THIRTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE NEW FOREST

GERALD LASCELLES

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THIRTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE NEW FOREST

Gerald Lascelles

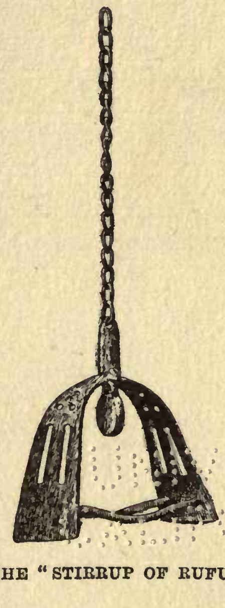
LONDON: EDWARD ARNOLD.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE NEW FOREST

BY THE

HON. GERALD LASCELLES, C.B.

DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF NEW FOREST; ALSO OF ALICE
HOLT, WOOLMER, BERE, AND PARKHURST FORESTS
STEWARD OF THE MANOR OF LYNDHURST



THE "STIRRUP OF RUFUS"

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1915

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TO

MY DEAR WIFE

WHO BRIGHTENED FOR ME THE YEARS OF
WHICH I WRITE IN THIS BOOK

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS IN THE NEW FOREST

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I WAS born at Goldsbrough in Yorkshire in October 1849, and, like many other natives of that county, especially those who bear the same name as myself, I became keenly interested in sport from my very early days. At the age of six I was duly blooded by Charles Treadwell, who was huntsman to the Bramham Moor hounds for twenty-three years.

I went through the usual course of education at Eton and at Magdalene College, Cambridge. I was never without a ferret at Eton, and generally had at the least a share in a dog. My Cambridge days were, perhaps, the happiest of my life. We had then a very cheery sporting set at Magdalene. Among them Sir Charles Fitzwilliam, now Crown Equerry to His Majesty; the late J. Maunsell Richardson, who, besides playing cricket for Harrow and Cambridge, distinguished himself by training and riding the winners of the Grand National for two years in succession; the present Lord Kesteven, and many others. We all of us revelled in the drag, and at certain times Newmarket Heath occupied much of our leisure.

After leaving Cambridge, I had a spell of about four years in the City at Lloyd's, and in 1875, in which year I was married, I joined a manufacturing firm at Leeds.

The indoor life in the surroundings of Leeds was unendurable, and I set to work in earnest to study Land Agency, as a more congenial profession, being helped thereto by being given a seat in the office of Mr. Constantine Moorsom, agent to the Harewood estates, and by having much work thrown open for my study and inspection in the offices of other kind friends who were members of my profession.

In 1880 I was appointed by Lord Beaconsfield to the post of Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest and the other Crown forests in Hampshire—five in all—besides other properties. This entailed, in addition to the work of the New Forest, a tract of 92,000 acres, a good deal of travelling about from one property to the other; and from the time of my appointment to that of my retirement, my leisure hours, except when on leave, were few, and had always to be made up for by working double tides. My home, however, was in the New Forest, at the old King's House (the Queen's House for all the earlier years of my service) at Lyndhurst; and it is with my experiences there, rather than with my other work, that I propose to deal in these pages. I do not propose to attempt anything in the shape of a history of the New Forest—that would be a difficult and much more serious undertaking!

I have only dipped into ancient records where they served or, indeed, were necessary, in order to correctly describe the condition of Forest affairs as they presented themselves to me. It took me years before I could find out the why and wherefore of many of the customs and prejudices that I encountered. But there generally *was* a reason, and, while it interested me to dig out this concealed root, I also found that when it was discovered it was often much appreciated by my local friends, who had neither the time nor the opportunity to hunt out these things for themselves. If, then, I have been a little diffuse in such matters as these, and perhaps especially in what I may call Forest politics, and the various storms that ever vex that stormy sea on which the barques of Crown, commoner, and British public alike contend in their traffic, I trust the reader who has no occasion to trouble himself with any of these things will bear with me, mindful ever as I am of the local foresters who love to discuss these matters.

Indeed, a large book might be filled with such disputations, but I have restricted myself solely to those which led to the events passing in my brief space of thirty-five years, terminating with 1914.

Prosily no doubt, as is the wont of the *garrulus senex*, who is invariably *laudator temporis acti se puero*, and though I have laboured to avoid those particular rocks, I doubt if anyone attempting my task could steer his barque entirely clear of them.

Lastly, I have written this book, because it amused me to do so. Because it was pleasant in my old age to recount, before memory slips quite away, incidents of the best and happiest years of my life. Because I liked just once again to recall the old fights, the old hunts, the old days of good hard work in the woods and about them, planning their future, realising their defects, and rejoicing when nature was propitious and plantations flourished.

In this book, however, I have no single word to say about politics, local or otherwise.

It is an unwritten rule of the Civil Service that its permanent officials take no part whatever in politics. How others interpret this rule I know not, but I do know that as far as I was concerned I carefully abstained from all political action even of the most trifling description, and took care that my subordinates acted on the same lines. I never attended a meeting of either party, or, in fact, gave any man a right to say on which side I was likely to cast my vote.

I have had the advantage of being able to refer to various papers and records in my office of official or semi-official character, but I have, I trust, done nothing to infringe the Public Secrets Act. In fact many of these papers have appeared in print in various books before now.

Especially they were before the public in those articles which I myself wrote on "New Forest Sport and Forestry" in the Victoria County History of Hampshire; and I am much indebted to Messrs. Constable & Co., the publishers of that work, for their kind permission to make use of some of the paragraphs which then appeared in connection with the public papers which were quoted therein. Especially on various memoranda connected with the King's House and

Royal visits thereto, I have adopted the Victoria History as my authority for the quotations from sundry papers in the Land Record Office, without appending, as is therein done, the precise reference, and date of the particular document quoted from.

CHAPTER II

THE CROWN AND THE COMMONERS

It is curious how little is known of the New Forest except among those who either reside in its neighbourhood or else visit it regularly. People often say, "Oh! I know the New Forest well—I motored all through it the other day." That is to say, they dashed to Bournemouth or Ringwood and back along one of the few main roads, and barely saw even the roadside as it flashed past. There are only two ways really to see the New Forest and realise what it is like. One is to go on foot with a pair of extra stout boots and a walking-stick, but this takes a long time, and is a fatiguing process. The other—the only way fit for a gentleman—is from the back of a pleasant, well-mannered horse, with good shoulders and a trained eye for ruts and rabbit holes. With such a conveyance, the most delightful summer's day imaginable can be spent in rambling about the beautiful heaths and woodland scenes of all kinds that make up this beautiful Forest.

This great tract of 92,000 acres is divided into the following classes of lands :—

	Acres.
Open heath and pasture	39,678
Open lands with timber	5,300
Plantations enclosed	11,138
,, open	6,532
Freehold lands of the Crown . . .	2,089
Private property within the Forest . .	27,658
	92,395

Over the whole of the 64,737 acres which are Crown property, the members of public have the privilege of roaming at will on horseback, or on foot, with or without wheeled transport, so long as they do no harm and infringe none of the very few regulations that exist for the protection of the public property.

There are divided interests in various portions of the lands described above. There is first the right of the Crown, which is that of the absolute owner of the whole 64,737 acres—that is to say, over the whole Forest less the 27,658 acres of private lands.

Secondly, there is the above-mentioned privilege of all loyal subjects, amounting to a practical—though not a legal—right to wander in right of the Crown, not as against it, over the whole of the Crown property except those freeholds which are in some cases demised temporarily to private individuals.

Thirdly, there are the rights of the commoners of the New Forest to exercise over certain portions of the Forest conjointly with the Crown certain defined privileges of pasture, of pannage, and of estovers in respect of the ownership of certain particular lands or houses.

Of these commoners there are two sections. First, the landowner, often the proprietor of a large estate, who is the possessor of the lands to which as set forth and defined by the statutory register, these rights attach. He is the actual commoner, and the owner of the rights.

Secondly, there is the exercising commoner or the tenant to whom the large proprietor has let his land, to farm it in the ordinary course of English estate management. These form the main body of the commoners who actually breed and turn out cattle and ponies in the right of their landlord,—for the right attaches solely to the land or the house, not to the individual, and for these rights they pay a substantial amount in the form of additional rent for each right, and may be termed vicarious commoners.

There are also a number of small holders, living on their own land and in their own houses, who own and exercise rights of common. They are a very prosperous and praiseworthy community. They represent the genuine commoner and his interests far more than those landlords who let out their rights, or those tenants who rent a large farm and go in for pony ranching in the Forest, even though they perhaps own the larger proportion of the ponies running out. But the small freeholder is the real pony breeder and cattle and pig raiser on small but efficient lines, who ought to be encouraged in every possible manner. It will be obvious that these common rights constitute a property of great value, and that there is necessarily considerable friction between those who own and constantly desire to increase and enhance them, and the Crown as actual owner of the soil over which they are exercised, and again with the public exercising its privileges in right of the Crown.

This constant state of conflict has existed from time immemorial, and been the subject of numerous inquiries by official committees and of Acts of Parliament based on the results of these inquiries.

It would be tedious to follow out these discussions in full, but for the purposes of this present story it is necessary to go back as far as the New Forest Act of 1851, generally known as the Deer Removal Act.

This Act, which followed upon a comprehensive inquiry by a Parliamentary Committee known as "Lord Duncan's Committee," completely transformed the whole character of the Forest. Up to that time it had been maintained (at considerable cost, it is true) as a vast and beautiful park, well stocked with deer and full of woods of fine timber, and also others of more scrubby and inferior trees which had no little beauty of their own, if their money value was small. The Crown's rights to enclose land for the growth of timber had only been exercised to the extent of some 2000 acres, and this had resulted in the formation of oak woods of about 150 years old, equal in beauty to any part of the Forest. The whole forest was maintained on Royal lines as a beautiful domain, in a condition now lost and ever to be regretted, but at that date difficult to defend from the practical point of view.

The Sovereign had long ceased to make any use of the Forest for purposes of sport. The general public hardly knew of its existence, and before the days even of railway accommodation, visitors to the Forest must have been few indeed. The commoners clamoured for the removal of the deer, under the impression that they would get for their cattle all the pasturage absorbed by them. The Treasury, from motives of economy, lent a willing ear to the proposal. It was generally felt, from a practical point of view, that a better use could be made of that part of this great national property which consisted of timber growing soil than was the case at that time; and after the fullest possible inquiry into the matter by Parliament the Deer Removal Act was passed in the year 1851, and the palmy days of the beautiful old Forest came to an end.

The main points of the Act were (1) that the deer should be removed within two years. (2) That a Register of Common Rights should be compiled, deciding once and for ever what common rights should attach to the various plots of land concerned. This was a most costly volume to prepare; it absorbed about six years of time, and cost some £6000, but it was of great value to the commoners as well as the Crown, by securing all their rights against possible intrusion by any outside parties.

The Crown was to be compensated for the surrender of the right to stock the Forest with deer to the absolute limit of the animals it could maintain by being given a right to enclose land for the growth of timber as against the commoners, to the extent of 10,000 acres, in addition to the rights conferred by previous Acts, amounting to 6000 acres, with the right to throw out lands when the woodlands upon them were thought to be of an age when they were safe from damage by cattle and to enclose the like quantity from the open Forest, but so that the area under enclosure should never exceed 16,000 acres at one time.

At the time, this arrangement seemed to satisfy all parties. The Crown gained a power which practically in course of years would enable it to cover with timber the whole of the Forest wherever the soil was sufficiently good for that purpose. The commoners were protected in so far that their cattle could never be excluded from more than 16,000 acres at one time. And this safeguard appeared to content them at the time—if, indeed, contentment has ever been known to that body. They looked forward to enhanced profits by getting for their cattle the whole of the feed which the deer—to the number generally of from 4000 to 6000—had hitherto consumed. They also got their register, of immense value to them, which settled all their claims and gave them a statutory position.

CHAPTER III

THE FOREST IN DANGER

For a while things went well, but in a short time discontent sprang up. In the first place the register, valuable as it is, had rather seriously discounted the rights of the commoners and others as they had imagined them to be, and as, in some cases, they had actually exercised them. Various customs, or alleged customs, were found to be altogether outside the limits of the rights to which, by ancient practice or grant, the commoners were entitled. When all these matters were carefully gone into by three gentlemen learned in the law (one of whom subsequently rose to the position of Lord Chief Justice of England), the various claims of the commoners were considerably boiled down, and a great number of persons, who had been exercising rights of common, were found to possess legally no such rights at all. Altogether the register, useful as it was to the genuine owner or exerciser of these rights, was not altogether an unmixed blessing to the whole countryside.

Worst of all, perhaps, was the discovery that, instead of the pasturage being increased by the removal of the deer, the contrary was the case. The deer had been invaluable in keeping down the growth of holly, more particularly, and of other rough undergrowth, which after their removal began to encroach upon the lawns, where alone the best pasturage grows. It is indeed an actual fact that there is less pasturage in the open Forest now, when 6000 deer have been taken off it, than there was when they were alive, grazing alongside the cattle, because their valuable aid in keeping back the rough growth from the pasture has been lost. This result was foreseen by neither side at the time. Further, as the new plantations under the Act began to be made, and the cattle excluded from considerable areas, the commoners began to grumble, although this was absolutely in accordance with the settlement they had agreed to. Altogether the commoners and the local landowners began to feel that they had made a bad bargain by the Act which they had agitated for in 1851. What they had petitioned for, and obtained, was not as good a thing as they imagined, and, moreover, they did not like to pay the price they had agreed to give for it.

So agitations, local and political, were rife within ten years after the passing of the 1851

Act, and the condition of the Forest was just as much one of discontent as it had been for the previous hundred years, in spite of the efforts that had been made to satisfy it.

These agitations continued until the whole question of the operation of the Deer Removal Act—the discontent of the commoners, before and since the passing of that remedial measure—was referred in 1868 to a Committee of the House of Lords.

That Committee made a very full and judicial inquiry into the rights and the wrongs of both sides, and its report was much of the nature of a judgment of Solomon, viz. that, since from time immemorial grievances and disputes had been rife on both sides, to which there seemed to be no solution, the time had come to destroy the bone of contention, and to disafforest and partition up the whole Forest. This was the conclusion to which most people, having regard to the precedents in other cases, had been driven long before. Indeed, so long ago as 1789 the same solution had been arrived at and carefully considered by a Royal Commission, despairing, as the House of Lords did in 1868, of arriving at a reconciliation of the conflicting interests; but fortunately they decided to postpone the evil day, and try remedial measures first.

Gritnam Wood.

It was now considered as a settled thing that the New Forest as a whole was to cease to exist. Not that there would not still have been a very large wild tract, or tracts of heath interspersed with woodlands, left for the enjoyment of the public, but large sections would also have been allotted to the commoners in satisfaction of their rights which would have been enclosed and broken up, while the large allotment to the Crown would for the most part have been cultivated as timber plantations—enjoyable enough in the future, but not when first planted. Anyhow, the ancient New Forest, already curtailed as to its amenities, would have ceased to exist from the passing of the necessary Act.

A certain section of common right owners were at first a good deal attracted by the proposal, because of the large additions of freehold lands which they would have gained for their estates, in lieu of common rights, which, to a good many of them, were not worth a great deal. But the smaller commoners, and all the large non-commoner population of the district, were much opposed to the loss of the Forest. The small commoner did not think that the compensation he would receive would really make up for the loss of his right. The bulk of the local residents who are not commoners would get no compensation whatever for the loss of their pleasure ground. So the agitation against the recommendations of the Lords' Committee grew until it might almost be said to be unanimous—locally, at any rate.

But the agitation of a number of private individuals, on behalf of their own profit or pleasure, might not have availed against the arguments in favour of the more profitable use of the public property had not a far more powerful ally come to their assistance in the shape of the public itself, in whose interests it was supposed disafforestation was necessary.

The Office of Woods and the Committee of the House of Lords had overlooked the great and growing craving for open spaces free to the public. They quite forgot the increasing love of beauty and of fine scenery which was becoming implanted in the minds of the general public. They altogether overlooked the force of the æsthetic movement, which may be said to have started with the Great Exhibition of 1851—a force which would induce the majority of the public gladly to waive some thousands of pounds of additional income rather than lose this magnificent park to take their pleasure in. Last of all, they forgot that at about even date with the passing of the Deer Removal Act, the London and Dorchester Railway was made right through the Forest, and was bringing thousands of people to explore it and to discover what it was worth to them. Those thousands of visitors now-a-days, with improved railway facilities and the advent of mechanical traction on the roads, have grown into millions, as all who know the Forest will recognise, and it was well that the force of the movement was realised in good time, and the Forest, as it then existed, was preserved to be so highly appreciated, as undoubtedly it now is. Accordingly, in 1870, Mr. Fawcett induced the House of Commons to pass a resolution prohibiting further planting or enclosing pending legislation and until the whole New Forest question had been further inquired into.

This gave the commoners and local residents time to organise their forces, and especially to combine with their new ally in the shape of altered public opinion, and the movement in favour of open spaces, which was being powerfully worked by the Commons Preservation Society. These adjuncts were organised for all they were worth, and dovetailed into the plea for preservation of local interests ably and well. The Office of Woods missed making the point that if the public desired to maintain the Forest as a great public park, they were there and ready to do it, as servants of the public, if so instructed, far better than by having their hands tied to prevent economical management, and leave all other policy to drift. However, the Parliamentary Committee of 1875 was appointed, and considered the question; and although the preservation of the amenities of the Forest for the use of the public was the underlying principle, yet on the whole their report, and the Act of 1877 which followed thereon, were a great victory for the commoners, whose case was far more ably presented than was that for the Crown.

The net result was that the extensive powers of planting for the sake of perpetuating and increasing the national stock of timber which had been conferred by the Act of 1851, were altogether surrendered. Not an acre, beyond what has been already dealt with, was ever to be taken in and planted, and of the land already taken in (some 17,600 acres) only 16,000 were ever to be enclosed at one time.

CHAPTER IV

THE COURT OF VERDERERS

THE ancient Court of Verderers—the oldest in this country with the exception of that of the Coroner—was to be reconstituted so as "better to represent the interests of the commoners." The old Court had represented both Crown and commoner alike, and assisted the Crown ably in maintaining and preserving order in the Forest. A verderer too, who was elected for life by the full county, took an oath of allegiance to the Crown. This did not at all suit the book of the promoters of the Act of 1877, whose object it was to set up a body which should override and oppose the Crown, and gain full power over the Forest, in favour of the commoners alone. The number of verderers was increased from four to six—they were to be elected on a popular basis by a constituency consisting of the owners of rights of common, and by persons holding the parliamentary franchise for a property lying in a parish any part of which lay within the Forest.

This at the time just nicely covered the commoners, and they alone were to have a hold, by an election held in rotation every two years, over the Court that had hitherto dealt solely with the Forest management.

These elections are, I believe, the only ones left where open voting prevails.

This ingeniously devised constituency was entirely upset by the revision and lowering of the franchise, which took place in 1885. By that alteration there became entitled to vote at a parliamentary election, and consequently at that of a verderer, an enormous number of persons who were not qualified by the Act of 1877. In fact, if a verderers' election were to arouse keen interest and the whole constituency recorded its vote, the commoners' vote, taken by itself, would be completely swamped by that of the other residents in and around the Forest who have no common rights at all! But, as a matter of fact, there have only been two contested elections, and hardly anyone but those interested in commoners' questions cared to record their votes, the polls being very small ones, and the interest taken in them very limited.

The powers of the verderers were increased in several respects by the New Forest Act, 1877, under which it is now governed, but at the same time they are not very clearly defined.

Some clauses of the Act are overridden by others, and altogether it is a clumsily drafted affair, difficult to understand, although many counsels' opinions have been called in to endeavour to arrive at an interpretation on various points, and one or two lawsuits have resulted. Altogether this Act has cost a great deal of money to interpret.

So impossible of administration was it that two years later the New Forest Act of 1879 had to be passed in order to enable the new authority over commoners' rights to escape the responsibility of enforcing the terms of the register of those rights, which was compiled in 1854 and regarded as so great a safeguard to them.

By the terms of this Act the verderers were authorised to issue licences to non-commoners to depasture their cattle in the Forest in contravention of the Forest laws, which was rather an admission of weakness in the new régime.

The ancient oath of the verderer, which dated back to Norman times and rather resembled the the oath of allegiance taken by a member of the House of Commons, was abolished, so that the members of the new Court should be troubled by no scruples when they attacked the interests of the Crown.

A new and nondescript member of the Court was added, who was called the "Official Verderer." He is nominated by the Crown, which thereby gains a solitary representative in the Court, provided that the Official Verderer takes the view that he is in any way pledged to support the Crown. But his duties are entirely undefined—except that he is to act as the Chairman of the Court. Some Official Verderers have interpreted their obligations in one way—others in quite a different manner. Those who consider themselves bound to support Crown interests and authority, and to confer on such matters with the departments in charge of the Forest—still in charge of and wholly responsible therefore to the public, in spite of the Act of 1877—usually have found themselves in a minority of one, as against six other verderers who regarded no interests but those of their constituents, the commoners. And this was the natural and inevitable consequence of the reconstitution of the Court.

CHAPTER V

MAKING A START

In this condition—with novel experiments in legislation on every hand, and with all the ill-feelings and suspicions on both sides, engendered by so prolonged and bitter a contest as had been raging for the previous ten years—I found the Forest when I arrived in February 1880.

I was perfectly ignorant of all that had been going on: marvellous as it seemed to my new neighbours, I had actually never heard of the "New Forest Question." I knew nothing whatever of the storms that had been raging, or why there should have been any storms at all! I found myself terribly ill-informed, and set to work to study the various questions.

Beginning with recent occurrences, and reading backwards, I studied the whole of the evidence given before the Committee of the House of Commons in 1875, and then examined the outcome thereof in the form of the Act of 1877. Gradually I extended my readings and study of correspondence, till I reached that best and most valuable history of the Forest, the Report in 1789 of the Committee appointed to inquire into all the Woods, Forests, and Land Revenue of the Crown.

No one who desires to master all the disputes and discussions of the last 120 years should fail to study this most excellent and comprehensive report, which deals in measured judicial language with the troubles arising from the various conflicting interests, which were just the same in those days as they are now. A first-rate map, on a large scale, known as "Driver's Survey," formed one of the appendices to the Act.

One factor only is left out—the new one, viz., the great and increasing interest now taken in the amenities of the New Forest by the public at large. It is this new point in the argument that will ultimately—nay even now has—become the dominant feature of the whole question.

While I had plenty to read up, and all the regular business of the office to transact, I had also to learn to find my way about the Forest, and to see for myself all that was going on. To this end I imported a couple of thoroughbred four-year-olds likely to make hunters, and set to work with a pocket map to find my way from place to place. For I always found that if I had worked my way by map or plan it was never forgotten, but the route that was shown me by a companion was likely enough to slip out of my head—alone, with a map, is the way to learn a new country.

I had a sad double reverse in the first month of my office by the almost simultaneous deaths of my first assistant, William Reed, who had served the Crown for over thirty years, and not only knew every stick and stone in the Forest, but also had at his fingers ends all the customs and habits of the residents, and in most cases the character and antecedents of every one of them. The loss of this mine of information was irreparable; and Harry Cooper, who died in the same week, was by far the best and most capable of the Forest keepers. He was the son of George Cooper, keeper of Boldrewood Walk since the old deer removal days and before them; he was a well educated, highly trained man, as was shown by the diary and notes which he left behind. The loss of these two men was a great blow, and it must have taken me two years at least to pick up what they could have told me in a month.

In addition to this, my second assistant, John Holloway, who had some forty years' service in the Forest, had become very infirm, had in fact tendered his resignation, and only consented to carry on his duties in view of the awkward position in which I found myself placed; for though I often got excellent advice from him he was not able to get about the Forest with me to any extent, and he lived eight miles away. In short, I had to set to work to find out everything for myself, and very hard work it was—for I found it too dangerous to go outside my staff for information, after I made the discovery that there were among the principal residents some who were not at all above taking advantage of the difficulties of my position in order to gain for themselves small concessions, and endeavoured to persuade me that it was in accordance with Forest customs that they should thus profit by my ignorance.

Altogether I found that in the disturbed state of local feeling it was better to trust nobody, and the first two or three years in the Forest were hard ones for me. In addition to this I had hardly reorganised my staff and got it into working order when my chief—Mr. James Kenneth Howard—died, and I lost a most kindly amiable friend, as well as a good guide. He was succeeded by Sir Henry—afterwards Lord—Loch, a most able administrator, who came from the Governorship of the Isle of Man to the Commissionership of Woods, but he only remained with us a couple of years, and then went as Governor to Cape Colony.

He was, however, long enough connected with the New Forest to introduce and pass the New Forest Highways Act, 1883—a most valuable and necessary piece of legislation.

The position of the New Forest roads, particularly the main roads, was so bad as to be almost unique. Prior to the year 1866, the greater part of the New Forest was extra-parochial. There were no rates; no one was liable to maintain any roads. The Crown did in the way of repairs whatever was deemed necessary for the mere haulage of timber. The main roads were in the hands of turnpike trusts for limited periods of years, and so long as the trusts continued the roads were well maintained.

In 1866 an Act for the relief of the poor was brought in, to deal with these extra-parochial tracts. They were constituted into townships, and it was intended that all the property within them should contribute to all rural rates, as in rural parishes, the Crown, though not liable to rates, consenting to give an "*ex gratia* donation in ease of rates," based on assessment and rateable values as in the case of other properties.

A certain section of the residents of the New Forest, with what they imagined to be astuteness, got up an opposition to the Bill, and succeeded in getting it so modified that, while the relief of the poor was provided for, everything in the shape of highway maintenance was struck out.

The idea of these agitators was that the Crown would be compelled for its own sake to maintain the roads for them. Nothing of the sort happened. The Treasury, having consented to a contribution for the local poor rates, was far less inclined than before to expend additional money on local interests. So the roads were not repaired at all except just so much as to enable timber to be carted. Worst of all, as the turnpike trusts expired by the effluxion of time, the main roads became impassable, and the greater part of the New Forest was rapidly becoming impossible for wheeled traffic. In other districts it was provided that as the turnpike trusts expired the maintenance of the road should fall on the rates. But here, in the New Forest, it had been contrived that there should be no rates for it to fall on. These great turnpike roads became derelict. No one was responsible, and the country suffered greatly. Surely such a condition of things could never have happened except in the New Forest. Nothing but an Act of Parliament would suffice to get it out of the muddle.

In introducing his Bill, Sir Henry Loch had careful regard to the element in the Forest that was so hostile to all or any proposals emanating from the Crown, and induced the Treasury to allow him to make a liberal offer with a view to obtaining a settlement of the matter, without too strict a regard to Crown interests. So he proposed to the various local highway boards that all the roads should be placed in good order by the Crown, and certain new ones made, and that the County Surveyor should be appointed arbitrator to decide whether the work was properly done.

Most of the boards accepted this offer, and the Act was passed. We set to work, and in about two years we had good roads and new roads over three-fourths of the Forest. But alas! on the western side, nothing would induce the rural board to come to terms, led as they were by a gentleman whose hostility to all Crown action was very marked.

As the two principal main roads passed for part of their course through this district, they could only be repaired up to the boundary thereof, and through communication was impossible. The matter grew to be a considerable scandal. A man was upset in his cart owing to the condition of the road, and killed on the spot. Luckily the *Deus ex machina* arose in the form of the County Councils, which at that time were constituted. At the very first meeting of the Hants County Council this scandal was brought up for discussion. The representative of the obstructive District Council attempted to carry on his old line of argument, and to defend the action which he had advised his Council to adopt. He met with a short shrift. The County Council that day took the main roads into its hands, and made a proposal to the Crown to take over their maintenance on far more liberal terms than those which the Crown had already offered to give. Needless to say, with two authoritative bodies involved free from petty local prejudice, the matter was speedily settled, and with it the vexed question of New Forest roads. The system was complete. All existing roads were repaired, and their maintenance was settled. The Crown accepted all, and more than all, the obligations of a liberal landowner, governing the largest property of the district, and at last I was able to contemplate "something attempted, something done," to alleviate one, at any rate, of the vexed questions of the locality, and to achieve a genuine practical improvement.

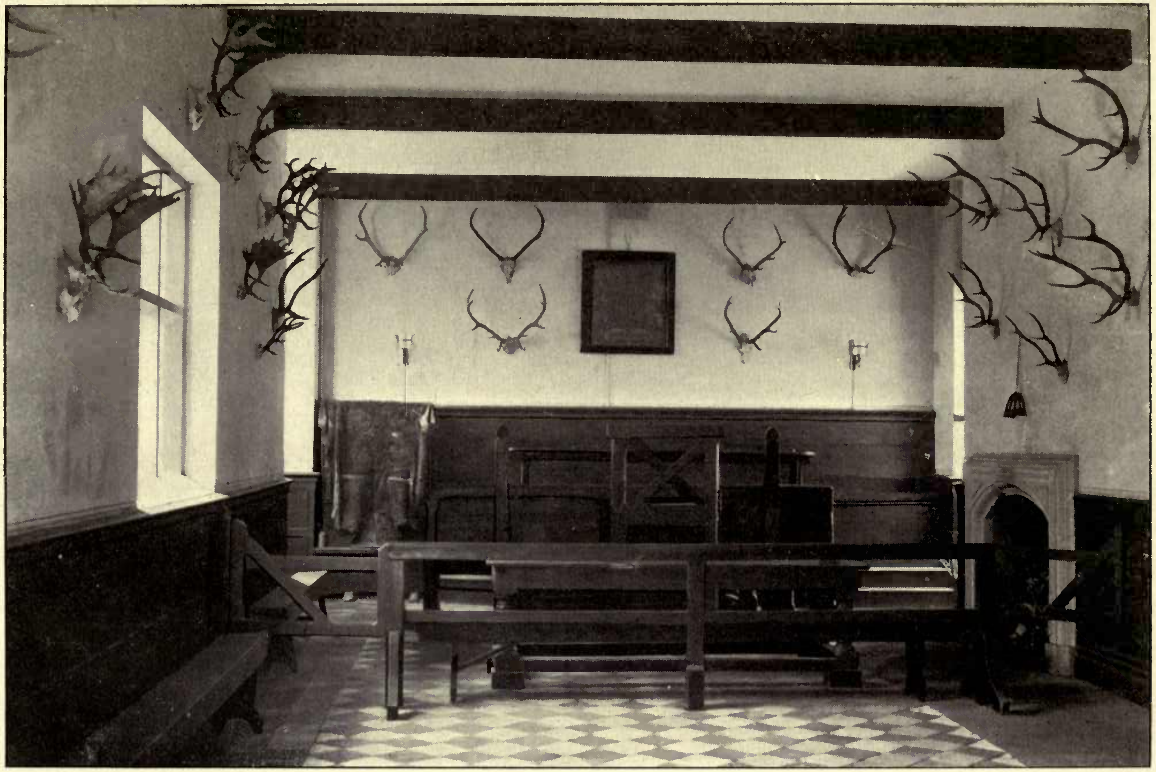
CHAPTER VI

SOME VERDERERS, OLD AND NEW

DURING these years the newly constituted Verderers' Court, having obtained the assistance of an additional Act of Parliament to lighten its responsibilities, was beginning to find its legs and form its policy.

By the Act of 1877, each of the then existing verderers appointed under the ancient laws was entitled to retain his seat on the new court if he chose to do so. Only two of the number elected to continue to act. The remainder of the court was elected in manner prescribed, and naturally was formed from the ranks of those who had been the bitterest opponents of the Crown and at the same time the keenest supporters of the interests of the commoners. The clerk of the court was newly appointed, and had no experience of its work. For Official Verderer Mr. Sclater Booth, a distinguished member of the Conservative Government, was nominated, and he filled the position with complete impartiality and dignity.

The two verderers of the ancient régime who remained at their posts were Sir Edward Hulse and Sir Henry Paulet. Of Sir Edward Hulse I may say, *vidi tantum.* He was already in failing health when I met him, and only attended a few meetings of the new court. As soon as it might be said to be fairly on its legs, Sir Edward retired. He was a fine specimen of the old school of country gentlemen, and of unimpeachable fairness in his dealings between Crown and commoner, and with all men besides. Sir Henry Paulet's was a remarkable, if slightly eccentric, personality. He was very well known and respected in all circles in and around the Forest. A keen sportsman, and chairman of the Hunt Club, he was also a regular shooter in the Forest of many years' experience. His appearance on these occasions was remarkable. He was very tall, and something rugged in appearance. He invariably wore his shirt and coat sleeves rolled up above his elbows. Putties were not then in general use in this country, so Sir Henry used as substitutes ordinary blue stable bandages. His shooting-coat appeared to be about the same age as himself, and was hung about with queer pockets, dog whistles, dog whips, &c. Altogether the the *tout ensemble* was such that it really was not to be surprised at that when a certain timid



The Verderer's Hall, King's House.

young lady, walking with her governess in the Forest, came suddenly upon the worthy Baronet, they became so alarmed, that they fairly took to their heels, and never paused till they reached home, and described the wild man they had met in the woods. Of course a shout of laughter arose, for their description was unmistakable. But a more kindly, good-hearted gentleman than Sir Henry never existed, in spite of appearances.

Sir Henry was always very friendly to me, and gave me much good advice on which I knew I might rely, for his sense of justice and impartiality was very strong. He had, moreover, having worked hand-in-hand with the Crown authorities for many years, a strong feeling as to the duty of the verderers to support the Crown and its authority rather than to undermine it. While he presided over the court, as in the absence of the Official Verderer he frequently did, one was perfectly certain that even-handed justice would be dealt out whether it was the Crown or a humble commoner constituent that was concerned with the matter.

Sir Henry had some rather curious ideas about shooting. His estate at Little Testwood was only small, but he liked to rear a certain number of pheasants there. But since he had so little ground to shoot them on, he always began on October 1st, and in my first year he invited me to come to luncheon with him and shoot the pheasants afterwards. We sallied forth—only the two of us—Sir Henry with his bandages and bare arms, and two large and fat retriever dogs, one brown, the other black.

The pheasants were mostly in turnips, and the sport not of the highest class, but I have seldom laughed so much in an afternoon's shooting. At every shot both dogs invariably ran in, and as invariably Sir Henry gave them the contents of his remaining barrel at a range far shorter than I have ever seen dogs shot for correctional purposes before. When they ran in to my shot, he gave them both barrels, impartially, right and left. The dogs, which certainly had the most curly and woolly coats imaginable, never seemed to mind. Neither of them ever howled or ceased to run in. I think he hit them quite often, but the whole proceeding was irresistibly comical, and I could not help thinking that if only they could be sold by the pound, what with the fat and the thick coats and the enormous amount of lead that they must have accumulated in their hindquarters, these dogs would have a value surpassing that of the most valuable retrievers that ever ran at trials.

Sir Henry Paulet died in 1886, which severed the last link between the ancient Court of Verderers with all its historical associations and the new and totally different court created in 1877.

As these older members passed away, their places were filled by co-option from the ranks of the party which had conducted the bitter campaign against the Crown from which the new court resulted. The character of the court, on which Sir Henry Paulet had exercised a wise and restraining influence, became much altered, and it was rapidly degenerating into little more than a committee of commoners, with no object in view but to enhance their rights and attack and impair those of the Crown.

While this policy might commend itself to those who only desired to see the common rights so exaggerated that they absorbed the whole Forest, it completely destroyed the status of this ancient and venerable court, and wiped out its judicial position. It was inconceivable that cases should be brought before a court nominally a court of justice, when the members of that court ceased not to proclaim on every house-top that they were pledged to support one interest, and one only.

So after several honest attempts to give the verderers a chance to keep up the jurisdiction of the court, and to deal impartially with all cases brought before it, the practice fell into desuetude, and it is now a long time since a case was brought before the verderers to deal with judicially, save only minor offences, under their own bye-laws.

