Once

in partickler, a nice affable gent (and a proper fine fisherman he was, too) went out as we might be a congering, and got his arm jammed in one of these here holes ; no one was nigh him, and as the tide came up he was drowned there and then. We found him next tide hard and fast, but the congers had been at him ; you would not a knowed his face, it was awful to look at. I'm blessed if it didn't make me womit for a month arter."

We were not long getting to work. Presently old Bucket called out, "Here he be ; come here, sir !"

It was a hole about as big as my head, and the old man was poking about in it.

"I hears him, sir," said he, as I came up.

"You hear him ?" I exclaimed, how the deuce can you hear him ?"

"Well, just you put your ear down."

"I did so, and heard a sucking and gurgling sound."

"The tide," I said, "coming and receding from the hole."

"Ne'er a bit on it, sir ; that be a conger or

large lobster, or I'm a Dutchman," and so it proved ; it was a conger of eleven pounds.

I never saw such a dab as the old fellow was at this ; I could do nothing, and soon gave it up, but was quite content to watch him. He rarely made a mistake. To hear the lobsters and congers sucking and gurgling in their holes was very curious. We got that day five congers, two large ones and three smaller, and nine or ten very decent lobsters, a good many crabs, a large basket full of limpets and black periwinkles, and a dozen or so of "Ormers," a capital shell fish, and when well dressed exactly like a veal cutlet, only with ten times the flavour.

I was quite delighted with this to me novel style of fishing and my day's sport. It was very exciting wandering over these vast masses of rock, seeing no end of curious things ; and the astute knowledge of these island fishermen as to the habits of the conger eel, and where to find him, was really astonishing. I may say that during the time I was on the "Ecréhos" hundreds of congers and lobsters were caught.

As the tide was coming up we embarked and got on board the dainty little "Fearless," and

with a favourable tide and a fair wind was soon in *Gorey* Harbour again, and at the club in time for dinner.

“Holloa, old Conger Eel,” exclaimed my friend, as I entered, “here you are then, all alive and kicking. Now for dinner, and keep yourself right for to-morrow night, for I have made up a stunning pic-nic, and after that a dance which we mean to keep up till the tide serves ; at eleven p.m. or so, we shall start *in the carts* for a night amongst the *sand eels*. Such a spree, my boy,” he added, “and a rare lot of pretty girls going ; it is the best fun out is a night amongst the sand eels.”

How this came off, and what we did, I shall give in my next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

A NIGHT AMONGST THE SAND EELS.

I WAS dozing dreamily in my bed on the morning after my return, from congering. My thoughts wandered to the song with the stunning chorus of the preceding evening, then again they would stray to old Captain Tar Bucket and "Dumpling Bet;" then I was hauling in a conger of many tons weight; when at last, as sleep was about to take me once more in her embrace,

"Now, old Conger Eel!" shouted a voice in my ear, "we shall be ready to start in an hour. Have you forgot the pic-nic, the tea fight, the dance, and the night amongst the sand eels?"

“Pic-nic, tea fight, dancing, sand eels—what the deuce? Holloa! I am all right,” I said springing out of bed amongst three or four who stood laughing by. “I am all alive O, my boys; I remember now. Here, waiter, a bottle of soda water. I will be with you in twenty minutes, so be off and get the breakfast ready.”

Notwithstanding “hot coppers,” I managed to swallow a pretty good breakfast, and in half an hour afterwards was seated in a large waggonette, amongst a lot of very pretty girls on our way to La Rocque, which we soon reached, and put up at a capital hotel just built there. Here there was a famous large dining and ball-room, and as this had been engaged we found the table all laid and ready for us. As it was now low water they settled we should stroll about till three o’clock, and then return to dinner.

Some of my friends went off to engage more carts to take us down at ten p.m. We mustered about forty, so we wanted at least six or seven of them. This is the only way ladies can get down over these vast tracts of rocks. The fishermen, and those accustomed to the place, are very clever guides, but any one not knowing

something about it would quickly be lost, and most probably drowned, for though you may be standing on a large bed of sand quite high and dry, on looking round you will find you are surrounded with water to the depth of some feet, and the tide amongst these rocks comes in with surprising rapidity.

Some explanation of the way of catching the sand eel may here be necessary. Nets were once allowed, but these have been long done away with ; a rake and a small hook, similar to the reap hook, was then used ; a *veto* has, however, been put by the states on the use of the rake, and the hook is now the only legitimate thing to be used. Sand eel catching goes on by day as well as night, but the night is *par excellence* the best time, and certainly far the most amusing where a large party is assembled.

The hook is used in this way : You have a basket opened, or rather one without a lid, the regular Jersey fishing basket. This is strapped on in front of you ; you then commence cutting the sand before you, and the little eels are thus turned, or as it were raked out. They are very quick, and you must be just as active in laying

hold of them, or they are gone on the instant. On a nice moonlight night they shine like a streak of silver. Immense numbers are taken in this way ; it is hard work, but very exciting, and bets are generally made between the gentlemen as to who will make the largest basket ; they go in gangs of three or four.

The rake is by far the most effective method. The ground is torn up by it, which uncovers many more than the hook will do, and there is a regular scramble for the fish. At these pic-nic parties the men generally rake, and the ladies catch. I need hardly say the sand eel is delicious eating.

It was for this fishing, then, that we were all assembled at La Rocque ; but the merry party was very nearly being turned into a mourning one as will presently appear. I suppose it was the same thing at the beginning of the world, and will probably continue so till the ending, and that is, that whenever a certain number of gentlemen and ladies get together there is usually a fierce flirtation or two going on. Now such was the case on this particular occasion. Not one or two, but some five or six. The

young ladies, as a rule, are much troubled in Jersey with the *scarlet fever*. And no pic-nic, ball, or party is considered perfect without a few of the sons of Mars. As there is always a marching regiment quartered at St. Heliers, little difficulty is experienced in getting some of the officers to the parties, croquet, or archery clubs.

We had a capital feed, and the champagne flowed freely; tea was over, and dancing finished, and serious flirtations were taking place, when the captain of the expedition entered saying—"Ladies and gentlemen, the carts are waiting."

There was a regular rush for these elegant modes of conveyances, which were nothing more than the common farmyard cart. We had formed our parties for each vehicle, which was furnished with plenty of clean straw strewed on the bottom. The Jehu of each mounting on his steed's back, bare-legged, with his trowsers tucked up above his knees, and his feet resting on the shafts of his cart; a smack of the whip is given, and we are off.

Of all things, defend me from a Jersey cart!

I shall never forget the jolting and bumping over the rocks—no, never, as long as I live. Sometimes we had to wait for minutes, as the tide was not yet off certain parts of our route. Again, we were so deep that the water was coming into the cart, amidst the screams of the ladies and laughter of the gentlemen.

At last the sand eel ground is reached—ladies produce pretty little hooks; gentlemen, rakes and baskets; all is jollity and laughter, and the sand eeling commences. I am astonished to see the numbers that are caught; the spirit of emulation possessed us all, and we worked away for our lives.

It was a pretty sight to see the different groups flitting about on the moonlit sands, a walking star (the lighted end of a cigar) being seen now and then, to be again lost in darkness almost immediately. Hours have passed away, and no one seems tired of the sport. At last we are warned that the tide has turned, and is making fast, and that it is time to be off—a hint not to be neglected.

The carts are drawn up, and the bridles put on the horses, which had been allowed to eat

during the fishing. Every one gets into their own vehicle ; but where are Captain A. and Miss B. ? This couple is wanted to complete the party. They are shouted for again and again, and at last they appear strolling very leisurely across the sands.

“All right,” observes the *militaire*, coming up, “lots of time.”

“Is there ?” exclaimed our captain rather testily, “there is nothing of the sort. We have already wasted a quarter of an hour in waiting for you. Deuced odd you could not manage to be near.”

“Nothing odd at all,” says the gentleman addressed—nor was there.

“Come, sir, be quick,” cries Falle, our old white-headed pilot. “My good” (a favourite expression), “we are half an hour late ; move on quick unless you all want a swim.” (To the carters) “Trot the horses, and get along as quick as possible.”

Away we go again, bump, bump, jolt, jolt, up to the horses’ bellies in water, and the tide running in like a mill sluice. There is one more bit of water to pass, and we are safe. All get

through but one cart, and that is the one with the Captain, his fair friend, and one or two more. The horse in that comes to a halt, and will not budge a peg.

“Jump out and lead him !” shouts the old pilot ; “*sacre*, do you want to drown the ladies ?”

The horses will not move—the cart begins to float.

“Jump out, I tell you,” screams the old man, rushing into the water.

There is a lurch as they try to get out, and over it goes, all in. The *militaire* saves himself, and the rest, with the cart and horse, are got out ; all save—pretty Miss B.

“My God !” screams out old Falle, “one of the ladies is gone ; tide has got her as I’m a sinner. *Tonnerre de Dieu*, Captain ! save your sweetheart.”

But the Captain is paralysed, and can do nothing. Several rush into the water, but the strong current warns them to go back ; they are afraid, or are no swimmers.

“Do you see her, pilot ?” I exclaimed, as I rushed into the water, stripped of all except my trousers, “do you see her ?”

“There away, sir, I seed her dress above water. God forgive me! I can’t swim a stroke, an’ I be nigh on eighty years of age.”

I struck out in the direction, followed by some three or four others. The strong current whirled me round and took me fast away. The moon shone out gloriously at the instant, and I saw some ten yards before me an arm thrown up and then sink; I swam like mad again. A lump of something was before me, and I grasped at it. Letting myself sink down in an upright position, I was enabled to use both my hands. I had caught the bottom of her dress, my hand was soon at the back of her neck, and I struck out again. She was senseless or drowned, I knew not which, but oh! how heavy. Where am I to go to? I cannot keep on long. Ah! that rock there, that will not be covered for half an hour; that is my mark. Every nerve is put into play to reach the desired spot. We are within ten yards of it, when her arms tighten round me.

“For God’s sake,” I screamed out, “do not hold me or we die.”

Still that steady death-like clutch; I find

myself gradually going under ; we are down. I use, in my agony, almost superhuman strength, and get an arm free ; as we come to the surface I grasp something—the slimy seaweed by the side of a rock. It gives way gradually ; I seize another bit. Great heaven ! what is this ? I can touch ground. Grasping the poor girl firmly round the waist, I succeed in getting her on the rock.

“ Where away, sir ? ” cried the pilot, in answer to my shouts.

“ On this rock,” I shouted again, putting myself in the best position I could to be seen.

His eagle eye made me out in an instant.

“ You be all right there for three quarters of an hour ; I’ll be with you. Are you got her ? ”

“ All right,” I shouted, and the carts moved on.

I then took a look at the poor girl, who lay huddled in a heap on the rock. I turned her over, face down, and undid her dress and stays, or rather tore them open, and commenced rubbing her. I had not much idea how to treat people in such a state, and thinking I might be doing wrong, I grasped her by the waist again,

and held her upright beside me. Some water came from her mouth, and then a low gasping sigh ; I fancied the eyelid moved.

“ You are saved,” I said. “ You are saved,” I repeated louder ; another sigh. I kept her in the same position as well as I could. Her head had fallen on my shoulder, and all was so still that I thought she was dead after all.

“ Poor child,” I murmured, “ here is a melancholy termination to your fishing and flirtations.”

But let me carry her up to the highest part of the rock, for the tide is fast mounting. What is that I feel against my chest ? Regular breathing, as I live. Oh, that I had only something to cover her with. But covering there was none obtainable, for I had stripped off everything for my swim except my light summer trousers, and thus we remained whilst day broke, cold, with a bit of a breeze, I strained my eyes to catch sight of the boat, which I knew would come. At last I saw her—four oars dashing her along, old Falle standing in the stern sheets steering, and his white locks streaming out behind him.

“All right, sir,” he cried, as the boat ground against the hard rock, and swung round with the force of the tide. “Hold on, taut O! Jack; should a been here afore, sir, but was obleeged to go up to winderd to take the tide down; it be terrible hot here about. Now then look sharp, and bear a hand with the young lady, that’s your sort—in with her steady. Now, Jack, the blankets, and give way with a will, lads. Hurrah! we are off again. . . Gently, boys, gently, let her take ground easy.”

There are the whole party shivering in the cold morning air at the landing place. Seeing what it would be, I stood up, and exclaimed—

“Do not make a row, get a fire lit in a bedroom at once, she will be all right.”

And so it proved, and in half an hour she was sitting up, wishing to see me.

“Oh, Colonel,” she exclaimed, as I entered; “what has become of the Captain?”

“Damn the Captain,” I pettishly answered; “he is all right, as right as six tumblers of hot brandy and water can make him; he is fast asleep before the kitchen fire with his head in the coal scuttle.”

I took a savage delight in uttering this truth. Those few words of mine "cooked his goose."

We had an early breakfast, and then drove home as happy, nay, a happier party than when we went out sand eeling to La Rocque.

CHAPTER VI.

FISHING GOSSIP.—FLY FISHING IN FRANCE.

MANY people have an idea that trout and salmon fishing in France, more particularly in Lower Brittany, is first-rate; this is not the case, it is passably good, but nothing more. I have fished over most parts of Brittany, which is amusing enough, and I have sometimes made a good basket of trout. I once caught eighty-six nice fish, herring size, about twelve miles from Quimper, in Lower Brittany. There are plenty of salmon at this place, but I could never manage to rise one to a fly. Many capital fishermen have essayed over and over again, but it has always been a failure. Every sort of fly has been tried, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, and English. I

have frequently been laughed at by old and crafty hands, who have said, "My dear fellow, how can you expect to rise a salmon in water where the tide comes up every twelve hours? Try above." I explained I always did try above, and with always the same result—no rise. There was a famous pool about a mile up the river from Quimper, where no salt water could possibly or ever did come in, and although I have seen as many as six and thirty fine salmon taken out by the net in one morning, yet no fish could be tempted to rise at the most luxurious and beautifully-dressed fly.

The largest trout I ever caught in France was a five-pounder, but take the run of them they are under herring size. One of the most beautiful spots for fishing I ever saw was at the Strangalla, about five miles from Quimper; it is a splendid little river, full of rocks, shallows, and falls, and is situated between two lofty ranges of hills difficult to get at, but when you are there it amply repays you for your trouble; it is certainly one of the sweetest spots I ever saw, and boasting some very fair fishing.

Many people, too, imagine they can fish or

shoot where they like in France. There never was a greater mistake. The French are now almost as jealous as we are where any sport is concerned, and that is, I think, equivalent to saying that it is not very easy to get. Years ago it was different, and a man could roam where he liked. *Nous avons changé tout cela*, but still a little tobacco (cavendish) goes a long way, and if you treat them politely and courteously you can get leave by asking for it. At this very Strangalla I have spoken of (which was open to all, though few ever went), I was one day quietly casting my fly when I received a tremendous blow on the back; I turned round, and found I had been struck with the handle of a large hay fork, which an enraged Breton woman was flourishing about. I was in a great rage, took the fork from her, and threw it in the river; she then commenced making a peculiar noise something like the loud two-hoo of an owl. This is their cry for help. I presently saw three or four men coming down the hill side, all armed with forks. I plainly saw I was in for a row, so produced my revolver, which I always carried with me. What she said to them I know not,

for I am not up in the *Bas Bretagne* language ; however, they seemed in a great passion, and would no doubt have mobbed me, but the sight of the revolver, together with the hostile attitude of my black retriever, who put up her back and showed her teeth in a most unmistakable manner, had the effect of bringing them to a parley. One of the men spoke French, so there was now no difficulty ; a bit of cavendish tobacco put matters square, and we became great friends, and I was never after interrupted there, on the contrary, they always showed me politeness.

The fly to be used in France must not be a gaudy one ; not too much tinsel or gold thread. Red and black palmers, grouse and partridge hackles, hares ear, alder fly, duns, and such like, are the killers, and these must not be too large. "A small fly, a small rod, and above all, fish fine," are the principal maxims to be remembered for Lower Brittany.

There is a very easy way of getting there now by steamer from Weymouth or Southampton to Jersey, and from thence again by steamer to St. Malo, or you may go from Jersey in one of the fine cutters, some fifty or sixty tons each, to

Portrieux, which is in Lower Brittany. They will whip you over in about six hours, at the large cost of five francs (4s.) From Portrieux you may easily get to any of the following places, for a few francs, but there are innumerable little bourgs, or villages, which I cannot remember the names of now:—Pontrieu, Pampol, Tréquer, Lannion, Guingamp, Belle Isle en terre, St. Brieux, Morlaix, Landernau, Quimper, Quimperlé and Carhaix. It would be here quite impossible for me to name all the places, but I have given the names of a few towns where all information may be obtained. At Guingamp there is very decent salmon fishing, and the other places are good for trout. I am told they are for salmon, too, but I was so disgusted with the salmon fishing at Quimper, that I never tried any place but Guingamp, and that was before I went to Quimper.

You must not believe what Frenchmen tell you regarding sport of any kind. I never met a Frenchman in my life returning from fishing but he told me he had been "*très heureux! plusieurs douzaines belles truites, mon cher, sans blague,*" though perhaps he had not one, or ever

caught half the number he named in his life. I once asked a countryman if there were any salmon in a river. He replied "*Saumon? Mon Dieu! oui, il-y-a un tremblement de poisson,*" leading you to suppose there was hardly room to cast your fly. The rascal! Only five fish had been caught for the last ten years.

I had once a rather curious fishing event happen to me. I was bottom fishing for trout in a small lake, about six miles from Quimper. On arriving I found a disciple of old Walton there before me. He was an agreeable, good-looking young fellow, and a good fisherman. We caught some very nice red trout that day, and we got on capitally together. I quite liked him, for I found him to be a well informed and very civil person. We put up our rods and walked home together, but about two miles short of Quimper he stopped, and said,—

"*Bon soir, monsieur.*"

"Are you not going on to Quimper?" I asked.

"*Oui, monsieur, oui,*" he replied, "but I am not company for a gentleman to be seen with in town."

“Fiddle-de-dee,” I answered, “come along, man.”

We trudged on for another mile and a half till we came to the environs of the town, when he resolutely refused to proceed any further with me. Determined to know what was the matter, I turned into a little inn, called for a *petit verre*, and when I saw my friend pass, followed him at a respectable distance. As he came in sight, I saw most of the people cross over to the other side, and give him the *trottoir* to himself; he presently entered a house, and asking a friend of mine, who happened to pass at the instant, why he and others had so rushed out of his way, he exclaimed in a voice of horror,—

“*Grand Dieu!* Have you been fishing and walking home with that man? he is the *public executioner*.”

CHAPTER VII.

FISHING GOSSIP.—FLY FISHING IN FRANCE.

“Marry come up and I will trie,
In yonder brooke which flows hard bye,
Some trout to snare.”—OLD SONG.

HAVING in my last chapter given you a short account of the places where you may expect decent fishing, I will now proceed to tell you how you ought to set about it.

Never, as a rule, if you are fishing for trout, whip the large streams, the little ones are much better; small ditches, in fact, those that have a few stones, holes, and undermined banks are the best, and for this reason—the larger rivers are always being tormented with would-be anglers. Frenchmen, generally speaking, are not by any means first-rate fly fishers. They

go flogging the water with *such* flies, how they can expect to rise a fish is, and always has been a wonder to me, and how they ever do take a trout is still a greater marvel. I think if some of our practical fly fishers were only to see the collection of French flies I have by me, they would never forget them, and I believe the British Museum would give a handsome sum to place them amongst their modern curiosities.

A year or so ago I bought a splendid card of six flies, which to lure the purchasers had these words printed on the top: "*Mouches, et arrangées pour carpes et truites* (flies arranged for trout and carp!). I thought some of my friends would have died with laughter when I showed them to them. Fancy whipping a pond with a large brilliant scarlet fly with a black body for carp! Well, Frenchmen may manage to rise a carp with such a fly, but I never did, or with any other, and I must honestly confess, I have not yet been tempted to try.

But to return—if the angler fishes a small stream such as I have mentioned, he has a good chance of making a tolerable basket, but he

must remember to chose those little rivulets that have a sufficient depth of water in them to prevent the fish being taken out by the hand in summer when there is little water, or by a hand net. These small streams have seldom a fly cast on them, because they are too narrow; they require the practised hand—one who can wield his hickory wand to a nicety, and drop his fly just over the weeds which come up pretty plentiful about May. I have begun fishing in Lower Brittany in February with very fair success. A nice mild day should be chosen, and no attempt made to fish a stream in which any *snow water* comes down, as this is fatal to sport.

You may flog a stream for a whole day without a single rise when this is the case. The best way of getting sport is to strap a valise on the shoulders containing such change of clothes as may be required, never forgetting the immaculate weed, and start off on a walking tour. This is my idea how to get fishing. The angler comes thus on little streams he would never otherwise hear of; it is, besides, a much more pleasant and independent mode.

I remember, on one occasion, starting for the day with an English acquaintance I had picked up, for a river about twelve miles from Quimper. This I knew to be a good spot, as I had had pretty fair sport there before. It was a beautiful day, and all that could be desired by the fisherman, with a nice warm wind blowing from the right quarter. We fished, and fished, and tried fly after fly, but they would not have it, nor did we see a trout on the move.

“Odd,” said my friend, “what is the meaning of this? Let us try lower.”

We did so, but with no better luck; we fished down the stream towards Quimper, fishing *up* stream was not the fashion in those days, nor do I think I shall become a convert to the principle. But under any circumstances we should not have fished up stream, as it would have been taking us from home instead of towards it—we always made it a rule to begin at the furthest point, and work our way towards our lodgings.

About four miles from Quimper we came on a party of French gentlemen who were returning, like ourselves, from a day's fly fishing. As

we both spoke French as well as we did English we were not long in finding out that they had been fishing the same stream as ourselves, but with far different luck ; they had, at least, a hundred fish, and some very good ones amongst them. We thought it rather odd our not being able to take any, more especially as we knew them to be muffs, and armed with such tackle and flies as no one, with any idea of fishing, would have used. They wanted us much to join them at dinner, which they had ordered at a little roadside *cabaret*, but as we were pressed for time we refused and walked on. We presently overtook one of the most notorious poachers in the place, with nets and poles returning home.

“Holloa, Pierre,” said I, “at it again? too bad, upon my soul ; no wonder trout are getting scarce.”

“*Mon Dieu, messieurs,*” he replied, “I have not been out to-day for myself, I have been fishing for the gentlemen,” naming those we had just left.

A two franc piece and a promise of secrecy persuaded the fellow to tell us all about it.

“You see, sir,” said he, pouching the coin, “this is how they do it; they go to a river with their rods and flies, and I am appointed to meet them at a certain spot with the nets; we catch all the fish we can in this way, and they take a certain number home, not too many, as it would tell a tale, and I take the rest home to them. This is how they have got the name of *Les pêcheurs intrépides*.”

I mentally determined I would “drop on to” these gentlemen some fine day, and so I did; I caught them in the fact, and taxed them with it. The consequence was that the five gave me a friendly invitation to meet them next morning at a different sort of amusement, for doubting their word, a politeness I was bound to accept.

I must, unless an unusual amount of luck had attended me, have come off second best in this affair, but it got to the ears of the authorities, and was put an end to in rather a summary manner, I confess not altogether to my dissatisfaction, as I had no great wish to stand up to be skewered, or potted, with the chances of five

to one against me. However, it settled their fishing.

They got dreadfully laughed at, and were never seen out with rods, lines, or nets again whilst I was in Quimper. Most of the French are fearful poachers ; they have the love of sport, but they rarely do it in a legitimate manner, either in fishing or shooting.

