# Humour in the Hunting Field

By

G. D. Armour

# *Humour in the Hunting Field*

*In* 100 *copies only of this edition each plate has been autographed by the Artist. The copies are numbered* 1 *to* 100.


G. D. ARMOUR

PLATE I.—SHAKESPEARE FOR THE HUNTING FIELD.

"Some have greatness thrust upon them."

# HUMOUR IN THE HUNTING FIELD

AS SEEN BY **G. D. ARMOUR**

WITH COMMENTS BY

**CRASCREDO**

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# "HORSE-COLOUR"

IT is said that there are no jests at all in heaven. Fortunately there is no necessity to believe it; for if we don't laugh out loud a lot when we are supremely happy, we certainly smile all over. For some people, of course, that is not enough. We can all quite see that it will be dreadful for your Uncle James if the day ever comes when someone tells him a heavenly joke, and he is no longer able to laugh that terrible laugh of his. Dreadful? It would be torture for Uncle James—not heaven at all, but *hell*. Yet that seems to be the inevitable conclusion: it will go on being hell when our uncle laughs in public, and heavenly when he no longer makes that dreadful noise in doing it.

As to heaven and smiling all over, there are many of us who for years have smiled all over whenever we have met Mr. Armour and *Punch*. *Mr. Punch* is a man who can enjoy a joke against himself and turn it against the joker; and *Mr. Punch* has said that the answer to "I don't think *Punch* is so funny as it was" is that it "never was." But when hunting drawings come into *Punch* there is no "never" about it for those of us who are interested in field sports and country doings. The paintings in this book are all of them based on Mr. Armour's *Punch* drawings—*Punch* drawings which for some amongst us still mark the date when our *Punch* first began to be full of fun. Without contradicting *Mr. Punch*, we can at least assert that much.

Many of us began to learn about horses from Mr. Armour and to make the acquaintance of *Mr. Punch* at one and the same time: but when did Mr. Armour first begin to know about horses? To a sensitive man there can be nothing, I should suppose, more revolting than to have his earliest history paraded for strangers. Even when a sensitive man does it *himself* (for strangers) it is often not very interesting. A sensitive man may nowadays tell his doctor what he thought about at the age of three, and the doctor will find it extremely informing, and the sensitive man will sometimes find it helpful: but we cannot suppose that this sensitive man will tell *us* what he thought about at three years old. He will tell us, instead, what he said or did—and, recognising that the Public will think they said things just as clever and did other things just as naughty, his Publishers will somehow get a sensitive man to stuff the whole lot into the first ten lines of *My Life and Times*. So I have not pestered the Artist or his friends to give me his early-days information—but I will give *you* one picture of a small boy going into a shop to buy paints. "But what *sort* of paints?" asked the shopman (a trifle briskly, I fear). "What colour do you want?" "*Horse-colour*," said the small boy, stoutly.

So Mr. Armour, aged seven, bought horse-colour—and Mr. Armour's horse-colour has never failed us. That brisk shopman wasn't really a shopman, but neither was he (really) an ogre: he was a well-disguised good fairy, and one fully capable of putting into the parcel something extra which can't be bought or sold—something extra for a small boy who has the sense to know it is horse-colour that he wants.

I fear that the Artist himself would not care about that suggestion of fairy shopmen. He has no patience with people who (sloppily) think that he gets even jests " out of his head " or in any such conjurer fashion. His jests come straight from the hunting-field—his own laughter and other people's. That in itself would be, one would say, a sobering thing for an Artist, to read *some* of the things we tell him we've laughed at —telling him, as we must do, with many a scoring-out and an underlining, with offensive-defensive apology, and with lamentable assurance, " But of course the way he *said* it was what was so funny." Mr. Armour, I am sure, will tell you with delight of hunting jests which a friend or an acquaintance has shared with him: but surely Mr. Armour must often shudder as he opens those " here's-a-good-one " letters from the rest of us ?

And if jests don't come " out of his head," the Artist will firmly deny that his Art does, either. No doubt—to return for a moment to those earliest years of each one of us—no doubt it will soon be possible for wise Analysts or fool-proof machines to present parents and guardians with a docket report, showing in their earliest years for what every child will be fitted. There will, one fears, be many disappointments for parents (or guardians) when, for example, the report on a child intended for a Bishop shows him to be a budding jockey. And one must, indeed, suppose that the shock to a parent will be scarcely less severe if an intended jockey is vetted as a future Bishop. What a guardian (or parent) will do when the report comes out blank—that I cannot imagine. The poor child will be put through the machine again, no doubt, and the parent will be allowed to take a second opinion; but at the end of it all there will inevitably be many blanks.

At present the genius of a Painter cannot be detected in early years, as if it were some suppressed rash: on the other hand, it is a rash parent who attempts to suppress a child who shows signs of being an artist —if he also shows signs of not expecting results to come popping out of his head. Mr. Armour's " results " have been worked out half across the map—from Edinburgh to the Vardar Valley, and back through the States. There were five years in the Royal Scottish Academy Schools, working there morning and evening and in his own studio during the day. There was hunting with the Lanark and Renfrew Hounds " by the occasional kindness of a friend and a not too critical taste in what I rode." There were models to be sought in the open air, and they were to be found in unusual places—on Glasgow and Liverpool cab-ranks, whipping-in to a Tangier pack, and a war-time in the Vardar Valley. Pig-sticking and a lot of rough riding went to the growth of experience, and if Mr. Armour makes it a rule only to paint the sports he knows,

he is able to paint almost every variety of sport, in addition to his Wiltshire fox-hunting with the Duke of Beaufort's Hounds.

Apart from those of his Academy and other pictures which deal with things other than Sport, Mr. Armour will show you in nearly all his painting something more than sport. When you've seen the joke in hunting pictures you've seen the winter sunshine, too: if you have looked with compassion at the Artist's beaten fox, then you have looked beyond a fox, to compassion. We ordinary fellows who have no knowledge of Painting must divide the Painters of our day into three. (There are, of course, Artists of our day whom we should be glad to chop into more than three, but I'm not talking about them, at the moment.) There are the Painters who can show us just exactly what we have all seen. And that is a great achievement: in sporting matters it is, also, an extremely rare one—requiring that sympathy be mixed with horse-colour, and a technical knowledge, wide and deep. But, next, there are the Painters who show us, in addition, what *they* see—bringing us to the sudden realisation that here is something which was here all the time, but until this time we hadn't noticed it. And the third Painter is he who, while showing us what he sees and we see, sets us common fellows wondering whether in all this matter there is not something hidden—greater than any one of us has yet seen at all ? " I wish, sir, that you looked like a king." " But I *am* a king," said *that* king. " It is better to look like a king." When a Painter is recognised as a king among his subjects, and when, in all that we see him do, we common fellows can recognise the master touch—why, then, we common fellows will say that this is all three painters rolled into one.

For, you see, there is clear judgment among us common folk, and if we don't know the meaning of the jargon of today we can put a common meaning to it. " Primitive "—that is a word of jargon today, or I fear it is not yet of yesterday. Queer notes of music, queer buildings—which seem to us made as if some Bolshevik architect with the soul of a Rasputin had spent a bad week-end in Cairo, returning via Berlin. Queer music, buildings, queer sculpturing of elephantiasis—and then queer pictures . . . as if a factory of jig-saw had been suddenly overset. We may not know the jargon, but we know jig-saws of different sizes when we see them—all jumbled up, like that. And we know a savage when we see *him*, playing on his pipe or making pictures. We can be sorry for a savage and we can wonder that people should want to go back to savagery, boasting of their want: but we can't pretend that Primitives are not

Savages to us—and if they must tattoo their souls with secret signs, we don't wish them to tattoo our souls also.

"Some have greatness"—but if that greatness is *only* thrust upon a man at a St. John's Wood or Chelsea tea-party, then the man himself must have a shrewd suspicion that the thrusters lie who call him king. It is better to *be* a king. At sunset in the Vardar Valley with the duck coming in, when hounds are running in Wiltshire and a good horse is a bit above himself—those are times when a man may ride in his kingdom of dreams, next to the things that matter. When a Painter with horse-colour in his brush can come back to tell us about such things as these, why, then, he will surely show us common fellows something more than the horse he rode. As, bumping along, down the opposite side of the page, I see the Artist's horsemen taking their tosses and sharing their jests, I must hope that in nothing I have written in this book shall I get in the way of the Artist, his horses, or his horsemen. I shall hope that, common or uncommon, we can then all ride beside him with a jest—being made to smile all over.

CRASCREDO.

# ARTIST'S "FOREWORD"

I HAVE been permitted, even encouraged, by an indulgent publisher to write a few lines by way of what I understand is called a "Foreword." That it should come behind "Crascredo's" Introduction may appear like the cart before the horse, but the cart and horse as a means of transport are rapidly becoming obsolete, and even the ubiquitous motor can travel backwards when required. In fact, not so many years ago, when horse power was low and engines were not too efficient, one could occasionally see a motorist using that means to surmount a hill of unusually steep gradient. This, no doubt, had its effect on the moral of the driver as well as on the efficiency of the machine, in that it enabled him to see the difficulties surmounted, while hiding to a certain extent the troubles to come.

This Horse-Cart "Foreword" has at least enabled the artist to read and comment on what has been said about him, though, as when the guest of the evening replies to the toast of his health, it entails the delicate task of suggesting, without offending or spoiling the harmony of the evening, that many of the nice things the proposer has said are verging on a terminological inexactitude.

I should hate to accuse "Crascredo" of any such intention. He expresses the hope that nothing written by him will get in the way of the artist. I can only say that I hope my artistic efforts did not get in his way beyond endurance when commenting on the subjects, and express my thankfulness, after reading his masterly summing up of the modern "primitives" (artist and architect), that he refrained from applying such a caustic if salutary treatment to my case. It is a great escape.

"Crascredo" has explained that the basis of the colour drawings was taken from material which appeared in *Punch*, and I would like to express my personal acknowledgments to the Proprietors for their courtesy in allowing me to use them in their present form.

For the origin of the jests, I owe a fuller acknowledgment than "Crascredo" suggests. It is to the good sportsmen and sportswomen who take the trouble to communicate to me such incidents as seem to them amusing. True, many of them, though laughable enough at the time, are unsuitable for illustration, others fail to penetrate to my own sense of humour, and many more do not pass the Editor or other censor. So far, however, from shuddering at the letters of such kind correspondents, I welcome them; the more the merrier.

What comes out of one's head—or, rather, experience—is often in need of supplement, and, as among raconteurs, one story leads to another.

G. D. A.

# BRIGHTER ELEVENSES

To an outsider there must always be something almost painfully dull about a Meet—and particularly about a lawn meet, which is quite the pleasantest form of fox-hunting assembly. I do not mean to suggest that there is anything deliriously exciting about it even for the insider. But the insider expects less and he gets all he wants. All he *really* wants is that the meet should end and a day's hunting begin; but in so far as he would like to eat, drink, or smoke, he can have—like a man who is going to be hanged—what he pleases. On the other hand (so stern are hunting realities), a man who is going to hunt will often feel very much as if he were going to be hanged—when, for example, he gets out of his car to see his horse arriving in the middle distance and throwing six bucks and a kick at every other stride. But whereas a man who is going to be hanged might be expected to wish to delay matters by ordering for breakfast a whole lot of things, each more out of season than the last, the man who is going to hunt would almost always prefer to hasten matters and not ask for anything at all.

Everyone who comes to a Meet meaning (hunting) business will be to some extent preoccupied, and the result will inevitably be a certain forcing of cheerfulness which

can only add to the gloom of the proceedings from the outside spectator's point of view. The Master is politely afraid that he will fail to see some of the Hunt's most prominent supporters—and desperately afraid that he *will* see some of his own *bêtes noires*. Both Master and Hunt Servants will be decently and reasonably worried as to the prospect of showing sport. Some of the field are afraid that they are not going to get a hunt—others are much more afraid that they *will* get a hunt. Host and hostess are dismally aware that they are never really at their best at eleven o'clock in the morning and that, anyhow, you can't be in two places at once. If you stay in the house you fail to give a welcome to those idiots outside who refuse to come in, even for a moment. If you go outside to join the other idiots, you are not in the house when you are wanted.

It is bad enough for the host and hostess, but for the non-hunting spectator it is a situation quite appalling for its missing of opportunity. Here are all the elements of pageantry—a pageant of that exceptional kind where all is in a natural setting and everybody can be doing something for which he or she is fitted by training and by inclination. Every Meet, the outsider feels, ought to be something between a torchlight tattoo and a ceremony of votive offering, with Hunt Servants chanting " Great is Diana." And every Meet *is*—just a collection of people waiting to begin to do something else.

One cannot but sympathise with an outsider's disappointment, and one cannot but agree that, in these days, when the solid Hunt breakfast is mercifully a thing of the past, the hasty snatching of a cigarette and cherry brandy makes but a scrubby opening to this great and hazardous emprise—the history of which is bound up in that of England itself. But I hardly know what to suggest. Something could, perhaps, be done with fireworks—rockets for the arrival of Royalty and those " good paying subscribers to the tune of £50," of whom Mr. Jorrocks always demanded a quorum before he would move off. There could be catherine wheels for the reckless horsemen and, perhaps, just a squib for any self-important people who reckoned they ought to have a rocket, too. There would, of course, be a band—or, rather, there would be two or three bands—for I never yet met a band at a function which didn't spend three-quarters of its time not playing.

I can quite see that all this will involve extra expense as well as extra jollity. On the other hand, an immense economy in foodstuffs will be possible. The most elementary knowledge of dietetics is enough to tell us that. Although the wastefulness of the big breakfasts is a thing of the past, the costliness of what (in a search for something simpler) we may call these hunting " elevenses "—is entirely unnecessary. Do let us try not to be muddle-headed about it. After all, this hunting entertainment will be either a wicked extravagance or the grossest sentimentality unless it has some solid ideal behind it. What, then, is the *object* of our kind host and hostess ? Surely, when you really get down to it, their whole aim and ambition is to turn their foodstuffs and drinkstuffs into *energy*—and so to have, vicariously, their humble (but admirable) share in some at least of those catherine wheels which bold and energetic horsemen will shortly be turning. Very well. I am no great housekeeper, and I am not going to lay down for hostesses exactly what items should be eliminated from their present generous but over-lavish list of things they give us to eat and drink. I will only say this—the fuel value of fresh

cod is 220 calories per lb., as against 325 for the salted (the carbohydrates in both being nil). It is only a suggestion; but when, with all three bands playing, you next walk into the house to get your cherry brandy—and when you *do* get your plate of nice salted cod or something of the kind—why, then, you will, perhaps, think kindly of me as you come quickly out again to get on your horse, bristling with added energy and other things.

If you do *not* then think kindly of me, I shall be completely at a loss for a means to brighten these " elevenses." There is a lot to be said for having them at a different time of the day altogether. We have got into this habit of a Meet before hunting—but it is very little more than a habit, and there are possibilities enough about a Meet *after* hunting to set a nice-minded hostess dancing with joy. To start with, the horses themselves would no longer be dancing, and that in itself would prevent any such " Abuse of Hospitality " as that of this horseman who is taking a first toss of the day into a tray of his hostess's glasses. That is only one of the minor advantages of a change which I would most warmly commend to everybody. Just think how—— But we can't go into all that now.

Care should be taken not to abuse the hospitality offered at a lawn meet.


G. D. ARMOUR.

# NINE-CARAT GOLD

THE golden age for horses is just beginning: there have, for some time past, been no more 'buses to pull, no more of those cab-ranks full of *Les Misérables*, and now there seems to be a good chance that, if there should be any more battlefields, there will, at least, be no more battlefields blocked with the blood-soaked wrecks of gallant horses, shell-smashed, in their agony. That is the situation with which we are presented. We have done nothing ourselves to bring it about, but it is in our power to improve it. This golden age for horses is likely to prove only a 9-carat affair unless, in the practice of horse-mastership—on which the happiness of horses depends—we can look at the thing more nearly and more often from the horse's point of view.

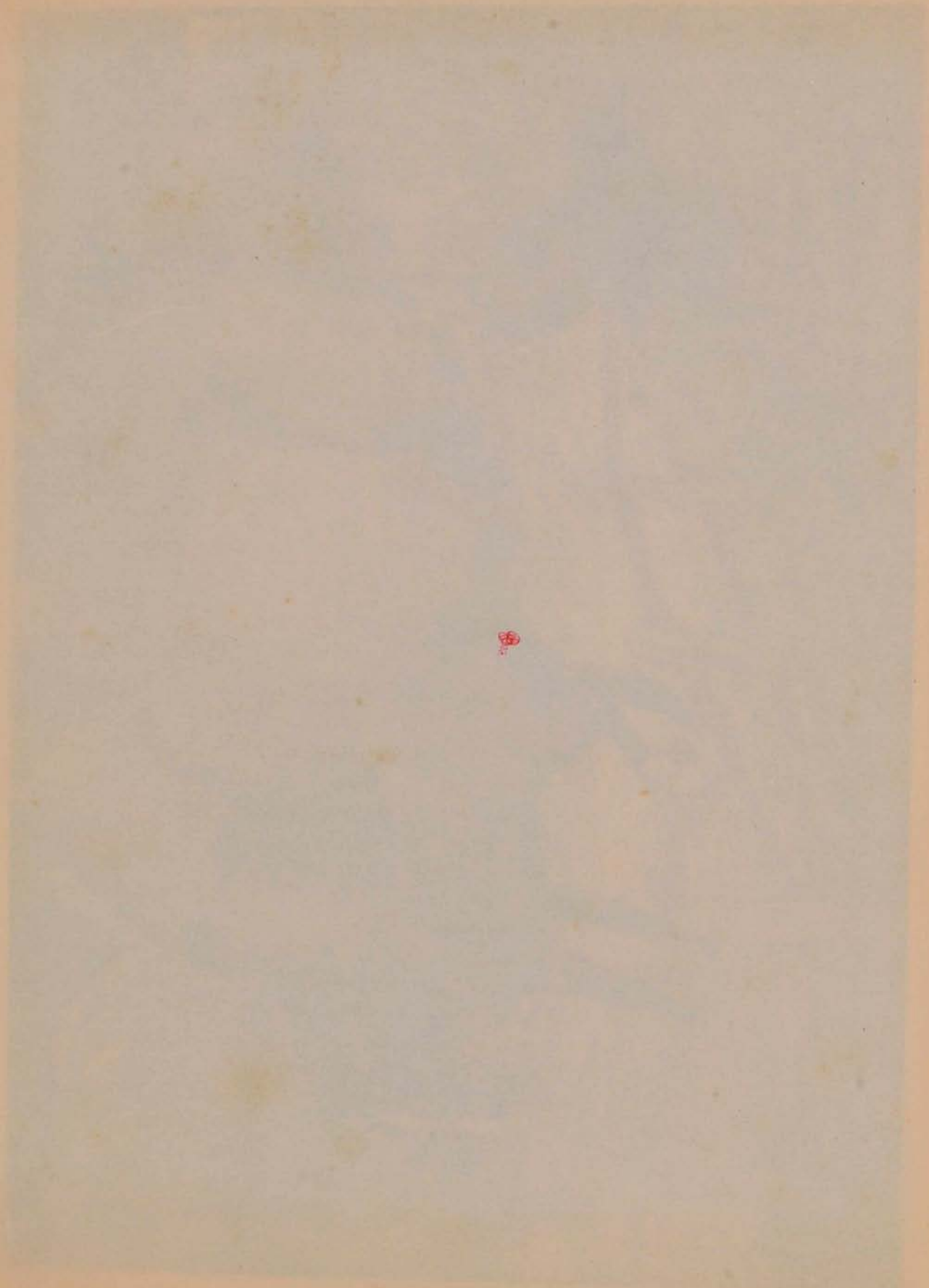
" Never to approach a horse in a fit of anger is the one great precept and maxim of conduct." More than two thousand years ago that was laid down as the eighth rule of horsemastership. Ever since then we have been mighty careful never to approach a horse (if we could help it) when the horse was in a fit of anger; but as far as *our* anger was concerned, why, surely, we have felt, a ride was just the thing to shake the liver up ? With the coming of this golden age, however, the late Mr. Xenophon's rule number eight is likely to receive closer attention. Quite recently it has been put more glibly: " If you lose your temper with your horse, you had better get off him and go home to bed." I am not quite sure whether this is " looking at the thing from the horse's point of view " or not. It may simply mean that, otherwise, the horse will *put* you off him—and go home to his stable. In any case, it is, perhaps, a counsel of awkwardness, if not of perfection. To have (horse) master coming home to bed at all hours of the day would make things very difficult for the average household.

