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# RATCATCHER TO - SCARLET



CECIL  
ALDIN

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*TO*  
**Tony and Ann**



# RATCATCHER TO SCARLET

**CECIL  
ALDIN**



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## P R E F A C E

**I**N the hunting season of 1924-25, an all-children's horse show was held at Craven Lodge, Melton Mowbray ; also in that year a pack of fox-hounds in the West of England had an advertised meet 'for children only.' Both these events were a step in the right direction, a species of cub-hunting for the young entry.

These notes are for that young entry and not for the old hounds, but we may also include the beginner in the noble art of fox-catching, of whatever age, be he youngster, subaltern, millionaire or embryo Jorrocks. Penned for my son-in-law, I leave them in the form in which they were originally written.

To those who have been bred to the game they may be superfluous ; to such lucky boys and girls, all and more than I can tell them has been known from their childhood ; but to the youngsters not so lucky, who want to hunt but feel they do not quite know the 'ropes,' they may give a few hints, and perhaps save them from making some 'howlers' ; the fear of making such howlers being often the cause of many not taking their first plunge into the game of hunting the fox.

To the young entry, and may they enjoy the best of sport !

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H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES  
(WITH THE PYTCHLEY HUNT.)

LETTER I  
A BEGINNING

**M**Y DEAR BOY,—

You say you would like to hunt, and that you have never done so before; you are quite candid and tell me you know nothing about it.

For that reason we must start you at the beginning, and instead of procuring your horses and hunting kit first and your knowledge of the sport afterwards, as so many beginners do, we will endeavour to start you at the bottom of the ladder and gradually lead you up to the great day when you attend your first regular meet of hounds.

Now, to begin at the beginning, we must first go out 'cubbing,' or cub-hunting, and you will then learn among other things how to understand by ear what hounds are doing when in covert, and what the huntsman means by the notes he blows on his horn.

How few of the regular hunting field know anything of this.

Instead of buying some horses at a sale, as you suggest, about which you may know very little, we will purchase for cub-hunting one steady and reliable hunter, probably of a certain age—that is to say eight years old or over, a sound animal as far as I can help you, and one that will carry out in a gentlemanly manner what he is asked to do.

Many people seem to think that the business of cubbing is conducted primarily for them to school their young horses and to get them used to seeing hounds.

Nothing of the sort.

Cub-hunting is conducted for two reasons : firstly, in order to train the young hounds—to blood them—which means letting them hunt, kill, and eat a fox ; and also to teach the young foxes—that is the cubs—to know what a pack of hounds means in their lives, and that it is not advisable for them to hang about in covert if it is possible to get away.

Blooding the young hounds comes first; and for that reason we shall find our huntsman will prefer cubs to be ‘ held up ’ (the methods of which I will explain later) at any rate during the earlier mornings of cub-hunting.

It is advisable, however, to warn you that cub-hunting is, as I have said, a training process for young hounds and cubs, and is in August and September, a private function, for the Master and his staff and a few old and reliable members of his field.

If you were cub-hunting for the first time with a new pack, it would be polite to advise the Master of your intention, and (having previously interviewed the Hon. Sec. and settled your subscription) ask him if he had any objection to your doing so.

You now know why cub-hunting is conducted, and later we shall come to the reasons for holding-up, digging, and other things, and perhaps even for killing as many as three brace in one morning.

As I said before, your horse is a quiet one; you know that it will not kick at hounds, which, however, does not allow you to walk about in the middle of the pack, or not to take the usual precautions, such as turning your horse’s head towards hounds whenever they pass you in a ride in covert, or on the road. Your thong should hang slack when hounds are passing you, slightly away from your horse’s shoulder and towards hounds. But as we are to start at the beginning, I must first give you a hint as to kit, which for cub-hunting is of course totally different from regular hunting, which does not begin until after November 1st.



YOUR THONG WHEN HOUNDS ARE PASSING YOU  
SHOULD HANG SLACK.



Now let us go out for our first morning 'cubbing,' and see what happens.

You have on your rat-catcher—that is, an ordinary short tweed coat, buff or tweed breeches, and you can use up your old regimental field boots for this purpose. For a hat you may wear anything you like except a top hat or straw: a soft felt hat being the most comfortable for a hot morning, instead of what Mr. Lock of St. James's Street calls a coke hat, or bowler. Of course, no hunting stock, but an ordinary collar and tie. Comfort first in cub-hunting.

Now I wonder what you expect on this your first morning? Do you anticipate a mad gallop over fields and fences, as most of your non-hunting friends seem to think you will have? Do you dream over-night of large stiff stake-and-bound fences, and rows of solid posts and rails looming up in front of you every second? If you do, you will be sadly mistaken.

You are beginning at the beginning, remember, and will, I hope, learn to hunt and understand the sport, and not simply to hunt for a ride. I am not going to allow you to come to the opening meet on November 1st and not have the slightest idea what huntsmen and hounds are doing.

You have your kit, your horse, which we have bought together, as two heads are better than one; now let us make a start, having stayed with me the night, and turned in at an early hour in view of the fact that a very early rise will be necessary in the morning.

As a rule the first few weeks of cub-hunting fixtures are not advertised in the papers: in fact, some packs do not advertise them at all. We have therefore found out from the Master, or at the Kennels, where the fixture will be.

Possibly you may think that this first morning will be in some large wood: but I find that this is not so. The fixture is at

daylight, and we start at 5.30, and as it is close home, we will hack over, having first had a substantial meal of coffee and eggs before we start. I mention this because it is necessary to cub-hunting. You will be quite hungry enough to eat a second breakfast at 9 or 10 on your return.

As we jog along at a slow trot, or walk, I will tell you the *modus operandi* of this morning's proceedings.

We are going to a small covert of eight to ten acres, and this litter has been wisely chosen by the Master in order if possible to be sure of giving his young hounds blood on the very first morning they are out. In a big woodland, on a hot morning, as this will soon be when the sun rises, to catch a cub might be more difficult—especially as we noticed at starting hardly any dew on the grass, and as a consequence, if the ground is suffering from want of rain, scent may not be particularly good.

Now we come to the pack jogging along just ahead of us: and what a big pack it is!—35, perhaps 45, couples of hounds, with sterna waving gaily in the air, the huntsman speaking by name to the young hounds as he rides along in the centre of them. Six miles an hour, even less, for not a hound must be out of a trot. Nothing annoys a Master more, or shows up a lazy huntsman so much, as to see him bustling along the road late, and his hounds cantering behind him.

Why do I pull up?

For one reason, you are pressing too close to the second whipper-in; and for another, a hound has stopped. We will wait until he goes on again. The second whipper-in is looking back for him and taps his saddle flap as the hound goes by him to the huntsman.

Hounds must stop sometimes on the road to the meet. Good huntsmen and whippers-in for that reason never hurry them on; and we, the field, should always let hounds go before us.







THIS SURROUNDING THE COVERT IS CALLED  
'HOLDING-UP' CUBS.

I said just now you were pressing too close on the whipper-in. In your keenness your horse's head was almost level with his mare's hindquarters.

Your first mistake.

A whipper-in must have plenty of room; he may have to rate a tail hound—and by 'rate' I do not mean hit—and for that reason he must be behind and close to him. He may have to go from side to side of the road, to get hounds 'over' from on-coming traffic or any other reason. He should therefore have plenty of room, and members of the field should never be nearer than two lengths behind him. Nothing looks worse, or, for that matter, is worse for hounds, than to have the field pressing on the tail of the pack when they are on the road. One of the first mottoes of a huntsman is: 'Give my hounds plenty of room on the road and in the field.'

On the road going to the meet there are lots of things the hounds have to do; don't let us press them on, or frighten shy puppies on this their first morning, perhaps their first experience of having strangers riding behind them.

Arriving at the meet, we say 'Good morning' to our huntsman and staff, and you, as a stranger, I will introduce to the Master.

There is no waiting. As soon as our Master arrives, a word to a keeper, a nod to the huntsman, and hounds move off.

Two fields bring us within sight of the covert we shall draw, and some two hundred yards from this covert a whipper-in and second horseman are sent on to the far side, while the Master asks the 'field' of ten to spread out on the other sides, as this first morning he wants to make sure of a kill.

This surrounding the covert is called holding up.

When the covert is surrounded, the huntsman brings his hounds quietly to within thirty or forty yards of the wood, where

he waits for a few seconds before giving the 'Eleu-in ! Eleu-in !' which tells the old hounds they may dash into covert.

You notice we are all standing a long way from the edge of the wood—50, 60, 100 yards away.

Why ?

In the first place we want to hold-up cubs : that is to say, prevent them from coming out of the wood. For that reason we stand, not close to the edge, but some way out in the centre of fields—which, by-the-by, is just what we must *not* do later on in regular hunting.

If we were close to the covert a cub might pop out and dart away, leaving us behind instead of in front of him. Where we now are, by tapping our saddle flaps with our whips, foxes will see us, even if they come ten or twenty yards out of the wood, and if we ride towards them at a tangent will in all probability dart back in again. That is the reason for standing in the middle of the field and not close to the wood.

That was a cub that came out a moment ago and popped

back ! Did you notice his thin brush and general lanky, half-grown, puppyish look ? An old fox would have had a much thicker and more bushy brush ; but there he goes, the old fox, and you can easily see



A CUB.

the difference. There, at the corner of the covert, between the second whipper-in and ourselves. There is no hesitation about him, for he knows his business ; and now that he hears the cry of hounds, knows that it will be safer for him to clear out as soon as possible.



THE OLD FOX.

You ask why I did not 'holloa' ?

Old foxes are always allowed to go away during cub-hunting. We are only out for cubs. Not a sound from the whipper-in, although he also saw the old fox leave the covert, he made no movement to try to stop him. In fact he effaced himself as much as possible.

There is another cub, a much darker one than the first, and although it seems rather like murder to put him back again, we must harden our hearts to do so, in the interests of the young hounds.

'Aye, aye, aye, Charlie !' cries the whipper-in, as he gallops at a tangent, cracking his whip, and our cub darts back into his home in the wood. 'Tally-ho back !' (Tally-o-bike) he holloas just once, for the huntsman inside to know, and then stands still as before.

Now for a quarter of an hour hounds tow-row round the covert, and one or two young hounds that have not before left

the huntsman's heels begin to take an interest in the cry of the pack.

First one cub and then another is hunted with hardly a check, while our huntsman sits quietly on his horse and lets hounds hunt for themselves.

How they revel in it can be told by the wonderful cry with which they are making the covert re-echo. Round and round they bustle, and as each cub pops his head out, he is turned back by the watchers outside.

A strong litter it is, and I expect the Master will let one go away shortly, for they must be having a fairly good lesson and will soon know that hounds mean a pretty serious thing in *their* lives.

Now a sudden lull in the music of the pack. 'Have they killed one?' you ask. This has not happened, or we should have heard the change in the cry of the pack—from glad screams of delight at the glorious scent, to the savage growl and bay of a kill. We should also have heard the huntsman's 'Who-whoop!' the hunted cub has probably lain down in some thick undergrowth.

'Let him go!' shouts the Master, as a fresh-looking cub darts out to follow the line of the old fox. We all keep perfectly still in the hope that he is bold enough to slip past us, now that he has learnt his lesson, and will make a good fox later in the season. Along the side of the hedge into the ditch, away from the covert he goes; now he has passed the whipper-in and has saved his brush.

Then, while we were all looking at our bold young friend streaking away, a bedraggled cub shows himself, and the whipper-in shouts 'Tally-o-buick!'

In a few moments the huntsman is at the spot with his pack and the gay chorus begins once more. Now you will notice the change in the cry. There is more anger in it, for the old hounds are hot on the cub's brush and must have almost run into him.

For an hour they have been hunting. Once more round the covert, and then we see a cub come out for the last time, with the leading hounds within a few yards of him.

They view him, and in a second all is over.

'Who-whoop!' shouts the huntsman as he jumps off his horse, and the first whipper-in comes galloping to him.

'Lewlew, tear 'im!' 'Who-whoop!' to the young hounds. Shortly taking the dead cub from them for the whipper-in to cut off his mask and brush, while the pack stand round baying.