Not long after the death of the last of the old verderers, Lord Basing retired from the position of Official Verderer. He made no secret at all—to me at least—of his decision that he could no longer continue to hold the position of Crown representative on the Verderers' Court after they had adopted a policy of attacking Crown interests and undermining Crown authority on every possible plea.

There was no little difficulty in filling up the vacancy caused by Lord Basing's resignation, which, indeed, had been long decided upon, as was matter of common knowledge for about two years.

Finally, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, a dearly loved relative of my own, consented to step into the breach and accept the position. A more unfortunate decision was never arrived at. Lord Montagu was of all the men in the world the last that should have taken up this burden. A man at once the most amiable and high-minded of English gentlemen, he had, as many a time he told me, in our conversations on the impending retirement of Lord Basing, every disqualification for the post he often refused and finally was over-persuaded to assume.

He was, to begin with, already an elected member of the new court. He was also the largest owner of rights of common in New Forest, and thus deeply interested in the business side of the management of Forest politics. In the case of such a man as Lord Montagu this mattered but little to those who knew him intimately; but to the rest of the world it only appeared that all men—even peers of the realm—were very human, and that the chance of controlling favourably his own and his friends' interests on the Court of Verderers would appeal to the practical view of an able man of affairs. But besides this Lord Montagu had been, as Lord Henry Scott, M.P. for South Hants, one of the leading spirits in the attack on the Crown's ownership of the Forest in 1875. His colleagues and intimate associates were gradually obtaining the control of the court they at that time strove to establish, and the overpowering loyalty of Lord Montagu's disposition almost forbade him to take any view hostile to theirs, although he had become nominally the guardian of the very interests which they—and indeed he himself—had jointly attacked for so many years.

Of course there could be only one ending to this, and it came speedily. In one year's time Lord Montagu resigned the position of Official Verderer. He never ought to have accepted it. So he said time and again, and the task he essayed was too difficult a one for any man to undertake.

Perhaps the best compliment paid to Lord Montagu came from my official chief at that period, Mr. George Culley, C.B., who had been altogether outside the New Forest controversies, and knew Lord Montagu personally only very slightly. He was duly informed by the Treasury of the appointment as Official Verderer of Lord Montagu in lieu of Lord Basing, and naturally was a little taken aback.

But in his reply (I quote from memory) he said "that the appointment to that position of the largest owner of common rights, who was also a most active supporter of those rights as against the Crown, would have created an impossible situation in the case of any person other than Lord Montagu, in whose appointment he cordially acquiesced."

Lord Montagu was succeeded by the Right Hon. Evelyn Ashley, who became chairman of the court just at the time when the attitude of the verderers had become most uncompromising.

Point after point was being raised by which it was sought to oust the jurisdiction of the Crown and to thwart its management. At last the doctrine was formulated that, although the Forest was the property of the Crown, and although its management was vested in the Office of Works as servants of the Crown, yet the interests of the commoners were such that nothing might be done by the Crown or any person thereby authorised which could affect even technically one single blade of glass that the animal of a commoner might possibly have eaten if it came that way!

This was, of course, a *reductio ad absurdum.* Under this theory no man might ride a shod horse across the waste, nor carry a stick with a ferule on it. There was no remedy—for it was admitted that by no possibility could the verderers give a consent to any act which, they sought to contend, was a trespass against the actual rights of the commoners.

Obviously such an absurdity did not really exist, and the law officers ere long gave a decided opinion that, although the Crown or its nominees might not do any serious or even tangible injury to the rights of any commoner as *de facto* exercised, yet that small or technical damage which did not actually, though technically it might, injure the genuine interest of such a commoner, was perfectly within the bounds of the Crown's authority.

The verderers had, however, endeavoured, on the plea of "technical damage," to restrain such things as the placing of a telephone pole on the waste, arguing that on the few inches of land it occupied there might have been some blades of grass. Making of holes on a golf green—four inches in diameter—and the mowing of a cricket pitch fell under the same ban, and all had to be carried out in the teeth of the opposition of the court.

Finally matters culminated in a lawsuit as to whether the Crown, when felling or selling timber, had the right (which it had exercised from time immemorial) to cut it and convert on the open Forest, sometimes perhaps depositing temporarily a heap of sawdust caused by the operation.

A considerable array of counsel appeared on both sides, with piles of arguments dating from Magna Charta at the least. There was every prospect of a case dealing with innumerable historical details and lasting many days, but at the suggestion of one of the judges trying the case (which, as he truly pointed out, affected an alleged damage that after all could not amount to £5!) a compromise was attempted. It took a long time to bring this about, and the law officers were changed at least once during the negotiations, but at last a settlement was effected which, after some little trouble, has worked well enough, and I do not think anyone, of late years, has desired to revive or to hear any more of the "sawing engine case." It is to be hoped that, with the various changes of time, the feelings which led to it have become greatly modified.

One good effect, however, was produced; compromised as it was, this miserable case led to the expenditure of a considerable sum by each side.

The amount which the verderers had to pay used up nearly all the capital with which they had been started under the Act of 1877, to hold on behalf of the commoners. There was no little disgust among that body when they heard that their capital had vanished. But the lack of funds to fight with had a wonderfully peacemaking effect, and was most serviceable in keeping the litigious section of the verderers out of court—for a time at any rate.

CHAPTER VII

MY WORK, MY STAFF, AND MY CHIEFS

One of the first things I had to do was to set to work to reorganise my staff. I was allowed three assistants, one for each district of the Forest, and, as I have said, I lost two of them in the first year of office. I feared to go outside the department and import strangers at a time when I was so ignorant myself and so incapable of teaching others. I was able, however, to fill the vacancies by promotions in my own office. These men were truly assistants to me, and without their aid it would be impossible to carry on the work over a large tract like the Forest, especially for one who had in addition the charge of four other forests or large woodlands, involving in each case a journey by train, and a long day—often two days—spent away from home.

I looked to my assistants to carry out all the details of the various work we set out—first for the whole year, and again month by month as the year progressed.

At the commencement of the year it would be settled exactly which sections of the various plantations should be thinned or cut altogether, and where the planting was to be done. A review was taken of all the draining that required cleaning or increasing. What sections of fencing would have to be done, and how many new gates were wanted. What cottages or lodges should be repaired, and tender obtained for the work. Having these returns from each of the three districts, with estimates, moreover, of the amount of produce that could be realised from the various operations, and the value thereof, we set to work to compile the totals of the three districts, and to ascertain how much of the projected work could be carried out with due regard to economy and to the amount the Forest seemed likely to earn. Of course we always wanted to spend more money than we were likely to get. The size of the Forest and its innumerable roads and rides would absorb any amount of expenditure, and dealing with them always seemed like pouring money into a sack with a hole in it. On the whole, I am bound to say that I was well treated in this respect, and was not often refused the grant of any money that I deemed it reasonable to ask for. Especially I was allowed to put in order and improve the bad cottages.

Once these figures were finally settled, and the exact amount decided that was to be spent, or obtained, from each section of plantation or of open Forest, the routine work was carried out by my assistants, and very ably they did it. Each month they produced the several pay lists and sale books showing exactly what wages were due to each man, and what money had been obtained from the sales of minor produce, such as fern, faggots and the like, and I then handed over the cash that was due to each set of labourers. Pay day, once a month, was always a very busy day.

In addition, I had to be constantly up and down in the Forest giving my personal attention to details I did not care to leave to any other person, such as the marking of any good timber that was rather more than mere routine thinning. The repairs and improvements to cottages were matters that I always kept under my personal superintendence. I am bound to say that when I came to the Forest in 1880, I found most of the labourers' cottages in a very deplorable condition. The accommodation was what we all term now a scandal. It was quite normal in those days, except on very well managed estates.

How the fine fellows that fought our wars in the Peninsula, and in the Crimea, could have been reared in such miserable overcroweded tenements is really incomprehensible. It could only have been that the fittest alone survived the hardships of their bringing up, and that men who had endured such things could be destroyed by nothing short of fire-arms.

I set to work at once to raise the standard of these dwellings. It is not easy to get money, when it shows no increase of income, to be expended by the Treasury, and in those days I had no Rural District Bye-laws and no Housing and Town Planning Act to wave in the face of Whitehall as an indication of what were considered the necessary conditions for a labourer's dwelling.

Luckily, however, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had recently laid down a rule as to the minimum accommodation for a labourer's cottage. Nor does it at all err on the side of extravagance.

Practically, it is to the effect that no cottage shall comprise less than a good kitchen and living room—if not indeed a kitchen *and* an independent wash-house, and above stairs "three separate bed rooms which do not communicate with one another."

With this trump card up my sleeve, and with the hearty backing of Sir Henry Loch, I introduced an estimate for the improvement of three cottages, and it passed muster—for very shame they could not refuse—with the authorities of Whitehall. What has once been agreed to in the Civil Service constitutes a precedent which, as a rule, passes with but little inquiry in future, and so I quietly introduced into my estimates plans for the improvement and repair of about three different cottages year by year, dealing first with those that harboured the longest families, and so on in succession. It took some years to get through the list, but many years before I left the New Forest I had the satisfaction of knowing that all our employees were housed in cottages that would bear any reasonable test of inspection, and were, year by year, kept in good order; and I am bound to say that, after the first, expenditure incurred on the above lines was never cavilled at in Whitehall, provided that the necessity for it was clearly explained.

All these estimates were, of course, laid before, and approved of by, my chief, the Commissioner in charge of New Forest, and I was always glad when he found time to come down and see for himself what I proposed to do. Of course, without his backing and approval my figures had no chance of passing the Treasury, and by bearing in mind that "*Chi va piano va sano*," and by never putting forward on my own initiative schemes so large as to frighten those apprehensive birds that frequent Whitehall, I was able generally to get all my estimates through.

The successor to Sir Henry Loch in the Commissionership of Woods was Mr. George Culley, C.B., a gentleman who owned considerable property in Northumberland, and had already done service under the Local Government Board.

A more kindly, considerate, and withal capable chief no Civil Servant has ever had to serve under. Mr. Culley had considerable tact, but also very considerable firmness in dealing with the troubles and disputes so rife in New Forest, and he did very much to allay them. It was only when the verderers had finally made up their minds to go to law with the Crown that he was driven to accept battle.

Mr. Culley had a very clear knowledge of estate management generally, and was always happy on the back of a nice hack looking over the woods and property. He was able to pass in review, in a short visit, the conditions and main points of the woods he passed through, and to give a sound and considered opinion when he got home as to what was the proper course, quite regardless of what my view might be, but always kindly and gentle in explaining why he had formed a different opinion from myself.

Though not particularly like a bishop, Mr. Culley would have rivalled any bishop that ever dwelt in a palace in that he was "given to hospitality" in a marked degree. He never allowed me to come to London, as I very frequently had to do, without insisting on my dining with him, generally at the Oxford and Cambridge Club (the cellar there is world-famous). Not unfrequently he collected very pleasant small bachelor parties on such occasions. Some of these have been the pleasantest among my reminiscences. It was at one of these small parties that I first met Sir Edward Grey (who was a ward of Mr. Culley's) when quite a young man. I well recollect our host's remark to me, when we were talking over business after the others had gone away—when he said, referring to his late ward, "That young man is sure to go to the top of the tree." He could hardly have foreseen the time when the name of Sir Edward Grey would become a household word in every capital of Europe. Mr. Culley died when of no great age. I always thought his life was shortened by the strenuous work he did at the time of the Committee of the House of Commons which sat in the sessions of 1889–90. His grasp of the whole subject was marvellous. The multitude of figures, schedules, returns, and Acts of

Parliament that he had at his fingers' ends was endless; but Mr. Culley kept mastery of it all, and during all the early days of the Committee met their every point, and, by his frankness in producing and anticipating every possible return or figure that could be asked for, became the friend and ally of the Committee instead of an hostile witness, as he was regarded when he first entered the witness chair.

This Committee originated partly in a mare's nest. There had just been a considerable scandal with regard to the Board of Works, and certain wiseacres had jumped to the conclusion that something of the sort was to be unearthed with respect to the office of Woods, especially with regard to the management of the London property, from which most of the income is derived.

In about two sittings the whole of this idea was exploded. Mr. Culley so openly produced every return, document, or account, that, as far as those matters were concerned, the Committee had everything in their hands, and had nothing left to inquire into.

It was immensely to the credit of Sir John Fowler, afterwards Lord Wolverhampton, that directly he found that the theory of maladministration, with which the Committee was at first imbued, was an erroneous one, he completely altered his tone and bearing, and for the greater part of two sessions worked cordially and in a friendly manner with all those connected with the Office of Woods who could give him any information to make a complete and thorough investigation into the whole management of the land revenue; and in all this he met with the heartiest support from all concerned.

Naturally the report of the Committee gave the Department of Woods no cause for complaint.

I always recollect with pleasure and amusement Mr. Culley's kindly old-fashioned peculiarities. He never would come from London to visit me without bringing with him a present of a little parcel of the best and freshest fish to be had that day from Groves', whether we wanted it or not.

He had made it a standing rule that he *always* desired to have an interview with me in London on the Monday in Derby week, just in case we might have anything to discuss or arrange! And on those occasions he invariably gave me the number of the box he had taken in the Grand Stand at Ascot on the occasion of that great summer festival, held annually on the lands under the charge of the Office of Woods; and he was disappointed if I did not pay him my respects there. Lastly—he never possessed any thick boots!—and this always caused me regrets whenever it was necessary for him to go on foot through any wet woodlands where work was going on which he wanted to inspect. But he went there just the same, in spite of all I could say.

Mr. Culley was succeeded as Commissioner of Woods by Sir Edward Stafford Howard, K.C.B., though he had not then attained to his present rank and titles. Sir Stafford is fortunately still amongst us, so I cannot recount our transactions, or relate anecdotes which might occur to me, actually as it were to his face. Mr. Howard, like his two predecessors, encountered at the outset a tempestuous time. The verderers had actually formulated their position as they desired to establish it, with regard to what was practically the ownership of the Forest. The lawsuit they were promoting was already in the list, and Mr. Howard had to take charge of the proceedings connected with that suit when he was comparatively new to office.

Whatever could be done by conciliation and kindly feeling, coupled with the most indefatigable pains, to bring about a better state of things between the Crown and the verderers (claiming to represent the commoners), was done without sparing of himself by Mr. Howard. And his equanimity and patience when his cordial advances met with little response, or were countered by one or other section of the opposition, were certainly beyond all praise. As an American Ambassador once said of a distinguished leader of the Tory party, "He had often heard of the milk of human kindness, but never before had he seen the cow." I often used to think of that saying, when I fancied that a little stimulant in the milk would make it have better effect.

Sir Stafford and I worked together for some twenty years with much contentment and good friendship, and (I hope) mutual self-esteem. Of all that he did in the matter of promoting Forestry and Forest Protection I will speak later on. It deserves a chapter to itself.

I found the condition of affairs as regards the Forest keepers and the preservation of game and of all wild fauna such as I conceived a Royal Forest ought to be stocked with, was in a very bad state.

In the Deer Removal Act it was set forth that, with the abolition of the deer, the necessity for so great a number of keepers would cease—there were then thirteen head keepers, so this was obviously the case—and that the lodges occupied by these thirteen men, or some of them, might be leased by the Crown on certain conditions.

In this way arose such mansions—built on the desirable sites of some of the keepers' lodges—as Malwood Lodge, built by Sir William Harcourt; Bramble Hill Lodge; Whitley Ridge, Rhinefield, and Lady Cross Lodges. The tendency of the tenant, as one succeeded another, has been to overbuild, and some of these houses have rather outgrown their sites. But they represent valuable property, all of which reverts to the Crown at the expiration of the lease, and they are all very lovely residences.

But as the lodges went, so also did the keepers, regardless of the necessity for the protection of the Forest. Without doubt, soon after the Deer Removal Act was seen to be a failure, and long before the Report of the Lords' Committee of 1868, it had come to be looked on as a foregone conclusion that disafforestation was to overtake the New Forest, as it had done nearly all the other forests of England. In those circumstances the area of the Crown property would have been much reduced, its character would have been materially altered, and a much smaller staff would have been required. And so, in anticipation of all this, the Office of Woods was gradually letting the old out-door staff slip away.

When I came to the Forest there were but four responsible keepers left. As their colleagues had died or retired, under keepers were appointed in their places. These men were under no supervision but that of the Deputy Surveyor, and, as they were as a rule merely promoted labourers, they were not the class of man to be allowed to act independently. No definite orders had ever been given to them, and they seemed to think that so long as they looked after the preservation of foxes and pheasants, and kept a mild check on poaching, generally all the rest might be allowed to slide. Rabbits were supposed to be kept down by the keepers in the plantations, but they never accounted for them when killed, and everything in the shape of rare birds that they could get hold of they regarded as perquisites. With some trouble I discovered the Southampton bird-stuffer who was in the habit of regularly paying them 3*s.* 6*d.* per head for all kingfishers he could get. Everything in the shape of a bird of prey was, of course, looked upon as vermin, killed, and if possible sold. Had it not been for this laxity, the honey buzzard might have continued to be a far more regular breeder in the Forest than I have found it to be.

The four remaining head keepers, though they had far higher pay and better houses than the under keepers, had in charge only one of the thirteen "walks," or keepers' beats, in the Forest. They had no authority over the under keepers, who each had a similar "walk" which he considered his own, free of supervision.

Everything was in a state of chaos, and I set to work to clear out what was verily an Augean Stable. First of all, I had to persuade the Treasury to give me one other head keeper at a somewhat lower salary than the four existing ones. Each of these, and they were all excellent men, continued at their existing wage, but their places were each cut down to the limit I had decided on, as they fell vacant, and new men were appointed at what was quite an ample wage. I divided the Forest into five districts, containing so many "walks" each, and placed each of my five men in charge of one, with twelve under keepers among them. Each man had so many under keepers under his authority, and these men had no defined districts, to the boundaries of which they confined their energies as before, but had to attend to whatever duties were set them in any part of the district of the head keeper wherever he chose to send them. He was entirely responsible for their good work, and was supported heartily if he had any well founded complaint to make against any of his subordinates.

Full instructions for all the keepers were carefully drawn out; each man had his printed and signed copy, and realised that a deliberate breach of those instructions meant instant dismissal. In compiling this list of rules and orders, I had in view the object of preserving all the fauna of the Forest of every kind—not merely, as gamekeepers are apt to think, game birds and ground game only. In a great wild National Park, where for many reasons very high preservation of game is neither possible nor desirable, there is room for every kind of wild animal, and I had to make my men understand that I desired the same care taken of the nest of a buzzard or a fern owl as of a pheasant. As to these instructions, I took the advice of such able sportsmen and naturalists as the late Lord Lilford and Professor Alfred Newton. Special rules were made as to particular care being taken of the rarer birds likely to occur, and orders were given that every instance of a strange visitor was to be reported to the Deputy Surveyor at once. And there was to be no killing of any birds save a few scheduled ones. All bird's-nesting was to be rigidly prevented. Of course these were rather novel ideas to some of the men, but, after a change or two had been made among them, they all settled down well to their work, and in some cases became keen and intelligent observers of wild life.

The old-fashioned head keepers, when in the employ of the Lord Warden of the Forest—an office which fell into abeyance at the death of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge in 1850—were rather a different class of men to those now fulfilling what is left of their duties. They drew very good salaries and had good lodges (so have the head keepers now), and had in the days of the deer very responsible duties to perform, and a good deal of money passed through their hands. The Lord Warden provided a uniform: green coat, gold-laced hat, white breeches and top boots. Everybody always rode about the Forest in those days and until recently. Even the under keepers always had their rough pony to get about upon. But the bicycle has done much to knock minor horsemanship on the head. In my time we found horses best, if we really needed to get about in the Forest in all conditions and to all remote places.

Altogether the Forest keeper of former days was apt to be somewhat of a personage, and many of them were much respected and looked up to locally.

Some of them succeeded to their offices from father to son for generations. Most people now living in the Forest recollect George Bumstead, keeper of Ashley Walk and district, and, apart from his abnormal proportions, quite the modern prototype of the old-fashioned highly respected New Forest "groom-keeper," as they were called in old days in contradistinction to the "master keeper," or gentleman of high repute, who held appointment by royal favour as governors of sundry "walks."

In 1789 Anthony Bumstead, groom-keeper of Ashley Walk, gave his (recorded) evidence before the Commission of that year to the effect, *inter alia*, that he was appointed to that position in 1763. Whether he succeeded a forebear or not, I have no record, but it is certain that George Bumstead succeeded his father and grandfather as keeper of Ashley Walk, and we may fairly conclude that there was an unbroken succession from 1763 up to the date of George Bumstead's death about 1890—a record in one family of not far from 130 years.

So again, William Cooper, keeper of Eyeworth Walk, comes before the same Commission in 1789 and says that he had been appointed some fifteen years before that date. Whether he was the father or grandfather of George Cooper of whom I spoke above, I am not sure; but the latter succeeded as keeper of Boldrewood Walk, and died at a considerable age about 1878. He again was succeeded by his son Harry, who survived to my time, and died in 1880. George Cooper was quite one of the distinguished personalities of the Forest.

These men were among the last of that rather curious type that lived and throve on the New Forest for centuries. Wholly deer-keepers, they were also bailiffs, revenue collectors, and above all sportsmen; and on their efforts and never-failing goodwill depended all the sport and enjoyments of the whole Forest. Perhaps old James Coles, about the last of the type, expressed their sentiments very well to me when, after a conversation as to the hunting and the shooting, and incidentally the proposed planting of trees in the plantations, and the necessary extermination of rabbits, he burst out with, "Rabbits, sir! Why rabbits is the bread of life for everythink!" I ruminated on that saying, and, taking into account all the interests I had to serve, made up my mind that when I planted I would also buy wire-netting. I have found this both a preservative and a keeper of peace—James Coles's saying had a good deal to commend it as far as New Forest, with an abundance of foxes therein, is concerned.

A strong staff of keepers—or whatever you like to call them—is a necessity in the New

Forest, apart altogether from any questions of preservation of game or of sport. They are the custodians who do all the policing of the public property, and their duties are manifold. The Gypsy population—at some seasons very numerous and often very lawless—almost require a staff to themselves. For many reasons it has not been found practicable to banish them altogether from a Forest that is practically open to all His Majesty's subjects; but there is a code of rules for the regulation of their camps and other proceedings, and a great deal of the time of the keepers is spent in enforcing those rules and checking the depredations of these semi-savages. Again, the very fact that the Forest is open to all the public needs a staff of men to guard against advantage being taken of this liberty. Were it not for the watchers employed, there would be endless damage done by cutting of trees, stealing of timber and of any portable property that is worth money.

The keepers also are in charge of the gravel and sandpits which are all over the open Forest. They measure the gravel dug; regulate, under the direction of the Deputy Surveyor or his assistants, the ground where the gravel is to be dug; and render their accounts to the various Highway Boards or other purchasers of gravel. Thus

New Forest Ponies.

a New Forest keeper is now, and always has been, something very different from an ordinary gamekeeper, and, now that their numbers are so reduced, they have as much work to do as it is fair to ask anyone to perform.

In the old days, when there was a great head of deer in the Forest, the keepers had, no doubt, a great deal to do in looking after them. But they were thirteen in number—one for each walk, and each of them had a man under him, an assistant who was known as the "browser," one of his principal duties being to cut the holly, ivy, and similar underwood, for feeding the deer in the winter.

The small enclosures round each lodge, fenced with low posts and rails, were called the browse pens; the deer easily leapt in and out, but the ponies and cattle could not, and thus could not get at the fodder laid within the fence for the benefit of the deer.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW FOREST DEER

While treating of the keepers and their former vocations, it may be well to give some details of the deer—as they used to be, when the Forest was a huge deer park full of half tame deer, and as it is now when it contains a comparatively small number of quite wild deer.

There is no doubt that the New Forest district did from very ancient times constitute a Forest specially suited to deer. In the days of Canute it was made into a Royal Forest, conveniently situated to Southampton, where he had a palace, and where also he tried the historical experiment of seeing whether the tide would or would not wet his feet. Like other monarchs in more recent times, he discovered that he was not superior to the forces of nature.

There was therefore without doubt a stock of deer prior to the occupation of the Danes, or Canute would not have enacted laws for their preservation. The original stock of Great Britain was no doubt the red deer. They were pretty well everywhere, where the country suited them. But on the New Forest they never greatly throve or attained to a great herd, frequenting only certain parts of the Forest, and, at any rate during the last two hundred years, never increasing beyond a head of seventy or eighty all told, although practically nothing was done to keep their numbers down, while all round them was a numerous and ever increasing herd of fallow deer, numbering at various times from 3000 to 8000 head; nor did the red deer ever attain great size or carry very good heads.

A similar state of things formerly existed in the adjacent forests of Alice Holt and Woolmer—both under my charge. In the former, growing on a good clay and loam soil, with oak timber and open furzy spaces, fallow deer were numerous, but red deer never came there.

At Woolmer, a heathy, sandy country, with no timber but the Scotch fir, there was always a great herd of red deer. It is recorded by Gilbert White, in his *Natural History of Selborne*, how Queen Anne, on a journey from London to Portsmouth, diverged at Liphook into Woolmer Forest, and there, stationed at a spot to this day known as "Queen's Bank," saw the herd of red deer driven past her to the number of some 500 head. Yet these deer rarely put in an appearance at

Alice Holt Forest, practically contiguous to Woolmer, but remained on their own barren wastes. There they lived and throve until the arrival of the "Waltham Blacks," and ultimately the passing of the Black Act.

The "Waltham Blacks" were a gang or gangs of desperadoes, who throve in the neighbourhood of Waltham, in Hants, in the earlier days of George I. It was their practice to disguise themselves by blacking their faces, and hence the name of "Waltham Blacks." At first their depredations ran chiefly in the line of deer-stealing, which they practised with devastating effect in Waltham Chase, among the deer of the Bishop of Winchester, and they went far to clear the Royal Forests of Woolmer and Alice Holt. They also extended their practices to such matters as cutting the dams of fish-ponds in order to secure the fish, setting fire to houses, barns, and stacks of corn and wood, maiming of cattle, and the like. The Black Act (9 Geo. I, c. 22) was passed in order to check the practices of these particular gentry. It made all the actions in which they habitually indulged into felonies, and the list was a long one. In it was included, besides the crimes I have recounted above, the cutting down or destroying of any trees planted as an avenue, or growing in a garden, orchard, or plantation—in fact, all the damage that these malefactors habitually committed. These stringent measures, and the certain death penalty involved if any of the "Blacks" was captured, appear to have stamped out the gang. But the Bishop of Winchester refused to restore the deer to Waltham Chase, saying that "they had done enough mischief already."

The deer in Woolmer Forest also were reduced by these depredators to a shadow of the former herd. It was deemed better for the peace of the neighbourhood that they should be done away with, and to that end came, as Gilbert White recounts, the Duke of Cumberland, with "a huntsman and six yeoman prickers in scarlet jackets laced with gold, attended by the staghounds; ordering them to take every deer in this forest alive, and to convey them in carts to Windsor. In the course of the summer they caught every stag, some of which showed extraordinary diversion. But in the following winter, when the hinds were also carried off, such fine chases were exhibited as served the country people for matter of talk and wonderment for years afterwards.

"I myself saw one of the yeomen prickers single out a stag from the herd, and I must confess that it was the most curious piece of activity

I ever beheld, superior to anything in Mr. Astley's riding school."

This settled the Woolmer red deer, and it was not long before the fallow deer of Alice Holt were also wiped out.

Both these properties were under my charge as Deputy Surveyor for the whole period of my residence in Hants, so it seems but natural to put in a few words about matters that I was so intimately connected with myself, though not in respect of the New Forest. Although there was no dividing line between the haunts of the red deer and those of the fallow deer in the New Forest, yet it was remarkable how they each kept to their own particular ground. The red, as I have said, were undoubtedly the indigenous deer of Great Britain. It is always believed that the fallow deer were introduced into England by the Romans, and Mr. Millais (see *British Deer and their Horns*) is of opinion that the New Forest deer are descendants of Asiatic fallow deer from the shores of the Sea of Marmora. At any rate, New Forest deer, which are very fine, and often attain to very good weights, differ in various ways from park deer. In parks you see fallow deer, *i.e.* deer that are of a pale red colour, with innumerable buff or white spots on their sides. Again you see dun deer—nearly black on the back, but a lighter dun colour on the under parts. Again one sees nearly black deer, and those that are nearly red without spots. Each one of these retains the same colour both in summer and in winter. But in the wild deer of the New Forest, just as in the case of wild roe deer, there is a complete alteration in the colour of each individual deer in summer and in winter. In summer every deer is a perfect fallow colour—that is to say—a bright ground colour with conspicuous white spots on the sides. That is the true "fallow" colour, but in October they change rapidly, and become in every single case of the dun variety—that is to say, of a very dark brown colour on the back, coming low down on the sides, and of a light dun on all the lower and under part of the body. I have never seen in a park a universal and a complete change such as these wild deer go through. At any rate the New Forest may heartily thank the Romans for three very desirable things. First (as many say), the beech tree, the most beautiful object in the Forest; secondly, the fallow deer; and lastly, the pheasant. Long as it is since the tramp of the Roman legions was heard in England, yet the beautiful features which they introduced into the New Forest remain and thrive, when other memories of that wonderful race have died away.

Of the deer, without doubt there were two varieties in the district when the Conqueror afforested this great tract, where he desired to take his pleasure near his capital of Winchester. We read of him that he "loved the *tall* [*i.e.* the red] deer, as if he had been their father," and probably most of his personal hunting was the pursuit of the noble stag. But the fallow deer were certainly there in greater or in less numbers.

Of the roe deer we have no record. His only appearances have occurred in recent years in the form of solitary deer—mostly old bucks, that have probably been worsted in fighting—and have strayed up from Dorsetshire, where they are now plentiful enough. They were, however, only introduced into Dorsetshire about 1830, though they have thriven so well there, and spread so greatly, that it is strange that more of them have not established themselves in the New Forest.

The first that came into my ken was about the year 1880, when a solitary buck, wandering no doubt out of Dorsetshire, tried to make his way over to the Isle of Wight at low water by way Hurst Castle, and its long approach over that pebbly beach which leads to it. No doubt the buck thought that the tongue of land he traversed went all the way to the Island downs that he could see far-off, but he was deceived. First, he stuck in the mud, and then the tide rose on him. He was taken alive by some fishermen, who reported the capture to me, supposing that he belonged to the Forest. I hardly knew what to do with him, and sent him off to the Zoological Gardens, where I hope his life was a happy one. Deer were in Norman times the be-all and end-all of the forest. All legislation, customs, and habits of the country were regulated by their welfare. Many of these ancient laws seem very barbarous to us, and, no doubt, when first they were enforced were the cause of unspeakable cruelty. The clause in the Charta de Forestæ of Henry III, enacting that "henceforth no man shall lose life or member for taking our deer," has a nasty sound in the ears of those who live in the twentieth century. But for all that, the penalties that remained to be paid, though not so hideous in their barbarism, were terribly severe.

One of the cruellest enactments was that concerning the "expeditation" or "lawing" of dogs. But even this was not quite so bad as it sounds. By the laws of the Forest, a dweller within its verges might keep a small dog "for the protection of his house and chattels." But he might keep no hound or dog of such size that it might chase a deer or fawn with any prospect of success.

Such a dog, then, by strict law had to be "expeditated," or to have his three front toes cut off with an axe, so as to debar him for ever from running fast enough to chase anything—let alone a deer.

And the test was whether he would pass through a certain large stirrup which hung in the Verderers' Hall at the King's House at Lyndhurst, where the Forest courts were held. If the dog would pass through the stirrup he was a little dog, only fit to guard house and chattels, and free of all risks; if he would not pass, he was liable to the penalty.

The ancient stirrup used as this test still hangs in the hall, and though it has not the antiquity popularly assigned to it, being probably of Tudor date, yet it was no doubt used for the practical purpose I have described.

Such stirrups were not very uncommon, though, I believe, this one is the last in existence. Such an one is referred to in the records of the Forest of Exmoor—also, I believe, in those of the Forest of Pickering—but this I cannot verify. But the actual lawing seems not to have been carried out after the earliest times. The "jingling of the guinea healed the hurt," that the dog never felt. For this lawing or expeditation was a substantial source of income to the Crown, and those who desired to keep big dogs must pay for them or get rid of them.

In the Charta de Forestæ of Henry III, it is laid down:—"Let the inquisition or view of the lawing of dogs being within the Forest be henceforth made when the regard ought to be made—to wit every third year . . . and let him whose dog shall be found not lawed give for mercy three shillings, and henceforth let no ox be taken for the lawing." So you could keep your dog uninjured at "a bob a year." These were substantial payments, and the whole thing was really a tax—not a barbarity, though founded on one—and there were remissions, *e.g.* in the 8th year of Edward I: "The foresters, verderers, regarders and other jurors of the New Forest say upon their oath the men of the New Forest of Lymitthorn (Lymington) are quit, and ought to be, of expeditating their dogs of the same town up to a certain number, to wit thirty-two dogs; and if there are more mastiffs in the said town they ought to be expeditated, or *expeditation shall be given for them according to the custom of the Assize of the Forest.*"

If this were not sufficient to prove that the whole business was one of taxation "according to the custom of the Assize of the Forest," the following quotation will illustrate the matter.

In the Pleas of Venison of the New Forest presented in the 4th year of Edward III (1339), William de Bello Campo, Knight, keeper of the Forest, presents under the heading of "Expeditation" of dogs in the Forest aforesaid:

"From John, son of Richard de Wynton, Knight, and Joan his wife—from Edmond de Kendall and Henry de Hainhulle, tenants of the lands and tenements which were of John son of Thomas at one time keeper of the Forest, for two expeditations of dogs received by the said John, son of Thomas in his time, £90.

"From the heirs and tenants of the lands of Roger de Inkpenne at one time keeper of the Forest, for one expeditation of dogs received by him in his time, £50."

Presumably the keepers died without accounting for the money received by them, and their heirs were held responsible.

But these, at the rate of the day, are substantial sums, and if each "regard" every third year, by a single keeper of one district alone in the Forest, was worth so much, expeditation must represent a tangible income if properly collected and accounted for. I don't know when the custom died out, and the income was lost to the Crown. Probably at the date of the Commonwealth. But in one way or another, to man or to beast, the deer were a source of trouble if not severely let alone; nor was rank or position always a protection.

In the pleas of juries and assizes held in the fortieth year of Henry III (generally at Winchester), Nigel de Bokland, Simon de Ernewoode, and John Ernys, verderer, and foresters, of the New Forest, presented that Avice, Countess de Insula, in returning from the Court of the Lady the Queen, on Monday next before the Conversion of St. Paul 37 Henry III took in the Forest two deer [*bestias*], therefore let the matter be discussed before the King."

Nor were the princes of the Church above helping themselves to the venison of their superior Lord the King, for at the same assizes it was presented and found that "On the vigil of Saints Tyburcius and Vallerianus, William Russel, with a horse carrying the saddle of a convert of Beaulieu named William, then keeper of the Grange of the Abbot of Beaulieu of Harisforde (Hertford), with three grey hounds, entered the Forest and slipped them [*amissavit*] after the game of the Lord the King. The foresters arrived, and William fled, leaving the horse and greyhounds, to a spinney. The foresters delivered the horse and greyhounds to John de Buttesthorn, steward of the Forest. The Sheriff is ordered to cause the Abbot to come that he may produce his servant, William Russel, on the Friday before Ash Wednesday." The Abbots of Beaulieu seem to have been peculiarly troublesome neighbours to the adjoining Crown Forest, and indeed up to the present day they have one after another been actively tenacious of what they, with wide views, conceived to be their rights. But the following incident is a very delightful instance of the royal economy in dealing with the Church subscriptions which existed then, and are now always with us.