The trout rod for Lower Brittany should be a small one, and tolerably stiff. It is a great fault with many of our English rods that they are too limp, and often nearly useless for throwing against the wind. Moreover, there are so many weeds and stumps of old trees in these Breton streams, that unless your rod is pretty stiff and you give the fish the but the instant you have struck, he is gone. Many and many a time on a cold March morning I have had to take a header in the larger streams to clear a friend's line, because he would let his fish run. I was once fishing some thirty miles from Quimper with my English friend. He was a very nervous man, and had had all sorts of ideas drummed into his head as to the savage character of the Bretons.

One day we came on a famous stream, and killed not only a good basket of trout but three nice little salmon also. We fished and fished, little thinking of the time, and that we had some nine or ten miles to go back to the *cabaret*, when night came on us. As we were making the best of our way home, we passed a large farm-house on the edge of a nice-looking mill-stream. Being thirsty, I entered to ask for a glass of cider. The farmer, a good-humoured, pleasant-looking fellow, was most hospitable, and told us that there was first-rate fishing in the stream, and that if we liked to remain he would give us a bed and show us first-rate sport on the morrow. Whether it was that the cider was so good, or that we were tempted to remain by the sight of three very pretty girls, his daughters, I know not, but we remained. These said three girls were really pretty, and as they all talked capital French, we got on famously. Sitting under the curious old-fashioned fire-place, and blowing our clouds, we made ourselves quite happy and at home.

At about eleven o'clock we turned into one of the numerous bunks which line the wall. I

should premise that one room is the "common room" in most of these farm-houses; the master's bed is that nearest the fire-place, and the others all round—farm-labourers, &c. We found that only one of these bunks was allotted to us, and that we were expected to sleep together, which is a very common thing in France. As we were tired, and had had a capital supper of fried trout, we made no bones about it. We found the stowage rather close, however, and uncomfortably warm, and after having tried various plans, decided the best one was to make both ends of the bed the head. This answered pretty well as regarded room, but my bed-fellow, who was a restless, long-legged man, would keep kicking me about the shoulders. Notwithstanding all this, however, I fell into a doze, when I was awakened by a tremendous kick, and a whisper of—

"For Heaven's sake, Jack, look here!"

I should mention there was an oil-lamp burning. I sat up and looked in a half-dreamy state at my companion, who was peering out from between the curtains, which we had closed.

"What is it?" I whispered.

“Jack, my dear fellow,” he replied, “they are going to murder us!”

“Murder be hanged!” I returned; “go to sleep, man.”

“But do look, Jack,” he answered, his teeth chattering all the while.

So to oblige him I did.

“My dear fellow,” he said, “just look at the women.”

Turning my eyes towards the fire-place, I saw the mother and three daughters in deep confab, looking earnestly from time to time towards our bed-place.

“I think, mother,” said one of the girls, after a strict scrutiny of our bunk, “the gentlemen are asleep; now is the time.”

“There!” said my timid friend, “I told you so; we are dead men.”

“Do not be a fool,” I answered, “there are only four women. All the rest are gone to bed and asleep, as you may hear by their snoring. It is a little curious, I own, but nothing more. Hold your row, or they will hear us.”

They gave another glance towards our bed-place, and then deliberately began to undress.

Our situation put me very much in mind of Mr. Pickwick with the "elderly lady in yellow curl-papers."

"There, old fellow," I whispered, "you see they are only going to bed."

"I don't know that, Jack; it's very odd."

"Odd or not odd," I returned, "they are stripped to the waist." (They had only got their heavy blue woollen petticoats on.)

The old woman then put her hand into a niche of the wall where they keep the matches, and produced a box, and began rubbing them all over with its contents.

"By jingo," cried I, "I have it. All the girls have got the ——" (mentioning a cutaneous disease which shall be nameless).

"The what!" he screamed out, at which they all rushed into their beds pell-mell, and the light was blown out. The whole room was now in a hubbub.

Eventually the lamp was re-lit, but nothing would induce my friend to remain, and away he went at twelve at night: I would not follow him. In for a penny in for a pound, I thought, as I quietly turned in again. On getting home

next day, about two o'clock, I found my friend in bed, covered with some pungent salve, and swearing he had got it. His man-servant told me he had been having hot-bath after hot-bath until he was parboiled. As for myself, I went and had a good bathe in the river, and neither of us were any the worse, though it took several days to convince my companion he was all right.

Some time after I went up alone to this farmhouse again, and the mother told me all the family had generally this particular disorder once a year, and that it was a very common thing in Brittany.

CHAPTER VIII.

FISHING GOSSIP.—PEARL FISHING IN FRANCE.

REMEMBER one fine morning, as I was busily engaged in tying a black hackle, my friend rushed into the room in a great state of excitement, shouting—

“Jack, I have got a coracle.”

“A what?” cried I. “You do not mean a Welsh coracle?”

“Just so, my boy, and a clipper too; will hold us both comfortably, and to-day we go to the Strangalla. I have sent it on; I will tell you why I wanted to lose no time. There is a pic-nic up in the valley to-day, and some of the prettiest faces in the department will be there. They are going out pearl fishing.”

Pearl fishing in Lower Brittany may sound somewhat strange to my readers : I will therefore explain, in a few words, what this said pearl fishing is.

In the beautiful river which runs through the Strangalla are countless fresh water mussels, and many of these contain most beautiful pearls. They are of a rose tint ; the larger they are, and the more delicate the rose tint is, the greater their value. The Bretons about Quimper set great store on these, and I have seen many very beautiful ornaments made of them, such as ear-rings, bracelets, brooches, &c. If a lady has found enough good ones to make herself a set of ornaments she is looked on as rather a lucky person, and envied accordingly. The way in which the mussels are taken is very simple. They go in large parties to the Strangalla. The bottom of the river is a beautiful sand, and in some parts gravel, but where these shell fish are taken is in the sand, and they are always near the edge of the stream. The ladies then loop up their gowns (having on their little fancy Turkish trousers), and put on a thin pair of slippers—some go bare footed—they commence treading about the

sand ; feel the shell with their feet, and immediately stoop down and pick it up. Thousands and thousands are taken in this way. Each lady or gentleman has his own basket for the fish ; these are sent home, opened, and the pearls looked for. Sometimes you may open hundreds, and not find a pearl ; then again you may come on three or four. The whole thing is very good fun. It was a pearl fishing pic-nic, then, which my friend had determined to join, he had got an invitation for both of us ; so it was settled we should commence fishing the river in the coracle, some seven miles above where this said mussel fishing was to take place, work down the river, and drop on them just about feeding time.

I knew as much about a coracle as a rhinoceros, neither had I much faith in the skill of my companion, but as he assured me that if we only sat still we should be perfectly safe, and as I knew, moreover, that the river was not deep, and we could only get a ducking, I consented to trust myself to his steerage. On arriving at the stipulated place we found our vessel already launched, sitting on the water like a duck.

"I say, Jack," said my friend, "she looks rather small, does she not?"

"Small or big," I replied, "you have brought me seven or eight miles up the river to go fishing in a clothes-basket; so that is your affair. Here we are, and fishing we must go, so come along."

As there was no help for it, my friend got in, but he was no sooner in than the frail bark began turning round and round, and one sweep of his paddle set it spinning about like a top.

"I say, Jack," he began to bawl out, "the cursed thing has got the *delirium tremens*, the *St. Vitus's*——" when suddenly over he went, the coracle floating and spinning quietly down the river.

"It is so infernally crank," he cried, standing up to his waist in water, and looking most dolefully; "it was over like a shot."

"Of course it was, with such a muff as you in it. Never mind; have another squeeze at the lemon. There she is on shore."

This next time he performed a little better, and I was ass enough to trust myself with him. We got on capitally for a time, he doing the

paddling business, and I fishing. Every now and then he dropped the weight, whilst I whipped a likely looking bit of water. I caught some very fair trout, and was highly delighted with the success of our nautical trip.

After an hour or so's work we got out, and rested ourselves a little, but were soon afloat again. This time we went along in really first-rate style, and gradually working our way down, we came, about four o'clock, on the fishing party. There they were, about forty of them, ladies and gentlemen, dodging about in the water some three hundred yards below us.

"Now, old fellow," said I, "put on the steam, and go down a rattler. Let us show them what a Welsh coracle is."

"All right, Jack."

And he began paddling away. We proceeded beautifully but, alas! not carefully. The coracle began turning and twisting about, and there was no stopping her, as she had got into the full swing of the stream. My friend lost his paddle, and began using his hands in one direction, I following suit. The effect of this was that she spun round faster and faster. Our

heads grew dizzy with the continual turning round, and just as we got opposite the astonished fishing party she hit a sunken root, and sent us both spinning out in the midst of the *pêcheurs*.

I shall never forget how crestfallen we were. I stuck to my rod and basket, so luckily the fish were saved; my friend captured the truant vessel, and we endeavoured to make ourselves as comfortable under the *contretemps* as we could. There was a small peasant hut not far off, so we had our light clothes dried, and soon forgot our misfortunes; what with mussel picking, eating, drinking, smoking, and flirting, we did not reach Quimper again till twelve that night. Amongst this party was a lady, who gave us an invitation to fish in a lake of hers about eight miles off. She said it was full of fine trout, and that we must come early, fish all day, and dine with her; an invitation which we at once accepted.

On the appointed morning we were at the house, and she was up to receive us. She told us that a French gentleman from Paris had arrived, that he was *un pêcheur intrépide*, and

would accompany us. We soon started, our Paris acquaintance with us, and commenced flogging the water.

“I say, Jack,” began my friend (he always began five out of every six sentences so), “just look at his rod ; dash me if he is not going to spin.”

This was the case ; but such a rod, and such tackle ! The rod was big and heavy enough to have held a whale, and the hooks on the false minnow, which, by-the-by, looked as much like a minnow as a dolphin, were quite strong and large enough to have securely held a moderate-sized shark. Then, again, the way in which he threw it in with both hands ! We laughed literally till we *cried*, but remembering the polite invitation I had had, I kept my merriment to myself.

“I say, Jack,” said my friend, “I cannot stand this any longer ; come along to some other part of the lake, this fellow will kill me with laughter, and he will hook one of us to a certainty within the next two minutes. There he goes—got it in a tree again !”

Whilst the Parisian was cursing, and extri-

cating his tackle, we moved off. In about an hour we heard him screaming out for us to help him. He had hooked a fish "*soixante livres au plus*" (60 lbs. or more). We got up to him as quick as we could, but he had somehow managed to land it before we arrived.

"There," he exultingly exclaimed, as we arrived breathless, "*Voila une belle truite, un poisson magnifique.*"

"Oh Lord, Jack!" said my friend, rushing roaring away, "this is too much. I cannot stand it any more, upon my soul I can't."

It was a small jack of about a pound and a half, that he had in some way managed to inveigle!

There was not a trout in the lake, as it proved, though plenty of pike and other fish, but it was a long time before he would believe it was *un brochet*. However, he took it very well, and we passed a very pleasant day and still pleasanter evening.

CHAPTER IX.

FISHING GOSSIP CONTINUED.



WAS daily paddling about in my coracle, but as my companion could not always accompany me, I found it a little too large and heavy, so I had a smaller one made, which answered admirably. I generally left it at some farm-house, and when I wanted it had a boy to carry it where I wished, which he would do for ten sous.

In my rambles I got near Bernaudet, on the coast; the river Odet, which runs from Quimper, empties itself here. It is a beautiful spot, and admirably adapted for yachting. Although it is a very small, wild place, about six or seven huts, yet there are some most beautiful places round about.

The sea fishing here, as well as for some miles up the river Odet, is splendid, and there is also most capital wild-fowl shooting off the coast. The solan and barnacle goose, besides all kind of ducks, abound here. There are a batch of islands about fifteen miles from Bernaudet called the Glenan. The duck shooting and fishing here is very good.

One day a friend of mine, a Mr. Gowland, an Englishman, who has a nice estate near Quimper, and a snug little house at Bernaudet, took me out in one of his yachts, a Cowes built boat of fifteen tons. There were three of us fishing. The small boat that was towing behind was literally filled. We were to pass the night at the Glenan Islands, and set the long tram-mells. There was only one place we could anchor in, and this was a small deep pool, with beautiful clear water, and a sandy bottom underneath us. We took the larger boat, set the nets, dined, and turned in. Coming on the deck in the morning, and looking about, I missed the small boat. I soon found she had sunk from the weight of fish. This is no exaggeration or fisherman's yarn, and will show the

quantities of fish there are. You can get, or could get, red mullet there for a sous (halfpenny) each, and very large ones for three sous apiece.

The fish in the boat were nearly—that is all the best and largest—destroyed by the lobsters, spider crabs, and dogfish. It was two men's work in a day to clear the nets of these latter. They spoil the nets immensely by getting in to devour the caught fish. The men first pull off the legs of the crab, and then carefully break the top shell without cutting the nets.

The quantity of lobsters here one would hardly credit; but alas, the fishing is becoming "smaller by degrees and beautifully less" every year. There is a new company formed at Belle Isle, and you can never now go to the Glenans without seeing a score of green-painted *chasse marées* at anchor lobster catching, and there are, in addition, several large cutters built expressly (with wells to keep the fish alive) which run from Southampton to Bernaudet for the same purpose.

All round the coast is famous for the sardine fishing, which are taken in countless myriads.

I have diverged from my subject, "Fly fishing," to show my reader that there is other sport to be had. On some future occasion I shall return to this, and give a fuller description of the sea fishing that may be had on the Brittany coast.

Some four or five miles up the river Odet I found a beautiful little stream. Getting a lad one fine morning to carry the coracle, I wended my way upwards, and got some ten or twelve miles inland. I whipped a few of the likely-looking pools, and caught some very fair trout in full season. I put up at a farm-house that night, intending to fish the stream down, or a part of it, the following day. I should mention that I always carried my gun with me as well, as I was forming a collection of stuffed birds.

The day broke beautifully, just what a fisherman delights in seeing. Making a good breakfast, and putting half a loaf, some butter, and a *litre* of cider in the coracle, I was soon afloat with my gun ready at hand for anything that might get up.

I never have been particularly fortunate in

any of my excursions, and this turned out to be the most disastrous of all.

It was a beautiful little river I was fishing, but I quite forget the name of it, and I have not my map of Brittany by me to refer to. The trout were fine here, and plenty of them. Every now and then I would anchor my frail bark and whip a likely piece of water. Whilst so engaged, I observed a most extraordinary commotion amongst the fish, which were flying out of the water in all directions. I knew what this meant, so placing myself behind a boulder of rock commanding a good position, I watched patiently for the result. Presently a fine otter made his appearance about sixty yards below me with a trout. He was too far to fire at, so I watched him with the fish, which he soon finished, at least the best parts of it, and then quietly toddled off into the water for another supply.

The instant he was down, with a sweep or two of the paddle I placed myself in a much better position. Drawing the cartridge from my breech-loader, I put in a B.B. It was some time before he appeared again, and when

he did it was with a small salmon of three or four pounds weight. On landing he immediately found out something was not right, for he laid down the fish and looked uneasily about; he scented danger, and was just preparing to skedaddle and make a dive, when I laid him low; he was a magnificent fellow. Throwing him into the coracle, I shoved myself ashore, and whipped off his jacket, which did not take me long.

I was far above where the salt water could come up, so I thought I would have a turn at the salmon, but was unsuccessful. Giving it up, I returned to the trout, which were on the rise, and took the fly freely.

I fished for many hours with good luck, but the fish getting off the feed, I returned to shore, had my dinner, smoked a couple of pipes or so, and fell asleep. I must have been in the arms of Morpheus for some time, for when I awoke it was evening—night, and I was damp and cold from the dew; there was a nasty queer feeling on me which I could not make out. Never mind, I'll get some brandy at the nearest *bourg*, which will put me all to rights. So

entering my coracle, I was soon afloat and making the best of my way downwards. In half an hour I came in sight of a little village, and entering the nearest *cabaret*, got some indifferent brandy, which I was glad of, for notwithstanding my exertions, I was wet, cold, and shivering.

“Holloa, my boy,” exclaimed a voice just as I was going out. “Holloa, old fellow, just come in time.” It was a friend of mine, Captain H., who lived some little distance off. “Just come in the nick of time—a jolly wedding; the whole country are going to have a dance outside; you must remain to see it, and have a turn; but what the deuce is the matter? you are as pale as a ghost.”

“I shall be better presently,” I replied. “Here, *bourgeoise, encore un petit verre.*”

Swallowing it, I felt a little warmer, and getting close to the fire, for I could not shake off the strange feeling, had another pull at my pipe.

Presently my friend returned informing me all was in readiness, and they were just going to begin.

I followed him, where in a small field close by the wedding party was assembled.

The musicians were seated on cider barrels, and blowing away at a sort of bagpipe, which made a most infernal row.

“Now old fellow,” said H., tapping me on the shoulder, “you must dance. I have brought you the very prettiest girl in the whole country for your partner, and she is very anxious to perform with you.”

She was indeed a sweetly pretty girl, and beautifully dressed in Breton costume, as indeed were all the rest, both men and women, for it was a superior wedding. Although I was far from well, I could not refuse, so asking Mademoiselle if she would honour me (which she did) took my place in the ring.

I can hardly explain the dance, however, it is composed of as many as like to join; giving each other their hands, they form a ring, and a certain number perform in it, then retire and join the ring, and make way for others. My pretty partner spoke French as well as she did Breton, so we were soon great friends. I found it was the custom to engage your partner for

the whole evening, and this I at once did to my great satisfaction.

I was now quite jolly, warmed to my work, and danced away right merrily. Presently a huge fellow came up and said something to my partner in the language of the country, which I did not understand. I saw, however, that all were uneasy at the man's presence. H. came up to me at once, and said, "Take care of that Breton; he is here an uninvited guest; the greatest bully in the whole country; most people are afraid of him, and he is always tormenting this girl to marry him; but she 'will none of him;' her father looks for something far better."

"All right, my boy," I answered, "I will take care; but he must not bully me. Now, Louise," said I, turning to my pretty partner and speaking in French, "what is the matter?"

She told me the fellow would not have her dance with me, and said, "He would eat me if I did;" but, added she, "I like you very much, and I mean to dance with you, but do not quarrel with this brute, for he is nothing else."

Up struck the music again, away we went round and round, but the savage Breton pre-

sently confronted me, and said something in his language.

“Can any man here speak French?” I asked.

Several stepped forward.

“Ask him what he means,” I demanded of one good-looking young fellow.

“He says, sir, you must not dance with Louise, that he will prevent you.”

“Tell him to go to the devil,” I returned, “that I mean to dance with her as much as I like, and that if he lays a hand on me or her, I will knock his teeth down his throat.”

Away we went again, but on coming round to the place where the fellow stood, he seized me violently by the collar of my coat, and threw me aside. Springing at him I let go my left, took him between the eyes, and knocked him clean off his pins.

All was now confusion, and he was set on by several young fellows, who dragged him off and locked him up for the remainder of the night in a cider cellar.

We now adjourned to a large room, which was lighted up for the purpose, as the night

was getting cold, and all went on as "merry as a marriage bell."

I became strangely fascinated with my pretty partner, and left about two o'clock in the morning, promising to come and see her the following Sunday. I found out she was a wealthy farmer's only daughter.

Getting in my coracle I was soon down the stream and in the Odet. As the tide was running out—ebbing, I should say—I determined to go down to Bernaudet, and turn in there for three or four hours, and as soon as the tide set, go up with it to Quimper.

My little barque went merrily down, it was a cold morning, and the wind blew fresh. The nasty feeling had returned, my teeth chattered, and I shivered from head to foot. In spite of all this my head nodded and I fell asleep.

I dreamt of my pretty partner, then I was in the midst of a terrific combat with the Breton; then I was on the sea knocking about in my frail boat. This feeling increased. I *was* being tossed about. I opened my eyes. Great Heaven, it was true, I *was* at sea, and the coracle bounding over the waves like a cork.

My paddle was gone, I had dropped it as I dozed off. My gun and other things were at my feet, but I was helpless as to the means of getting to shore, and about four miles from land, with the Glenan Islands right ahead of me.

I thought probably the tide might sweep me towards the islands so that I might be seen, or that by firing my gun I might be heard, and get assistance. I soon found out, however, I had no strength to fire or even lift my gun, that I was as helpless as an infant. The cold and shivering was ten times worse than ever, and the truth then flashed across me, I had got what is so common in Brittany, low fever and ague.

I took a land-mark to see which way I was going, and found, after an hour's observation, that I had got no distance, that I was a fixture, or nearly so. How was this, what was it prevented my going towards land now ?

I knew by my watch that the tide had been for two hours on the flow. Looking about as well as my weakness would permit me, I discovered the coracle was hitched in a sardine net, which had broken loose. To disengage

myself from it was impossible. In the first place I had not strength to move ; and in the second, if I had attempted it I should have upset my little barque.

I was in despair ; cold, shivering, wet, and miserably ill. I bore it for some time, and at last from sheer exhaustion fainted. How long I may have remained so I know not, but on coming to my senses found myself in a warm bed and comfortable room.

“Where am I?” I faintly exclaimed.

“All right,” answered a voice, “I am with you. It’s H., your old friend : don’t you know me ?”

It was, indeed, my friend, and with him was my Quimper chum. Both were standing by me.

“A very narrow escape indeed,” said H. “You have been here insensible for eight days, picked up off the Glenans by a fishing-boat in that infernal coracle of yours. I have heard of fellows going to sea in a cockle-shell, but never in a clothes-basket.”

It appears I had been found as stated hitched to the sardine net, and carried into Concarneau.

The authorities were not long in finding out my friends, who were soon on the spot, and at the urgent request of the father of my pretty partner of the previous evening, who had come to hear about it, was conveyed to his house. It was months before I could get about, and in fact I had no desire to move, for, be it known, I had fallen in love with my host's pretty daughter; and curious as it may seem, I determined to educate this girl and make her my wife—that is, if I could induce her to have me. All was soon arranged, and at the end of four months I went abroad to a warmer climate for my health, and Louise to a boarding-school in Paris. She was only seventeen, with a great desire to learn, and a wonderful passion for music.

At the end of three years I returned to England, after many a wild and exciting adventure, bronzed by the sun, in rude health, and a beard half a yard long.

I was quickly in "La belle France," and at once found out my two old friends at Quimper, who were enchanted to see me.

"Bless me, your beard is of amazing growth," said H. "You lucky dog, she is such a beauty.

Came home three days ago, speaks English like a book, plays the piano and harp like—however, you'll judge for yourself; dressed in the latest Parisian fashion up to the nines, such a figure, foot, and ankle. Here is the trap, jump in, we will be there in half an hour."

"What the deuce is he talking about?" you will naturally exclaim.

The answer is this, it was my partner of three years ago he had been dilating on. Yes, reader, I had come over expressly to be married, which we were a week afterwards.

I have never repented it, and am as happy as mortal man can be. The old farm-house in Brittany is turned into a pretty and comfortable dwelling. Every now and then I and my wife run over to the "old land." I spend my time between the two,—hunting, shooting, fishing, and farming.

My English acquaintances do not know anything of my better half more than that she is French, and if they did I should not care, for I am in no way ashamed of her, quite the contrary.

The old coracle is kept as an heirloom, but

I have never been in one since. I must now conclude this little episode in my life; but believe me, reader, I have never repented my trip to France for Fly Fishing.

CHAPTER X.

KEEPERS. VERMIN CATCHING, ETC., ETC.



VERMIN catching and trapping is a most important part, I may say *the* most important part of a game-keeper's education, but it is very indifferently attended to ; there are but few men who are really good trappers. In many preserves they want for nothing—traps and poison in abundance—but there is a lack of energy, perseverance, or knowledge. Poison has, in a great measure, superseded the use of the gin ; both are used, but I prefer the trap.