Yet it is certain that rule number eight must be moved to the top of the list as soon as possible—and turned into an affirmative. We need now to get at the truth of the matter. It was wise of the late Xenophon to tell us not to approach a horse in an unfit state of mind; it will be even more helpful if modern horsemasters continue to impress upon us what *is* a fit state of mind. In their anxiety to spare the feelings of those of us who are mere amateurs of horsemanship the acknowledged horsemasters must not, I think, overdress the truth—if they wish to carry conviction. We may not want to see truth naked, but that will not prevent us from criticising the clothes if they do not seem to be the right clothes. In the legend of Mr. Armour's picture—" Always let your horse see that you are its master "—there is, of course, one word too many, there are also two words too few. Cut out the " its " and make it " Let your horse see that you are master of yourself." We shall then have a hint to beginners which we can all recognise as worth taking. If we decide to take it, there will be a fair chance of taking also this coming golden age out of the 9-carat tray and turning horsemastership into horsepartnership.

The artist himself knows well enough that only a mentally blind horse could " see that you are his master." Indeed, to send out a beginner with a hint like that can only have one sort of ending: the artist has shown the sort of ending—with the rider in the horse-pond and the horse on the bank; the boot on the other leg, the smile, as it were, on the face of the tiger. For an intensely clever man may (perhaps) master the theory of light or the reasoning processes of women, but in no circumstances can he master his horse. He cannot, that is to say, compel his horse to go forwards, backwards or

sideways, to stop when started or to start when stopped, if that is what his horse chooses *not* to do. He cannot prevent his horse from kicking him, falling back on him, or savaging him to a pulp if that is what the horse chooses *to* do. I am speaking broadly, but —except for those who are super-gymnasts or have the souls of apes—not, I think, too broadly. A man with the soul of an ape has, before now, compelled a jibbing horse to go forward by lighting a fire under him. Even then—jibbing being chiefly due to nerves or a disordered stomach—the horse will not go *far* forward. I am quite aware that a horse " hasn't got a stomach." It is the only definite (but not the only inaccurate) statement ever made in nine-tenths of the lectures on " Feeding and Watering." It doesn't alter the fact that even an ape-man cannot go on lighting fires under his horse all down the road. Again, a super-gymnast will, perhaps, avoid being " savaged " by a horse so minded; but, unless he has his running clothes on and a good solid door within easy banging distance, it will be safer for him not to offer any odds about it.

This we all know, quite as well as does the horse. " Always-let-my-horse-seethatI'mhismaster "—that, I admit, is what we say to ourselves, as, jobbing him four times in the month, we suddenly realise that he really *has* got away with us this time.



Always let your horse see that you are his master.


G. D. ARMOUR

And the last five words are spoken all in a rush as we sail through the air for the horse-pond. But in the panic of the moment we dress our thought up wrongly. We are, after all, no fool. All we *meant* was, " I must never, *never* let my horse know I'm *not* his master." That is not so bad, but it is quite bad enough; and it is on that mistaken notion—that fear-founded premise—that the science of horsemastership has been based until quite recently.

For it is mistaken. We cannot prevent the horse from knowing that we are not his master. The horse is no fool, either. Those who, in their fright, try to think otherwise, cling fondly and foolishly to the statement that the brain of a horse, like his stomach, is a small one. Of course, that simply means that there is all the less room in a horse's brain for thoughts to go astray. To say that a horse is " completely brainless " is only to employ that form of vulgar abuse which can sometimes be a safe, if shabby, defence to libel. It is true neither in substance nor in fact, and, when said of a horse—why, it's a shabby thing to say.

Every horse, as well as every horseman, is perfectly well aware that in no sense can we ever be master—in no sense, except that the horse's health, liberty and happiness are in our keeping. If you were prepared to trade on *that* fact, you would be, of course, a stink—— You would not be a proper person to have charge of horses. The unfortunate thing is that, quite apart from cads and such, 86 per cent. of people are not " proper persons." That is unfortunate: it is not remarkable. A slightly larger percentage of men and women are not proper persons to have charge of children, and close on 100 per cent. are not fit to look after themselves. We can't (as you will be glad to hear) go into all that now; but, in the case of horses, the question is—two questions. Does it matter very much if we miss the mark in horsemastership ? If it does, to *whom* does it matter ?

It can matter a lot. I can remember an occasion when the welfare, and perhaps the whole future, of an empire was put in jeopardy because a young soldier light-heartedly gave to a king a horse which was liable to fall over backwards. I can remember a less momentous occasion when, if world-politics were not actually in the balance, at least it would be true to say that the apple-cart of minor and visiting royalty was nearly upset. The officer commanding the escort chose to ride a favourite hunter, unschooled in matters ceremonial. The favourite hunter, having never been taught where to put his feet, chose to put the greater part of a foreleg through a wheel of the State landau. And for five hectic minutes uneasy rocked the head that wore *that* crown. Of a different order was that failure in horsemastership of a whole regiment—when they failed to remove their saddles for three days and nights of warfare, so that, when they did attempt to remove those saddles, the backs of their horses were torn away in strips and—— But that is not a nice story and, as it was not a British regiment, it may be more tactful not to trace the consequences to what history may show to have been the exaggerated conclusions of that time. " For want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe—— " Without labouring to conclusions, we can all agree that failures of horsemastership have upset every kind of apple-cart in the past two thousand years.

But now, when that golden age for horses has begun, even apple-carts will soon be all of a tankish sort, and masters of horse mere masters of horse power. And if the

stupidest and clumsiest of us can no longer upset apple-carts by our ignorance of the science of horsemastership, will it matter very much if we all remain stupid and clumsy? In the hunting field it will matter much more than it has ever done before, because there will be an increasing number of other people whom our stupidity and our clumsiness will affect. On the polo ground or the racecourse or in the show ring things might well continue much as now for another two thousand years. The very stupid and clumsy people would go on getting quite a lot of fun without ever getting ponies fit or winning races or rosettes. In fact, it might be that, except in the hunting field, only the horse would really suffer if we continued to base our treatment of him on mistaken ideas.

But the horse has suffered for rather more than two thousand years. That seems long enough. And if horsemastership seems long enough as a word, horsepartnership is one letter longer—yet it may prove the quickest and most sensible solution. They burnt a man in France three hundred years ago because he taught his horse too much. Really, of course, he didn't teach his horse anything—he merely educated his horse, "led out" of him, in terms which he himself could understand, the knowledge his horse already possessed. But that has been the trouble all through: we have not been prepared to learn what the horse was thinking unless he could express himself after a fashion chosen by us. Not very long ago they taught a horse to spell—taught him "at the age of eight," as the published accounts announced. Well, that should have been very impressive, because, at eight years old, quite short words give *us* a lot of trouble. Even now very few of *us* really know for certain (and for example) when it should be "its" and when it should be "it's"; and the longer words, like "fuchsia," can be quite a bother up to the age of eighty.

What this Spelling Horse chiefly *proves* is that the horse can use our ways of expression, and perhaps our language, if we really want him to. But why shouldn't we try to learn the horse's language? That the horse could always understand us was proved long ago—and, understanding us, as he has always done, is it any wonder that the knowledge has, up to now, left horses speechless? Yet even when horses have been speechless with anger—as was Vatican, the stallion savage—they have generally been willing to listen to certain men who would talk to them quietly. Unfortunately, the list of horses which it was most unsafe to approach "in a fit of (their) anger" is a long one, while the list of those to whom such horses would listen is painfully shorter. For it would seem that it is not enough to be able to talk to a horse quietly—it is necessary, as well, to have something to say to them worth hearing. "Jumper" the Yorkshireman, Sullivan, that Irish "whisperer," Albert Barker, the "training groom" of Hambleton—what could such simple souls as these have had to say to horses which had been maddened by the foul and hideous treatment of fear-inspired inhuman beings? Is it possible that there were more and deeper things in the combined philosophy of Bert Barker and Vatican than some of these big-brained folk now dream of?

That, no doubt, is what we have to discover—if this golden age for horses is to be something better than a nine-carat affair.

# A LITTLE BLIND

A LITTLE blindness in the hunting field is necessary if all is to go happily; in fact, one may say that from the beginning to the end of the season it is most desirable that we, if not the fences, should be a little blind. At the beginning we must be blind to the fact that the Wire Committee have only done about three parts of their job: all through the season blind to the fact that every tenant farmer has not the virtues which we ascribe to all farmers at an end-of-the-season farmers' luncheon; and, when the season is over, blind to the fact that our huntsman's dash has no longer quite the same quality about it that the dash of our (same) huntsman had ten years ago. Otherwise we might start by cursing that voluntary Wire Committee, go on to confound all farmers, and end by sacking the huntsman. It wouldn't need very much of that sort of thing to make hunting a thing of the past.

Most of all we must be blind to our own failings if we want to be happy out hunting. I know that it is all the rage to recognise your failings. A man of Greece started it, with talk about "knowing yourself," and now we say that if you know yourself to be bad-tempered, you must go on being bad-tempered, but you must only lose your temper

about things that matter to other people. I daresay that's all right, although I've not noticed anybody yet being bad-tempered about the things that only matter to me. Anyhow, when I say that in the hunting field we must all be blind to our failings, I mean that we mustn't mind that we entirely fail to achieve what we, personally, would like to achieve out hunting.

We certainly should not be so humble nor so silly as to accept other people's view of us. Should some power the " giftie " give us to see ourselves as others see us, I can't suppose that the sight would be good for us. In the hunting field, at any rate, other people are too tolerant—too tolerant, I mean, for their view of us to be anything but mildly flattering and distinctly kindly. So long as a man keeps his purse open and his mouth shut, and doesn't jump on hounds, he is considered a pretty good fellow—and rightly so considered. That tolerant attitude is one of the best things about hunting people. One of the most serious threats to hunting today is that this attitude may change with the increase in efficiency of all that appertains to hunting management, and with the undoubtedly wider dissemination of hunting knowledge. There's a lot to be said for an amateurish way of doing things when a more professional attitude makes people get cross with the amateurs. At present there is a decent humility about the vast majority of members of a Hunt. Even when they criticise the Master or the Huntsman they don't see themselves doing any better. They see the Huntsman or the Master doing better—much better—and, of course, if he *doesn't* they will visualise another Master or Huntsman who will do better, and they'll begin to take steps accordingly. That is not to say that they will ever interfere with you or me. Actually, even when they see our faults, they seldom see us as faulty as we are. They may see us, for example, not perfectly turned out—but they seldom see us as the scarecrow which our tailor, looking angrily at our last date in his books, knows that by now we must be. In this connection I cannot quite understand the violence of the language of the Master in Mr. Armour's picture. A *beastly* scarecrow ? The blindness of this Master is of the order which sees " men as trees, walking "—but here he has seen a scarecrow as a man, standing. Most Masters would be perfectly satisfied if one of us scarecrows, when we viewed his fox for him, *would* just stand and point—instead of flapping our arms about and bellowing.

Yes, a little blindness in everybody, from the Master downwards, is most desirable—even essential—in the hunting field. Perfection is for heaven (and, of its kind, for hell too, no doubt), but not for the hunting field. It is just because they recognise this that, in everything connected with horses and the riding of them, hunting people will tolerate almost anything except a lack of toleration. The thing was laid down, once and for all, by Mr. Jorrocks long ago—" Be to his faults a little blind, and to his virtues ever kind." It is a little puzzling why we should have to be kind to a man's virtues. I suppose the fact is that, anxious as we all are to overlook other people's faults, we can't help noticing that some people have got the faults of their virtues. This seems to me rather dangerous ground. I think that if we are to keep our share of this reputation for toleration we had better leave other people out of account altogether.

Let us, then, see ourselves as we are out hunting—and not as others kindly see us.

LADY: "I'll ask my husband to catch your horse if I can find him."
UNRECOGNISABLE SPORTSMAN (emerging from very muddy brook): "I *am* your husband."

Let us see ourselves a little blind, for that's how we ought to be. We must, for example, and if we would be happy, be blind to the fact when we are not quite so bold as we were. After all, we all *know* it—and we all know, too, what happened to Peeping Tom. If Truth has a fancy for riding like Godiva, that's no reason for looking at the naked truth. If some of us go looking for reasons why we didn't have that big post-and-rail today, we may easily become so blinded to our own interests that we shall give up hunting altogether. And there are plenty of other things to which we shall shut our eyes if we be wise. We can shut our eyes to the fact that our latest purchase will never be worth the three hundred guineas which we thought of when we bought him—and perhaps unlikely to fetch the seventy-five pounds we gave for him. Seeing ourselves far more clearly than anybody else can see us, every one of us will be able to think of half a hundred other things to which we ourselves should shut our eyes.

We must not, of course, be quite blind. If we shut our eyes to some things we can open them to others. For example, we needn't even blink the fact that you and I haven't got the forward seat, the pivotal seat, the race-riding, show-jumping, or any other of

the, so to speak, " registered " seats at all. What does it matter ? If nobody went show-jumping who hadn't got the show-jumping seat, it would be as foolish as some people think it would be if everybody went hunting with the for—— No, for goodness' sake don't let's start *that* seat argument all over again.

It is astonishing how much hunting will do towards making a man happy if he will only be as tolerant of himself as he is of other people. But *quite* how much hunting could do for a man I do not think that I should ever have realised if I had not seen the second " hunting blindness " picture of Mr. Armour's painting, where a horseman has fallen into a brook and is climbing out of it, soused and bedraggled. " If I can find my husband," calls a kind lady, taking a pull, " I'll get him to catch your horse for you." " I *am* your husband," splutters the poor man as he claws at the bank of the brook. That simple and engaging tale tells much better than I can what hunting will do for you. You can wander into other ways of life where, if you get into trouble or stir it up, a man will promise to alter you so that your own mother won't know you—but not so that your own wife will be polite to you. Half the troubles of married life arise (or so I understand) because ladies will visualise—to put the thing as mildly as possible—another man as their husband. But here is a lady who has seen her husband as another man, and therefore been polite to him. If there were a little more of *that* sort of merciful blindness Divorce Court judges would have more time to go out hunting and see some happy people.

Of course, a lynx-eyed fellow such as a judge is paid to be might see about hunting today several things to which some of us are apparently quite blind. But I do not think that we will discuss those things. It is not for nothing that no Power has given us an embarrassing giftie, which might force us to see our hunting as other people see it. As to Divorce Court judges, if they must never be even a little blind, yet it might do even the best of those judges good to *lift* a little blind—to lift a little blind and take a look at fox-hunting. Three months, I think, must a judge allow before even his decrees can be made absolute; but after that look he would, I am sure, make an absolute decree at once—a decree that a man and a woman must go hunting together for at least three months with nothing and nobody intervening. When hounds are running there is little time for squabbles to arise and no time at all for a squabble to get bloated into an incompatibility. If only those three months were decreed to be properly spent in the hunting field, quite a number of men and women might continue to be husbands and wives when the three months were over. There is, I fancy, just a touch of irritation about the protest of that sopping husband in Mr. Armour's brook. " I *am* your husband," he splutters, with unwarrantable indignation, to this kind, but slightly short-sighted, lady who doesn't know that she's his wife. I can imagine that much the same words would be spoken with something of relief by a man and woman whose marriage lines had been straightened out again by a season's hunting. It simplifies matters so very much if a man and a woman can continue to hunt together by just remaining man and wife. I should not suppose it can be quite true that love, as they say, is blind; but it is quite certain that just a little blindness out hunting will help to give, to man or woman, a lovely time.

PLATE V.—PROVERBS REVISED: "THINGS ARE SOMETIMES WHAT THEY SEEM."

SHORTSIGHTED M.H.: "Confound you, sir, why don't you tell us where the hare has gone, instead of standing there holding up your hat like a beastly scarecrow?"


J. D. ARMOUR

# ALL THE DIFFERENCE

How much difference does foxhunting *really* make for us of the English countryside who live, let us say, in a too large, two-day-a-week country, in which hounds can meet but seldom within a two-mile radius of our home ? How much " difference "—to those of us who are not able to hunt and do have to get on with the day's work however much other people may be hunting ?

On the face of it, one would say that the share of all such folk in foxhunting must be an entirely negligible share—that it is *all* bunkum to speak of foxhunting as a neighbourly and jolly sport which gives each year to kings and carpenters a mutual delight and thrill. It would seem, for example, that there cannot be much foxhunting for those of us who are farm labourers, keepers of shops, dwellers in small houses where the old-time pony-stable has been replaced by the " portable " garage and the very-nearly-portable car.

And yet it is not (all) bunkum or balderdash. The fact, I think, must be a constant source of puzzlement to earnest axe-grinders, crazy cranks, and to those who can see only the cruelty part of a sport which they do not understand. The thing, they find, is firmly rooted in the English countryside—but if it were really rooted in sin and/or (as the lawyers so carefully put it) selfishness, why, a really earnest axe-grinder (helped by a thoroughly crazy crank) should be able to root it up.

And they cannot. Be the country never so large and those two-days-a-week never so inadequate, there will come for almost all of country people—once, twice, in a season —that thrill which the sight of galloping horsemen gives, that fill-the-eye pageantry which even the sloppiest of " fields " must bring to the drawing of a covert.

It is not much which we get; but there is, I think, nothing which crazy cranks could successfully put in its place. Today has been a dull day: partridges are beginning to pair, an occasional snowdrop may be seen; that unattractive female, the mother sheep, is in the hurdled yards, ferociously butting all other offspring, while accepting the existence of her own with that *sang-froid habituel* which the schoolboy translated as " her usual bloody calm." They are cross-ploughing the—— But, say what you will, it *had* been a dull day; and at about two o'clock in the afternoon a mist blew over the hills from the sea, hiding those hills from view, hanging in the air a blanket, muffling the neighbourly sounds of business in the countryside.