"The Abbot of Beaulieu was indicted at the Pleas of the Forest held at Winchester on the morrow of St Hilary 8 Edward I, for receiving Brother Richard his convert and Richard de Rames his servants [*familiarum*] indicted for trespass of venison with snares and other engines in a close, made fine with the King for forty marks, came and brought the Queen's writ by which the Queen pardoned the Abbot and convert for the trespass aforesaid—*and gave the forty marks for the work of his Church.* Therefore he is quit." Good and businesslike. This time the worthy prelate seems to have been fairly caught out and condemned to pay. But how cunningly he got out of the fix, and with what sound feminine economy did the Queen compromise for the inevitable subscription towards the building of the new Abbey. These royal personages and great churchmen were infinitely human!

But the deer and the care of them, at an assize held shortly after the date last mentioned, led to a very serious charge and conviction against a prominent Forest official — for it was presented "that John le Espaniell yeoman [*valetus*] to the Queen took in the Forest in 55 Henry III, twenty does for the behoof of the Queen, and Walter de Kanc' took in the same year one hart [*cervus*] and six bucks [*damos*] for the behoof of the Queen. And the said John le Espainell was in the same year with the Queen in foreign parts. The verderers and foresters being asked present this. They say that Walter de Kanc' caused this to be so enrolled—and well they recollect that the said John took the said bucks though they erred in their presentation. But they say that Walter took venison at his own will at all times of the year when he was steward. The verderers are amerced for a bad presentation concerning John. Concerning Walter the verderers and foresters being asked as to the destruction which the said Walter made for venison in the Forest, say that he and John de Buttesthorne and William de Barthon, and

John de Ponte, and others who were under him when he was steward of the Forest, despoiled the Forest of five hundred beasts [*feræ*] and upwards, and sent the venison where they wished to different parts for the said Walter de Kanc'.

"For the trespass of the 500 beasts taken by him at his precept taken £5000, namely, for each beast £10. For other beasts which he caused to be taken without number and without warrant, and for the waste made by him of his bailiwick as well of venison as of vert—because it is not possible to estimate it—at the will of the King and Queen. And for the trespass of the aforesaid malefactors by him placed there, for whom he is held to answer, because they have nothing—at the will of the King and Queen."

A more appalling condemnation and sentence could hardly be faced by mortal man. To be "at the will of the King" meant no less than that your life, the lives of your family, and the whole of the property of every kind that you possessed, lay at the mercy of the King so-called, but practically of that of the convicting Court. Probably, unless extenuating circumstances could be effectually urged, the sentence was carried out to the full. But in any case the enormous fine of £5000 at the money value of that day imposed on the unfortunate Walter was one that no subject except one of the highest magnates of the kingdom could be expected to raise. Certainly it was not then, or now, one that a salaried Forest official was likely to be able to produce. Therefore the very best prospect before poor Walter de Kanc' was that of rotting in a dungeon for the rest of his life, and reflecting how meanly all his Forest friends and associates had rounded on him when the day of trouble came and they began to tremble for their own skins.

But I quote these old records to show how very high was the value and importance set on the deer, and how it was still a matter of life or death to take liberties with them. The fine imposed of £10 per head can only have been a vindictive one. Even in those days, when venison may have been of much greater value than it is now (for most people despise it, if compared with ordinary butcher's meat), no deer could possibly have been worth a fifth part of the value put upon it. It was the estimation in which the "venison" of the Forest, comprising a good deal more than mere deer's flesh, was held that caused these tremendous penalties to be fixed.

I have not come across any particular records about the deer in Tudor times. Doubtless there are such records, interesting enough, but they require an immense amount of unearthing and the aid of those who can readily translate the language of Norman-French and dog-Latin combined, in which they are written. I have never had leisure for such researches in the course of my life.

The Stewart records that I have had access to relate more to timber growing and building than to the deer. In 1670, however, we have a record of an order of Charles II for enclosing with pales certain land adjoining New Park "for the preservation of our red deer, newly come out of France." Whether the stock had fallen very low during the time of the Commonwealth (as is very probable), or whether His Majesty merely desired to introduce a cross of fresh blood, we are not told. But in this same year 1670 there was drawn up a very interesting census of the New Forest deer. Whether it had anything to do with the importation of fresh red deer from France at that particular date or not, is not apparent.

This return was found at Bolton Hall, Wensleydale, by a member of the family in possession there, who are the direct descendants of those Dukes of Bolton who for over a hundred years exercised so great an influence in New Forest, and took their title from Bolton Castle in Wensleydale. This paper was found among ancient documents connected with, probably, that last of the Dukes, who bequeathed his North Country properties to his daughter. She married Mr. Orde—a Yorkshire gentleman, who afterwards assumed the name of Orde-Powlett. The term "rascall" deer is quaint, but no doubt a common one at that date. It seems to apply to all deer not actually fit for venison—and doe venison, though a capital thing on the table, seems to have been "nothing accounted of" in the days of the Dukes of Bolton. The common expression "rascal" applied to many a worthless fellow, no doubt has its origin in the deer-park.

A Veiw of the Deere in the New fforest

IN THE COUNTY OF SOUTHTON TAKEN THE BEGINNING OF APRIL 1670.

		Red Male.	Red Rascall.	ffallow Male.	ffallow Rascall.
North	Baylwicke	—	—	157	675
Godshill	,,	2	10	45	183
Linwood	,,	23	50	232	470
Burly	,,	19	34	189	1,292
South	,,	14	15	149	759
East	,,	6	37	69	633
Batramsley	,,	15	42	230	721
Inn	,,	—	2	81	124
ffritham	,,	24	64	257	1,327
Totall of each sort		103	254	1,409	6,184

Totall of yᵉ Red Deere	357
Totall of yᵉ ffallow Deere	7,593
Generall Totall	7,950
The last yeares veiw amounted to	7,273
So there is this yeare increased	677 = 7,950

The stock of deer kept through the eighteenth century probably varied from 4000 to 8000 head. No doubt, when it approached the latter figure the ground became overstocked, and if bad weather came there was heavy mortality. It is recorded that, in 1787, 300 deer died in Boldrewood Walk alone during the winter.

At the period of the Deer Removal Act, when the deer became a burning question, it was stated that the number had been cut down, from about 3000 to 4000 in recent years, to the number of 2000. Even then, as I have recounted above, there was considerable anxiety in various quarters to get rid of them—and this was arranged to be done.

According to the Act, the deer were to be wholly removed from the Forest within two years. No effort was spared to bring this about. At first the great bulk of them were simply shot down. But as they became scarcer and wilder, all sorts of means had to be adopted. Nets were used, and the deer were driven into them, set at the well-known tracks and paths through the woods; hounds were freely employed to drive the deer into the nets and up to guns posted in likely places. Finally, hunting pure and simple had to be resorted to, and a deer when found was run down by the bloodhounds each keeper used to assist him in his duties. At the end of the two years, the Act had been carried out as far as was possible in a wild densely wooded country like the New Forest.

But it was impossible to carry out the provisions of the Act down to the very last deer, or to know for certain whether or no a few of the fugitives were left in various parts of the thick coverts up and down the Forest. Probably a few did survive. But it was overlooked by those who drafted the Act that in many parts of the Forest it is bounded by thick woods, the property of private landowners. The hotter the pursuit in the Forest grew, the more the deer sought refuge in these woods. In some they were killed just as they were in the Forest. But in others they met with more hospitable treatment, and as the Deer Removal Act grew to be more disliked, the deer that remained were viewed with more kindly eyes. People forgot the damage they had done, and thought with regret of the palmy days of the Forest, with its herds of deer constituting one of its most attractive features. In these circumstances the remnant of the herd found sanctuary outside the bounds of the Forest, and so the ancient stock of wild deer, dating back to the days of the Romans, never became really extinct in the district.

The two years in due course rolled by, and with them came an end to the money allotted for the work of destruction. The strangers who had been employed to assist in taking the deer went back to their own places. The staff of keepers was considerably reduced, and the bloodhounds they formerly kept to track or to recover a wounded deer were got rid of. All that could be reasonably expected to be done in order to carry out the provisions of the Act had been complied with, and the little remnant of deer were left at rest. Gradually they crept back into the Forest, but no one seemed to think there was any obligation to continue year by year the destruction of the deer after the prescribed two years had expired. A certain amount of hunting was permitted, which for a long time prevented the deer from increasing too fast.

Such, then, was the condition of affairs when I came to the Forest. There was a small stock of deer scattered pretty well over the Forest—quite enough, and more than enough, to provide sport for a pack of hounds. My predecessor had already begun to kill down a few, and I soon found that the deer had a tendency to increase very rapidly, and that I must bestir myself if they were to be kept from overwhelming me. The first things I had to provide myself with were some hounds. At first I got a draft or two from the pack that hunted the deer. It is difficult to improve on a well bred fox-hound for any sort of work that a hound is suited for, if once you train him to do what you want.

Just at that time I heard that the old strain of bloodhounds kept for centuries at Bagot Park were about to be given up, and I put in a word for some of them. Lord Bagot very kindly gave me what were left, and from these I set to work to breed. Gradually I got together enough hounds of sorts, to enable me to provide one for each head keeper, and to keep two or three myself; for I found that the work of keeping down the deer was going to become a good deal more than I could do myself, and that the keepers would have to keep on at it whether I could be there or not. But I made it an invariable rule *that if ever a shot was fired at a deer, a hound was to be laid on its line, and the deer pursued until it was either recovered or seen to be unwounded.*

In thick woodlands like those of the New Forest, and especially when the fern is high, it is impossible for any man to be certain whether he has struck a deer, which is often out of sight in a single bound. Unless a certainty is made, by using a hound, there is always a risk of leaving a wounded deer to suffer, or of losing one that, shot perhaps through the heart, has run a hundred yards in covert, and then fallen dead. But if a hound is invariably made use of, such things ought never to occur.

Our method was generally this. I would meet the keepers of the particular district, each with his hound, armed with smooth-bores, and with specially and very carefully loaded buckshot cartridges. I myself would be mounted on a pony with a weight such as falconers use, carried in a socket on the saddle and attacked to the bit. When dismounting for a shot, the weight is pulled out of the socket, and the pony can be instantly tethered. For a weapon I used a "Paradox" gun. In one barrel I had a buckshot cartridge, and in the other a bullet. These guns are as accurate as any rifle up to 150 yards, and I was thus *utrinque paratus.* If the deer crossed a ride within 30 yards, it was a fair chance for the buckshot barrel whatever pace it was going. But if it came and stood anywhere within 150 yards, the bullet in the left barrel had its opportunity.

Sometimes we drove the covert with a wide line of beaters far apart. When the deer were very numerous and in herds, this was a good plan, and often the guns posted ahead would get a shot when the deer first moved. But the prettiest and most scientific way of going to work was to lay a good hound on the line of a deer where it had been slotted, or seen, in the early morning. Where the object was to get a particular buck, this was also the best way. It was pretty to see the old hound work out the line slowly but surely, till he roused the deer we wanted, and if none of the outlying guns got a chance when he first started, the hound would keep the deer going slowly, and generally in circles, till some one got a chance—either one of the men on foot, placing himself in a likely spot, or myself, scuttling on my pony at top speed from place to place as the chase seemed to incline, and jumping off in readiness, with tethered pony at hand, and gun ready. By whichever method we found our deer, it was generally brought to book by the use of a hound—generally a couple or couple and a half running together. In this way they did not press the deer as a pack would, and cause them to make a point, but generally managed to keep them moving and dodging about in circles, until they ran up against some one who was ready for them.

In this manner I have spent many very amusing days—the combination of hunting and shooting was almost unique, and sometimes I saw very interesting hound work, while the general surroundings and the study of wild life of all kinds were most delightful.

I found my bloodhounds were too silent for this work. Their note was deep and fine, but only repeated at long intervals—too long to enable us to follow, at a distance, the direction of the chase. I tried old-fashioned Southern hounds, and had one or two very good ones, with as much tongue as I could desire; but they are soft, and incorrigible in the vice of running heel. I have actually seen them hunt a deer round to the gun, and work up to where it was lying dead on the ground, having been just shot, and, if they were not quickly caught, turn round and run the old line backward from the place they had just hunted it up to, with their quarry lying dead before them.

But at last I got the very hounds I wanted in that ancient Irish breed called "Kerry beagles." Black and tan, and about 22 to 24 inches high, they were as unlike "beagles" as any dog that I ever saw. But they were very keen and active, rather too fast, but mad to get hold of a deer, and with a tongue you could hear for miles. A first cross with the foxhounds produced a hardier, better constitutioned dog, and I left some good ones behind me when I bade farewell to the New Forest.

But besides this form of sport, I have spent some most enjoyable evenings in summer, "creeping" the woods for bucks with a rifle. It cannot be called stalking, for there can be no "spying," and without spying there cannot be stalking. One can only walk very quietly in the woods, towards dusk, in particular parts where certain good bucks are known to lie.

In August and the earlier part of September, especially before they have burnished, bucks do not go very far afield, and from about fifty minutes before dark they move out of the thickets where they have lain all day, and begin to draw to their feeding ground. Just for that space of time a careful "creeper" may encounter one, and get a shot. It is rather difficult, for a man must have a very quick eye to "pick up" a deer, standing generally in the shade of covert. Moreover, the shot must be taken at once—as you both stand—and generally from the shoulder. It is almost always the case that the buck has "got" you just as soon as you "got" him, and, though they generally stand for a minute to stare and see what has alarmed them, it is but a short minute, and he must be taken just as he stands, however awkwardly it may be, and without a second's delay.

I have in my time killed a good many good bucks by this method, and I must own that it is a quiet form of sport that I have greatly enjoyed. The charm of the surroundings is so great—the silence, the calm beauty of the summer evening, with the brilliant but tempered rays of the setting sun slanting down through the heavy foliage, are so impressive, that, whether I met with success or not, I could not but be happy; while not the worst part was the ride home in the cool of the summer dusk, with the little fern owls following me, and, as is their weird custom, settling in the middle of the road every fifty yards in front, and remaining there till my pony almost trod on them, when they would noiselessly flit up, only to go forward and repeat exactly the same manœuvre a little farther on.

Perhaps almost the best thing about sport of most kinds is that it takes one into such beautiful and interesting scenery and conditions.

The fallow deer on the New Forest often run to very good dimensions, and certainly are the best venison possible. I never partook of a deer out of a park that seemed to me to be anything approaching a good Forest buck in excellence.

The following are the weights of a few good deer taken from my game book.

			st.	lb.
Aug. 20,	1893	Islands Thorns	13	3
Aug. 20,	1901,	Oakley	13	10
„ 21,	„	Ramnor	13	5
Sept. 7,	1906,	Islands Thorns	13	10
„ 14,	„	Wootton	14	6
Aug. 8,	1907,	Park Ground	14	7
	1908,	Denny	14	4
Aug. 15,	„	Shave Green	13	8
July 26,	1909,	Denny	14	6
Aug. 5,	1910,	Shave Green	14	0
„ 16,	„	Parkhill	14	2
Aug. 3,	1912,	Getthornes	14	9
„ 17,	1914,	Rakes Brakes	13	10

All these deer were weighed as deer usually are in a Scotch forest, as they come off the hill on the pony—viz. clean, *i.e.* gralloched, but with heart and liver left in. Head, skin, and horns, of course, on the beast. The retention of heart and liver varies in places. It means 10 lbs. of the weight. During the last decade or so, the deer in the New Forest country have begun to increase so rapidly, that we have had to kill a large number of them. The reason for this is that they are so well preserved, and are become so numerous in all the vast chain of woodlands on the north side of the Forest, that there is now a large herd of deer scattered among these woodlands, associating and no doubt interbreeding with the Forest deer, of which the Forest officials can keep no count, and over which they have no control.

These deer are to be found outside the Forest in considerable but unascertained numbers, in woods running nearly to Salisbury. They are to be found in the Norman Court Woods, adjoining the old Forest of Clarendon. It would be no great stretch if one were to say that the deer of New Forest and Clarendon now intermixed, and that is what we never hear of in the ancient days, when Clarendon and New Forest were both well stocked deer forests, under different control.

Inside the New Forest all we could do was to peg away at all the deer we could find, and kill as many as we could in the time that could be spared for such work. But the stock was like a widow's cruse, for often, when we thought the herd frequenting a particular place had been accounted for, a fresh lot would, as it were, drop from the sky from one of these outlying places, and place us just where we started from, as to numbers, to be dealt with.

The contribution I got from the Office of Woods towards this work consisted in the cost of the cartridges used, and latterly the cost of the licences taken by the keepers for the hounds they used. Towards the cost of these hounds (and it was often considerable), and towards their keep, I never could extract a farthing. But this incessant increase in the deer, with the attempt to stem the flood, was a worrying thing and a difficult one to control. I put my hand in my pocket for the hounds we required, and the unfortunate keepers were mulcted in their pay for the keep of the hounds, without which they could not do their duty. But it was not generous treatment. Altogether I got a great deal of sport out of the deer in my own way, and the cry that came to me from the masters of the buckhounds and all interested in the hunting of the deer was always to press me to keep on killing them down, lest all their sport be swamped by the multiplication of their quarry.

Like other deer, the New Forest bucks fight desperately in the rutting season—not unfrequently even to the death. A curious case occurred about 1905, when two bucks were found still warm, but both dead, in the bottom of a drain, with their horns so firmly locked together, that it was almost impossible to disengage them. The heads of both had to be cut off and removed together, before the bodies could be got out of the drain. It would appear as if one buck had turned to fly, and his pursuer had locked the horns together by an attack from behind, falling on to the defeated deer into the drain, and turning right over, locked as he was by his horns, had broken his neck. His superincumbent weight probably suffocated the undermost deer quickly. But had this not happened, they must surely have perished miserably from starvation. The heads, locked together as they were found, now hang in the Verderers' Hall at the King's House.

CHAPTER IX

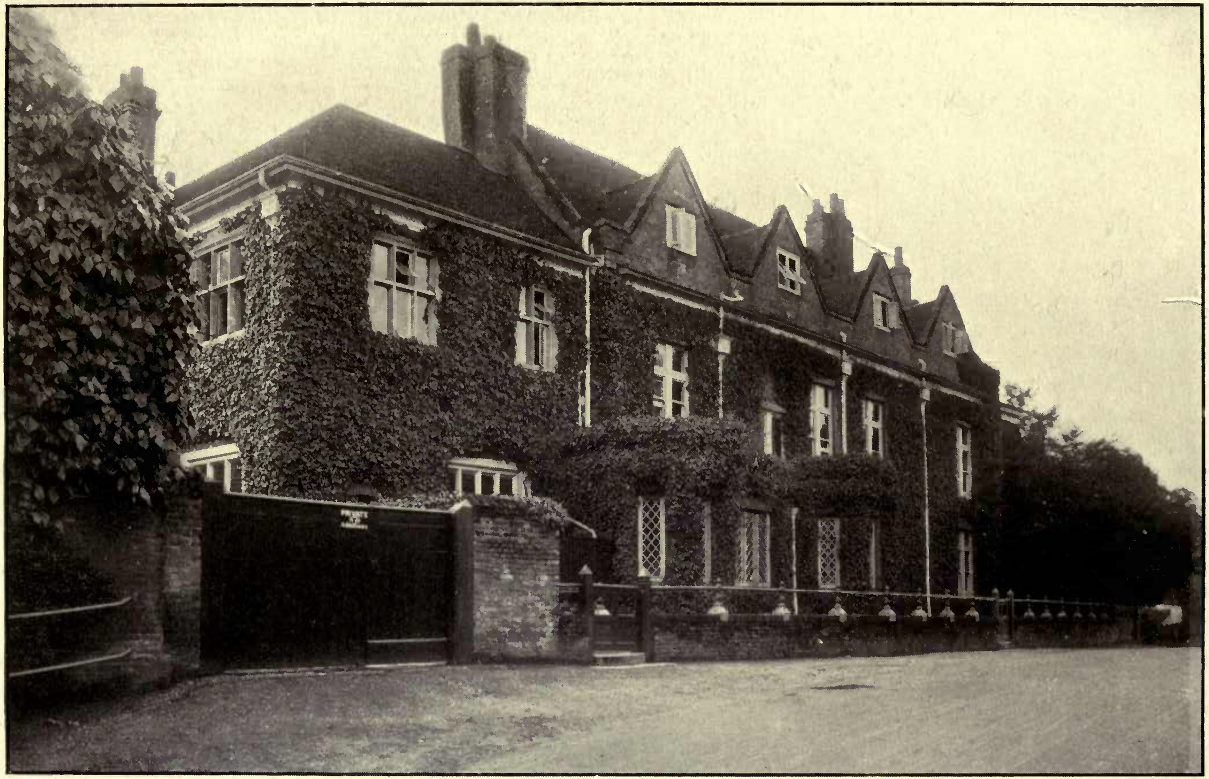
THE KING'S HOUSE

It would hardly be possible for me to set on paper my reminiscences, and omit any mention of the delightful, old, inconvenient, but well appreciated residence in which it was my duty to live. I conceived also that, as the residence of the representative of the Crown, it was intended to be a centre of hospitality, and therefore, although no "table money" was allowed to me, I thought it right to make as welcome as I could, not merely my official chiefs and those connected with the Office of Woods, but also all the many professors of Forestry or students of our English systems that came to England or to Hampshire in the prosecution of their researches. This was not only a great pleasure to my wife and myself, but it also caused me to make friends of most of the distinguished lights of forestry and leaders of that branch of science and its practice that have been living in or visiting this country for the last thirty years. Many interesting discussions took place at my table, and I was able to learn and profit very much from what fell from these learned pundits, and to get an education in forestry difficult to arrive at otherwise.

And again, in what is locally called "the April month," viz. from about 15th March to the end of April, when hunting people from all parts of England flocked to the New Forest to finish up in that delightful climate and scenery the ordinary hunting season, I found that quarters in the old Royal hunting box that I occupied were keenly in request, and my spare bedrooms were continuously booked as one party succeeded another. And more than that, the inns and lodgings of the village were overflowing at that season, and contained many a good sportsman who was paying a brief visit to see the spring hunting. These, of course, of either sex, had to be gathered in to join our party, and I think I have seen as many cheery, informal dinner parties one after the other during the April month, as the old house can ever have sheltered in its earlier days, far back as they go.

For this old "Queen's House," as it was when I came to it, but "King's House," as it was before my day, and again after 1901, has a long history, and must have seen and heard a good deal within its walls.

It was not ever, as many people suppose, a house



THE KING'S HOUSE—NORTH SIDE, 1904.

connected, strictly speaking, with the Forest itself, nor was it ever intended originally for the residence of any official in charge of the New Forest.

It was the manor house of the ancient royal manor of Lyndhurst, a manor dating back to Saxon times, and on the site (a wonderfully well chosen one) of the present King's House there stood a manor house—of what sort I know not—considerably before the days of the Conquest and the afforestation of the New Forest.

The manor of Lyndhurst was, at the time of the Conquest, in the hands and administration of the Abbey of Amesbury, granted thereto, it is said, by the Saxon Queen, Elfrida, the murderess of Corfe Castle, probably about eighty years previously.

At what precise date the Conqueror resumed possession of the manor is not clear, but it was assessed in the "Great Survey" in 1086, and in 1165 we find a grant thereof to a subject.

Successive grants of the manor, all duly recorded, follow one another from that early date till the last grant in 1831 to George Harrison.

But the old manor house seems to have been always retained for the use of the King himself, and to have been maintained by the Crown and not by the grantee of the manor. And its use was generally given to the Lord Warden.

Edward I spent some time here, and many documents of his reign are dated from Lyndhurst. But his Queen, Eleanor of Castille, made Lyndhurst her home during the absences of the King on his wars against the Welsh. In this reign an order was issued for "twenty oaks to make laths for the use of the Queen's manor house at Lyndhurst": this rather points to repairs or construction on a considerable scale.

In 1388 a hall was built within the lodge, and this hall became called the Verderers' Hall, since the Forest courts were held there. It existed untouched until 1851, when the house was badly altered, and in part it exists now.

The "old house" was repaired and enlarged by Henry VIII, and probably the old porch leading into the back-yard, once the main entrance to the hall, dates from that reign.[1]

In 1634 the King, Charles I, issued letters patent to John Chamberlayne of Lyndhurst "for the new building of divers lodginges for our use and service adjoyning to the old house at Lyndhurst in the Newe Forrest, as also, a Kitchyn, Pastrie, Larder and other offices, and a stable to contain fortie horse according to the plots and directions given by the Surveyours of our Workes.

"The charges of the materialles and workmanship whereof, according to the estimate thereof made, will amount to the some of one thousand five hundred three score and three poundes 12 shillinges and six pence besides the timber for all the said workes which is to be felled in the said Forrest and brought to the said place at which by the estimate will amount to two hundred and fifty loades for the fellinge and carriage whereof speciall warrant and directions shall be forthwith given."

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[1] See *Victoria County History of Hants*, vol. ii.

Then follow all Mr. Chamberlayne's detailed accounts and charges, only interesting for contrasting the prices with those of the day.

For instance, two wheelbarrows cost 3*d.* and 4*d.* apiece. I have just paid 31*s.* 6*d.* for a new one in 1915. A pickaxe, however, cost 16*d.* Labourers got from 6*d.* to 12*d.* per day. The latter, no doubt, were skilled artisans.

The work, however, though authorised, and no doubt in part carried out in the reign of Charles I, was not completed until after the Commonwealth, in his son's reign, for the final account of the sums of money recently spent "in repairs to His Majesty's house at Lyndhurst"—£1057, 17*s.* 9*d.*—is settled by Lord St. John in 1672.

Previously to that date Charles II had spent in 1669 a sum of £500. In the following year £1500 were raised by tops or lops, to be employed in rebuilding the stables, and the total sum spent in 1671–72 came altogether to £1750.

Altogether the estimate, as rendered in 1634, of £1500 proved, like many another such estimate, to be a very misleading document. What was built by Charles II was the main block of the building lying to the westward of the Verderers' Hall, the "Kitchyn pastree," &c. &c., and it constituted the principal living accommodation of the house. An inspection of the roof timbers and of the old beams points clearly to the use of Forest timber, often hardly worked at all, and that only with the axe. The doors were clearly of Forest oak, made out of plank with beautiful grain, but cut sadly too thin. Alas! when I went there every door was covered with paint, but I could not resist paying out of my own pocket the expense of burning and cleaning off the paint and restoring the old doors of oak to their original condition.

As to that seeming addition to the extreme west end of the house, which bears upon the heads of the lead stand pipes the crown and the letter A.R. 1712, I am not quite certain whether this was a mere repair or an addition carried out subsequently to the Charles II building or not, but I think it must have been the latter.

It was apparently a tradition of these ancient surveyors that any addition or considerable repair to this old house should bear the initials of the reigning monarch. Would that this had been

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the practice during the whole existence of this ancient house, for then we might have had a record surpassing in interest those found in most mediæval dwelling-houses. However, we have on this western end, on the old leaden heads of the stack pipes, the insignia fixing the date in the reign of Queen Anne. It seems to be too short a time since the house was rebuilt by Charles II for any reconstructions of a sufficiently important character to have taken place. And so, I think, it was the mark of an additional extension to the house.

On the main portion of the house, various dates appear on the heads of these stack pipes. George III 1748 is the principal one, and doubtless refers to some important repairs carried out at that date—over 100 years since the most recent building had been projected.

I was careful to follow this precedent, and when the whole house had to be repaired in 1880, and when again considerable restorations were made to it in 1904, to which I shall refer subsequently, I was careful to record the dates on the heads of the new stack pipes entailed, not indeed in the beautiful old lead work of earlier dates, but in the best copies to be obtained in modern cast iron.

So I think the old house was carried on, as a very charming old residence, always in the occupation of the Lord Warden of the New

Forest (very frequently a royal personage), who was allowed £70 a year for the upkeep of the house. It was usually occupied by his steward, who was responsible for the Forest dues made over to the Lord Warden, and for the conduct of the Forest generally. In connection with these dues, I may point out why there are in the New Forest no real "agisters," although the servants of the verderers have usurped that title, which is that of a special officer in a Royal Forest. To this the servant of a subject can have no claim. The matter is well and tersely put in the Report of the Commissioner of 1789, to which I have previously referred:

"There were formerly agisters of this Forest whose duty was to receive the agistment or profit arising from the herbage and pannage *for the King's use*, but the herbage and pannage being granted to the Lord Warden, those profits are collected by the Lord Warden's steward, and the appointment of agisters has been discontinued for near a century past."

Their appointment was never revived, for at the termination of the appointment of the Lord Warden's steward, the collection of the Forest dues was continued, as before, by the Forest keepers for the King's use, who accounted for them to the Deputy Surveyor instead of to the

Lord Warden's steward, and do so to this day. They are the real agisters of the Forest, but that office is merged in that of keeper—or forester, as it was always called formerly.

The so-called agisters at present in the Forest merely collect—by no means "for the King's use"—sundry levies which since 1877 the verderers are empowered to make on the commoners alone. They have no pretensions to be Forest officers as defined since the days of the Assize of Pickering, and the real office of the agister, *per se*, is in abeyance, as it has been for 220 years.

This is somewhat of a digression from the history of the old King's House to the duties that were performed therein; but as I am only jotting down reminiscences and researches, and not attempting to write history, I hope to be pardoned if I deal with the various matters just as they spring into my memory.

The next change I have to record was in the period about 1850, when there arose such a complete reformation and upheaval of the whole New Forest and its system of government.

In the first place the last Lord Warden of the Forest, H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, died in 1849, and, since no successor to him has ever been appointed, the office is still in abeyance but never abolished. With him went the office of Lord Warden's steward and the occupancy of the King's House. The control of the keepers and of their collection as agisters of the New Forest dues lapsed to the Crown, and fell under the control of the Commissioners of Woods. The King's House stood empty, and the Deer Removal Act, with all its alteration of old customs, was close at hand.

It was decided to remove the Deputy Surveyor from New Park, the residence always occupied by the Commissioners of Woods, who, apart from the sporting interests, had sole control of the Forests. New Park was then a comparatively small house. It had close by convenient carpenters' yards, a sawbench, and other essentials, the lack of which I felt keenly all my days in the Forest.

The King's House was large, rambling, expensive to live in, without any land to speak of attached to it, so that no artisan estate work could be done there, and was thus very unsuitable for the residence of the Deputy Surveyor.

So accordingly they set to work in those mid-Victorian times to wreck the old place as far as they could. In order to reduce the house to dimensions more in accordance with its future use, some genius pulled down the beautiful old Tudor rooms (no doubt the addition of Henry

VIII) which were over the Verderers' Hall and also the scullery and servants' offices adjoining them on the side of the street. They threw this latter accommodation into the hall, enlarging it to a size which had never been required up to that day, and never has been since, and placing thereon a barn-like roof abutting on the old house—a destructive alteration as barbarous in character as could be imagined. But they could not even do this properly. The walls of the upper story, which had to come down to enable the barn roof to be completed, were good 16-inch brickwork, and they were pulled down to some 8 feet from the ground—I cannot think why. But instead of being built up from that level in the original 16-inch work, a brickwork of only 11 inches was put in, with lath and plaster on the interior, to make up the appearance of the new work to the width of the old walls they were superimposed upon. Still worse, mullioned windows were put in to replace the old ones destroyed—doubtless originally built with stone, but the present mullions are a despicable sham of brickwork covered with plaster.

Mercifully, sufficient of the beautiful oak panelling which lined the upper rooms was preserved to form a dado round the newly constructed "ancient Verderers' Hall." A more rank imposture does not exist!—save only for the ancient oak fittings and furniture which has never been removed. There are two very ancient—I think, Tudor, but one may be Jacobean — solid and heavy oak tables. The dock in which the prisoner stands is a most curious piece of oak furniture—solid and heavy as stone—touched with no tools but the axe and adze, and bearing the marks of them to this day. I fancy this piece of old oak is about the most ancient piece of work on the premises; the solid oak "bar" or barricade, between the court and body of the hall, is also massive and ancient. Fortunately, too, the ancient canvas with the Royal Arms on it was also left. Though not beautiful, it is interesting, as it records the holding of the last Great Justice Seat in Eyre held for the Forests south of Trent. "It bears date C. II. 16'9." The third figure of the date is obliterated, but it is undoubtedly a 6, as the Justice Seat was held by Vere, Earl of Oxford, in 1669-70. Worst of all, it was quickly found out that the absorption of the servants' offices as devised by the destroying genius rendered the house uninhabitable. To sacrifice the useless, cocktail brand-new hall, which had absorbed and ruined the priceless (as we should now think it) hall of 1388, was not to be thought of. So a fresh device had to be resorted to in order to provide absolutely necessary accommodation, and two hideous excrescences were built out on to the fine old façade of the house on the north side, with bow windows, copied one would think from the Early Victorian villas of Surbiton. That the extra space had been made a necessity is true. It was provided up to about the extent of accommodation found on a fair-sized yacht, and no more; but, irrespective of the badness of the design, the perpetrator of the outrage on the old building ought to have been publicly gibbeted in front of it. The remainder of the house was panelled, as to all the principal living rooms, in the large-sized panels of deal which came in about the later Stuart period. Even here the despoilers of 1851 could not leave well alone. They decided that panelling of any kind was unsuited to a drawing or principal living room. Therefore they covered over with rough planking the walls of the drawing-room, but luckily left the panelling behind it, not very much injured. Over this planking was stretched canvas, whereon was pasted a wall-paper of quite remarkable hideousness.

A very handsome carved wooden mantelpiece, typical of the date of the building had been in this room. It was removed, and a plain white marble slab, with two uprights, placed in its stead. Luckily the canvas stretched over the walls was very rotten, and under my investigations it gave way sufficiently to give an idea of what might be underneath. I quickly examined into this, and, to my joy, found the panelling intact. Better still, I had recently discovered in a loft over a stable, a carved mantelpiece for which I could not account. On bringing this to light, the outline on the paint of the panels showed that it was the original mantelpiece that fitted into its old place perfectly in the drawing-room of the house as it formerly was.

I soon besought the Office of Woods to carry out the restoration of this room to its original form. What they would not do, I myself supplemented, and the result was a very pretty old room exactly in keeping with the rest of the house.

In the rebuilding in the days of Charles II, the idea of an abode that should be of the nature of "our lodgings in New Forest" was always kept in sight, and the result was a house of peculiar and by no means convenient planning.

On the first floor are all the principal rooms of the house, and very good lofty rooms they are, opening all one into the other, as was the custom of that day, and occupying the whole of the first floor on both sides of the house. These were no doubt the apartments reserved, and built expressly for, the royal accommodation, whether for the King himself on his occasional visits, or for the Lord Warden, who, no doubt, was frequently in residence.

On the ground floor was a suite of rooms, similar in area to the royal apartments on the upper floor, but five feet less in height, and altogether inferior to the first floor and rooms.

Above the old Verderers' Hall was a set, probably of four, oak panelled bedrooms, not of very large size, but comfortable, no doubt; and in the second floor is a perfect rabbit warren of attics, reduced in number since the vandalisms of 1850, which so altered the fabric of the house.

In 1880, and the years which followed it, I was able to get a few sanitary improvements carried out. We got the South Hants Company's water laid on eventually, and were saved from the perils of a very doubtful and precarious supply pumped by hand! And in 1904 came the ever so badly needed drainage scheme for Lyndhurst, with which we were connected; and, as a part of the works carried out in consequence, we attained at long last to the luxury of a bathroom, which we had had to forego for twenty-four years of residence in a Government house!