The best mode of employing strychnine is by placing it *in* the eye of any bird, rabbit, or leveret you may employ as a bait. Some slit the eye, and so introduce the poison ; I have

ever found the best way is, to put the powder *under the eyelid* and leave the eye *whole and perfect*.

The same bait should never be left long in the same place; if it is not touched in the course of a day or so remove it and substitute another.

Some gentlemen are so particular that they properly insist the poison should be removed the first thing in the morning, this of course only applies to *ground bait*; those in trees, for the crow, jay, magpie, hawk, and others may be left a certain time, but in any case, never too long. This is where a great mistake is made in trapping.

Few keepers, as I have said before, are masters of this branch, and their dog-breaking is just as faulty; plenty of whip and noise, shouting and bellowing, but none of the gentle firmness and tact of the well-finished dog-breaker. The lamented John Leech's admirable picture in "Punch" was a famous cut at the craft—who can forget "The Battue?"

"Swell keeper (to party assembled). Keeper: 'Now I wants a couple o' lords forrard, a

couple o' lords on the right, and a couple o' lords on the left.' (Turning to humble commoner in knickerbocker and Zouave gaiters), 'You try the high stuff with the beaters and take your chance of a hare back.' "

This was no caricature ; I have seen the same style of thing scores and scores of times. In the "Sporting Gazette" of Dec. 21st, 1867, I came across the following, which is quite as good a gem in its way, and only wanted our poor friend's pencil to have illustrated it and made it equally famous :—

" While on the subject of shooting I may remark that last year 'Punch' took up very successfully the question of the payment of gamekeepers by gentlemen who come to shoot with their masters, and cleverly illustrated their airs and graces. The system itself has been frequently debated, for the *honorarium* was felt to be absurdly high, and a great tax upon those who, as Sheridan says, are not blessed with affluence. Since the agitation on the subject has commenced the evil has partially abated, but the following anecdote, for the truth of which

I can vouch, shows that in the South of England, at least, the tax is sought to be levied as strictly as the income tax in the North of England. A nobleman—a thorough sportsman, who may be said to have shot from ‘China to Peru’—left London to shoot with a friend in the south-western district, and returned in the afternoon of the same day he started from Waterloo station. Having shot for three or four hours, on leaving he put a couple of sovereigns in the head-keeper’s hand. It might be generally supposed such a gratuity would have been ample for any man in that sphere of life, and he would have been grateful for it; but, to the astonishment of the donor, the keeper, touching his hat, returned the *douceur* to him, saying, ‘That he begged his pardon, but he never took anything less than paper money!’ On hearing this cool avowal his lordship was determined he should not be disappointed, and therefore handed the sovereigns over to the under-keeper, by whom they were thankfully received, as I suppose he had studied Lord Overstone’s letter on ‘The Currency Question,’ and knew the value of ‘metallic reserves.’ The look the

head-keeper gave when he saw how he had been sold, I am assured, could only have been described by Herr Schultz at the Egyptian Hall. But 'served him right' will be the general judgment of those who have heard the case."

For impudence I do not think the above paragraph can be beaten.

A swell keeper, that is to say, a swell *non-working* one, is a useless article. A keeper, whether he be a flash one or not, should perfectly understand his business in *all* its branches, and should not be above his station.

I recollect a friend of mine having one of these useless gentlemen, who was far above cleaning a gun, in fact doing anything but smoking a *mere sham*, as he called it, and which had been given to him by some grandee, or bragging about his "Westley Richards" which he had done a scion of a noble house out of.

I got at this fellow's character pretty quickly, found he was no shot, knew little or nothing about dogs, game rearing, or trapping; in fact, was a humbug. Yet to hear him talk, the way he caught poachers, did this, and

did that, and coupled with his great science, you would have supposed he was no end of a good and useful man. In fact, he was as chock full of science in his way as Mr. Puffington's swell huntsman Brag was in his. (See "Sponge's Sporting Tour.")

I was not long in letting my friend know my opinion of his grand keeper.

"My dear fellow," he replied, "the fact is, every one is against Williams; I can't imagine how it is he is so much disliked; he attends to his work, goes his rounds and all that, now what more can I want?"

"Now, my friend," I replied, "I have heard you out patiently, just listen to me. You know nothing whatever of Williams—you are seldom here, and when you are, rarely go out; you do not attend to the thing. You pay his wages, and when you want a brace or two of pheasants or what not, you get them; but are your battue days good? decidedly not. You are told the breeding season is bad, too wet or too dry, eggs stolen, and so on—that is how you are humbugged, and yet you have a pretty, I may say very heavy corn bill to pay for feeding. This

Williams is not only an ignoramus in his calling, but a thief and an arrant coward into the bargain, bullies always are ; your second keeper does all the work, and your lazy first gets all the *kudos*. Now I will lay you an even fiver I prove it to you if you like in two days."

The bet was taken and I had a *carte blanche* to proceed how I liked. Sending up to Nathan's, I had a nice long black beard and moustache down by the next post. Putting this on, with a different coat and hat from those I usually wore, I walked down to the home cover, about eleven o'clock.

The second keeper had been put up to it.

I killed a cock pheasant, and then commenced blazing away blank cartridge. Presently the enraged Williams came dashing into cover.

"Who the h—l are you?" he exclaimed. "Drop that game, and come along with I."

"Drop that game?" I replied. "Come, come, my good fellow, do you know who I am? I will drop into you, and that pretty quickly, if you are not off in a brace of shakes. I'm the Duke of Dorset, now be off."

"I don't believe a word of it," he replied,

softening down a little, "you must come with I."

"Now look here," I replied, "I'm no duke, but a quiet country gentleman, fond of sport and a bit of poaching. I do not mean to go with you, but here is a sovereign to keep your mouth shut."

"Make it two, sir, and I'm mum," returned the honest guardian of hares and pheasants.

This I gave him and walked off. My friend was astonished at what I told him, but as he had heard the shots, and I produced the pheasant, he was obliged to believe me.

"Wait quietly till to-morrow night," I said, "and I will show you a little more."

Next evening, I dressed as a labouring man; it was given out that I had gone away to dine some distance off. My friend was in the habit of sitting under his veranda after dinner to smoke his cigar, that is, as long as the weather was warm enough, and it was yet October.

It was decided he should send for Williams, and keep him under some pretext, whilst I got down to the cover. When the firing was heard

he was to come down with Williams, and I was to be caught, "*in flagrante delicto.*"

The trusty Williams was quietly and contentedly sipping his glass of hot whiskey and water which his master had provided him with, when bang, bang in the heart of the cover reached his astonished ears.

"What is that?" said his master. Bang, bang, again. "In the cover, by George! come along."

They were soon on me. I was walking quietly along, with a pheasant's tail sticking out of each pocket. I had procured the birds from the game larder.

"Who are you, you scoundrel?" said my friend, coming up with a broad grin on his countenance.

"What is that to you?" I returned.

"Here, Williams," he called to his keeper, "take that fellow's gun from him, it's after sunset. Night poaching, by Jupiter."

"Now, you chap," said the valiant Williams, "give up that iron; it's no use your trying to put the double on I, give it up and come along."

“If you come near me,” I answered, “I will knock you down.”

“Go in, Williams,” bawled out my friend, “go in at him; I command you to take the poaching scoundrel.”

“I am afraid he’ll use his gun, sir,” answered the man.

“Devil a bit,” I replied, firing off both barrels and throwing it down. “Now then, keeper, come on and take me,” but not an inch would he stir. So walking up to him I tripped him up by the heels, and, snatching up my gun, bounded over the fence, got up to the house, changed, and was quietly smoking my pipe on the veranda before my friend and his crestfallen keeper came up. The secret was religiously kept, but Williams got his *congé*.

There is now plenty of game on that said property, for my friend has luckily got two honest men, who do their duty by him.

Many a time and oft has he thanked me for opening his eyes and putting him up to the pranks of his swell keeper.

But to return to the subject, trapping. We will suppose you understand poisoning by

strychnine. Now as to the setting of gins. The bait must never be put on the trap but *beyond* it.

This forces the animal to come *over* the trap. Let this bait, if possible, be put about nine inches from the ground, on a twig or something of that sort, so that the animal is obliged to jump or stand on its hind legs.

The bait for a stoat should be placed near the foot of a tree, or a branch that hangs or projects nearly over the trap.

As regards the fox, ought I, as a man doat-ingly fond of hunting, to tell how Reynard is to be taken ?

However, as I do not write this for the benefit of fox destroyers, but for game pre-servers where no hounds are ever supposed to come, and as I imagine no *gentleman* would be guilty of trapping crafty Reynard, or allowing his keepers to do so unless a pack was out of reach, or there were a super-abundance of them, why, I will tell you.

You must know, all vermin, such as stoats, weasels, polecats, martin-cats, and foxes, are like dogs, exceedingly fond of rolling in any offensive

matter. The entrails of rabbits are the best bait for the fox. Proceed thus :—

Get a bucket full of rabbit's entrails, keep them till they are more than high, or till a keeper once observed to me—"You wouldn't come anist them once a fortnight for a crown." Then put them in a heap, cover them *slightly* with leaves, round this place in a ring some five or six traps, pegged and chained. These must be five or six feet from the bait and also covered with leaves.

This is almost a certain way of taking a fox. He goes to have a roll in the offensive mess and generally comes to grief.

It would here be simply impossible for me to instruct fully how to trap, it would occupy a volume, and after all, I should be no nearer the mark than I am now. You must use your own instinct as occasion requires, and study the habits of each animal you wish to take to be a good trapper.

I have seen a vast deal of it done at home and abroad ; pit traps for the largest animals down to the skulking cowardly wolf, and from him to the nimble little stoat.

One thing should ever be borne in mind, if it be for elephant, lion, tiger, wolf, deer, jackall, fox, badger, beaver, or *anything else*—disguise as much as possible the taint of the *human hand*.

I have seen hares and rabbits scores of times go up and smell a wire in a hedgerow, turn aside and pass through some other place; they left their accustomed run because they feared the smell of the *human hand*.

The greatest pains and precautions are taken by good trappers so that the natural instinct and cunning of animals may be foiled in this respect, yet such is their sagacity and intelligence that many methods are often resorted to before the trapper can secure his victim.

As regards jays and magpies, a very killing plan is to make a nest in a hedge, or tree that they frequent. Place your hawk trap in it, which should be a *round* one, cover it slightly, and then put two or three small eggs in it. Bantam's are very good.

Many have an idea they can kill the old magpie or her young ones in the nest; try it, and you will soon be convinced to the contrary.

The magpie lines her nest thickly with mud like the thrush. You may fire and fire away but you will do no harm, the nest is almost impervious to shot—you may kill her coming off the nest, *but seldom in it.*

For hawks, set the traps in *old* nests in trees ; put the trap in and cover it *slightly* with twigs, *but no bait.*

Hawks in season always seek each other in these nests, and it is a certain way of securing the female bird.

I should mention that in setting traps for polecats, stoats or weasels, where you put the bait beyond the trap, a little hedge must be made *behind* the bait and on *each side* of the trap, so that the animal cannot seize it from behind, or from either side ; this hedge forces him to enter by the front opening, and on stepping on the pan of the gin is taken.

Since writing the above I have received the following letter from Mr. H. Lane of Wednesfield, one of the best trap-makers in England. He says :—

“The four-inch common rabbit-trap is a trap made principally for merchants ; it is made

rough and common because they and iron-mongers appear to get a better profit out of them, as they are very cheap.

“They get spread through the country, and game-keepers have a difficulty in getting good traps, because they do not know where to go for them.

“The four-inch Dorset trap is an improvement on the old plain rabbit-trap; this improvement was made by a man in Dorsetshire, and that is why it is called the Dorset trap.

“There are vast quantities made of them in a rough way, similar to the common plain four-inch I have sent you.

“Being in the habit of visiting game-keepers, many have said they prefer the Dorset to the old one, only the hinge and catch parts were apt to get rusty, and would not act well till taken to pieces, and the joints and hinges loosened.

“I then thought of a plan to put brass for the hinge and catch, and shewed it to many of my friends, who much approved of it, so I got it registered.

“These traps always act because wet or damp cannot rust the joints. Keepers can leave them

set as long as they like, and anything passing over them is sure to be caught, as they work so easy.

“The three-inch trap is a good one to set where foxes are preserved, and many keepers use three-inch traps for rabbits as well as vermin.

“The hawk trap is made without teeth, many like them so ; they are the same price with or without.

“I will now give you a few points of a good trap by some of the best keepers I know. Many good keepers use a three-and-a-half-inch with rather a small plate or puddle, for a large plate comes nearer the jaws of the trap, and a rabbit may put its feet on the edge of the pans and just touch the plate, let the trap off and not be caught, and if it does, the hold is not enough, and the rabbit thus escapes ; but when the plate is not made too large they cannot let it off without having the feet in the centre of the trap, and are properly, and not half, caught.

“Another important point in a trap is that all the joints should be loose, because when set in the ground they get rusty, [this applies to all

steel and iron traps], and the joints become set unless they have plenty of play.

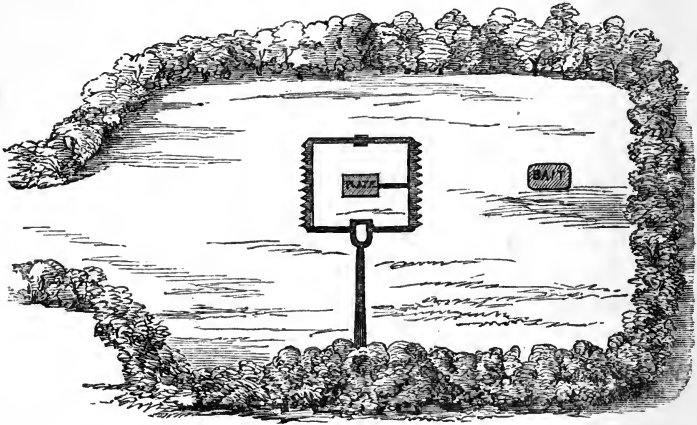
“Another important point is that the plate or puddle should work easy, because when set for rabbits if it works easy enough it will catch any kind of small vermin that are always on the hunt. Vermin will often kill what they cannot eat, merely for killing’s sake.

“I may mention it is a very bad plan for any one to push the spring of rabbit-traps down with their feet, it puts a much greater strain on them than there would be with the hand and has a tendency to strain them ; good trap-setters never do it.”

Mr. Lane is quite right here, the trap should be rested on the thigh, well grasped with the hand, this with the assistance of pressing your thigh up greatly facilitates the proceeding, and lessens the strain on your hand. I can set with the greatest ease his large otter-traps in this way. He continues :—

“I have had traps returned because I had no holes in the plate or puddle to tie a bait on for catching vermin, but good trappers *never* put a bait on the plate, the bait is put away from the

trap [this is what I before observed]; set the trap on the road to the bait, something like this."



BUSHES ROUND TRAP.

Since writing the above, I have seen the "Idstone trap." So far from its being a new invention, I possess one that is *more than twenty years old*; it was thrown aside as being perfectly useless, so much for new inventions.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HEDGEHOG A GAME EATER.

FEW game preservers and shooting men really know or are aware of the hardships of a keeper's life—that is, if he is a conscientious and honest one. They are, I admit, difficult to be found, but still they *are* to be had. Many lose their lives, as the public journals will testify, and will charge boldly and unhesitatingly into a band of poachers, get knocked on the head, or shot down, as the case may be ; but such men have not always been alive to their employer's interests—at least, they have been alive to their own as well. I do not for one instant mean to say this is the case with all, far from it. I know many who have the greatest trust and

confidence reposed in them, and that trust and confidence they do not abuse; but still, as a rule, a really good man in the above capacity is difficult to be found.

I am one of those men who always like to know what my keepers are at. Many a score of times have I slipped into a warm coat after dinner, when my friends were quietly ensconced before a blazing fire, dipping into their beakers of Burgundy, or magnum of port, blowing clouds of smoke from their short "dudeens," their "yards of clay," or fragrant Havanna, telling their after dinner stories, the last new joke, or their prowess by flood or field. Yes, often have I left my boon companions, and faced the howling storm, the sleet, and snow, the pelting rain, the bitter blast, and nipping frost—and why? Because my love of sport was such that I could not rest easy or comfortable, unless I was "up and doing," sharing some of its inconveniences, and to make myself master of the craft. Such must a good keeper do, and much more. Often have I turned out of a bitter winter's morn, when the rest of the party lay comfortably in Bedfordshire, dreaming of their previous

day's excellent sport, which nothing but unwearying patience, and a strict look-out could have given them.

A good keeper is a scarce article, and happy is the man who possesses such ; he should regard him as the "apple of his eye," and treat him accordingly, and not let a few shillings wages stand in the way. It is all very well for your "young bloods," who have their thousands and tens of thousands a year, to take their well-finished breech-loader in hand, and knock down feather and fur ; but the real sportsman, I opine, is the man who can not only do that, but know how to get up a head of game, and keep it up, who knows how to breed by hand, dog-break, trap and snare. Many a scion of a noble house would say, "What the dooce is all that to me, I pay my keepers to do the work, I pay to have game, and I have got it ; what more can a fellar want ? I'm not going out to be involved in a row with a lot of infernal poachers, and get a black eye, or some of my teeth knocked down my throat ! I'm dooced comfortable where I am—have another weed, old fellar, and pass the claret."

Why should they go out? There is no earthly reason that they should. But these are not the men to dictate on sporting matters; they know nothing about the thing; perhaps they can shoot, and that is all. Different people have different opinions. It is a lucky thing we do not all act or think alike. Watching the different habits of the various animals is a source of delight to me, and many a cunning trick have I seen played by vermin to entrap their victims, the time they take to ensure success, and many a clever artifice of the pursued to evade and double on their pursuer. Such scenes the drawing-room and hearthrug sportsman does not witness; he may occasionally hear of them, and if he did see them, would probably take no pleasure in it.

I will relate a curious circumstance relative to the hedgehog, which many people believe to be harmless. Such is not the case. This animal is not only an *egg destroyer*, but a *game eater*, and the following case was witnessed by myself. Some three years ago a partridge's nest was cut out, with sixteen eggs, and brought to me. They were immediately set under a

good-sized bantam hen, and in due time fourteen young ones were hatched. They were placed in a coop close to the house, and by a bank, in which some rabbits had burrowed. This coop, about six o'clock, always had the whole of the front part entirely closed up, to prevent cats or vermin getting at them. Between two or three o'clock in the morning it was opened by my keeper, the birds fed and counted. One morning I was looking at them about nine o'clock, and could only make out thirteen. I sent for the keeper. "How is this, Kaille?" I asked, as he came up. "One of the birds dead? There are only thirteen."

"Only thirteen, measter. I counted um at eaight this morning, and there were fourteen on um then. What the dickens is up now?"

On looking about he discovered some feathers.

"Darn it," he exclaimed, "some of them tar-nation cats are been about thick there birds. One on um be gone, shureli," and so it was.

Now this man *was* a keeper. He was up to every dodge a keeper could be, and in every respect a clever, honest, and trustworthy servant.

“If I sets a trap hereabouts,” he soliloquised, “I must shut thick there birds up ; that won’t do. Sawdust won’t give me the track of the warmint as nobbles um, though clay would ; and, besides, the little crittures would scratch it all about. And when I comes to think on it, measter,” he continued, turning round to me, “I’m blowed if I think it are a cat at all. It’s a hedgehog !”

“A hedgehog,” I exclaimed ; “come, come, Kaille, that won’t do, that cock won’t fight. I know hedgehogs will take eggs, but as to being game eaters, they are not.” At this moment my under-keeper came up. “Charles,” I continued, addressing him, “there’s one of the young birds missing, and Kaille says it is a hedgehog.”

“A hedgehog,” said Charles, “why what besest thinking on, Kaille ?”

“What besest I thinking on ?” returned the old man, “why I besest thinking that ee knows nought about the matter ; theest been about with the measter to furrin parts, and art a good lad, but thee doesn’t know nought about this consarn, and I’ll bet ee a quart it is a hedgehog.”

I was determined to humour the old man, more especially as his knowledge of all animals and woodcraft was profound. A bed of pretty moist clay was put in front of the coop at some little distance from it, and in fact all around. The next morning, at four o'clock, the birds were fed, and let out. There were thirteen, but at eight there were only twelve. Kaille and Charles were called to the spot.

"I thought so," said the old man, after having examined the clay. "Charles, where besest the price of the quart? Look at thick there, measter."

He was right, for there was the print of a hedgehog's toe and foot pretty distinct; still, Charles was not convinced, and, to be candid, neither was I.

"Well, I tell ee what it is, measter," he said, "if ee likes to lose one more of thick there birds, I'll prove it to ee. Just get up to-morrow, and judge for yurself."

The morrow came, and we were up betimes, the birds were let out, and fed; there were twelve.

"Now, measter, I've ar made some seats fur

ee to witness the play," pointing up to some trees close by in which he had fixed some boards about twenty feet from the ground, to sit on. "I'll warrant ee won't wait long; and Charles, dos't put out thy pipe, and hold thy jaw."

We got up by means of a short ladder, which the wary old man pulled up after him, and fastened with a bit of cord. We might have waited about an hour and a half, when master hedgehog made his appearance from the direction of the rabbit burrows. He did not waste much time, or leave us long in suspense as to his intentions, for he went straight into the coop.

The bantam flew at him several times, but he was rolled quietly up, and she became pacified. He presently seized with the greatest quickness one of the little birds, and trotted off, having his movements greatly accelerated by the hen, who again flew at him furiously. On getting out of the coop he seemed in no hurry, for he deliberately killed the bird, and was taking it leisurely away, when a shot from my breech-loader settled him.

"Now measter," said Kaile, "dos't think I be right?"

We could not but acknowledge he was. The quart was paid, and I gave the old man a sovereign for his lesson to me in natural history, and I have ever since destroyed hedgehogs. This animal will, if you draw a sharp bramble across its back, cry just like a child ; but if you pinch its foot sharply it has the same effect.

Since the above was written I have seen many letters on this subject, and to the effect that the hedgehog is harmless. These would-be naturalists evidently know little of the matter.

CHAPTER XII.

SQUIRRELS AND RATS AS EGG EATERS.

FEW people are aware that the beautiful and elegant little squirrel (*sciurus*) is an egg eater. In Bailey's dictionary, I find it is given as "a sort of wood weasel." I confess I cannot see anything of a weasel in it. I have had many squirrels as pets, various varieties; they have eaten of all sorts from my hand, and one thing I have proved beyond doubt, that the squirrel is remarkably fond of eggs.

I have always imagined that their eating eggs in confinement was perhaps because, however well I fed them, they might not get all they wished or were accustomed to in their natural state, but this last spring I was convinced to

the contrary. I was one day out birds' nesting with my boys. We came on a thrush's nest in a pretty high tree. It was no sooner spied than up went one of the youngsters, regardless of a new pair of knickerbockers, and the inevitable rowing papa would receive for allowing "such pranks." There was one egg in it, which I persuaded them to leave, promising to come again in three or four days, when there would be more. Day after day I was tormented, till at last, in self-defence, I was forced to take them to the thrush's nest. Watching the lad climb the tree, I was somewhat astonished to see a squirrel jump from it, with an egg in its mouth, which it dropped in its fright; all the other eggs had been sucked. This is, I think, a further and pretty convincing proof.

I was mentioning the fact a few days ago to a keeper, and he assured me the squirrel is an inveterate egg eater. "Darned little brutes," he said, "they be pretty enough, but they likes pheasant's eggs too much to please I. Going my beat this ere last breeding season, I was obleeged to fire away at these infernal little warmint, as

was a cutting about all over the place with eggs in their mouths, and frightening my birds. Master wool have it they do no harm, and I can't get him out neither at the proper time to believe his own eyes."