Suddenly the mist divided—and there they were ! Within a few hundred yards, huntsman, hounds and field, moving on the skyline and towards it—moving into the mist again, hidden from view, a pageant of our world gone by. An hour later, mist-ridden and unnecessarily depressed, I strolled down the lane—and round the corner he came, a fat, jolly fellow, scarlet-coated, on a fat, white horse. " God

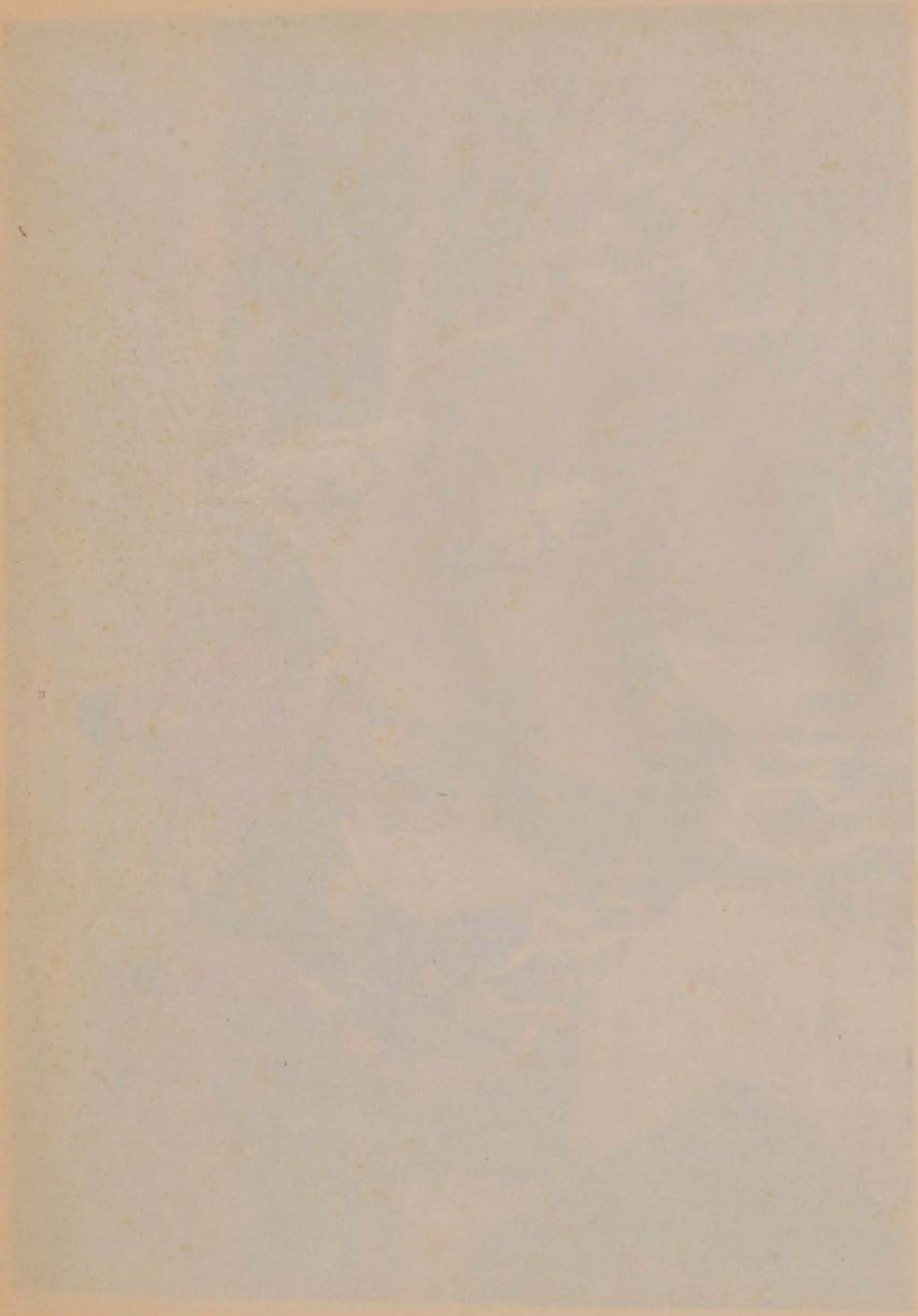


prosper you, sir!" I would have cried to him, but he was so very fat and jolly and his home-going cigar so comfortably alight that I feared to disturb his pagan peace of mind. But if he should read this and recognise—not, of course, himself, but some other fat and jolly fellow of the Hunt, then he must know that we do not grudge their cigars to fat (if also jolly) fellows who come out into the open air to see a trifle more of hunting than do we. We regard them, those horsemen who never get galloping, as linking us to high and jolly happenings—in much the same way as some fat and jolly, semi-pagan priest may yet serve to show his earth-bound flock that higher things and happier are only just beyond their normal experience.

Yes, we see little enough of it all, and yet, today, it seems that everybody has seen something of the Hunt. Children and work-free people saw them at the Meet, a brave company and a gay one—a living picture in which the colours rippled and ran (but in semi-orderly fashion) as a late horseman came cantering smartly up, and as light and shadow danced among the waiting pack. Hedgers and farm labourers saw them later as they moved from the Waterloo covert to Tumble-down-Dick plantation. During the rest of the day all manner of men seem to have seen them for a few moments at a time—jumping into the gravel lane below the railway bridge, streaking across the big pastures of the Friday country, checked in the water-meadows, horsemen and horse-women half-hidden in the steam of their own horses. And towards evening, when the sea mist cleared, but the shadow of night was already behind us, children coming home from school and a chance wayfarer or two—they saw them in a last scene of all. The wind which bore the mist away bore sounds of music with it. "Chime, ye dappled darlings!"—but when the chime turns to a death-knell, that is a terrible music. They saw him first, those watchers, on the skyline—a big fox of the hill country unwilling to commit himself to night and an unknown vale, questing this way and that while the chiming grew louder, nearer; desperately seeking whether there might not be *some* way by which a hard-pressed fox might win back to safety and the hills. And there was no such way. So down the hill he came, but with the pack now close behind him. Twice he turned and ran slap through the pack unharmed, but at last they had him; and he died in a hollow of the hills as the pack poured in on top of him.

Of horsemen or foot people there were more who saw that big fox dead than could catch any glimpse of him alive. Even in these fox-hunting times there are, indeed, many in our countryside who have never seen a fox dead *or* alive, so that he maintains today his mysterious, desperado character. Others of our English countryside are mysterious in their comings and goings, but the fox is the sole surviving desperado. You may, if you are rather lucky and very quiet, come upon Brock, the badger, in our English countryside as he goes about his secret business; but the badger is a monkish, respectable, if slightly Jesuitical-looking, old party with whom no man has justification for interference: the fox when we come upon him of a sudden is never being anything but a desperado, and well he knows it.

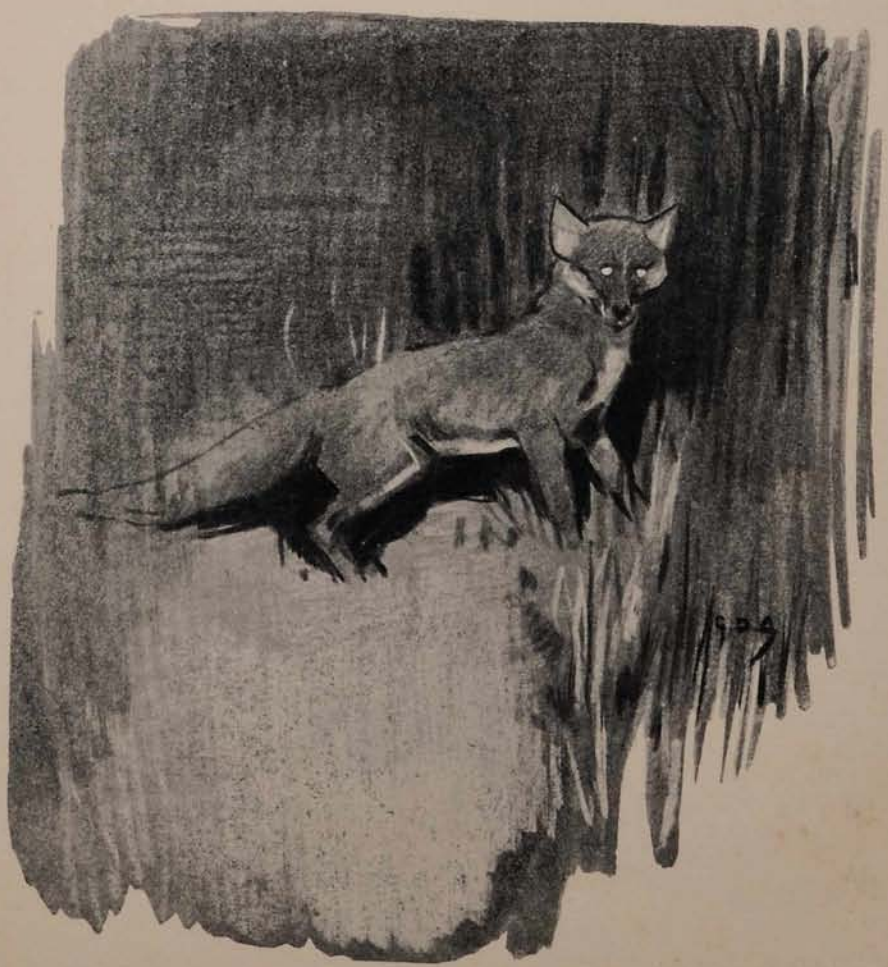
Yet countrymen are curiously unmoved by—or perhaps it is merely that they are unhysterical about—foxes and foxhunting. You or I, if we come suddenly upon an unhunted fox, will challenge him with loud and excited cries. In the past ten days,



BOY: "Killed any foxes?" HUNTSMAN: "Yes."
BOY: "'Ow many?" HUNTSMAN: "Two."
BOY: "Lazy beggars!"

driving a motor-car at night, I have come upon two such foxes. The head-lights brought the first into full view as, all unsuspecting, he leapt out across the lane; the second was caught for a moment only—jumping to safety on the roadside bank, where, stuck in the hedge for half a second, the brush of him waved defiance. And each time, I (partly) regret to say, I swooped on through the night hollering in a scandalous manner, and disturbing the countryside.

Yet, I think that countrymen would have understood my feelings—would have remained unmoved but not uninterested. Some of them—whose family history, if written down, would all lie in the English countryside, an unbroken history of country living—some of them or their forebears have known this excitability of hunt-loving folk from the beginning of English history itself. They have seen Red William in the Forest, and known him for a man unpleasantly excitable about laws of vert and venison. James Stuart they knew, not as the dullish king of history books, but riding through their countryside in what seems to have been his one healthy enthusiasm, stirred by the chase. And George, the this and that, they have watched come riding by—even 19-stone " Farmer " George, fat and faint, but ever pursuing, so that his huntsman must " arrange a judicious check " every now and then, and give Majesty a chance to get excited. All through the ages countrymen have seen these men of business—be it that of kingship or counting house—come riding through the countryside excited or excitable, in the reaction from business cares.



And the countryman himself is not much excited by it all. His is the larger attitude. That boy of Mr. Armour's painting, sitting on the bridge—" Lazy beggars !" he says. Your townsman will smile a little awkwardly at this jest, seeing Mr. Armour smile, but not very certain what it's all about. But the boy knows. His increasingly detached view of hunting has been a feature of hunting since before the days of Red William and the rest. He has never had much share in the spoil, tangible or intangible, and perhaps for this reason he has refused to take the thing too seriously or trouble himself with niceties of technical terms and such matters. A townsman will speak of hounds as " the dogs " and—if he have any decent feeling at all—will blush when tactfully corrected. Your countryman, corrected, will call them " dogs " again, and go on to tell you all about the run. The (third) best description of a hunting run that I myself have ever heard was, not long ago, from the lamp-room of a Great Western Railway station, on a Sunday night. Stranded at that very small station, waiting for the London express, I stood outside that lamp-room in great contentment for an hour while they hunted Saturday's fox again. " But the dogs nearly had 'un when 'e turned by the park fence "—there were two who, cheery-voiced, tossed the ball of reminiscence in that lamp-room saga of Saturday's hunt; and, whenever they showed signs of failing, that third voice would stir them up again—" But the dogs nearly had 'un when 'e——" It never got farther than the park fence, this third and eager voice. When the London express at last steamed in, the one porter came hurriedly, if reluctantly, from the lamp-room to speed the express on its way. I leaned from the carriage window, straining my ears again: " But the dogs——" began Voice Three. The one porter heard him as well as I did. Waving an official and frantic farewell-and-god-speed to the engine-driver, he backed hastily towards the lamp-room, to scotch this Voice Three interruption as soon as might be, and himself take up the story of Saturday's fox once more.

The countryman, in this his semi-detachment, exercises another and most healthy check on foxhunting and foxhunters. Mr. Armour has, I recollect, a further picture —of a country boy standing on top of a bank while an infuriated huntsman (having galloped half a mile with hounds to this boy's " holler ") demands to know *why* he hollered if, as now appears, he had not seen the fox at all. " 'E bin took Mother's old tom-bird last night, and she do want ten bob for un," answers the boy, loudly, sturdily and, to him, sufficiently.

And that is right: it is this boy's rightful, if awkward, privilege to stop our sport today if our fox has taken Mother's old tom-bird and nobody has done a thing about it. It is a privilege which he will not abuse: I cannot imagine a proper country boy interrupting a hunt from sheer mischief—but when the fox has taken Mother's old tom-bird, why, then you may expect to find him today, eyes ablaze, demanding justice for Mother. It is his rightful privilege, gained after centuries of suffering—not gladly, but necessarily —fools who put their sport before the countryman's happiness and livelihood. If that seems a hysterical way to talk about Mother's old tom-bird, consider, I pray, what would have happened to this boy if he had hollered up Red William—or Gloriana engaged upon her hunting pageants, or even George, the this and that, already over-troubled with problems of agriculture and industrial revolution. What would then have happened

to that boy? Red William would have put his blazing eyes out, strictly according to law. Gloriana? Well, Gloriana (God forgive her!) would, perhaps, have been content with sending him for a sailor. But if, today, a prince came galloping to his holler—why, I think that, today, from all accounts, that prince would understand about Mother's old tom-bird. Before an infuriated huntsman could say "Jack Robinson" (if that is what infuriated huntsmen say) Mother's old tom-bird would have been reduced to cash by princely magic, if not restored to life.

It may be that those of us who do not hunt see little enough of hunting in the English countryside, but we do require to see that little. It makes a lot of difference. The magic of good manners will give us a better view. Crazy cranks must have their say and show us what they can: at present we are content to put our trust in the influence of princes, that they will get those hunting-field manners of other people improved. And then, if crazy cranks will only learn to ride, it will just make all the difference to the history of hunting in the future.

# SINK OR SWIM

ALL parents would agree that the only sound way in which to teach other parents' children to swim is just to chuck them in. The thing is theoretically sound for all children, and it is only not followed by parents with their own children because, as you may have noticed, " own " children are always astonishingly (but so definitely) different from other children. But, thrown in or not, the most sleep-walking of parents cannot for ever shut their eyes to the fact that there must come a time when even their own child must make independent arrangements either to swim or sink. It is the same in the hunting-field, and it may be well for parents to recognise the fact before they send all those children out hunting.

In the hunting-field, also, the question " Sink or swim ?" must be answered by the child. If the final decision may be longer delayed in the hunting-field than the swimming bath, the question is earlier put. In swimming, a child may be bolstered about with water wings or lugged around the bath by a rope on a pole for quite a while; but, out hunting, the stage beyond which we can do nothing further for them is almost at once reached. It is true that, on paper, you can, to some extent, control the situation when the leading-rein has been discarded and hounds are running. It is, of course, an " on paper " control. On paper you can tell your wife that, if the pony gets away with Maud, all you'll have to do will be to gallop after the pony and stop it. Unless she is an exceptionally stupid woman, it will certainly be safer to *write* and tell your wife (or the Horse Marines) a thing like that. Actually, of course, what you'll have to do—and that within ten seconds of getting galloping—is to take such a pull on your own horse as will get him in hand all in a moment, and leave you free to concentrate on the pony; and you will then have to stop that pony before he reaches the next fence. You will have also to do this without crossing or barging into anybody else, without riding over hounds, without the pony realising you are after him, and without frightening Maud. It is, perhaps, just as well to put the thing on paper, so that you and Maud, if not her mother, may know where she sits. For that is a situation which ought to be faced. You may grandly, if pompously, tell your children that in other occupations of life they should start themselves at the bottom of the ladder—but in this occupation of hunting you can only truthfully tell them that as soon as they have started up the ladder it will be kicked from under them, and they left to scramble along as best they may.

If that is all you have got to say to your child, it may well, as you tersely suggest, be better to keep your mouth shut. On the other hand, you can, at any rate, keep your eyes open. When children go out hunting we cannot closely control the situation, but we can watch it with advantage to the child. There are three periods of a child's education in the hunting-field. If during any of those periods the child is seen to sink instead of swim, then, to my mind, you should promptly plunge in and pull the child out of the hunting-field altogether—firmly, ignoring protests. Of course, you must

IRREVERENT YOUNGSTER (to old Huntsman, pounded by a wall): "Now, then, Charley, it's no use walking up and down in front of it unless you blow your trumpet."

be quite certain that the child is sinking; in fact, so important is it that the child should complete a hunting education if possible, that I am not sure that you ought not, for safety's sake, to wait until the child has definitely sunk before plunging in to pull him out. We must, in any case, not plunge in just because we hear a few squawks and splashings; or, rather (to get away from that swimming-bath for a bit), we must not stop the child from going out hunting just because he has had a nasty shock with his second nasty toss. You must somehow encourage him to stick it if possible, for it is certain that he will never make a horseman unless he can win through the three full periods.

Those three periods will vary in length with every child, but, as periods, they are clearly enough defined. The first period ends (abruptly) when the young horseman fully realises that whenever he goes out hunting he is going to be up against something or some things rather bigger than he can comfortably cope with; the second period ends when he has tried conclusions with those things; and the third, when he has got slightly the better of them.

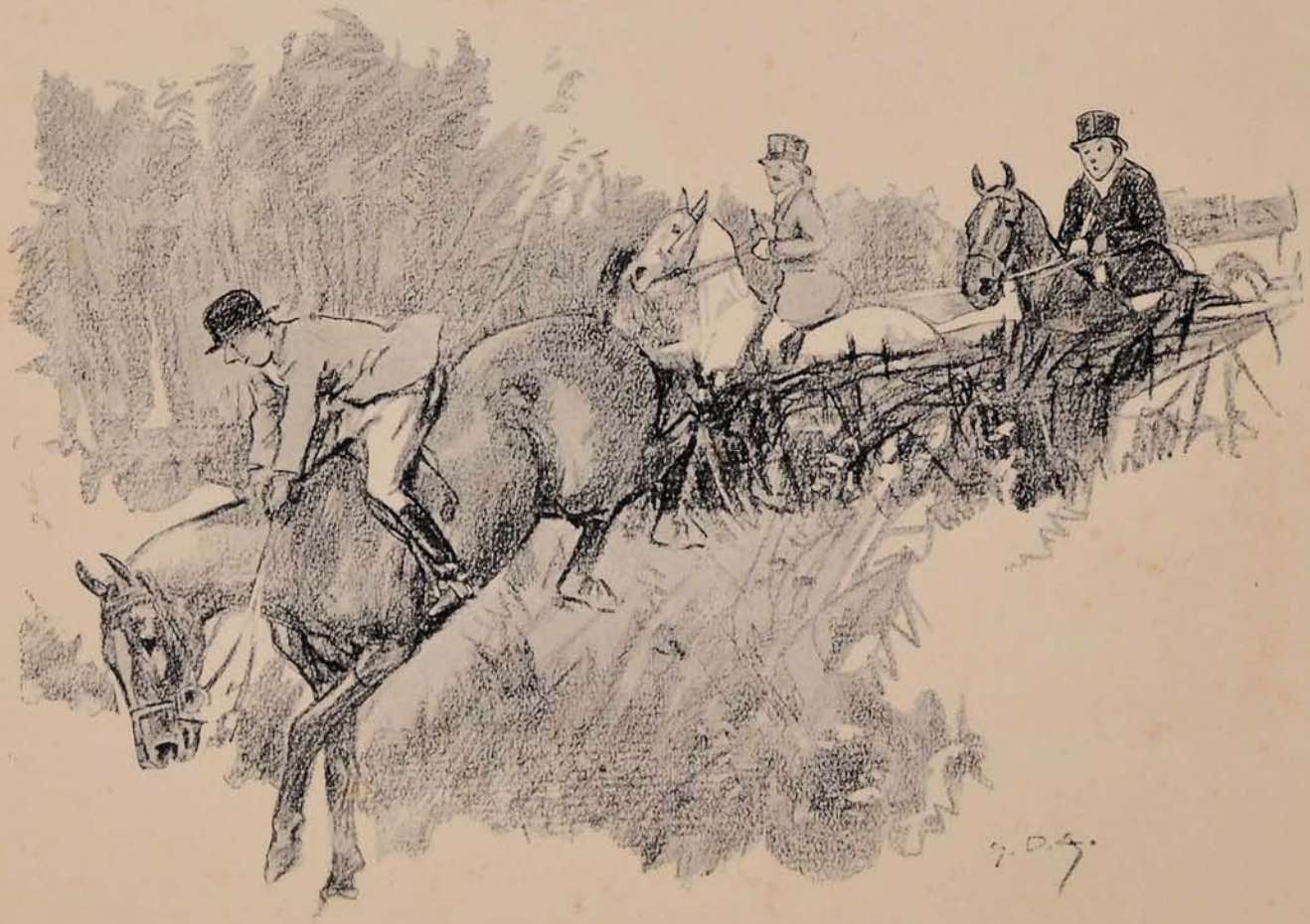
The first period ends abruptly. You yourself will remember that first day on which, scorning the further attentions of that so kind (but *so* unenterprising), elderly, road-riding pilot to whose charge you were always delivered, you finally escaped from him in the jostle of a start. You will remember how, thumping along on your hard-mouthed pony, you charged that bottom slip-rail before the protesting runner could succeed in slipping it for you. You will remember the ditch in the next field, and how you had scarcely bumped back off the hard-mouthed pony's neck into the saddle again when you realised that you and the hard-mouthed pony were irretrievably committed to the now slightly battered—but still *simply enormous*—stake-and-bind fence at the end of the field. It is for you to say what happened there, but whether it was technically