But in 1904 there came to the old house a restoration better than any it had experienced since Stuart days. At that date (1903) the accommodation for my office and for my staff had become impossible. Two very small rooms on the ground floor had to provide space for an enormous accumulation of papers in daily use for reference; for my clerk—and a boy—and on frequent occasions for my three assistants, and all the men they were paying monthly wages to. The clerical work, owing to that extraordinary passion of the Civil Service for multiplying—and multiplying, and multiplying again—all papers and returns, mostly saying the same thing three times over, had increased to such an extent that my clerk, with a boy assistant, could not compete with it, nor could I do my outdoor business and help him too. The office accommodation was reduced to such a point that any fresh papers that came in had to find their resting-place on the floor. This, of course, doubled the work, for it generally took more time to hunt up off the floor the references required to make a report that might be called for, than to make the report itself when the materials had been gleaned together. It was actually maddening.

Finally, in the autumn of 1903, my health gave way from worry. I was ordered by my doctor to clear out of England, to do no work of any kind whatever, or take any sort of exertion till further orders, and accordingly I went off to Egypt for the winter.

Before I left, however, I pointed out that my one clerk, with so little assistance, was much worse off and more worn out than I was, and I received the sop of a promise that all work should be reduced, and he should be as little pressed as possible till I returned, and could reorganise matters.

But it was with no little shame and compunction that I received at Assuan on Christmas Day the news of the death of my unfortunate clerk — worked to death in the service of his country if ever a man was, but without complaint from him and wholly without necessity or excuse. Naturally, on my return, business accounts and books were in a state of chaos. However, I made it clear that as one man, and very nearly another, had been killed by the recent condition of affairs, I would not carry on the office unless I was given at least one additional clerk and provided with a new office that would hold my papers and books of account, and also provide room for correspondence. The Treasury, something alarmed by the fact that they had done a man to death by the conditions of their service, were unusually malleable, and authorised me to engage two clerks at once. I was not long in doing this—and first-rate men they turned out to be—and in taking steps to better the offices.

As to the provision of office accommodation, that was a difficult problem which was long and often discussed between Sir Stafford Howard and myself. The Commissioners were quite willing to buy, or build, a house for the purpose, though that would have been very inconvenient to work. But there was no suitable site, and the only possible house was not available.

Suddenly the idea struck me of restoring the old rooms over the Verderers' Hall — easily providing thereby the accommodation we wanted, and at the same time restoring the old house itself to its original proportions and appearance. There had recently retired from the service of the Office of Woods one who had been my first assistant for many years. Mr Roberts, a qualified and ingenious architect, particularly good, as I often found, in adapting additions to old building. He threw himself into this work as a labour of love, and succeeded admirably.

The difficulty was that the height of the ceiling of the modern hall had been raised, so that it was very difficult to adjust the new rooms to the levels of the existing building. The height of the building was limited by the height of the house as it stood. However, these troubles were overcome. The height of the modern Verderers' Hall was reduced by 2 feet 6 inches without anyone ever noticing it. A well executed copy of the fine old Jacobean staircase in the house itself was placed at the northern end, so as to give access to the new offices, and, in fine, we contrived, out of what was previously wasted space, a capital set of three rooms of offices, with abundant presses for holding papers, &c., drawing tables, and all the accessories of a land agent's office.

The relief and assistance that was conferred on my staff by this extra space was inconceivable. Instead of spending hours in searching for a paper, heaped with others in a slovenly mass on the floor, every document was indexed and in its place. The saving in labour, represented by pounds shillings and pence, went a long way towards paying interest on the outlay and the additional salaries.

But besides this practical view, there was the immense improvement in the appearance of the old house.

When first my proposals for an alteration of any kind to that portion of it which was erroneously conceived by the public to be a genuine historical building were made, I was warned and well realised that an agitation and an outcry was sure to be raised against any action of this kind by the Office of Woods, who had not at that time earned public approval and confidence in such matters by their singularly able preservation of Tintern Abbey. Accordingly, we called in Sir Aston Webb, as the highest authority obtainable, to examine our plans and advise generally.

He cordially approved of the scheme we had propounded, only stipulating that everything should be carried out—not as in earlier days—but with the best material and in the best manner. He suggested a valuable alteration or two, and thus, armed with his report, we were quite prepared for the inevitable question in the House of Commons, asked by some member who knew nothing about the matter, as to a proposed "destruction" of a historical building in the New Forest.

One of the stipulations I made in the builder's contract was, that no brick should be used in an addition to the old building that was not certified to be at least two hundred years old. When the contractor ran out of what material he could provide from old cottages and the like, I provided him with the remainder from the walls of the old derelict garden at Boldrewood, abandoned for many years, but of considerable age. In this way the ancient house had its restoration carried out without a brick or a tile appreciably more recent in date than the old fabric being used in the reconstruction.

After the death of Frederick, Duke of York, in 1827, the manor of Lyndhurst seems to have been retained by the Crown, independently of the Lord Wardenship. But the use of the King's House was granted to the Lord Warden (with the allowance of £70 for upkeep, previously mentioned). The use of the house was occasionally demised by the Lord Warden to certain noblemen, as, for instance, in the case connected with hunting in New Forest, which I shall refer to later, when H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester gave permission to the Duke of Richmond as "the only person who had permission to use not only the kennels and stables but the King's House likewise, if his Grace should choose to come (to hunt) which is very improbable."

Several other large houses existed in the New Forest, which were occupied in most cases by the master keeper of the walk in which it was situated, with the exception of New Park, a delightful old house of Jacobean or very early Georgian character, standing in a park, studded with many fine old oaks, and surrounded by a pretty good farm of some 150 acres. This residence was at one time on lease to the Duke of Bedford—the Lord Warden of the day—and his heirs, but afterwards occupied by the officer in charge of the Forest, now called the Deputy Surveyor, as the representative in each forest of the Surveyor-General, who was the ruler over all His Majesty's woods, forests, and land revenues.

At New Park were the carpenters' and masons' yards for carrying out the maintenance of lodges and buildings all over the estate. In the Park there were impounded all animals found trespassing in the Forest, while the farm was principally cultivated for the purpose of providing fodder for the deer in winter time.

This provoked the great indignation of William Cobbett, who visited the place on one of his "rides" in 1826; he inveighs against finding at New Park "a garden, a farmyard, a farm, and a nursery. The place looks like a considerable gentleman's seat. The house stands in a sort of park and you can see that a great deal of expense has been incurred in levelling the ground and making it pleasing to the eyes of 'my lords' the Commissioners" (who, of course, used New Park as their headquarters when they visited the Forest). A little later, on learning that the farm provided fodder for the deer in winter time, he says "What are these deer for? Who are to eat them? Are they for the Royal Family? . . . For what and for whom, then, are deer in the New Forest, and why an expense of hay farm, of sheds, of racks, of keepers, of lodges, and other things attending the deer and the game?" Cobbett was, of course, incapable of taking any but the most utilitarian view of any property, but for all that his views, twenty-five years later, found expression in the Deer Removal Act of 1851, which wiped out—doubtless for sound economical reasons—one of our most beautiful national possessions, as it stood in its beauty at that time. Probably the best of the master keepers' lodges was the one at Boldrewood, which appears to have received more attention from its occupiers than some of the others.

In the Commission report of 1789, an appendix contains "The answer of John Richard, Earl de la Warr, Master Keeper of Bolderwood and Eyeworth Walks, to the Precept of the Commission of Land Revenue dated 1st day of June 1787."

In it he states that he was appointed master keeper (as above) by the Lord Warden during pleasure. He occupies Boldrewood Lodge, which is in very good repair—(no wonder, since the Crown had just spent £712 upon it, in 1781)—and about 27 acres of meadow ground thereto adjoining. . . He receives 25 loads of fuel wood for the consumption of Boldrewood Lodge. This "John Richard," Lord de la Warr, was apparently a grandson of the Lord de la Warr whose letters appear in that delightful book by Lord March, *Records of the Old Charlton Hunt* (to which I am indebted for the following particulars). They are from Lord de la Warr, who was then master keeper of Boldrewood Walk, to the Duke of Richmond, dated from Boldrewood in 1732 to 1738.

In August 1747 we find him writing to the Duke who was at his house at Boldrewood entertained by Lord de la Warr, his Grace apparently not caring to avail himself of the permission of the Lord Warden, previously recounted, "to occupy the King's House and stables whenever he should choose to come."

He refers in some detail to the "new building," which he thinks will make "the whole very convenient."

It appears to have comprised a new library, "to be a family assembly room"—and he describes at some length his reasons (if indeed they needed any apology) for putting "wainscot in the Stone Parlour." For the reasons he gives, and for others, it must have been a great improvement.

Alas! all that is left of this magnificence is a handsome old lead pump, rather a curiosity, with Lord de la Warr's initials and coronet thereon, and the shell of the keeper's cottage hard by is reputed to be the remains of the old laundry attached to the mansion — since added to.

The last occupant of the house was Lady Londonderry, who continued to reside there after the death of her husband, the master keeper of the walk, in 1821, until her own death in 1833. The house was then pulled down, a great sale of all the materials was held in 1833, and all that remained was a keeper's cottage—and the pump!

A large master keeper's lodge stood in Rhinefield Walk. In 1628 we find an authority from the Earl of Holland to certain persons, and "to Gabriell Lappe, gent, his Majestie's Woodward for County Southampton, for £30 to be raised, in addition to £116 already expended in repairing and building of the great lodge called Rynefield, and the other outhouses thereto belonging, in the Baylwick of Batramsley within the New Forest."

In 1789 this lodge was occupied by (Col.) Nathaniel Heywood, master keeper of Rhinefield and Wilverley Walks, and deputy to the Lord Warden of New Forest. From his

"Answer" to the Commissioners of that date, I have formed the opinion that he had no very good grasp of New Forest questions, or indeed had concerned himself very much with them. He states that he has no salary whatever as master keeper or as deputy to the Lord Warden, but as master keeper he occupies the lodge at Rhinefield and a small enclosure round it, of little value (this enclosure was one of 42 acres), and I observe that between 1771 and 1774 about £530 were spent on repairing and improving the lodge.

I do not trace what happened to this lodge after Colonel Heywood's death, but for some time before the date of the Deer Removal Act (1851) it had become the residence of a groom-keeper, and must have been much reduced in size.

After 1851, when much planting was commenced, the lodge became the residence of the head nurseryman in charge. "The small enclosure of little value" became a large nursery ground, in which some millions of ordinary forest trees, such as oak, larch, and Scotch fir, were reared and planted out, and besides these, many thousands also of beautiful ornamental trees were successfully grown. Many of these still remain *in situ*, but the great pinetum at Boldrewood—the "Ornamental ride" in Pound Hill enclosure, and the avenue of Douglas fir (so little known and admired) in Oakley, with many hundreds of other fine specimens, are witnesses of much good and successful work in this nursery.

After the passing of the Act of 1877, all planting and nursery work became abandoned in the New Forest, and Rhinefield Nursery was closed down. The house fell into ruins, and eventually the property—a most lovely site for a house—was let to Lieutenant Monro Walker, who turned the old nursery into pleasure grounds, and built on the old site a large and very beautifully designed mansion, with very well laid out gardens.

The great house at Burley Lodge stood on a different footing. It was occupied by the Dukes of Bolton, who for nearly 130 years exercised a sort of "*imperium in imperio*" in the Forest difficult to understand or explain.

For "near a century" before 1789 the Dukes of Bolton held the keepership of the Bailiwick of Burley (*i.e.* Burley and Holmsley Walks), with the great lodge at Burley and the under keeper's lodge at Holmsley. The last grant to the Dukes of Bolton or Paulet family terminated in 1786. But a further grant was made to the Earl of Lonsdale (as family trustee) for an additional thirty years. Finally, the interest in the grant was purchased from the trustees of the Duchess of Bolton by the Crown in 1809, for a very considerable sum of money. The rent paid by the Dukes was only £9, 2*s.* 6*d.* During all those years the Dukes of Bolton controlled, as it were, a forest of their own, within the limits of their bailiwick. They seem to have exercised all forestal rights. They appointed their groom-keepers, with their residences — the whole thing being Crown property. They contracted under their grant to maintain the lodges and all fences within their bailiwick; but they did not observe this obligation, for in 1697 a sum of £106 was expended on the lodge, as declared before the Right Hon. Anthony Lord Ashley, Chancellor, and in 1768 we find that the Crown spent £1022 in the repairs of Burley Lodge! As to the Crown's forestal rights, the Dukes seemed to have usurped them for themselves, and to have issued warrants to kill deer, cut wood, &c., exactly as if that part of the Forest belonged to them. And in this they were supported in 1757 when the Crown keepers disputed the killing of a buck under the warrant of the Duke of Bolton. In the affray that ensued a keeper lost his life, and the opposing side were put on trial for murder. But since the judge declined to hear evidence upon the question of right, a verdict of manslaughter was recorded. From that day the Dukes maintained their right to appoint under keepers of the two walks, but those keepers never attended the swainmote or attachment Forest courts, and the bailiwick became practically outside the Forest law. And it is perhaps from that cause that Burley, in its old form, before it became a city of villas, was ever intolerant of anything like Forest law and custom, and always prone to contention.

The old Burley Great lodge was first after 1809 used, in a reduced form, for the residence of the groom-keeper, eventually appointed assistant to the Deputy Surveyor. Then the park and open land around it was, in the utilitarian days of 1851, ploughed, and an attempt was made at high farming. A new residence was built, and nothing remains of the old great lodge except the front of an old coach-house, and an enormous stone-lined well, which, however, is soon exhausted by modern requirements.

But the remains—some half dozen in number —of the "Twelve Apostles," the famous group of old oaks, said to be noted in Domesday Book, still ornament the otherwise uninteresting park, and are worth a visit from any lover of ancient trees.

The other great lodge was in Ironshill Walk, in the "Inn" Bailiwick. There is not much interesting history about it among the records that I have unearthed. It stood, like all these lodges, upon a beautiful site, before all the ground around was planted up, and the fine old silver firs that were planted as ornamental trees in the grounds of the old mansion stand up as a landmark that may be seen for many miles from the plateaus of the Forest to the west and northward.

In 1787 the lodge was in the occupancy of His Royal Highness Prince William Frederick, as master keeper of the Inn Bailiwick.

Ironshill Lodge appears to have become somewhat noted in the matter of the heavy expenditure incurred for repairs—an expenditure which the Commissioners, in their report of 1789, do not hesitate to suggest was fostered by the Deputy Surveyor, in accordance with a bad old custom of those days, under which he received a commission of five per cent. upon the outlay, and, further, had the sole supervision of the works.

The Commissioners had the case of Ironshill Lodge before them, and found that an estimate for repairs amounting to £931, 16*s*. 0*d*. had been given in and approved by the Treasury. As they found that the sum £1788, 13*s.* 3*d.* had been laid out upon this lodge in 1769 and 1777, they thought the sum excessive, and, "having the buildings viewed by a competent and experienced surveyor," found that the work might be done for £390 less than the authorised estimate."

The question of the excessive expenditure on the repairs of these lodges in the Forest had been the subject of comment from various influential persons and memorialists for some sixty years previously. In 1724 the verderers had taken upon themselves to interfere in the matter, which was one quite outside their jurisdiction, and received a somewhat severe snub from the Commissioners of the Treasury in reply.

But there was no doubt room for a good deal of suspicion and comment about the large sums which were spent on these lodges, and the possible peculation connected with them. And since they were only held as an emolument of a complimentary and altogether sinecure office, public indignation rose. The result was the gradual disappearance of all these charming old residences. It is a great pity that they were not preserved and utilised on sounder conditions. Ironshill Lodge must have been rather a fine old house, from what we can read of it. Its final office was to serve as an abode for French prisoners of war in the beginning of the last century, after which it was pulled down, and nothing remains of it now except what was once its *cloaca maxima*, now used as a stronghold both by foxes and by badgers.

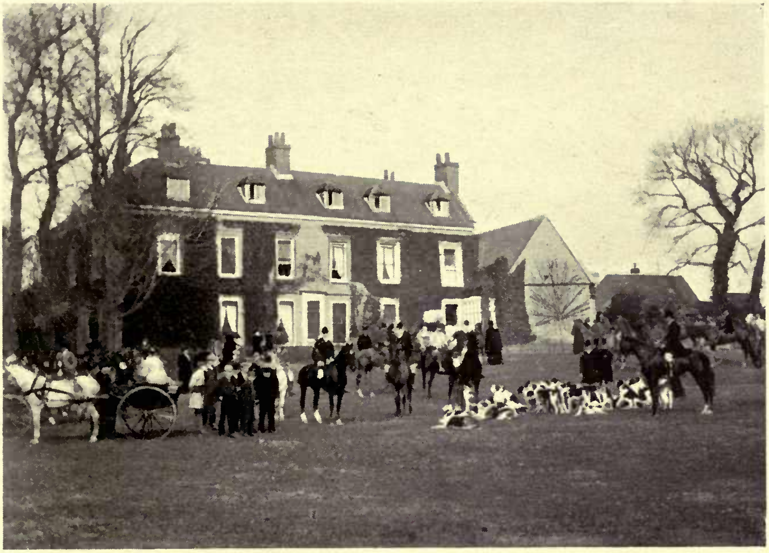
CHAPTER X

ROYAL VISITS

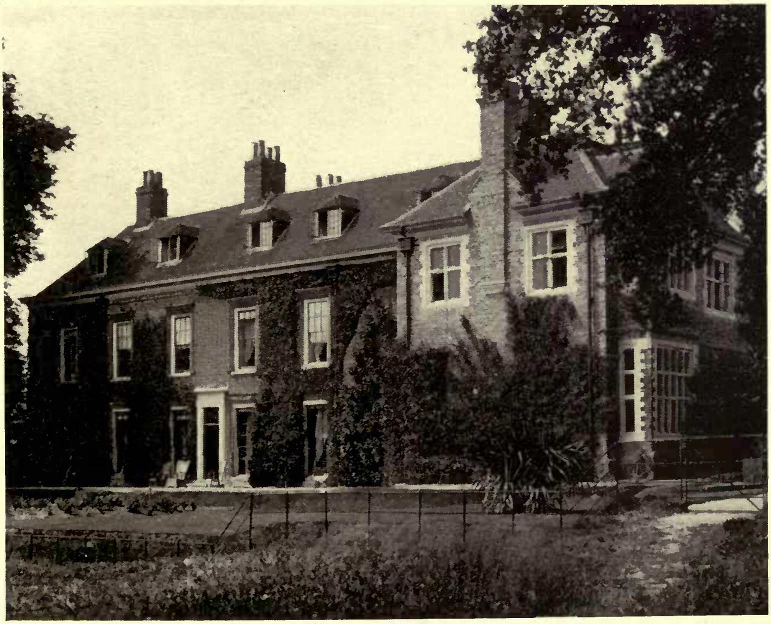
Of these the records I can discover are not half so numerous as one would expect. Of course the Norman kings did not bring the New Forest under their forest laws for nothing. Moreover, as regards their hunting, they had only followed in the line of their predecessors. Canute, no doubt, first used "Ytene," as was the ancient name of the New Forest; and indeed it is said to have been at Southampton, when holding court there, that he tried his little experiment of controlling the tide. That William II died in the Forest we all know, but there is not much record of the visits of his immediate successors to the newly made Forest. Henry III seems to have patronised the Forest of Clarendon chiefly, but to have procured from the New Forest a great number of oak shingles for the roofing of his house there; but his son Edward I spent much time at Lyndhurst from 1278 to 1289. Many documents of state are dated thence, and, as I have before stated, his Queen, Eleanor, spent most of her time there during his absence on his Welsh campaigns. Some of the papers relating to her stay are of interest: "On Tuesday the 13th November 1285, in oblation of the King's daughters and others standing at Lyndhurst in the King's Chapel there, for the soul of the Lord Philip King of France, deceased, 3*s.* 4*d.*"

This is also interesting because it points to the origin of the handsome church at Lyndhurst which replaced, some fifty years ago, the very unpretentious building that did duty as the parish church. Lyndhurst was always a chapelry attached to the mother church of Minstead, and is to this day served by the rector of Minstead or a curate appointed by him. The origin, no doubt, of a chapel being first established there was that it might serve for the King and Queen, and the large staff of followers and servants that accompanied them, at irregular seasons.

Again, on the 4th November 1289: "To Gundesalous Martini, sent by the Queen as far Southampton and Portesmouth in a great ship which came from Spain, to buy divers things for the Queen's use by view of Henry de Monte Pess who went with him to help him—namely oranges, raisins, pomegranates, dates, figs, olive oil &c., &c. For baskets, cords, and carriage of



The King's House before restoration.



The King's House—south side as restored in 1904.

the same from Portesmouth to Lyndhurst together with his expenses for his food for three days when he was away from the Court purchasing the said fruit, &c. 16½*d.*, besides his wages. Total cost of the provisions 67*s.* 0½*d.*"

And again a curious entry: "For the expenses of Stephen de Fyta who came with the King into England, in going from Lyndhurst to Beaulieu, Southampton, and Winchester to see and visit those places and be away from the Court for 4 days, £1. 3*s.* 4*d.*" Although many sovereigns must have visited the Forest, yet I have not found records of their personal proceedings there, the entries being all either of Pleas of the Forest, heard in this or that court of justice, or else records of expenditure on houses or fences, or the like.

In 1637, not long after the order had been given to rebuild the greater part of the King's House, but apparently before it was carried out, Mr. Secretary Coke, writing from Lyndhurst, says: "This morning His Majesty and all that hunted with him in the Forest were roundly wet, and the weather has continued so extreme that since his return to Lyndhurst scarce a room in his house has held out the rain."[1] It is probable that both Charles II and his brother

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[1] See Victoria County History, vol. ii., *Hants.*

James visited Lyndhurst pretty frequently, and most likely, after the building ordered to be done was completed, they were more comfortably housed.

Her Majesty Queen Anne devoted her hunting days to the Forest of Windsor, where she regularly followed the chase; but I trace no record of any visit to the New Forest, though I have already recorded her inspection of the herd of red deer at Woolmer.

Neither George I nor George II had inclinations that led them to the Forest, but during the reign of George III at least two visits were paid—notably in 1789, when he resided at his own house, the old house at Lyndhurst.

An account of this visit is to be found in the *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, June 25, 1789:—"Arrived at Lyndhurst, we drove to the Duke of Gloucester's" (*i.e.* the old King's House, held by the Duke as Warden, in which capacity he was acting as the host of the King).

"The Royal Family were just before us, but the two Colonels came and handed us through the crowd.

"The house, intended for a mere hunting seat, was built by Charles II, and seems quite unimproved and unrepaired from the first foundation. It is the King's, but lent to the Duke of

Gloucester. It is a straggling, inconvenient, old house, but delightfully situated, in a village—looking indeed at present like a populous town, from the amazing concourse of people that have crowded into it.

"The Bowmen and Archers and Buglehorns are to attend the King while he stays here, and in all his rides.

"The Duke of Gloucester was ready to receive the Royal Family, who are all in the highest spirits and delight.

"I have a small old bed-chamber, but a large and commodious, parlour in which the gentlemen join Miss Planta and me to breakfast and to drink tea. They dine at the royal table. We are to remain here some days.

"During the King's dinner, which was in a parlour looking into the garden, he permitted the people to come to the window, and their delight and rapture in seeing their monarch at table, with the evident hungry feeling it occasioned, made a contrast of admiration and deprivation, truly comic. They crowded, however, so excessively, that this can be permitted them no more. They broke down all the paling, and much of the hedges and some of the windows, and all by eagerness and multitude, for they were perfectly civil, and well-behaved."

No doubt, from her description, Madame D'Arblay and her companion occupied those old rooms over the Verderers' Hall, separate from the royal apartments, but as she says "commodious" as to the principal apartment and lined throughout with that fine old Elizabethan oak panelling (for that portion of the house was by no means "built by Charles II"), the remains of which form the dado round the Verderers' Hall in its modern condition.

King George III paid a second visit to the New Forest, but was then the guest of Sir George Rose, at Cuffnells.

Neither George IV nor William IV appears to have visited the New Forest. Nor is there any record of Queen Victoria having honoured the district with her presence; but about the year 1903, King Edward VII paid a flying visit to New Forest, coming over from Cowes, where he was residing on his yacht, and sailing up the Beaulieu River, where he landed, and was met by Lord Montagu, who took him for a long experimental drive (it was in the early days of motor cars) all through the Forest. He paused at the King's House, just to see it, but did not enter it or descend from his car, as time was pressing.

In August 1895, the Aldershot command of troops visited the New Forest for military training, under the command of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught. Four camps were pitched, and all the northern and western parts of the Forest were used for manœuvres. About 13,000 men first came into the Forest, but before the close of the manœuvres, about 20,000 were on the ground.

This was up to that time the largest body of soldiers that had ever been assembled in the New Forest. Nor was it exceeded till 1914, when the Seventh Division of the Army, with artillery and cavalry, was camped at Lyndhurst, during August and September, before going to the fighting line in France. This was the most magnificent body of highly trained athletic men, to the number of nearly 30,000, that could possibly have been seen. They looked, indeed, able to go anywhere and do anything. But those who will read the history of the terrible war that is raging will know but too well what were the difficulties and disasters which confronted that magnificent body of men, almost from their first landing abroad, and what were the results.

But to go back to 1895: the Duke of Connaught visited the Queen's House (as then it was) various times, and honoured me on some occasions by having luncheon there.

During these manœuvres, various members of the Royal Family visited the Forest, and came to the Queen's House for this or that purpose, among them the Duchess of Connaught and Prince and Princess Henry of Battenberg, who visited the church and surroundings of the house, and remained to tea.

No more royalties visited us until 1902 or thereabouts (I am not quite sure of the date), when the present Crown Prince of Germany—then quite a young man—came over to England to pay a series of shooting and other visits, with a sojourn in London, under the auspices of my old friend Count Metternich, then German Ambassador, whom I had known for many years.

My first intimation of this, followed by an explanation from Metternich, was a telegram from Lord Lansdowne, which reached me when I was grouse-shooting at Allenheads in Northumberland, asking me to take charge of the Crown Prince and show him the Forest, and to provide four nice hacks to ride about upon, for the use of himself and his staff!—a pretty tall order for a man to comply with in the month of August, with the ground like iron, who at the best of times was master of a very small stud.

However, I hurried home, and provided the Crown Prince with a nice horse of my own, because, at that date, I thought it was important that he should not break his neck. Things are altered now—and our universal provider of horseflesh, Mr. Bradford, found me mounts—the best he could—for the rest of the staff, with a gentle beast for the ambassador. Well, we wandered over the Forest for two whole days, and I wonder who was the most bored person amongst us—probably Metternich. I who had been to German forests, and knew something of their management, was sorely put to it not to expose all the difficulties and deficiencies lying in the path of New Forest management in forestry matters. However, we got through very pleasantly, with a long interval for tea at the King's House, a luncheon with Sir William Harcourt, and so forth. Metternich had got the Crown Prince out of London for two days, to his own great relief, and the day after he left us he was off to Scotland, and, as I think and believe, to merrier surroundings.

There must be many a heart besides my own thinking sadly of that visit of a cheery lad, and of all that has taken place since. Although one cannot forecast such things, there certainly fell, by look or word, from any of his staff or himself, nothing to cause a foreboding of the terrible shadow that was to fall over us in a brief dozen or so years.

And again, curiously enough, the next sovereign to visit the King's House was the Emperor, Kaiser William II himself.

In 1907 he came to reside for a brief period at Highcliffe, near Christchurch, and spent his time in motoring all over the country. I knew that he would be sure to want to see the King's House, but at that time it was a house of mourning, and a black shadow lay across it.

I took pains, however, to convey to the Kaiser, through Metternich, my hope that he would give me one week's grace before he came, after which time I would be willing and anxious to show him the house, and tell him all that was of interest about it.

His Imperial Majesty, however, selected to come at a time when I was perforce away. He looked over the house, being shown, of course nothing of interest, and, calling for a sheet of letter paper, wrote for me, as a visiting-card, a large "William I. R.," and a second sheet was covered with the signatures of his distinguished staff.

But I am bound to say that he afterwards sent me a very kindly worded letter through Count Metternich to the effect that, if he had ascertained that we were away from home, he would not, at such a time, have come to the house at all, though he wished to visit it. It is now naturally with somewhat mixed feelings that I regard these papers and these reminiscences, after all that has happened since. But there they are, and they cannot but come into my records. I have nothing more to say as to royal personages visiting the old royal residence. But I could fill a big book with the names of the distinguished, pleasant, celebrated and humorous persons who came and helped to make my life happy there. And the month of April was always a crowded and delightful time. The house was looked upon as a pleasant centre to the New Forest, and most people visiting that beautiful district would either come of themselves or would be brought by their local hosts to visit and inspect the old house and the adjoining church.

CHAPTER XI

FORESTRY

At the risk of being tedious, it is necessary to go rather fully into the history of the sylviculture of the New Forest, for most people have the vaguest ideas as to how the various woods, especially the older and most beautiful areas, originated, and under what difficulties the growth of trees was, at all times, carried on in the New Forest. Especially the notion was, up to a certain date, entertained that all the more ancient woods were "primeval forest," spontaneously grown without the assistance of man.

It is no wonder that such erroneous ideas prevail when we find them endorsed and put forward by such bodies as the Committee of the House of Commons on the New Forest question which sat in 1875. In more than one report suggested for adoption it is roundly stated that no cultivation of trees had ever existed in the Forest prior to the Act of 1698, in William III's time. The Committee seems to have accepted this view, in sheer ignorance of the

Forest's history, and it suited the book of those who opposed the Crown, in all it ever had done or proposed to do in the way of management, to be able to argue that since fine woods had grown in the past without any assistance at all, the proper course to adopt was to put a stop to all forestry or cultivation, and let the Forest take care of itself. And the Act of 1877 was intentionally framed on lines devised to fetter and impede everything in the way of forestry as much as possible indeed. Its principal promoters openly admitted as much.

Leaving out the open heaths covered with gorse, and groups of stunted trees of various kinds, and, in places, with fine attempts at a natural regeneration of Scotch fir, both valuable, and interesting to watch, we have first of all some 5300 acres of old woods, all planted before the times of Charles I, and many of them going back to much earlier days. Then there are woods, mostly of pure oak, of dates varying from two hundred to one hundred years old, covering about 7000 acres, and a balance of younger plantations from seventy to forty years of age—totalling about 10,000 acres roughly. These between them make up all of the New Forest that is devoted to the culture of trees.

As to the history of the woods in the last three categories, there is no doubt at all. The Acts of Parliament under which they were made, and the returns as to their formation and planting, are too recent and too easily inspected to admit of any dispute in their case. It is in connection with the "old woods," the great beauty of the Forest, which the opponents of forestry use to bolster up their case by arguing that they are "primeval," and "natural," that we have to look up ancient records long before the year 1700 to show that all these woods were just as much the result of the care of the Forest officers of those days as is the youngest "Crown enclosure" in the Forest.

It is not possible to trace to its commencement the practice of enclosing land for natural regeneration, and for reproduction of stool shoots and seedlings; but the wording of the first Act I can find on the subject, that of Edward IV in 1483, recites the practice as a common one, "In forests and chases within his realm of England, or purlieus of the same," and extends the period during which the land might be enclosed for that purpose from the existing limit of three years to one of seven years.

To go to the New Forest particularly, we find a return in the sixteenth year of Henry VI by Henry Carter of Walhampton and Thomas

Coke of Menestede, who were appointed by letters patent of the King to cut down and sell certain underwoods specified as growing in certain places, and to account for "money paid for enclosing 720 perches of wood and underwood at 4*d.* the perch, and in making three gates to the said enclosure, with hinges, hooks, hasps, staples, locks and keys, bought for the said gates." Further accounts of the same date refer to sales of wood and underwood sold within the bailiwick of East Lynwode (*i.e.* Broomy Walk), and to the enclosing of 785 perches by a hedge made around the wood, with gates, hinges, hasps, &c. &c.

In the twenty-sixth year of Henry VIII there is a note concerning Godshill Coppice—(a plantation of oak still existing, though its present timber is only one hundred years old), and money was paid to divers persons for the making of 10 furlongs 24 perches round the said coppice for the safe keeping of the springs or stools thereof."

Similar records as to coppices in the New Forest are very numerous, and prove that the practice of enclosing woods and fostering the growth of both timber and underwood was carefully attended to—as was the system of forestry of that date.

A further advance was made in the reign of Henry VIII by the passing of the "Act for the Preservation of Woods" in 1543. The keynote to the tenor of the whole Act, best known as the "Statute of Woods," was struck in the preamble:

"The King our Sovereign Lord perceiving and right well knowing the great decay of timber and woods universally within this his realm of England to be such that unless speedy remedy in that behalf be provided there is great and manifest likelihood of scarcity and lack as well of timber for making repairing and maintaining of houses and ships and also for fewel and firewood for the necessary relief of the whole commonalty of this his said realm."

And so the Act goes on to make provision that no coppice woods should be cut until they arrived at a certain maturity—that when they were cut a certain number of "storers or standils," to be of oak wherever possible, should be left to each acre—that these standils should not be cut for timber until they arrived at certain dimensions—and so forth, drawing up, indeed, a working plan for every wood throughout the kingdom, to be strictly followed on pain of a fine for every single transgression, of no less then iii*s*. iv*d*.

It will be noticed that in all these ancient records, woods are always referred to as "coppices" or encoppicement. That was the universal system of woodland management in those days. Planting four feet apart, with nurses, draining and all the rest of it came in long afterwards. The ancient practice was simply to exclude all harmful animals from the woodland, to encourage all the natural seedling growth, of the proper kinds that would assuredly spring up, and to cultivate and realise that self-sown produce in various ways, into which I will go presently.

Every one of the beautiful old woods which we admire so much as we ride through them in summer, or revel in the cry of hounds that echoes and resounds among the old timber in winter, is the result of such a process of enclosing, encoppicement, and cultivation as is prescribed in those Acts of four hundred years ago that I have cited. Whether it be Mark Ash, Bratley, or Ridley Woods, Vereley or Hollands Wood, Matley or Fair Crop or Bramshaw, it is all the same. Without the fostering fence and care, they never could have come into existence, or survived the ravages of the King's deer and commoners' cattle and ponies.

There are plenty of New Forest records to show this. In 1542 we find an Exchequer order from Wm. Paulet, Lord St. John, the Surveyor-General of all the Crown woods, giving instructions to Robert Dorne, Deputy Surveyor of the

King's woods in the county of Southamptom, to the following effect, that "these shall be on behalf of our Sovereign Lord to authorise you and your sufficient deputies by these presents not only to survey the King's said woods both great and small with their values and ages in every Lordship and seignory within the said County, and the wastes and sales made in them, but also to make sale to the King's use, at the best price you can before Easter next coming of as many coppice woods as are of fourteen years' growth and upwards."

In the reign of Elizabeth, in the year 1565, Roger Taverner, the Queen's Surveyor, was ordered to make a comprehensive survey of all the forests south of Trent, and his complete return of the New Forest and its woods is highly interesting to those who know the country well.

Most of the lands capable of growing hardwood are included. Some can hardly be traced under their old names. Others can be identified, but are now absorbed in larger and more modern plantations, though some of these woods are 200 years old to-day and more. But many a name shows us the old open woods of to-day in their condition of encoppicements in 1565.

Though various Acts were passed by James I and by Charles I and Charles II dealing with the better cultivation of New Forest timber, yet I think I have quoted enough, and tried my readers' patience enough, to prove my points: (1) that the timber cultivation in New Forest was of very ancient date provided for by legislation at that date; (2) that it was an erroneous assertion, so freely made in 1875, that all Crown cultivation of timber in New Forest started with a hard and fast line with the Act of 1698.