Then what is left of the cub is thrown high in the air, and the pack 'eat and tear 'im' in earnest.

'Lewlew, tear 'im!'



PULLS AT IT AGAINST HIM, TO MAKE THE YOUNGSTER KEEN.

'Whoop! Split 'im up!' the huntsman calls, as he catches hold of a portion of fox hanging from a young hound's mouth and pulls at it against him, to make the youngster keen.

All this, however, we have seen from a distance, although a few of the field have gone to see the final act in the drama.

On the Master's instructions, in case one of the other cubs should come out, we have not moved. If possible, with such a strong litter, a brace is to be killed here this morning, and we do not want to find an empty covert when hounds are once more put in.

Besides the well-blooding of hounds, the Master's reasons for this may be that a neighbouring farmer's wife is complaining about the losses in her poultry-yard. A couple of masks or more on the D's of the whipper-in's saddle when he passes the farm, will put matters right: and the huntsman will probably call in on his way home and tell them the result.

It may be, however, that the keeper wants a brace killed out of his litter, which he knows is a strong one. In any case, another is to die if possible, and for that reason we should not all leave our posts.

'Tally-o-buick!' comes from the far side, and the old hounds cock their ears, listening, while the huntsman jumps on his horse.

Round to the side from which the holloa has come he gallops, putting his hounds in exactly where the cub has been viewed. In a few seconds the wood resounds once more with the cry of the pack and the tow-row round and round begins again.

They have many more checks this time as scent on the already foiled ground soon brings the old hounds to their noses. Once more there is a sudden lull, and a silence, lasting some minutes. You wonder what has happened.

Probably the hunted cub has lain down again, or crawled into a small rabbit hole. The huntsman knows that the main earth was properly stopped over night, or all the cubs would have disappeared below ground long ago. If the cub has got into a small unstopped rabbit hole, it may take the old hounds some time to find him, and is what is called 'marking him to ground.'



Listen ! I hear the 'Who-whoop wind-'im-in,' which means that they *have* marked him. If it is a small place, the Master will have him out.

It is as I expected. There goes a whipper-in for the terriers and a spade.

I think we may now go into the covert and see what is happening.

Listen ! 'Who-whoop,' it is all over ; hounds have evidently been able to draw him themselves ; the terriers will not be wanted after all. Yes, you can hear by their savage, snarling bay, they have killed him.

As hounds have now killed a brace and the sun is getting hot, the Master has decided to return to kennel.

A good first morning for young hounds and a salutary lesson for the cubs that are left, probably another brace.

On another morning surroundings may be different—a big woodland will probably be tackled, when you may see more of the actual hunting.

Your first morning, and you see you've had no jumping or galloping ; but you also know, when you are soft, how necessary it is for your comfort to have a horse that is a gentleman.

Your non-hunting friends will perhaps be disappointed. You will have no tales of wonderful 'leps' or mad gallops to relate, but you have shaken down into the saddle, had some moments of excitement, seen a brace of foxes killed, and have developed the most healthy appetite you have had for many a day.

Nine o'clock ! and from the look in your face I don't think you will refuse that second breakfast.



## LETTER II

### A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER

**T**HE first thing for the beginner to remember is that a horse is not a machine like a car.

You probably know all about the inside of your car, try also to know a little of the inside and outside of your horse.

In the early days of the war a horse—a really fine ‘lepper’—was issued to a new unit. In the course of my duties I had to make a report on his death, and on making inquiries this was what I found.

Directly the new subalterns had discovered they had a fine jumper a school had been built consisting of five, six or seven formidable looking jumps.

Over these the wretched animal had been taken first by one and then another youthful officer, none of whom, or even the C.O., I fancy, knew the head from the tail of a horse.

Day after day the whole regiment, or at any rate the whole of the officers’ mess, learnt to jump upon his back—until finally the poor wretched animal crashed from sheer exhaustion and broke his back.

They were all very upset about it, and the whole thing was caused through want of knowledge—just imagining a horse was a machine.

That, of course, was an extreme case.

Some years ago, when stag-hunting in France, one of the field was very apt to brag of the number of horses that had dropped dead under him during the season (he used to ride blood weeds, and weighed 15 stone or more), but to kill horses under you is not

sportsmanship, or a sign of being a thruster. To kill a horse even to see the end of a hunt is not a thing to be proud about. To brag about it is worst of all.

For this reason the beginner in the hunting field should have some knowledge of what his horse can do, and should know when a willing horse has had enough.

This knowledge can only be learnt by experience, but it is well to remember that a good hunter is generally a keen fox-catcher, and does not want to stop unless he is 'beat.'

He will be with them if he can, and it is only from unfitness, or being thoroughly blown, that he will want to stop during a hunt; remember that heavy going which would stop you if you were on foot, also affects your horse in a minor degree. After a really gruelling hunt, and if he is really 'cooked,' spur and whip will not help matters much. You had better stop, get off his back for a minute or two, and turn his face to the wind, until he gets his breath again. Then jog slowly home, or follow on quietly.

First of all, however, let us take the pattern most likely to carry the novice safely and well, although it must be remembered that every Adonis in horseflesh is not necessarily a sportsman, nor in hounds is every winner at Peterboro' a fox-catcher.

If, as I hope, you will take a personal interest in your horse, look, when buying, for one with a big, full, kind eye and a sensible brainy-looking head. There was once a print of a hunter entitled 'Brains,' by an artist whose signature appears in this book. That was a horse with what might be called a brainy head.

A long, sloping shoulder, i.e. long and slanting to the point of the shoulder from the top of the shoulder blade.

A short back—well ribbed up, that is, the ribs carried well back towards the hip-bones.

Yet a horse may cover a lot of ground and still have a short,

strong back. Very sloping shoulders, with the dip behind the withers well back, and big quarters will do this on a short-backed horse. This is known as a horse with two good ends. Look for a deep girth—the longer the girths necessary the more heart room your horse will have, and he should not be too high off the ground, i.e. have too much daylight under him.

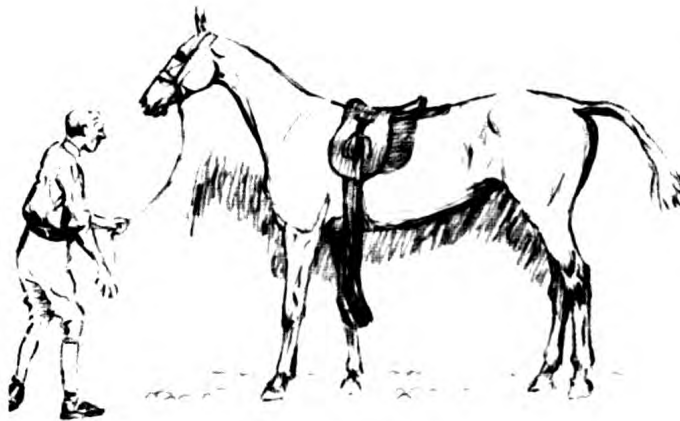
Big, strongly-developed forearms and short from the knee to the pastern joints.

Broad in the second thighs, both in side and rear view, with muscles between the thighs well developed.

Clean big hocks well let down and seen dead side view, a straight plumb-line from point of the hock to back of fetlock joint. Excrescences in this plumb-line generally mean curbs and other troubles.

Your veterinary surgeon will advise you as to feet tendons, wind, sight, and other matters, but the outline of the horse you want should be something on these lines, with a fairly long neck giving what is known as a long rein, always remembering that a *very* long neck may be more liable to wind trouble.

*Sale Yard Tricks.*—Of these their name is legion. You may



A FLAT CATCHER.

buy a horse at a sale with a saddle mark left on his back, and when you get him home you will find the saddle sits four inches in front of the saddle mark. This mark has been

left well back in clipping—in order to give the appearance to a novice of a well-set-back shoulder or to make a long-backed horse look shorter in the back. Only when you put a saddle on his back do you discover that it does not sit where the saddle mark has been left.

Personally, if it is not possible to see a horse gallop, I always note very carefully his walk. A big, long-striding, swinging walk generally means a good mover in all his paces, or at any rate in his gallop, the walk and the gallop being the most important paces in a hunter.

You are not looking for a hackney—and for that reason you should discard any one that shows by his high action, straight shoulders or general conformation a taint of hackney blood.

Then, as to horses with a character. Horses that 'have never given owner a fall,' I am always very doubtful about—probably the owner has never given him a chance of taking a toss. You do occasionally find a hunter that has really gone straight and hard, and has never come down, but they are rare, and known, and your purse will have to be a long one to buy them.

'Very fast and likely to win a point-to-point,' also wants treating with care if you don't want to have your arms pulled out. The shortest descriptions are generally the best.

'A good hunter, fast, best of manners, a good performer over any country—an exceptional timber jumper.'

If the pattern is right, this is worth looking at carefully.

If you want a friend in the stable as well as out, watch the flag (that is the tail) and ears when the groom takes off his rugs, and when you walk up to him.

One thing is perfectly certain, that should you buy in the sale yard, you will always be slightly disappointed when you get your purchase home in your stable.

In the stable your horse will do much better with fresh air

than without it. I mention this as many grooms like to have their stables too hot, as it keeps the shine on horses' coats and is a saving of labour to the man. For all that, in my opinion, a cold but not draughty stable is the best for health. Warmth can be given to the body by warm rugs. A hunter has to stand about in all sorts of weather and a stable-coddled horse is the one that catches the most colds.

Boxes are better than stalls for hunters.

Exercise should be given every morning before breakfast, except on hunting days.

The duration of the exercise should vary with the temperament and condition of the horse. Some horses, if on full corn, want two or even three hours' walking to steady their superfluous spirits, while others of a more sluggish temperament need less.

Walking, however, with occasional slow trotting, will be the only paces your hunter will require from his groom. You yourself will give him on hunting days all the galloping necessary.

*Watering and Feeding.*—Watering comes first as every horseman knows, but the best plan of all is always to have clean water in the horse's box for him to drink as he requires it. If this is done, if he always has water in his box, he will never take long drinks after feeding. The more unfit a horse is the more he drinks and wants. A hunter should not have water offered to him just before hunting.

*Getting up on his back.*—I have seen such terrible exhibitions of this that I am making a special heading of it.

With the beginner, perhaps taking his lesson from the way he has seen film actors on the screen get into the saddle, he may mount in this way :

Usually he forgets to pick up his reins before springing on to his horse, but whether he does so or not he invariably, at the

first time of asking, springs from the ground using his left foot in the stirrup as a lever.

One, two, three—and if he is active he gives spring enough to land him clean over the horse, but if he does not get to the far side he lands in his saddle with the orthodox film actor's crash, at the same time tightly grasping his reins and getting his horse's head nicely in the air.

There are many reasons why it should not be done in this way.

Now for the correct way, which is a glide into the saddle, imagining that you are about to sit on a row of pins, points upward.

Your right leg should just clear these as it comes over the saddle, and the sitting part of your anatomy should rest gently on the seat of the saddle with no undue haste and no sign of a bump.

Try to forget the way you have seen the heroes of the screen mount a horse. You are not a hero yet, so don't try to emulate one.

Besides the saving of exertion in getting into the saddle with a gliding movement another reason might be remembered. A very fresh horse may, and very often does, 'stick his back up,' or buck at a sudden 'bump' on his back. Beware of this or you may be on your back on the ground instead of being on his.





## LETTER III

### WOODLAND HUNTING

**T**HINGS have moved rather fast since my previous letter, and the countryside is rapidly changing its aspect. Instead of masses of green in the foliage and the steaming hot mornings of August and September, the leaf is now rapidly turning yellow, orange and red, and in most cases falling: one night's frost will bring most of it down.

By this time—the second week in October—our huntsman has handled—that is to say, killed—twenty and a-half brace of cubs. The early rising I gave you at first has now come down to a more normal hour, as we do not meet until ten o'clock; and this has been gradually going on, making the hour of meeting later each week since the early part of September. One of the reasons for this being that the sun is now not so hot and the ground is wet from rains instead of being hard and dry, as in the first weeks of cub-hunting when the only moisture was the heavy dews.