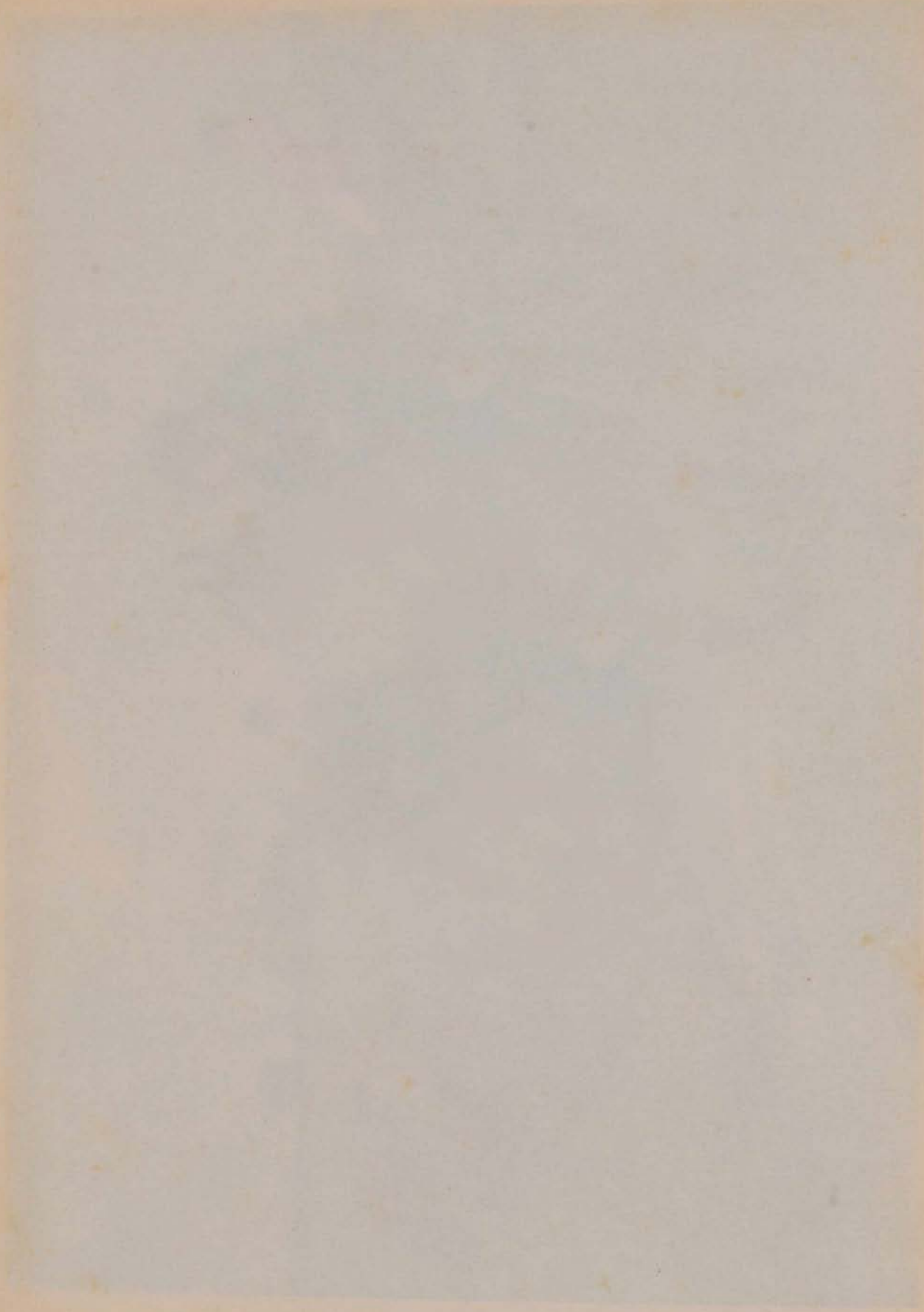
a triumph or disaster, life from that moment was never the same to you again, I'll be bound. Wherever else the hard-mouthed pony may have landed you, this eventful, glorious occasion had jumped you into period two.

Period two was a longer one, if I remember rightly. The stuffy little short-legged Shetland was succeeded by that nice, narrow pony with the pretty good mouth. But you were growing rather fast in those years, and we had a good deal of trouble in finding your next hunter for you. What with Fairybell, who wouldn't jump water, and Midget, who kicked in a crowd, and that star-gazing, goose-rumped grey which George planted on us, and then Tearaway, ex-polo pony and several shades too hot—well, it was distinctly to your credit that you ever got into period three at all.

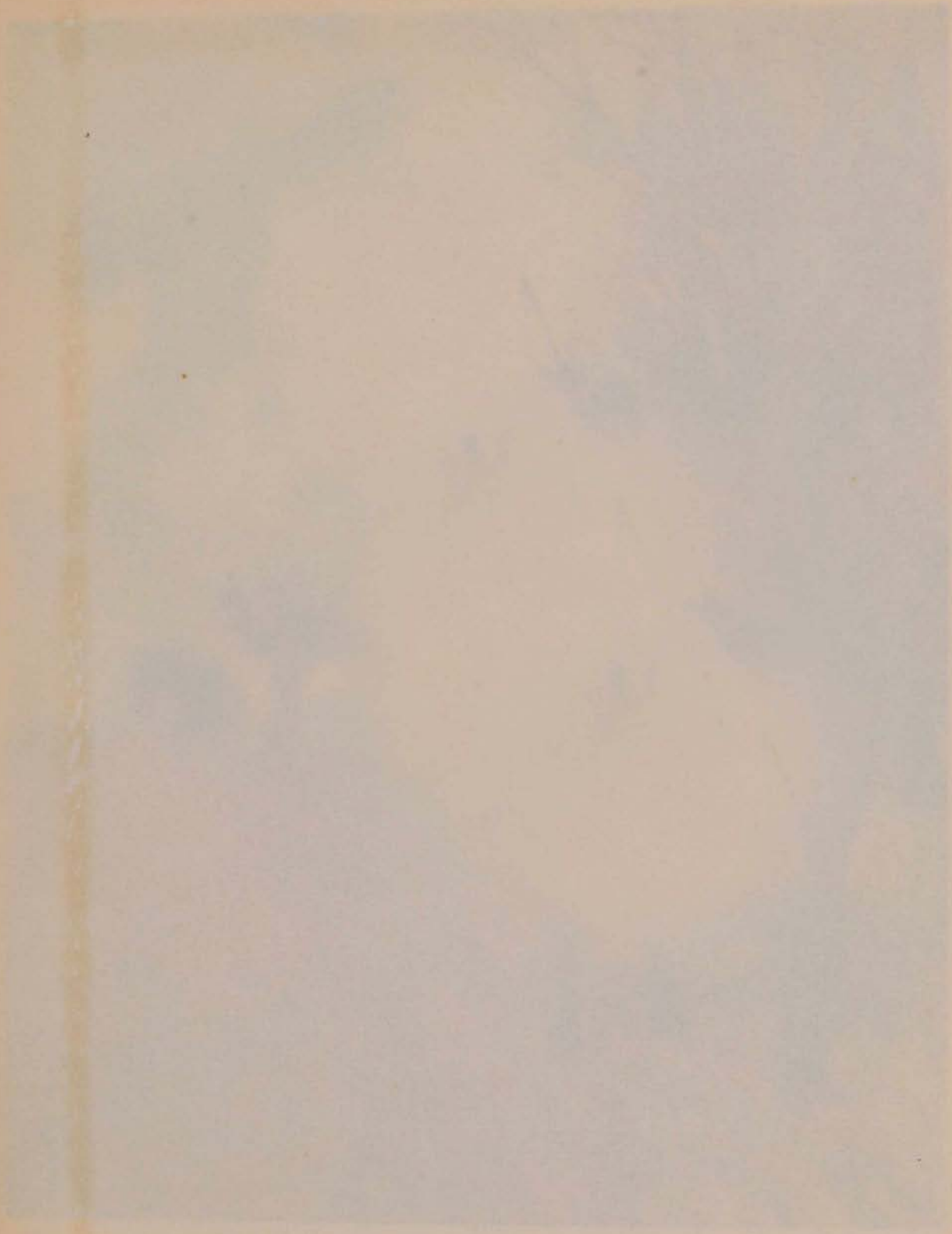
But you did. And during period three some people (we must admit) found you quite intolerable. Mr. Armour has shown you in period three—saucing the huntsman. I can think of no one whom you were incapable of saucing in that period, and you didn't confine yourself to cheerful impudence, either. There was a certain intolerant and expressed contempt about you which some of us, I may say, resented very much. Had you stopped for one moment to let us explain, we could all have told you, time after time, just *why* we were going round by the bridge or letting you have first cut at that rather nasty drop fence below the osier bed. But you never *did* stop. I must, indeed, allow that there was a certain quality of courage in your riding at that time, and one which was big enough to cover quite a lot of impudence. After you had galloped on we used to tell each other, I recollect, that we ourselves were just like that at your age—except, of course, for the impudence.

The artist has shown all the periods in triumphant " no fear " pictures. " No jolly fear !" shouts the small boy, with his sister, as I regret to see, half a length ahead of him in this flagrant defiance of the Whip's " Hold hard !" Miss Maud, in a second picture,





THOMAS (sol.): "Master says to me, 'Can you take care of Miss Maud on that new pony, Thomas?'—but what I want to know is, 'oos to look after Thomas on this old brougham 'oss?"



WHIP: "Here, you! Hold hard, come back!"
TOMMY (home for the holidays): "No jolly fear! You want to get first start."


G. D. Armour

is clearly in period two, but plainly does not yet know the meaning of fear. (In a few years' time she won't know the meaning of " brougham 'oss," either.) I am relieved to see that no elder Miss Maud is in the picture when young George is being rude to the huntsman; but, perhaps, she is merely round the corner, cursing her groom for being late with her second horse.

Still, we can't have it both ways. Some of you are always nagging at the children, telling them they ought to be able to make their own way in life—and then you raise your *not* entirely unjustifiable howl when they do make it their own way. In hunting, the fact is that it has got to be largely their own way—or nothing. For a child may ride to the Meet to amuse mother or go bobbing round at a Horse Show for the greater flattery of father, but he must go hunting to please himself in those first and third stages, if he goes hunting at all. There is nothing to be done about it—unless we are to stop them going hunting altogether.

That may be necessary. There are, perhaps, not many pleasanter country sights than that of children in the hunting-field today; but there are so many more of them today that I am left wondering how many of them, in that searching period two, are there of their own free will. There is, probably, no great harm resulting to those children who are compelled to ride to the Meet in Thomas's care just because it pleases mother to know that this is what they are doing. And it is, perhaps, only occasionally that we do see in the show ring those terrified children riding unmanageable thoroughbred ponies as part of a fuller scheme for bringing father to the notice of the countryside. But it is rather too often that one hears of children who are ordered into, laughed into, *forced* into going out hunting when their hair is obviously standing on end for the greater part of every hunt. It cannot, then, be too strongly insisted that, if at any period a child is plainly and continuously terrified of hunting, that child should at once be removed from the hunting-field, however mortifying the removal may be to father. Father has no reason to be mortified, anyway. Five years later the same child, grown larger and longer and given some slow old " patent-safety " of a full-size hunter, will more often than not jump clean away from those earlier fears. Two seasons later still, and he will be jumping clean away from father—and won't care what he rides as long as it can keep galloping and jumping all day long.

But it *is* sink or swim, and in these days, when the joys of horsemanship are coming to be more widely realised, that fact has got to be realised as widely. If it is to be " swim," the three full periods of experience must be gone through. If they *are* gone through, all the things of horsemanship will eventually be added to the exultation of riding big horses rather fast at enormous fences. So (and in no other fashion) may seven-years-old train on to the stage where, at seventy-years-young, the other things added will remain. The big horse (I don't mean the *same* big horse) is not now required to gallop quite so fast, and the success of a day's hunting is no longer entirely judged by the number of " the jumps "; but seventy-years-young will notice things and happiness which seven-years-old was too busy riding to observe, and seventy-years-young will be glad to think that seven-years-old did swim and not sink—and that seventeen, if slightly impudent, kept a stout heart.

# "HE HAD TO SMILE"

THE Artist himself is not to blame for the misery of his pictured Huntsman—whose moan comes to us as an *Echo of the Chase*. The real culprit is Hard Fact—H. Fact, the Master of us all.

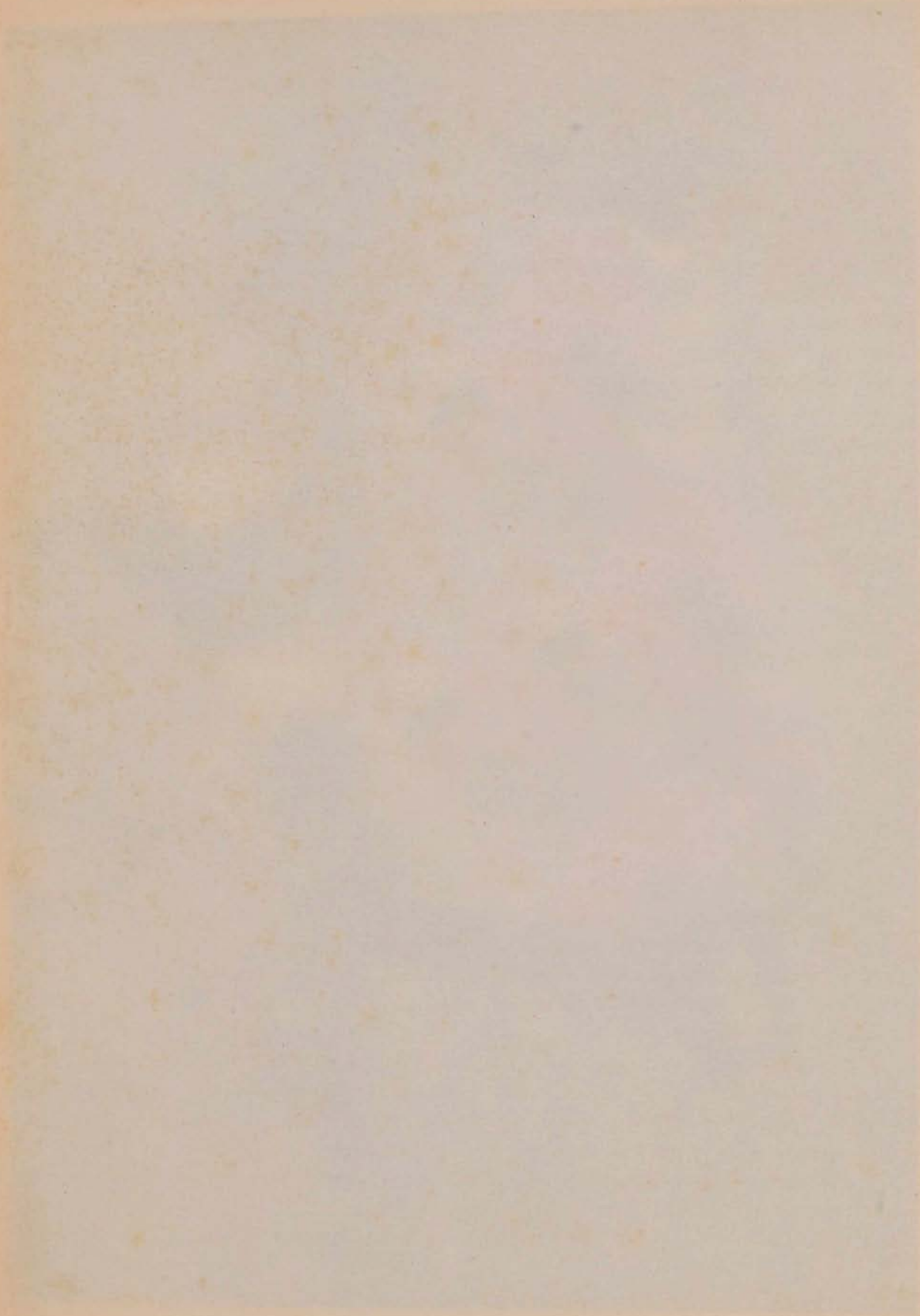
Then, who was this huntsman in real life—or whose huntsman was he? But this you must not ask. Having a clear eye to my own comparative safety, I am quite sure that I will not answer that question, and I do not think that the painter of this picture will wish you to ask it. The humour of Hunting should be of that shrewd but kindly sort which will remove the sting of personality and leave a jest which all can share. It would, therefore, be a pity as well as a clumsiness if I were to hint at from what hunting country news of that huntsman's misery was brought to the Artist.

But perhaps this is one of those cases where the teller of a tale may seek a legal safety which is found in numbers. Perhaps there are, shall we say, *several* huntsmen now hunting hounds in England who will smile a companionable, if rueful, smile at this picture of their brother in distress. Yet, while we have all heard many a huntsman consigned by indignant members of a Hunt to one Bottomless Pit, I myself have heard of only one huntsman who was "sacked" (as is obscurely said) at the bottom of a ditch. That was a huntsman who went rather farther than this huntsman of Mr. Armour's painting. Farther in two senses—for, being heavily unseated, he rolled down into the ditch and stayed there: and then he succeeded in going farther still—he went *too* far. He indulged in the back answer which turns up the flame of wrath.

The Master, failing to mark his huntsman's reappearance after what he judged to be a sufficient interval, rode back to enquire what he was *doing* in the ditch. You, with your quick wits, will be able to think of half a hundred things which the huntsman might have said he was doing—but the huntsman, with rare dignity, ignored his Master's immediate question, and "Prince," he replied (or words to that effect), "I am, as I think, inevitably condemned to spending the greater part of my day in this, or some similar, ditch, so long as I have to hunt your hounds and school your horses at one and the same time. In a word—am I Your Highness's huntsman or Your Highness's blood-stained rough-rider?"

I give, you will understand, the sense, merely, of what the huntsman said. The Master got the sense of it, too—and that was why the huntsman got the sack. I never heard tell of any subsequent triumphs of that huntsman, and yet I should suppose that there was something of greatness for him in the stars he must have seen in those many falls that led, at last, to the bottom of that ditch. I should hope that he went from that ditch to a better country—a "better country" in the strictly hunting sense, I mean, and one at least as good as that in which we see *this* huntsman falling about. This





HUNTSMAN (who has been having a very bad ride): "Either master wants some new 'orses, or a new 'untsman."


G. D. ARMOUR

huntsman has a hope, however faint, that his Master will get new horses for the Hunt servants—but the abiding *terror* of that other (ditch) huntsman was that the Master would get new horses: for the Master always *did* get new horses—as soon as ever he could sell (for three times what he had given for them) the brutes of which his huntsman had had the schooling.

Huntsmen are very great men. They have to be. Little as I really know of you, I take leave to doubt whether you would sustain your half of a conversation from the bottom of a ditch. I myself, if I were to be sacked in a ditch, I would choose, I think, to stay sacked and ditched. But your huntsman must (eventually) climb out—for half of his life he must spend hovering over ditches and with sacks hovering over him, as a necessary condition of his employment. They have made a great to-do about Damocles, the courtier, and the naked sword which Dionysius, with doubtful hospitality, if pardonable irritation, hung over his head by a hair: but Damocles at least was having his dinner while the sword hung over him—your huntsman must go in *search* of his dinner while the sack hangs over him.

I do not mean to suggest by that last remark that a huntsman has to eat fox—but he must certainly be prepared to find on his menu the unattractive dish of humble pie. Unless he be a very fortunate as well as a very good huntsman, he must expect to hear himself pretty often called—even if not to his face—a very bad huntsman. And yet he must not *be* a bad huntsman—that is to say, he must not be so for more than two seasons at a time—or, if he needs to be paid for being a huntsman, he will then cease to be a huntsman at all.

And if a paid huntsman ceases to be paid—how pitiful a case is that! "Othello's occupation's gone"—but Othello, after all, was not, at the best of times, very well occupied: and at the worst of times it would have been better for Othello had he been unemployed. But for a huntsman to be unemployed, that seems to me a grievous fate. To have climbed so high, to fall so far! It is a fall which may well take a man over the edge of a Bottomless Pit. For let us remember this—the necessary qualifications of even a bad huntsman are more than some of us have to produce in order to engage in our employment. The worst possible huntsman, if he is to get signed on as a huntsman at all, must have exhibited over some considerable period the majority of those twenty-two qualifications which Mr. Surtees laid down as necessary to huntsmen. The late Lord Willoughby de Broke seems to have narrowed the twenty-two down to seven, but this is one of those cases in which the less includes the greater: whatever authority you may choose to follow on this question of a huntsman's qualifications, you will agree that, in addition to being technically skilled and experienced, a huntsman must be courageous, temperate, determined, and much else, before he can hope to carry the horn.