What, then, follows from this? Why, that the theory that the Forest, if left to itself, will successfully and continuously produce and reproduce fine timber, and maintain its present stock thereof, is a hopeless fallacy. Our ancestors knew this, and they energetically encoppiced and protected their woods, as I have shown. They have left to us such beautiful examples as Ridley Wood, Mark Ash, and others—now in the last stages of old age. Those who are tree lovers know it, as they wander through such woods as Fair Crop, Bratley, and the like, and look on a forest of rapidly decaying trees above their heads, and at their feet a thicket of young oaks and beeches, gnawed to their death, at two feet from the ground, by cattle and ponies, but abundant enough between every group of ancient trees—now, alas, all too far apart—to regenerate the whole wood, if only the protection of a single rail, for twenty years—to the detriment of no one—might be accorded to them. But this is prohibited by an Act that honestly meant well to the New Forest, but, as it came to be drafted, struck it the severest blow it had encountered since the last "well meant" Act in 1851. Alas! between two Acts of Parliament, pulling in diametrically opposite directions, the poor Forest came to sad grief. I am writing now to those who love trees and understand forestry—not the economic forestry of the German professor, though that is all very well in those parts of this—or any—forest that are suitable for it, but more that of the Estate Forestry practised in these islands among parks, ancient chases, forests, such as the New Forest—where the beauty of the surroundings is the first object, and where the annual production of so many cubic feet of marketable timber is not put in front of all other considerations. Two things will strike them, first, that these beautiful old woods are mainly composed of beech timber, and for that reason their life is likely to be all the shorter, than if the oak predominated.

But they will have observed in those specimens of modern encoppicements and natural regeneration, of which, thank God, there are a good many—Denny enclosure is a fine example

—that the woods do not spring up now as beech woods, but of mixed oak and beech, where the soil is suitable for hard woods, and of Scotch fir where it is not. In fact, the oak predominates—therefore certainly the same thing took place four hundred years ago, and the question arises—where are the oaks?

Where should those oaks have gone, but to the Royal Dockyards to play their parts in the sea fights of the nation and the protection of the realm? For that purpose they were grown, and for that they were properly used.

In all surveys and reports on the Forest, the growth of timber especially for the use of the navy was the first question considered, and that encouragement to planting of oak was needed is shown by the returns.

In that of 1608, there were shown as trees fit for the use of the navy 123,922, but in 1783 there were shown only 32,611.

The planting authorised by the Act of 1698 was doing what it could to remedy this state of things, but it could have produced no navy timber as yet. The great sacrifice of timber, shown by the drop from 123,927 trees to 32,611 came out of the old woods I am speaking of, converting them from mixed plantations to somewhat sparse beech woods.

Much of this timber went where it ought to go, viz. to the upkeep of the Royal Navy. Thus, between the years 1761 and 1787 the Forest yielded timber valued at £87,952, of which £54,449 went to the Royal Dockyards; while before that date, in 1707, a warrant was issued for cutting, for the service of the Royal Navy, 300 trees annually for forty years, and further, for felling yearly such trees as should be found most useful for the navy. And in the years 1849 to 1852, when the utilitarian spirit mostly prevailed in the Forest, when a navy purveyor for some three years occupied the Queen's House itself, when also the old wooden walls of England were about to be renewed for the last time, upwards of £150,000 of timber went to the dockyards — rightly and properly enough, if it was fit for ship-building. For what is a Royal Forest meant, if it is not to supply timber for national service, and if its growth is not cared for and maintained so as to keep up that supply?

And there was another constant drain on the more valuable oaks in the constant thieving that went on all over the Forest, by the neglect of the Forest officers to check the malpractices, if, indeed, they did not participate in the profits made, and increase them by the bad system of perquisites which they were allowed to take.

So bad had things become, that the Commissioners of 1789 were induced to say that "the neighbouring inhabitants have been naturally led to partake in the spoil, and hardly to think it a crime to take what no one seemed anxious to protect." That this was no idle word is shown by an item, in a return of certain receipts from the Forest, which appears in the most matter of course way, namely, "The like of casual oak trees found by the surveyor cut down, and by him seized and saved from being stolen—Loads 869, value £1526."

If filching of timber was regularly carried on, as well as a supply kept up for the navy, it is a matter for wonder that we should find any oaks at all left in the woods existing at that date. Possibly those we now see were not at that date large enough for navy purposes, or even to tempt the purloiner. Under certain circumstances the taking of even a single tree was visited severely enough. At the Justice Seat held in 1670 there comes a petitioner in the form of Henry Browne of Brockenhurst, who had been fined £10 for cutting down a tree to make a maypole, and the cart and horses carrying it forfeited, "though they did not belong to the petitioner

Browne, and the presentment was made absolutely against the consent of the regarders and verderers," being "solely fermented by Phanatics who have a prejudice to all customes used tyme out of mynd." Prays to have fine remitted.

I am afraid, though, that the punishment was inflicted with but little thought for the preservation of the timber of the Forest, and a good deal of that desire to put a stop to all ancient forms of recreation which prevailed during the lugubrious times of the Commonwealth, like to the famous prohibition of the sport (?) of bear-baiting—not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the people!

There are, however, some cases where these old woods consist wholly, or nearly so, of oaks alone. There can be no doubt in these cases that the woods were carefully cultivated with a view to the purposes of the navy, to the exclusion of other considerations, and that great pains must have been taken to eradicate all the beech, under the impression that the oak would thrive better without it—a view that is not endorsed by modern foresters nor by the result before us.

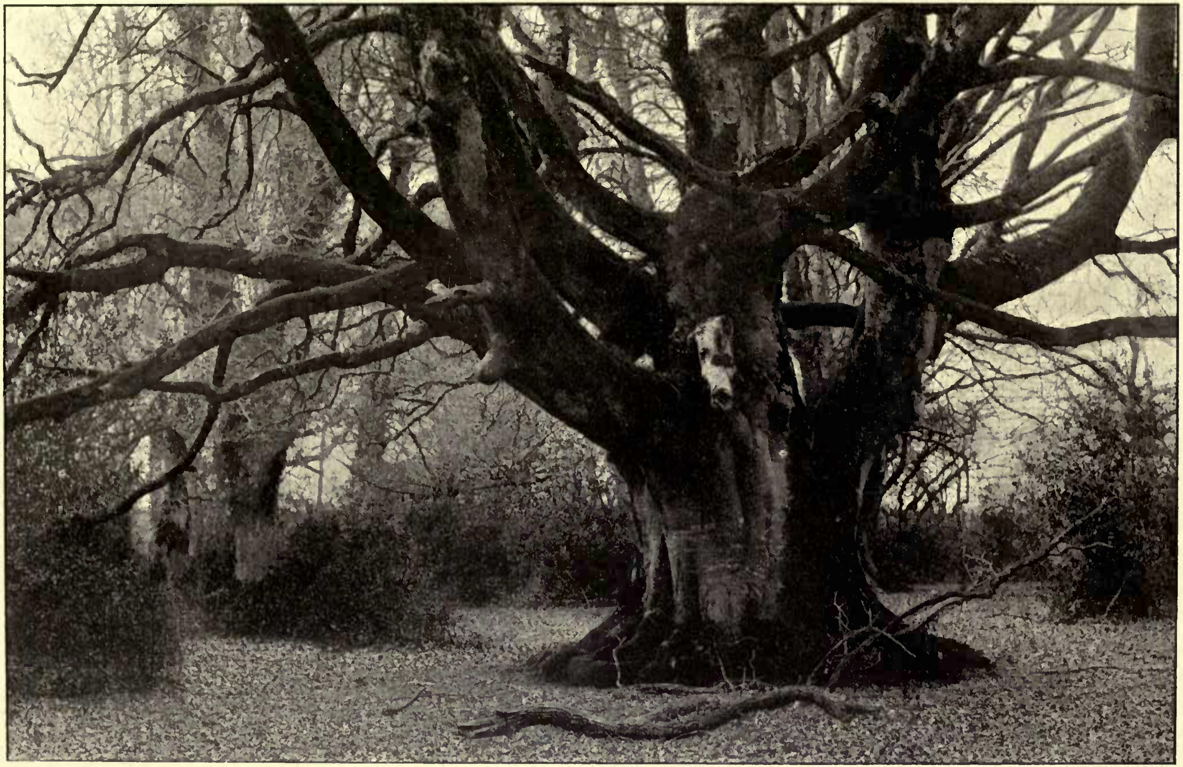
A second point will strike any observer of trees as he wanders through these ancient groves. It is that almost every beech—and some oaks—are pollarded. And it is perhaps to this treatment that they owe their great size and their age, exceeding the average life of the beech. But why was this pollarding done? And under what circumstances?

The reason is to be found in the method of cultivation practised in the early days of these encoppicements, viz. to farm them out upon lease to various tenants under very strict conditions. The crop realised was mainly the underwood, and used no doubt for fuel and charcoal. It was not permitted to fell timber trees, nor to cut down trees such as oak and beech which might ultimately become timber. But a sort of cultivation by pollarding on underwood lines of young trees seems to have been permitted. Only, the tenants or farmers were well looked after, and presentments against them in the Forest courts are often recorded.

Thus, in 1571, we find a presentment of the regarders of the Forest to the effect that "a coppice called Ridley Coppice hath been spoiled by cattle by one John Marlowe." And again, there is an indictment "for felling five dotards containing ten loads of timber, value 6*s*." And again, for "shrouding 200 trees in the said coppice and selling the same." Again, "for divers and many young oaks felled for stakes for the hedge." All these things appear to have been inconsistent with the rules laid down to regulate the method of farming the coppice.

Ridley Wood, where these misdemeanours occurred, is one of the most beautiful woods in the whole Forest. It consists almost entirely of pollarded beeches, with wide spreading heads of numerous different stems, some of very large dimensions, forming, both individually and as a whole, woodland scenes of very great beauty. It has amply repaid the care that was bestowed upon it in its early days.

There were other forestal crimes committed with regard to these ancient encoppicements. In one case the "Regarders and Preservators of the Bailiwick of Fritham make oath and say in English words, that in the coppice called Hocknold (Ocknell Wood) there is felled *by the ground* four oaks"—*i.e.* the pollards might be re-pollarded, but not felled. These records, trivial in themselves, when taken with the story that the old woods tell for themselves, throw a flood of light on the origin and history of the ancient woodlands which most profoundly interests the practised observer. That they were first enclosed is certain by the records and by the heavy bills we find being presented to the Exchequer of the day for the charges of doing the work. That they were farmed out, on peculiar terms, is shown



AN ANCIENT POLLARD BEECH.

by the leases and grants to the various tenants; how they were farmed, we have to glean from the complaints as to breaches of the conditions of the leases. That the underwood was regularly cut either by the tenant or by the Crown, is shown by the receipts for sales of this kind. All actual timber seems to have been taken for the Navy.

But the presentment as to the "shrouding," of trees, and as to the cutting of "four oaks *by the ground*," shows, if the woods themselves did not tell the tale, that pollarding the trees was the prescribed practice.

The effect, quite apart from scientific forestry, is certainly most beautiful. The great spreading trees, covering, no doubt, five times the space they ought to occupy when the main consideration is the number of cubic feet of timber to be produced per acre, are therefore anathema to the forester, who avers that he is nothing if he is not commercial—but to the ordinary lover of beautiful forest scenery they are very dear.

I well recollect one of the most distinguished scientific foresters of my time declaring to me that he had never seen an English hedgerow tree that was worth looking at—as a tree.

I, with my mind full of hundreds of glorious hedgerow ashes in the East Riding of Yorkshire—

of the magnificent oaks in the fields of Herefordshire, Staffordshire, and a dozen other counties—of the elms of Berkshire and Dorsetshire, stood aghast at the saying, coming as it did from such a distinguished authority.

But I took heart when he explained to me that what he meant was that all these trees, beautiful objects as they were to the sentimental forester—a being he described as altogether outside the pale and not worthy of consideration!—were to his mind all of the wrong shape for the production of timber. That they occupied five times the space they ought to cover, if the growing of timber on proper lines was the object, and further, that in any case they shaded and spoilt a certain area over which the farmers crops ought to be the sole consideration. And no account need be taken of the beauty of the country or of the estate of the landlord, who after, all, let it to the farmer, or cultivated it himself, on terms which had been previously considered with regard to the existence of the trees.

Well, everything that my distinguished pundit said was perfectly true, but for all that, and for all his immensely superior science, gathered in various parts of the Empire, I dared to disagree with him, and was thankful to believe that even yet there are thousands of English landowners who will sacrifice a few rods here and there of the economical value of their estates in order to preserve their ancient beauty and their glorious old timber.

This is rather a digression from New Forest matters, but it serves as an illustration of the different views that foresters equally in earnest and equally capable may take of the proper methods of dealing with sylviculture. And especially how difficult it is to adjudicate upon such matters in the case of property of the peculiar nature of the New Forest, where you have, on the one hand, large areas of woods, ancient, beautiful, greatly appreciated by the public, and wholly, as I have tried to show, the outcome of the application of certain regular principles of forestry, but where also you have large areas of modern plantations which should, without doubt, be treated on economic lines, from a different point of view altogether.

All this pollarding of trees was finally extinguished by the Act of William III, in 1698. By that Act it was made a punishable offence for any keeper to top or lop any timber tree for the purpose of browsing the deer, and, as the custom of farming out the coppices had fallen into disuse, no one had any interest in thus dealing with the timber.

We can therefore safely assume that all the old pollards forming the woods so greatly appreciated by the public are not less than from 200 to 300 years old. Probably the latter date is more nearly the correct one.

A lover of scenery connot fail to contrast their picturesque forms with those of more modern woods—even those planted immediately after the Act of 1698 — and there is food for reflection in the mind of the arboriculturist as to the extra term of years and the beauty of form that has been conferred on these trees in consequence of their maltreatment in early life.

The holly was always a principal feature in the New Forest. It is in truth the weed of the Forest, and a very beautiful weed too. The rich glossy evergreen foliage which clusters around the great stems of the beeches in winter—and I have never found anything that flourishes under the immediate shadow of the beech as the holly does in the New Forest — is one of the great features of forest scenery. It was always deemed to be of importance—whether for covert for game or for browse for the deer seems uncertain.

But in the report of J. Norden on the New Forest and its coppices, made in 1609 to Sir

Julius Knight, Chancellor of His Majesty's Exchequer, he relates that "Holmsley Coppice," (which took its very name from its splendid production of the tree whereof we are speaking) "consisteth only of holly or holm, which are for the most part very old, and by reason that the country people have taken the bark of the most of them to make bird lime, they are all decayed and dead, and if they be not taken they will utterly perish and the covert will be destroyed, whereas the cutting in a seasonable time will revive and continue the same."

This is an interesting record as to country life and what was then called "birding," and the means whereby it was carried out; but it is also interesting as showing the ancient knowledge, now so often forgotten, of the proper way to cultivate hollies and similar evergreens, viz. to lop and pollard them as soon as ever they show signs of decay.

By this means, and by this only, such shrubs may be kept alive until they attain great age and dimensions; and it is to this method of treatment, chiefly adopted for the purpose of browsing of deer in winter, that the existence of some of the almost patriarchal trees of the New Forest is to be attributed.

Those who are familiar with the Forest will have noticed that most of these fine pollard trees stand not far from the old keepers' lodges. It was to browse their deer that they cut these vigorous old stems, as often as they would stand it, and for obvious reasons they selected those nearest at hand—and these gradually multiplied: at such places will be found grand old stems of 7 and 8 feet in girth, with fine spreading heads, that show clearly on examination the marks where they have been pollarded three and even four times—probably at intervals of thirty years or so, thus prolonging their existence—and that as noble forest trees—to a period enormously in excess of that of the ordinary holly shrub as we know it in gardens and pleasure grounds.

When the deer were removed, the reason for pollarding and lopping of hollies went with them. But luckily a new demand sprung up, with the great increase of population, for holly, and especially berried holly, at about Christmas time. Fortunately for the hollies, and incidentally for the Crown revenue also, this demand goes a long way towards taking the place of the old lopping for browsing purposes. If the demand goes on, and the cutting is judiciously done, the Forest may continue to hold its ancient holly trees for centuries in the future as it has done in the past, and to bring in a good revenue from this sylvan by-product into the bargain.

There were other causes that depleted these old encoppicements, and robbed the navy of the benefit to be derived from them. I spoke before of downright thieving and peculation, but sometimes the mischief arose in high places. For instance, among the State (Domestic) papers of 1664 is one in which His Majesty Charles II is "informed that two coppices—one called King's Copse, the other New Copse. . . . and that the underwoods of the said copses are valued at £1292, besides the trees and saplings growing thereon, to be preserved for our own use.—We are graciously pleased upon the humble petition of Winifred Wells, one of the Maids of Honour to our dearest consort and Queen, to give unto her the benefit of the said underwoods.—C. R."

The order speaks for itself, but it is quite worth while for anybody who is interested in old tales of courts to look up the plainly spoken account of Miss Winifred Wells, and of her remarkable misadventure at a court ball, in Pepys' Diary, 1663-4.

It was hard enough for the woods to have to meet charges such as these, but there was, and is, another drain still more hurtful — in the form of the right of common of estovers.

This is a right, attaching to certain defined houses in and around the Forest, to have, free of any payment, a certain number of loads of fuel wood annually "from the open and unenclosed wastes of the Forest"—that is to say, from these very encoppicements of mature age of which I have been writing.

About 100 years ago these claims amounted to over 840 loads annually, but at that date the Crown set itself to reduce this impost on the best part of the Forest in real earnest.

All allowances of fuel made to the lodges of master keepers, groom-keepers, and all other forest officers were commuted or extinguished as the appointments fell in. All the rights attaching to the—then very numerous—copyholds of the Manor of Lyndhurst were also extinguished as the lives fell in. And the Crown kept a market open from that date until now to purchase at full market value at any time all rights of this nature that the owner would sell. In these ways the number of the rights fell from 840 loads to about 370 at the time when I came to the Forest, and they have since been bought out whenever opportunity arose; they stand somewhere about 240 loads at the present day. It is very desirable that they should be wholly wiped out.

From the earliest days the exercise of this common right was deemed most hurtful. In the twenty-sixth year of Elizabeth an Exchequer order was issued, with the view of checking the practice, that "no inhabiters of any house newly builded since the beginning of the Queen's reign shall be allowed any wood in the same Forest to be burnt and expended therein."

The right is thus limited to houses that stood when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, including such reconstructions and renewals as have been rendered necessary during the lapse of years.

This right of common was formerly the subject of great abuses. Whole trees of beech, or even of oak, were assigned as representing so many loads, and were quite unlawfully sold or made use of for any purpose rather than that of the necessary fuel of the house to which they were assigned. In later years the fuel wood has always been cut and stacked by the Crown, and good timber is never included in the assignments, so that it is at least fuel wood, and fuel wood only, that is now carried off.

But the right is at the present date more injurious than ever, although so much money has been sunk in reducing the number of claims, because the area of "open and unenclosed woods" from whence the supply can be drawn is also become so much reduced, that the tax falls far more heavily upon the area that is left. It is the case that they are becoming so old and decayed that the frequent windfalls go some way towards satisfying the claims to fuel wood. But it happens, often enough, that the sovereign's sign[1] manual authority has to be obtained for the sacrifice of 100 or 200 of these old trees, and the loss is too severe to be often repeated, when the drain by windfalls is also considered. In 1883 Sir Henry Loch, then Commissioner of Woods, introduced a bill into Parliament with the object of obtaining powers to buy up, arbitrarily, all these rights, for the purpose of protecting the old woods. The price, whatever it might be, was to be fixed by arbitration or, in the case of small amounts, by the local magistrates in Petty Sessions.

But the commoners resented any interference with their right, whether it was for the benefit of the Forest or not, and, after the bill had passed its second reading and committee stages, the third reading was blocked, and, owing to press of business we had to abandon it. Thus the right still continues to be a perpetual drain on the most precious part of the Forest, to the sad detriment of the public property. The traveller through the New Forest may pass, after surveying these old encoppicements with all their interesting history, into one of the old oak woods planted under the Act of 1698, in the years which immediately followed the passing of that Act.

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[1] No tree of timber dimensions may be cut in the open parts of New Forest without the authority of the Sign Manual of the Sovereign.

A more astonishing contrast in methods of sylviculture can hardly be imagined. Here are no, or very few, beeches. Here are no pollarded trees. On the contrary, we see around us woods wholly of oak, standing very close together—even now, after fifty years of constant thinnings, drawn up, as such trees must necessarily be, to a considerable height, and containing an average of say 100 cubic feet of timber, with no side branches up to many feet in height.

These trees were are all sown, not planted. The method of sowing is recorded. "Pits or beds of three spits of ground each were dug, a yard apart, and three acorns planted triangularly in each bed. Half a bushel of acorns were allotted for each person to plant in one day. Two regarders attended every day during the time of planting, to see that it was properly done: and after the ground was fully planted with acorns, it was sown with hawes, holly berries, sloes, and hazelnuts, and drains cut where necessary; and traps were set to catch mice; and persons attended daily to re-set the traps and keep off crows and other vermin." See Report of Commissioners of 1789.

Apparently, the dense plantations thus formed were never thinned, but grew up on the principle of "the survival of the fittest." Whether these are good principles or bad ones must be decided by the pundits of the modern science of Forestry. But the result was undeniable. When the French professors of forestry from the school at Nancy, headed by M. Boffre, the chief of that institution, visited the forests and woodlands of England in 1885, they left it on record that nowhere in Europe had they found pure oak woods with a larger quantity of cubic feet to the acre than in these old William III plantations in the New Forest.

What is more, up to that date, when the trees were well under two hundred years old, the majority of them were sound timber, though some were showing signs of old age—an indication of the brief limit of life to be enjoyed by our best timber trees, in the very moderate soil and bad exposure of most of the New Forest woods.

And sure enough, in the thirty years during which I have occasionally thinned those woods, the quality of the timber has been steadily deteriorating until, in 1913, it was worth but little more than half the price it fetched in 1883.

The portion of the old William III woods that I had to deal with was not much more than a remnant. The greater portion of them had been felled soon after the Act of 1851, partly to bring in revenue and much needed timber for the dockyards, and partly to clear the better land, which they occupied (our ancestors always chose good land to plant, or else did not plant at all).

At the time of what I may call the "anti-forestry" agitation in 1875, much blame was sought to be cast on the Commissioners of Woods for cutting these plantations, which undoubtedly consisted of very fine old trees of peculiar character. But it is difficult to see what other course they could pursue. The formation of these woods had been originally authorised solely on the plea that when mature they should supply the needs of the navy. They had arrived at the mature stage, and contained a large amount of valuable timber of which the navy stood in need. It was impossible to resist the claim of the dockyards, although to grant it involved the sacrifice of many acres of beautiful woods which were a source of pleasure to the inhabitants of the locality. They loudly protested against their removal, and from the economical point of view, the action of the Commissioners of the day is amply justified by the decay and deterioration of the remaining woods of that age to which I have just referred. They were cut only just in time.

However, to leave New Forest ancient history, as far as we can in dealing with old woods, the next series of plantations to come under observation are those of 1776 and thereabouts, such as Furzy Lawn, Copse of Linwood, &c. And here may be observed a new thing—viz. the presence of the Scotch fir, which has not been apparent in any one of the old woods hitherto referred to.

In such plantations as I have named, it would appear to have been planted for protection belts on the outsides of the woods, and also in areas —often of some size—where obviously the oak had failed, where the soil had been too shallow on the upper lands, and the exposure too severe for it. And in various such places the Scotch fir has grown to fine dimensions and produced good timber.

It was about the year 1770—I am not sure of the exact date—that an Exchequer order was issued for the making of experiments in order to ascertain if the Scotch fir—that exotic in the Southern counties—could be successfully cultivated, "in order to provide top masts and bowsprits for our ships of war." The first evidence of experiment in the New Forest is that little enclosure, with the traces of its original fence around it, known as Ocknell Clump. Chosen, no doubt, as an experimental situation, with the worst exposure possible from all sides, and on the poorest heath lands, it has answered the question whether the New Forest was suited to the growth of Scotch fir timber very decisively. In such a situation, and on such a soil, no trees could possibly grow to fine dimensions; but they withstood all hardships, and the answer to the experiment now is a landmark conspicuous from all sides of the north Forest—one that has guided home safely to the lower ground and to civilisation many a wet, weary hunter or tourist, who has strayed into the New Forest from some far country.

No doubt the conspicuous clumps of better fir trees that stand at Boldrewood formed a part of the same experiment, and so also in all probability was the splendid group at Hill Top within the Beaulieu manor, locally known as "The Fir Garden"—a most conspicuous landmark for many miles round, and even from the hills of the Isle of Wight. Here the trees have grown to splendid dimensions, and there can be no doubt as to the success of the experiment in that case. Yet it is on poor heath land. It is very remarkable to watch the spread of the Scotch fir over all the south-west of England, where it may almost be said to be the dominant tree now, and to reflect that all this growth dates back to no longer than 150 years.

That it was indigenous to the South of England in prehistoric times is proved by fossil remains, but it would appear to have completely died out for a period—possibly of æons—and then to have been reinstated not two centuries ago by the hand of man. At any rate it thrives wonderfully in the thin poor soil of the New Forest, on land which will grow nothing else, and seems to have been specially designed by nature to clothe these barren wastes.

Its propagation became more and more frequent in New Forest as its value became apparent, and, passing on to another series of woods, viz. the oak plantations of 1805 to 1815, we find a deep shelter belt of Scotch firs round every plantation, and also shelter lines planted here and there right across the wood, so as to break the prevailing winds.

There is a pretty good area of woods of this class—roundly about 6000 acres—and some of them are fine timber, such, for instance, as Amberwood, Ocknell, Hurst Hill, or Rhinefield Sandys, and Aldridge Hill.

It is very interesting to trace the growth of methods of forestry by examining this series of woods. They appear to have certainly been grown by planting, not by sowing of acorns. The principle of using nurses of coniferous timber to draw up and protect the delicate young oaks is adopted by means of the Scotch fir protecting belts. Occasionally we find larch in these woods, but they are more in the form of groups than in that of nurses regularly planted.

Thinning was the essence of the cultivation of that era. From the first removals of anything that might be called nurses, to the cutting out of oak at the earliest age when it was in any way marketable, every tree was cut that it was thought could be "spared," in order to give more room to its neighbour to spread and become a fine tree, and incidentally to bring in an annual income to the Crown.

In the New Forest I found a regular five years' rotation, dating back some fifty years, under which each section of oak wood that was of marketable age, and would yield bark—then worth £4 to £5 a ton—was gone over as each lustrum revolved. "Income" was the overruling cry from the Office of Woods and the Treasury, and so the woods were scraped over for income till they were thinned to death.

There is some common sense in this method. It is quite reasonable to come to the conclusion that you will eat your cake, and not have it to hoard. But it is not reasonable to hold up English Forestry to contempt, as compared with continental methods, when two entirely different methods are being pursued. It may be that the English method is the worse of the two, but if the accounts of the two systems could be compared, I am not sure which of them would, on the whole, show the better balance.

There is no doubt that the revenue obtained by thus heavily thinning these plantations of a hundred years old was a very large one. The difficulty was, how to deal with the standing crop that remained when the last cutting that could reasonably be called a "thinning" had taken place.

Of course, a German forester would not hesitate for a moment. He would simply—and quite rightly, in accordance with sound forestry—clear the whole standing crop and plant anew, or he would endeavour to provide a young crop to spring up to succeed the older generation that he was realising for profit.

But in the New Forest we have no choice. The Act of 1877, which laid down a system of sentimental Forestry, provided that under no circumstances was a single acre of plantation to be "wholly levelled or cleared," so that, good or bad, decadent or not, a "sufficient number" of old trees had to be left on the ground. This precluded us from clear cutting and planting, however correct that method seemed to be. But I, with others, observed and learnt, in Germany, certain methods of cultivation of trees by natural regeneration, and these methods seemed to suit the dilemma of the New Forest very well.

In certain plantations, notably in Aldridge Hill and Rhinefield Sandys, both woods of good oaks, but already decimated, we again thinned the standing crop very heavily, leaving only a few trees per acre as parents, first, of course, re-enclosing the ground against cattle. The result of these thinnings, done by degrees, was to bring in to the Exchequer a good many hundreds of pounds. The ground between these trees was cleared of undergrowth, the fern kept down, and the soil partly broken.

The result, though gradual, has been very encouraging. The ground is gradually becoming covered with young plants and scions of the best of the parent trees, and there seems every reason to hope that the rising generation of foresters will see an abundant crop of young trees surrounding all the standards that are left, so that it can use its discretion whether or not it will turn into the round sum of money that they represent these trees of 1815, secured by the fact that owing to the regeneration that has taken place, the ground will not be "wholly levelled or cleared," but that a "sufficient number of the best trees" will be left on the land, so that, in this case, sentiment and practical forestry can for once walk hand in hand.

After the plantations of the date of round about 1815, there was rather a lull in the planting of the New Forest. A certain number of plantations were formed in the period 1840–1850, but they are not of very great importance. In them is to be noticed the advance of the Scotch fir, and its more frequent use as a nurse and for a belt. Of these plantations are such as King's Hat Foxhunting Enclosure (why so called I never could divine) and Fletcher's Thorns.

But now we come to the period of the great impetus in planting caused by the Deer Removal Act of 1850, and this resulted, despite the check so speedily placed upon its powers, in the enclosing and planting of about 10,000 acres. The first process was to complete the powers conferred by the Act of William III in 1698, and to take in the whole of the 12,000 acres authorised thereby. Accordingly, such plantations as Oakley and Islands Thorns were made—great woodlands now—of some 600 or 700 acres each, and for the most part very promising young woods. These were planted more on the lines laid down by Mr. Brown of Arniston, the right hand man of Mr. Kennedy, Commissioner of Woods in the years 1849–51, and the cause of that great revolution which nearly broke up the Office of Woods, by uniting against it the whole force of the deputy surveyors (then a numerous body) and all the local officers in the service all over the country. It ended in the removal of Mr. Kennedy from his office, by Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

However, the principles of Mr. Brown endured, and the plantations of that date were planted with oak where the soil was good enough, with nurses in alternate rows up to four feet apart all over, and, where the soil was hopelessly poor, with Scotch fir only. Larch was largely used for the nurses, and did very well up to a certain age; but after about fifty years of growth, it begins to fail in the New Forest soil, and soon deteriorates. On the whole, the scheme paid well; the millions of larch and Scotch fir that have been cut out of Islands Thorns and Oakley plantations—to name only two—have brought in money enough to repay the cost of the planting several times over, or to produce enough cash to yield a good interest on the capital expended, and to leave a thriving crop of oak on the ground.

These woods, with Parkhill, Pound Hill, and other of that date, went far to exhaust the oak-growing soil of the Forest, which, after all, is but a small proportion thereof, and quickly they came to the bad heath lands, which could only carry Scotch fir, and that none too well. The result necessarily was the formation of unattractive fir plantations, such as Slufter, Highland Water, or Hawk Hill. Had the Deer Removal Act been carried out to the full, the extent of woodlands of this character would have been increased five-fold. And this would, at the present date, have seriously depreciated the attractions of the Forest, though in future years a great area of fine Scotch fir forest, well grown and well thinned, might have greatly enhanced it.

Perhaps the last enclosure made—that of Denny—was the best; and I believe it was intended to serve as an object lesson to the public. For some years the accusation had been levelled at the Office of Woods that they deliberately included fine old woods within the limits of their plantations, and then cleared the ancient beeches, in order to replace them with rows of Scotch fir.

That story was false; the fine old woods now standing in such comparatively old enclosures as Oakley, Knightwood, and the Heronry in Vinney

Ridge, give the lie to any such tale; but in the case of Denny the Commissioners went further, and enclosed (but without taking out the decaying trees, as should have been done) a much larger area of old oak and beech woods.

The natural regeneration that has sprung up around these old patriarchs, in every space open enough to admit the sun and air, constitutes as fine a specimen of the self-reproduction of a decaying old wood as could possibly be seen—incomplete, it is true, for lack of the removal here and there of the most hopelessly decadent trees, in order that the growth of the young scions may replace them; but still enough to show to any observant members of the public how easy it is to perpetuate those beautiful old open woods which he sees hastening to decay before his very eyes.

In making these plantations between 1850 and 1875, a fault was made which is very apparent now. The object and reason, even at that later date, for making them was, first, foremost, and all the time, to produce oak timber.

But only a little soil, comparatively speaking, in the New Forest will grow oak. The mistake was in making large plantations. But the Act under which they were made provided that they should be of no less size than 300 acres, so that there should be no selecting of small areas of the best soil only, to the detriment of the commoner.

Therefore in every plantation was a considerable area of inferior land—some of it, especially in the younger plantations, very bad. About that there was no doubt; Scotch fir was the only possible crop. Some soil was quite good, and here again oak was without hesitation selected as the proper crop.

But between these two grades of soil was a very large area which might—or might not—grow oak to some dimensions at any rate. It was no easy point to decide, and so I found that my predecessors had given the benefit of the doubt to a considerable area of moderate land, and planted oak upon it.

It is for this reason that, now that the experiment has been proved to be a failure, the observer of woods finds so much stunted hopeless oak of fifty years of age.

I think it was wise to give the oak a chance, since the growth thereof was the primary object in forming the plantation; but the result is a failure in many of these doubtful cases, and will have to be corrected, some hardier crop, such as Scotch fir, being reverted to.

CHAPTER XII

HUNTING

Hunting has always been an integral part of New Forest economy. For that purpose it was first afforested, and without hunting it would not have continued to exist during all these ages. In its earlier centuries the deer was, of course, the object of the chase, probably by hounds driving the deer to men armed with bows and arrows. They are apt to follow the same line year by year, according to the conformation of the ground. It is curious that the spot where Rufus was killed is the very one in that part of the Forest where any person desirous of viewing a hunted deer would take his stand. The reason is that the two ancient manors of Minstead and Canterton, then as now enclosed, narrow the open Forest to an isthmus between their respective fences. Then, as now, the line which the deer were sure to take ran past the spot where Rufus stood, and now, as then, the follower of the chase who wants to view the deer takes his stand just where the Red King met his fate.

But from ancient books on hunting we know that in the Middle Ages the practice of hunting deer "at force"—that is, with a swift pack of hounds that can run him down—had become popular on the Continent; but we have not precise records of the date when the practice became general in England, and in the Forest. Indeed there is very little to be found about hunting in the New Forest in those early times. We find plenty to show how rigidly the deer were protected and preserved to the King's use. Neither the Forest nor the deer were thus conserved except for purposes of sport, and we may take it for granted that plenty of royal hunting went on, though I cannot quote chapter and verse for it, without more research than I have given to this matter.

We find in Stuart times more regular records. In 1638 is a return of the sale of timber "employed for making of bridges and causeways to secure His Majestie riding over the boggs and moores there and not being otherwise used to the said waste." For what can His Majesty have used them save for the chase?

How many of us have hastily galloped, perspiring in hot chase, across these most convenient little passages and causeways without giving a thought to the noble King who had them con-

A Meet of the New Forest Foxhounds.

structed, and the subsequent unhappy episode in Whitehall. One causeway, indeed, near Matley, is known to all men as the "King's Passage," but which King made it, and at what date, we know not. Some of these "causeways" are very old. Let those who now use it for hunting bow the head and thank the monarch who ordered it to be made, without forgetting those who have maintained it in good order during all these centuries.

In 1641 a warrant was issued by the Earl of Holland to the officers and minister of the said Forests (being this side Trent) to permit "this noble French Lord the Baron of Vieville, second son of the Marquis Vieville, to hunt, and kill with his hounds or beagles, the game of hares within the said Forests, Chaces, and Warrens, or any of them, for his recreation, at reasonable times and in convenient places where herds of deer do not life" (*sic*).

The order issued by Charles II for the additions and repairs to the King's House and for the erection (see preceding pages) of a stable to contain "fortie horse," seem to point to the maintenance of a pretty large hunting establishment. And the casual reference, which I have quoted on a preceding page, to the King and all his attendants, in 1637, having gone out hunting and returned "roundly wet," all of them, shows that they were keen on the sport. It comforts me a little when I recall the many times that I have returned from hunting "roundly wet," starved and shivering, to find that these discomforts were experienced two hundred and fifty years ago by such exalted personages.