As the time has got later for going out, so have we made some gradual small changes in our kit. Now, being only a fortnight to regular hunting, most of us don a bowler hat with our 'rat-catcher,' and many more people are coming out. Where we had a field of eight or ten at the beginning of cub-hunting, we now have thirty or forty; I heard a Master of a fashionable hunt lamenting the other day that he gets one hundred to one hundred and fifty people now at his cubbing meets. No wonder, for this 'private' function, that a Master does not advertise his fixtures

in the papers. In a country like that his troubles in managing a field must begin long before November 1.

To-day we are drawing a big woodland country and we shall go outside. That is to say, we shall not hold cubs up, but allow them to go away.

This is also part of the young hounds' lesson, as they have to be taught to fly to the huntsman's horn when he blows his notes (doubling his horn) for a fox away, as well as to hunt in covert. Then is the time they must learn to get to him as quickly as they can, or discover that they will be left behind and miss all the fun. For hound and horse surely enjoy the sport as much as we do.

In this big woodland we are drawing you will learn a good deal of hunting and woodcraft. It is not a thick covert, with boggy rides in it, but consists of big beechwoods, with not much undergrowth, except thick briars in patches with some big clumps of rhododendrons.

We draw these latter first and follow the hounds through the trees to a three or four acre patch of rhododendrons in a clearing. Here the huntsman stays outside, as the bushes are some eight or ten feet high, very close together, and overgrown and impossible for a horse to walk through. Around us as we stand is a thick growth of brown dying bracken; but this only forms a patch on the map of this big covert.

Presently a hound opens, and we hear the sharp 'Huic! Huic! to Ravager' of the huntsman, as the pack join in the cry and rouse their fox.

What a scent there is inside! Twice round the bushes our fox goes, as he hears the big hounds smashing down the lower branches and undergrowth behind him.

Now you can tell, by the difference in the sound of their cry, that the pack have left the thick covert on the far side. If you listen carefully you will soon find out how easy it is to tell



the difference by ear of hounds running inside or outside a covert. At the same moment we hear the huntsman blow his hounds away.

It is a note, or rather a series of notes, like no other sound he makes on his horn. As far as hounds are concerned—for hounds have *not* an ear for a Galli-Curci—it does not matter whether it is a screech, whistle or discord, but it must be always exactly the same, distinct, and unlike any other sound made on the horn. We, of course, prefer a few clear musical notes, but to hounds it only means, 'Get to your huntsman, for a fox is away,' therefore, to be clear for them it must be exactly the *same* every time a fox *is* away, and never be used at any other time.

In this big woodland, if we want to hear hounds or see them again, we must now slip along or, once out of hearing, in open beechwoods, we shall be 'left.'

The fallen beech-leaves are wet and, with the exception of the patches of dead bracken we may come across, scent will probably be good. If we had seen that these beech-leaves were dry, shrivelled and curled up, then we should probably have had plenty of time, for scent would not have held much. To-day, however, we must not waste time now that they are out of the rhododendrons.

Thank goodness a small patch of bracken brings the pack to their noses and gives us time to get in sight of them

You are frightened you will crash your head against overhanging branches or your knees against unyielding beech-trunks. If you can steer your horse and have him properly bitted, you will not do so. Look well ahead of you, as you do in driving a car; keep your toes facing the way you are going, and don't turn your head from side to side as you pass the trees. One eye for trees and rabbit holes (of which latter there are surprisingly few: I have only had one toss from a rabbit hole in ten years' hunting in these woodlands), and the other eye on hounds, or with the help

of your ears keeping in touch with them. Ride as far as you can from the huntsman, look out for hounds checking and turn with them as they turn. Listen *all* the time. By the sound of their cry you can tell if they are swinging towards you or away from you. Take your own line; don't follow in a file; one tree is as hard as another if you crash into it—one way is as good as another in these woods.

Eyes and ears, especially the latter, are your greatest asset, and in a jabbering crowd you can't hear what hounds are doing.

There! Can you hear now? They have left the covert; the sound is quite different. They are outside one of the clearings, where two fields divide sections of the big woodland.

Now we must get to them quickly and try to see them before they dash into the trees again. We can slip along across these two fields, and be just in time to see the pack crash into covert again on the opposite side.

There are no fences around these fields, and we can enter the trees again anywhere.

Crash into the comparative gloom of inside! This may be an old fox, but by now (late October) all foxes are nearly old foxes, and our Master, although he may return and draw the rhododendrons again for the one or two cubs he left back, will not at present stop hounds.

No harm can be done here, and we can hunt in these trees for miles with only very few cultivated patches.

.....  
Fifteen minutes, and our first real check—and most of the field left behind.

Close by there is a main earth, and you notice our huntsman is holding the pack in that direction now that they have made their own cast.

Don't talk. You notice how quiet the huntsman is : and, perfectly rightly, not a sound on his horn to tell the lost field where he is. That's their funeral. If they can't get through these woods, they should not come out on this side of the country.

The great thing at the moment for the huntsman is to keep his hounds' heads down, and any noise would get them up. You see that farmer near you ? I have never known him get left in this side of the country. He is only riding a rough cob, but he is always there. He's a Devonshire man, uses his eyes and ears, and doesn't chatter. Every man should be silent in the hunting field, and every woman should wear a scold's bridle—a cheery field ; but wouldn't hounds be able to catch foxes !

There you see the main earth is properly stopped with a big bundle of faggots with stout sticks through the centre. Hounds open right up at it—an old fox evidently, he has tried the stopped earth and had to go on.

As hounds are well in blood, the Master decides to return to our original draw for one of the cubs he has left back, and our old fox lives for another day. The field straggle up as we return, and presently we are busy again in the rhododendron covert and a strong, almost full-grown cub pokes his nose out and goes back in again. A 'holloa away' takes hounds to the far side, and once more we have a dart through the big trees. This time, however, it is not a straight-running old fox, but a cub, as he soon swings round in a circle and returns to his home in the rhododendrons.

Scent, you will notice, is now better outside on the wet leaves of the beech-trees than inside the covert, although the rhododendrons are saturated with rain. The dead under-covert of bracken accounts for a good deal of this. Dead bracken never holds a scent, and the ground inside must be very foiled.





THE OLD HOUNDS HAVE THEIR HACKLES UP AS THEY DASH THROUGH THE COVERT.

Now hounds have fresh found their cub and roused him from where he had been lying down.

A few times round, and one or two more short excursions outside, and he soon begins to run short, twisting and turning, a sure sign that his end is near; the huntsman leaving his hounds alone to work it out by themselves.

Outside, however, he keeps level with them as they push their tired fox from one hiding-place to another.

‘Don’t make a noise.’

Don’t holloa if we see him, but saddle-tap him back. Hounds are hunting beautifully, and if we shout and holloa, it will get their heads up. Quietness in huntsman and field is an essential now, if we want to catch him.

Now hounds are racing for blood, and the old hounds have their hackles up as they dash through the covert.

There is venom in their cry—much more so than the merry note as they raced through the woods on their old fox.

Listen! they are right at him. There he is, crawling along the ditch.

‘Who-whoop!’ as they roll him over.

They have hunted and killed him by themselves. Another rattling good morning for the young entry.

On our way home you tell me that you gave your leg a bad twist in the first gallop; you thought you had smashed it.

It was lucky you did not do so, but it is all a lesson and warning for future remembrance. Your mare may turn too sharply at a gate-post or round a tree, and your foot not being parallel with the way you are going, your toe may get caught, the post or tree wrenching your leg round.

Always watch for this sharp turning of a keen horse in following others on the turn among trees or through an open gate. Your horse wanted the guiding hand to stop him cutting





RAISE YOUR LEG ALONG HIS SHOULDER AND NECK.

his corners. If there is a chance of this happening again, immediately raise your leg up and forward along his shoulder and neck so that your foot clears the top of the post or misses the tree. Your horse may knock his hip, but your leg will be saved a possible fracture or torn muscles.

If the opportunity occurs, you should give him a lesson in steering round these tree-stems

when walking or trotting behind hounds going to draw. With a keen horse that has not had much experience of woodland hunting, I always steer him straight at a solid tree and let him give his forehead a bang against the bark at starting. He then knows for himself that there is no 'give' in a tree, and will not run into one again if he can avoid it. Make him bend in and out of these trees at the walk and trot, looking well ahead yourself all the time.

Imagine you are driving a car through them. You would not be gazing down at your wheels; it is well ahead all the time you would be looking. Never hesitate as to which side of a tree you are going, or your horse will hesitate as well and probably smash your knee.

This has been a lesson for you in woodland hunting, a type of country one does not often get in the regular season. But it has taught you to use your ears, and to tell by sound alone what hounds and huntsman are doing. If you do this and keep away from the chatterers at the covert side, you will very seldom be left when hounds go away.

You have also found out that there are many types of country in hunting the fox, and, as in everything else, you must learn to take the rough with the smooth.

A good hunt is a good hunt in any description of country, and a good sportsman will enjoy this type of hunting as well as taking his place over a grass country with flying fences.

Graduate in the provinces, and take your degree in Leicestershire.

Everything comes to him who waits.





## LETTER IV

### 'LEPPING'

**Y**OU say that you have not done much 'lepping,' and ask for a few hunting-field hints.

My answer is that to know what is jumpable and at what pace to take various fences depends a great deal on your horse, as some horses take their fences best at a much faster pace than others; as a general rule you may take it that hunting-field fences are best taken fairly slowly.

It is very difficult to advise you much in a letter. Practical experience, when your faults will be obvious, will teach you much more than written instructions will ever do. But let me take an average hunt in a provincial country and see how, in imagination, you will get on.

Hounds have found and you hear the huntsman doubling his horn, for the fox is away.

Luckily you are not cooped up in a ride, but have stayed outside the covert with a few of the field.

Our fox has gone away on the north side; you are at the south-east corner.

'They're away!' someone says; and off you all pelt, through the gate, alongside of the covert fence.

Now is the time you want to slip along the grass field on this east side. Here you may gallop by people if you can, in a crowded ride you would have had to follow in line.

You glance ahead and notice a rather stout and elderly man is in front of you. If you can, now there is plenty of room, this is the time to go past him. It may be better to have him behind you than in front. But remember, never be in a *bad* hurry.





HE LOOKS LIKE GOING, AND WILL BE A GOOD PILOT.

The man you have your eye on, *if your horse is a good one*, is the long-legged soldier, the ‘Snaffles’ type of horseman. He knows the country, as we are on his shoot. He looks like going, too, and will be a good pilot if you do not ride in his pocket.

Until you have had a little experience it is better not to take a line of your own.

By this time you have passed two or three of the sticky-looking ones. There are only about six or eight ahead of you, and you can for the moment stay where you are.

As you come through the corresponding gate by the side of the covert to the one you came through at starting, you catch sight of the huntsman popping over the first fence. Here your leaders spread out, each man looking at the fence ahead of him and choosing his place as he rides across the field.

It is a nice fence with a small ditch on the take-off side. One place in it is as good as another. With hounds on their right another field away, these first-flight men take it in line.

You follow Number 2, seeing him away from the fence on the far side before you jump it. Your leaders are your teachers, and if you give them plenty of room and before jumping see them safely land, they do not mind you following them. The crime you have to be careful about is riding in their pockets at their fences, with a possible chance of jumping on them if they get a toss.

Your mare jumps well; you were far enough behind your leader not to have had to check her in her stride, but let your hands go more forward as she lands.

I notice you touched her mouth on landing. Give her a little more rein next time. You cannot hold her up by pulling on the reins, and you should not have to hold on by them yourself.

Now look towards hounds as they go out of the next field, and then pick your place in the fence. It certainly looks a

smallish one from a distance. You notice, however, as your pilot goes at it, he squeezes his horse and bustles him along when he is about ten yards from it.

If you are wise, you will do the same, for it is the far side where the danger lies.

He is over, but you saw his horse spread himself, and you now know that a biggish ditch awaits you.

Your mare cocks her ears as she approaches the fence, and with an extra squeeze and kick from you, she flies into the air. It was lucky she did so, as you notice the 'grave' under you as you fly over it. If you had not had a pilot, you might have been in it.