If the little animal will take one kind of egg there is no reason to doubt he will take another, and, though I have never seen them with a pheasant's egg, I must believe the assertion of this keeper, who is a practical man.

We all know there is nothing a rat is more partial to than a hen's egg. Many times and oft have I caught them in a nest with a gin. I never could make out the way they carried off the eggs, for I never found any shell, except when I dug into their holes, and then I have discovered some remnants. How they get these heavy eggs from the nest, so high from the ground, is a mystery to me, and I suppose ever will remain so. As the song says—

"We don't know how they do it, but they *do*."

About a month ago I was present at a rat hunt. It was in a pig-sty about one hundred yards from the house. There was a pig fatten-

ing in it. The crops were off the ground, and what few beans had been left in the fields had no doubt been devoured by the partridges, but they had been immensely assisted by the rats.

I have often seen scores in these fields. Want of food, and the cold, however, drove them into the hedges and ditches near the house, and they were not long finding out the pig-sty and the barley meal. I was asked by the man who fed the porker to come and look at the rats of an evening, and I went. I am not exaggerating when I say that two minutes after the pig was fed there were more than a hundred running over the animal's back, squealing and fighting in the most determined manner. One would hardly credit the lot of meal these animals devoured, and the pig had not nearly enough. A rat hunt was the consequence. A quantity of fagots had been placed at the back of the sty, which afforded them excellent cover.

We put in five good ferrets, which were bitten about in a terrible manner. However, we killed eighty-six, and took six or seven nests with

thirteen to fifteen young ones in them. They had regularly honeycombed the ground underneath, and on turning it up we found hundreds of walnuts collected in them. There were a great many walnut trees about; and these animals, like the squirrel, had no doubt been laying up a winter provision.

It is believed in the part of Surrey from which I come that a rat, when he takes an egg, will lie on his back and grasp it firmly between his legs, and then allow himself to be rolled or pulled along by the tail. This savours rather of an American yarn. I should like to see the operation, which I honestly confess I do not put faith in, but the rat has doubtless some curious way of carrying off an egg in the clean way he does.

The old black rat is seldom seen now, being driven away or destroyed by the larger and more ferocious common brown Norwegian rat. These latter are a nuisance in the poultry yard, and will pretty soon thin down your young chickens and ducks. They are very fond of young rabbits. A friend of mine, some time back, had an island of about one hundred acres ;

this he rented for the sake of the shooting, but he soon discovered that the rabbits did not increase, and that there were thousands of rats. He went in at the rabbits, and killed down all he could, but they were difficult to get at on account of the large number of stones that had been cast up by the sea. At the same time he was poisoning the rats. The scheme failed; he could neither get rabbits nor rats under, and he gave up the island in disgust. Had he been able to clear the place of the rabbits, the rats would soon have followed, as a matter of course, as they would then have taken the poisoned meat freely. He would then have re-stocked the island with rabbits.

Talking of the curious way in which a rat is supposed to take away hen's eggs, I see an equally curious circumstance is given in "Bewick's History of Quadrupeds."

He says:—

"It is a singular fact, in the history of these animals, that the skins of such of them as have been devoured in their holes have frequently been found turned inside out, every part being completely inverted to the ends of the toes.

How the operation is performed it would be difficult to ascertain; but it appears to be effected in some peculiar mode of eating out the contents."

CHAPTER XIII.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE.

THE following are the outlines of a trip two friends of mine took some few years ago. I have of course dressed them up to be presentable, but all the occurrences are *true*.

London is empty. What the deuce am I to do with myself? Horses are of no use at present, it is too late to fish, shooting won't come in for two months, and hunting is ages off. These were my thoughts as I lay idly on my sofa, puffing at one of Morris and Co.'s (22, New Bond Street) unapproachable cigarettes, one melting morning the latter end of July. The remains of my breakfast were on the table, and the morning paper, that had been looked through

thrown on the floor. The whole day was before me, with positively nothing to do. This was a nice situation for Harry Millard, Esq., to be in. There I was, in good chambers, with servants, a good cook, a good horse or two, and a tolerable income, with nothing on earth to do. I had always been told I was the idlest fellow in existence, and I now fully believed it. Like Lord Tom Noddy, I rang, not for Tiger Tim, but to have the things cleared away, and order Salt Fish, my favourite nag, for a canter round the park.

“Oh! James,” I exclaimed, as my servant entered. I could not finish what I was going to say, for he presented a tray with a letter on it. Here *was* something to do. A letter! I had not received one for an age. I looked at the address, which seemed to me to have been written with a skewer. A man’s hand? rather a different fist, thought I, to those I had lately been accustomed to receive, which were generally crouched in the same style, on delicate paper, with a tiny, well got up crest. “Lord and Lady,” or “Mr. and Mrs. So and So,” as the case might be, “request the pleasure of Mr.

Millard's company," &c., &c. No, this was quite different. Such a hand! However, I soon mastered its contents, which ran thus:—

“DEAR HARRY,—I'm off on a spree to France and take one horse with me. Come, like a good fellow. Shall be at King's Cross Station this afternoon at 2.40; meet me there. I'll put up with you till we start. Get some French money, and a dictionary; also, the silk jacket, breeks, and tops. You must take Salt Fish. I've been getting up my French, and can *parlez vous* like winking. Now, *O-re-vor*.—Ever yours,

“GEORGE DEBENHAM.”

Get ready the silk jacket and tops, and take Salt Fish. What is the fellow up to? Hang it, though, I mentally exclaimed, I'll go; just the thing. I should have cut my throat of *ennui* if I had remained here another week. Just the thing, by jingo! and come in the nick of time to save this child from suicide. “James, get ready the spare bedroom, Mr. Debenham will be here to-day, and have all my things packed, and your own, too. We're off to France in a day or so; and mind, let us have dinner at six,

sharp—veal cutlets and mushrooms, a steak and oyster sauce, and a hansom at a quarter to two.

Having given these orders I proceeded to dress myself, which being accomplished to my entire satisfaction, I lighted another cigarette, and sat down in my ruminating chair. Before I proceed any further, I may as well explain that I was an idle unmarried man, addicted to sporting of all sorts. My friend Debenham was the same, with only this difference—he disliked London, which I did not, at least for a time. We had been schoolfellows, and at Oxford together ; both were about the same height and size, and could get up in the pigskin at 11st. As I sat blowing clouds of smoke, I came to the conclusion George was up to something. He generally made what he called his “summer’s work pay for his winter’s amusement,” and his summer’s work consisted in buying a few hunters and getting them ready and fit to go. These as the season drew near, he usually sold well. It was quite enough to know an animal was Mr. Debenham’s to ensure its sale ; he was so well known that there was always a rush to purchase. He would run a horse or two, and man-

age to make it pay ; in fact, he was continually buying something or other, and was nearly always on the "right side of the hedge," a regular country gentleman, and ever doing. The arrival of the cab put an end to my reflections, and jumping in, I was bowled down to King's Cross Station. The looked-for train soon made its appearance, and with it my friend.

"Hallo, old fellow," he exclaimed, as he shook hands with me, "hang me if you've not been growing a beard ; too lazy to shave, eh ? Well, it ain't a bad one, rather gingery in appearance, but just the thing for France. Hold hard a minute, I must see Toprail out of his box. Got a spare stall in your stable ? if not, I'll send him to Mason's." Having assured my friend that not only a stall was at his disposal, but everything necessary for the comfort and well-doing of Toprail, he gave his man directions where to take the horse, put his traps into the cab, and started for my diggings.

It is unnecessary to state what we did the next two days. Suffice it, that on the morning of the third we found ourselves in "La belle France," at Havre, in Normandy. Our *route*

had been by Southampton. We had crossed by the *Alliance*, a fine steamer, belonging to the South Western Company; and having passed our traps, landed, and paid the slight duty on our horses, proceeded to Wheeler's, the English hotel of the place. On entering the general room, we found it half full of American skippers. (There are a large quantity of Yankee vessels always in the port.) These gentlemen were to a man smoking and chewing, but some half dozen, to vary the monotony of the thing, were most industriously engaged spitting at a small piece of white paper on the floor, about four yards from them. A pool was made up, half a franc each, every man three shots, and the ties spit off. It seemed a most exciting amusement to them, albeit somewhat of a dirty one to us. One gentleman was in great force, and evidently a tip top shot.

“Wall, I guess, my cöckey, I'm in pretty tarnation wall this morning; bust my gizzud, if I ain't. I calkerlate, Captain Willum” (to another spitter), “if that ar last of your'ne had been a little lower you'd 'ave tied me agin; but you can't whip this old 'oss.”

Captain Willum, thus appealed to, "guessed he'd 'ave better luck next set—snakes alive, if he wouldn't."

"Gentlemen strangers," said the fine shot, turning round to us, "you air Britishers, I guess? Wall, this ain't quite the amoosement for you, but it air easy, and a licker up of cobbler, cock-tail, gin-sling, julep, or brandy smash, assists very much at this air amoosement; but I calkerlate the thing to do the trick by is a plug of old Virginni. We'll all licker up afresh, and begin a new set. Hyar, garson, you young cuss, drinks all for the crowd."

"It's no use, Harry," said my friend to me, "we must swim with the stream; these Yankee skippers are not bad fellows in their way, but I'm not going to have a set with them, or chew a plug of old Virginia. We'll liquor up with them as much as they like. Look here, my friends," he continued, "I'll drink with you in all good faith, but I can't squirt, or chew, and I don't intend to try. Lord bless you," he resumed, "if Sir Vincent was alive he'd lick you all to chinks; he could take a fly off his leader's ear, or pass it through the key hole of the door,

which would be cleaner than your making a spittoon of the room !”

The liquors, or drinks, having been disposed of, we breakfasted, over which one of our American cousins confidentially informed us, “that they had at that present moment more ships in their little river, the Missipp-pi, than would tow our little island across the broad Atlantic, we ’ave, by G—d, stranger.”

We left Havre that afternoon ; and a hearty farewell was given us by Captain Willum. Some few days afterwards, we found ourselves at St. Malo, a dirty town, so we took up our quarters at St. Servan, close by, at the Union Hotel, kept by Madame Berne and Mrs. Cusack. Everything here was pretty clean and comfortable, and we found several English and Irish gentlemen, and learned from them that the St. Malo races would take place in a few days, that a hurdle-race and steeple-chase were open, and that we could enter our horses during the next two days.

The races, we found on enquiry, were to be held on the sands. “Hang it,” said Debenham, “I don’t know if the horses will run there, it is

a style of thing they have never been accustomed to ; however, we will go and have a canter over them to-morrow morning. Dashed if I shouldn't like to take the shine out of Mossoo here. But these chaps are up to a thing or two ; not only here, but in the old country. I never could make out the rights of that French mare losing the One Thousand and 'carrying off the Oaks' as she did. My man shall sleep in the stable with the horses, I'm not going to have them nobbled ; and my boy (slapping me on the back), if you'll only just attend to me, we'll commence winning here, 'skin the lamb' if we can, and work our way through these country meetings. The devil's in it, if we can't outride the Frenchman ; at any rate, we will try."

We found our horses went pretty well on the sands, and although they were heavy in places, we had nags which could carry us through dirt. We entered the horses that day, but as we knew nothing of the cattle against us, could do little in the betting way. The day arrived for the races, and I shall never forget my horror at reading the "correct card." They had not got our names rightly, which stood thus :—

“Course des Haies (1000fr.) &c., &c.; My Lord Hairy’s Saltfisher (Anglaise); Mons. de Benham’s Topsail (Anglaise).” Harry Millard had been turned into “My Lord Hairy,” the title of nobility; “de Benham,” given to George Debenham.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE—CONTINUED.

WE were both in a great rage at our names being used in this way, but as we were assured it was all a mistake, we were fain to let the matter drop.

“I say, Harry,” observed my friend to me, “I see by the ‘correct card’ (which God forbid they should catch sight of in England, for we should never have a moment’s peace afterwards) that there are four others against us, and all going. Now I have looked at the nags, not bad ones, but they want condition. If we cannot lick this lot, I’m a Dutchman. Your horse, my boy, is fast, but, like the rest, not in fettle, though he is better than the others. Mine is as

hard as nails, and fit to go for his life, and the ground will suit him. This hurdle race will only be a canter for them both, and, 'bar accidents,' they will come out as fit as fiddles for to-morrow's steeple-chase. I see, also, that in addition to the forty pounds for the hurdles, a second prize, as they call it, is given, in the shape of a tea service; not that it is of much use to us, but still, as they say it is worth twenty pounds, we may as well have it, if possible. Now what I propose to do is this. It is not the slightest consequence which of us wins. Your horse is faster than mine for a mile, but as this is over two, if the pace is at all good his bolt will be shot about a mile from home, and when he dies away, you may be certain the others will do so too, for they are as fat as bullocks. Now, you make the running at a strong pace, lead them over the hurdles at a devil of a bat, and cut the field down as quick as you can. I shan't be far off with 'Top Sails,' as they call him, and I shall sail by them quietly. If you can manage to beat me, do, and I will tell you why. I shall get seven pounds allowance for to-morrow, which will make it a certainty for me.

Keep your weather eye open, ride with nerve, and as cool as a cucumber. Nerve is the great thing, and I know you possess it. Now let us go and have a look at the youth and beauty; there is plenty of it, and there are some deuced pretty English girls here, who I am going to be introduced to, so you may as well come with me."

The introductions and small-talk being over, we looked after the nags, and as the time was getting on, dressed ourselves in the approved fashion of gentlemen jocks—well got up doe-skins and tops, and smart satin jackets. I never was more amused in my life than looking at the costumes of the French gentlemen riders; they were ludicrous. One had on a pair of such cut breeches as it had never been my luck to look upon, and a pair of tops to his boots which would have knocked Bartley into a cocked hat, for he never afterwards could have thought anything of those celebrated tops of his, "wot will cut a shine in, or over, any country." One showed a large amount of scarlet stocking between the boot and his breeches, whilst another, determined not to be outdone, dis-

played an equal quantity of loud blue and white. Of the jackets and caps I will say nothing; they were in perfect keeping with tops and breeches. One gentleman, in a splendid scarlet jacket, was standing against the weighing stand, with a bottle of smelling-salts to his nose; and on my asking him what was the matter—was he ill? he replied, in pretty good English, “No, monsieur, but I feels an emo-ti-on—a leetle faints. Anglaish sportsmans are more use to de hurdles race. *Mon Dieu!* but it will be runs fast to-day.”

At last we are mounted; the bell has rang for the last time; our preparatory canters have been taken; and we are in line. The polite *Sous préfet* is coming round to us, hat in hand, asking us to draw for our places, which we do, and change accordingly. Now all is in readiness. “*Etés-vous prêts, messieurs,*” shouts the starter, flag in hand. “*Allez!*”

We are off like a shot, I cutting out the running at a tremendous pace. My horse threw up the hard sand behind him in a manner that could not have been very pleasant to those in

the immediate vicinity. The pace was hot. 'I lift my horse at the first hurdle, and pop him over, and turn my head to see how it is with the others. All over safe; but one horse has got the better of his rider, and is taking him down to the sea as fast as he can. It is my friend in the scarlet jacket. The rest are coming along close behind me, Debenham holding hard in the rear, Toprail pulling double. As I eased my horse, and steadied him for the second jump, the *Mossoo* with the large amount of scarlet stocking rushes past me; over he goes, lands on his horse's ears, then again back on his tail, and finally finds himself in the pigskin again. During this little performance I had swept by him.

"*Vous ne pouvez pas gagner, mon cher,*" he shouts, as he rushes past me again.

"*Nous verrons,*" I muttered, as I took another pull at my horse, and eased him again at the third hurdle. "No use trying to cut you down," I thought, as I saw him whipping and spurring away. "You'll do that yourself, my boy, and pretty soon too." He would have pumped a steam engine.

The turn is made for home. We run out a little, but the nags are righted and set going again. I now made the pace a rattler, as I found I could not shake off my French friend, who stuck like a leech to me.

The first hurdle on returning is approached. I send Saltfish at it. Over we go. I turn again, and there is my French friend close by me. Debenham has crept up and taken the third place; the blue-striped stocking gentleman is whipping, spurring, and screaming in the rear, like a Red Indian in his war paint, with as much chance of coming up with us as he has of flying.

The second hurdle is taken, my horse going well under me, and I am making but little use of him as yet. The third and last is close by us. I hear shouts from the crowd, "Blue wins, Blue wins!" "My God, he's killed!" "*Sacre!*" &c. I have no time to look to see what is the matter; Debenham is on my whip hand.

"Send him along, old fellow," he says, "and make a race of it."

I do so—catch my horse well by the head, sit back, and send the Latchfords home. Crack,

crack, goes my whip, and I land Saltfish a winner by a head!

On returning to scale, I ask what is the matter, and am told my poor French friend, he of the scarlet stockings, who had stuck so close to me throughout, is killed. This, however, happily was not the case; he had entirely pumped his horse, who swerved at the cords, and pitched his rider headlong amongst some carts. It was a wonder he was not killed on the spot; but he got off with a broken arm, and was quite senseless when taken up.

I would here diverge a little from the subject with a word to my younger readers who are given to racing. Never make too free, or make too much use of your horse at the beginning of a race, unless it is for some especial purpose, such as making running, as I did, to serve a friend, &c., &c.; and when you find your nag sinking, or dying away with you, never put the steam on, or punish, unless you know him to be a thorough slug, who wants well rousing. A beaten horse can never win a race where others are comparatively fresh, and it shows bad judgment and jockeyship. Many and many a horse

loses a race even in the hands of some of our tip-top sawyers from being made too much use of at first, or not coming at the proper moment. Neither should a man make too much of a waiting race of it; scores have lost in that way. A jockey generally must be governed by circumstances. But to return to the subject. Our unfortunate French friend was carried away, and at the ball, in the evening, we were glad to hear he was going on well, and that there was no danger.

From the ball room we wandered into that set apart for play. *Ecarté* and *lansquenet* were going on in full force, and from the eager faces around us I concluded the play was heavy, which it was. We got up as well as we could to the *lansquenet* table, which was crowded, and there sat facing us, with a pile of gold pieces before him, no less a person than our American cousin, Captain Willum, of Havre, got up in the pink of fashion. He saw us on the instant.

“Hellow, Britishers, here we air agin. By stars and stripes, I’m not a squirting now. I guess this old ’oss has rather raised the dander

of some of these gents. Banquo," he bawled out, and again he swept a pile of gold towards him. "I calkerlate," he continued, "I'm in pretty tarnation tall luck to-night. I jist calkerlate I am. You would not see me to-day. I could not git anist you. But when I saw you bringing your 'osses down the track at such a tarnation pace, and a winning easy, I shies my hat up, and bawls out, 'Go it, my cockeys; you air a winning like greased lightning. I knows them air Britishers,' says I, 'and though they can't squirt, they can ride like great guns. They're a caution to snakes, they air, by h—l."

Our appearance had the effect of making him leave the table, which he did, to the evident dissatisfaction of the others.

"I guess I ain't a going to play any more, strangers. There air a lot of chaps from Paris, and thought they wur a going to clean this old coon out; but I guess I've wiped them off pretty slick this board. Let's go to the grocery and hev a cobbler. And now I think of it, jist you let me whisper a word in your ears afore you starts for that steeple-chase to-morrow. Keep your mouths shut, and take a spare set

of stirrup leathers with you. There air a game going on that this old 'oss hev git to the bottom of. Good night, my cockeys, and don't forget to-morrow to look out for Captain Willum."

CHAPTER XV.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE—CONTINUED.

THE day broke bright and beautiful for the St. Malo steeple-chases, which were held at Paramé, a small bourg about a mile from the town.

Debenham and myself went over early in the morning, and had a look at the ground, which was about the roughest bit I had seen for some time. The course was to be officially shown by the Stewards at twelve o'clock, but we thought it better to go by ourselves, and take a squint at the place.

After breakfast we ran over to St. Malo, to see our friend Captain Willum, who was staying at the Hôtel de France. We found that worthy seated on one of the benches in front of the

house, smoking an enormous cigar, and as we had not much time to spare, we begged him to let us know about the stirrup leathers, and what he meant about it.

“Look here, Britishers,” he said, “this old coon has knocked about a little, and I guess I am up to a few things. Now you must know, I can speak French jist as well as I can my own language, which air the finest talk in creashun. Wall, I came down here after a charter party for the vessel, and knowing that these races were to take place, thought I would hev a cut in at the fun. I don’t let every one know I can speak French, and this time it has served me, and I hope it will you. Perhaps you don’t know that all these hosses you ran against yesterday, and most on ’em you will meet to-day, are trained by Englishmen. You ain’t got an idea what a lot of these fellows come over here from your island. They gits warned off the course there for some little game --foul riding, nobbling, or something of that sort. Wall, what do they do? Why, they puts an advertisement into one of your sporting papers, saying as how their lowest riding weight

is so much, and that they have no objection to go abroad, which is very kind and considerate of them, seeing that they can git nothing to do at home. Some of these Frenchers hears of this, and gits 'em over. They'll only do down in the country here, for they are too wide awake to hev such characters up round Paris, where, I calculate, the racing is pretty considerably different, and it takes a good hoss to whip 'em there. Nothing, stranger, makes a Frencher—I mean these country fellows—more proud than to hev a *jockey Anglais*. I guess that's the ticket for them, and they work their masters pretty well. The long and short of it is this, there are a lot of these blackguards here, and when you whipped 'em all yesterday, I heard some two or three say that if they could get at the saddles, that they should jist give your stirrup leathers a perpendickeler cut with a razor, and rub in a little strong oxalic acid. That's all I know; look to it, and now let's hev a liquor up."

We thanked our Yankee friend, who was really a good fellow, and got away back to St. Servan as quick as we could. We found the

stable locked, but on looking at our saddles which were in a room close by, we discovered that the stirrup leathers of both had been very finely cut.

“Don’t say a word about this at present,” said Debenham. “It is a clumsily arranged thing, and does not matter a button, as I have two or three sets by me. Now let us go down to the Union, and have a pipe before we start.”

On entering the smoking-room, we found a good many English gentlemen there talking over the coming steeple-chases—our chances, &c. One Irish gentleman told us he had lived at St. Servan for some years, and had been in the habit of attending most of the race meetings about.

“You will find,” he said, “several English jocks up against you to-day, and some of them nice ruffians. They will try and ride you out, and are up to all sorts of dodges. If I were you I should mention this to the Stewards, so that they may be on the *qui vive*.”

“I’ll do so,” said Debenham significantly, “and you will hear a little more of these black-

guards; but as you seem to know the tricks of these fellows, it will probably not surprise you. I can assure you we are much obliged for your friendly hint."

We were interrupted in our smoke by the *garçon* entering, and telling us to come and look at the splendid carriage and horses of the Count — who had just arrived from Lower Brittany.

"*Quatre chevaux magnifiques,*" he added, excitedly as he rushed from the room.

"Come on," said our Irish friend, "I know this trap well. You will roar with laughter, but don't do so before the owner. He has come here on purpose to show us English fellows his splendid turn-out."

On reaching the door I saw such a sight as I was not prepared for. A large, very gaudily-painted break, with four gray stallions to it, their tails plaited up with straw, harness of buff leather, such as we make our hedging-gloves of, straw collars, with no end of bells to them, and white rope reins; I shall never forget it. Seated on the box was the owner of this gorgeous equipage, got up with an attempt at

the English coachman. Such a pair of top boots and breeches ; a light green coat with brass buttons, and a red-and-white striped groom's waistcoat. I nearly burst out laughing as my eye caught this remarkable figure ; and seated beside him was one equally curious, his groom, dressed *à la mode Anglais*, a most miserable caricature.