Although George III was a keen hunter, it does not appear that he took the trouble to bring his hounds from Windsor to the New Forest to hunt deer. But in 1836 we find that the Royal Buckhounds, with Charles Davis as their huntsman, came down to hunt the red deer, carrying such of them as they took, back to the Swinley paddocks at Ascot. Lord Erroll was then master.

It is recorded that two thousand people were present at the meet at Lyndhurst. For several years subsequently the Royal Pack, under successive Masters of the Buckhounds, visited the New Forest, and enormous crowds attended their fixtures. Of course red deer only were hunted by this pack, and the hunting was "at force"—that is to say, the hounds alone were relied upon to run down and take their deer, by unaided speed and endurance. The old French custom of using "*relais*" of hounds had long died out here.

Harbouring was, of course, a necessity, and this work was done then, as now, by the keepers of the Forest. I found an entry in an old copy of the Diary kept by the steward of the Lord Warden, whose orders the keepers obeyed, to this effect: "April 26, 1848—all the keepers must attend to-morrow morning, Tuesday, April 27, at Bolton's Bench, in their uniform, at 11 o'clock, to attend Her Majesty's Hounds without fail. And the keepers on the lower side must harbour a stag."

Once again only did the Royal Pack come—in 1852; for the Deer Removal Act had been passed, and, as far as was possible, the deer were doomed. They hunted for some little time, and took away what they wanted for the stock in the Swinley paddocks.

After that time the deer, red and fallow, warrantable or "rascall," as the Duke of Bolton phrased it, were hunted, netted, shot, persecuted, and destroyed for the two years during which the official "jehad" lasted. But until this had run its course, nothing in the way of sport revived.

But as the deer became reduced to very small numbers, the sport of hunting them became apparent. And quite a competition sprung up among the sporting squires of the neighbourhood to "assist the Crown" by "removing" deer with the aid of various packs which they assembled together. So great, indeed, was this competition, and so manifold the disputing and quarrelling among them about prior rights, that the Crown had to take a firm stand, and eventually narrowed permissions down to one pack only hunting in the spring months, sometimes under the authority of Mr. Morant, and sometimes of Mr. Lovell of Hincheslea.

A pack of harriers, too, belonging to Colonel Montressor visited the Forest for two or three successive springs. And in one year Lord Wolverton's famous pack of bloodhounds came to try conclusions with the wild fallow deer, with but moderate success. This visiting of the Forest by strange packs, especially in the spring, for hunting—the quarry being, of course, the fox, before that removal of the deer which made hunting them possible—seems to have been a practice of long standing. The *Records of the Charlton Hunt*, to which I have previously referred in connection with Boldrewood Lodge. shows how that establishment annually travelled out of Sussex, and took up their quarters at Boldrewood, the residence of Lord de la Warr—though this pack also made a practice of visiting the Forest in autumn.

About 1740 the Duke of Bolton had his pack of hounds at his residence of Burley Lodge, and correspondence passed between his Grace and the Duke of Richmond, complaining that there was not room for both packs. That was likely enough, with the kennels barely two miles apart, but there is nothing to indicate to us which pack were deemed interlopers, and which ought to give way.

A little later Lord Eglinton came to reside at Somerley, and though that mansion was well across the river Avon, yet he seems to have pursued his sport in the New Forest, and again provoked remonstrances, this time from the Duke of Richmond, while foxes seem to have become very scarce—no wonder. In these circumstances the hunting of the country must have become chaotic, and it was high time that some one should intervene — for during all this time the local pack of hounds, of which Mr. Gilbert was master, was hunting over the whole Forest whenever he could squeeze in a day.

It was high time that the matter was taken in hand authoritatively, and in 1784 we find a manifesto issued by the proper authority for controlling these matters — viz. the Lord Warden, who at that time was H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester. This edict throws light on one or two old-fashioned hunting practices. It runs thus:

ADVERTISEMENT

No hounds are to be permitted to hunt in the New Forest except the Lord Warden's, and (if he should choose to come) the Duke of Richmond's, but in the month of April—viz. from the 1st to the 30th, both days inclusive.

That no pack be suffered to go out more than three times in one week, and, to prevent confusion, it is agreed that the Lord Warden's are to hunt Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Mr. Grove's to hunt Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and no more than two packs of hounds to be in the Forest at the same time.

[It is necessary to remark that the Duke of Richmond had liberty from the preceding Lord Warden to bring his hounds, which was continued to him by the Duke of Gloucester, and this was the only person who had permission to use not only the kennels and stables, but the King's House likewise, if his Grace should choose to come, which is very improbable.]

Then—any strange pack must give way

for the time, that there may be no more than two packs at one time.

The Earths not to be stopt till half-past four in the morning, and no hounds to be thrown off before five.

The Earths during the month of April not to be stopped, but by the keepers or their servants.

The Keepers have orders not to suffer any fires to be lighted on the earths, nor any person to stand on the earth to keep out the foxes; no tarriers to be taken out, or foxes dug in the month of April.

A. Cunninghame, Printer, opposite the
Market House, Southampton.

We have here at last a much needed code of regulations for hunting, which in the New Forest had at that date become almost impracticable. But there was a wise head of Government just then, and the explanatory letter which was sent with the above edict throws additional light on the position. The letter is signed by Colonel Heywood, Equerry to H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, and is addressed to Mr. Grove.

SOUTHAMPTON, *January 27th*, 1784.

SIR,—The keepers and others in the New Forest having represented to His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester the great scarcity of foxes at present in the country, he thinks proper to revise some regulations that were agreed to with the Duke of Richmond and Lord Eglinton when they had liberty to bring their hounds in the Forest. He wishes also to add a little to the regulations, as the necessity appears greater at this time.

As your hounds have occasionally been in the Forest, he commands me to send you a copy of the regulations, and he hopes, as the Forest Hounds will strictly adhere to them, there will be no objection on your part.

The Lord Warden has given his name to Mr. Gilbert's hounds, and for the future he will look upon them as the established pack of the country, but does not mean to prevent your hounds coming out under the enclosed regulations.—I have the honour to be, etc., etc.

To MR. GROVE.

The letter is interesting, as it explains the position which the Lord Warden felt himself compelled to take up—that of having a pack of his own, and putting all other packs, save only that of the Duke of Richmond, which stood in an unique position, into the category of "strange packs." He had, however, as far as we know, no pack of his own, and therefore by "giving his name" to the existing local pack of Mr. Gilbert, he not only constituted them the "pack of the county," but entitled its followers to wear the royal button of the Lord Warden of that date, with the "Crown and the Stirrup" emblem of the New Forest engraved upon it. The button was identical with that worn by the keepers and all other servants of the Lord Warden. But when first I inquired of my companions in the hunting field, how it came about that they wore a royal button on their hunting coats, I could not find any one who could enlighten me, and even at the present date there are plenty of people who suppose that they wear a crown on their buttons in right of a subscription to the New Forest Foxhounds, and have never thought out the reason why this particular pack should be privileged to wear the royal emblem. It is, of course, not really a "hunt button" at all, and is shared with the followers of the chase, by all the keepers, under keepers, and other servants of the Crown who wear a Crown livery. But it is an ancient historical emblem, of which the wearers may be far more proud than those whose coats are decorated by the initials or the twisted cypher of some local pack, of a mere hundred of years' standing.

I note particularly these matters because, when I came to the New Forest in 1880, I found myself confronted by a situation very like that which had arisen in 1784.

As I have before observed, several gentlemen laid claim to be granted permission to assist the Crown in "removing the deer" by hunting them with packs of their own, without any regard to the sport or convenience of others who claimed the like privilege. In fact, at one time there were no less than four packs in the Forest, and to reconcile any permissions to them with proper regard to the pack of foxhounds — the senior pack, hunting three days a week—needed no little consideration, and perhaps a firmer hand than Mr. James Kenneth Howard, then Commissioner of Woods, the kindest and most genial of human beings, cared to exercise.

He had therefore delegated his authority to settle these vexed questions to the then Master of the Foxhounds, Sir Reginald Graham, who again put the matter into the hands of the New Forest Hunt Club, a body composed of the subscribers to the New Forest Foxhounds, and of them alone—not the covert owners at all.

The result might have been easily foretold. The club exercised its delegated authority in its own interests alone. It cut out, once and for all, those rival packs of deerhounds that had been squabbling and fighting among themselves, and did so very rightly. It issued a permission—to be ratified, of course, by the Commissioner of Woods—to Mr. Lovell, the master of the principal of these contesting packs, to hunt deer for a very limited period in the spring, under the most complicated restrictions, devised so as to make it impossible for his hunting to be anything but a temporary arrangement, with a scratch pack; while for Mr. Mills, the master of the only pack of harriers in the Forest, they devised conditions and imaginary boundaries, by lines drawn from this point to that on the map, which were not to be crossed on this or the other day of the week.

All these were puerilities. In the case of Mr. Mills they worked well enough, for neither he nor anyone else paid the slightest attention to them! But in the case of the deerhounds it was different. The feud had gone on for many years; all the country had taken sides one way or another. Many people had ceased to speak to each other over this wrangle. The battles of the Montagus and Capulets were nothing to it, and I, without the slightest knowledge of all this turmoil and bad blood, was launched into the thick of it in complete innocence of the temperature of the hot water into which I was officially desired to plunge. Very hot it was too!

However, I got hints from reliable friends, both inside of and far away from the Forest; and, while I realised that an unfair, and indeed impossible situation, had been brought about, I determined to let a couple of seasons go by while I followed the sport of both packs, and could judge of them for myself. What amazed me was the intense bitterness of feeling which the official managers of either pack displayed towards the promoters of the other form of sport, while all the while they each of them followed and subscribed towards the maintenance of the pack they said they were opposed to! In fact, each faction cordially approved of the proceedings of the other, provided only that they were allowed to dictate them!

After two years' watching of the working of New Forest hunting, conducted in close friendship with the masters of all three packs, and having all their grievances poured into my ears, I came to the conclusion—first, that there was abundance of room for all of them in the Forest, and that under proper regulations (and here I had the invaluable rules of 1789 to guide me) none of them need interfere with the sport of the other, but that there *must* be a supreme controlling power.

As to the Harriers, I troubled about them not at all. The nominally oppressive rules which the New Forest Hunt Club had imposed on them affected them not, for they regarded them in no sort of way. The fox-hunting community knew better than to quarrel with Mr. John Mills, a large covert owner outside the Forest, whose support was valuable. No one ever tried to enforce the somewhat ridiculous boundaries which the New Forest Hunt Club had induced the Commissioners of Woods to impose on this harmless little pack. I assuredly did not!

There remained the old and deep sore of the quarrel between the master of the foxhounds and any master of a deerhound pack. It appeared to me from a couple of seasons' observations that the hunting of the wild deer in the New Forest was one of the finest opportunities for making a good pack of hounds and showing first-class sport that could be hit upon by any enthusiast.

I even went so far as to say, after a brief experience of this, to one of the older generation of New Forest hunting men, who, I vainly supposed, had really studied sport, that it was pretty clear that, given an equally good pack of hounds, an equally good huntsmen, and a staff equally well mounted, it would be far easier to show good sport in hunting the deer than by hunting the fox over this same country.

My old friend was, I found, of the opposite faction, and without consideration voted me a heretic. But I have never swerved from the opinion I then expressed, and am satisfied that, provided the numbers of the deer are kept within reasonable limits, the man who hunts them, if only he has a good pack of hounds, has a better opportunity to show sport than has the man who hunts the fox.

But, after all, in either case the "good pack of hounds" is the first and the last consideration.

Well, to go back to 1882—I found that there were two forms of hunting to be enjoyed in New Forest. One, shared in common with many other countries in England, the other with one only—that which dominates hunting down in the West Country.

Both, under fair treatment, could show equally good sport. Both had ardent supporters. One was free, with a good establishment of hounds, kennels, &c.; the other was hampered and impoverished, with nothing but a scratch pack of hounds composed of all the rogues, drafted about February from many high-class kennels in England. They joined in the cry of Mr. Lovell's pack (those that were not drafted for muteness), entered and led by the one or two couples he had that had hunted deer the previous season. Most of them were revelling on the scent of what they believed to be riot, and there were always a few beautiful old dogs finishing their last season who declined to do this wrong (except when catching time was close at hand), but lent all the time a stately air to the proceedings. Some of these were high-class stallion hounds, but they never did a hand's turn of work at deer-hunting. All the same, it was wonderful what good runs Mr. Lovell got occasionally out of this scratch pack. But it was quite clear to me, for I was no novice as to fox-hunting, and had also seen a little of the hunting of the wild red deer down West, that the sport merited a better sort of establishment than Mr. Lovell had been tied down to. And mainly, too, because I had seen enough to realise that, by the nature of the New Forest country, it is impossible for one pack to interfere with the sport of another. The covert is so abundant, the habits of the various beasts of the chase so different, that there could be no doubt but that there is room for all, and to spare.

And so, after having got all this into my head by observation and practical experience, I laid the case as it appeared to me before Sir Henry Loch, then Commissioner of Woods, together with the petition for hunting facilities which was put forward by the committee—a strong one—that was formed to promote deer-hunting and to guarantee that it should be properly carried on. Sir Henry was quite uninterested in any of the hunting disputes and squabbles of the New Forest, and he decided to put in force the authority exercised in a somewhat similar case by the Lord Warden in 1789, and to lay down regulations for the carrying on of all hunting in the New Forest—first and foremost having regard to the convenience and necessities of the New Forest Foxhounds, the successors of Mr. Gilbert's pack, to which the Lord Warden "gave his name" in 1789. These were therefore regarded as the senior pack, but not permitted to exercise any authority over any other pack to which the Commissioner, acting as the successor to the Lord Warden, might have extended his permission to hunt.

It was my unhappy duty to have to stand up at a meeting of the New Forest Hunt Club, and announce, with all the suavity I could command, that any authority hitherto exercised by that institution for regulating the proceedings of any packs of hounds in the New Forest other than that one which was under their own control must now cease; that they, with other sporting institutions, must understand that they all hunted on the same conditions under the permission and ægis of the Crown; and that, if any of them found that they suffered any hardship, or that their sport was interfered with by any other pack, they must report it to the Commissioner, who would act as arbiter in any disputes, without delegating his authority to any one of the interested parties. I shall never forget the nervousness with which I rose to make this announcement. I knew it would be a sad blow to certain old foresters, who cared much more for regulating hunting than partaking in the sport. Indeed, in the field later in that day, one dear old friend wept openly at the sorrow of seeing what he called "the other lot getting their own way."

But the thing had to be. The hunting quarrels of the New Forest had gone on too long, and about 1879 the country had got a bad name all over the hunting world in respect of its squabblings. There was only one way out of it, viz. that some overriding power of landowner and covert owner, on whom the bulk of the sport, preservation of foxes, &c., rested, should assert itself, and settle disputes once for all.

This power had not happened in the Forest since ninety years previously, but at that date it brought peace, and so it did when it was again invoked in 1883.

Accordingly, a conference was held, and the master of the Foxhounds, as the senior pack, hunting three days a week, was asked to name the days for which he desired permission. He chose without discussion to adhere to his existing days, viz. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, each with a particular section of the Forest attached to it. The Buckhounds had Monday and Friday allotted to them, each also with a section of the country assigned to it, so planned that there should be only a remote possibility of their disturbing country to which the Foxhounds were coming the next day. So long as these regulations were strictly observed, there was, as in 1789, hardly a possibility of the sport of either pack clashing with the other.

As a matter of fact, the scheme worked admirably. I doubt if there is a hunting man in the Forest who could point to a day within his memory when the sport of one pack interfered with that of any other.

And, indeed, the oddest thing about the whole affair was this: from first to last, I never had the assertion made to me that the hunting of either pack ever had interfered with, or was ever likely to injure, the sport of the other. The whole contest seemed to be a struggle not for the promotion of the sport of any pack but for the right to override and suppress the operations of some other body of sportsmen. Naturally I had little sympathy with such motives as these, and, though it cannot be gainsaid that old prejudices died hard, and reared a head needing to be cracked from time to time, yet I am glad to say that, for some years before I left the Forest, nothing but peace, goodwill, and mutual accommodation reigned as regards both of the packs.

I am not a little proud of the splendid present of silver plate that was given to me when I retired from the office of Deputy Surveyor, by the whole hunting community of the Forest, on the initiation of the members of the Hunt Club, the body with which I had been forced into collision many years before; and that they were pleased to say that they tendered this beautiful gift "in recognition of the efforts I had made to promote the best interests of sport in the New Forest."

Looking back thirty-five years, and reviewing all the hostile interests and old-established bitterness that had to be reconciled, I remember well how my heart misgave me when I dared to forecast a period when peace and good sport, backed up by all alike, might reign in what truly ought to be a paradise for all hunters. It took twenty years to bring it about, but it is one of the comforts left to me in my old age to reflect that the ancient wars and troubles have died away, and that I left a thoroughly friendly, united body of sportsmen where I had found a very different state of feeling.

To go back to 1883. It was at once proposed that an established pack of buckhounds should be formed under the mastership of Mr. Lovell, who made over to the managing committee all the hounds he then had in kennel, and undertook to continue the use of those kennels at Hincheslea.

At first Mr. Lovell carried the horn himself, as he had been wont to do, and, on his invitation, I habitually rendered him all the assistance in the field that I could. He had only one whip, a groom of his own training, not brought up to kennel work, and an extra hand in the field, even an amateur, was very useful to him.

In the spring of 1885, owing to the sudden death of Lady Rose Lovell, Mr. Lovell could not hunt. He was, however, quite willing that the hounds should go out if the subscribers wished it, and they could make any suitable arrangements. I was asked to undertake to hunt the hounds, and Lord Londesbrough promised to supplement my small stud by lending me what horses I wanted. On these terms I agreed to try what I could do. I had the advantage of knowing every hound in the pack, and what his capabilities were, and, after a few days' horse exercise with me, they became handy enough; but even so, it was no easy task to hunt another man's pack, with servants not my own, but only temporarily under my orders, and riding horses lent by another person still! However, we did not have a very bad spring season's hunting. Though I was not able to achieve a "record" run, we had two or three very good days—notably on April 27, when hounds ran hard in the morning for forty-five minutes and killed an old buck, and in the afternoon ran a buck from Rhinefield down into the Avon valley beyond High Wood, and, turning back to the Forest, bayed him at seven o'clock P.M., in the stream by Burley Manor, after a long and varied hunt over all sorts of country of some three hours duration. As is so often the case, when it came to cultivated land, hounds could only walk after the wild deer; he is much more difficult to hunt over ploughed land than is the fox. I remember, too, at the finish of this hunt, poor Wanderer, a useful dog, and the first to bay the buck, got severely handled by him, being caught, when swimming, against the high bank of the stream and badly punished; though he did not at the time seem seriously hurt, and came home well enough with the pack, he was afterwards very ill, and seemed to have suffered from blood poisoning from the hurt of the buck's horns—at any rate, it took him the whole summer to recover, and he lost every hair he had on his body before he recovered.

It made one think of Turberville's ancient distich:

"If thou be hurt with horne of Harte 't will bring thee to thy bier,
But leeches' art can bore's hurt heal; thereof thou needst not fear."

We had other good days, but nothing of great note. I had fourteen days' hunting, one of which was practically blank, and killed eight deer. I believe that the field were pretty well satisfied, and I know I was glad to get so well out of a very difficult job.

In 1886 Mr. Lovell was laid up by illness, and it was arranged that the whipper-in, W. Perkins, should hunt the hounds, and that I should act as Field Master, and take charge of all arrangements. A whipper-in was provided to help W. Perkins.

In many ways this was the best arrangement to adopt. It was better that the man who hunted the hounds and lived at the kennels should handle them in the field and bring them home. Fewer hounds were left out than was the case with a divided mastership, and I always found the whipper-in anxious and willing to avail himself of any hints which my longer experience in deer-hunting could proffer him—I had got to know the run of half the bucks throughout the Forest!

We were stopped by hard frost up to March 18th—a notable thing in a mild southern county.

We managed to show a good deal of sport by sticking hard to business. I note one day—April 12, 1886—when we found three stags in Busketts Wood, and tufted them for three whole hours before we got one separated—and then it was a light galloping deer—not the big fellow we wanted. We then ran him right across the Forest to Linford—a nine mile point, and he was killed after a two hours' hunt. A fair day's work for men and horses.

A week afterwards we had a good hunt with one of the two stags left in Busketts. In this case I wasted less time, and laid on the pack after an hour's tufting on to the two stags—rather a risk, but it came off. They ran together right across the Forest to Roe Wood, about eight miles away, and then divided. I watched them separate. We had several checks, chiefly owing to the way the field persistently galloped *after* the deer and *over* the hounds, but, in spite of these unnecessary difficulties, we brought our stag right back across the Forest, and killed him at Canterton. It was a three hours' hunt—not very slow, but frequently interrupted, and I made it about seventeen miles on the map.

We killed eight deer this spring also, but I think Will Perkins had rather better sport than I had, taking the two spring seasons through. After this season, Mr Lovell realised that the strain of the long days of deer-hunting was rather more than a man of his years could comfortably sustain, and he thought it best to engage a professional huntsman. Just at that juncture, my old friend, Sir George Brooke, had decided to reduce his pack of harriers in Co. Dublin, and wrote to me to recommend his huntsman, whom he described to me as being "always keen, never cold, never hot, never tired, never hungry, and never thirsty"!

This was a good recommendation from an

Robert Allen, Huntsman to the Buckhounds, 1896.

Irishman, and Mr. Lovell engaged him as his huntsman. I am sure he never regretted it.

Allen was born and bred in Bramham Moor, and started his hunting career as second horseman to old Charles Treadwell, to whom I have already referred as the man who started me on the way that I should go, in the direction of hunting. He was in various services during his career, and had perhaps no more important place than the period he spent under Mr. Parry as huntsman to the Puckeridge.

To us he came in later life, from Sir George Brooke, whose beautiful pack of harriers he had hunted in Co. Dublin and in Kildare. Nothing was thought good enough to put forward by Sir George but Belvoir and Brocklesby bred hounds, and perhaps his standard of 21 inches was a trifle elastic. But whenever the Ward left out a stag on the Kildare side, and asked Sir George to give a bye-day to recover him, that stag quickly found that he had not changed his situation for the better when these speedy bitches were after him. He seldom kept dog-hounds.

Allen was a thorough hound-man. It did not require much assistance from me to persuade Mr. Lovell into our joint belief as to the excellence of Bramham Moor blood.

The late Mr. George Lane Fox was a kind

and sympathetic friend, and sent us year by year a draft of dog-hounds, from which, if distemper was not too hard on us, we could easily select the small entry required to be put forward for a two-days-a-week pack.

Lord Portman, too, was ever a generous friend from first to last, and in most years sent us a couple or two that were most serviceable. Some of his hounds, I noticed, year by year, took more than one season to enter and settle down, but they were generally very stout hounds, and in many cases lasted for a season or two longer than the average.

From Brocklesby, too, where my old friend Maunsel Richardson was at that time hunting the dog pack, Lord Yarborough often sent us a useful young hound, and everything that came from Brocklesby always had plenty of tongue, and used it in the right place.

Little dogs, those that in great kennels would have to run with the bitches, if kept at all, were what I used to beg from my kind friends, and many a charming hound was sent us that was deemed too good to draft at first, but was not up to the standard of a really high-class dog pack. But he generally grew enough to look quite at home in the pack of 23-inch dog-hounds which was presently got together.

Of course, from the day that the pack was started on an established footing, nothing but unentered hounds were taken into it. A hound that had even hunted, still more had attended the funeral of a single fox, was scrupulously rejected.

In a very short time my anticipations as to the sport of the New Forest were realised to the full. In about two years a capital pack of working hounds had been got together. Naturally, being a pack of draft hounds, there were not a great many of those beautiful creatures among them that Mr. Lane Fox used to refer to as "summer dogs," but they all of them helped to catch deer, and a succession of excellent seasons with capital sport followed on Allen's appointment as huntsman.

In 1893 Mr. Lovell, feeling the burden of advancing years, retired from the mastership, and was succeeded by Mr. Walker, an ex-master of the Croome hounds. In 1894 Mr. Kelly, who had lately purchased Northerwood, a fine place near Lyndhurst, became joint master with him, and in 1896 he took sole charge of the pack. Up to this date Allen had continued to carry the horn, but in 1897 his health finally gave way, and he had to give up all idea of hunting. It had been painful to him very often—unendurably so sometimes—and he did not very long survive his retirement.

He was succeeded by Harry White, who came to the New Forest from Mr. Charles Wright when he was master of the Fitzwilliam Hounds, but had previously hunted both the Vere and Dumfriesshire packs. Though perhaps a little past his quickest form in the field, he was the very best kennel huntsman I have ever seen. Under the greatest difficulties, at times, owing to changes of kennels and the like, he never failed to bring out his hounds in perfect condition, fit to hunt all day and looking beautiful in their coats. At one time, and that for a great part of a season, he was actually reduced, for kennels, to a range of pigsties, a small cowhouse, and a loose-box! More than one master of great establishments has admired to see his hounds come out day after day in the pink of condition from such wretched accommodation. I think Harry White's remedy for his miserable kennels (*N.B.*—he had only dog-hounds in his charge, and no bitches to seclude) was to keep his hounds ever in the open air. His love for them was very great, and their devotion to him was equal to it. Neither of them desired anything better than to stroll about together in the Forest, regardless of weather, for most of the daylight hours, and in that fashion the poor housing at home was forgotten. But happily this state of things did not last long.

In 1902 Mr. O. T. Price took the hounds, and soon afterwards became occupier of New Park, where he erected temporary kennels of somewhat better accommodation. Here, of course, the servants, and probably the hounds, were more comfortable.

But with the knowledge I have gained from the many visits that I have paid at one time or another to a number of the great kennels of England, in almost every part of the country, where I have seen every skill displayed and no cost begrudged in the construction of what are truly canine palaces, I have been amazed to see how hounds of the same breed—emanating indeed very often from these same noble palaces—can be brought out fit, clean, and well from such hovels as I have described above. Of course, I do not advocate hounds, or any dogs, being kept in such places. But I have learnt that if you provide the best of food—and that you can get, however bad is your kennel—but above all, if you have the right man, who well understands the management of his hounds, and, with his heart really in his work, is willing to buckle to and make the best of circumstances as they are, you will find that a small pack of hounds, say twenty-eight couple, can be kept healthily and well in kennels of surprisingly cheap construction.

No doubt everyone knows this, still there are many people who think a "pack of hounds" needs a great expenditure in order to house it. To these I would merely recount what we found could be done in the New Forest in a very humble fashion. Certainly the kennels did not in any way affect our good sport. But when we could obtain better kennels we thankfully did so. Mr. Price carried on the hounds until 1908, when he suddenly threw them up at the beginning of the season. Mr. George Thursby and Captain Timson jointly took over the pack, and got the hounds into working order by about Christmas time, Mr. Thursby carrying the horn. Although they laboured under these disadvantages, the joint masters were not long in reviving the class of sport which this pack had shown in former years, and in a few months they improved upon it. Before the spring hunting, which is always such a feature of this sport, Mr. Thursby had an excellent if rather a short, pack of working hounds, while Captain Timson supported him by taking charge of the tufting, and turning the pack to him when in chase.

In a couple of seasons more Mr. Thursby

took sole charge of the pack, and by that time a really first-class pack of hounds, judged by the standard of work in the field, had been got together, and most excellent sport was being shown day after day. Mr. Thursby found himself obliged to follow rather different lines from those which we had adopted, in getting his entries together. The practice of selling drafts of young hounds by auction at Rugby had come into fashion, and this raised the price a good deal. In old days it was possible to bespeak, year after year, the whole draft from some kennel of note, where the working capabilities of the hounds were unimpeachable and the number of young hounds annually bred was large.

In this way many provincial packs, built up in successive years from hounds bred in particular kennels, became not only very good packs of hounds, but also packs with a distinct character and points of excellence of their own, that cannot so well be formed by bringing into kennel a number of hounds of many different strains and qualities, from diverse places.

However, matters have changed, and, since the auction mart led to very high prices being given for smart young hounds of average size, Mr. Thursby thought it wise to raise his standard above the usual size of a foxhound, and with a minimum height of 26 inches, to get hold of the big hounds, that were out of place in foxhound kennels, but were otherwise symmetrical.

By doing this he eliminated all competitors but two, viz. the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, who also have a big pack, as well as one of the usual standard, and the occasional foreigner. When once the West Country pack had made up its numbers, it was not difficult to pick up what was wanted out of the remainder of the big hounds in the market.

I was not altogether happy about this at first, for I am not very fond of extra big hounds, and feared an accession of lumbering great dogs. But I was completely mistaken. No lumberers appeared, and the pack was as smart and quick as any little pack of bitches, under Mr. Thursby's control. And I do not think there has ever been a pack in the Forest that got over the ground faster, and ran better together, than these big dog-hounds, while the echo of their cry among the old woods was magnificent.

Much of this was due to Mr. Thursby's exceptional qualities as a huntsman and a judge of hounds, whether in kennel or in the field. I certainly consider him the best and quickest gentleman huntsman that I have ever seen or heard of, except perhaps the late Sir Charles Slingsby, who is to me but a recollection.

It is very extraordinary to see the implicit confidence and obedience which this pack of great headstrong dog-hounds displays towards Mr. Thursby. They know that he is ever among them, watching every turn, and that they can look to him to give them unfailing assistance towards killing their deer, the object they both have in view.

It is most interesting to watch the demeanour of these hounds when, after running with a keenness and dash that left nothing to be desired, the line of the hunted deer suddenly brings them into the scent of fresh deer which have moved at the approach of the hunt, and have perhaps been joined by the hunted quarry.

While the young hounds, ignorant and puzzled, try to push on and chance recovering the true line, it is quite touching to see the way that the old hounds acknowledge the difficulty, and even come back to their master as if to report the trouble and ask for his aid. The whole energy of the chase seems to be suspended, and the hounds show it first. But directly when, by a successful cast, the line of the hunted buck is recovered, after he has left his freshly roused mates—for they never stay long together—the dash and drive with which the hounds, especially the old ones, recognise the scent of their hunted deer and take it up again, is a most interesting lesson on the intelligence and sagacity of hounds.

Except when I actually hunted the hounds myself, I did not keep a diary, and memory is a treacherous guide to enable one to recall the many first-class runs I have seen, or failed to see in spite of my best endeavours.

I recollect one such hunt with a young stag, that I viewed away myself from the Franchise Wood on the northern verge of the Forest, in the county of Wilts.

The hounds ran hard, fast and straight across the whole Forest, passed over its southern boundary, and went on towards the shores of the Solent—his point no doubt—but he was bayed and killed near Milton, a mile short of the sea.

No one really saw all of this run, and no one horse could have got through it, at the pace hounds went, the point in a direct line being fourteen miles and the time less than an hour and a half. Mr. Thursby, Mr. Compton, and myself were well with them for the first seven miles, but were all misled by a false holloa and got behind hounds. Mr. Thursby, riding a racehorse, made a lucky turn, and got up to them near Brockenhurst, thus gaining much on us. He followed his hounds right down to Milton, till his good horse was reduced to a walk. He put him into the hotel stables at Milton, requisitioned a fly horse, and on this unwilling steed got to his hounds, where they had pulled down their beaten stag in a ditch, not more than a mile from salt water. As for me, I carried on with tail hounds to the southern verge of the Forest, about two miles from where they killed the deer; but when these hounds lost the line, I turned my tired horse homewards, hoping that my second horse might yet turn up to my assistance. And so it did, to the great credit of my old groom, but, alas, not till I had turned for home some ten minutes, and so missed him. I was glad to get my horse—a very good animal—safe home, and it was a long time before Mr. Thursby's gallant thoroughbred came out again.

In recent days I recall a fine run with a fallow buck in April 1913. He was roused in Loosehanger, outside the Forest on the north, but quickly recrossed the Forest boundary, and the pack were laid on. They ran fast and straight over the Ashley hills, across by Broomy Lodge, and on due south in a perfectly straight line. In Roe Wood the hounds got among fresh deer, but put themselves right—all but two couple that were beguiled by the hot new line. One check ensued at Ridley Wood, where Mr. Thursby for the first time lent his hounds assistance, and the pack swept on, bending a little westward, over the open heaths that lie between Burley and the Avon valley, and on, over the Forest boundary to Mr. Mills' property at Bisterne, where they killed him in the open about a mile from that gentleman's house. The point was eleven miles, probably about thirteen as hounds ran, and the time an hour and a half. The run was nearly all in the open, so that it was easy to ride, and a large field, including Lord and Lady Leconfield, and various other masters of hounds, saw this good gallop.

In former years bucks used frequently to run down to the river Avon, and, crossing it, even when it was in flood, would take to the enclosed land and heaths beyond, even near to the Dorset boundary. I remember on one such occasion, late in April (as illustrating the unusual dates at which New Forest hunting is carried on), the field were making for a gap that appeared to be the most practicable exit from the land hounds were crossing. The huntsman arrived first, and his warning hand, signalling danger, sent the field scuttling off to find a better place. When, however, I asked Allen what was the matter—for I saw no danger—he replied, "There's an 'ard turkey hen sitting on her eggs i' that gap, and I didn't want them to disturb her, ye see." I never encountered an obstacle like that on any other occasion, when engaged in hunting.

Old Robert Allen was full of dry humour, but always had the politeness of a courtier. There is a tale about him—true, for I heard it myself—which has found its way into more than one sporting paper, generally incorrectly told.

We had met one day at a well-known spot called Bushy Bratley, and deer had been harboured some four or five miles away in Lord Normanton's coverts, to the westward. We had a long trot, then a tuft—singled out a fine buck, and laid on hounds. The deer had laid down within half a mile in some thick furze, and the pack fresh found him, and got away close on his back. They fairly raced him for the four miles or so straight back to the very place of meeting, where he ran right into the arms of the late Colonel Martin Powell, a very regular follower of deer-hunting, but one who preferred to accommodate his hunting hours to his own convenience. He had, in fact, arrived at the fixture just at the moment when we got back there in full cry, having trotted a long way to find our deer, and, after that, run some twenty-five minutes at best pace back again.

Off went the Colonel's hat exhibiting, like the farmer in Whyte-Melville's delightful song, "a grin of delight and a jolly bald crown," but the hounds turned short from him, and, running on for another half-mile, ran into their buck fairly burst up "with never a check from the find." A usual event.

When we gathered our forces together, and moved off to look for another deer, the Colonel rode up to Allen (I was riding on the other side of him), and said, "Well, Allen, *I* killed that deer for you." I saw the old huntsman look up as this startling view of the case was presented to him, but, too polished a courtier to contradict, he said, "Thank you, Colonel, but" (with an apologetic glance at the pack trotting around him), "*they'll* never believe that!"

When I arrived in New Forest, I found the present Sir George Meyrick master of the foxhounds, and I joined as heartily in his sport as time and the *res angusta domi* would permit.

I have gone into the earlier history of this ancient pack in a former chapter, but I may say that its existence can be traced back to quite the earlier days of foxhunting in this country, for we have the record of Mr. Vincent Gilbert of Lamb's Corner owning a pack of foxhounds in 1781, and in 1784 this pack was, as I have previously related, formally recognised by the Lord Warden, and given a *locus standi* in the Forest, which has been maintained ever since.

However, my personal recollections begin with the mastership of Mr. Meyrick, which began in 1878. No expense was spared to organise a good pack of hounds. A commencement was made by the purchase of his bitch pack from Sir Reginald Graham, the retiring master. Then other hounds were lavishly procured, and large drafts, notably from the Grafton, were obtained.