On your right one man is down : his horse jumped short and dropped his hind legs into the ditch. You need not stop, however, just an 'All right?' from you, and a 'Yes, go on,' from the man on the ground, who has not let go of his reins, and you look ahead once more at hounds and the next fence; a post-and-rails into the plough.

As you approach this, you take a pull on your horse, considerably easing your pace as you near the timber. Before jumping, however, you once again glance towards hounds when you are half across the field, and you note, just in time, that they are turning left-handed towards you on the plough. The arable land has brought them to their noses, and the huntsman has checked his horse.

Your pilot is stopping as well. A 'Hold hard!' from the Master on your left, brings both of you to a standstill thirty yards from the timber, and hounds are now making their cast, just where you would have jumped had you gone on.

A few moments' check, and then they hit off the line again. The Master tops the timber, and you know that it is all right to get on yourself. Here, however, you need not follow a pilot : a post-





HOUNDS ARE MAKING THEIR CAST JUST WHERE YOU  
WOULD HAVE JUMPED.



and-rails is almost as good at one spot as another. Take your own place and go slowly at it, and sit tight in case you hit the top rail.

Crash, crash, on each side of you, as top rails fly; but your mare had a foot to spare. She evidently knows how to jump timber, and you may pick the timber in your fences if you wish to.

On the plough you go easy. Ride up a furrow, if possible, in preference to riding across them. Save your horse all you can; remember you never know how long a hunt will last.

Hounds swing towards you, and most of the field are on their right. There will be a squash at the gate, and you will have to keep going a bit more.

As a rule, when you see a gateway ahead of you, which is the best and nearest way out of the field, put on a little more steam. A crowded gateway soon gets congested, and will cause you to lose your place and your pilot, unless you get there early.

Note how *he* slips through such a gateway. When others are ‘jobbing’ at their horses’ mouths, and elbowing and pushing, he just sits still, with his heels only keeping his horse in its place. Then the moment an opening appears, an extra double kick, and he is in it. Once more he sits still; the two or three in front of him are pushing and squeezing: one gets against the gate-post, another’s horse is a sluggish one and not quite quick enough off the mark, and our friend pops through and is away before the others have got disentangled.

Instead of looking out ahead, for the opportunity to get forrard, these others are looking from side to side at their next-door neighbours.

Red-ribboned tails, the sign of the kicker, you must be careful about. People have been known to put this rogue’s badge on a sheep, in order to get more room in these gateway squashes—but you must not take any chances.



A hand behind a rider's back showing the palm towards you, means the same thing. In any case it is not wise to let one horse eat another's tail.

Now we are on the grass again, and hounds are swinging round left-handed; the plough team in the last field evidently having turned the fox and caused a check.

You bend left-handed as hounds turn, taking three or four more fences at a nice hunting pace, as the pack have settled down and are now running hard again.

Turn your head sideways to the wind and you can hear their cry. They are one field away from you, running beautifully.

You are very pleased with yourself, and think how easy it is on a good horse, as you flip gaily over a stake and bound without a pilot. Your elation, however, is shortlived.

'Wheat! 'Ware wheat!' shouts the Master on your right, and you look back to find yourself alone in your glory in the middle of a field of wheat.



'COME OFF THE WHEAT!'

'Come off the wheat and ride the headland!' shouts the Master; and you ignominiously return to take a back seat in the single-file crowd riding along the hedgerow.

Seeds, wheat, beans and roots should not be ridden over except by the hunt servants. The first generally looks like a thick layer of young clover, the second may be sown ground, i.e. having had the roller or harrow over it, and not like freshly ploughed land in big furrows; or it may be very young wheat, like blades of grass in rows.

Beans are quite distinctive, in straight rows, and if you have once seen a field of young beans, you will never forget them, the rows being very strongly defined.

Roots. Make a point of going round the headland if you possibly can; and as a rule the headland is very little farther.

So you see there are lots of things besides galloping and jumping that you have to think of out hunting.

Always an eye on hounds if they are within sight. Always an ear to listen. If you are driving a car at a dangerous corner, you often anticipate in thought a possible flock of sheep round it. In the same way at a fence you cannot see over, always be prepared for beans, wheat, seeds or roots after landing. It saves time, and a rating from the Master in the end.

When safely over, one glance at your feet will tell you the crop. If it is any of these, shout back, 'Seeds,' or 'Beans,' or whatever it may be, and turn immediately up the headland.

To all growing crops you do more damage in wet weather than in dry.

Hounds are running on, and you are a long way behind in the centre of the crowd, none of whom is trying to listen to hounds or catch a glimpse of them. Their hunting is simply a procession one behind the other, with occasional waits at well-worn gaps in fences.

Pluck up heart and don't let this be your lot for long.

Here we are—one at a time, at the next fence where a largish gap has already been made.

Now it will be possible on that mare of yours to make up a bit of ground. Look out for another place as you come towards the crowd waiting their turn. Don't go too close to them.

There it is—what you want, I can see it from here. A bit of timber put in to repair an old gap; stiffish, but jumpable, as it has a good take-off; and what's a toss to you, at your age, in exchange for the chance of seeing hounds once more?

Jorrocks was all wrong when he said 'A toss is a hawful thing'; it's nothing nine times out of ten, and just gives the spice to the sport.

You've pulled well away from the crowd. Take your place fair and square, and not on the slant. Keep her head straight, and let her feel you mean going over and—she takes it like a bird.

One more field, and you will be within sight of the leaders again.

Now you look up and down the far hedge: a widish ditch and bank with a hedge on top. Take the stile, a small but stiff one, in the corner; especially as that is the direction you can hear hounds are running, although the rest of the crowd are scampering to a gap the opposite way.

Once over this, you see your original pilot just jumping out of the next field, and get a glimpse of the huntsman a field or so away. But you have some plough to negotiate, so don't press your mare. Ride up that nice wet furrow. It's the longest way round, but the shortest way there, especially as it takes you to the gate in the corner a trifle nearer hounds.

As you near this, you see the top bar is broken and a not too greasy take-off. Have a go, although you don't see many gates

jumped nowadays in the hunting field. If you do hit that top bar, it won't turn you over, and it's hardly worth while getting down to untwist the wire the gate is latched up with. All of which you note as you pull your mare into a slow canter as you approach. If it is just a simple latch that you could undo from your horse, do not risk smashing a gate.

'Beautiful!' as with a grunt and hunch with her hind-quarters she clears the timber.

You are beginning to get your self-respect back again after the Master's rating.

Once more as you come to the leaders, you hear the warning: 'Hold hard!' and you pull your horse to a dead standstill.

Don't chatter to the man next to you or tell him all your troubles.

See how quiet the huntsman is. Not a sound as he lets hounds make their own cast. The slightest noise now would get their heads up.

A minute of valuable time and he catches hold of them and quietly makes his cast down wind in the direction of the covert we can see a field or two away.

Under the hedge hounds speak to it again, and their cry has more venom in it. Our tired fox has evidently waited here a moment or two, and hounds are closer to him.

There he goes towards the covert, but don't say a word, for the keen-eyed huntsman has also seen him.

With a cheer to his hounds, he tops the fence and gallops to where the fox has popped through the covert hedge.

There is no doubt about this wood (the venue of our first cubbing fixture) being his point now, as we know from cub-hunting that it holds a main earth.

Now hounds are racing with a screaming cry as they crash over the low fence surrounding the covert.

The huntsman signs to the whipper-in, who gallops his hardest outside to the top end of the wood.

We keep level with hounds, also on the outside, with the Master as our leader.

We hear a momentary check inside as they get to the stopped earth, but our huntsman makes a forward semi-circular cast round it, and at the same moment we hear a 'Holloa away!' from the forward whipper-in.

In a few moments hounds, huntsman and ourselves are at this point, where we see the whipper-in, hat in air, at a gap in the adjoining field, where hounds immediately pick up the line up the ditch.

Hard up this they race, some in it, some on either side; but the cry is a cry for blood, as with a breaking of branches and undergrowth and a snarl of hate, they fall over each other as they run into their fox.

'Who-whoop!' from the huntsman as he leaps from his horse, and another hunt is finished.

Dismount now and ease your horse, as it will probably be ten minutes before they draw again.

You have learnt something of crops you must not ride over; the pace to take some fences; the people to avoid; the people to follow; and these latter you will find, i.e. those who cut out the work, will always be the same after a field or two, however bad a start they may get. Others come after them in various degrees of boldness, until the last contingent just scramble through well-worn gaps.

You must remember, however, that some of those worn-gap people were once, notwithstanding their now portly figures, first flighters; and that there are also many men to-day out fox-hunting who should only go drag-hunting. The pleasure of fox-hunting proper is an unknown quantity to them, for in the words of the old tag, they hunt to ride, and do not ride to hunt.

IS IT JUMPABLE?

Out hunting to-day a horse in front of me suddenly refused at what looked like a small bit of timber. Round came the horse and rider and I recognized one of my protégés. 'It's jumpable, isn't it?' was excitedly snapped at me as I came up beside him.

Now this particular place was jumpable, but *not* the place to choose, and I had better describe it.

Hounds were running: my young friend was among the first few, and those in front of him had gone a little way left-handed. We had come through a covert and this was the boundary fence to it. As far as you could see just in front of him was a small rail with a fair drop on the landing side. When you got right up to the rail, however, a big six-foot-wide ditch cut down three or four feet yawned below you.

The timber only went about ten yards and then a small straggling fence, the same height, on the take-off bank carried on the covert boundary. This, however, was not all; across the ditch at the place where my friend's horse had refused was a very solid two-foot wide plank which had evidently been put there to give keepers access



MORE SENSE THAN THE RIDER.



to the wood. Exactly over this baulk of timber my protégé proposed to take this jump from a standstill.

Needless to say I said 'No!' to his query and went a few yards to the left where the others had gone, when we both got safely over the fence and ditch. Had we been galloping at the place it would have been a fair one, but having to come out of the trees at practically a walk, it was hardly a fair thing to ask a moderate horse to take, especially when a much easier place, at which point the huntsman and Master had already taken it, was possible a few yards away. Luckily for my friend his mare had more knowledge than he had and refused it. It is quite possible had she attempted it from a standstill she would have tried to land on the plank, or at any rate might have dropped her hind legs on it with an awkward roll over into the deep ditch below as the result.

Swinging across a field at a gallop, yes, it was certainly a jumpable place, but not a place to take from a standing take-off.

And there are lots of places like this, quite jumpable if your horse is galloping, but unjumpable, or at any rate unwise to attempt, from a cramped take-off.

When a horse is extended almost any reasonably wide ditch is possible.

What is jumpable and what is not depends on whether your horse goes up to it at a gallop, canter, or walk. Some exceptional hunters can clear this sort of place at a very slow pace, but they are rare.

Timber, as I have said before, should always be taken slowly, at a slow canter. For that reason *solid* timber of any appreciable height is dangerous to attempt if it has a big ditch on the take-off or landing side. With a level take-off, most good hunters will clear really high timber—a ditch in front is generally the







LANDS WELL INTO THE NEXT FIELD.

undoing of many. In all these cases I am talking only of the ordinary hunter and not the exceptional horse.

A very good maxim of the hunting field is only to jump solid timber when it is necessary; as a rule a more or less hairy place can be found quite close, and should be chosen in preference, at any rate, to a bad take-off at timber; for the take-off is the thing that gets you over or puts you down. It is astonishing how seldom a drop fence—even when on foot it looks like a very big drop—brings a horse down.

Never give up hope even with drop fences which, when you are in the air, give you the impression that you will never touch mother earth on the back of your steed again.

Sit well back and remember that a horse hardly ever turns a complete somersault at a drop. However deep the drop he somehow always manages to get his head and forehead in front, although he may seem in an almost perpendicular position as he brings you to the ground. Some horses 'pitch' more than others at a big place, but very few ever somersault except over solid timber. The toss, if toss you get, is usually when your mount slithers on his chest or side, or you may be jumped off when he pecks on landing.

In the hunting field when hounds are running, you may meet every conceivable type of fence, with the exception of those known as the obstacles of the show ring.