The whole turn-out was marvellous, even to the whip, an unpeeled holly-stick, the thong a single strip of leather, exactly similar to those used by the diligence drivers. The owner, as we came to the door, was busily engaged tying on a new "cracker" to the thong, for you must know that the continual cracking of the whip constitutes the great charm of the French four-in-hand driver. As I looked on in wonder and amazement, I could not help humming to myself a line or two of an old song, of which this whole turn-out was so thoroughly the reverse—

"With spirits gay we mount the box, the tits up to the
traces,

Our elbows square, and all so prime, dash off to Epsom
races ;

With Buxton bit, bridoon so trim, three chestnuts and a gray,
Well couple up, my leaders there! ya! hip! we bowl away."

"May I ask," said one of the gentlemen to me as we got back to the smoking-room after the departure of the fire-engine, as I had named it, "why you call your horse Saltfish?"

"Why," interposed Debenham, "because he is a good one for a *fast day*. His first owner, a most capital sportsman, lived near Bath, and both he and Saltfish were well known. The horse was in those days a hard puller, and often took old B—— into grief. One day," so the story goes, though I will not vouch for the fact, "he went slap into the hounds, and the Marquis of W—— was exceedingly wrath. 'Good God, Mr. B——, he exclaimed, 'pray spare my hounds, and ride a little wide of the pack.' Old B—— at the kill happened to be up first. 'Bravo B—— and Saltfish,' exclaimed someone on coming up. 'Damn Saltfish,' exclaimed B—— pettishly, 'I've changed his name.' 'Changed his name, they replied, 'why what the deuce do you call him now?' 'What do I call him?' retorted

B——, looking hard at the Marquis who was a few paces off, ‘what do I call him? why Worcester sauce to be sure,’—his love for a joke he could not let pass by. Since I wrote this article, my poor friend B—— is numbered amongst the past and gone. Thinking of him puts me in mind of the old hunting song, ‘John Peel,’—

‘But now he’s dead and gone far, far away,
We shall ne’er see his like in the morning.’

I bought Saltfish for Millard some two years ago, and a better or more honest animal never had a saddle put on him, and if he has any luck today, he will be near about winning. I can’t say I like this system of running a steeple-chase in heats, it is cruel to men and horses, and had I known it I should certainly not have entered mine. However, as they are in they must go.”

About twelve o’clock we had a *voiture* at the door. Such a conveyance! no end of bell ringing and whip cracking again; however, we soon got to the course, having passed the fire-engine on the road. The first steeple-chase was for horses of the department. Curious as I

thought the four-in-hand turn out to be, this was still more wonderful. There were nine horses for this race, and four of them were ridden by Bretons. One of these curious looking fellows was mounted on a nice spicy little nag. No saddle, merely a bit of rug, and an old roller on him. And the rider's costume, what was it? A pair of the canvas trousers such as are worn by the countrymen, and enormous wooden *sabots*, with a nail sent into each heel to serve as a spur (a fact). The large hat had been taken off and replaced with a handkerchief passed over his head, and tied under his chin. The sporting public was much in favour of this horse and rider. I was told confidentially he must win. "*Mon cher,*" said one to me, "*c'est un cavalier intrépide, effrayant. Il est sûr de gagner.*"

"Wall, I calkerlate, Britishers," said the Yankee, coming up, "this air an exhibition yer never seed before. It air a caution to snakes, this air; it licks all creashun holler, this do. There they air, a ringing up the play. We'll jist git by the stand and see this amoosement."

It certainly was a ludicrous sight. There were one or two Bretons nearly as bad off as our

sabot friend, but they had saddles of some sort. Amongst them, mounted on a nicish gray, was our blue and white stocking friend of the day before.

“Ah!” said he, as he stopped his horse to speak to us, “it is a farce to let those Bretons go. I must win to-day, I have the best nag in the race.”

“I don’t know that,” observed our friend the Irishman to us, “it is not likely he will. In the first place, these Bretons can ride, which Mossoo can’t. They will lick him to a dead certainty.”

The bell for starting rings again, and away they streak, the Bretons going to the fore, and cutting out the pace. They are all in a cluster at the brook, which is the first jump.

“Bravo Sabots!” shouts out Debenham, as the Breton, closely followed by the others, takes the water in splendid style. “Now, old blue stockings. By jingo, he’s over all safe. Never mind the daylight, old chap, cut away. Now, Harry, look at them going at that post and rails, that’s a floorer for some of them. By Jupiter! splendidly jumped,” he exclaimed, as the Sabots again sent his horse at the fence, and cleared

splendidly. "That fellow can ride well ; he wins for a hundred."

I never saw better riding in my life than these Bretons showed us. They sent their horses along at a tremendous pace, and sat them well. They were now out of sight.

"Hang it, what a pity," remarked the Irishman, "we are not upon the hill side ; we could see it all. There's the bell ringing again ; they are coming home. There they are, and, by the powers ! blue stockings is leading the lot. Where the blazes is Sabots ?"

But Sabots was not far behind.

"Now, my boys, there they come at the big water jump. Holy Moses ! blue stockings is in it," and so it was. His bolt was shot, and he was plunging in about seven feet of water.

"I hope that won't be our fate," said Debenham to me. "Look at Sabots again ; there he comes—jumped like a bird. Hang me, if all the Bretons are not together ; it is a splendid race."

On they came at a tremendous pace, whipping, spurring, and screaming out their "Hi ! hi !" but Sabots is too much for them, and he lands

his horse a winner by three lengths. The victor is weighed out, a bunch of flowers with a branch of bay amongst them, and tied together with the tricoloured ribbon, is stuck in the horse's bridle, and he is led away.

"Now, Debenham," said I, taking my friend's arm, "it is our turn. There will be a jolly row over our affair, and, true to his word, here comes Captain Willum. Now, Captain, are you coming with us?"

"I rather guess I air a coming with you," he replied, "this old hoss ain't a going to leave you. I can explain all matters for you. Look at them low cusses a larfing and giggling. I guess, my coons, you don't know your little game is up a tree. Don't try to play possum with me."

On mentioning we had something to say to the stewards, we were politely invited to step up on the stand. Our friend came out well, and explained all to them. They seemed rather astonished, and ordered the saddles to be brought up. The horses were walked up, and the saddles taken off. They were soon satisfied as to the truth of our statement, and the culprits being pointed out by our American friend, they

were immediately taken into custody by a couple of gendarmes. Fresh leathers were put in, and all in readiness. There were nine starters for this, and some five or six were ridden by Englishmen.

“Gentlemen,” said one of the stewards, “we are watching you ; mind there is no foul riding, I warn you.”

“Never mind that old buffer,” said one of the helpers to a jockey, who was leaning over his saddle, listening to some instructions. “There’s four on ye all right, ride ’em out, and bust’ em.”

I heard no more, for we were off.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE—CONTINUED.

THE steeple-chase was like most others, with the usual amount of mishaps and falls. However, we got off pretty well, and managed, as my friend foretold, to “pull it off,” running first and second. As to the other fellows riding us out, they never had a chance, for we came away, and beat them as we liked in both heats. I must here explain that a steeple-chase ground in some of the provinces in France cannot be well imagined by an Englishman. Almost every impossible obstacle is picked out. A Frenchman’s general idea of a steeple-chase is to choose an impassable ground; the more accidents the better. Talk of your Croydon sensational leap, why that is a farce

compared with many obstacles you see in some of the steeple-chases in France. I remember riding, or endeavouring to ride, over rough, ploughed ground in several parts of Lower Brittany—that is, ground turned up to the depth of eighteen inches or two feet. It is done in the spring of the year, and left to the summer sun. This is, in July, like riding amongst large boulders of rock, and pretty nearly as hard.

A friend, in writing to me on January 9th, 1868, says, “I look forward to ‘fight over old battles’ with you on some future occasion, as I have lived some time in France myself, and, amongst others, was present at the celebrated and absurd steeple-chase at the *Haras du Pin*, when *Multum in Parvo* won, and at Caen, where *Springbok* won. Such ‘countries,’ too, and ‘obstacles.’ *Mon Dieu!*”

Well might he say “such countries and obstacles;” I shall never forget them, for I rode in all these steeple-chases myself. I remember now with what horror I looked at the post and rails at the *Haras du Pin*, which one of my French acquaintances told me was “*absolument*

rien !” It consisted of solid oak pollards bigger round than my body, and these were *banded together with iron hooping*. It was only *five feet six inches high*, with a fearful taking-off in deep and spongy ground, and quite as bad a landing. I confess I felt a terrible misgiving as I rode at this formidable “obstacle,” as *Mossoo* calls it. However, putting on plenty of steam, I managed to get over in safety. At another steeple-chase, down the country, I was invited to go and look at the bank and double ditch which some enterprising French steward had given orders to be made. This consisted of a ditch six feet wide, with a bank *nine feet high*, and another ditch eight or ten feet wide, full of water on the other side. This he told me with great glee was “*une fosse tout à fait Anglaise*,” a beautiful jump, and at which there was sure to be a horse or two killed, and probably a leg or arm broken, or some other graver accident.

By dint of persuasion, combined with the majority of the riders declaring they would not peril their lives at it, the first ditch, the taking-off one, was filled in, and the bank a little sloped, but even then it presented a fearful

appearance. One horse fell back, and smashed his rider's leg, another had his horse killed (a broken back) landing on the other side. I got a heavy fall, and a very severe shaking, but as all the rest had refused, and no one to go against me, I won as I liked.

My experience, which dates over twenty years residence in France, has taught me to believe that a horse, a good jumper, with a moderate turn of speed, is the animal adapted for most parts of France. He must be a weight carrier, and a sticker. I am not alluding to the steeple-chases round Paris, or any of the very "swell" ones, but he might do well there, as a rule. Such a horse as I have named is the nag for France. With a good and resolute rider on his back, and a fair share of luck, he would find at the end of the season he had paid all expenses, with something to boot, to continue the war with.

We remained at St. Servan for a month, but we lost our amusing American friend, Captain Willum, who went back to Havre to join his ship. As we had made many pleasant acquaintances here, and, moreover, had been promised

lots of shooting and hunting, we determined to winter in France, and go about, to see what could be seen, and to do what was to be done, so we sent to England for our guns and dogs, which arrived in due time, and one fine morning took our departure for Rennes. Here we soon made more acquaintances, for we brought letters of introduction with us to some very nice fellows, who shortly invited us to a great boar hunt. This and wolf hunting are considered the *chasse par excellence*, and if you like plenty of noise, horn blowing, shouts, and no end of smoking, you are fitted to a T.

The night before this event took place they asked us to a grand dinner; and I shall never forget the chattering, and what we were told to expect. Had we been inclined to believe all they said, we should never have gone, for the danger was terrible, and we could expect, inexpert as we were, nothing short of having ourselves and horses ripped up. After dinner, between whiffs of tobacco and picking their teeth with their fork (which latter amusement, by the way, they seem particularly partial to), they told wonderful stories of what they had done, and would do on

the morrow ; and from what I could make out, every one had slaughtered several thousands of these *bêtes féroces*, and that the remainder of those that still existed were in danger of being totally exterminated next day.

The way they have of finding out the slot of a boar is not a bad one. The *louvetière* (chief wolf killer of the department), if it is with his hounds you are boar hunting, sends out one of his *piqueurs* at break of day with an old steady hound well used to such work. He has a collar round his neck with a cord attached to it ; the end of this the *piqueur* holds, and looks at all the paths the boar may have travelled in the night. The instant the dog comes on the slot he gives tongue, the man following always holding the cord. In this way he comes up to the boar's lair. He is roused by throwing a stone or halloaing at him, and he seldom turns on you, but generally sneaks off. The *piqueur* returns immediately, assembles the hunting party, and the hounds are then laid on. Sometimes the boar is left in quiet when found, and the dogs are given a view, but there are many other methods of hunting this animal in different

places. The *piqueurs* are particularly clever in tracking, and will tell you to an hour by the slot how long he has gone.

Debenham and myself agreed to send on our horses to the forest that we were to draw, and ride to cover in a *voiture* and take it easy. Moreover, we wanted to arrive on the ground with clean boots and breeches, and astonish the natives. We had got some way in the forest listening to the extraordinary tales of prowess and valour which our *conducteur* told us he had performed amongst the pigs, when all of a sudden he exclaimed, "*Voilà, messieurs, voilà!*" jumped frantically off his box, and "swarmed" up a tree in a jiffy. We looked, and about three hundred yards ahead saw a herd of wild boar crossing the road. There might have been some nine or ten of them, but nothing would induce our driver to come down again, nor did we see him any more the whole day. He was found hours after in a small *cabaret*, a short distance off, frightfully drunk, and the woman told the person who found him he had entered in a state of the wildest fear, and drowned it in repeated doses of *petits verres*.

I took hold of the reins and put the miserable horse along, and in due time reached the *rendezvous*. Here were assembled such a motley group as I had never seen before, at least not in the hunting field. There were about thirty there, and most of them dressed in the most extraordinary fashion. Nearly to a man they carried a *cor de chasse* (which to be once heard badly played will never be forgotten), ox skin coats and breeches, large boots, and such *couteaux de chasse!* small cimeters in fact. They laughed at our mishap and the valour of our driver, and looked somewhat curiously at our well got up tops and buckskins.

“So, sir,” said one, “this is your famous horse, Saltfishes? and yours” (turning to Debenham), “Top-sails? *Mon Dieu!* good horses for sportsmans.”

We soon had a good boar up, and notwithstanding the row of the infernal hounds, halloaing, yelling, and heading the unfortunate animal, he at last actually broke cover, which they do not often do unless hard pressed. However, our *sanglier* got a good start. It was far from being a complete pack, griffons,

harriers, dwarf foxhounds, and staghounds all *ensemble*, some a quarter of a mile ahead of the others.

Still, blowing of horns and going ahead was the order of the day. Never mind if some unfortunate dog was ridden over. "*N'importe, allons, mes amis! vous n'avez pas de chasse en Angleterre, comme ici.*"

The first fence is approached, in the shape of a three and a half foot wall. Debenham and myself take it in our stride side by side, and look back at our Mossoo friends. Three or four are over, but some of their horses are on the taking-off side; one gentleman is firmly glued between his nag's ears, another is as firmly holding on to his horse's tail, and one very extensively got up "swell," with a black velvet cap and prodigious horn, is rubbing his nether end, looking after his horse, who is away with the hounds, and no doubt as glad to get rid of his rider as his rider of him. The rest, with the exception of a few, were nowhere.

The hounds come to a check on the banks of a small stream, which enables most of our friends to come up, some hatless, with rents in coats,

and bruises, and many of the horns as flat as a pancake. More trumpet blowing, talk, and smoking, when at length piggy is hit off, and away we go right merrily, some of the Frenchmen standing up in their stirrups about a foot from the saddle, *à la mode Anglaise*, as they called it, in that peculiar position our lamented friend John Leech portrayed so well. "*Comme des jockeys Anglais*," others are seated closely to the pigskin, with their elbows up to their ears, and some giving their nags a touch of the Latchfords fore and aft, *à la Tommy Lye*.

The boar is at last seen crossing a bend of the river, about four hundred yards up, and such a yell is given that a red Indian warwhoop is nothing to it. *Couteaux de chasse* are drawn and fiercely brandished, to the imminent danger of their nearest neighbours, but no one thinks of riding through the two-foot stream. All but ourselves gallop for a bridge about half a mile off, and in the meantime our porker is at bay on the other side, and playing the deuce with the dogs.

"Here, Harry," said Debenham, jumping off his horse, "catch hold of Toprail. Dash my

tops and breeches, I can't stay here and see the poor dogs knocked about like that; he'll kill them all in about five minutes."

Rushing through the stream, with his six chamber revolver in his hand, he quickly put an end to the boar, before he had effected any great amount of damage. He was highly complimented on what he had done, and which, without any flattery, was well done.

Thus ended our first hunt in *la belle France*. As I am talking on boar hunting, I will close this chapter by an amusing anecdote. I once shot a *vieux solitaire*—that is, an old boar too aged to herd with the others. Two Frenchmen quarrelled on the subject; I forget now exactly what it was for, but I believe one wished me to have the head stuffed for my museum, and the other wanted it to be stuffed for the table. However, they came to blows about it, and one had all his front teeth knocked down his throat. He did not act with the usual pluck of his race, and call the other out, but came to me afterwards and told me in his broken English, "*Mon cher*, I do not care von damn for my tooth; zey was all false."

He swallowed his teeth, and the insult at the same time. I kept the boar's head, and before having it stuffed (not for the table) had it weighed, and it turned the scale at forty-four pounds (French weight).

CHAPTER XVII.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE.—CONTINUED.

MANY Englishmen think it *infra dig.* to go out partridge-shooting, unless they can make large bags. They must discard such an idea in France, where the bird shooting is amusing enough, but nothing more. I am an old-fashioned fellow, and must confess I do not look on the present style of beating for game in this cold foggy country of ours with a favourable eye; in fact, I do not call it legitimate sporting. To me, going out with my brace of well-broken setters, or pointers, who will “back and stand” perfectly, and are “steady before and behind,” constitutes the greatest charm in shooting. Give me these, with an intelligent

and obedient retriever, and I am happy. The present system of driving partridges is to me odious—a line of men across a turnip or stubble field, a gun, a beater, a keeper, with his retriever; another gun, beater, and keeper, and so on. What sport or excitement is there in this blazing away, with a loader carrying your second gun? I say none, but different people have different opinions.

How well I remember a famous old song, often sung by a jolly British yeoman of the old school, one Bob Daws, of Ripley, Surrey, one of the finest shots and best cricketers I ever saw. How he used to chirp it forth after dinner—

“To-morrow’s the first of September,
Get ready the dog and the gun;
And be sure you don’t fail to remember
The whiskey flask marked number one.
With Juno you’ll bring the black setter,
Nor leave old friend Ponto behind;
And sportsmen who wish for a better,
I wish they a better may find.”

No; give me my wild shooting, with no keeper at my heels beating and cursing the dogs, every now and then exclaiming, “I say,

measter, oi'l couple up the dogs, there be a fine covey of oighteen in the tornops there." This is no sport for me.

A man to make a good bag in France must be a stout walker, not sitting on every gate he comes near, or spending a couple of hours over his luncheon, and turning out so full of chicken and ham, washed down by copious doses of Bass's bitter or doubtful champagne, that he can neither walk nor see, swearing his gun-maker is a muff, that the infernal thing is not properly sighted, is too straight or crooked in the stock, or that Eley is a humbug, and his cartridges not worth a tinker's rap. This, I say, won't do for France ; you must walk, and be content with a moderate bag. To me the great charm of French shooting is its wildness, and its perfect independence. You never know what you may have a shot at next—a rabbit, a quail, a landrail, or hare ; then whirr goes a covey, and before you have nailed two or three brace of these you may have a dozen shots at other different sorts of game. This is the shooting to give me pleasure. You will find little interruption if you go the right way

to work ; always call on the mayor of any little *bourg* where you may be staying ; hire a man of the place who knows the country well to go with you, carry the game, your brandy, and a fair supply of tobacco for the peasants ; be polite and liberal with what you shoot, and you are all right.

Debenham and myself got on first rate, meeting with uniform kindness and permission to shoot. We generally went by ourselves, going out early and returning late. The way we managed was to put one of the horses in his dog-cart, which he had got from England, pack up a change of clothes, take two brace of dogs, and one of the servants, and be off for a week, roaming about from place to place, as our fancy dictated.

Debenham was a man of inventive genius, and as he did not like the little dirty *cabarets* we were sometimes obliged to stop at, determined to have a house of his own, which he accomplished in this way. He sent to England, and bought a two-horse racing van for a "song." This he had fitted up as a complete house, the large let-down door was closed up behind, and

the van parted off. We had our kitchen at the back, with a French charcoal *fourneau*, and a sliding panel to pass the dishes through. The other part was our sitting, dining, gun and sleeping room. We had a little stove in this; the beds were so arranged that they could be used as sofas, and there we lay of an evening smoking our pipes, talking over our day's sport, and what we should do on the morrow. The dogs were in a nice tray full of straw, suspended underneath the trap, like those you see in the large French *roulages*, about a foot from the ground. We had one large enough for eight or ten dogs, should occasion require.

All round the van, enclosing the wheels as well, a strong tarpaulin was buttoned and pegged to the ground, so that the dogs lay as warm as possible. From each side the whole length of the van a waterproof tarpaulin unrolled from the top of the vehicle, and pegged to the ground. The ends were closed in, and it was most snug. One side we used for our stable, and the other for any extra cooking and to feed our dogs in. All this would roll up under a wooden ledge, and could not be seen when we

were driving along. The front part had a leather hood the whole width of the van for the driver, for whom a good stuffed mattress made a capital bed ; and with the waterproof curtains drawn and buttoned tight, he said he had never a more comfortable perch in his life. For the Breton lad we took with us, we contrived a nest under the tent in the stable, but he found his way into the tray with the dogs, one end of which he appropriated to himself, and declared it was "*un palais magnifique.*"

The whole concern—van, carriage to France, alterations made there, beds, tents, stoves, painting, a set of second-hand strong harness from London,—cost us £43.

I must say the arrangement was perfect, and no Bohemian gipsy travelled more comfortably than we did. All our glasses were arranged in holes as in ships ; under the sofas were our cellars, and we had besides a capital stock of soups, oysters, and lobsters, in tins, so that we could open one, warm it up, and have it ready in a few minutes. Obtaining no end of letters of introduction from our French acquaintances to their friends in all parts of Lower

Brittany, fastening the dog-cart behind, harnessing and putting Saltfish and Toprail in the van, as leaders, and two strong Breton nags as wheelers, we one fine morning, at five o'clock, took our departure from Rennes.

"There, my boy," said Debenham, as we emerged from the streets into the open country. "There, my boy," he repeated, lighting his briar-root, "this is what I call prime; thoroughly free and independent. None of your long hotel bills, and noisy fellows at dinner, but comfort. Here we have six dozen of capital claret, which beats all your Bass, though there is plenty of that for a time, brandy, whiskey, and gin—what more can a fellow want?"

We were sitting in front, with his man driving, for there was lots of room for three. I should mention I had sent my servant home, as I had lent him to my brother, who was coming to France for the winter in his yacht. The horses got along famously in harness, the trap was not too heavy, and we were as jolly as sand-boys.

We had permission for a few days' *chevreuil* (roebuck) hunting or shooting in the *Forêt de la Hardouhnay*, about thirteen or fourteen *lieues*

from Rennes, and there we determined on first going. I had three couple of French hounds that would hunt anything. Two and a half couple I had bought, and one, old Rappido, I had been made a present of. He was a splendid hound, and I shall have to speak of him and his doings presently. The French hound is a useful animal, and is generally used for anything—boar, wolf, deer, or hare, but a great change, of late years, has taken place. Many noblemen and gentlemen have good packs, which are properly hunted and done well. English hounds are now in great request with Mossoo, as may be seen from the large drafts which annually find their way into France.

I have often and often been asked by French gentlemen how it was that if English hounds are so good, his Grace the Duke of Beaufort was not more successful with the wolves some five or six years back? My answer has always been, because they are too good for the country. The fact is his Grace's hounds are so perfect on fox that they will hunt nothing else, but if his young hounds were entered on wolf, I am quite certain, from what I know of French hounds after many

years' acquaintance with them, they would never live with our English ones, especially with such a pack as Badminton can turn out, and I confess I should much like the experiment tried. My impression is they would run into their wolf, which few packs have ever been able to accomplish fairly. I have known them live for days before different *meutes*, regular relays of dogs brought against them, and then go off as if they had never been hunted at all.