If he be all those things, he may look forward to thirty years of foxhunting, and to some three thousand days during which he will be actually hunting the fox, killing, perhaps, five thousand of him or running them to ground. And to do all that he must not fail much in courage and skill on many of those three thousand days.

Having come to so solemn a view of a huntsman's occupation, we shall hardly like

to take a second look at our Huntsman climbing out of a ditch—finding him, as we do, facing the world on all fours rather than meeting it four-square. And yet . . . "I had to smile—I had to laugh." That will sometimes seem a curiously silly saying of a pseudo, semi-bashful bravado: for, except under misgovernment by Soviet, there could nowhere be, one would have said, any law or penalty against smiling. But if Mr. Armour's huntsman will say it of himself, that will be a different matter:

*Ah! ha!* they laughed, *Ah! ha! ha! ha!* but the huntsman laughed too loud.

The poet might have been right (although a line like that makes poetry writing seem very easy): if a huntsman were an ordinary man, he would smile at his troubles a little ruefully, there would be a slightly false note in his laughter. But because huntsmen are no ordinary men, you may hear them laugh with the rest of you and the best of you—*Ah! ha! ha! ha!*

Yet, even a ditched huntsman must laugh more heartily at some times than others. It may be true (although I don't think it is) that " no one is more profoundly sad than he who laughs too much," but it can certainly be said that we are seldom more profoundly glad than when we laugh the last. And if you like a happy ending, why, here's a fairly happy ending for you. Someone who knew of my interest in that ditched and sacked huntsman began making enquiries—and here is his letter, come tumbling out of the post: " . . . You may be glad to know," says this just-in-time correspondent, "that when the season ended, that Master *himself got the sack*. What is more, the Huntsman was reinstated—and all went happily afterwards."

In fact, *Ah! ha!* they laughed, *Ah! ha! ha! ha!* (and the huntsman had to smile).

# THAT'S THE RULE HERE

It is a comforting fact (which we must continue to hide from the very young) that there comes a time in the life of every sensible man when he need no longer obey rules. A time when a man need *never again* obey rules. I am not referring to mere laws: in regard to those a man's chief difficulty will be to know when he can begin to *obey* the law—to drive at ten miles an hour through a county town without being looked at as if he were mad, or to take out, for that revolver of his, the licence for which he, unfortunately, failed to apply when first *that* rule was made. And I do not mean to suggest that, in a games-loving country such as ours, a man will ever be able actually to break the rules. It is possible, and with some bridge-players even probable, that a man might, for example, fail to return his partner's lead five times in one night; but it would have to be in *one* night. If he were still to be alive by the next night, it is too great a stretch of the imagination to suppose that he could possibly again get a partner.

He can never break the rules for long, and it will be difficult for him even to disregard them; but he can do what will be infinitely more delightful—he can regard other people making their frantic attempts to obey the rules, while he himself stands outside it all. From the moment when he himself says the word to himself he is free to take his ukelele or his one-string fiddle to the card room of his club and sit there thenceforth in a magnificent detachment. Whether he can actually play his ukelele when he gets there will, no doubt, depend to some extent on local rules, and to a greater extent on whether there is anybody in the card room at the time; but that's not the point—the point is that he needn't play cards. I have no grudge against cards, I would merely use those devil's picture-books in illustration of the fact that it is when a man gets to *that* time of life that he begins at last to be a happy man.

When that time shall start will depend on the man himself. That is not so simple (nor, indeed, quite so silly) as it sounds. It is an appalling thing to realise how many a false start we must make before we can expect to go ambling along on that so-desirable course. We may call it the South Sea course, for it generally begins with a wish that we could go and live alone in the South Sea Islands. If half the people who had wished it had ever got there, the South Sea Islands would long since have sunk. It is our baggage which has saved the islands. If there wasn't much which we wanted on the voyage, there was a great deal which, on further consideration, we reckoned we should need on the island. Whether our wants ran to an occasional fox-hunt or could be more modestly met by the ukelele and a couple of packs of cards—so long as we wanted any baggage at all, we were always carrying an extra load which left us hopelessly overweight for the South Sea state of life.

That, of course, is the snag. We have to give up a great deal—and to *want* to give



up a very great deal—if we are to get away from rules. It doesn't seem to be enough just to want to get away. That we have always wanted, and up to now the rules have always brought us back. That was the rule in the nursery, these were the rules of schools —and even in the school some restless prompting, or, more prosaically and probably, the attainment of a respectable position in the list of batting averages, would keep our noses to that grindstone. At later periods the choice was presented to us with increasing clearness. It became perfectly clear to us, for example, that we could go to the Royal Enclosure dressed (or undressed) as a South Sea Islander; but it was made equally clear that not even the women could go *into* the Royal Enclosure undressed as South Sea Islanders.

" That is the rule here "—so, do we wish to be enclosed or do we not ? We must make up our minds what we want. But first we must make up our minds what we mind. In that we shall get plenty of practice in the course of our many false starts—in those attempts which we make to stand outside it all rather before we really want to. " Extraordinary person ! Frightful fellow !" So long as we object to being so described if, for example, we come out hunting in blue breeches and a bowler hat—for just so long can we be sure that what we really want is to obey the rules, and not to stand outside at all. Do not, then, let us be worried by the violence of the language which people use about us. Its very violence gives it its value. When people take to calling us a Queer Old Party or a Quaint Old Card, the situation is a little dangerous for men who have not yet quite made up their minds. It will not then be long before they are calling us " Oh, *him*," and when that happens it will be a waste of time wondering whether we would like to cut loose from it all. We shall have *been* cut loose. Those will still be the rules, but we ourselves will be treated, whether we like it or not, as a permanent exception.

I want to make it perfectly clear that I am not for a moment advocating the abolishment of rules. I should like to see a lot more rules made about everything—*silly* rules, which would make us feel all the happier when we need no longer regard them. But I should like us to be compelled to regard them for quite a long time. We are all agreed that it is bad for youngish people if they are not bound by rules, but it is most unfair on young people if they see the older ones unbinding themselves too soon. I like to remember those words of the late Mr. Wilde: " We start by loving our parents, later on we criticise them, and in the end we sometimes forgive them." Those are words so nearly true of some of you that it is extremely pleasant to realise that they just manage to be false. I do not mean that you don't start by loving your parents. I mean that in the end you always forgive them. Yet it is a fact that the younger generation will bitterly criticise a father who comes out hunting in blue breeches and a bowler hat. And they will be right in doing so. It is not fair when older people stay outside the rules at the expense of younger people's feelings; and we cannot suppose that anything could be more devastating to younger people's feelings than the sight of this blue-breeched father, scarlet-coated and bowler-hatted, will be to his children out hunting.

To an outsider it is, of course, astounding that there should be any rules in the hunting field, and nothing is more surprising, nor, at first, so discouraging, to the new

FIRST SPORTSMAN (in brook): "I feel as if I'd swallowed all the fish in the stream."
SECOND SPORTSMAN (owner of the fishing): "Then you'll have to put 'em back if they're under a pound: that's the rule here."


NOTICE
G. DARMOUR

sportsman than to discover how many are those rules. The outsider supposes that all we have to do is to get into a hunting field and go on jumping out of the field—until the dogs (" well, *hounds*, then !") catch the fox. We cannot explain all the whys and wherefores to an outsider—indeed, it's a job to understand some of them ourselves—but we have sense enough to accept the rules. Unruly habits mean sloppy people, and better an incomprehensible rule than a world of human slop-basins.

It is, perhaps, that consideration of slop which has turned Englishmen back from the South Seas more often than any other consideration. It is possible that even in the South Seas there are certain established practices. I can imagine that a man would scarcely have cracked his first coconut before some dusky and meddlesome Meg would come along to show him that he ought to have cracked it some other way, for " fuga shokoto Y'ami " or " *that's* the rule here." Yet I cannot suppose that in those South Seas there is any substantial penalty for cracking a coconut the wrong way round, and there *must* be penalties for breaking the rules if a man is to get full enjoyment from standing outside and watching other people obey them.

It is all very difficult, but for myself I think that as soon as I find myself beginning not to mind when other people refer to me as a frightful fellow—then I will retire, not to those South Sea Islands, but to one or other of the new synthetic concrete islands which are going to be popped into various oceans as stepping-stones for aeroplanes. In mid-Atlantic, for instance, one will have a lot of peaceful periods and still get the cream of the hunting news, as wealthy sportsmen travel to and fro at the beginning of the season and the end. With a little imagination (or a small improvement in television) I shall be able to see you all doing the things which I no longer want to do. I shall be in close enough contact with life to keep myself from sloppiness. And when the weekly aeroplane zooms into view I will hastily put on my old blue hunting breeches and come bustling down to meet you at the petrol pump. I do not think that I will pump the petrol for your pilot, but, as you step a-concrete to stretch your legs, I will be there to show you where you may stretch them, and where you may not. Then you may think of me as a Queer Old Party, if you like; but it will be useless to raise any protest. By long residence I shall have become a privileged person round the petrol pump. " *That's* the rule here " I will say to you severely, if you don't stretch your legs my way.

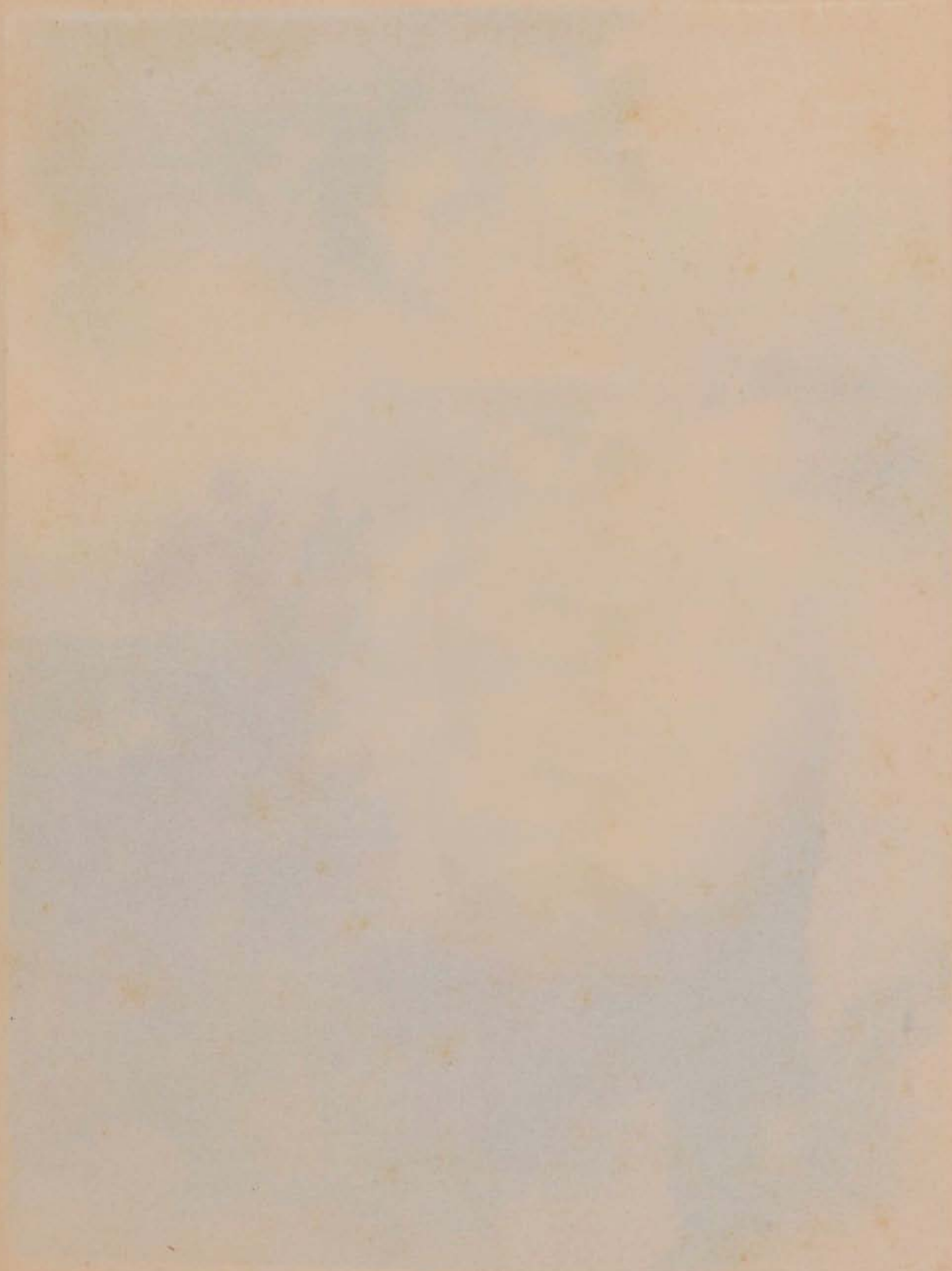
# LET THE CAPTAIN LEAVE THE SHIP

DEVONSHIRE is certainly the worst hunting country I ever was in. The north of Devon has no charms for me, who spend half my life in the saddle. But, in case you should suppose that the first, at any rate, of those two sentences is my own, I will hasten (as fast as I can) to tell you that they are neither my words nor my sentiments. They are the words of Charles James Apperley, who was " Nimrod " or Pomponius Ego—according to whether his slice of sporting history is to your taste or not. However that may be, those two crumbs from his slice will be to the taste of no one today. " Devonshire is certainly the worst hunting country ": it is, perhaps, safer to put the words back in their inverted commas, and so to do as much as is possible towards stifling the bellow of rage which might otherwise be emitted by every man of Devon who read them. It will give, to us at least, a breathing space, and in that breathing space we may note that " Nimrod " was not in a position to express any informed opinion on hunting in Devonshire, for in Devonshire he appears to have had one day's hunting only, and that with what he himself describes as an Extraordinary Establishment. Of Devon, " Nimrod " will tell you—and, no doubt, with truth—how Colonel Kelly (of Kelly) asked Her Ladyship if she had ever tail-piped a greyhound: he will sing you, in three pages of someone else's song, the account of a run with Mr. Fellowes' hounds: he will add to that contemplated book of yours—*Some Curious Customs of the Countryside*—the information that the Chulmleigh Hunt Club eat plum-pudding and tongue, mixed together, as a standing dish. But he can tell you, from his own experiences, little or nothing of hunting in Devon, and nothing of hunting the stag. For that, we must go to Devon for ourselves, to the incomparable country of Devon and Somerset, where, almost alone in England, the stag is still treated with the honour he deserves.

As for the north of Devon having no charms for a man who has spent half his time in the saddle—that is both nonsense and not the *point*. The point, at the moment, shall be that the north of Devon has the greatest possible attraction for those who feel that, in any other hunting country, they would spend more than half their time tumbling *out* of the saddle. I am sure that it was this consideration which first induced the gentleman in Mr. Armour's picture—this captain who is so unwillingly leaving the ship—to try his hand (or his seat) at hunting in Devon. In Devon, he will have understood, there are almost no jumps: and since it will have loomed large in his mind that it is just those jumps which are the very devil of hunting, Devon, without devils, will have seemed the place for him.

" Some parts of the country are extremely rough," says Mr. Nimrod. In a few moments' time, when the captain of this picture has finally left his ship with a bump, he will, no doubt, confirm that verdict on the roughness of the country. He will go

PLATE XII.—WITH THE DEVON AND SOMERSET.



SAILOR: "I don't know much about that kind o' navigation, but it looks to me as 'ow the capting might be leavin' the ship pretty soon."

back to his hotel (if not to his London) murmuring with Nimrod against the " Devonshire Dingles and those killing hills."

It may well be better *and* kinder if, in looking at Devon, we take our eyes off both Nimrod and this unlucky " Captain " who is about to quit his ship. Leaving out of account, too, all those who really know the West Country—all those to whom its very names are music (Cloud Hill and Brendon Water, Porlock and Shilletts Wood)—we may safely say that no other hunting country in all England will have the attraction which Devon has, both for those who spend half their time in the saddle and for those who spend half their time tumbling out of it. " Jumps," after all, are a by-product of this comparatively recent civilisation of ours: even for fox-hunting people and great horsemen of other hunting countries it is sometimes a comfort to get behind that civilisation again, to go back to a country " clean of officious fence or hedge "—to return to the uplands of Exmoor, to the deep and lavish woodlands, to those cliffs that look out on the Severn Sea.

How much the greater is this attraction to those of us who cannot " leave the ship " so often as do luckier folk. To go ashore in Devon is to return to a country where hunting is bred in the bone. Even Nimrod admitted *that* much. More hounds, he said, were kept in that country than in any other three counties of England: the " greater part of the yeomanry keep what they call ' a cry of dogs,' " and a friend of his had, indeed, declared that in Devon he had hunted with seventy-two packs. And even Nimrod admits that in Devon you find hospitality at its kindest (although he adds, with what in a less delicate person would be a sniff, that you always *do* get kindly treated in a wild country). I do not think that we should take Nimrod with us when we go to Devon: but I do think that we should take with us our highest hopes for happy times, our every ability to receive and appreciate the luxury of a beauty in which man has had no clumsy hand—and last (but really first), the knowledge that in the Devon and Somerset country we shall get closer to the spirit which gave birth to hunting, and since has kept it alive, than in any other county or country all across the world.

So, by all means let the Captain leave the Ship. Everybody knows that in theory and in any properly conducted business, from navigation to an importation of nutmegs, the temporary absence of the captain should make not the slightest difference to efficiency. That is correct in theory, and in practice it is often (and however regrettably) the case that the more the captain is off the bridge the better for the business. Anyhow, in August or September *let the Captain leave the Ship*, on whatever sea he sails—even if he be nearly as unwilling to do so as is the unfortunate horseman of this picture. If he should go to Devon or Somerset and find some parts of the country " extremely rough," well, that will do him a world of good in these days, when softness is rather too easily come by. And we can promise him that he will find no parts of the country " extremely dreary," as did that astonishing fellow, Nimrod.

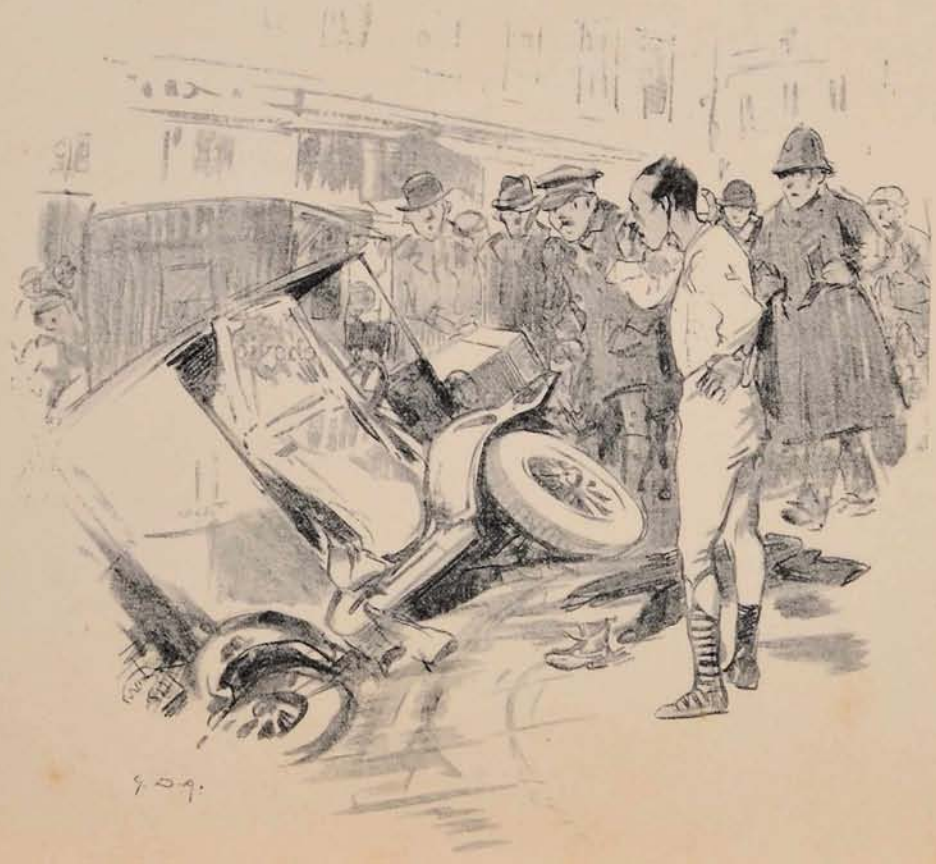
And if the stag seems to be the last person we think of—then let us, at last, think of the stag. I do not wish to think of that stag swimming a mile out to sea and compelled to turn back again to death. I do not wish to think of how this noble stag sees men who wait for him below the cliff, as men have seen vultures, who will wait for a

dying man. It is a bad business, this slaughter of a gallant stag: I do not think that, in Devon or Somerset, you would find a man who would for long seek to deny that. So, after all, I will choose to think that a gallant stag *does* see men as vultures, when they wait below the cliff. I will think that he has no great fear of vultures, who can only take from the dying what the dead will no longer require. I will think that some whisper came to turn him from that death-swim—a whisper, it may have been, that neither stags nor sparrows fall without that fall being marked. I will believe that he turns back knowing that his spirit will be free; and that even the vultures will leave his bones to lie in his own land.