Mr. Meyrick had a very large pack in, and passing through, his kennel, and when he resigned he sent to Rugby a very fine pack of dog-hounds, as well as a bitch pack, which by itself would have gone far to satisfy the requirements of the country. After his retirement considerable difficulties arose, and finally it was decided to divide the country into two sections. The western half was taken over by Mr. John Mills, who sacrificed his perfect little pack of harriers and got together the best pack of foxhounds that he could, while the eastern half was at first taken by a committee on which I had the honour to serve, and, ere hunting began, Major Browne of Hall Court came into the country with a small bitch pack of his own, and relieved the committee of its duties in the field.

Meanwhile, the committee in question, having good kennels and stable accommodation, with some money in the bank, decided that a pack of hounds in the kennels in question would place the country in a better position to treat with a prospective master, either at the present juncture or in future. Accordingly, I was empowered to go to the sales at Rugby, and lay out a certain sum, as far as it would go, in procuring the nucleus of a pack. I took with me as my counsellor George Carter, from the Fitzwilliam pack, and I felt sure of getting sound, if perhaps plain-spoken, advice from that fine old huntsman. In the upshot I bought (if I recollect aright) somewhere about twenty-five couples of bitches, half from Mr. Meyrick's own pack and half from the Burton, then in the market. I also bought (because they were a bargain) some three or four couples of Mr. Mark Rolle's dog-hounds, and these (as they were unsuitable for our purpose), I traded away for hounds that would serve us better, and that to some advantage. This little venture, in which I am glad to have borne a part, started the pack belonging to the country at present in the New Forest kennels, and long may it remain there.

Major Browne only remained in the Forest for one season, and was succeeded by Mr. Bradburne of Lyburn, a local landowner, who engaged John Dale as his huntsman. He again was succeeded in 1889 by Mr. Stanley Pearce, as regards the eastern portion, and in the western side Mr. Mills was replaced by Sir John Thursby, whose son Mr. George Thursby was then hunting his hounds for him, and laying the foundation of that experience as a huntsman which is serving him in such good stead now.

In 1895, under the mastership of Mr. Henry Martin Powell, the two sections of the country were again amalgamated, and he hunted the whole country three days a week, as in days of yore. It is not really a four days a week country, though it will stand many bye-days.

During the nine seasons that the country was hunted by two packs of foxhounds, I am proud to record that the supply of wild foxes (and the responsibility for that rested on my shoulders) did not fail, though I must own that the country was somewhat over-hunted, and I was obliged to ask my good friends the M.F.H.'s to conform to certain rules which I laid down, and they very amiably did so.

My rules were as to digging, &c. After February 1st, all main earths, which ought to have been stopped all the season, to be opened out, but all earths to be put-to on hunting mornings very early. On March 1st, all stopping of earths in any way to be abandoned. After April 1st, no digging of foxes run to earth to be permitted.

But up to 1895 there was no trouble about finding foxes. In that year commenced that great epidemic of mange which raged almost all over England for three years. It gradually spread to the New Forest, and not only were dead foxes, horridly diseased, picked up all over the Forest, but in some cases we found badgers woefully afflicted, either dead or wandering about, blind with disease—and that by broad daylight—or lying dead. Most of the packs in England had, during this epidemic, to curtail their days of hunting and their season. But so abundant was our stock of foxes in the New Forest, that, to my surprise (knowing as I did the numbers that the keepers picked up dead), our hunting held out far longer than in most countries, though, of course, hounds had to draw more country to find foxes.

But in time the stock began to fail, and there seemed to be a fear that the "great scarcity of foxes," which was reported to the Lord Warden in 1789, was again upon us.

But by the time that Mr. Powell, after a troublesome and anxious period of mastership, had resigned the reins of power to Mr. Christopher Heseltine of Walhampton, in 1899, there was little fear in the minds of those responsible for the welfare of New Forest sport but that the stock of foxes would shortly be ample for the prosecution of the particular sport of foxhunting. And the results of the next year or two justified their prognostications.

Things went on all right after that, and we had no more epidemics. I think that when I bid farewell to the Forest in 1914, there was as fine a show of foxes in it as the country has ever produced.

Mr. Heseltine, whose hounds were hunted by his brother Mr. Godfrey Heseltine, who has since acquired fame as a huntsman in countries abroad as well as at home, had not long been master when the South African War broke out. The Heseltine brothers were among the first to volunteer, and, their services being accepted, the Hunt was left perforce somewhat in the lurch. However, Mr. Heseltine made all arrangements for carrying on hunting until the end of the season, when the country had to seek a new master. A curious coincidence then occurred. In the year 1800 the sudden death of Mr. Vincent Hawkins Gilbert threw the hunting arrangements of the country into considerable disorder; Mr. John Compton of Minstead Manor stepped into the breach, and by taking over the mastership solved the immediate difficulty.

So, exactly one hundred years later, when by the force of circumstances in 1900 the Hunt found itself in a similar predicament, Mr. Henry Francis Compton, the descendant and successor in title of the M.F.H. of 1800, came forward in the same manner, and, being elected by acclamation to the position of master, carried the New Forest Hunt over its difficulties, and conducted its operations with success equal to any of the best of his predecessors.

It was a rather curious thing that in both cases the head of the Compton family should come forward to relieve the Hunt in its troubles, the more so perhaps that during the hundred years' interval between these two occasions, no other lord of Minstead acted as M.F.H.

Mr. Compton continued as master until 1905, when he was succeeded, for a second term, by Mr. Henry Martin Powell. In 1907 Mr. Walter Cazenove brought his skill and experience to bear, first, on breeding a high-class pack, and next in showing good sport, in the most genial fashion.

When he retired, Mr. John Cooke Hurle, who had previously hunted the Dartmoor country, took the hounds jointly with his brother Major Cooke Hurle, the latter of whom I left in possession when I bid the Forest and hunting a sorrowful farewell in 1914, though at that juncture Major Cooke Hurle was summoned to the war with the Territorial Regiment he now commands, and the country had to make shift with substitutes for the season 1914–15, as under similar circumstances it has had to do before.

What may be in store for sport and for old England, as the outcome of the terrible times (1915) in which I write, is on the knees of the gods. But of this I feel sure, that, as the earliest recorded English hunting began in New Forest nearly nine hundred years ago, and as the Forest itself was formed and created in the first instance solely for the sport itself, so it will be the last of our English countries in which the sport of hunting will come to that end which we all trust is very far off.

Of harriers and hare hunting I spoke when referring to Mr. Mills' pack, which he gave up when he took over the western half of the country for foxhunting purposes.

This was a very beautiful little pack of hounds, about 19 inches high and very level, with necks and shoulders like the highest class of foxhounds. I was puzzled to know how Mr. Mills maintained his high standard, for it was only occasionally that he found a dog-hound with sufficient quality to run with his smart little bitches. Except the two or three couple of dog-hounds that he might chance to find in his own kennel, I cannot think where he found sires good enough to maintain the standard of his pack. But he was determined to have nothing but the best procurable, and I think he bought more than he bred, when he could hear of them.

When he wanted to give them up and start foxhounds, no buyer was in the market, and it ended by this perfect little pack being sold for a mere song.

Mr. Mills always delighted in "a good cry," and he used to run twenty or twenty-five couples of these little hounds, and truly the cry was as melodious as it was abundant. It really was a pack of "merry harriers." At the time that Mr. Price was master of the Buckhounds, he started a little pack of foot beagles, with which he hunted hares round about Lyndhurst, and this sport became very popular with the tradesfolk and foot people of Lyndhurst. And not unfrequently they hunted over enclosed lands by invitation, and visited sundry farms in the neighbourhood. After Mr. Price left New Park, another similar pack of beagles was formed, and subscribed to by the Lyndhurst residents. It still shows sport in that locality under the mastership of Mr. Day.

With so much hunting going on, it was not too easy to map out a country and formulate a permission which should give these humbler sportsmen reasonable facilities and yet not interfere with the arrangements of the senior packs. But wherever we were met with a good will, difficulties soon melted, and the "merry beaglers" have had as much hunting as they could possibly require, on the terms laid down by the Crown.

Naturally, in a wild country like the Forest, where all species of fauna are protected, such animals as otters and badgers are common enough, and, like the fox, hare and wild deer are laid under contribution to provide each their share of Forest sport.

The habits of the otters in that locality are rather peculiar. The streams of the forest proper are small in size, but in most cases run down, without joining any larger river, to the sea direct. Otters use these streams as main roads, without (unless cubs are laid down) lying for very long in any of them. They pass on their incessant travels up one stream to its source, then pass over the watershed to the head waters of some other little river, revelling among the frogs and slugs to be found in the boggy parts of the New Forest, which they traverse, and so pass gradually down the stream they have arrived at, halting as they please by the way, until tidal water is reached again, and, after a sojourn on the shore, the pilgrimage starts again.

In the case of old dog otters concerned with their affairs of love and war (for they are perfect fiends at fighting with one another), very long distances are covered even in a single night; but the orthodox routes are travelled.

These habits of the otter lent themselves pretty well to the hunting thereof. We used to get very frequently most delightful trail hunts, or "drags," where the hounds traced out the wanderings of the otter through the night, but sometimes the holt to which this trail led lay where the steam was too small to afford a good hunt or to give fair play to the otter. But this did not very often happen, for the banks of these same streams are lined with great forest trees or ancient alders, which have positive caverns of small size running under their roots to a point far inland from the stream, all of which communicate with each other, and afford strong fortresses for the otter, even if there be a depth of but a few feet of water outside their portals. This, however, is quite enough to hide him, if he thinks well to abandon one fortress to take refuge in another. Altogether it is astonishing to see how long a time it takes in these woodland streams to bring to hand an old otter, although the actual water of the river may not be half a score yards in width.

When first I came to the Forest, a local pack of otter-hounds existed, and monopolised the country. It was, however, conducted on peculiar lines, for neither the master nor any of his staff had a glimmering of knowledge as to how an otter should be found or hunted. Moreover, the pack only hunted in New Forest, and for a day or two in Surrey, which was no sufficient country in which to make and work a pack of otter-hounds. Moreover, their custom was to hunt only in the spring, and to abandon hunting just when the other packs were getting into full swing.

Let it, however, be recorded that I did once see one good day with them, though, as far as I could make out, neither the master nor his staff had any idea of how or why this success fell to them, though it was my good fortune to see and realise all that was going on.

Fortunately, in a couple of seasons this pack was broken up, and the country became vacant, so that I could at once set to work to organise proper otter-hunting for the future. I first applied to that past master of otter-hunting and all that concerned it, the late Major Geoffrey Hill, the Gamaliel at whose feet I learnt whatever I know of this rather abstruse craft. He was willing enough to add a week's hunting to his existing engagements, for he had just given up that delightful country abounding in huntable streams, with otters on every reach of them, where, in the pleasant South of Ireland, I had my happiest and hardest experiences with him.

Major Hill came down, and inspected the New Forest streams with me, and, with that abstruse knowledge which enables the expert to state with certainty how many otters there may be on a river, and of what size, pronounced most favourably on the prospects of sport on these practically unexplored streams.

But alas, just then his kennel of the most valuable otter-hounds perhaps that ever were got together, was being decimated by rabies, and he was hard put to it to keep a pack together to hunt any country at all, still less to embark upon a new one.

After a couple of seasons of uncertainty, Major Hill finally resigned all claim to the New Forest streams, and very few people know that, even for this short period, the New Forest formed a portion of the Hawkestone otter-hunting country.

Still for years I would wear no other than my old H.O.H. uniform whenever I hunted in the New Forest.

But we desired to get our otters hunted, and hunted properly, and Major Hill's advice to me was to try and induce Mr. William Collier, master for ever so many years of the Culmstock Otter-hounds, in the county of Devon, to bring his hounds and his men, and above all *himself*, to hunt our country for the fortnight or so that it can well provide sport annually.

Perhaps no better piece of advice was ever given, and I was very pleased when I got into communication with Mr. Collier, and found that if the way was smoothed for him as to the consent of riparian proprietors, accommodation, finance, and the like, he would be very pleased to come.

These little matters I was in a good position to arrange, and I took care that whatever troubles arose, they should fall on to my shoulders and not on those of Mr. Collier.

His first season with us was in 1884, and he soon won all hearts by his kindly courteous bearing, typical of the old West County yeoman landowner, who had lived in his own house, cultivated his own estate, hunted his own hounds over his own lands and those of his neighbours, and dating back at least three or four generations of his forebears. Dear old William Collier might well have stepped from a picture of two hundred years ago, and, except in the Dales of Yorkshire and in his own county, it would be very hard to find a "marrow" to him in these days. He was, moreover, the most accomplished artist on the straight hunting horn that ever I have listened to. He was no mean musician, and, I believe, played the violoncello well, and in his earlier days was possessed of a beautiful tenor voice. Even in his old age in the New Forest days it was worth listening to in after-dinner songs, often of the Dibdin type. But he, unlike any else I have heard, put his musical soul into the battered old straight horn that he carried, and the melody that he contrived to throw into the notes that he produced from that "wonderful and ancient piece" (like Captain Costigan's hairbrush) was a revelation to many a man who was accustomed to hear an ordinary huntsman blowing his hounds out of covert with a similar instrument. It was in Mr. Collier's first season with us that he had that extraordinary drag hunt on the line of an otter that he has described so well in his chapter of the Badminton volume on Hunting.

Meeting at the kennels of the foxhounds near Lyndhurst, with the view of hunting down the small river that runs past them to the sea, he struck the drag of an otter up the stream, and, casting round the large mill-pond just above, hit the line where a little runlet comes down from the higher ground. Following this line, hounds led us with a merry cry, away from all water and out into the Forest, over a hill which is, for that country, a considerable watershed. Over that again the line led us to the head waters—a mere brook—of the Lymington River, and down it we went with a cheery cry, but at no great pace at this hour of the day, nearly to Brockenhurst; a little before that place, the line turned up the minor tributary which runs through the Forest to Burley. This was so surprising, that old hands like myself could not believe the possibility of such a line; I even ventured to have a word with Mr. Collier, who told me he could so rely on the hounds that were doing the work, that even if the otter had gone to the nether regions, *that* was the way he had gone.

So indeed it was. We had a long tramp for over five miles more to Burley, and I, for one, supposed that we were bound for the river Avon, three miles farther, the line getting fainter and fainter as the sun rose higher and higher. And oh! what a cry of relief as my old groom and second horseman following in a dog cart, by making an enormous circuit and governed by his knowledge of hunting, turned up most unexpectedly on a track right across our path! The contents of that commissariat train were soon assimilated, and the cider cup went down "like a band of music," as the old Yorkshire keeper so graphically phrased it!

Well, we went on with a certain but failing line for another mile till we came to a big holt, a strong place, very near the head of the stream. Some of us knew of this—and it was the ace up the sleeve of one or two weary souls—and he was not there! No, he was not. Although some of the younger hounds marked rather strongly, yet it was only old stale, constant scent, and the ancient wise-heads of the pack, after a first and a second try, absolutely discarded it. Against that solemn contemptuous verdict there is no appeal.

But the old huntsman—I really think the least tired of all of us—held them forward, and in a quarter of a mile, old "Harlequin" "set," and chopped, in a hedgerow, the otter that had led us this tremendous dance, before she ever was on her feet before the hounds.

From point to point of this hunt (it was not a "run" in any sense of the word) was eight miles, but as the hounds ran it, it was about thirteen miles. And this represents the night's workings and travelling of a little bitch otter, no more than 14 lb. weight, that is stuffed in my hall to this day.

Truly the habits and vagaries of otters are difficult to understand, and it is this very thing that makes otter-hunting such a fascinating abstruse sport, so difficult from all other hunting, and so interesting in its many details.

To recount all the merry days and good hunts that we had with Mr. Collier would fill a book of itself, but there came a day when the old man had to tell us that he was no longer able to hunt his hounds, and his nephew, Mr. Fred Collier, succeeded to the mastership of the Culmstock Hounds. This was in 1890.

Fred Collier was a splendid specimen of an athletic Englishman, and as an untiring walker simply unrivalled. Of course he knew all about otter-hunting, but he did not consider his field enough, and was very apt to stride from end to end of a good trail and then decide that his otter was left between the two points, and back he would stride to find him. Very often this did not come off, for the day had grown older, and the holt where the otter was laid up, which the slower progress of "Uncle William" would have located, was not so easily spotted on foiled ground, three hours later. However, with this little fault, born of lusty manhood, Fred Collier showed us capital sport till 1899, when an accident befell him, and he resigned the hounds.

Meanwhile a quasi-local pack had come into existence under the experienced hands of Mr. Courtenay Tracy, who established a country on the rivers of Surrey, Hants, Wilts, and Dorset. He very badly needed a wild sporting bit of country like the New Forest, and it seemed right that this county pack should have the local country.

This was soon arranged, and from that day to this, the excellent pack kennelled at Wilton has provided a capital fortnight's sport in the New Forest streams.

Mr. Tracy had a large and excellent band of followers, wearing the green coat and white breeches of his hunt uniform, who lived near and helped him on the widely scattered streams which in three or four different counties constituted his "country." These brought great assistance to the master when he visited the New Forest, and imported no little conviviality and good fellowship into our hunts. They are in possession of the country now, and, though the master himself has so far yielded to the burden of years that he no longer carries the horn himself, he has able substitutes, and the sport goes as well as ever. Long may it continue to flourish!

Badgers are now very numerous in the New Forest. When I first came, I found there were a good many, and for thirty years I never allowed them to be destroyed, deeming them, generally speaking, harmless creatures, such as ought to be protected in a State Forest amongst its other denizens. After that space of time, I found that they had become so very numerous that I took steps to diminish their numbers by a little; and when badgers were dug for the training of terriers by those who delight in that most hard-working form of sport, I used to order the old ones to be killed, especially the old boars, who do most of the mischief that can be laid at the door of the badger.

But when any badger-digging was going on, I always stipulated that it should be superintended either by myself or by one of the head keepers, who had my orders how to proceed. I always instructed him to take the badger into his own possession, unharmed (for you cannot injure badgers by digging down to them with the aid of little dogs — their immensely tough hides protect them far too well for that), and as a rule he was ordered to turn him down quietly in the evening—or to bring him to me. I suppose I must have turned out upwards of a score of badgers in the little park in front of the King's House, when it was dark enough for them to get away in safety. They were very soon back again in the earth they came from, however far away it was.

Some of my friends take much delight in breeding good little terriers suitable for this work, and in digging badgers on scientific principles, and indeed it is not a sport in which a novice can succeed, nor nearly as simple as it looks.

In the Forest many of the earths are made in a stratum of sandy soil, beneath which is clay or boggy and wet grounds. So that the earths do not run more than 8 or 9 feet deep, but often spread over as much as three-quarters of an acre, with innumerable entries, galleries, and passages, all communicating with one another over this extent of ground.

Often there are two stories of such galleries, one running above the other, and the badger moves from his ground-floor apartments to his first floor as he thinks he can best baffle the dog.

Now, in order to get hold of him, he must be located, and driven in and around his earth till he can be got into a corner by means of digging cross trenches, so as to cut him off here and there from parts of his stronghold. At last the dog, if he be good enough, locates him with certainty, and, lying not too near him, but baying lustily, tells us where to dig down first on to himself, and finally to the badger, which is a little way in front of him, and can be secured by opening out the earth till some one can grasp his tail as he turns to dig onwards, and he is hauled out unhurt and popped into a sack. Very often after the dog has found the badger, and moved him about to various parts of the earth, there is a long silence, and the dog comes out completely baffled. What has happened? Why, the badger, gaining an advantage over the dog, has managed to "dig himself in," viz. to open out some narrow passage in his great castle and work along it, throwing up loose sand in spadesful till he has blocked completely the whole passage behind him, and the place appears like a load of loose sand just deposited.

This is a truly artful manœuvre, and requires a clever dog to circumvent it. Perhaps the dog that has been working the badger is an old hand, and is pretty well aware of what has happened. He may go back down to the block, and bay there—not at the badger, which he cannot see and can hardly smell, but in order to mark his knowledge of the way he has gone. In fact we can hear him digging away in order to follow his enemy.

Now we quickly sink a shaft leading down to where we can hear the dog working. And, sure enough, we find him digging at a newly blocked hole, and scratching out loose sand by the spadeful.

We help him with the spade, and get the passage clear, and, putting a dog into it, presently hear the angry bay which tells us that he is face to face with the badger again.

Now, if we have been wise, and cut at the first a cross trench confining friend Brock to that corner of his castle to which he has retreated, it will not be very hard to get him ere long. But if he has all the great earth to retreat into unchecked, a great deal of work may have to be done over again, and some hours may be spent over the job. This is what is meant by "scientific" digging. But if we have dug scientifically, we have got him into a corner where all the puppies can see him and bay at him, and find out what sort of a customer the "gentleman in grey" is, and how near to him it is wise to go.

Many people suppose that badger-digging is a brutal and bloody sport, where poor high-couraged dogs are cut almost to pieces by their formidable opponents, and poor Brock himself barely escapes with his life. This at any rate is a delusion, for, however often he may be shaken up, he is far too well protected to suffer inconvenience.

All depends on how the sport is conducted. If—after having got to the badger in some easy place, by the aid of a really sporting little terrier, and you have got him practically exposed at the brink of an earth—you can then run at him hard bitten dogs, bull terriers and the like, who go in at him with unlimited courage and no difficulties about searching for their foe in the dark, you will get very bloody encounters. Your dogs will be cut to pieces. The badger will have all the best of it, but he will not have a good time, and I cannot see where the sport comes in. That is badger-baiting, not digging the wild animal from his complicated fortifications, and I never would sanction any such proceedings, nor allow a live badger to be taken away from the Forest, to be used for purposes of that nature.

It is a mistake ever to use very hard bitten dogs for badger-digging. You do not want to bite the badger, or to get your dog bitten; you want a dog that will first of all find the badger in his complicated burrow, then to lay up near to him, so as to prevent him digging himself in, baying well all the time so as to guide the hastening spades to the spot far underground. Should the badger turn, and commence digging onwards himself, a really perfect dog is on to him at once, and, with tooth and redoubled bay, puts a stop to all engineering proceedings. But the moment the assaulted badger whips round under this attack and presents his "business" end, our clever little terrier retreats a yard or so, out of danger, and does not risk even a nip, but never leaves his foe, never lets him make good his retreat, and never ceases his baying signal to the reinforcements that he knows are hurrying to his support.

Such a dog as this is a very highly trained and valuable sporting dog of a particular variety. He is full of courage, but also well supplied with discretion. He knows that it is not his business to get his jaw bitten off by a much more powerful animal than himself, but that he is also a disgraced dog if he ever leaves his foe, even though he is down in the dark bowels of the earth, with eyes and mouth full of sand, until the welcome daylight breaks in upon him and he hears his master's voice. His job is done then. It has probably taken him two hours. He has shown them the badger. The young dogs who are being educated at the quarry, the hard bitten dogs that cannot get into the earths, may do the rest for all he cares.

You may dig a dozen badgers to such a dog as this, if you can get him, and it will be very exceptional to find a single cut on him. But you could not have done without him.

It is always best to use little short-legged terriers, of a good hunting, but *not* a fighting strain. The smaller they are, the better. Firstly, they can get into the earths, while the hard bitten larger terrier, or the modern show fox-terrier, who is often hard enough, when you bring him within view of the badger cannot get about the earths after him. When once Brock begins digging himself in, in small pipes, you might as well have a Newfoundland dog to help you as a big terrier.

Secondly, and most important, when in the earth and confronting the badger at the moment that he makes one of his sudden savage charges, the little dog can hastily back out of danger and escape, returning at once to his job, which is that of annoying and holding up the foe, when the violent attack ceases. But if this chances with the bigger dogs, they cannot retreat because of their bulk. They have to stay, and face the attack—nothing loth, to do them credit—but they suffer considerably, and at that sort of game they do not serve their master for many years.

Two years or so ago we had got out seven badgers, all full-grown, in a day, using almost entirely the little short-legged, wire-haired terriers that my friends used to breed. We had employed good old dogs to find the badgers, and young ones when things became easy; but on all the days—about ten—there was not to be found a single cut that required the least attention. I do not mean to say that our dogs never got hurt. Sometimes they got a few cuts under particular circumstances; but if properly managed and understood, the extraction of the wild badger from the most complicated earth may be very hard work for the men, but ought not to be in the least a cruel or brutal business for either dogs or badger.

I do not think I ever saw a badger hurt by the dogs, and I must have turned out, after they had been dug out, many scores. We did not always carry them back to Lyndhurst, and it has often been a comical sight to see four or five badgers clumsily rolling off down a ride together in the broad daylight, greatly upset and perturbed at all the happenings to them, and much perplexed as to how in the world they got to where they were, at that time of day!

There is an ancient sport, followed chiefly about Christmas time, by the humble sportsmen of the district. It is the chase of the squirrel among the trees. Some years ago they were very abundant, until there came an epidemic which reduced them for a long time to small numbers.

This is a very ancient form of chase, pursued on quite primeval lines. The squirrel, when located among the trees which are his habitat, is pursued by the party of "sportsmen," who strive to bring him down by the use of their primitive but skilfully handled weapons.

These are of two descriptions, the "squail" and the "snogg." The users of these forms of minor artillery have their controversies over their respective merits, just as shooting men will argue over the respective virtues of the one-trigger gun over the older form of fowling-piece.

The "squail" is the more artistic weapon, and probably the more ancient. It is the product of the man who lives and works wholly in the woodlands.

It consists of a stick, about 15 inches long, light, with just a trifle of play in it, to the end of which is fixed a round or, better, a slightly pear-shaped ball, about the size of a tennis ball, turned out of some heavy hard-wood. The "snogg" is a similar weapon, but made of a rather stouter stick of similar length, around the head of which is fixed a ferrule, or lump of lead. It is claimed that this weapon is the less likely to become lodged in the branches of trees.

But whichever is used, the wielder of the "snogg" or the "squail" can make surprisingly good practice with it up to as much as fifty yards; while to see them fetch a squirrel out of the tops of the highest of the forest beeches, sometimes as he bounds from one branch to another, or again as he flattens himself for concealment against the trunk of the tree at ninety feet up, is a perfect revelation.

In fact the "squail" is never out of the hand (or the pocket) of that class of the New Forest labouring population—too numerous by far—who never can be induced to put in a week's consecutive honest labour, and a good deal of "stuff" other than squirrels fall to them by the skilful use of this weapon as they spend their days loafing about the forest.

Up till recent times the great congregations of squirrel hunters about Christmas time all met together in the evening, at one or other of the local public-houses, and enjoyed great suppers of "squirrel pie," the product of the day's amusement, but of late years squirrels have hardly been abundant enough to furnish material for these epicurean feasts. But I have been assured that squirrel pie is "not half bad," and I know that hedgehog, properly cooked in a paste of clay according to the ancient custom, is most succulent eating.

The squirrel hunting is probably a survival of very ancient sports of the kind, and is a curious continuation of the use of the more primitive weapons of the chase. In no other district of England save the New Forest could it have survived and been successfully practised to the present day.

But I think the New Forest management has always been lenient in its control and friendly to sports that did no real harm, and sportsmen of all classes, from the highest to the lowest, have ever found it to be a happy hunting ground.

CHAPTER XIII

SHOOTING IN THE NEW FOREST

SINCE first the art of shooting game flying came to be practised, the New Forest must needs have been a tract of land where rough shooting such as obtained then could be had in perfection. And although the principal use made of the Forest, from a sporting point of view, was to maintain it as a great chase bountifully stocked with deer, yet that very system necessitated the employment of a large staff of keepers, who guarded and protected the ground very adequately, so that all wild game of whatever kind was well preserved, and throve accordingly.

Pheasants, no doubt, were not as common as they are now, but there were numerous flocks of black game, while much ground that is now drained and planted was in earlier days the haunt of snipe, and woodcocks were always plentiful among the hollies.

The earliest records I have been able to obtain come from the counterfoils of an old book of tickets showing the heads of game sent week by week to the Lord Warden (then H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge). A regular system was in force under which week by week two of the keepers shot together in their respective and adjoining walks, so that by degrees the whole Forest was laid under contribution in rotation. I have picked out some of the weeks which seem noteworthy.

WEEK ENDING *Oct.* 30, 1846

Pheasants	2
Partridges	4
Snipe	44
Hare	1
	51

WEEK ENDING *Sept.* 4, 1847

Blackgame	12
Landrail	1
	13

WEEK ENDING *Oct.* 21, 1848

Pheasants	3
Partridges	7
Woodcock	1
Snipe	44
	55

The total of the game sent weekly in the season 1845–46 amounts to—

Snipe	300
Blackgame	41
Pheasants	68
	409

In 1848, there is a remarkable series of weeks between December 31, 1848, to January 30, 1849, in which 284 head of game, mainly snipe and woodcock, were sent to His Royal Highness' larder. It must be remembered that these figures represent only a small portion of the game killed in New Forest. It was only that which was killed by two keepers in a restricted area shooting solely "for the pot." A much larger amount must have been killed by the body of licencees who had the privilege, as it then was, of shooting in the Forest.

Doubtless these keepers were good shots, from the practice they got; and they were quite certain to provide themselves with good dogs, which in the Forest is more than half the battle.

Readers of Daniell's *Rural Sports* will doubtless be familiar with the account of the pig which was trained to point game by Toomer, one of the New Forest keepers, who lived at Wilverley

Lodge, I believe. He must at least have been a patient breaker, and those who know the New Forest swine can quite believe in the ranging and quartering of which the pig might be capable.

There used in ancient days to be a very long list of distinguished persons, to the number in all of eighty, who received, as a compliment at the hands of the Sovereign, the permission to sport in New Forest.

In most cases it was a compliment only. Sundry members of the Royal Family, who never visited the Forest, the Lord Mayor of London, and similar dignitaries, were never likely to trouble the game much. In addition to these, however, there were the verderers of the New Forest and various of the landowners and residents therein, to whom the Lord Warden was pleased to extend the privilege.

The fee paid was small. One guinea a year, and an entrance fee of £5 paid to the Charity for the Widows of the New Forest Keepers—a fund which, from small beginnings, has developed into a very prosperous charity, and is thriving now. There were no rules laid down as there are now, but there was an unwritten law which it was expected should be very strictly observed. It was summed up in the terms of the licence, which was "to be used for purposes of recreation only, and with that moderation which is fitting."

Consequently the holders of the licence were careful as to the spirit as well as the letter of their actions. It was not thought right to shoot oftener than two or three days a week. Rabbits were deemed the perquisite of the keepers (a very bad thing), and were severely let alone by the licencees.

Anything savouring of poaching or unfair practices led to the certain forfeiture of the licence. And as a new licence was only granted when a vacancy in the list occurred, and there were always many applicants anxiously waiting for that chance, there was a fairly good police system in existence; and anything savouring of undesirable practices was sure to be reported ere very long. It was a thoroughly sporting concession, and was expected to be used in good sporting fashion.

In 1867 all this was altered. An arrangement was come to by which the property of Claremont, then part of the Crown property surrendered by the Sovereign to the nation, in return for the Civil List, was handed over by the Office of Woods &c., to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, in exchange for her surrender of the right to issue licences to sport in the New Forest.

Of course, when the matter came under the control of a Public Department, it was placed on a business-like—not to say commercial—footing.

A comprehensive code of rules was compiled, in order to secure that the shooting should be carried on somewhat on the lines which it was formerly a point of honour to follow.

A fee of £20 was fixed as the consideration, with a "double licence" at £30, which enables the shooter to take with him a friend staying in his house. This is the pleasantest feature of the new arrangement, and much appreciated by various men who reside in the Forest, or near it, but have no shooting of their own.

This new arrangement brought in about £800 a year to the Treasury, and, I suppose, a change of the kind had become inevitable.

Obviously one result was that the Forest became far more heavily shot over. People who had planked down £20 for their shooting privilege—which extended to over 50,000 acres of rough shooting—not a bad bargain, as the market for shooting properties goes—were not likely to forego a single item of what they considered to be their right. But the pressure on the stock of game was great; when I came on the scene in 1880, I found the Forest very bare indeed. There had been a bad year for rabbits the previous season, and in the following March I could not have been persuaded that in a couple of years' time I should have been resorting to all kinds of devices in order to keep down the rabbits, which were amounting by then to a positive danger to our plantations.

Certain new regulations which I made, and have alluded to on a previous page, soon told a tale, and I went at once to the Office of Woods and told them that, if we were to pretend to make a shooting revenue out of the Forest, we must necessarily, as other people in the same position have to do, rear some game to replenish our stock.

The Forest is a fine country for wild pheasants (allowing for foxes), and in a good year they thrive wonderfully well. In a bad wet season, they do no better than in other places; but, as a rule, the district suits them very well. My object, seeing what a drain there was upon the game, since the ground was so hardly shot over, was to produce each year such a number of young hen pheasants, which under our rules were protected, that, if the following spring were a favourable one, we should be secure of an ample breeding stock and a good show of wild game.

On the whole, this has succeeded well enough. In all years now, good or bad, there are ten times the number of pheasants that existed when first I came to the Forest, and in favourable years, I think the stock must be increased fifty fold.

As to the cocks, young or old, whether hand reared or wild bred, the licencees were heartily welcome to kill all they could, as soon as they were sufficiently mature to take care of themselves. And the more they killed, the better I was pleased. But I never had any sympathy with the shooter who in the early days of October would prowl round my breeding fields in the hope of getting some immature cock, scarce perhaps distinguishable from a hen (and very often the hen was not distinguished at all) just to fill his bag.

To deal with such "sportsmen," I had the ground around the breeding fields driven in, more than once a day, so long as the birds were too young to protect themselves. As soon as November arrived, the cock pheasant could look after himself, and he got no more protection from me. This protection was made into a great grievance by some. I used to rear these birds —generally about 800 in all—in three or four different places, which were from nine to five miles distant from each other. Like all game preservers, I picked up my eggs on my outside boundary, just as my neighbours did on their side of the fence. But I always had one or two small sets of pens with breeding birds shut in them which gave me a good supply of eggs; and when it seemed advisable, I bought a hundred or two of eggs to supplement home production.

These reared birds, after being fed, and kept together with a barley stack or two until November, were allowed to stray where they would. They were never shot, in any systematic way, but of course the licencees got plenty of the cocks. That was what they were reared for.

I have known licencees, shooting singly, to get their 140 or so of pheasants in a season, and bags of from 80 to 100 were common enough.

Rabbits, however, as in most other places, formed the weightiest part of the shooter's bag, and afforded very excellent sport among the furze brakes of the Forest. Good spaniels and hardy ones were necessary for this work, as the rabbits need a good deal of pressure to induce them to leave such thick covert. In good seasons 100 rabbits in a day to a couple of shooters was no uncommon bag early in the season, and from 500 to 700 rabbits in a season have often been killed.

Black game, alas! have very nearly died out in the New Forest, where once they were so plentiful.

When first I went there I realised, from what I was able to learn, that their numbers were diminishing rapidly. My first step was to put a stop to shooting them altogether, for it was perfectly certain that there were not sufficient of either sex for that to go on any longer.

I also subsequently did all I could to introduce fresh blood, in the hope of reviving the stock. First of all, the Duke of Buccleuch sent me from Dumfriesshire a supply of several brace of live birds ingeniously caught by old Lindsay the keeper at Sanquhar. These certainly seemed at first to improve the stock; we had more broods of young birds than for some time past. But after a year or two the improvement vanished.

A friend in Perthshire then sent me some eggs from his estate there. They did not seem to be a particularly hard bird to rear, but still we had many losses, and, as the supply of eggs was limited, the net result did not carry us far.

A few years later I got a larger supply, two years running, from Bavaria, of fully grown birds —and here I would like to record that not only the Commissioners of Woods, but also successive Financial Secretaries to the Treasury, took much interest in these experiments, and supported them with all reasonable liberality.