Arriving at *La Hardouhnay*, we found it a large long forest; the village just above overlooked it, and, as seen from there, was really a fine view. It lay, dark and solemn, beneath us, and we were charmed at the prospect of the sport we were likely to have. It was a charcoal forest, that is, a forest where the smaller wood is cut and burnt for charcoal. Others are called *sabot* forests, where larger timber is cut, and made into wooden shoes. The huts in all these forests are miserable, very different from the log huts in the backwoods of America, which are generally comfortable.

This forest had plenty of boar, wolf, and *chevreuil* in it. As the two former were to be

attacked at some future period, we determined to commence next day with the roebuck, not as the French generally do, hunt and shoot them, but to hunt them legitimately, and try if we could pull one down with three couple of hounds.

Our caravan excited immense interest in the village, and much disappointment to the small hotel keeper, or *aubergiste*, who told us we should find his accommodation perfect, and that another English milord, who had also got leave to hunt, and was waiting to join us, had taken up his quarters there. We, however, declined at once, and entered the little *cabaret* to see who the English gentleman was. We found he was one of our St. Servan friends, who had obtained permission, and hearing we were coming down, had started to join us. We were very glad of his company; for though Debenham said he knew by the cut of his jib he was no sportsman, still we were delighted that the little doctor had come, and welcomed him most cordially. He dined with us that evening, much to the disgust and chagrin of the *aubergiste*, who politely told our Breton boy we were *cochons Anglais*, and *imbéciles* to stay in the

forest in our van instead of his house, which all the nobility who hunted there patronised. The little doctor was so timid that nothing could induce him to return at night, so we made him up a bed in our kitchen, which was warm and comfortable.

The next morning we sent up the Breton boy for his nag, which he had hired for the occasion, and in a short time he returned with an animal which looked like a cross between a bear and a bull—a genuine Breton pony. As the little doctor mounted, and seated himself in the old demi-peaked saddle, with his single gun in hand, he looked, with his long beard and moustache, like a Cossack.

We soon made a start, and at half-past eleven commenced drawing the forest for a *chevreuil*. We had one of the guards of the forest with us to show us their whereabouts, so we soon started, and settled to a fine *brocard* (male roebuck). Old Rappido was a first-class hound for deer, and led the others out in fine style, and after a rattling run of two hours all through and through the forest, in which they hunted totally unassisted, for we could not lift our hounds,

which, I opine, is always a bad plan, and not genuine hunting, they pulled him down in an open glade of the forest.

The little doctor was enchanted, and declared he had never seen such capital sport in his life before. He wanted to get rid of his gun, but as no one would take it, he was obliged to sling it with a bit of cord at his back. We commenced trying for another, when, coming down one of the rides, what should we see but an old sow, followed by a dozen two months old squeakers (*marcassins*). The doctor "grew paler and paler," as she came down full tilt towards us. We quickly pulled aside to let her pass, but the doctor's cob, a rusty, hard-mouthed, sulky brute, refused to budge an inch. In vain we halloed to him to get out of the way. He was tugging violently at his gun, but it was so fastened he could not undo it.

The pony slewed half round, the sow and the pigs ran between its legs, and in the *mélée* pony and rider kissed mother earth. However, there was no damage done, so we soon picked up the bits, and remounted him. A nip of brandy put him to rights, we soon found another brocard, and

were running him famously, when the doctor's nag took another turn, and finally ran away with him.

We ran this roebuck a long time, but night coming on, and as we were some distance from our van, were obliged to whip off. We expected to find the doctor awaiting our return, but there was no sign of him, or had any one seen the little man. Thinking he might have gone back to his inn, we sat down to dinner, and had hardly finished when a peasant came to say that "Monsieur's horse had returned, but not Monsieur."

We became really alarmed, and at once started off into the forest, and after an hour's search, we both suddenly halted.

"Hark!" exclaimed Debenham, "I heard a shot."

"Well, I thought I did," I replied.

"I'm sure of it," said he. "Hang it, there's another. What the deuce is up now?"

After a few seconds there was another.

"Come along," said Debenham, dashing into the forest in the direction of the firing, "there's mischief going on."

We had not proceeded a hundred paces when we heard another and another. Presently the firing ceased, and we could plainly distinguish cries for help. We made our way as fast as we could through the thick and tangled brushwood, and soon came on the spot where the sounds proceeded from.

Ensnared in a tree was our small friend ; he had been thrown from his nag, and had wandered about till nightfall, when failing to find his way out of the large forest, and remembering the wonderful stories that had been told him, and which, by-the-by, we had not forgotten to embellish with additions of our own, he had mounted the tree in which we found him, and fired signals of distress till his flask was emptied.

We soon had him *chez nous*, and he attacked the eatables and drinkables in a way wonderful to behold.

Notwithstanding the unceasing chaff he had to put up with, nothing seemed to *bisquer* him, for he very contentedly sat down to his grog and his pipe, and said, " If he could only have unslung his gun when that d——d

old sow floored him, he would have killed her *raide mort.*"

So ended our first hunt in *la Forêt de la Hardouhnay.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE—CONTINUED.

WE shot and hunted in and about the Forêt de la Hardouhnay for some time. Notwithstanding that the winter had set in with unusual severity, we were as happy and comfortable as possible in our van. We were now well in December, and boar, wolf, and roebuck hunting was the order of the day. About this time a capital fellow joined us, an Irishman, whom we will call Langton; he was a fine sportsman, a splendid rider, and a famous companion. One night, as we were sitting round our little fire after a capital day with the roebuck, he turned round and said—

“ Millard, let us know about that famous old

dog Rappido that always performs so well ; you told me you would, and I should like to buy him of you."

" Sell him ?" I returned, " not for a thousand pounds, and when I tell you his history you will see I could not part with him even if I was so disposed."

Rappido had been the property of a French gentleman, but having been attacked by a stroke of paralysis, he gave me the dog, then an old one, on my faithfully promising never to sell or give him away. He knew I was fond of, and a kind master to, all animals, and on presenting him to me said—

" My dear friend, it is so ordained that I shall never enjoy the *chasse* again ; I give you the old dog with pleasure, and when I tell you the history of that pretty *chevrette* you so much admired yesterday, I am sure old Rappido will be doubly valuable in your eyes. Some two or three years ago I went to the forest de P——l to hunt for *chevreuil* at which old Rappido was, and is, particularly clever. We found a *chevrette* at eleven o'clock in the morning, and ran her till three in the afternoon, when, owing to

the heat, for it was a bright October day, we were obliged to sound the *faire revenir*, or *rappel*. The only hound missing was Rappido. We sounded and sounded, but to no purpose, and we were obliged to leave the forest without him, but as the *château* we were staying at was only a mile off, we had no fear of losing him. We dined, and in the evening sent out a *piqueur*, but he came back without the dog; The next morning a *paysan* came with a beautiful *chevrette*, the same one as you saw in the paddock, with the old dog baying at his heels. It appeared in passing by a lake some four miles off to take up some night lines at daylight, he saw the poor *chevrette* in about three feet of water, and the old dog keeping watch, both nearly dead with exhaustion, and the doe was easily taken by him. I gave the peasant forty francs, turned the poor creature out in the paddock, and there she is as happy as can be, and as tame as a dog. The most extraordinary thing is, that when I walk in the field old Rappido invariably comes, but never offers to molest her, being quite content with standing and looking wistfully at her, while she

will approach him quite familiarly and butt at him, and seems to understand she is safe, and that the old dog is of too noble a disposition to touch her in her captivity. I have even seen them chase one another in the prettiest way imaginable. This poor doe must have been at bay in the lake some twelve or fourteen hours, the dog on the watch, but too wary and cautious to approach."

This is the history of old Rappido, and I shall never part with him. A large party came down next day, English and French, for boar-hunting. As there were no end of hounds, I left the old dog with the rest of my dogs at the van, and three or four sleepy-headed fellows were left in bed at the village, as we would not wait for them. We found the slot of a boar, came back, let out the hounds of Monsieur M. G——n, whose *meute*, I should say, are famous at boar, hunted, and killed him. On returning home through the forest about three o'clock, just getting dusk, for it was late in December, I thought I heard dogs giving tongue in the distance. My ear did not deceive me. The music of dogs in full cry was wafted to

us by the breeze. Louder and louder it came.

“By Jupiter!” said I to my friends, “there is my old dog Rappido. I know his note amongst a thousand; who can have been fool enough to let them out?”

The cry of the dogs came nearer and nearer. I spurred on Saltnish, as I felt sure the hounds would cross the riding I was in. In a few moments I saw a beautiful roebuck bound across the path, a hundred and fifty yards ahead of me, and the hounds which I had left at home, close at his haunches. I halloed in vain. I could not stop them, and their notes were gradually lost in the distance. Whilst I stood debating what I should do, several of my friends came up, and we agreed it would be useless following them, as it was nearly dark, and there were now plenty of wolves in the forest, added to which it began to snow heavily. There was nothing left for it but to make for our van, and when we arrived there, some three quarters of an hour after, the ground was nearly three inches deep. I never remember seeing so heavy a fall of snow in this part of France. We

went up to dine with the party at the *auberge* that evening, and we found, by a huge fire, and quite snug and comfortable, the lazy would-be *chasseurs*. They had turned out at about one p.m., and resolved to have a hunt; and for that purpose had let out my dogs, and almost immediately found a *chevreuil*, but not being mounted, they could not follow the hounds, and on being blown, and obliged to give up, exclaimed—

“*Tiens : quelle fortune !* Monsieur Millard will not lose his animals; he is sure to search the forest through for his old dog, and will no doubt come across the rest.”

I regularly “opened on them,” and they took their weeds out of their mouths in surprise, to think I could be guilty of such rudeness as to let out at them for having a hunt.

After dinner, at about eight o'clock, we all turned out to see how the night was; it was snowing and freezing fearfully. The village on the top of the hill, with the forest, in its vast extent, lying far below us, and extending for miles and miles. Twenty of us turned out, then, on this wild winter's night; there were

some ten or eleven of them who had their *cors de chasse* with them, which they played most beautifully together.

With these gentlemen we went, the rest of us smoking our pipes and cigars, to the brow of the hill, where they commenced playing the *Rappel de danger*; we were afraid the wolves would get at the dogs. I never recollect anything more beautiful, for they played well. The snow stopped as they began, the moon came out bright and glorious, and the horns sent their echoes far into the extensive forest. In vain did we listen to hear the baying of hounds, no sound reached our attentive ears. Again and again did they play, call after call ravished my ear (I never, before or since, thought *cors de chasse* music). The *Bien aller*, *Halali*, and many others were sounded, and died far away into the almost trackless depths of the forest which lay at our feet, yet not one welcome sound did we hear, and though I had been enchanted and entranced by the beautiful melodies, my thoughts were far away in the grand and magnificent scene below me, with the bright moon shining out so calmly, and making the

scene almost as bright as day; yet, as the sounds ceased, and I turned to go back, I recollected that my favourite hound and faithful friend was lost.

All that night, in spite of the most urgent entreaties not to do so, did I wander about the forest, but I could find nor hear nothing of the dogs, and at half-past four came home fagged, disappointed, almost frozen, and went to bed dead beat.*

I had slept some two or three hours, when I heard the door of the van open, and Mons. J——s, one of the best and most active of the *chasseurs*, came in, and exclaimed—

“All right, old fellow, Rappido is found.”

He had sent out *piqueurs* before break of day, and seven miles off the old dog was found in a cowshed, in a farm-yard on the opposite side of the forest. The prints of three different wolves were tracked close up to the shed door. The poor animal had evidently run there for shelter. He was found quietly sleeping between the cows in the morning.

* I should mention that we had moved our van up close to the little auberge. We dined with all our friends, but s'ept in our van.

I need not tell you how glad I was to see him ; the rooms of our lazy friends were besieged, and they were instantly pulled *sans ceremonie* out of their beds, and proceeding they disliked more than any other, and we all sat down to a jolly breakfast. The rest of the dogs turned up in the course of the morning. I have had many good days with old Rappido since.

The next night we dined all together again, and insisted on Langton singing us a song, which was as follows :—

“By my soul, I’m a broth of a boy. I’m fond of an illigant fight.

With my sprig of shillalagh I crack a crown daily.

Sure a man with his nut crack’s an illigant sight.

Chorus.—Sure a man, &c.

“Faith it’s fond of the girls that I am, the illigant cratures so slim.

There’s Miss Biddy O’Towl—I give you my sowl,

I’d marry her jist for her tin, for her tin.

Chorus.—I’d marry her, &c.

“Oh it’s fond now of hunting, I am. What swate music there is with the hound ;

And when in their wake, walls and ditches I take,

The hills with my cheers they resound, they resound,

Chorus.—The hills with, &c.

“Troth it’s fond now of whiskey I am ; there’s nought like a sup at the cratur ;

And if married I am, my wife won’t fill the can,

Tare and 'ounds with my blackthorn I'll bate her, I'll bate her.

Chorus.—Tare and 'ounds, &c.”

“There, my boys,” said Langton, “that’s the only song I ever knew ; it used to be sung by a drunken groom of mine, who did get married and licked his wife to death, for which trifling offence he was sent across the herring-pond for fifteen years. I flatter myself there’s no brogue in that.”

We all laughed heartily, seeing he spoke the broadest Irish.

“Now, my lads,” he continued, “here is a little yarn for you, with a moral to it—so take a lesson :—

“One day in the middle of October, 1842, I started off walking with my two red Irish setters on a shooting expedition. On the third day I saw a fine old *château* seated on a most beautiful hill, and surrounded by very extensive woods. I asked to whom it belonged, and was told the name of the proprietor, a French nobleman, and that if I asked permission to shoot, it would most likely be given ; so putting my native bashfulness in my pocket, I walked up

to the house and rang the bell. A servant in livery answered it, and I could see at one glance that everything was well kept, in fact I had discovered that before I entered, as the beautiful lawn and walks were in perfect order, and the outside of the house presented an appearance far different from what you generally see in the French châteaux, which are mostly in a tumble-down, ramshackle condition.

“I was shown into the count’s library; sitting at a table, reading, was a fine gentlemanly man of about fifty years of age. He instantly rose and bowed courteously, and I forthwith explained the object of my visit. He most cheerfully gave me permission, not only to shoot but to fish also if I chose, but he asked me not to shoot at the *chevreuil*, as there was to be a large hunting party on the morrow, to which he gave me an invitation. He asked me not to go into the woods at all, but to content myself to fields.

“Of course I expressed myself most grateful for the permission so kindly accorded, and set out in high spirits to thin the birds. I had been shooting with tolerable success for three

or four hours, and had marked a covey down in some high fern, which I followed up. My two setters were working well before me; I was looking on admiring them, when I was startled by something close to me. I saw the fern wave, I pulled trigger, and on going up to the spot beheld to my horror and consternation a beautiful *brocard* lying struggling in the agonies of death.

“I shall never forget my feelings at this moment; I knew that I had been guilty of a breach of trust, and shot the very game that the kind proprietor had so particularly requested me not to do. I did not know how to act, and felt quite disgusted with myself; at last I resolved to leave the *brocard* on the spot it lay, and go direct to the château and inform the count of what I had done. He did not expect me so soon, and hoped that I had had good sport. I never felt so confused or awkward in my life, but at last I blurted out the catastrophe. I told him how excessively hurt I was with myself in having unfortunately shot the *chevreuil*, but that it was in a place I had least expected to find one, and had pulled trigger without

giving a thought that such an animal might be there.

“He looked very grave, and said, ‘Sir, we shall see,’ and left the room, closing the door behind him.

“Well, thought I, this is a pretty state of affairs and *finale* to my day’s sport, and ten to one I shall be presently served with a *procès verbal*. I remained nearly half-an-hour cogitating and thinking what a fool I had been not to have looked before I shot.

“At last the count entered, saying, ‘Monsieur, will you have the kindness to follow me?’

“I did so, and he presently ushered me into the drawing-room, which was filled with his company, and some devilish pretty girls, I can tell you, *en grande tenue*. They were all looking at me, and were evidently prepared for what was coming.

“‘My friends,’ said the count, ‘this is an English gentleman who came to me this morning, asking permission to shoot over my estate, which permission I gave, expressing at the same time a hope that he would shoot none of the *chevreuil*, as I was to hunt them to-morrow, and to

which *chasse* I invited him. He was out for some hours, and to judge from the size of his pockets, with very good success. In the open, amongst the fern beyond my large cover, he marked down a covey of partridges, and in going to seek them a *brocard* got up, and without thinking, and in a moment of anxiety, shot it. He came immediately to tell me of the misfortune, as he calls it. Now, my friends, as I like candour, and above all an honourable man, it gives me very great pleasure to introduce to you my new acquaintance, Monsieur Langton.

“‘Sir,’ he continued, coming up to me, and taking my hand, ‘do not for a moment let the thought of the *chevreuil* distress you. I am quite assured it was accidental. You are ever welcome to come here and shoot, or fish, and I trust you will always make my house your home.’

“He would have me stop with him, and sent to the village where I had left my little *sac de nuit*, which I usually strapped across my shoulders when walking.

“I spent three or four very pleasant days there, and had capital sport ; but, recollect, this

was in 1842. Things are widely different now. My kind friend has long 'passed the way of all flesh,' but I have still leave to shoot over the estate."

This French gentleman's behaviour and liberal feeling was equal to that of the Duke de Longueville, in "Daniel's Rural Sports." It is thus quoted:—"The temper shown by the Duke de Longueville, when it was observed to him that the gentlemen bordering on his estates were continually hunting on them, and that he ought not to suffer it, is worthy of imitation. 'I had much rather,' answered the duke, 'have *friends* than *hares*.'"

CHAPTER XIX.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE—CONTINUED.

MY brother having arrived at St. Servan with his yacht, I put Saltfish in the dog-cart, and drove down in two days. I could not prevail upon Debenham to come; he hated duck shooting, and would rather be "bored" at La Hardouhnay (could he mean a joke?) I found the "Manola" anchored at Le Solidore, the entrance of the Rance, which runs up past Dinan. It is a most beautiful river. A short distance up is the bay of St. Souliac, which is about three miles across; here is capital duck shooting. They were at this time in countless myriads, as the weather was unusually hard.

"Halloa, old fellow," exclaimed my brother,

as I stepped into his cabin ; “just in time ; such a spree.”

What the particular spree was I could not at that instant divine, as I stood looking in blank astonishment at some three or four individuals in a most extraordinary state. They were dripping to the shoulders, and all their faces were blackened.

“Such a spree,” continued my brother, aside. “I’ve been giving these fellows a dinner. Two Frenchmen and three English. They are three sheets in the wind, as you may see. I’ll introduce you to them ; but don’t split on me, and you’ll see such a lark.”

I was then introduced to the gentlemen, then in a very happy state. The table was out of the cabin ; on the floor was a large bucket of water, and in it a gold Louis. This was to be dived for by putting your head down into the bucket and trying to take the coin up in your teeth, which if you succeeded in doing was yours. Such was the spree alluded to ; on one side of the bucket stood the captain, and on the other the steward, each with a towel in his hand, one part smeared with soot or black

grease, which they cunningly kept out of sight, then politely wiping each gentleman's face as he drew it dripping out of the bucket! This was the intellectual amusement I found my brother engaged in.

"Varry appy to make your acquaintance, Monsieur Millard," said one of the Frenchers to me. "I speak Anglish varry good—one, two, tree—roast beef—old England—Got damn. Monsieur Robert" (my brother) "teach me—foney fellow—we was all a little merry, you see, but I no able to get that stupids Louis. We try one hour, but there he stick still, *Mon Dieu!* I was quite drowne all this time; but Monsieur Robert he say ave one leetle more squeeze at the lemon, von nip of Cognac, or a glass of portaire—strong beer portaire—varry good."

"Proud to know you," said one of the Englishmen, "mosht exchitings game thish—been at it jusht an hoursh, but can't get the coin—show you mosht mag-mag-mag-ni-fi-shent sport to-morrow."

After some time we managed to get them away, and I was not sorry to know, when the boat returned, they were landed safe, and mak-

ing the best of their way home through St. Servan.

I learned from my brother's sailors that at low tide a little bay close by was covered with woodcocks. It seemed they had been frozen out everywhere, and came down to feed at low water. I determined in the morning to see what I could do with them, so taking a glass of hot brandy and water, turned into Bedfordshire, and was soon in the land of nod.

The next morning I arose betime, and got a couple of the men to row me off to the little bay. No one seemed to have found it out as yet, for there was no shooting going on. It was only half ebb, yet there were thousands of birds on it—golden plover, lapwings, woodcock, snipe, and all sorts of ducks. I am afraid to say what I killed, but there were forty-four woodcock amongst them. They were in poor condition, as were the snipe. The plovers, teal, and duck were fat, and in good order.

At three o'clock I was on board the "Manola" again, and she was just getting under weigh to proceed to the Bay of St. Souliac, which was to be the scene of the duck shooting operations.

She was soon there, and snugly moored for the night.

After a good dinner, and donning our shooting gear, as they called it, we got into a boat, and were put on one of the mud banks which the tide had left as it fell. These banks are intersected with deep ditches and pools of water. Into these the wild fowl came by hundreds. At eight p.m., as the tide was low enough, some three or four of us got on shore to commence a havoc with the ducks.

It was a lovely moonlight night, though intensely cold. I had stolen off by myself, for the others were rather noisy, and would talk, which I knew was fatal. I had wandered about some three or four hours, getting pretty good sport, when all at once one of the thickest fogs I ever remember came on, and I was soon completely lost. I was several times nearly falling into the deep ditches, where I should have been to a certainty smothered. When the tide turns it runs up the Rance with great speed, and you may imagine my consternation on hearing it coming up. On looking at my watch, by the aid of a fusee, I found I had mistaken the time, and

that it was much later than I had expected, but which, in the excitement of the amusement, I had forgotten all about.

I shouted and fired, shouted and fired again, and again, but to no purpose. I knew that if even I could swim on shore it must be a long way before I could reach the land, a mile or a mile and a half. I thought of my brother, where he was, if he would be saved, or find a watery grave. I remembered, too, that I must swim with my head against the tide. To have attempted to go with it would have been certain and instantaneous death. I was also aware that even if I did reach any point the current was so strong that it would be almost impossible to hold on.

I was in despair. Sticking my gun muzzle downwards deep into the mud, I thought that, should I be saved, I might perhaps find it the next day; I then took off my long mud boots, coat, trousers, and waistcoat. It was a bitter cold night, and the fog was thick almost to stifling. I determined to stand against the tide as long as I could, and then trust to God and my own swimming powers. Just as I heard

the tide ripple against the bank close by me, a voice screamed out—

“Mr. Harry, Mr. Harry, where are you?” It was my brother’s old captain in the “Manola’s” boat. “Ahoy! where are you?”

To wrench my gun from the mud in one hand, snatch up my clothes in the other, was the work of an instant, and one second more saw me safely in the boat.

“Give way, men, with a will,” said my brother, “we must reach the schooner before she catches the full of it, or we shall be carried miles up the river.”

They did give way, and in a few minutes were on board. We made her before the full swing of the tide caught her, and just as our feet touched the deck, round she went with a jerk that seemed to snap every link of the chain cable, but the good old boat stood it all.

“All right,” exclaimed my brother, speaking thick and shortly, and evidently much moved. “D——d narrow escape; hate duck shooting. Let’s go below and have some grog; and, steward, give the men a double allowance to

drink Mr. Harry and all the others' escape, and plenty of baccy."