I am afraid that (as you say) we have thought rather *gloomily* about the stag when we have come to think of him at last. But at least it has taken our minds, as well as our eyes, off that poor Captain (of Industry, I think ?) unwillingly leaving his Ship. He must by now have landed. If, with Nimrod, he has found that landing " extremely rough," why, he will soon get his land legs and be able to stand gratefully on his own two feet in all the glory of the West Country.

# DANGEROUS DOINGS

FOXHUNTING and the race-riding incidental thereto stand by themselves as dangerous employments. If hunting people are not the only people in England who accept a challenge to live dangerously, they are, probably, alone in Europe in running a weekly risk of dying unnecessarily. I am aware that, in these days, the majority of occupations —from coal-mining to crossing the road—are dangerous; but in those other occupations necessity is at the back of our acceptance of the risk—or it seems to us that it is. We cross the road because, like a hen, we believe it to be necessary to get to the other side. When the one-way traffic idea is fully worked out we shall, perhaps, get to the other side not quite so like a hen as we do now. When we all, in the words of the song, " go the same way home " we shall not run the same risk of going to what for some reason is gloomily described as our " long " home. Perhaps the exhilaration of that reprieve will compensate for the misery of a much longer walk. But whatever method civilisation chooses to adopt for killing us—and whether the process be long or short—we can have, individually, but little say in the matter in the daily business of getting our living. In our sport or recreation the position is quite different. That is why, when being driven in a motor-car, we resent it so fiercely when we are being driven too fast. We are not afraid to die, but when we are out to enjoy ourselves we do not intend that some other individual shall arbitrarily decide the manner in which we shall meet death. Sometimes, of course, there are additional or peculiar reasons for the resentment we feel against these fast drivers. I have myself twice had occasion (necessity compelling) to change my clothes completely when being driven in a taxi-cab too fast across London. Each time my fury was a mute fury, because any resort to bellowings and window-tappings would necessarily have drawn the driver's attention to my half-nakedness.

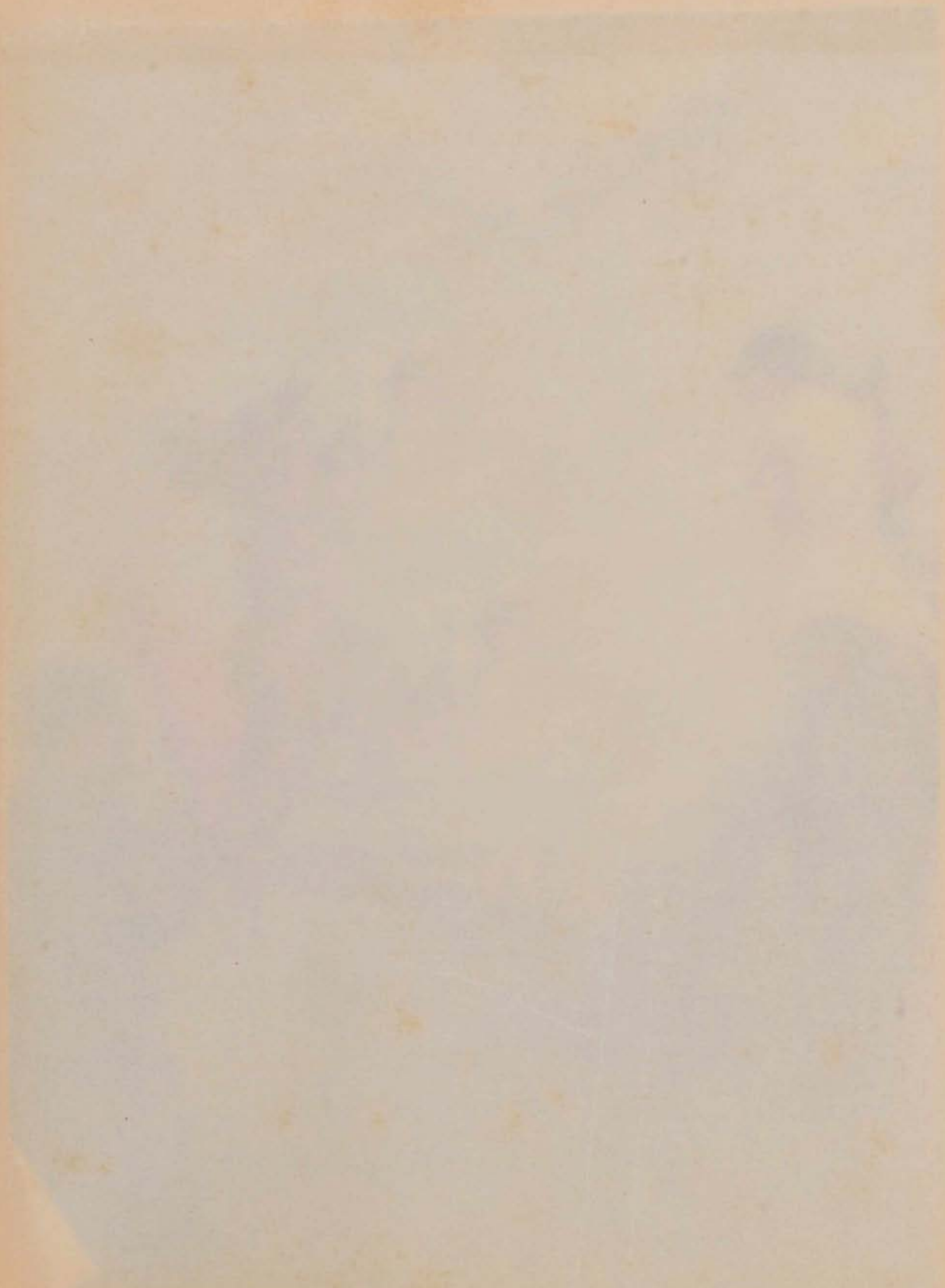


He would then have refused to drive me any farther at all. But my fury was the greater fury from the realisation that at the inquest, after the crash, it would come out that at the moment of impact I was wearing one yellow sock and one green one. All sorts of other things might then have come out. The driver, who would be sure, himself, to be thrown clear, would also be sure to remember that " he thought I looked queer " when I hailed him. Well, of course, I always look queer, but I do not want the thing placarded all over London.

I only mention this extremely personal trouble in order to admit that there are circumstances in which special considerations arise; but the fact is that we, normally, resent any attempt to hasten our demise, and, with a firm conviction that good men are scarce (and good women becoming a mere phrase), are determined not to make *ourselves* scarce.

So, if it takes a bold man to go down a mine for his living every day, it must still take a bit of a dare-devil to hunt six days a week. Quite *how* much of a dare-devil it is difficult to say. A Lloyd's policy will (be pleased to) tell us at any time what is the degree of the insurable risk spread over the whole country. But it is the whole essence of insurance that a risk which is rightly estimated for the country as a whole will be wrongly estimated for every individual insured. There was once an insurance agent whose grisly habit it was to waylay undergraduate riders on their way to the start of 'Varsity grinds. He would be there in an obliging, *memento mori*-ish way, inviting you to bet against his modest fancy that you were about to break your neck. Or your horse's neck. It was this sideline which put unpaid to his account and sent him out of business. Estimating the risk to the neck of my friend at one pound, and the risk to the neck of the horse of my friend (to extend a phrase-book form of words to breaking point) at five shillings, he had the misfortune to make a complete miscalculation. It is true that (at the first fence, too !) my friend's horse broke his back and not his neck, but any consolation to that ghoulish insurer on that account was a pedantic and certainly not a pecuniary one.

And if folk who deal in figures can make that sort of mistake, how can you or I expect to size up the risk ? How brave do people have to be in order to go out hunting ? That will depend, I suppose, on what manner of men or women they are—and on how boldly they propose to ride. The latter is not so important a consideration as might appear, for it is a matter of mathematics and common knowledge (among those who know) that, the bigger the obstacle and the greater the pace, the farther clear you will all get thrown. The number of your bold horsemen who die of jumping big fences is about equalled by the quantity of cautious coves who " cop " (as is said) it by putting their horse's foot in a rabbit hole. How brave people have to be will depend, therefore, on the person rather than on the size of fence they propose to set themselves as a reasonable standard for negotiation. Some day, if these " Behaviorists " have their way, we shall all be levelled up in this as in other matters. It seems, from what the Behaviorists tell us, that our horror of a great hairy fence (with a stout rail in front of it and a ditch big enough to bury a cathedral) is chiefly a muscular matter. It is also " unverbalised." We are afraid to say what we think of the ditch as we get galloping towards it—that



WELL-PRIMED OLD PROFESSIONAL (to starter who is being very particular): "Oh, let us go, Captain darlint, let us go before the whisky dies out av us!"


G. DARMOUR

must be the unverbalised part. What we say about our horse as we go limping around for the next month would then be dictated by our muscular agony. The Behaviorist proposes, I understand, to take us all in hand at a very early age and frighten the fright out of us. It will be done, I gather, on the system of the gentleman from Petticoat Lane who took his little son for a walk " to give 'im 'ith firtht lethon in bithneth." When asked to explain the return in tears, he recounted how he had helped little Ikey to clamber to the top of the highest available wall, and had then held out his arms: " *Jump, Ikey, and let your old dad catch you.*" Ikey, at seven years old, being utterly devoid of business-like caution, *did* jump. When his old dad took his arms away at the last moment —well, that was to teach him, in business, not to be foolishly trustful.

So the Behaviorists will some day and in some such way as this level us all up, even in the hunting field—get us all to a *dead* level, no doubt. When that day will come it is difficult to guess—perhaps when they put the " u " back in " behaviour " and cease to think that they can leave the " you " out of life and treat us like a lot of little Ikeys. In the meantime we get over our own troubles in our own fashions. " I'm not never frightened when I goes into the boxing ring " said a (very) young countryman boxer to me not long ago—" but my legs goes all woggley when I *first* goes in." It may be an unscientific suggestion, but it seems to me that the hunting field, no less than the boxing ring, will lose something in value if the sight of a big black fence (or, for a boxer, some big black's face) in front of us makes *nobody* go all woggley.

At present the illusion of danger is well maintained and, for most of us, ever fresh. Other dangers, for people who have been in the habit of meeting them, do not appear to take the keen edge off the hunting kind. Many a soldier horseman will have felt during a hectic period of warfare that, after this, it would be a small matter to go back to jumping very big fences on very badly schooled horses. But, returned from those wars, he will have found it not a bit easier than before—the average lowness of the hunting risk making the individual chances seem no more attractive.

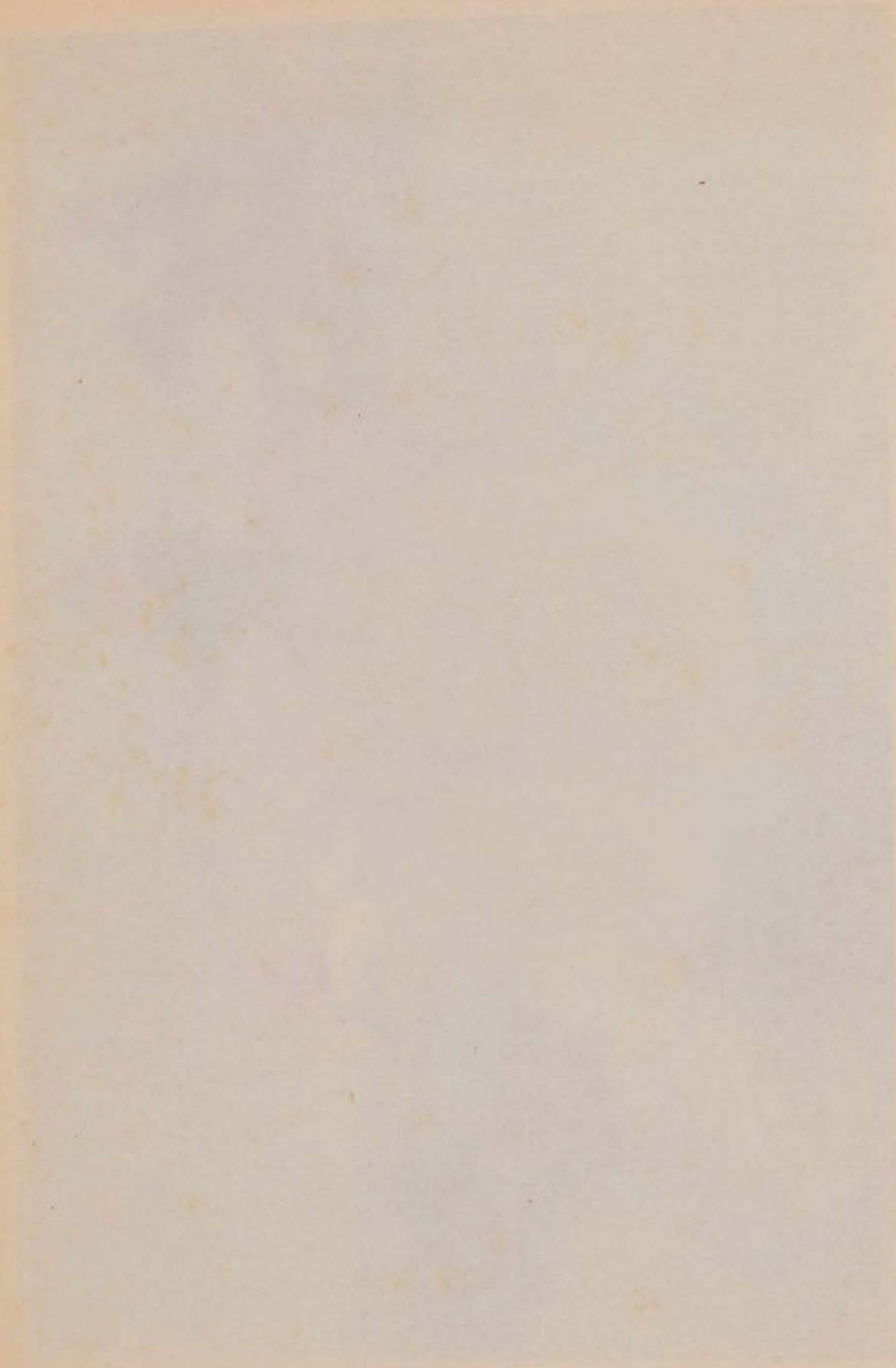
Because necessity is the less compelling it takes a braver man to be a bold rider to hounds than to ride a race. In a race, as in a war, the thing is done for you, most of the time. It would be more difficult, for example, in a race (or, indeed, in a war) to invent a likely sounding excuse for turning back when half way to the start than to ride right on. It would require a quite exceptional and sustained ingenuity to ride round each of the fences and so avoid going over any of them. Having done so, it would require greater courage to proceed to weigh in than it did to weigh out. And yet, the race-rider, when he rides his first race, will get a thrill which the bold rider to hounds will never know at all. In that first race in which you ever rode, wasn't there something of a peculiar exhilaration—such as you had never known before, such as you have never since recaptured ?

There probably was. You fussed a good deal, as we all remember, before you mounted: girths were wrong, the bit was wrong, the leathers were *all* wrong. But once in the saddle and on the move—why, you knew yourself a king, and much more than a king, for, having no subjects to be a nuisance to you, you rode there supreme and alone with your horse, physically, mentally and spiritually above the roaring ring and the

jostle of the flotsam and jetsam—the rubbish, both horrid and pathetic, of a racing crowd. A few minutes later, of course, you were brought down to earth and the exigencies of riding over fences at a pace a full one-third faster than you had ever ridden over fences before. A few minutes later still and you and your horse were, perhaps, brought *finally* down to earth, so far as that race was concerned. But just for those first few minutes . . .

Before the spirit dies out of us ! In the artist's Race Start picture it is the whisky that's going to die out of them. As to that, one can only say that the aristocrat in the tumbril remains, in some sort, an aristocrat even when he goes drugged to execution. To go to the tumbril *via* the tumbler is deplorable, but it is, probably, less deplorable than to refuse altogether to ride in the open race. Of those who do not refuse, the number who tilt a tumbler beforehand must be, one would say, entirely negligible—and they will have tumblered or tumbled themselves out of the race or out of the hunt in the first three fences.

And the others ride on. " You can't expect to live for ever "—but it is because (broadly speaking) we all *do* expect it, unless we go tumbling or tumblering about, that the dash and courage of galloping horsemen is so admirable a thing. Theirs, it seems to me, is a fine spirit. May it never die out of Englishmen.



IRISH DEALER (to rough-rider on young horse): "Go on, Dan, go on! Ye can't expect to live for ever!"


G. D. ARMOUR.

# AGAINST THE CAR

I HAVE a profound sympathy for the poor lady who has been trying her husband's horse against the car, and could only get a bare 30 m.p.h. out of him even on the hard high road. Life is simply peppered with these sickening disappointments. A man has said that the surest way to spoil a legacy of five hundred pounds is to tell the recipient that he has been left five thousand. But there's nothing new in that idea. We are repeatedly being left five hundred pounds (well, you know what I mean) after understanding that we were going to get five thousand and, indeed, seeing no reason why it shouldn't have been fifty. Why was Sparks, the chauffeur, so stupid as to encourage this poor lady to make the test?—for, looking at him, I am sure he *did* encourage her. I am sure, too, that her husband will have been as vexed about her disappointment as I am. " Sparks," he will have said, " you *were* a stupid."

Actually, of course, the wretched horse didn't do too badly if he really kept in front of the car for any distance while it was doing thirty miles an hour. But the lady evidently expected, and had understood she was going to get, something very much faster than *that*. " He'll catch pigeons, that one," a dealer will often tell you. I expect that was what a dealer told this lady's husband, and the thoughtless fellow went and repeated it to her. A pigeon can do sixty miles an hour quite easily, and this " American wife " no doubt expected the new horse to do anything up to seventy-five on a decent bit of road, without stretching himself unduly.

Regret for his wife's disappointment will doubtless have been that husband's first, overwhelming, feeling. When, after that, he came to consider the condition to which his horse had been reduced, it is just possible, I suppose, that he will have had something to say to her on that score, too. He will have been anxious that she should understand his English point of view, and at that rate it may have taken him some days—even years —to say all he wanted to say about this thirty mile an hour gallop on the high road.

Perhaps he hasn't finished yet. But if it is a fact that that English husband does still make occasional reference to this unfortunate incident of some years ago, he will soon have to hurry up and finish what he's got to say. In England we may have caught the hustle habit a little later than some of our neighbours, but there is no doubt that we are all for speed now. There is a melancholy interest in marking the stages by which even hunting people have been won over to mere speed, and to that " let the car do it " attitude whenever it is merely easier for a thing to be done by car. After all, it is not so very long since every hunting man could be relied upon to speak (or splutter) about " road hogs " on the smallest provocation. Today, the only road hogs are these maddening pedestrians, who even at night will sometimes infuriate us by walking actually on the road (instead of crawling down the ditches on their stomachs). Until quite recently it was the easiest thing in the world to get together a moaning party to deplore the interest which the younger members were taking in these motor-cars. We were



all, like the horse of this picture, " against the car "—or, at the very least, against everybody else's use of the car.