The Blackmore Vale banks, the cut-and-laid of Warwickshire, the Whaddon doubles, bullfinches, and uncut fences, the big bottoms of the Grafton, the flying fences of Leicestershire, or the hedge and ditch of many provincial countries, all are fair places for a horse to negotiate, but many want a hunter with brains to do so.

The best hunter of all is the one who cocks his ears and makes a big arc over his fences—a big lepper—and lands well

into the next field. A sticky jumper is not a pleasant mount. Stiles, especially if very solid looking, are the safest type of timber to jump.

The more solid the timber the more careful most horses will be to clear it, but a ditch on the landing or take-off of timber always wants a particularly clever hunter. Don't jump timber up-hill out of sticky ground or plough if it can be avoided, and if taking timber from a downhill take-off, take it even slower than usual or your horse will get too close under it.

Always sit tight over timber—a hard rap or smashed top-rail may not bring your horse down, but it may unseat you.

If it can be avoided you should never leave the saddle



SIT TIGHT OVER TIMBER.

yourself unless your horse comes down. In nine out of ten of hunting field tosses the horse doesn't fall.

The wise man never jumps timber if a fair brush fence is available. At water, your heart should be over long before your horse. By the feel of your legs your horse should not have the slightest doubt about your intention of going over—or in, i.e. that if he doesn't do his best you mean driving him in. A

suggestion of hesitation on your part conveys itself immediately to your mount—your heart therefore must be in or over long before you are, if you mean to have a cut at it at all.

Half measures—on the theory of he who hesitates is lost—are fatal.

Gallop at water.

Gallop at a low fence in front of water.

It's better to take an honourable toss than to have a faint heart.

Water is the only thing you should take really fast.

Jumping from tarmac or on to a tarmac road is dangerous, the latter should never be undertaken if a gate or any other way out is possible; landing on to a hard macadam road, for your horse's legs' sake, should be done as seldom as possible.

In an awkward place such as a Buckinghamshire double go very slowly and give your horse his head. In your fright by clutching at his head you often stop him seeing what is in front of him.

The worst hunter will generally get safely round an enclosed school if he has no one on his back clutching at his head. Never mind about yourself, let the horse see what he has to do, and in nine cases out of ten he will get you safely through if you can sit on him.

Don't believe in what the stable-man calls 'lifting' a horse in the hunting field, for it generally means pulling him down.

Use your legs as much as you like but not your mutton fists. A horse should almost be able to be ridden across country by legs alone. A loose horse hardly ever takes a toss even over gates.

Don't pull at your horse and he won't pull at you. If you have to check him, think all the time how soon you can drop your hands to him, i.e. let your reins hang loosely on his neck.



Hack along the road sometimes with your reins dangling on your horse's withers, not touched by your hands. Teach him to stop and walk at a word from you.

Teach him to trot slowly and canter slowly without feeling his mouth at all.

Reins are not one of the 'aids' to keep you in the saddle, they are only there to help you to guide and stop your horse.

Red flags or red boards in a fence mean that it has wire in it and has been so marked by the hunt.

Horses can very easily be taught to safely jump three-foot-six-inch wire netting or even small iron railings, but the first schooling should always be done at home.

The procedure of this is very simple.

Get a few yards of stout wire and peg it very *tightly* stretched in your paddock, one foot from the ground. Lead your horse up to it, step over yourself and let him follow you. After two or three times he will possibly get a little careless and one leg will hit it. He will then find out there is no 'give' in wire. Bandage him up, the bandages to go right below as well as above the fetlocks, and raise your wire gradually each day from eighteen inches to three feet.

Lead him up to it, jump it yourself and let him follow you over. Do this four or five times and probably once he will touch it. He finds out no 'give' again, and his leg gets a shaking: when he never touches it gradually increase the height to three feet or three feet six inches. About once a fortnight have him led over it bandaged, and have wire netting placed below the strand of wire. When he does this every time without touching it you are safe to let him jump three-foot wire netting out hunting.

The great point is that in teaching him the initial stages, the wire must be so strong and so firmly fixed that nothing will make it 'give' or break.

In almost the same way he can be taught to jump low iron railing.

First an iron bar fixed as the wire is fixed, one foot high, gradually raising it to two and three or even four bars, until he jumps it safely every time.

Any quiet hunter will learn to jump this safely after a few lessons if trained in this way.

When hunting a pack of harriers some years ago I had an amusing experience. Hounds were running through some beechwoods, and I was riding a little horse I had brought from France. He had been schooled to jump wire, as these beechwoods sometimes had wire-netted enclosures which a hare would easily jump over.



I SUDDENLY FELT MYSELF LIFTED IN THE AIR.

As I rode through the big beech trees I saw ahead of me a shooting 'stop' of string tied from tree to tree, with coloured paper knotted on it every few yards. It was only very thin string, about the height of my horse's chest. Expecting to gallop straight through it, I was looking at hounds at the moment of impact, when I suddenly felt myself lifted in the air and flying through space, as if over a jump. What happened was that my horse, left to himself, saw it, took it for wire, and jumped it, nearly unseating his totally unprepared master.

It is of course unnecessary to teach the ordinary hunter in a good hunting country to jump trick jumps, for I think we may call them that, as he is not likely at any time to meet them.

In some provincial countries it is different, some have a large proportion of wire netting enclosures, and a horse able to safely jump these obstacles is a very useful hunter.

#### 'TOSSES'

So far you haven't had any, but to-day you are 'for it,' and you conjure up visions of enormous jumps, such as one sees at Olympia, or even bigger and higher than those which we sometimes see in so-called hunting pictures, where the hounds are generally galloping underneath or behind the horses.

Talking of big 'leps,' do not imagine that every horse you see winning prizes at horse shows is a fine hunter.

In nine cases out of ten, far from it.

Show jumping is an art in itself, and a good show jumper seldom makes a really good hunter.

The worst season for tosses I ever had was when I unwisely bought a show jumper who could clear five feet of timber.

Given a perfect take-off and landing he was useful, but a ditch in front or on landing generally brought him down and, as he jumped so big, usually a crumpler. Hounds also very

often distracted him, and he sadly missed the band and the crowd round the ring. A horse jumping by the side of him upset him and made him think he was out of his turn.

My advice to the novice is, never buy a show jumper for hunting.

There are exceptions, however, to every rule.

The much-discussed question of the best seat for 'lepping' is another difficult point.

Some of the best men sit right forward, and on the other hand those equally good well back over their fences. The thing to be avoided in the ordinary horseman is over-exaggeration of either.

A medium stirrup-leather and fair give-and-take; that is, keeping your centre of gravity in the right position when taking off and landing is the soundest principle to go on.

A good dancer of to-day should make a good horseman, as to dance well he must have a sense of balance, and also, might I say, rhythm. (I see some of my hunting friends smile, but balance and rhythm with your horse are what you require.)

Now for the tosses, which will be more amusing for me, but perhaps more exciting for you.

First of all let me tell you they come very suddenly, and generally when you least expect them.

Now that post-and-rail; it is solid, but very low, and any timber jumper could jump it with ease.

Go on then. . . . Don't leave go of your reins, he won't tread on you when you are on the ground if he can help it; no horse ever will if he can possibly avoid treading on soft flesh, or our steeplechase jockeys would never live a week in the jumping season.

'Now why did the mare do that?' you ask. It was fairly obvious. First of all you went too fast at it, not noticing the





DON'T LEAVE GO OF YOUR REINS.

poached and slippery take-off where the sheep have been going to the trough close to it to drink. A hard surface underneath and slippery mud on top. The very worst take-off for timber that won't break, and should only be taken at a very slow canter or trot. Your mare slipped on the grease just as she was about to take off, slid up to the rails, got too close, tried to rise at them too late, and the top bar not breaking turned her over and you out.

Moral for Toss No. 1, always look at your take-off.

Which, by the by, is sound advice for every kind of fence.

It is not correct, however, to 'lark' over farmers' fences, unless hounds are running; solid timber like that which you

could not break or do any harm to we will forgive this time, but we had better join hounds and see how you get on over fair hunting fences while a run is in progress.

They are just putting into the gorse, generally a sure find, and we shall be away very shortly with a trappy line of country before us. They’ve found, but he’s not away yet; don’t trot about or you may head him.

Those people ahead are doing entirely wrong, madly galloping down the side of the gorse, because one of them thought he heard hounds.

As I told you, they’ve headed the fox, just as he was about to break, and are now getting well rated by the Master.

Now listen, the whipper-in is holloaing him away behind us. Now gallop to where he is if you like, but do not go in front of hounds if they are not out of covert before you. You are not out to catch the fox; we keep hounds for that purpose.

‘I sound as if I had a liver this morning, do I?’

Not at all. I’m going to have a cheery time, showing you what a small matter a toss really is.

Cheerio and bye-bye!

That fence in the bottom was nicely taken; the right pace, you had a nice feel on your horse’s mouth, and took it at the easiest place, making up your mind where to take it directly you came through the gorse handgate.

Always settle your place out of a field as soon as you jump into it!

A rider who swerves about at his fences is a danger to everyone, and one who walks up and down the side of a fence should be soundly cursed.

Ahead of you, you have something to cause you to think! There seems to be only one place really jumpable in this overgrown uncut obstacle, and that is three hundred yards or more



LET HIM KNOW YOU MEAN  
GETTING OVER.

from you on your left, and hounds are swinging right-handed nearer you.

Yes, I think you have done the right thing; you are going for that timber-repaired gap on your right, the others are all turning back and waiting their turn at the other place.

Get your horse at right angles to it, and now let him know, toss or no toss, you mean getting over.

The take-off's good, and the timber is high but not unbreakable; a fair pace now, or you won't clear the ditch on the far side.

Crash goes the top bar and your mare is thrown off her balance; the small ditch on the far side does the rest, but you are over, although on the ground.

Don't be too slow now in getting up; you really only stepped off the saddle on to the ground, your mare dropped her hind legs in the ditch and landed on her stomach and side. Fling the reins back over her head; a hold of the iron, almost before she has got on her legs, and you are up again and away, long before a third of the others have scrambled through the fence higher up. It's nothing compared to being collared low at Rugby and being brought down on your shoulder; a toss like that doesn't even shake you.

Never think anything of that, it's all part of the day's hunting—the mustard in the ham sandwich—and the quicker you mount again the less ground you will lose.

The best school for thinking nothing of tosses is a good course of 'rigger.' To a three-quarter like yourself, it must be child's-play.

Take your falls quickly; don't hang about wondering if you are hurt, while others are getting along.

The only thing you've got to think of is that you are on the right side of the fence; and the quicker you get into the saddle again the more fun you'll have.

Make nothing of it, and the field will take you for a 'hard' man.

Now you are really pleased with yourself—and quite rightly—your mare knows you mean going over whatever you put her at, and jumps well with you during the rest of the hunt.

She jumped the brook well, you gave her the feel that you intended going in or over and got plenty of pace on to clear it.

The man on your right jumped a bit short, and his horse came down on the far bank, but did not roll over.

You notice he never really left his horse, but just stood across him and came up on his back, slipping his feet into the irons as soon as his horse was safely up.

You don't often see this done in the hunting field; but with a slight toss, a freshish horse, and a light-weight rider, it is quite an easy thing to do; but let your horse have his head, and sit quite still if he scrambles about as he rises.

A trappy place you had to-day was the biggish bank with the



SHE CAME FROM THE BLACKMORE VALE.

fence atop; big for an English country, but quite ordinary for an Irish bank, and I could see that this rather puzzled you. You were not quite sure how to take it, or whether it was jumpable or not, at any rate at the place you had decided to take it at, where a gap in the growers on top showed that your horse could get through.

Your mare being an Irish-bred mare knew all about it; also she came from the Blackmore Vale country; you more or less left it to her, and this is how she took it.

Notwithstanding your vigorous kicks, she eased up as she approached the ditch in front of her, springing off her hocks straight on to the top of the bank and broken fence, with her ears cocked forward ready for the Irish ditch on the landing side.

This, however, was not as bad as she expected, and with her front legs a foot or two down the slope on the far side, she hunched up her quarters and shot herself clear of the ditch below her, as a good and clever hunter should do.