The morning saw us safely anchored at the Solidore again. I persuaded my brother to lay up the yacht for the winter in the Government yard, for which I had got permission. He did so, and a few days after saw us again at our van. The weather having broken up, we got leave to shoot a tolerably large wood, about nine miles from *La Hardoumay*.

We started early, taking my retriever. Di. We were much pleased with the curious old churches and crosses with which the country abounds. They are most beautiful. In the midst of this wood stood a splendid old ruined château, which must once have been a princely edifice. Its grandeur was, alas! departed, and only one or two rooms on the ground floor remained habitable. All was in rank decay, and recalled vividly to my memory Hood's beautiful poem "The Haunted House."

I had heard that in this château there was an immense cellar of wine, so I asked the *garde-chasse* if it was true. He replied that he did not know for certainty; that its present owner

lived far away ; the house was haunted, and no one would go near it ; that it had been dismantled in the time of Robespierre during the Revolution of 1793 and 1794. As we had not come for the purpose of house exploring but shooting, we started off into the wood, and separated, agreeing, if we lost one another, to meet at the château at three p.m.

I shot for some time with tolerable success, but I heard my brother and Debenham blazing away right and left, which showed they were having much better sport than myself. My retriever, too, showed an extraordinary desire to leave me and join the others. I presently got to the outside of the wood, and found the other two were shooting along the edge, about a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards in. An idea occurred to me that I would have some fun with them.

The cover was very thick, and they had no retriever with them. Presently there was bang, bang. Di looked wistfully at me, and on my bidding her "go fetch," she was off like a shot, and in a minute came back with a woodcock.

Another short interval, and bang, bang, again. This time the cock fell out of cover, and was immediately nailed by the bitch and brought to me. This went on for some time, and my pockets were rapidly filling.

Presently out rushed Debenham, heated and excited, and on seeing me, called out, "I say, old fellow, deuced unlucky; here have I killed five or six cocks and only got two."

I pitied him exceedingly, and seeing he was really vexed, said, "Just stop a few minutes with me, and I will show you how to bag woodcocks; I have nine in my pockets, already."

The words were hardly out of my mouth when bang, bang. "There goes Bob" (my brother), said Jack; "and there goes Di," said I, giving the bitch the word. In a minute she was back with the bird. There, my boy," I observed, "what do you think of that? You see the knowing George Debenham is to be walked into occasionally."

"I see it," he answered, "you are an infernal nobbler, and I'll give you twenty-five guineas for Di."

“No, old boy,” I replied, “not for a hundred guineas.”

That day we killed seventeen couple of cocks. A little before three it began to snow heavily again, so we sent on the guard to the little bourg where we had put up the trap to tell the man to get the cart ready at once, and bring it down to the château.

After getting a sort of resin candle from a farm close by, we started on a house exploring expedition, as we were curious to know about the large cellar of wine reported to be in the old château.

“Hang it,” I exclaimed on entering, “it is clear we cannot go up stairs, seeing there are none, and the rooms above floorless;” and as there was nothing to be seen we proceeded to the haunted regions below to look for the talked-of cellar.

After searching for some time, we came to an old, rusty, padlocked door, and instinct told us this was the looked-for place. The lock was forced *secundem artem*, and we discovered a very large place with many thousand bottles in it. Some of the bins had broken down

and their contents lay smashed on the ground. The place was in ruins, and had evidently not been entered for many many years. We tapped bin after bin, and all was as sour as verjuice.

“What a shame,” remarked Debenham, “to let such a glorious cellar go to decay, and the liquor spoil.”

We were quitting the place when my brother's attention was drawn to a little bin with some fifteen or sixteen bottles in it. I uncorked one, and from the delicious bouquet knew in an instant we had come on the right thing at last. It was Burgundy, and such Burgundy as I have never tasted before or since.

The cups from our flasks were taken off, and we speedily buzzed bottle No. 1. The rest we filched, and packed them securely away in the cart, along with some four or five bottles of brandy I discovered.

We agreed to dine at the *auberge* close to our van the next day, and finish up with the filched wine. The brandy went to our cellar, and we invited a few friends to join us next evening.

“There,” said Debenham, pointing to a lot of bottles arranged on the chimney piece, as we sat down to this said dinner, “I think beside the white wine and champagne, that twenty bottles of claret is a fair allowance amongst eight of us.”

As we drew round the table after dinner by the side of a blazing yule log, shall I admit it? the whole of this wine was drunk. How I got to bed I know not, but on coming down the next morning to beg one of the *garçons* to go down to the van for a few bottles of seltzer water, I found Debenham sleeping with his head in one of the large French stew pans, and the others were in different parts of the room.

My brother, with his head amongst the broken bottles and glasses on the table, and myself with two eyes in mourning, or as Bob, in the language of the P.R., had it, “A mouse in each eye, and my front railings all loose.”

I am almost ashamed to relate such a story, but the glorious days of our sojourn at the

Forêt de la Hardouhnay can never be forgotten, and my readers must take these happy old remembrances of mine as a sufficient excuse.

CHAPTER XX.

A SPORTING TRIP TO FRANCE—THE OLD COLONEL'S STORY.

WE were one evening more than astonished to see my father, an old man over seventy, put in an appearance; he had come over to see what his hopefuls were at. A famous sportsman he had been in his day. I need hardly say we were more than delighted to see him, and soon arranged for his accommodation. As we sat in our snug little crib, after dinner,—“Harry,” said he, “mix me a glass of hot whiskey and water; not Bob’s three-quarter stuff, but a mild one; and I’ll tell you a story.”

I did so, and, having lit our pipes, composed

ourselves to listen to "Triton,"—the old colonel's story :—

"Triton.* — The name recalls visions and scenes of long past years, of happy hours when youth, and health, and happiness were with me ; when I gaily bounded over the ground, gun in hand, or, mounted on horseback, almost flew over hill and dale, when—but I sit down to tell of my old friend and attached companion, 'Triton,' who was a pure-bred Newfoundland of remarkably fine growth, stood wide between the legs, and was altogether a very handsome well-formed dog, colour black and white.

"I took him to the Cape of Good Hope, in 181—, when he was about eight months old. The transport in which I made my passage to join the — Light Dragoons, put into Funchal Bay, Madeira, where we stopped three days.

"The weather was beautiful, but very hot, and many of us got into the ship's boats, and plunged into the sea, which was cool and pellucid around us.

Triton, who had been observing all this from the gangway of the vessel, where I saw him

* Son of Neptune, by Amphitrite.

moving about in an anxious manner, after reconnoitring the party, plunged into the sea, and swam towards me, and then endeavoured to take me by the nape of the neck, when I had some difficulty in beating him off, and making him understand his assistance was not required; so, after a little, we swam in a most friendly manner side by side.

“This was the first aquatic feat of my young dog, who became greatly attached to me, and always swam near me when I bathed in Table Bay.

“Triton soon knew all the men and horses of my troop in the barracks, and when they marched out in watering order, invariably kept with them; he lived in the barracks, that is, mostly in the stables with the horses, with whom he was on the best possible terms, and it appeared that he attached himself to his own troop most particularly.

“At this time an order was issued by the Governor to destroy all dogs loose about the town, and many were put to death, just outside the barrack gates. On one occasion Triton was standing near the gate with me, when a dog

was killed in our sight by a policeman. Soon afterwards the troop went out for exercise, but nothing would induce Triton to move out of the barrack-yard; he came to the gate, looked anxiously at the troop leaving him, put his tail between his legs, and quietly retreated to the stables.

“I am simply relating facts; but by what process of reasoning or instinctive powers Triton satisfied himself there was danger outside the barrack gate whilst there was safety within, I cannot undertake to show, or what are the nice distinctions between reason and instinct. The dog made his conclusions in a most logical and clear-headed manner, and acted upon them for his own protection. I well remember this little anecdote, as it made a very strong impression on my mind at the time, and led me to observe more frequently and more particularly the habits of animals in general, from which I have subsequently derived so much amusement and satisfaction.

“It was frequently the custom to bathe the horses and men of the regiment in the sea, when Triton invariably kept with his troop,

but would take good care to keep at a respectable distance from a horse in the water, although he would overlook these proceedings with a pleased dogified air, and would swim out to sea until he could barely be distinguished.

“When I left Cape Town for the interior of the Colony, I took with me a steady pointer, a half-bred dog, who was a very fair retriever, and my noble friend and companion, Triton; shortly afterwards the retriever died, and there was no possible mode of supplying this loss where I was then quartered. I had been in the habit of taking Triton with me when shooting small game on foot, with a Knox double-barrelled flint gun, pottering about near my station, seeking partridges, hares, quails, snipes, &c. On these occasions I taught Triton to keep close to my heels, and not to chase, but as he seemed to pay great attention to the sport, it struck me he could be made useful, and with a little trouble I taught him to bring game to me, and when put on the trail of wounded game, his sagacity and wonderful nose was astonishing. It was a beautiful sight to a sportsman to watch the dog puzzle out the scent of a wounded

quail ; he knew well the trail of the wounded bird, and never left it until the bird was in his mouth and laid at my feet.

“ There was a large swamp some little distance from my station, filled with snipes and frequently with wild ducks ; I only took Triton, who was here a complete master of his art, picking his way and walking lightly ; when I fired, his nose was in the air, and very seldom did he miss bringing me the dead bird.

“ I have had many valuable dogs in my possession since that period, but none with such a fine and delicate nose ; his natural intelligence seemed to teach him all that was required. I never lifted my hand to him except to caress him, and he would look into my face for approval when he laid game at my feet. But for his great size, and frequent desire for water, he would have been an incomparable retriever ; so I never took him far from home ; in fact, he knew well when I was mounted, that his services were not required for that day.

“ Triton was a great pet of the men of my regiment, and seemed to understand perfectly his position. He would follow at my heels when

examining the men at the troop parade, and the horses and himself were on the most social and friendly terms. He would stop before some of the horses, stand on his hind legs, lick their noses, and both parties seemed to express much pleasure at the meeting; in fact Triton was a personage of much importance with men and horses, and parade seemed incomplete without his attendance and supervision.

“When the regiment was ordered on to the East Indies, I was unwillingly compelled to leave my four-footed friend behind me, giving him to an officer remaining at the Cape of Good Hope. I parted from him with the greatest regret; but knowing the effects of the East Indian climate on a dog of his breed, I was in some measure more reconciled to his loss; he died, poor fellow, about a year after I left him from a disease common to dogs in hot climates.

“Many, many years have rolled over my head since that happy time when, full of youth and vigour, I carried a flint double, shot partridges, hares, quails, and snipes with my old pointer Spot and my noble dog Triton as humble companions and friends. My hair is now silver

white, my limbs are weak and stiff with age, my sight failing, my hearing indistinct, yet when I recall those times long past, like an old war-horse I lift my aged head, sniff the battle afar off, cry aha! aha! stamp my old gouty feet, and the visions of old are before me—but—

“ Well, well—time changes every thing around us, and we poor frail creatures of humanity change with it. Let us be content with what is; youth will continue to enjoy life as I have done, will bring down their birds with a double-barrelled breech-loader, with patent cartridges; and all the other numerous and expensive paraphernalia of a modern sportsman; but none, none will ever receive more real pleasure from their shooting than I did with my old flint gun, and my noble and excellent four-footed friend Triton.”

We shot about the forest for the next two months, then sold our van for more than we gave for it, and started for St. Malo with the horses; shipped them on board one of the South-Western Steam Company's boats, in charge of our servants; returned to St. Servan; got the yacht in trim; and shortly after cast anchor in the Southampton Waters.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON REARING AND BREEDING PHEASANTS.

MANY and various are the theories on rearing pheasants ; I opine the best way is the cheapest, that is as long as you have good, strong, and healthy birds.

It must not be supposed for one instant that you can breed pheasants at a *profit*—it is “not on the cards.”

As a rule, hand-reared birds, by the time they are fit to shoot, cost ten shillings a head. This seems a large sum, but you must take into consideration buying eggs, loss of eggs, men’s wages, loss of birds, cost of and repairing coops, food, firing to cook it, &c., &c. ; put all these items together, and you will find my estimate is not too high.

Aviaries must be well sheltered from the north and west, facing the south, and the soil *dry*.

Do not build them near old houses or sheds, ricks, or covered drains, because rats will soon be tempted to come to the food, and when they once get through, it is almost an impossibility to keep these pests out.

Keepers frequently put four, or even five hens to a cock ; but there are quite enough to ensure good and fertile eggs.

The pens are often made very much too small, which is a great mistake, as birds in too confined a space never thrive well.

The proper size pen for three hens and a cock is about twenty or twenty-four yards long, and sixteen or eighteen yards wide.

The best way, however, and by far the most economical one, and where a manor has the vermin *well* kept down, is to enclose a space large enough to hold seventy or eighty hens ; construct this near a favourite cover, and where it is warm, dry, and sheltered ; the wire net which encloses it should be eight feet high, and the mesh one and a half inch ; this will

keep out the smallest rabbit ; the price of such netting per yard, and twenty-four inches wide, is about fourpence farthing, but the price varies ; there is, of course, no covering to this kind of pen, as the wild cocks will come to the hens night and morning.

The pinion feathers must be *cut* from one wing of the hens to prevent them flying over—do not *pull* the feathers, or they will grow again directly, and the birds will escape.

When they have done laying they may be turned loose, but if you intend to keep them always in confinement, the better way is, with a sharp knife, to take the extreme end off the pinion, which will prevent them ever flying again.

Where you keep birds in covered aviaries, twine netting should be used for it, as it does not injure the birds when they fly against it. Soak this net in boiled oil, and it will last a long time.

If your aviary is near burrowing vermin, sink a three quarters of an inch *galvanised* net about twenty-four inches wide all round your enclosure, and carry it up the same height above the

ground ; this will effectually stop anything burrowing or getting in. The price of such netting will be about thirteen-pence halfpenny per yard.

Pheasants in confinement must be treated pretty much the same way as fowls ; there must be sifted cinders, or a portion of the ground turned up for them to bather in, and some slacked lime or crushed oyster shells placed about to assist digestion and formation of shell.

Laurel, spruce firs, rhododendrons, pampas grass, &c., should be planted for shelter ; but there are many other evergreens I do not know the name of which make capital cover.

Supposing you buy from dealers, go to known and respectable men, and choose young birds ; they will give you both good eggs and good birds.

There are many dealers who are not to be trusted, and purchasing from such is simply throwing your money away ; the eggs may have been sat upon, and in buying them you are often getting your own back again. I could give you some amusing instances of this.

Eggs from pheasantries should be collected every day, and the outlying covers and hedge-rows carefully looked after by your keeper or watchers. Pheasants often lay in curious places, and where you least expect to find nests.

I once knew of a nest under one of the sleepers of a railway, and where the trains were hourly going over, but she hatched all off and went away with them.

Your setting hens should be small and light—game hens crossed with the bantam are the best—they set well, are not too heavy, and are good mothers; there should be no feathers about their legs, if there are they often get wet, and frequently, from the mud and dirt which collects on them, drag the eggs off the nest and spoil them.

Set your hens a few days on a chalk egg or two to be certain they are thoroughly broody; when you are sure that such is the case, put fifteen or sixteen good eggs under each hen, carefully noting the day you set them.

The greatest attention must be paid when your hens are hatching off; if the chicks do not all come at once, those out first should be taken

away as soon as they are thoroughly dry, otherwise they may get trampled upon, or the hen may wish to go off with them before all are out; she may leave the weaker ones, or not finish hatching, and desert the rest.

If any of the hatches should be small, or weak, distribute the chicks amongst the other hens at night, and set her again.

Never set any eggs that are chipped, cracked, small, or misshapen—they are worthless, and will produce no chicks.

Your coops should be placed in a dry, warm situation, and well sheltered from the north and west.

In clover lays or mowing grass a swarth should be cut for each row of coops to stand in; it is also a path for the feeder to walk down, and he can see his birds, but the coops should never be placed where the clover or grass is too thick, or with too heavy a bottom. The coops must not be placed too close together, for if the young birds stray into a wrong one, the strange hen will frequently kill them. I like to see the coops twenty or thirty paces apart.

On no account allow any of your wild birds

to hatch near the place where your coops are, for when they hatch off they are sure to come to your rearing ground, and will play old Harry with your tame ones.

On dry ground no floor is required for your coops, but when the soil is damp and humid, a bottom is indispensable, otherwise your birds will get the cramp, and many will die.

The best way is to have the floor a trifle bigger than your coop, but not nailed to it; it can then be easily scraped and washed, as the *greatest* cleanliness is necessary.

The floor may be gas-tarred on the side nearest the ground, which will make it last much longer. Many gas-tar their coops outside, which is a good plan; oil will do nearly as well, as all that is required is to keep damp out.

Your coops should be constantly hot lime-washed to destroy the vermin and keep them sweet. The pheasant feeder cannot be too particular in having his coops wholesome and clean. They should be constantly shifted to fresh ground, facing them to the sun, but this cannot always be done, as I consider placing the

backs of the coops against the wind of more importance than facing them to the sun.

All coops should have outlets, which may be made according to fancy.

If gapes or pip appear, move them at once to some other place, and do not use that ground again for five or six years, or your birds will be certain to have it.

Every breeder has his own ideas on feeding. Many go very expensively to work, and do no better than those who do not spend half the money.

Hard-boiled eggs is a favourite food, but very costly. Ants' eggs another, but they are difficult and troublesome to procure—flesh of rabbits, well boiled and chopped fine, is often given, also sheep's liver and live maggots—or slightly baked, which they ought to be, as baked they do not scour. The putrid flesh, however, which you are obliged to have about to breed them is a great nuisance. Beef suet is another favourite—boiled rice, Indian corn crushed, and groats are all good.

In preference to all these give me Chamberland's food; give what you may, this condiment

cannot be beaten. I do not know what the ingredients are, possibly there is a little aniseed and caraway seed in it, or some spices, but at any rate it is excellent.

In cold or wet weather, a little cayenne pepper, turpentine, white pepper, or olive oil may be added to their food once a day. Olive oil must not be given often—once a week is enough.

If your birds are cold or shivering, a small quantity of spirits of turpentine may be added to it; but it must be *well mixed*.

My advice is, to use Chamberland's food, because with it gapes and pip do not often appear. If you see the former has made its appearance anoint the body feathers of the hen and the inside of her wings with turpentine; it will make the chicks sneeze and do them good—it is worms at the root of the tongue which cause them to gape—a stiff feather brings them away better than anything else. Insert it into the root of the tongue, and twist it round, this will generally bring nearly all the worms away. I have seen many keepers very clever at this, and cure their birds in a short space of time.

Copperas dissolved in water is a good preventive for gapes, so is stone vitriol, but both must be used with caution as they are poisons. In all food it is a good thing to use a little finely-chopped lettuce, but if you cannot get it, nettles. Never give water to healthy chicks, the moisture they get from the grass is quite sufficient.

The most difficult time for the breeder is the first fortnight. Get them over that and with attention they are pretty safe.

When young, they should be fed at least five times a day, at feeding times; the slightest whistle or call will bring them to the feeder in scores, but they will come to any call they are accustomed to. I remember one keeper used to bring his birds together by beating an old spoon on the tin which held the food.

There is another nasty thing young birds often take, and that is the *Tettigonia spumaria*. called by many "cuckoo spit," or "frog's spittle." When this is the case a little olive oil must be given, and the birds immediately removed to a drier and more airy situation.

Birds that begin to droop and mope are generally those that are stunted in their growth,

and though they may scour a good deal, their crops will be found hard—it is almost impossible to say what causes it—possibly cold, wet, or indigestion. The latter may be removed by change of food, and given a little softer and moister. Curds, a little oil, or beef suet and egg.

The breeder, if not using condiments, should always have plenty of eggs to make their food, and for this French or Irish eggs are the cheapest.

The coops must be closed every night to keep them warm and cats and vermin away. On wet mornings they ought never to be let out too early.

They should always be fed, shut up, and liberated at the same hour, and a heap of cinders, or sand placed near the coops for them to bather in.

As the birds grow older there is no occasion to feed five times, you may reduce it by degrees to twice a day; never give your birds too much at a time, but have them always hungry and eager to come to you.

CHAPTER XXII.

DOG SHOWS—AN ADVENTURE AT THE BACK OF
CLERKENWELL SESSION HOUSE.

TRULY these may be said to be the dog days. Although I am writing this in January, 1873, yet it is a fact.

The Birmingham show is over, and numbered amongst the past ; non-successful exhibitors are in a state of rabid excitement ; letters are flying about, and the different sporting journals are publishing them.

I have been a judge many times myself, and am fully aware of the great difficulty attending dog-shows, and the onerous duties attached to a judge.

I will commence with the judge. He is a

gentleman chosen, in conjunction with several others, to adjudicate on the merits of a certain class of dogs put before them ; they ought not, and are supposed not to know anything of any animal before them. This is simply impossible as at present managed. I will give you an instance or two.

Look at Kent, now I believe dead, and formerly the champion black-tan setter ; he was a dog without pedigree. No doubt he was a fine animal, but he never got good stock as a rule. I am not prepared to say he was a mongrel. I merely say he was a dog without pedigree.

When such a dog comes before the public as often as he did, and took so many prizes, it was impossible not to know him unless the judges were changed, and then no doubt he would have been immediately recognised by those who were newly appointed.

Again there was Byron, the English lemon and white setter ; he was, I believe, also without pedigree, yet he secured several prizes in England, besides the gold medal in Paris. This dog I have heard nothing of lately. Both were

said to be first class dogs in the field. They might have been ; I know nothing to the contrary ; but to such dogs, knowing them as I did to be without pedigree, I would never have given a prize, or even look at them, for I considered them very faulty as to shape and make. However, they think differently at Birmingham and elsewhere.

Now suppose a judge did not know these dogs as many do ? he would naturally give the palm to the best-looking animal, and very justly so ; what they can do in the field, or how they are bred, is not his business ; he must award as the rules at present stand—the prize to the handsomest and most symmetrical animal.

How this difficulty is to be got over, I am at a loss to imagine ; it is certainly very annoying and vexing to a man who has been at the trouble and expense of breeding dogs from an old and undeniable strain, to be beaten by those who have no pedigree at all ; but so it is at present, and will be till some very great alteration is made, but who is to make it ?

If a certain number of gentlemen would join together, men who breed and understand it

well, were to come forward, not under a *nom de plume*, but by their own proper names, then the public would be interested, and some good would be the result; but as things are at present managed, why it must remain *in statu quo*, which I for one am very sorry for, as I am, and have been for the last five-and-twenty years, a large breeder of all sorts of sporting dogs.

We have our rules for racing, yachting, cricket, coursing, pigeon-shooting, &c., &c. Why not have new and revised rules for dog-shows?

It only wants to be taken firmly in hand and put forward, as I have before observed, by a committee of influential gentlemen, and then I imagine there would be no great difficulty; but men are so diffident now-a-days, that I am almost inclined to give it up in disgust and breed no more; still I hope that there "is a good time coming," and that good and true men will put their "shoulder to the wheel" and alter the present state of things.

If anyone will only give me a hint, I shall only be too glad to bring the matter forward, and work it as far as I am able.

Very many fondly imagine they can get a

at eighteen months old under ten pounds, and if you go in for one of fashionable blood, I am quite certain that a good pup of *six weeks* old cannot be had under *five guineas*, and then only as a favour.

Well do I remember the prices asked by London dealers. In my younger days I was resolved to have a bulldog, as being the correct thing for a young blood, so I went off to a well-known fancier. I hunted about a long time before I could come on his whereabouts, which was somewhere down by the back of the Clerkenwell Session House. Though I have forgotten the name of the particular filthy and dirty court, I have not forgotten its whereabouts, or the visit in question.