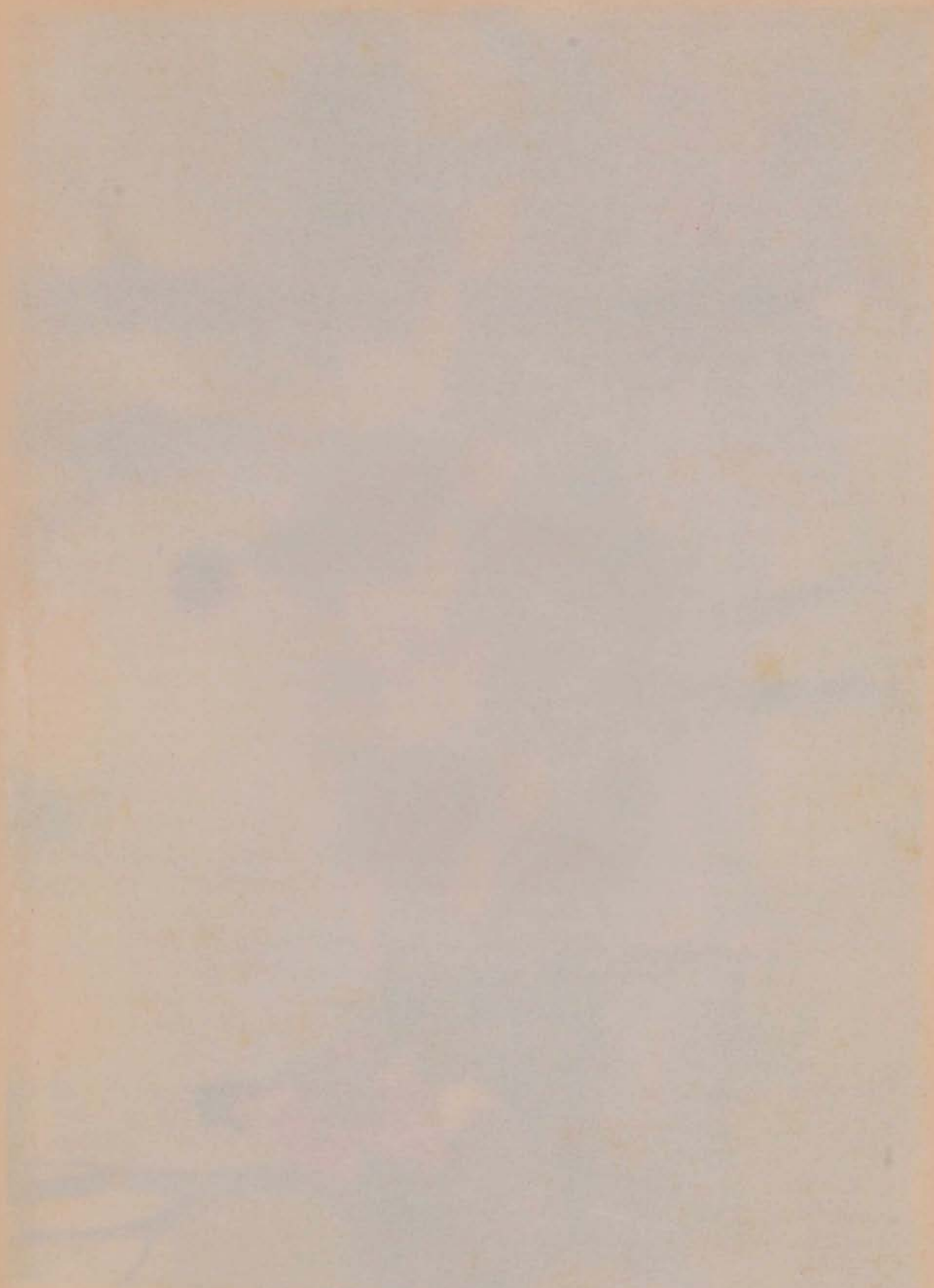
And then we seemed suddenly all to lose heart at the same time, and it came to be understood that even the very youngest members might use the car whenever they wanted to. Of course, they *were* using it, anyhow, so perhaps our weakness in that matter was excusable; but it has been followed by a piece of sheer madness. It is being now freely suggested that rich young men should give up keeping a stud of horses—and take to keeping a flock (or whatever it is) of aeroplanes. I myself have heard it suggested by people who ought to know better—by people who *do* know better, since they themselves hunt six days a week (or seven days, counting all they say on Sunday).

Of course, there's more behind it than speed-worship: there are the rich young men behind it. To understand how hunting people can talk like that it will be helpful if we know something of conditions in the hunting field today; but it will be even more helpful if we know some rich young men. Rich young men will be the last to deny that there are some (other) rich young men who, in the homely if out-of-date language of their nurseries, " want a good shaking." The difficulty is that in these days rich young men are generally extremely athletic young men. If we tried to shake them they might shake us back. It is that fact which must have inspired this " flock of aeroplanes " suggestion. Let the aeroplane give the rich young man a good shaking—let him have *several* aeroplanes, and so get several shakes. But surely his horse or horses will give a young man more shakes than his aeroplane ? Both more and more violent, substantial shakings. If an aeroplane will send a man's heart into his mouth, his horse will sometimes put his leg in a splint. There is that to be considered.

But I do not think that, even in our fury at the way the young men treat us, we are quite so brutal in intention as all that. What it really comes to is that we feel that young men who go about with their noses in the air might as well take themselves, nose and all, into the air and be done with it—leaving us to lead our bourgeois, earth-bound lives in peace and comfort.

That would be all right if it were any part of the scheme of things that we *should* be moderately comfortable on earth. The indications, unfortunately, are all to the contrary, and we must suppose, therefore, that it is for our ultimate good that we should all have to associate, to some extent and in however humble a capacity, with rich young men. Nor is it for the good of the young men that they should be encouraged to take to airy ways—to be always above us in fact as well as in their own imagination. That would be bad even for the other (pleasant) kind of rich young men. At the very least, to tell them to keep aeroplanes instead of horses is to encourage them in this very error of poor Sparks and " American wife." They thought—they really did think—that horses were kept for speed and nothing else.

If you are one of those who have been talking this flock-of-aeroplanes nonsense, I beg you to pull yourself together and think what those young men will miss if they go up in the air. Otherwise the rest of us will all " go up in the air " and come down to rend you limb from limb. " Sparks " we will call you, with your horrid, mechanical mind—and " Sparks, you *were* a stupid " we will say when you have left our richest young men between heaven and earth, neither fish nor flesh but utterly foul.



HUSBAND: "Good heavens! What have you been doing with that horse?"
WIFE: "Well, you said he was fast, and now I've tried him against the car and Sparks says he can only register a bare thirty on the speedometer."

# THE IRRESISTIBLES

FIGURES being what they are, I should think that existing hunting statistics (or, for the matter of that, the export and import returns) could easily, in the hands of a moderately good accountant, be made to prove for me what is in fact the case—that a majority of men under fifty who hunt regularly are extremely bold horsemen. But not more than one in a hundred is a " thruster." That is very comforting, for the thruster is the Irresistible in search of the Immovable, and life is quite uncomfortable enough already, without having a great many people of that kind let loose on the countryside.

We all know how uncomfortable it can be when the thrusters are loose: we " all " know it because the thruster is by no means confined to the hunting field. If in the hunting field the thruster will crash past, over, or through you, in his desperate search after something less easily removable than yourself, in other ways of life the thruster is equally desperate and alarming. Because thrusting is a disease and not a catching one, a man might almost suppose that only the diseased would feel the discomfort of the thing: but the fact is that, when dis-easy people of any kind are about, other people had better stop at home. And that, unfortunately, is impossible. Remove the Christians from the arena and what are the lions to do ? Retire from business life the people who really get the work done, and what happens to the new-idea-ridden Manufacturer, the spark-about General, the indefatigable Director of business—all those men who make life for their staffs unsafe enough to be stimulating and not so intolerable as to bring them actually to suicide ? In the present early days of our civilisation all these Thrusters are essential to it. It is the other people who really get the work done—that is admitted; but these thrusting folk believe that they make just that push and intrusion which result in everybody else *going on* getting their work done very nearly as fast as they were doing it when the thruster arrived on the scene. If, therefore, on the face of it, there seems to quieter people no logical *raison d'être* for the thruster's *être*, we

ought all, in the name of holy charity, still to continue to be about when the thruster is about, if only to give him a reason for existence.

But below the surface there are other sound and solid reasons for a hunting thruster's existence. If there were no thrusters in the hunting field—if there were none of those mad men rooting up fences, crashing through gates, galloping their horses to a knacker's yard in that frenzy of search for the immovable—do you suppose that the percentage of the good bold horsemen would remain for long at its present high figure of eighty-three ? I do not. The thruster is a bogey man who will catch you (and jump on you) if he can—and he generally can: but it is neither desirable nor of any use to hide your head beneath the clothes or your faint heart under a pink coat when bogey men are about. You may not see, for dust, the way they go, but the very fact and manner of their going will set your heart beating beneath that hunting coat, not more faintly but more fiercely. When the thruster has fallen fifty feet into a chalk pit, for example, the next big fence with a ditch on the farther side will seem at once less formidable and more desirable of achievement to the gallant eighty-three. Even the (very) odd sixteen per cent. of us will then ride, with something which approaches abandon, the line of devastated gaps which the thruster has left behind him. He gives to all men, if not a standard at which to aim, yet a valuable stimulus to maintain their own standard of courage at its highest possible level.

And a man must be content with his own standard—as soon as he has put it at its highest possible. Every amateur psychologist will tell you *that* much (although not even the professional psychologist seems able to say how the devil you are to know when you *have* put it at its highest possible). The fact remains that not only are the gallant eighty-three unable to reach the pitch of courage displayed by the thruster, but actually they do not wish to do so. For that there is at least one respectable reason. Really to thrust involves, among other things, a complete disregard, amounting to contempt, for the safety or, indeed, the continued existence of your horse. Let his horse be apparently beat to the world, yet how can a thruster be certain that he himself is no longer irresistible, while there remains in front of him a single fence in all England of the immovability or otherwise of which he has not yet satisfied himself ? It is only fair that we should ignore for the moment the fact that the thruster does not spare himself, and lay emphasis on this other fact—that he doesn't care two hoots what happens to his horse.

> Unbounded courage and compassion *join'd*,
> Tempting each other in the Victor's mind,

make "the hero and the man complete." When the enterprising thruster goes a-thrusting I should not suppose that he is aware of any temptation to be compassionate. If he is, it is a temptation which he puts from him with complete success and, taking his horse by the head, he will bang and punch him along to the end of the day or until one or other of them cops it. And so it is a good thing for horses as well as for the rest of us that comparatively few thrusters exist; and in so far as he would wish to be complete hero and man, it is a bad thing for the thruster that his unbounded courage is unjoined with compassion.

As a fact this irresistible thruster has very little wish to be a hero, and none at all to be thought a hero. All he requires of life is room to thrust and go on thrusting. He may smile with grim satisfaction as he hears you recount how he killed three horses last 'season, doing all that was humanly possible in the circumstances to kill himself as well. But his smile is a grim one, not a smug one: it springs from the recollection that, on those three occasions at least, he, the irresistible, went as near as makes no matter to finding the immovable.

It is necessary that hunting should continue in England, if only to employ these of our thrusters. At present they are often, in private life, quiet, decent men whose tastes may range anywhere from a study of æsthetics to that of zoological distribution. But that is when their engines are not really running, and if we have a fancy for trembling, we may tremble to think of what would happen if they hadn't this hunting-field outlet for their proper energy. At the best they would go, with engines aroar, to increase the already almost overpowering forces of thrust in other ways of life. Some would become parsons, exploding in the pulpit all those damnation notions which a parson *must* get rid of in the pulpit when he's not allowed to say things like that at home. Others—— But why terrify ourselves with a possibility so remote when hunting shows so little sign of stopping? After all, at a time when hunting *did* show signs of stopping, these men were well enough employed. For it was such men as these who, like the Lord General at Worcester fight, did " exceedingly hazard themselves " in more recent fights; men who (like my Lord General), when out of their proper sphere, might not be entirely suited to peace-time requirements; men who, even *in* that proper sphere, would not make at all times the best of commanders—but men who might be trusted to lead a

Forlorn of Horse slap through an enemy and out the other side, or to go with gaiety to the breaching of a wall or the raiding of a trench when other men were inclined to regard such an occasion with a certain solemnity. To put it at its lowest, it can sometimes be pleasant to have someone who will knock a large hole in a big fence for you. To put it a good deal higher, at times when a nation believes itself pounded, even those gallant Eighty-Three of bold fellows are glad, I think, when the Irresistibles come up to search out that which seems to other men Immovable

"End of a great run, only two in it."


G. D. ARMOUR

# MEME CHOSE?

If this worrying and unexplained " Hysteria " disease, which has attacked hounds and lesser dogs, had attacked, instead, Hunt Secretaries, there would have been nothing remarkable about it. Hunt Secretaries live, today, a dog's life, and if they don't go into hysterics much, one can only say they ought to. Considerations of cash have changed the whole character of fox-hunting in England. The thing is not to be disputed. The more optimistic may comfort themselves with " plus ça change " tags; but on questions of fox-hunting the least pessimistic are, more and more frequently, compelled to embark upon those nightmare calculations of the puzzle books, as to how much a thing can change and yet remain the same thing.

The great majority of us have, of course, the best of reasons for believing that it is not merely money, but too little money, which is at the root of all evil; but at the bottom of the Hunt Secretary's troubles of today we find an exception. Too much money has, so to speak, built the office of Hunt Secretary permanently on the edge of a nervous breakdown. All the promoters of fox-hunting are troubled by this too-much-money state of things today, in that all their sums, whether of addition or subtraction, have grown enormously bigger than ever before. But it is the Hunt Secretary who is given the worst of the sums to deal with—those sums which are set down for his *ex*traction.

We can feel the fullest sympathy with the Secretary of this end-of-the-day picture. No man whose job it partly is to collect money can expect to be playfully pelted with roses while he goes his round: it is, perhaps, therefore, too idealistic to hope that a time will ever come when a Hunt Secretary's breakfast-table will be smothered in bunches of rosemary (for remembrance), with a nice fat subscriber's cheque—I mean a subscriber's nice fat cheque—hidden in every bunch. But, from what I hear, I do think it is high time for the exploding of a notion that a Hunt or its Secretary can safely be regarded as a Little Godfather of the Rich. The rich, as we must all hasten to allow, are essential people in fox-hunting as in all else of worldly matters; but the rich only have an economic value, as such, in so far as they are willing to add, as it were, the duties of figure-head and those of a slot-machine to all their other kindnesses (if any). It is, let us, hurriedly again, admit, only the quite exceptional Rich-man who, in fox-hunting, refuses to take upon himself such a horrid combination of duties; but I would wager that it is just one of those exceptions who has given to the sandy-haired Hunt Secretary of this picture his strained and worried look. For, of all those who hinder the progress of struggling Secretaries in their task, it is the giant Brass Face who alone gives real anxiety today. Others of the field are well in hand and fully realise that they must pay for their pleasure: but the bigger Brass Faces do give quite a lot of trouble.

It ought, of course, to be possible to summon Brass Face to pay for his pleasure It is not right that Brass Face should absorb a whole season of hunting before he dreams

of paying his subscription: and even when he does then dream of it, a Hunt Secretary, not being much on uncommunicated dreams, can get no solid comfort from that. And when Brass Face's subscription, due in November, remains unpaid in the following July—why, then, I think that public opinion should encourage a Hunt Secretary to bring Brass Face to the judgment of the courts. It is very well-bred and distinguished, no doubt, to be prevented by custom, just like a barrister and such grand people, from suing for your money; but it seems more sensible to make quite certain (as does a barrister) that you shall get your money before hunting starts. There are signs that in the course of " plus ça change " we are moving towards that state of things. It is possible, indeed, that it is this which has inoculated most Secretaries against at least the more violent forms of hysteria—that they *are* nowadays sure of some of their money before hunting starts. Big Brass Face may get a whole season's hunting without paying for it, but little Sour Looks can be capped on every day of that season—and is.

Yet it is this extension of the " capping " practice which makes it most difficult to believe, as we would wish to do, that hunting, for all the changes, really remains *même chose*. What, do you suppose, Great-grandfather would have said if the Secretary had insisted on capping Great-grandfather's guests when they came out hunting on Great-grandfather's horses ? Yes: you needn't actually *repeat* it. We are all sufficiently aware that Great-grandfather had a remarkable command of language—and, as a matter of fact, I think that this capping of his guests would have left Great-grandfather speechless. In his day such commercial conduct was unthinkable. True, Mr. Surtees imagined the Huntsman of the Handley Cross Hunt going round selling insurance tickets at the meet: but the general feeling was that this was one of the less felicitous of Mr. Surtees' efforts. It was not very well-bred to pretend, even in joke, that money matters in any form could ever be allowed to intrude at the covertside. That must be, incidentally, one of the sorrows of imaginative writers—that they can never imagine anything at all without the beastly thing coming solidly and sordidly true. M. Verne, for example, goes miles under the sea in imagination and a boat, and almost before his own chuckles have died away every navy in the world can do almost as much in a boat without any imagination at all. Mr. Surtees pretends that the very Hunt Servants will soon be engaged upon commercialising fox-hunting—and within fifty years the Secretary is going round capping Great-grandfather's guests.

Possibly Great-grandfather would get some little comfort from the fact that the system is not yet running in a fully businesslike way. It is not yet easy, for example, for what Great-grandfather (in his wrath) might call " any counter-jumper " to find out just what it will cost him to have a day's hunting with any pack in England. Indeed, it is still quite decently difficult for us, as counter-jumpers, even to find out what it will cost us to subscribe as members of what are sometimes called the " more fashionable " packs. At least two of these latter, so far from mentioning this sordid question of capping, do not even publish the amount of yearly subscription required. Of course, if you or I were to jump our counter and set out like a scalded cat for a country where our money is apparently no object, we should soon be disillusioned—to the subscription-tune of a hundred pounds and more. But it would be nice for Great-grandfather to know

OLD-FASHIONED SPORTSMAN (to new Hunt Secretary going home): "What sort of a day have you had?"

SECRETARY (thinking of the cap): "Wretched! Worst I've had so far—only ten pounds."


G. D. ARMOUR

that there are still some Hunts which do not have to mention subscriptions in public. It would be nice for him, too (and it must be *very* nice for a Hunt Secretary), to know that there are some Hunts which can even announce boldly, at certain times of the season, " Only Subscribers allowed to hunt *and no cap taken*." For me, it is nicer still to know that there is at least one Hunt in England which can mention both subscription *and* cap—and then say that at no time do they ask for either. " No subscription and no cap "—I do not know what sort of a fox-hunting brick they will bake in that glorious country where no straw is demanded for brick-making purposes. It is enough for me to realise that what Great-grandfather (now smiling) might call a pretty solid fox-hunting " brick " must be at the back of it all.

Yet all this lack of a uniform practice will add to the worries of a Hunt Secretary, and must go to make him a lonely man even in his hysteria. He cannot expect much guidance from his fellow-secretaries where all are plunged into changing conditions. Indeed, I see it reported that when last all the Hunt Secretaries had the annual meeting at their Clinic (or wherever it is that those sad encounters take place), of three main problems for discussion, no help could be offered on two of them, and the third was left for solution *by the police*. I do not think Great-grandfather would have liked that. I think he would have snatched his hunting whip from the long table in the hall and gone to settle that matter for himself. I think that Great-grandfather would have announced himself as everlastingly condemned if he would permit any policeman to help him hunt hounds.

" What sort of a day have you had ?" " Rotten ! Only collected a tenner !" It is well that such a state of things should have been kept from Great-grandfather, and it is, perhaps, best that the Secretaries should have all the misery—that they should only ask that we leave them alone to their horrid calculations of the highest value at which their committee can safely assess a day's hunting with their own pack. The reluctance of those committees to make assessment is in the old tradition and has done them, it seems to me, high credit. " Cap £1," " Cap £2," " £3 Cap "—in many hunting countries the thing must now be set down baldly, bluntly, unequivocally: but others do still pitifully cling to the old and proper pride. " Capping is practised," announces one such Hunt with something of the sob of the confessional, but, it would seem, unwilling to confess the full extent of the sin. " No fixed rule," declares another Hunt, as if seeking to convince themselves, if not us, that there is no unfixed rule either. Other sinners are more bold: " . . . will pay a cap of £2, or subscribe ": there is nothing equivocal in *that* statement, with its final, hissing threat of subscription.