You were merely a passenger, and knew nothing of how it should be done, but you now understand the *modus operandi* of a clever horse at a bank.

A spring on to the bank—a pause—and a spring away on the far side, in each case what is known as jumping off her hocks, and she jumped it in the best Irish hunter style.

It is always best if you are not sure, to leave it to your horse, if it is a sensible one.

I think to-day you came across the first wire-warning board you had met in a fence—a red cross-piece nailed to an upright topping the fence. This is sometimes a small red flag, but in either case always turn away—it means danger and wire.

If you see a man ride at a fence in front of you and suddenly stop, holding up his hand above his head, pull up, for that also

means danger; moreover, he generally calls back ‘’ware wire,’ a thin strand of which he may have seen.

He may have jumped and cleared it as he went over; but the hand up and a shout back generally means wire.

No sensible man who has ever had a toss in wire would then attempt to follow him.

In a country where you know there is a certain amount of wire—and very few countries are entirely free from it now—it is often advisable to carry a pair of small wire nippers on your saddle.

I hate to see a saddle lumbered up with a whole collection of flasks, sandwich cases and what-nots—but a pair of wire nippers sometimes saves a valuable horse from having to be destroyed, or remaining useless for the rest of the season.

Better than a sandwich case on your saddle, a few ginger nuts or pieces of hunting chocolate in your pocket, and as a matter of fact the less you drink until after hunting is over the better.



## LETTER V

### RED-LETTER RULES

**N**OT really a dull letter, although you may be anxious to get on to fox-hunting itself. These notes are collected together to keep in your mind when out hunting, and the first of these is—

*Never crab your Master or huntsman.*

Many of the field you meet will do it, but for all that it is not the thing to do. How much do you, or any other member of the field, know of the minor worries of running a pack of hounds smoothly and successfully? You may think it a great pity that the best riding country is not more often drawn, and “Why are we given such a dose of woodland?” is often heard. You, however, uphold the decisions of your C.O.

In very wet weather the farming interests must be studied by a Master more than in a dry season.

One day we will *walk* across soaked land after 200 horses have galloped over it. You will then see for yourself the result.

In very wet weather ride the headlands, i.e. as close to the hedges as you can.

*Never jump fences unless hounds are running.*

This is a maxim that should be kept to the letter, whatever you may see others doing.

*Your* horse may clear a fence so jumped, but the example is bad, and the horse following you may smash a rail and so damage the fence.

The farmer does not mind a smashed rail or flattened fence so much if hounds are hunting a fox, but he *does* object to see his







DON'T TALK TO A WHIPPER-IN WHO IS  
WATCHING A RIDE.

fences smashed when there is no hurry and hounds are only going to draw, or leaving a blank covert. There is nothing brave in jumping a fence at such a time.

It's the exhibition of an ass, and shows want of knowledge of the rules of the game. When hounds are really running, jump what you fancy. That's the time to show your bravery.

*Never follow the huntsman round when he is making his cast.*

Then is the time to stand still, keep your mouth shut, and your eyes open. You should *see* when hounds hit off the line again as soon as the huntsman does.

Not one in twenty of the field ever see this: their hunting consists of just galloping and jumping when other horses go galloping and jumping.

A huntsman wants quietness when making his cast. A raucous laugh, a sudden high-pitched voice, may get hounds' heads up, when he is doing all he can to keep them down, nosing for the scent of his fox. Therefore don't chatter at a check.

The steam from hot horses obliterates scent for hounds. Give the pack plenty of room at a check and *stand still*.

*At a check don't tell your neighbour where you think the fox has gone.*

You are probably wrong and the huntsman knows best.

*Don't talk to a whipper-in, or anyone else who is watching a ride.*

Very few of us can carry on a conversation without turning our heads. If the watcher does this, the fox is over, unseen.

*Don't grumble on a bad scenting day.*

An official 'grouser' is an abhorrent thing—unfortunately every hunt has one.

*Don't let go of a swinging gate until the man or woman behind you is ready to catch it.*

'Gate, gentlemen, please,' is the right expression to call to a laggard.

*Don't mind getting off your horse's back when you can.*

The more you do this the longer and better will he carry you.

*Never tell your neighbour about the big places you have just jumped.*

*He'll have seen you if you have, and after all, your horse did it.*

*Don't holloa a fox away unless it is the only way to let the huntsman know.*

If he is within sight hold your hat up at arm's length above your head, *exactly at the spot you last saw the fox*, and your horse's head in the direction he has gone.

Always remember that there is often more than one fox on the move when drawing a covert.

As soon as the huntsman sees you, go as quickly as you can to the exact spot *where you last saw the fox (not where you think he may have gone)* and wave your hat in the direction he has gone; never cheer or holloa when doing this. The huntsman is there to do all that if necessary.

*Always make room for hounds, Master, huntsman, or whips to pass you in a narrow ride or lane.*

Bear in mind you cannot get out of their way too quickly.

*Never turn your horse's tail towards hounds*, when they pass you on a road or ride, spin him round sharply so that he faces them. Very few horses kick with their front legs.

*When hounds kill, keep your horse well away.*

The smell of blood when the pack are breaking up a fox will often make the quietest horse kick, or strike at hounds with its forelegs.

*Don't hesitate to jump off and open a gate for the Master or huntsman if the opportunity arises.*

*Always wait for a man to remount, who has got down to open a gate, before going on.*

*Don't hunt with a whip with no thong to it.*

*Don't put your spurs on upside down, or forget to slip your garters between two buttons of your breeches; see that the buckles (with no superfluous strap-end dangling) keep dead in the centre of your knee.*

Garter buckles, if the strap is between two buttons, will *not* slip round your leg.

The smaller the hunting stock the smarter.

*Don't come out hunting in ratcatcher in the regular season.*

It's a very poor compliment to the Master.

*Don't imagine the hounds are of very little value.*

To the Master one hound is of much more value than you and your 300-guineas hunter combined.

*Don't ride horses you cannot completely manage, or horses that are liable to kick at others.*

Even a red ribbon in the tail or hand behind your back does not exonerate you from blame if you break a child's or woman's leg.

Don't forget in parks that there are often rabbit holes *under* trees, and that a toss on the flat is the worst of all.

Two separate sandwiches in grease-paper (no string) in the pocket of your waistcoat are easier to get at than a great dangling sandwich case on your saddle. Your second horseman can be plastered over with flasks and sandwich cases if you wish it.

Don't carry them yourself.

The proper time to eat and drink is before and after hunting.

*Don't say, 'There he goes!' if a big jack hare suddenly leaves the covert.*

*Don't annoy the Master by trying to talk to him: he has lots of things to think of in the hunting field and if he wants you he'll call you.*

*Don't forget in the field a Master can never be wrong—so take your rating like a gentleman and apologize in two words. It shows you know the game.*



DON'T SAY, 'THERE HE GOES!'

*Never ride across seeds, beans, wheat, or roots; on these, always ride the headlands.*

Don't forget, that on wet plough a puddle furrow (i.e. with water standing in it) is easiest for your horse, and the more you save your horse the more likely you will be to see the end of a hunt.

Don't forget to have some loose shillings in the ticket-pocket of your coat. Someone may hold your horse or open a gate for you. A coat ticket-pocket is easily got at.

*Don't hang about coffee houses when hunting is finished—jog home at a walk and slow trot.*

If your horse is very tired with a long way home, walk by his side for a mile. It will do you good and ease him.

For bad exhaustion a pint or two of beer for a horse is an

excellent pick-me-up if he is really 'beat.' A loaf of bread will do him no harm if he will eat it. You can almost always get these if nothing else is available.

#### A HUNTING VOCABULARY

**THE MASTER.**—Your commanding officer. One who is always right and who must always be obeyed.

**HOUNDS.**—Hounds must not be spoken of as dogs, but as hounds. A hound should have a long clean neck, good sloping shoulders, and straight forelegs seen from the front or side; he should be short in the pastern joint, with big bone down to feet, what is known as bone carried 'well down,' ribs carried well back and quarters with muscles standing out, as on a greyhound. He has a stern and not a tail. This is set on high and carried gaily over his back, but not curling over it. A curly stern is a fault, but need not necessarily affect his hunting capabilities.

Hounds are not fed on the morning of the day they go hunting: they have nothing on that day until they return to kennel. On the other hand, a hunter has a full feed before he sets out for a day's hunting.

Male hounds are known as Dog hounds and females as Bitches.

We go out hunting with (1) a mixed pack, (2) the dog pack, or (3) the bitch pack, sometimes called the 'Ladies.' The pack of hounds is the most important and valuable unit of all the assembly at the meet. Never forget this. For your horse to damage one hound is an unforgivable sin.

**HUNTSMAN.**—The pictorial press usually describe everyone out hunting as a huntsman.

This is not so.



It is an almost everyday occurrence to see under a portrait in the daily papers, Lord — or Mr. A. as 'huntsman,' when they have never hunted hounds in their lives.

There is only *one* huntsman, the man who hunts the hounds, be he Master, or professional huntsman. If professional, he takes his instructions from the Master. The Master, however, does not interfere with him when he is actually hunting his fox. If he has anything to say about this to the huntsman he will do so when at home.

Other hunt servants 'sir' the professional huntsman. With his staff, at the kennels, and in the field, he is the major, under his colonel, the Master. Hunt servants raise their hats to you when you say 'Good morning' to them. They never touch their caps. You always address a huntsman by his name, and he should always have a Christmas box from every member of his regular field.

At Christmastide you do not give a huntsman less than a pound note, or less than half this to a whipper-in. It has been done, but you don't do it.

In a ride, or lane, you always make way for the huntsman and his staff. The one word behind you 'huntsman,' means that you must get out of the way quickly.

'Huntsman right,' means that you must get to the left-hand side, and vice versa. A whipper-in should also always be let through a crowd of horsemen.

WHIPPER-IN.—Of these there are two: the first whipper-in, who keeps in touch with the huntsman, turning hounds to him, and the second whipper-in who, amongst other duties in the field, brings on tail hounds, and should as a rule be the last of the three to leave covert.

The pictorial press again generally call these the second and third huntsman, at least one presumes they do, as the huntsman

is usually called the first huntsman; but they are never known to hunting people by any other names than huntsman and first and second whipper-in. All other designations are purely comic journalese.

THE HON. SECRETARY.—Is the man you should meet first of all, for he collects your subscription. If you have not met him before it is his duty to come and speak to you if you are a stranger, and incidentally to collect 'cap' money if you are not a subscriber or intend becoming one.

A subscriber can as a rule take a guest, staying in his house, out hunting on one or sometimes two days, without the guest paying a 'cap.'

But each hunt has its own rules as to this, and if you are a guest it is best to ask your host the rule about it

Many hunts have an extra fund known as the Poultry Fund. This is separate from your subscription, is as a rule optional, but to which every member of the hunt should subscribe. In some hunts there is also a Wire Fund.

When sending your subscription you add an extra amount, and state that it is a donation to the Poultry or Wire Fund.

There is also with most hunts nowadays a Point-to-Point Fund which is used for the purpose of entertaining the farmers and their wives at the Point-to-Point meeting.

To this also at the end of the season you *must* subscribe. You ride over the farmers' land all the winter, the least you can do is to help to entertain him on his big day, the Point-to-Point meeting.

Even for the comparatively poor man, and with all these subscriptions, hunting is well worth the price, and one or two days' hunting a week will soon put your doctor among the out-of-works as far as you are concerned.

THE SECOND HORSEMAN.—The Master's second horseman is



the man in charge of this section of the field. If you have a second horse out it is imperative that you give him instructions to stay with the hunt second horsemen.

No second horseman should jump fences; his duty is to ride a line of lanes or gates, and to shut any of the latter he sees open. He should also put back any stray cattle. It is very seldom, if he knows the country, and stays with the hunt second horsemen, that he need be ever out of a trot. A bad second horseman brings your horse to you in a lather.

In a hunt it is not the leaders that do the harm, the tail end often do the most damage.

A Secretary should make a point of sometimes being a very long way behind.

TALLY-HO BACK (TALLY-O-BIKE).—Should be used more often during cub-hunting than in the regular season, in which latter case it generally means someone has headed the fox.