But here again the good effect was only

transitory. We had, as before, a few additional broods, and then the decrease set in again; and now it has prevailed so far that, for the last few years, the days when one encountered a blackcock or greyhen were few, and to be marked with a white stone. And I can recollect myself counting 23 blackcocks on a "curling ground" near Ridley Wood. In those days one never rode about the forest, especially on its northern side, without encountering at least half a dozen black game.

The truth is that when a stock of game birds gets down to a very low ebb, especially that of a variety so easily destroyed in the early days of its life as is the black grouse, it is almost impossible to revive it in a country where it is customary for foxhounds to pursue their sport for five and even six days a week without the fear of running short of quarry. It is sad to have to record it, but I found the two things incompatible.

As an illustration of what the New Forest shooting is like, I am able to give an extract from the carefully kept game-book of Messrs. H. F. and F. C. Wingrove of Langley House, Totton. These two brothers shot together systematically for many years after 1886, and during the ten preceding years Mr. H. F. Wingrove shot either alone, or with a licence that enabled him to be accompanied by a friend.

This shows what could be accomplished by two young men in the prime of life, excellent walkers and good shots, provided also with dogs particularly well suited for the work. They used to shoot the Forest three days a week on a regular system, and it is not everyone that would care to lay himself out so entirely for the sport, and work so hard at it. Messrs. Wingrove paid attention mainly to rabbit shooting in the earlier part of the season, and as the season progressed went mainly after snipe. Pheasants they merely took as chance provided, and many of the licencees killed each year many more than they did.

The figures shown on the bottom lines of pages 258, 259, represent the sums of money they paid between each year for their shooting.

Various other gentlemen have given me particulars of their bags in the Forest. In 1897 the late Mr. Howard of Goldenhayes sent me his totals for the year as follows:

Pheasants	91
Partridges	2
Woodcock	56
Snipe	11
Duck	2
Hares	1
Rabbits	687
Various	5
	855

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Mr. Howard was always a single-handed shooter, and did not work himself to death. But two years later he writes me a comical letter of complaint as to the woeful falling off in his sport, his score having fallen to 557, with only 46 pheasants, against 91, and 441 rabbits as against 687.

But he confesses to have been exceedingly slack both as to days and hours spent in pursuit of game, and also in particular having been afflicted with a very inferior kennel of dogs, on which so much depends. But, taking either year, I don't think Mr. Howard had much to grumble about as to the result of his expenditure of £20; and he was a good average specimen of the successful New Forest shooter.

Mr. C. C. Dallas, of Eastley Wootton, was one of those sportsmen who keep a very accurate game book; and, while he generally took a grouse moor in Scotland, he devoted himself in the autumn to the New Forest and to the shooting there, a form of sport that he greatly prized—generally, however, going abroad after Christmas.

The record he sends me in summary is that he shot from 1886 to 1914 consecutively for the whole or part of the season; that he was out on 1144 days, and killed 8495 head—not a great average perhaps daily, but in the case of genuine rough shooting, in all weathers, when a few blanks must be looked for, it is not a record to be despised by the sportsman who is not solely a shooter. Nor must I overlook the record of my neighbour Colonel Austen, who, shooting always alone, and rarely employing any conveyance, averaged 138 snipe to his gun for ten consecutive years—this in addition to other game. As, for instance, in one of the years I am referring to his grand total was 472 head, of which snipe accounted for 116 only.

The figures I have given were a fair criterion of what was done in the way of shooting in the Forest in my day by the fairly active division. There were of course, as always, some sportsmen who, becoming advanced in years, could no longer make the most of what is undoubtedly rough shooting in every sense of the word, both as to rough walking and long distances to travel. But there are many who set great store upon the healthy exercise they get combined with amusement. But, taken all round, the New Forest is the poor sportsman's paradise. He can for the small sum of £20 get 50,000 and more acres to shoot over, with the certainty that there is something to shoot. He generally impresses his gardener or his groom into the service as beater. If he employs a man from outside, no remunera-

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Therefore he must stand, not attempting to draw, on the instant he acknowledges the scent of a snipe at from 80 to 100 yards. This wary quarry will allow of no nearer approach by him. But if he stands firm till his master joins him, the quiet approach of the two should result in a shot.

There come a few days in most winters when heavy rains or a sudden thaw swell the rivers Test and Avon, to the width of their respective valleys. Then everything, the snipe included, is driven out of those extensive water meadows, and the snipe flock up in great numbers to the wet healthy uplands of the Forest. Then, for just a few days, a shooter, with a careful setter such as I have described, may do very well indeed. I have often known ten couple to be killed by one gun in the day, but that number is not very often exceeded.

But whatever the weather, all depends on the dog, and he must be selected for the particular kind of game that is to be sought on any day.

A clever, well broken old retriever, that really understands the management of sporting, is a very valuable assistant. If he has become steady and knowledgeable enough, he may be used as a close-ranging spaniel, not tied to his master's heels as in his earlier days, but allowed liberty enough to use his nose.

Such a dog will keep close enough to interfere with neither setter nor spaniel, but he will insure that his master does not pass any game within reach of his nose that the setter, ranging a little wide, or a flighty spaniel may perhaps have missed. He is a most useful aid, and, with his education and training, can be relied upon to do nothing wrong.

As for my own Forest shooting, much as I appreciated it—and though I have taken part in many and many a big day's shooting, yet I never enjoyed anything much more than a good day in the Forest with my dogs—I can show no such records as those of the keen sportsmen I have just referred to.

My time was far too fully employed for me to sacrifice it to the long hard day's work that I have been describing. Moreover, such time as I could spare from my office and from other official duties, I preferred to devote to hunting, when I could survey a good tract of the district under my charge, and store up many a note as to the condition of various matters as I rode about the Forest. Further, there was the question of keeping within bounds the wild deer that ever and ever were encroaching in numbers, and this alone occupied most of my bye-days—so that altogether, year by year, my book tells me that about fifteen to eighteen days' shooting was about my average number of excursions with the fowling-piece. But it suited me very well to use this privilege on the old lines, viz. "with that moderation which is fitting."

It was a convenience to be able to put in a couple of hours' work in the office, and then be off to some district near at hand to do a half day's shooting. Some of them were very pleasant, but I rarely went very far from home. I had the privilege of being able to enter the enclosed and reserved plantations, and in that way securing, however late I went out, the chance of beating undisturbed ground.

Except for one or two points, this privilege was not worth much. The game, as a rule, chose for its haunts the open woods—the older oak plantations where the acorns were falling, and the sunny parts of the Forest, rather than the thick enclosures; only in one or two cases was this seclusion valuable, viz. where one of the streams, open enough in places to attract wild fowl, ran into and through one of these plantations.

In cases such as this, it was an advantage to start late, when the fowl, if there were many about, had been disturbed and shot at at various places, and had sought refuge in the secluded streams and pools in the wide coverts of New Forest. These little collections of refugees would afford me very excellent sport about mid-day, as they rose in little bunches in the shelter of the thick covert.

There were various ponds and pools in the manors in and around the Forest where wild fowl—notably teal—congregated, and were preserved and fostered and fed till they became quite at home. Then on certain days guns would be assembled, and a heavy shoot would take place.

My good neighbours would often notify me of the day when they proposed to shoot their ponds—mainly, as I like to think, from good-nature and kindly feeling towards myself, and also because by my disturbance of the woody refuges they were driven back again to their old haunts, and the flock of wild fowl using the ponds was kept together—as to its remnants at any rate.

There was no place where fowl, at one time (for they are capricious in their haunts) congregated more thickly than on the mill-pond at Minstead Manor. I have been present when one hundred fowl have been brought down in about twenty-five minutes. It is a pretty shoot. First, at the start, comes the great rise of 500 fowl on the wing at once. After that, teal and ducks are flighting round with the intention of returning to their snug quarters, and presenting rocketing shots at every height and every angle. After half an hour or so, this flight ceases, and the ducks sheer off to quieter quarters that they know of. Some of these lay in the Forest streams, and especially that stream which ran from Minstead Manor through the thick enclosure of Buskett's Lawn. Mr. Compton would often notify me of his intention to shoot his pond, and often also ask me to make one of the party. I would then requisition from him one of his guests, and, leaving him to shoot some of his coverts until the afternoon, the pair of us would proceed on a maraud down the stream, to get what we could for ourselves, and to drive the ducks back to the pond they came from, so that the party might have a second turn at them. Some of these walks were very pleasant ones. I quote the result of two or three:

1894. Dec. 3. Alone. Pheasants, 3. Rabbits, 3. Woodcock, 1. Teal, 22 = 29.
1895. Dec. 18. Alone. Teal, 14.
1896. Dec. 11. 2 guns. Teal, 27.
1897. Dec. 24. Alone. Pheasant, 1. Hare, 1. Rabbits, 5. Woodcock, 1. Teal, 17 = 25.
1898. Nov. 22. Alone. Rabbit, 1. Teal, 29 = 30.
1899. Nov. 29. 2 guns. Rabbits, 2. Wild Fowl, 28 = 30.

I don't remember any days of shooting that I have enjoyed more than these quiet walks after teal along the winding stream that ran through the young woods, here widening into pools, there giving a vista down a reach, but always leading one to the unexpected. Then the sudden flush of the teal, almost always through thick covert, exactly like shooting woodcocks, was most exciting. Immediately after a shot, one had to stand to arms for five minutes, as it was impossible to know whether or no there was a big flock of teal just a little farther on which was flushed. Often enough there was, and they would come swishing over, sometimes very high, and again quite low, as they failed to realise the danger. In either case they afforded the most beautiful shots to anyone who was quick in the use of his gun. Sometimes, after securing a right and left at the rise of a couple of teal, one could secure two or three more without moving from the place as they came rocketing over from some unsuspected hiding place.

Weather and water had to be carefully considered. A certain amount of wind was essential, or else the wary fowl would quickly detect the approach of the shooter pushing his way through the dense covert; and the water had to be watched with the keenness of a salmon-fisher.

If it were too high, the ducks also sat too high, and could detect the approach of their enemy over the banks which should have concealed him. If too low, it might not attract them sufficiently to settle at all, and the whole stream would be blank. It was, in all, a thoroughly sporting piece of shooting, dependent upon all the chances and risks and disappointments that go to make up genuine sport. When these chances were favourable, they yielded what I thought to be a most delightful day. I know that twenty or thirty head does not seem much to many a shooter used to big bags of driven game. But in the New Forest we were content with small figures and rough shooting, gained by our own personal exertions; and, believe me, for I am very familiar with both forms of shooting, there is no less sport to be gained from one than there is from the other, to anyone who is willing to work for his pleasure, and obtain it by his own exertions.

There were other days—sometimes days of very good sport—that I was able to obtain in connection with the keeping down of rabbits.

As I explained before, the old system, that obtained before my day, of allowing the keepers to regard the rabbits as their perquisite was a thoroughly bad one. It led to the preservation of rabbits where they were not wanted, and to a sort of claim to a vested interest in them that was wholly undesirable. I deemed it a better plan to take it into my own hands. Where I perceived—and I pervaded the Forest pretty regularly—that rabbits were getting ahead, I set the keeper to work to ferret and to stink out the earths thoroughly in a certain plantation by a certain date. I then arranged to get together a number of shooters, mainly from the ranks of those who had taken licences to shoot in the Forest. I provided a sufficient luncheon, and selected as far as I could shooters of a friendly disposition, for feuds always raged between the various licencees in the Forest. So we had many very pleasant days' shooting such as the following:

Jan. 10, 1895—(Rhinefield).—6 guns. 13 pheasants. 112 rabbits. 12 woodcocks—130 head.
Jan. 19, 1896—(Sloden).—6 guns. 2 pheasants. 204 rabbits. 2 woodcocks—208 head.
Dec. 10, 1897—(Sloden).—50 pheasants. 238 rabbits. 5 woodcocks—293 head.

The keeper who had charge of Sloden enclosure, a sandy hillside where rabbits were wont to multiply, was a man who knew his business very well. He could "show" what rabbits there were in the covert as well as any man, if he only had ten days' notice, and was, as on such days as the one I am referring to, favoured by weather, he had every rabbit above ground, and they were well accounted for.

1897 was a very good year for pheasants, both wild and hand-reared. One of the lodges where I generally reared pheasants was only a mile away from the scene of action, and we had turned out some four hundred and fifty young birds there to stay where they would. The only toll taken of them on behalf of the Crown that paid for them was on such of these birds that came among our fifty pheasants on the day in question. Of course we only shot cock birds.

We had a good day in Sloden on December 10, 1896, when eight guns killed 17 pheasants, 284 rabbits, 7 woodcocks—total, 308.

This is the only day I ever had in the Forest where we attained to a total of over 300 head. But I have seen better days' sport, and the one I described on December 10, 1897, was a better day, though the bag was not so good.

After that, the stock of rabbits in Sloden was pretty well mastered; a bad breeding year or two supervened, the trees got larger and safer from the attacks of the rodent, and the peril of the rabbit passed away for the time.

But earlier in my New Forest times, I had far better days than these. They came just at the time that I realised that if rabbits were to be kept down I must see to it myself, or else run the risk of seeing them allowed to multiply so that the keepers should make a profit out of their excessive numbers. But at that date some of the young plantations were still of the height and growth to hold woodcocks.

Sloden, above referred to, was one; King's Garn was another—not so much that it harboured rabbits of itself, as that our good neighbour Sir Henry Paulet, across a narrow strip of open forest, chose to maintain a considerable head of rabbits in his excellent coverts of Canterton Manor. I found I had to take this in hand, and in 1887 had the rabbits well ferreted and attacked them in force. The keeper had told me beforehand that a great number of woodcocks were using the covert, but I did not think they were in anything like the numbers that really were there. As soon as I realised what was actually the state of affairs, I was rather in a dilemma. Here was a great number of woodcocks, and a chance of a record day. On the other hand, the rabbits had all been got ready for the day, and we were there to kill them down. So I stuck to business, and we killed 126 rabbits—all we could have done—and 27 woodcocks. But two days afterwards the keeper of the walk came to tell me that not only was there still in the covert all the woodcocks we had left, but also that a fresh flight had come in. I hastily summoned by telegraph a number of the best sportsmen that I thought could be got together, and met those who responded on the following morning. We found all the woodcocks we had left on the previous occasion, and a few more. I placed the guns on the rides and open spaces solely for the woodcocks, just as I had placed them on the previous day solely for the rabbits.

We got 41 woodcocks, and incidentally some 30 rabbits. I had previously arranged to shoot the rabbits in Sloden early in the following week, and it yielded, besides some 130 rabbits, 20 woodcocks more, making 88 woodcocks killed in three days comprised within a single week. I do not think this record has been often beaten in England—at any rate in the southern counties.

But, alas! we could not keep up this sort of shooting. The coverts quickly grew up, and became draughty under the trees on the ground; our good friend Sir Henry Paulet passed over to the majority, and no longer supplied us with hordes of his surplus rabbits to make us a day's shooting.

In 1888, I had a day in Sloden which produced 32 woodcocks and some 120 rabbits, but that was the last good day. The coverts of that date were played out, and the sport to be had out of them, as regards woodcock shooting, was nearly over (and never had really been exploited) when I went to the Forest. I had a flash in the pan of a possible revival of this form of good shooting when, on February 1st, 1905, I killed with two companions 14 woodcocks in the young plantations in Wilverley, which are as yet hardly open enough to attract them, but I would not wonder if one day someone were to have a very good day in those young woods.

These pleasant wanderings, either alone with the gun and good dogs, or again with cheery companions and friends, are delightful reminiscences of my Forest life. To ardent shooters our sport may seem meagre. So perhaps it was, but it was all obtained by our own woodcraft and hard work. We were very tired at the close of the day, but very happy if things had gone well. I have enjoyed many such days much more than when I have helped to kill, say, 1000 pheasants, and been treated as a mere battery—tethered to one spot and wholly ignorant of the programme of the day's sport—further than to see that the store of cartridges was ample, and the powder as straight as one could make it.

CHAPTER XIV

FALCONRY

ALTHOUGH the New Forest is a country so unsuitable for hawking that, except on a very few occasions I was unable to follow the sport there, yet my life at the King's House, and in fact wherever I have been, was so bound up with the training of hawks and with falconry, that it would be impossible to omit mention thereof in any sketch of my pursuits during my New Forest life. I do not know when I first took to falconry. I cannot remember the time when I was not devoted to that pursuit. Although quite ignorant of its practice, I devoured all books I could get upon the subject, and in my Eton days endeavoured to put in force what I learned from reading them upon any unhappy kestrel I could get hold of.

But my feet were first set on the right path by the kind teaching of that fine sportsman, the late Sir Charles Slingsby of Scriven, who was as good a falconer as he was a huntsman.

In my summer holidays I would toil over on my pony as often as he could find leisure to be bothered with me, the thirteen miles or so that divided Harewood from Scriven, and receive education in the handling of hawks.

Sir Charles was a past master in managing the sparrow-hawk—perhaps the most difficult kind of hawk to control and keep in health, and with his friend Mr. Bower used to have capital sport with blackbirds and thrushes in July and August. In this sport I was a truly willing novice, and was also allowed, under careful supervision, to do a little "carrying" and training of the young hawk which had been set aside for me to try my hand with.

At last the day came when I was allowed to take it home and do my best with it all alone; and I was a proud boy as I rode home across the countryside with my hawk on hand for the first time in my life.

Well, the history of all beginners' hawks is much the same. I devoted myself to her. I got more education for myself than ever the hawk suspected. But I got her perfectly trained and fit to go hawking with. And then I was wrecked on the rock of "condition," so fatal to all of us, old hands and beginners alike, and the delicate little hawk got out of health and soon died. But I had become fairly started as a falconer.

I could feed and handle a hawk properly; cut out my own tackle, even imp a feather, and, except for rare intervals, I have never been out of reach of a hawk since.

Soon after this, in 1866, I was allowed to spend part of my Easter vacation on Salisbury Plain, on the invitation of Mr. Cecil Duncombe, who afterwards became one of my best and dearest friends. The hawks were those belonging to the small club that afterwards developed into the Old Hawking Club, and were managed by that famous old sportsman Clough Newcome, formerly one of the shining lights of the Loo Hawking Club in the palmy days of heron hawking in Holland.

Robert Barr, a member of a famous family of Scotch falconers, was the professional falconer under Mr. Newcome's superintendence, which was, however, so minute and careful that it left his subordinate very little to do.

Here at last, and for the first time, I saw real hawking. I studied the use and training of the noble peregrine passage falcon, so great and so powerful compared with the hawks I had handled up to the present. The quarry was the rook, and the hawks of the highest class. And a second visit stimulated my eagerness yet more fully.

The following year I went to Cambridge, and as Feltwell, where Mr. Newcome lived and kept the hawks, was within fairly easy reach of Cambridge, I used often to go over there for a day or two whenever there was any hawking to be seen.

Meanwhile, when I was at home I kept my hand in by training merlins, and I had a good deal of fun with these most engaging of little pets and miniature falcons. In 1870, when the war between France and Germany had broken out, the entire stud of hawks belonging to the Champagne Hawking Club had been removed to Elveden Hall, near Thetford, then the residence of the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, who kindly asked me to stay with him and inspect the establishment. Shortly before that time the Maharajah had sent John Barr to Iceland in order to catch the Iceland variety of the gerfalcon. He brought back some thirty of these magnificent falcons. He told me that they were so plentiful that he had little trouble in catching them when once he became familiar with their favourite haunts, but then he was a past master in the art of catching hawks. His trouble was in feeding them on the homeward voyage, and for this purpose he purchased some half a dozen of Icelandic ponies, which he slaughtered as became necessary during the passage.

The Champagne Club had an establishment

of some twenty or more hawks, mostly peregrines, and two or three goshawks. The Maharajah had a very good saker, and there were one or two hawks of the rarer and most valuable kinds such as our falconer of later years, John Frost, always described as "menagerie hawks."

But altogether this great joint establishment of hawks, so numerous, containing so many of the noblest possible specimens of the Falconidæ, was certainly the most magnificent hawking establishment that I, or possibly any other living person, ever saw.

As to sport. Many of the French hawks were very good ones, but were chiefly game hawks, that had been flying very well in Scotland at grouse the previous autumn. They had one or two good heron hawks too.

The gerfalcons were all flying to the lure in the most magnificent form conceivable. Two or three had been entered to hares, and I saw a few flights at that quarry, but was not very greatly impressed by it as a form of sport suitable for the swift-flying long-winged falcons.

After seeing so much of these splendid hawks, I could not be happy without a hawk about me of my own. I should think I was the only undergraduate of the nineteenth century who regularly kept a trained hawk in his rooms in

College. Moreover, I had a dog also! but the Magdalene dons were kindly folk, and looked the other way when my dog was in the court. As to hawks, there was no law against them, and I had a perch, with the necessary flooring, put across the corner of my rooms, where my hawk could sit very comfortably. But I always blamed the loss of a beautiful little passage tiercel, that Mr. Newcome gave me, to the old cat of a bedmaker, who, no doubt, thought hawks "nasty messy things," and I have good reason to suspect that she untied the leash and left the window open. Professor Alfred Newton, whose rooms were in the same court as mine, saw him in the distance as he took flight, but I never heard of him again. In 1869 Mr. Newcome died, and the Hawking Club was broken up, and the hawks divided amongst the members. Cecil Duncombe gave me the falcon that fell to his share, and Robert Barr took service with the Marquis of Bute.

In the following spring he went with what hawks he had to enter and fly them at rooks on the Wiltshire Downs. I took the falcon I had had given to me, and another one of my own, and went down to join him at Market Lavington. On my way thither I stayed a day in London, and at Tattersalls speculated in a pony, for at least one horseman is essential for rook hawking, and very well did that pony turn out.

With this modest equipment, of two falcons and a pony, I spent the Easter vacation of 1870 assisting Robert Barr. We had a certain amount of sport, and I learnt a great deal about the management of hawks. The pony was a capital hack, and carried a hawk well.

Except for what I did with some merlins of my own, and subsequently with a young goshawk, at rabbits, I saw little hawking for a year or so; but in the autumn of 1871 it befell that Cecil Duncombe, Mr. A. E. Knox, a member of the former Hawking Club, and myself forgathered at Gordon Castle as the guests of the Duke of Richmond. The question of reviving the club was mooted, and then and there letters were written off to Lord Lilford, Captain Brooksbank, also original members, and to one or two others, proposing to them to start the club again. I myself wrote off to John Barr (his brother Robert, our old falconer, was dead), to propose to him that he should become our professional falconer, and soon made terms with him. All the old members gave us support, especially Lord Lilford, whose generosity smoothed all difficulties. Francis Newcome came in place of his father, and I was requisitioned to act as Manager and Hon. Secretary, a position I have held ever since. It now covers forty-four years.

We began well in 1872, with a remarkably good lot of hawks, such a lot as the Dutchmen, who catch them on their "passage" or migration, do not get hold of every year. With these I was able to show very good sport in the spring, partly at Ashdown, on the Berks Downs (Lord Craven was a supporter of the club), and partly in Wilts. When, a few years after, I took up my appointment in the New Forest, I moved the hawks to the south with me.

It was a position much more handy for the spring hawking on the Downs than my Yorkshire abode. In these days of motor cars it is easy to make a long day of it, and to go for the day's sport from Lyndhurst. At any rate it was certain that the hawks must be wherever I dwelt, or else I could not supervise all the management and training of them which was so essential if the establishment was ever to play a good part in the field.

Accordingly, the headquarters of the Old Hawking Club were transferred to Lyndhurst, and, though the hawks were not flown there, the mews where they dwelt was an object of interest to a great many of my neighbours, and other travellers, from Mr. Gladstone to Kaiser Wilhelm, both of whom paid visits thereto, as did many another distinguished personage.

But the most attractive sight afforded by the hawks to the people of Lyndhurst came during July and August, when the young peregrines, to the number of eight or nine, were flying "at hack,"—that is to say, in perfect freedom, all round the village, using, as a rule, the pinnacles and tower of the church as their chief resting place. As they began to get stronger on the wing, their evolutions, as they chased one another around the spire and all over the village, were very beautiful to watch. I have seen six or seven chevying one another all over the village, and perhaps half a hundred visitors and inhabitants standing in the street watching the aerial show. So long as these young hawks come regularly to their food, morning and evening, they are just as secure as fowls let out to feed. But ere long symptoms are shown that they have, one at a time, learned to procure food for themselves. Steps are then at once taken to secure them, and the happy period of liberty, which rarely extends to more than three weeks, is at an end. The hood and the jesses control the holiday maker, but it is only a very short time that elapses before he is on the wing again, trained and under control, and shortly to be allowed to kill his first grouse five hundred miles from where he learned the use of his wings, "flying at hack" and roosting on Lyndhurst spire.

During my life at Lyndhurst, a great many first-class hawks—hawks such as perhaps have had no superiors—passed through the mews at the King's House. Of the young hawks that used the spire so persistently in their youth were many very superior game hawks, coming most of them year by year from certain eyries in the precipitous cliffs of north-west Donegal. Whether it was the intensely wild and stormy surroundings of their birthplace, or whether it was a peculiar strain of dark-coloured peregrines that haunted those precipitous cliffs, I cannot tell; but year by year hawks of the highest class were sent us from those eyries to mature round Lyndhurst spire. Perhaps one of the best was that famous tiercel Persimmon, who came to us in 1897, and lasted till 1900, killing, year after year, old cock grouse up to the end of the season—a thing that not one tiercel in ten is able to do. In one year he killed seventy head of game. But again, from the Culvercliff in the Isle of Wight—an ancient eyrie in which hawks have bred for centuries—one that was specially reserved for Queen Elizabeth for her own personal use—we got one year a very good game falcon called Vesta. She served us for nine seasons, during the short period for which grouse-hawking, by far the finest form of game hawking that exists, can be carried on. During that time her score was:

Grouse	297
Other game	41
	338

or 37 head every season that she flew, but in her later days she was rather self-willed, and her scores suffered proportionately. In her earlier days they were much higher.

The object of the Old Hawking Club, revived in 1872, was to maintain a first-class establishment of working hawks, for all purposes, for the use of its members, where they wished. Every year it obtained from the Dutchmen at Valkenswaard a number of freshly caught passage falcons, and by that means kept an ancient but declining industry on its legs. These were always at first trained to rooks, and used during the annual visit of the club in March and April to Salisbury Plain. Here we all forgathered, though our quarters shifted from time to time as certain comfortable old inns changed hands. Finally, they were settled at a small cottage at Shrewton, which I bought and made comfortable, and, with rooms at various houses in the village to supplement its accommodation, many very enjoyable gatherings have been held within its walls, by the club and its many visitors. But in former days we were sufficiently comfortably housed, and our sport was very good. The Downs then had not been bought by the War Department for military training, nor laid down to grass and covered with enormous camps as they are now.

There was plenty of arable land to attract rooks, and we could get all the flights we wanted. Most of our members and their friends came down for long or short periods. Our accommodation was always strained, our joviality never failed, whatever might be the weather or the sport. Year by year the members of the French Hawking Club would pay us a visit, when the babel of tongues and the elaborate courtesies exchanged were diverting beyond all expression.

Some members, again, did not patronise the rook hawking, but relied upon the club and its hawks to provide sport on their moors or manors in the game season. Thus the Duke of Portland would year by year have the hawks at Langwell, to help to entertain some of his guests, at that lovely place, prolific of all sport. Mr. St. Quintin and Colonel Brooksbank would take a moor and have the hawks for a month or so. Once, I remember, in that space of time they killed 100 brace of grouse with them, and then the hawks went on to Langwell and killed a number more. Later still that season they killed 105 partridges and made up a total for the game season of 353 head. Lord Lilford, though the country around his home was not suitable for hawking, was unhappily too great a cripple to be able to join us in our sport farther afield, but he always liked to have the hawks with him for a short time, and a good hawk in full practice could show him many successful flights at partridges, even in a cramped country.

The Duke of St. Albans did not come out hawking or care for the sport. But he considered that his position of Hereditary Grand Falconer of England (with an income of £1200 a year) put him under an obligation to do something for the sport of falconry. He therefore joined our club, and gave us a handsome subscription on the understanding that if ever he were called upon by the King to produce hawks and show a day's sport, he should have the use of the club establishment. When some years afterwards his Grace commuted the pension he enjoyed in right of his position as Grand Falconer, he withdrew from the club.

I think the club was strongest and showed its best sport about the period 1886–96. The members in 1886 were:

Lord Lilford.
F. Newcome.
W. H. St. Quintin.
Lord Londesborough.
B. H. Jones.
Duke of St. Albans.
Duke of Portland.
Hon. E. W. B. Portman.
Hon. G. Lascelles—*Manager*.

HONORARY MEMBERS

Hon. Cecil Duncombe.
Hon. G. R. C. Hill.
Colonel Brooksbank.
F. Salvin, Esq.

In the previous spring season the hawks killed on the Downs no less than 243 head of rooks, crows, and magpies.

The total head of game killed during the season was 515, including 77 rabbits taken with a goshawk.

In 1890 we had an extraordinarily good lot of hawks, and they killed in March and April no less than 257 head of rooks, &c., out of 293 flights. Among these hawks was a rare old falcon called Elsa, flying at rooks then for the fifth season in succession, and killing them as well as ever. But she had also spent the four previous autumns in Scotland, flying at grouse and killing them in the grandest style—in fact, in two of her four seasons, she made the highest score of all the team. Yet after each spring she would, having well moulted, come out again in August, as a rook hawk, and make year after year either the best, or nearly the best, score of all the lot. It is very unusual to get a hawk that will thus excel in two entirely different forms of sport year after year, and for so many seasons, and when such a jewel is discovered there is no end to the amount of sport that can be got out of her. Elsa went on flying grouse into her sixth season, and then was lost at Langwell, the scene of many of her triumphs. It is to be hoped that she got clear away, and next spring found herself a mate and bred young eyases of her own quality.

Her mantle to some extent fell upon Ursula, a falcon caught in Elsa's last year with us, and she was just as good as her predecessor, though she did not last so long. In 1891 she killed 50 rooks on the Downs in spring, and in the same autumn 50 grouse in Scotland, coming again to her work at rooks as well as ever the following March.

In 1893 we had an extraordinary rook hawk sent from Holland, which we called Danceaway. She was always kept as a rook hawk, and lasted for seven seasons, invariably flying in splendid form, and never doing anything wrong. A child could have handled and managed her, and she was a delightful pet. Moreover, she always showed us the best of sport, for her style of flying was a treat to behold. She killed for us altogether 288 rooks. In 1902 we trained a remarkable hawk at Lyndhurst, a haggard which was named Shelagh. Now, for the benefit of those readers who are not falconers, I must explain that a haggard is a fully matured hawk—possibly an old one that has reared young, for it is not easy, after the first moult into the blue or breeding plumage, to say how old she may be. Possibly she has migrated more than once, and travelled over half of the globe, returning with her kind to Northern Europe at her appointed season. Obviously such hawks as these, with a wild nature inbred in them, and influencing them for years, are five times as hard to train as a hawk taken from the nest, which is almost afraid to lose sight of the man who has always brought food to it. It is further twice as hard to tame as even an ordinary wild caught hawk of the first year, which is not yet a twelvemonth old, and is more easily reclaimed.

Many a haggard is not really worth the trouble it takes to reclaim and train. Moreover, if you lose her, and leave her out for but twenty-four hours, the old "call of the wild" comes to her, and you have a wild hawk to catch again, instead of merely a lost friend to find and recover.

But if you once get your haggard trained, you have a hawk indeed. For you have got no amateur that needs entering and training to teach her to fly, but a genuine professional—one that has at the least maintained itself for two or three years, killing some wild sea bird, or rock pigeon on most days, and harrying the wild fowl on their migrations, and possibly has also brought up a family needing far harder work from her, and plenty more killing in order to supply the larder for the whole brood.

Such a hawk as this can fly like a swift, and catch prey wherever she is well placed to do so. She has for her lifetime exercised "dominion over the fowls of the air" at her sweet will and pleasure; and if you can get her to exercise those powers for your behoof whenever you please, you have got a hawk worth any amount of trouble. It is all a question of temper. If you light on a really sweet-tempered haggard, and have the patience and experience to handle her, you may get a hawk worth many ordinary ones.

Such a hawk was Shelagh. She became as sweet-tempered and gentle as a bird could be, and we all loved her. As to performances: in her first year she killed fifty-four rooks; in her second, sixty-two. She came out in her third year as good as ever, and was beginning to run up a score again, when she was lost, owing to a clumsy blunder with rotten tackle. It is, alas! so easy to lose a good hawk; and the better she is the harder it is to recover her, for a good hawk is never hungry. We have had other good haggards, some that were for long so handy as to be useful as game hawks, but Shelagh was the nearest approach to a perfectly tractable wild falcon that I remember having handled.

We have had many a notable hawk—such as Josephine, who killed 185 rooks in three and and a half seasons; Aimwell, who killed 72 rooks her first season;—but it would be tedious to recount the doings of these various favourites, interesting as they may be to those who witnessed them. There has never been a year up to the present time that has not produced one or two very good hawks; but, of course, some of them stand out as exceptionally good ones, and are remembered accordingly.

All of these hawks that I have named were trained at Lyndhurst, with many others, year by year. The mews was always open to visitors who took an interest in the sport, and the early lessons on training were all given on the Lyndhurst racecourse, where some scores of good hawks first learned to use their powers of flight under the control of man.

But I regret to say that, although the existence of a pretty large stud of trained hawks excited some little interest in the neighbourhood, the ancient sport of falconry has lost its hold over any but a small band of enthusiasts. The amount of patience and time necessary to success in a very difficult sport does not appeal to the modern sportsman, who lives at a faster rate and requires a larger return of quarry brought to bag to repay him for his time and trouble than he can get out of a trained falcon.

Those who are once bitten with the desire to follow this beautiful old sport seldom recover, and generally become real enthusiasts, up to the end of their days; but it is idle to dream of a "revival of falconry" such as should restore this pastime to its ancient position of the premier sport enjoyed by the leaders of Europe.

The general practice of shooting and the improvement in fowling-pieces was the first blow to the more precarious method of providing game for household consumption by the means of trained hawks. Then the enclosure of most of the cultivated lands of England so reduced the area of open land available for hawking, that it became practically banished to the Downs, where the country is on the chalk formation. In other districts the sport died out perforce.

The best Downs remaining for the purpose of the sport are those Wiltshire Downs ranging from Lavington to Salisbury, and from Marlborough to the valley of the Wylye.

But these, alas! have been ruined for sport or beauty by the necessities of the military authorities, when seeking for fresh training grounds for troops, to which all else had to give way. When first an immense slice of Salisbury Plain was purchased, a large standing camp was established at Bulford, near Amesbury. This camp has grown and grown until, on what was once the wildest and most attractive part of our country—where the hobby and even the raven built—there is a vast city of tin houses.

The camps to the south side of the Avon—Larkhill and others—were soon afterwards established, and then commenced the artillery practice over all the wide Downs almost from Stonehenge to Lavington.

We withdrew to the remotest corners of the Downs on the western side, but our range is very limited, and our sport on its last legs in that district.

However, I do not doubt that many another keen falconer of earlier generations has died in the firm conviction that the sport he loved was dying with him; so I hope that as to my certain knowledge those veterans were in errror, and that it has fallen to my lot to maintain this time-honoured sport for a span of nigh upon fifty years after they had passed away, so may I also be mistaken in my gloomy prognostications, and better and younger men will carry on what has been well described as "the noblest sport in which man has ever indulged," for the benefit of many future generations after I have ceased to take a part in it.

With this somewhat digressive chapter, I bring to a close my history of my New Forest life. As I have explained above, although hawking had not much vogue in the Forest, yet it has always been identified with my pursuits, and in my old age and retirement I am thankful that the tinkle of a falcon's bell is generally to be heard in my garden.

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