On knocking at the door of the bedroom (I had gone up two flights of stairs; it was only a low two-storied house) I was invited to enter, which I did, and found the redoubtable dog-fancier and prize-fighter in bed with his wife, which bed was on the floor in one corner of the room. If my memory serves me right, there were two or three children in it as well.

Running about were some fancy pigeons, and

small toy dogs were in cages every here and there. The growling and snarling put me very much in mind of a visit to the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park about feeding-time, and the stench that assailed me was by no means pleasant.

After having stated my mission, I was requested to return in half-an-hour, when I found every vestige of the bed gone, though where it had been stowed I knew not.

A pretty good-sized fighting and rat pit was placed in readiness in the centre of the room.

On each side of the fireplace was a small cupboard, and in them a badger, some rats in a large wire cage, and a game-cock in another held a prominent position.

Giving him to understand the particular animal I wanted, he requested me "to step up the ladder into the cock-loft, and look out one."

On getting up, such a fearful row ensued, that I thought I should be torn to bits, and the stench was enough to knock me down, so I beat a rather hasty retreat, but had time to see there were about fifty dogs of all kinds,

with chains certainly not more than two feet long; these were fastened to the floor, and each animal was furnished with a potato basket to sleep in.

The only light that was admitted came through the crevices of the old and broken tiles.

Turning to his wife, he said, "Go up, missus, and bring the white one and the mealey-eyed 'un down. I take it the young gent ain't quite used to it."

She presently descended, with the two dogs under her arms, and who were struggling to get at each other.

They were pitted, set to, his fair wife assisting. Not taking my fancy, a brace of brindles were next substituted, which did not suit, and finally I left, without being a purchaser, the animals not being what I wanted, and the prices exorbitant.

In vain did the fancier offer to bait the badgers, and prove to me "his dawgs were the 'ammer." I could not be had; so giving him a crown for his trouble, took my departure.

I shall never forget this visit, though many years ago; the misery of the place, and dirt, I

see it all again in my mind's eye, and I am quite content to view it so.

Some three years and a half ago, I went to judge at a show with some well-known sporting gentlemen. I had not been much in England for twenty years, and had forgotten nearly all my youthful acquaintances.

The very first person I stumbled against was the ever-to-be-remembered dog-fancier. I knew him on the instant. There he was, as busy as a bee, in shirt sleeves; a large frill to the said shirt, a dirty-white watered silk waistcoat, and still more dirty and greasy continuations. Yes, there he was, the fancier of bygone days, lord-ing it at a dog-show; time—close quarters—bad air—hard training—drink, and late hours, had not affected him; he was “as hearty as ever,” and from his general appearance I should judge he had yet many days in store for him; but “*revenons à nos moutons.*”

I cannot understand the enormous prices given for toy dogs. “*Chacun à son goût,*” if toy-terriers and others are worth so much, what must be the value of a good field-dog?

I trust the matter of dog-shows will be kept

before the public, and the existing rules and regulations altered. No one will be more rejoiced than myself to see the true-bred dog win; and I trust the day is close at hand when none but faultlessly-bred animals and of undeniable blood will be allowed to compete at dog-shows.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JULES FONTAINE AND HIS FAMOUS DOG "LE
BEAU POLYDORE."

MANY years ago the following laugh-
able incident took place. And to
anyone who understands French,
and French manners, the picture
will not, I think, appear overdrawn. I give it
exactly as it happened:—

I had returned from Lower Brittany, after a month's very so-so sport, and had located myself at Rennes, thinking where I could next wend my steps. I was sauntering down one of the principal streets one fine evening in October, turning over this knotty point in my brain, when I ran against an acquaintance of mine, one Jules Fontaine, and his famous dog, "Le beau Polydore." Both were returning from *la chasse*.

The dog seemed out of sorts, as did his master, who, by-the-by, was got up in the most approved sporting fashion. A black velvet jockey-cap, very high, such as is worn by her Majesty's postilions.

A bit of badger-skin was stuck in it by way of ornament, and to show he was a sportsman. A silk neck-tie, bright scarlet and yellow. A blue and yellow velveteen (or stuff to imitate it) waistcoat, with one end of white pearl; a coat of all sorts of colours, same material as the waistcoat, buttons to match. I fancied this last article was an attempt at Scotch plaid. A *carnassière*, or game-bag, large enough to hold half the hares and partridges in the department, ornamented with a green fringe about a foot deep, dangled at his back. A powder-flask of cow's horn was suspended across his shoulders by a green cord, and on the other side, suspended likewise by a green cord, was his dog-whistle; a curious instrument which I cannot explain, but which made a sound similar to what our children make with a comb and bit of paper.

An immense dog-whip hung at his button-

hole, one that, had Le beau Polydore received a lash well laid on, would have cut him in two ; for he was, in sporting parlance, "high in bone, and low in flesh." His trousers were of cotton cord, "*L'étoffe Anglaise, mon cher,*" gaiters to his knees over the continuations, which made his legs look from the knee downwards like two stuffed sacks, or gigantic sausages. They were laced and buttoned in the most intricate fashion, with many little tags and bits left flying about, which put you in mind of a Chinaman's tail, or "Sir Arry Scattercash," otherwise named "Sixteen - stringed Jack," (vide "Sponge's Sporting Tour").

A pair of equally curious boots completed his costume. The whole get-up was much like one of the Italian brigands we see on the stage of our metropolitan theatres.

As I have said, master and dog seemed down at mouth.

"Bon jour, Monsieur Jules," said I, taking my hat off in the most approved fashion. "Good sport to-day?"

"Comme ça," said my French friend, like wise doffing his jockey cap ; "un beau lièvre."

“Vraiment, where is he?”

“Ah, je n'en sais rien,” said he.

“Ah! I see you have made a present of him?”
I said, determined to know all about it.

As he saw I was bent on having the whole story, taking me by the arm, he commenced:

“Ah, voyez-vous, mon cher, c'était un lièvre de quinze livres au moins, gros comme un veau; je le tiens au bout de mon fusil, voyez-vous, le coup parti—dou, pang!” (Those two words were uttered with intense vehemence, and with his left hand stretched out trying to grasp the end of the barrel. I was really afraid he would blow his hand off.) “Voilà mon lièvre,” he continued, “qui fait la culbute; je cours pour le ramasser, mais sacré nom de Dieu! il reprend sa force et le voilà reparti.”

“Ah,” said I, “he went off no doubt to fetch the currant jelly.”

“De tout, mon cher, de tout.”

He evidently had not taken my joke, or misunderstood what I said.

“Comment de tout?” I continued, determined on drawing him out.

Nothing I could say seemed to put him out,

for he went on still more vehemently and vigorously.

“J’ai lancé Polydore après ce sacré lièvre, mais je ne l’ai plus revu.”

“Perhaps your dog caught him,” I suggested.

“Mais non, mon cher ; mais non,” he dolefully replied.

“Then you have shot nothing ?” I continued, determined at getting at the whole of his *chasse*.

This last question seemed to offend him greatly. That an Englishman should for an instant imagine that *un vrai chasseur* like Monsieur Jules Fontaine and his *beau chien* Polydore could go out and bring nothing back was too much.

“Si, mon cher, si,” he answered triumphantly. “J’ai tué deux gibiers inférieurs, une grive, et un merle, très bon à manger, vous savez.”

This was in fact his day’s sport, a thrush and a blackbird.

To make up for the roasting I had given him, I thought I might as well compliment him on his dog, and remarking what a handsome pointer it was, said it was a pity his tail had been

cut ; there was not more than six inches of the stump left.

“ Mais mon cher, c’est pour donner de la force dans les reins,” continued the imperturbable Frenchman ; but noticing my look of surprise that cutting off the tail should give strength to the loins, resumed—“ Ne fait pas ça chez vous, n’est pas, mon cher ? Mais vous avez tort.”

I could stand no more, so looking at my watch I pretended I was in a great hurry, and left Jules et le beau Polydore in the streets of Rennes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

USEFUL RECEIPTS, AND GENERAL MANAGEMENT.

IN this chapter I shall give a few *useful* receipts—ones that I have tried, and *know to be good*. I have hundreds, and out of that number more than half are not worth a button. I shall only give those that may be of service to the sportsman.

A WASH TO GIVE A DOG A GOOD COAT.

To be used once a week. After staying on *three* days, to be washed off with soft soap (McDougal's Carbohc soft soap is the best) and hot water. But if your dog is properly attended to he will not want this.

Lime Water and Linseed Oil equal parts (one quart).

One oz. Carbonate of Soda.

RECEIPT FOR WATERPROOF DRESSING FOR BOOTS.

One oz. Pitch (Burgundy).

Two do. Beeswax.

Two do. Spirits of Turpentine.

One pint Neats-foot Oil.

This is a most excellent dressing for all sorts of leather, harness, &c., &c., which it will render as soft as possible. On old saddles and bridles it is invaluable.

FOR DISTEMPER IN DOGS.

There are many valuable medicines for this ; "Rackham's" is very good ; "M'Callum's Specific" equally so. Both "Rackham" and "M'Callum" advertise in "The Field" and other sporting papers. I always make my own medicine. And the two following I have found to be very useful.

Equal parts of jalap and best Stockholm tar made into balls about the size of a small marble. Give one or two balls, as the case may be, every other day—oftener if it does not act freely.

If taken in its early stage, "Norton's Camomile Pills" are very effective. My keeper will never use anything else, and I must say he has been most successful.

In all cases the dog must be kept *very warm*—no draughts, or wet. Meat and high feeding must be avoided. Nice sheep's head broth is the proper thing to give them.

A dog to be kept in good health should have proper exercise—a warm, dry sleeping house, and a clean and well-drained exercise yard. Such a kennel should be well washed and scrubbed out *every morning*; if there are many dogs, *oftener*. It should be *hot lime* washed every month. Their beds should never be foul or dirty. If you are tormented with fleas—which you will not be if your kennel and dogs are properly looked after—let them lie on shavings taken from a good piece of deal, with plenty of turpentine in it.

Your dogs, to look well, must have great attention, and be *well brushed every morning*.

Many sportsmen will not do this, or allow it to be done; but after five-and-twenty years' experience, I am fully persuaded it is the only

plan of making your dog's coat look bright and healthy.

PURGE FOR DOG, HORSE, MAN, OR CHILD.

Equal portions of Rhubarb, Gum Giancum, Nitre, and Sulphur.

For a dog, one pill or two about the size of a marble.

For a horse, a quarter of an ounce.

For a man, four pills.

For a child, one or more, according to its age and strength.

MIXTURE FOR GRIPES IN HORSES.

Nitrate Spirits Æther, four oz.

Tincture of Opium, four oz.

Tincture of Ginger, four oz.

Give *one ounce* for a dose in a pint of warm water (beer is better), and repeat in one hour if requisite. This is a very valuable receipt.

THE PROPER WAY TO GIVE ARECA NUT FOR
WORMS IN DOGS.

Get a *fresh* areca nut, put it in an iron vice

fixed to a bench or table, then with a wood rasp, not too coarse, rasp it down. Get a captain's biscuit, and rasp or pulverise it fine; mix the two well together, then put it into a soup plate with plenty of milk, and let the dog lap it up.

If he will not take it this way, drench him with it. This mixture should be given after the dog has *fasted at least twelve hours*.

Four hours after this give onē oz. castor oil. This should be given *twice a week for a month, or more* if required.

A whole nut is not too much for a full-grown pointer or setter.

Nothing I have ever tried has been so effectual as the areca nut.

In giving all medicines, you must, of course, be guided by the constitution of your dog, and a great deal must depend on your own discretion, judgment, and observation.

FOOT ROT IN FERRETS.

Your ferrets should be kept just as clean as your dogs, and you will then be free of this

disease. Their hutch should be hot lime washed every month or six weeks.

Good and clean wheat straw for their bed, and constantly changed.

After using them in damp or wet weather, well clean and dry their *claws* and *feet*.

If they show symptoms of rot in the feet or tail, *at once* scrape off all the affected part with your nail, or blunt penknife. Do not mind its bleeding, it must be got off. Then dip the affected parts in spirits of turpentine. Ferrets should have *plenty of room*—it is the small confined space that is generally allotted them which brings on disease.

A cat is capital food for them, gives a splendid coat, and makes them as fat as butter. A hedgehog skinned is equally good.

If your ferret is low in condition by overwork, or other causes, the yolk of an egg given twice a day is not to be beaten—they will take it greedily.

Bread and milk, or milk and oatmeal porridge, is capital food, but it should not be given warm; it is not natural to a ferret to have hot things, and it scours them.

Handle your young ferrets as soon as possible, and they will soon become tame and play about with you. Let the jill have plenty of milk before and after having young, and she will then seldom destroy her young ones.

If your ferrets are bitten by polecat, or other vermin, put equal parts of sweet oil and turpentine on the wound; some use burnt butter, or glycerine; oil and turpentine is far the best. Feed your young ones for some time on bread and milk.

FOR THE SWEAT.

This is another disease ferrets, especially young ones, are very liable to. Dirt and cold in a great measure bring it on. The only cure is to have a perfectly dry hutch, in a *warm* place, and free from draught. Fill it full of clean wheaten straw, and this must be changed at least three or four times a day.

In concluding my few brief remarks on *dogs* and *ferrets*, the greatest *cleanliness is not only absolutely necessary*, but they must have plenty of room, exercise, dry beds, and free from wet or draughts, and properly and *regularly fed*.

In beating your ground for partridges, and where the turnips and potatoes are in drills, never work up the drills because the birds see you much quicker. Your dogs, as a rule, should work up wind, but in this case it is not of much consequence.

At the commencement and end of the season, turnips carry but little leaf, and the killing way, when birds are at all inclined to be wild, is to *cross* the drills and *not walk up them*.

At the commencement of the season, men that are accustomed to it will always pick out the old birds, as they are much larger and stronger; you have then the covey at your mercy.

If you can, always commence shooting your outskirts so as to drive the birds *into* your ground, not *out* of it.

In hot weather endeavour to drive your birds into heath, potatoes, seed clover, long grass or hedge rows, there they will lie like stones.

In snipe shooting, always have the wind at your *back*, the snipe flies *up wind* not *down* it, therefore by adopting this plan, you get a much

nearer shot at them than you would were you to work up-wind.

In hard weather, and where the birds are frozen out of their usual feeding grounds, follow the running streams and little brooks, edges of rivers, and so forth; your retriever is the only dog you will want at this time; number eight shot is the best size for snipe shooting.

In pheasant shooting, if you are working hedge rows, have a gun on each side, and let the hedges and brambles, etc., be well beaten, or if you have a good spaniel, or retriever that you can depend on, let them work it for you, but they must always be kept within gun shot.

In cover shooting, if you are ahead of the beaters or placed in a hot corner for the *bouquet*, never *smoke*, or make the *least noise*, otherwise you will lose a quantity of shots; the same may be said when you are working your ferrets for rabbits, never show yourself, and be silent, otherwise they will not bolt, and it often takes an hour or two over one burrow, whereas if you had been silent and out of sight, you would have worked the burrow in three minutes.

It matters not where and at what you are

shooting, always be quiet, and never allow your friends or keepers to be halloaing and bawling.

In duck shooting, and where you are walking, always work *up wind*; but if in a punt, *down wind*, disguising your punt if you possibly can with a bunch of fern or bushes; these wary birds think something natural is coming down on them with the wind, and no danger. When within shot, give a slight whistle, which will bring their heads up, then let drive with your first barrel a *little over* them, and take them with your second as they *rise*, right into the brown of them.

In plover shooting, if the birds are on the ground, to get near them you must walk round them in a circle, coming nearer by degrees, this is supposing you are by yourself, if you are two or three, you may work them in another way, and generally manage to drive them to the guns.

The most killing way for plovers is of an evening to watch by their stands or roosting places; they then come wheeling about backwards and forwards for more than an hour, and this way you may often have many effective shots.

Your keeper is a most important personage ; as a rule they are the most ignorant, presuming, bumptious lot of fellows I know of—can break dogs, breed pheasants to any amount, dress flies, etc., etc. There are good men occasionally to be had, but their name is certainly not Legion.

I remember many years ago a man came to me for my place. I asked him for his character, and where he had been ; he gave me a good testimonial, and said he had been eleven years in his last place, which he had, but unfortunately his late employer was no sportsman, knew nothing about it, and had only seen this man once a year during the whole time he had been with him.

I asked him if he could break dogs.

“Lord bless you, sir,” he replied, “I’ve a broken hundreds, and though I say it there ain’t a keeper a going as can do it better than I.”

“And are you a pretty good shot ?” I asked.

“Well, sir,” he replied with a sort of satisfied triumphant smile, “I ain’t a man as is given to brag, but I b’lieve I can shoot above a bit ;

and as for pheasant rearing I can do any amount, and I never yet see the bird as I couldn't cure of the gapes."

On the strength of his testimonial and abilities, I engaged this fellow at a pound a week, cottage and coals, rabbits for himself, and a suit at Christmas.

Luckily for myself I only took him on a three months' trial, and said nothing to him of my habit of going round occasionally at night, and daytime as well, to see that all was right.

He had not been with me a month before I discovered he knew nothing whatever of his calling, was a drunkard, a thief, and a presuming scoundrel, and having caught him one night at eleven o'clock in the midst of a heavy carousal with a few choice and kindred spirits, when he ought to have been out watching, gave him his dismissal there and then, and the next morning, Mr. S——n took his departure, but not before blackguarding me to his heart's content, and finished by saying,—

"He was surprised as a gentleman as a ought to 'ave been a gentleman should a come a ferretting about his covers," and wound up by assert-

ing, "that such rubbish warn't worth a tinker's cuss."

But my bootmaker becoming acquainted with his tailor, cut short his voluminous speech rather unceremoniously.

You cannot be too cautious in engaging a keeper, and however good they may be, always make it a rule to have a look occasionally by daytime even if you will not by night.

To me half the charm of shooting consists in looking at my dogs, seeing how they are fed and cleaned, watching my covers, killing vermin, and doing a little trapping.

There is no occasion to interfere with your keepers if you see they are doing their work properly, and they will always respect you more if they know you observe their goings on; they then take a pride in shewing you what they can do, and how they have done it.

The same applies to your stables; how many stud grooms are masters, and their masters men. I recollect an unfortunate friend of mine who kept a nice stud of hunters, never being allowed to ride the horse he wanted. If he said,—

“Williams, I shall ride Jack in the Box to-day,” his invaluable servant would reply,—

“Jack in the Box, my Lord, not if I knows it; he’s tucked up and coughing like blazes, and I raily thinks he is got the hinfluenza.”

It mattered not what horse my friend wanted, there was always something wrong with that particular horse, and unfit to ride.

At my suggestion he always named two or three he would ride, though in reality he did not want them, by this means he always got the horses he fancied.

After being bullied by this fellow for two or three years, he at last plucked up courage and gave him his congé.

I am sorry to see since I commenced this book, that with real sportsmen and men who know what dogs are, dog-shows are coming into general disfavour, and the reason is simply this, that men are chosen to adjudicate who are no sportsmen, and who know nothing whatever of the matter. I could name some, but politeness forbids my doing so, who have never shot a head of game, and others who have had but

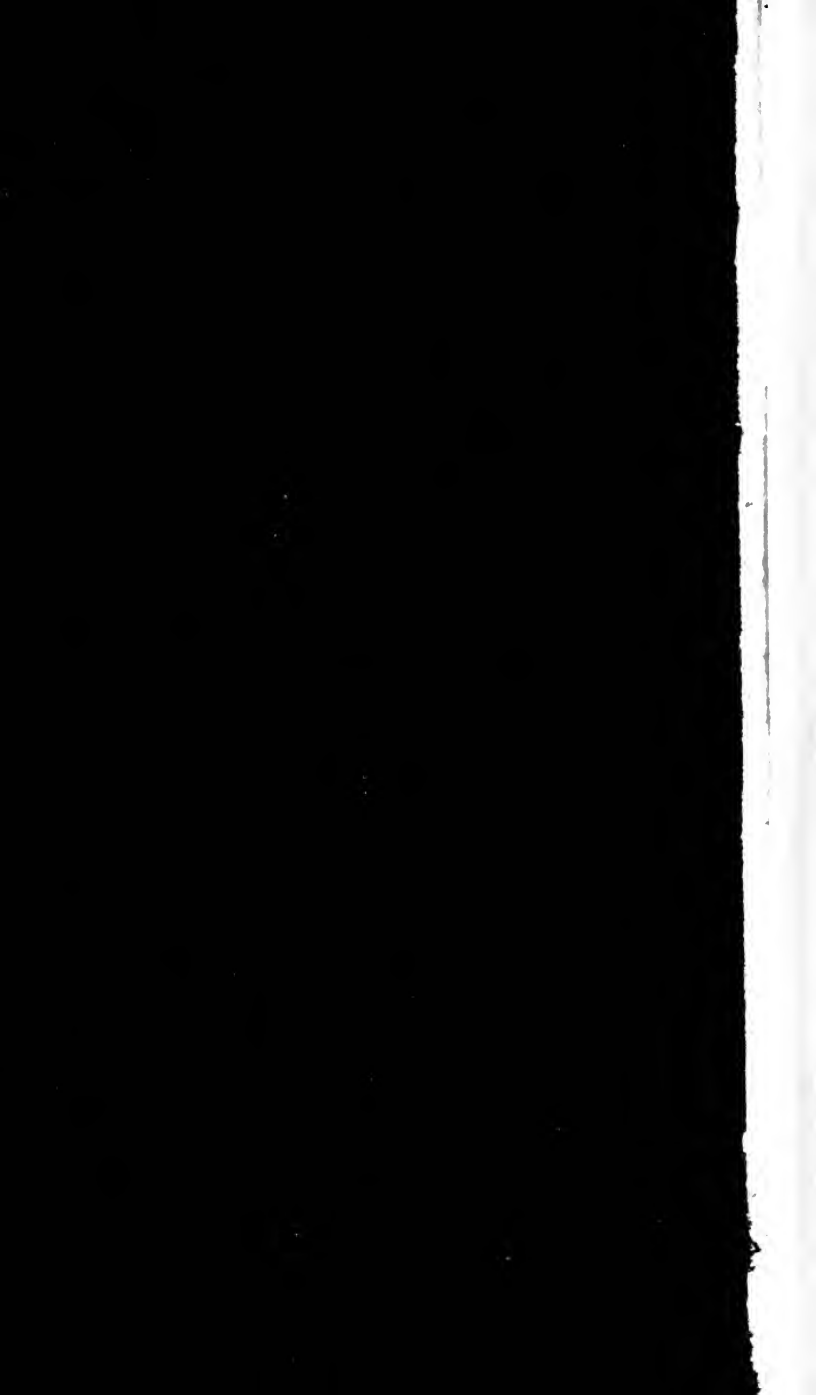
little experience with the gun, yet you see them figuring as judges, and giving their valuable dictums of what a shooting dog ought to be. Others who have never crossed a horse, or at any rate ridden to hounds, judging this class—preposterous!—it is no wonder that many shooting and hunting men deride and laugh at dog-shows. Men should be chosen who are known to be good authorities, and understand their work.

I could write some hundreds more pages on hunting, shooting, fishing, and general sporting, but space forbids me entering more fully into it, and I am afraid that my worthy friend and publisher, Mr. Bentley, will be sending me a line saying I have already exceeded the space he allowed, so I must now conclude by saying my task is done, and I trust that these short sketches will not only prove amusing, but instructive. I think perhaps I may have indulged in some curious names and expressions. But those who are country bred will understand how almost everyone is nicknamed there, and that there is no exaggeration in them. If my experience may be of any service to those

who invest in this little book, and take the trouble to read it, then I shall be more than amply repaid by the time I have devoted to it.

THE END.





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