TO HEAD THE FOX.—Is the worst crime you can perpetrate. It means that you are standing where you ought not to be, i.e. probably not close enough to the covert, when hounds are drawing.

At this time you cannot be too much bunched up together, or too close to the edge of the covert.

VIEW HOLLOA (VIEW-HOLL-ER).—Is a shrill high note based on Y-o-o-o-i, some few men can give one, others cannot, although everyone imagines he can.

The less holloaing the better for hounds, as every holloa helps to get their heads up. Never holloa a fox, if hounds are hunting the line, even if you view him. The quieter the field are with a beaten fox the more likely it is that the huntsman will handle him. John Jorrocks's rule to count twenty slowly before holloaing a viewed fox is a very safe one for everybody.

A fox may even come away from covert, and return to it





ROOKS WILL CIRCLE ROUND A HUNTED FOX.

again on hearing a holloa behind him. Always let him get through the next fence, before holloaing. If the huntsman is near always tell him in preference to holloaing.

Foxhounds don't hunt by view, like greyhounds, therefore a huntsman's first thought is to keep their heads down to pick up the scent. If we make many strange noises it will have the opposite effect.

TO DRAW A COVERT UP-WIND.--Is to put hounds in with the wind blowing in their faces. In this case they will probably wind the fox, i.e. smell him, before he winds them. In drawing up-wind a huntsman usually gets away closer to his fox.

A fox more often runs down-wind than up-wind. If you have any option take the down-wind side of the pack in preference to up-wind, you will also hear better what they are doing.

On a bad scenting day, if hounds run up-wind they will probably run faster than they have done down-wind. A hare runs in a circle, a fox as a rule unless headed runs straight.

Jays or magpies screeching in a covert ahead of the pack tell you the way the fox has gone.

Rooks will circle round a hunted fox.

A shepherd or ploughman will often head the fox.

A flock of sheep or cattle will spoil the scent if a fox runs through them, a sheep dog coursing the fox obliterates all scent. One hound a long way ahead makes scent difficult for the body of the pack.

A single hound getting away on a fox should be stopped until the pack can be laid on to the line. It is a hunt servant's duty to see to this, but a huntsman should always be told if a single hound is away ahead.

A fox has a brush, a mask and four pads, all of which are cut off by the whipper-in after he is killed by the pack. The carcass is then given to the huntsman, who throws it to the hounds to eat.

WHO-WHOOP WIND 'IM IN.—From the huntsman shows that the fox has gone to ground.

WHO-WHOOP.—Alone, that hounds have killed him above ground.

The preliminary procedure of hunting the fox is as follows :—

The Master fixes the meets a fortnight or more ahead, hunting each side of his country fairly and regularly.

He has however to take into consideration shooting tenants and their shoots, and occasionally water-logged country has to be missed in the interest of the farmers owing to the damage of the ' field ' crossing it.

A few days before the meet the huntsman sends what are known as ' Stopping,' or ' Earth-stopping,' cards to each keeper in the country they are likely to draw (this country is known as the draw for the day), and ' putting-to ' cards to keepers in country into which hounds might run, within a radius of say five or six miles from the meet. All this country is then known as ' being stopped.'

The keepers who have stopping cards should, the night before the meet (but they do not invariably do so), go out after nine o'clock at night and stop, i.e. put bundles of stout faggots well into all earths used by foxes on their beat, that is, in the confines of their shoot.

Each bundle of faggots should be pinned well home into the ground with stout stakes firmly through the centre.

Stopping fox earths by pushing earth or sand into the mouth and ramming home with a spade is useless.

It should be done after nine at night to ensure foxes being out of the earths hunting for food. On large beats where there are a lot of earths it may take two or three evenings to do this thoroughly. All this is why we find foxes above ground in the coverts we draw when hunting.

If 'stopping' were not done we should find very few foxes. A fox is a night-hunting animal and sleeps by day.

Outside the radius of the draw, that is the series of coverts the Master thinks it will be necessary to have stopped to ensure plenty of foxes for the day, the putting-to cards are used.

In this case a keeper can put-to his earths on the morning of the meet, provided they are all put-to by eleven o'clock. Putting-to cards mean that their coverts will not be drawn but a hunted fox must not get to ground.

In the old days the earth-stopper was an important member of the hunt staff, and this work was always done by him. To-day hardly any hunts have their own earth-stopper. The reason for this is that shooting tenants prefer their own keepers to do the stopping, and the keepers no doubt originally had a word in this, as they are paid at the end of the season a fixed sum for every find, or litter of cubs.

A keeper in my country has taken as much as £25 or £30 in a season for these finds alone.

All these sums are paid by the Master at the end of the season, at what is known as the stopping feast.

So you see a Master doesn't just walk out and hunt a fox in any wood he may think fit. If we run what is known as 'out of the draw,' that is, where the earths are only put-to, we must return to draw again to one of the stopped coverts if we want to ensure finding another fox.

If a M.F.H. hunts a fox out of his own country (and every fox-hunting country is marked on the map with definite boundaries), he must of course not draw again until he returns to his own country, neither must he dig a fox out should he run one to ground in the country of a neighbouring pack.

It has been laid down by an eminent authority that we may

poke him out with a stick if in a drain or elsewhere, but we must not move soil to get at him.

HUNTING KIT.—The correct dress is a silk hat, scarlet coat, white breeches and soft-legged top boots with light tops. (Mahogany tops are not at the moment the smartest.) A cut-away tail-coat looks well on a tall thin man but horrible on a short fat one.

The ordinary coat of to-day has a fairly long opening at the neck, two buttons with only a hook and eye where the third button would come. Waistcoat should have four very large, roomy flap-covered pockets. Yellow waistcoats are worn but are not now fashionable.

A white leather waistcoat of the post-boy pattern, showing between the stock and the coat at the neck opening, can be worn, or a waistcoat of the same pattern, made of the same white material as the breeches.

Coats should have well-rounded points in front, and not coming to a point as the coat of a hunt servant, flannel lined at back, with ticket and two side pockets set at an angle on the skirts. Garters should be the same colour as breeches, white or almost white.

Boots should be high under knee at the back and fit here like a glove.

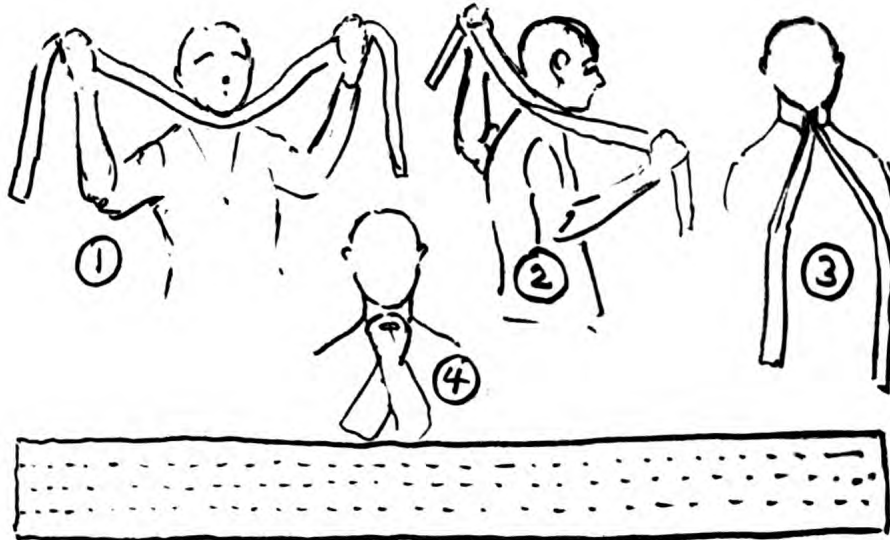
Spurs short-necked, unrowelled for preference and set high on heel of boot, as close up under the ankle as comfort allows in walking. Spurs' straps narrow and all the same width.

Stock small and neat, fitting close to the neck all round.

This pattern is the most comfortable and neatest :— One yard and a-half of 12-inch *thin* hunting stock material folded four times, and adjusted as the following diagrams show.

It never slips or bulges out over the waistcoat if properly put





on. The neater and smaller the tie portion of the stock the better, so long as it covers the waistcoat opening.

**HUNT BUTTONS.**—In some hunts these are given by the Master, in others any subscriber of the full subscription may wear the hunt button, and again in some cases only members of the Hunt Club can wear it.

In any case brass buttons, whether plain or monogram, should *always* be worn with a scarlet coat, black buttons with a black coat.

It is usual for a beginner to hunt his first season in a dark coat. If he wears white breeches he must wear tops of a lighter colour than black, but he may also wear light *buff* breeches and black patent leather tops, never *white* breeches with black tops, and never a low hat when fox-hunting.

Members of a hunt who wear scarlet and the hunt button may wear the same with the hunt dress coat. Hunt dress coats are not worn out of the hunting season.

Sometimes these are worn when dining with hunting people in the country; if you are not sure what your host is doing ring up the butler who will tell you in a minute without bothering his master.

In the country, among hunting people, at most dances during the season hunt coats are worn and at all county balls, but never in London. I believe the only exception to this rule is the Pegasus Club dinner in the Temple.

This reads rather like an article from the 'Tailor and Cutter,' but it may answer a query which one day you may not be quite sure about. I will, even at the risk of boring you, carry it farther to stag-hunting, otter-hunting, and hare-hunting.

With the Devon and Somerset a season or two ago, a well-turned-out fox-hunting man arrived at the meet at Larkbarrow in smart top hat, white breeches, tops, and black coat.

Every one felt sorry for him because he was evidently a good sportsman, and it was purely bad luck at not thinking to inquire before he came for his first wild-stag-hunting meet. I don't think he stayed out long, as we only saw him at the meet. If he went home everyone was sorry because we all felt, and could see, that he was a sportsman.

With the Devon and Somerset in August you wear a low hard hat, black, white or brown, a tweed coat, breeches of any colour you like, except dead white, and black patent leather-topped boots, or brown polo or field boots, a hunting stock or not, as the weather or your fancy suggests to you.

It sounds unnecessary to state these things in print, but everyone has to have a 'first time' at some time in his life, and it may save you taking the wrong kit.

The questions I am answering have so often been asked me by first-timers, old and young.

With carted deer packs, silk hat, etc., as in regular fox-hunting. With drag hounds, tweeds and a low hard hat, never a silk hat.

With beagles any old shooting or riding kit, and stockings.

With otter hounds the same as above, but holes bored in the soles of the oldest shoes or boots you have, to let the water run out. Flannel material is best for this sport.

I shall never forget seeing a sporting sailor on leave come out otter-hunting in spotless white duck trousers. He looked beautiful at the meet, but as he joined in the sport to the fullest extent, even to help hold a stickle, the effect at the end of the day was comic.

Which reminds me of the illustration which appeared some time ago in a weekly sporting journal. It was to picture an incident in a short story in which the heroine was talking to the hero, a Master of *otter* hounds, on the banks of a stream. The artist who pictured this had evidently seen in the picture papers Masters of Hounds at meets, and took one of these as his model. The heroine was stylishly dressed and beautifully booted in Parisian high-heeled shoes, and the Master stood on the bank of the stream talking to her, in all the glory of velvet hunting cap, hunt coat, white breeches, tops and spurs, truly a noble and impressive hero, and the only thing wanting was his horse, which unfortunately did not come into the picture.

With harriers one never wears a high hat as in fox-hunting and carted deer, neither do we get into white breeches and tops. A low hat, serviceable weather-defying coat, light breeches, and black-topped boots are best, but I have seen a young enthusiast arrive at a harrier meet in full fox-hunting kit and silk hat.

Hunting caps are only worn with scarlet by Masters of

Hounds and sometimes Hon. Secretaries, the hunt servants and hunt second horseman. In many hunts there is the very excellent plan of giving farmers the right to wear velvet hunting caps with their ordinary hunting kit.

Never on any account go out with any pack of foxhounds, harriers foxhounds, or staghounds with a whip without a thong attached, which last, I am glad to say, completes these sartorial instructions.