We must get what comfort we can for Great-grandfather from all this. It will not be much. It will be rather more if, when those poor Secretaries have balanced their budgets, they find that they can in future make one small concession. " Friends of Subscribers may hunt free, on a Subscriber's horse "—whatever the actual practice, I can think of only one Hunt which makes even this concession in so many words. When next those Hunt Secretaries get together, could they not lighten the gloom of their proceedings by sending out a new and wider slogan to their committees ? " Guests *of covert-owners* may hunt free on any horse they something-well please ": a little thing

like that would go a long way with Great-grandfather. And I think that Great-grandfather has earned it. Returning today, he would find his tenant farmers treated with a fuller consideration which could but win his hearty, if surprised, approval; but, returning today, he would find himself as a covert-owner treated with a lack of attention which might easily give him apoplexy.

In fact, great changes have occurred, and where there is any tendency to apoplexy in the family it is certainly better that Great-grandfather should not return to find Great-grandmothers riding astride, and to mark all the other *pluses* of these *ça change* days. He must leave it to us and the Hunt Secretary to do the best we can.

But *ça* does *change*, and this " Diana " painting is another of the *ça change* pictures —Diana of the Crossways riding astride. It is not only Mr. Armour's Diana who is at the Crossways—all hunting is so placed: but not, I think, so awkwardly placed as the artist has chosen (with a terrible, if purely temporary, lack of gallantry) to show Diana herself. It is clear that the Diana of this picture has gone so far forward that she can scarcely go back, and it is equally clear that the fact is no comfort to her at all. But of hunting, which is at the cross-roads today, it is extremely comforting to be able to believe that it can never now go back. It is not continuing to go forward along that old road, and it may not, in the view of some of us, be going forward at all. Yet, if north road and south are blocked, there remain the east and west, and along one or other the story of hunting will move. A Frenchman, in his happy way, may convince himself that the more a thing changes the more it stays the same; but the Englishman will be satisfied if, among all the big changes, some little things which he has treasured do remain unchanged. And of that we may be very hopeful. The dog-cart is already being driven out of a sunset picture, the sandy hair of that Hunt Secretary will certainly and soon go grey: but, just before the sun sinks, after galloping days, it will stop for a moment to give men a light on all that the day has meant. And in that magic hour England will speak to Diana and to the others, as she has always spoken. I have strong hopes that, as they ride home together, England at evening will still be able to tell Englishmen why, how, and when, hunting is worth while. England at evening has always been wonderful: she may even, eventually, be able to tell Brass Face that he really *must* pay that subscription.

PLATE XVIII.—GEORGE MEREDITH
ILLUSTRATED.

Diana of the Crossways.


J. D. ARMOUR

# COUNTRY EYES

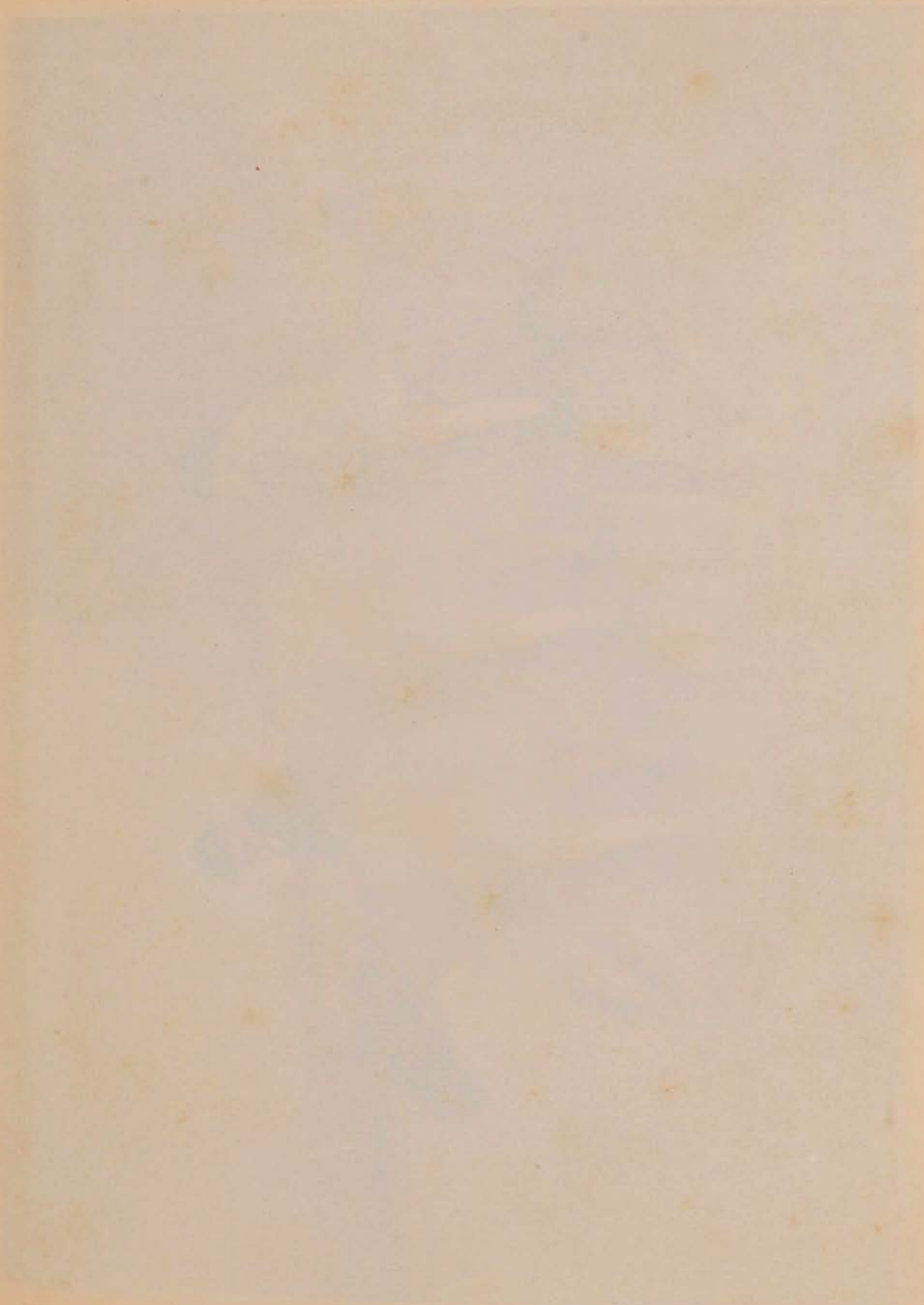
Is " an eye for a country " any longer of the slightest value to a man ? I am not dwelling on the fact that so much of our countryside can no longer, in its original sense, be said to be a sight for sore eyes. It was not a very beautiful saying, anyhow; and to have a lot of sore-eyed people going about the countryside could scarcely be any more desirable than are the eyesores which we find there today. What I am wondering is whether that ability to see through to the other side of a hill, and to recognise at half a glance which part of a fence he should jump, has still the practical value for a man which it did have not so very long ago.

After all, its *most* practical value was in the process of training for war. Quite apart from the fact that, in the words of the old (and admirable) song, " There ain't going to be no war-er," it is a still more solid fact that there is extremely unlikely again to be a war in which an eye for a country will yield any tactical advantage. The blindest of generals can now see over the highest of hills with the help of a nice aeroplane, and the most enterprising of platoon or troop commanders will be able to achieve nothing by his eye-for-a-country if he is again to be stuck in a ditch which runs from one end of a war to another. Even out hunting that eye for a country has little enough value today. It never did have a great deal of value in the galloping countries—where a man can jump almost any fence he pleases just wherever he pleases to jump it; but before these eye-soring days a man could add vastly to the pleasures and successes of his hunting in more creepy-crawling countries if he could rapidly decide upon the best line to ride. Nowadays that ability of rapid decision is becoming a matter of purely academic interest, when nine-tenths of the " best lines " are blocked by chicken houses and such.

As a fact, that ability to pick the right place and line had to be, in a non-flying country, so fully developed if it was to be of any real use, that a man could scarcely expect to possess it until he was so old that he could no longer use it. It was not really an eye for a country at all: it was a knowledge *of* the country, intimate, exhaustive and kept up to date. It could often be an embarrassing possession: many an elderly gentleman has ridden about all day in a state of mild terror, knowing that he was expected by a considerable number of the less enterprising to show them the way if hounds started running. Indeed, that terror has been shared by the majority of us. It is not necessary to be widely credited with a possession of this remarkable " eye " in order to feel that terror. There can be few of us who, when hounds were running comparatively near our own homes, have not known the misery of being appealed to as to *which* is the right way now ? There is—very properly—a sort of disgrace in being unable to supply the answer on the spur of the moment. It is as well, indeed, to supply an answer of some

kind on the spur of the moment, even if it subsequently prove to have been the wrong answer. Should you and your infuriated following be utterly and hopelessly pounded a couple of fields farther on, by a ten-foot park wall, a railway junction or the English Channel—well, you must insist that the thing wasn't there when you last rode that way.

Of course, if you really *are* near your own house, there is no " sort of " disgrace about it at all; it is then quite clearly the very blackest disgrace not to know your own way and other people's. The only question is how far away are we to consider " near." I remember, in the first enthusiasm of a 1914 war and in a certain district of England, the formation of a mounted troop of local guides. There were probably many such, but I remember this one. The idea was that, in the event of invasion, these eye-for-a-country guides with their local knowledge would lead a brigade of cavalry by secret ways and cunning cuts at full gallop to the coast. Arrived there a good hour before



SPORTING FARMER: "Come along, Sam, you ain't frightened by a drop of water! They're running like blazes."

SAM: "Go on, lad, go on. I be looking for a pond that used to be in this field—maybe you'll find 'un."


G. D. ARMOUR.

they could possibly have arrived but for this leading by guides-with-an-eye-for-a-country, the brigade would drive that enemy into the sea some sixty minutes sooner than was laid down in the schedule. That was the idea. I will not seem to scoff at a piece of patriotic service by telling you what happened when the full-dress rehearsal was staged of that invasion-smashing gallop. I will not even describe for you the *quis-custodiet* guiding of the guide who fell to my lot in a humble capacity. I will only say that the General started the day by referring to the guides as a " fine body of men," but he finished the day unable to trust himself to speak about them at all. The fact, of course, was that, in that wooded and much enclosed country, each guide very soon got too far away from his own home for his guiding to have any special value. With the best will in the world to get still farther away from the General, he could achieve it no faster than the next man.

But if eyes for country have lost any practical, commercial, or warlike value—they are still a possession which those who own them would do well to treasure. " *Why don't you get galloping?*" bawls the stranger to the farmer as he splashes his horse past him through the flooded field. " Get galloping, man ! Hounds are running like smoke." " Go on, lad, go on !" shouts the farmer cheerily, and continuing on his stolid way. " I'm lookin' fer a pond used to be in this field. *Maybe you'll find 'un.*" It will seem to that stranger when, in another few strides, he *does* find the pond, that local knowledge has a quite material value; and we all know that a farmer's knowledge of his own farm, field by field, is a thing for which an incoming tenant would be more pleased to pay than he is for other items of his valuation. But the fact remains that knowledge of a country is not a thing which can be bought and sold, and it can scarcely even be given in exchange. That is well. In these hard times if a thing has market value a man may be tempted to sell even that with which he can ill afford to part. Are you so rich that you can afford to give away this knowledge of your home-lands, the learning of years ? Are you so poor in spirit that you would sell it ? That shall be your answer when next you lead the (less enterprising of the) field to the ten-foot wall, the railway junction, or, perhaps, to the English Channel. " Am I so rich—— " you shall begin. And before you get to the not very *à propos* part about not being so poor, your infuriated following, if not their fury, will have melted away.

There is one part of that farmer's answer to the water-splashing stranger which goes somewhat near my heart. " *Used* to be in this field," he says in his joking way. But the things which used to be and no longer *are* seem in danger today of becoming a trifle too numerous to be quite healthy. A pond or two (as in that flooded field) may seem neither here nor there, but the fact is that today there are whole fields of our countryside which used to be fields of our countryside and of which a man can now scarcely say that they are either here or there. He can say that they are the ground floor of the Shakies Picture Palace or the lower end of the dirt track or where they take the money in the greyhound racing; but he cannot say that they are any longer fields of our countryside. Admitting that an eye-for-a-country may have lost its wartime value, it will be a bad business if that " eye " should come to have no value of *any* kind —just because there is no longer any country fit to be seen.

# GOOD DEPARTURE

And when it's all over there is at least no *sadness* of farewell: or, if there is a little sadness, there is no mere gloom. We do our level best to pretend that the ending of a hunting season is a rather dismal business—but what it really comes to is that some of us have to put away for a bit the only clothes in which a man is fit to be seen. Even if we have killed a May fox on that last day, it may still have been a poorish day for us—although, of course, it will have been a much worse day for the May fox—and we are well satisfied to make an ending for a time. If the season never ended we could never have another, and in that sense (or nonsense) we may be said to be beginning the season when we end it. It is not only for His Majesty's collectors of income tax that a new year starts in April, and, for hunting people, that new year will start in April or May with the certainty of New Year hopefulness being longer sustained than it can possibly be by many of His Majesty's collectors. I think, indeed, that the high hopes of His Majesty's collector must often die with the cowslips. Even if we a little exceed those " twenty-one days " which H.M.'s collector will give us in which to raise our howl of protest against this, his hopeful assessment of our wealth—even then, one supposes, the hopes of a collector must generally fade with the bluebells. But *our* hopes are then only just beginning to bloom, and when the May is here in England the hopes of a man as he rides through the English countryside will take the jolliest shapes imaginable. On those May mornings you must not call him early (as you would for cubbing), but you may call him King—a King of the May, riding through the countryside, his Recollectors hard at work remembering for him sound and jolly reasons why hope springs eternal in a horseman's breast. Blackthorn winter is for H.M.'s collectors—but *this* Majesty can only feel (as he rides home in a biting east wind, half-choked with dust) that, if summer comes, another winter is not so very far in front.

And so there is only a little sadness of farewell; for this departure is made, as it were, at a good time of day. That " time of day " factor is terribly important if we would avoid, at parting, something of departure's sadness, but nothing is *here* for that sort of sadness. We must not exaggerate the situation: laughter behind tears is sometimes a brave solution, but to put a sob at the end of a season of hunting gaiety would make the whole thing come unstuck. The end of a season is not to be compared with the end of a living or a loving: it is to be compared with the end of a dining or a dancing.

For six months the fox has led us a dance, and now the dance is over. For a May fox it was a dance of death, but us it leads, at worst, to a next two months of (London) life. Mr. Jorrocks told us never to go to London for a summer season—and he ought to have known, having spent more than half his own summers there—and the fact is that a London season can make stronger demands on our vitality than ever a hunting

season does. As you hobble home at three o'clock in the morning from one of those dinings and dancings, it may be you will sometimes wish *that* season had never ended and this one never begun. But that is as far as regret will take you. The immediate prospect (with never a taxi in sight) may seem a little dismal, but the not-very-remote future is full of pleasant possibilities. And as to the interval, whatever else comes, *this* much at least is certain—that, at a time or times before the happiness of hunting starts again, you yourself will laugh aloud. It may be that the sudden jest will catch you unawares. It may be that, with skill and artifice, the tale will be told to you piece by piece—until, the last touch put to that engaging structure, your bellow of laughter may blow it to bits; and with tears in your eyes you may grope for the bits, to hold them up with cackles. It will happen at least once. I cannot conceive that any man can be of such sombre stuff or keep such dismal company that at no time between hunting seasons will the beauty of a jest seize and shake him until the cackles come. It is a great and comforting thought.

It is, at least, a thought not unsupported by facts. Men seem to die, jokes certainly

perish of senile decay, but laughter lives on. It may be that the note of your laughter (so important a thing in cackling) is a more refined and pleasant note than that of Red William, guffawing in the Forest. It *may* be—but, remembering, again, the way some of us laugh, I shouldn't think there's much in it. I think that the same jolly laughter, the same hoot of joy, and just that whistling, snuffling honk which greets the jest which should *not* have been told—that all these are but echoes of immemorial burblings, and echoes which will ring with much the same note so long as times and seasons last.

And in all this is there nothing to make a fox laugh ? Why, it's enough to make a fox laugh that there should be in England two hundred packs of foxhounds all intent upon his death. *Two hundred packs*, and *all* intent: and yet he survives. That is the way the fox must look at it when he wants to see the joke.

And in so far as hunting is a joke, foxes have the best of that jest. Mr. Armour has shown the fox up a tree; but, as with human beings, foxes when they are " up a tree " are generally there because they have put themselves there; and (as with human beings) they will generally succeed in escaping. If the fox is up a tree he will come down full of life and ready to enjoy life; and, what is more, he will have a sporting chance of doing so. This tree'd fox speaks of us as Shylock spoke; but today the life of a Shylock in England is at least as free as that of the rest of us. Teeth-pulling days for Shylock are of the dimmest past, even the days when Mr. Shylock must call himself McTavish —or Vivian Southumberland of the Sunshine Syndicate (Ltd. or Inc.)—all those days are done. Shylock need not even be Sherlock in the England of today: he may (indeed, by law he almost *must*) draw your golden teeth from you under his own name. And the kindness with which Englishmen have treated Mr. Shylock is, like the loans he makes to them, in part repaid. If still this Shylock Fox must take his pound of flesh, he will take it in the hunting field today with the least possible inconvenience to us—by taking pounds (and pounds) off our superfluous weight. So, in a world where the lives of all men continue to be rather " nasty, short, brutish, and mean," the life of Shylock the Fox will seem to him no nastier than my life, nor, I think, than yours. Yet I will not thank *you* to shorten my life, and I think that Shylock the Fox will show what to some people will seem an absurd lack of gratitude, if the hunting which means life to foxes is ever put to a final ending. " You take my life, when you do take the means whereby I live ": Shylock, merchant of Venice, and Shylock, a fox of England, will have no two opinions about that.

" *There is not one of them but I dote upon his very absence* ": that is honestly spoken by Shylock the Fox, yet that is only to say that Shylock likes a holiday. And Shylock the Fox *gets* a holiday in England today—a longer holiday, every year, than any one of the rest of us gets. We cannot blame a fox if he sometimes feels he will enjoy a holiday—will enjoy getting away for a while even from his friends. But we are none the less his friends. It is time to be riding on out of this page: we have no time to labour out together an exposition of all those reasons why we, who to some people may seem to dissemble our love for Shylock the Fox, are in fact his truest friends. Let us, then, put it another way about and ask who could possibly refuse to be friends with so attractive a reprobate ? It is not we who call him names. Yet he has been called names. Indeed,

PLATE XX.—SHAKESPEARE AT THE END OF THE SEASON.

REYNARD (sol.): "There is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and God grant them a fair departure." (*Merchant of Venice.*)


G. D'ARTHOUR

of all the synonyms for deceit, those which have some foxy twist about them are the most popular form of that abuse, and the most readily accepted as descriptive. Even Fox Fire is held to be " false fire "—a sort of foxphorescence; so it seems that Charles James Fox must be Will-o'-the-Wisp, as well as Shylock and fifty other things and people, rolled into one.

For myself, I do not like these fancy names for fox. There is about them a smack of familiarity rather than of friendliness, and fox cannot really be expected to change his name any more successfully than does your foxy financier. If it be objected that a fox by any other name will keep his scent, then this Mr. Shylock shall still be called only Mus' Reynolds. " Mus' Reynolds "—a good old name of the English countryside, where Mus' Reynolds the Fox gets the respect he has earnt.

" God grant them a good departure," says Mus' Reynolds from his tree, and there is not one of us who will fail to return the compliment. A good departure for Mus' Reynolds ! Men have hoped and schemed for it, at the covertside, all through the season; but now that the season has ended there is a more altruistic note in this, our parting salutation. But still we will not think of it as of a final departure. If there must always, and at the very least, be just a little sadness about the ending of anything pleasant, why, let us be something foxy, and pretend that this thing has never ended at all. So—good hunting to us all, Mus' Reynolds included, and Mus' Reynolds shall live to make many a good departure yet, to the cry of " Gone away !"

THE END.