THE FOX.—When the pack have killed him, his mask, brush and four pads are cut off, before the hounds eat him. A whipper-in will attach the mask to the D's of his saddle for all the world to see, the pads and brush will probably go in his pocket. If you want a brush or pad, ask the Master or huntsman if you may have it. The brush is not now presented to any member of the hunt, as it was in the old days, but after a good hunt there is no objection to you asking the huntsman if you may have it or a pad.

Sometimes the Master may give the brush to a schoolboy or girl, but it is not usual to do so to any of the grown-up section of his field unless they ask for it.

Some little *pourboire* to the hunt servant who hands it to you is usual if you have asked to have the brush or mask.

An average fox weighs about 14½ to 15 lbs., and a vixen about 13½ lbs. Cubs are born in March.

If anyone holloas a fox, all the huntsman wants to know is *exactly* where the man who holloa'd saw him last, and how long ago. Don't describe the fox or where you *think* he is going. If you do you will get no thanks.

Scent as a rule is not good :—

1. With a falling barometer.
2. In beech woods when the fallen leaves are curled up and dry.

3. When you see white cobwebs on the hedges and grass as you go to the meet.

4. Or, when frost is going out of the ground.

Hounds rolling at the meet is not a good sign. Scent always gets less with a sinking fox, or a heavy vixen.

On the other hand you hope for a scent :—

1. When the barometer is steady.

2. When a frost is coming on.

3. With a westerly wind not too gusty. Grass generally carries a better scent than arable land on a bad scenting day, and there is more likely to be a scent if a fox runs up-wind.



## LETTER VI

### A GOOD HUNT IN A GOOD COUNTRY

**U**NTIL now we have only had a hunt in a provincial country, such as the one you are beginning in. In that country fences are trappy; ditches and banks, and places where one has often to creep and crawl. And a horse with a head, and in that head a brain, is here required more than anywhere else.

Now let us take a hunt in a good grass country—a very different proposition.

At the meet, crowds of foot people, motor-cars, grooms and horses; almost more women than men; very few black coats or short-tailed horses; and a pack of hounds concealed in this crowd that looks to you very small and light of bone, but you know that they are the famous bitch pack.

No one seems to take much notice of the hounds except the foot people. The chief concern of everybody seems to be to find their grooms and horses, some two or three hundred men and women, with a similar number of motor-cars and horses, being congested in a narrow street around a small village green. Fat men and thin men, regardless of figure, in scarlet swallow-tails and the ordinary hunt coat. Women in bowlers and top hats that seem all to be made from one mould. Boots with tops of every known hunting shade of colour, except old mahogany. Women with breeches and boots that outvie the men's in cut and smartness; apron skirts which, when on foot, are of the minutest description.

In this pandemonium it is some moments before you discover that hounds have moved off; but you follow in the crowd that is

slowly moving up the street, an insignificant unit in three hundred horsemen and women, with one hundred to a hundred and fifty second horsemen following in a regiment behind.

You glance around, and the chief thing which strikes you is the straight stirrup-leg of the women; some can hardly touch their irons, and look like the lovely ladies we see in the summer riding at horse shows. The same thing strikes you in some of the older men—an absolutely straight leg and long stirrup leather.

Somehow you very seldom see this to-day with a provincial pack, even with the patriarchs; but in Leicestershire it is often seen—almost the cowboy seat of the Rodeo at Wembley.

For those who were bred and born to it, it may be the most comfortable, but not being bred and born to it myself, and being rather short in the leg, it has never appealed to me for a long day's hunting.

Here one also finds a few little idiosyncrasies of dress. Perhaps that is not the right word. Following in the steps of father, grandfather and great-grandfather would be a better way of expressing it. For instance, the late Lord Chaplin, 'The Squire,' always hunted in boots of 1830 type—black boots made like a Lifeguardsman's, protecting the knee. The present Master of the Cottesmore has his tops about two inches longer than present-day fashions, the same length of top that his great-grandfather wore. A few men also wear the garter tied in a neat bow in front instead of the modern buckle; but, as a rule, each man or woman is clad outwardly exactly like his neighbour.

You never see the horrible wide flat-brimmed bowler on a woman that you sometimes do in the provinces.

Every bowler or silk hat is stamped out of the same mould and varies not one iota in shape. Hunting kit which may be passable for a provincial pack is not always quite the stamp for hunting in Leicestershire, unless you wish to be conspicuous. On



the other hand, swallow-tails are not the most suitable thing to wear in a rough country.

But to get to a much more interesting subject—the largish gorse covert on the side of the hill, which you are now approaching.

Here there are only two places where the field are allowed to stand :—

1. Outside, at a hand-gate at the top of a cut track through the centre of the gorse.

2. Outside, at one corner, which is the one you have chosen.

While hounds are drawing very little interest seems to be taken by the field, until presently you hear the two or three sharp staccato notes on the huntsman's horn, which denotes that they have found. Then everyone crowds to the two places mentioned above. Three hundred horsemen and women, scrambling and squeezing at two small gateways, waiting for the Master to give the word that hounds are away. Nobody can see or hear anything for the noise and scrimmage.

If you don't squeeze your mare into the scrum, you will never get away, so you jam her in with the others, wishing you had got nearer the front earlier.

Horses seem to be kicking on all sides of you, language is flowing, both from women as well as men, until at last you find yourself in the next field, four or five fields from huntsman and hounds, whom you see streaming away below you.

A slow horse would for this reason be hopeless in a good grass country if you wished to see anything of hounds.

You look down on lines of riders bobbing over fences, and others following a line of hand-gates, as in other less fashionable countries; for even in Leicestershire there are people who never jump a fence.

As you gallop down the hill, you must settle which line to

take, the right or the left; but hounds swinging slightly left-handed give you your clue.

Hand-gates, however, with this crowd, will take longer than getting over fences, so you steer clear of them.

A well-made stake-and-bound faces you, and you take it in your stride—a real good take-off and landing.

The next fence looks more formidable, and is so. A cut-and-laid with big timber in it; not a cut-and-laid as we know it in this country, but great thick growers, practically young trees, split by the hedge-cutter's billhook and laid along the fence. There is no chancing this, but you note that the take-off, always the most important thing, is ideal.

Your mare does not quite like the look of it; you feel in her a tendency to hesitate; but an extra squeeze from you settles it for her, and she knows she has got to have it.

You don't exactly flip over, in fact you nearly land on her neck, but she stands up, cleverly putting out 'a fifth leg' to save herself, and in a second or two you are safely set in your saddle again.

The mare has learnt one thing and you have learnt another. She now knows what she has to do—i.e. put all she knows into most of the 'leps.' You have found out what happens to you



YOU DON'T EXACTLY FLIP OVER.

if she pecks, and must be prepared, by getting your weight well back in the saddle on landing.

You do not find, however, that your mount is making much headway. You cannot overhaul people as you did at home. In fact, your mare seems rather slow, and you wonder what is the matter with her.

If you had noticed the amount of daylight under many of the horses, you would understand this. Most of them are practically chasers, and the light pack of bitches fly over the grass like swallows.

So different from the big dog-hounds and roomy bitches you hunt behind at home.

At a check hounds are hardly allowed to make their own cast. The huntsman knows to his sorrow that cast forward almost at once, or be branded as slow, is the only thing to do. If he does not hit off the line, he always has the alternative of galloping to the next covert, or gorse patch, with his hounds, and immediately going on with a fresh fox.

I have seen this done many times, and not one in fifty of the field knew the huntsman was simply holding them on, or had got a fresh fox in front of him as soon as he got to the gorse. Not one in fifty really cared if he had done so. They had their galloping and jumping, which was what they had come out to get.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

I am not hurrying you, as I want to give you time to shake well back into your saddle, when you and your mare nearly 'took it' at the last fence.

So far you have had nothing but grass under your horse's feet, and from the high ground you are now on you can see how far you are behind hounds. Your consolation is that many others are worse, as you see them pounding along behind you over the undulating country.

There is a general impression that grass countries are flat countries; but if you have ever looked at Alken's old hunting prints of Leicestershire you must have realized what an undulating country it is, with high points and low points, and not-to-be-forgotten 'bottoms.'

Its charm is the sea of grass; big fair fences with very little trappiness about them, scarcity of roads and population to head foxes, and small gorse and other coverts situated at reasonable distances apart, all tend to make what Jorrocks called the 'cut-'em-downs' the finest hunting countries of the world.

For all that, if you had plenty of time, it would not be a difficult country to cross on a *good* horse. It is the pace you have to go on good scenting days, and the amount of exertion necessary for your horse to clear the big upstanding fences, that make it a very stiff country to get across if you wish to see hounds at all.

One of the quickest men I ever saw get over this Leicestershire country was the late Teddy Brooks, who, like so many of the best, was killed in the war. In his big silk hat jammed well home, he was a well-known figure with the Quorn before 1914. Always on smallish 'stags' of horses, which were schooled to jump anything he asked them to do, he was an exponent of the short leather seat, and one of the quickest at getting away, or on top, as soon as hounds found.

I have the picture of him now vividly before my mind the last time I saw him out with the Quorn. Hounds had found and were away, and we had a practically unjumpable fence in front of us. Almost everyone was galloping to a hand-gate at the far end; but in the corner near Brooks was a stiff stile, high and solid, overhung with the lower branches of trees on either side of it. It looked quite impossible for any horse, to say nothing of a rider as well, getting through the small space of daylight between the lower boughs and the top of the stile. Teddy, however, turned

his horse quietly at it, hunched himself forward in the way he always took his fences, and lying flat alongside of the animal's neck, went through as if he was on the back of a stag. It was like a trapdoor stunt in a pantomime, and not one horse in a thousand would have faced the small space available. Needless to say no one attempted to follow him.

But here we are coffee-housing out hunting—just what I have impressed upon you not to do.

Let us get on with our hunt. Across great grazing fields of ridge and furrow you gallop, taking care to ride these undulating ridges as far as possible in a slanting direction and not at actual right angles to the furrow, for you have soon found out how much easier this is both to your horse and yourself. You have also discovered that these Leicestershire fences can be taken at a much faster pace than the trappy ones of your own country, but also that there is no brushing through the top to be done with impunity.

Of plough or growing crops you have not seen a sign. There has been a check or two, but hounds have in every case been away again almost before you have got up to them.

Thirty-five minutes of it, and your mare is showing signs of distress, and does not jump her fences quite so flippantly. Then ahead of you you see a group of horses in a crowd of steam, and you hear 'Who-whoop!' and the bay of hounds.

They have run into him in the centre of that great grass-field, and all is over.

As you bring your sweating mare to a standstill and jump off her, you glance at her now heaving sides. Turn her face to the breeze and take her out of the fast arriving crowd to where she can get more air. Let out your girths a hole, to ease her, and as soon as she is blowing a bit steadier, lead her slowly about.

Now begin to arrive those who have had bad luck, some in

their own estimation and some in reality. Stories of tosses, loss of shoes, a rotten pilot, you hear on all sides; cursings of second horsemen not arriving, and of unfit horses; but in many cases I am afraid a line consisting mostly of grass tracks and gates accounts for their troubles.

Up come second horsemen, with sandwich cases strapped on D's of saddles or on their backs. Out come cigarettes by male and female, and in some cases a little judicious powder-puff.

Stories of how Di Oxbridgeshire was last seen standing on her head with her legs waving gaily in the air, or Lord Bob's exit into a muddy pond, until the Master gives the huntsman the word for the next draw.

Then once again, mostly on second horses, the field jog off; another mask to nail on the kennel door dangling behind the whipper-in's saddle, and another half-brace of foxes killed to go to the credit of huntsman and pack.

It is hard to turn back on a day with a screaming scent like this, but if you are wise you will do so, and your horse will come again in a few days' time. The pace and quantity of fences have taken more out of her than a long day in your own country, and in a second hunt on a day like this you would be hopelessly left and disappointed.

Even where all is grass, scent is not always so ideal, and a slower hunt may be your lot another day, when you will be able to see more of a crack huntsman's methods: how quick he is when quickness is necessary; how his hounds fly to him through crowds of kicking horses, when he tells them, on his horn, that a fox is away. If his hounds were not quick and nippy, half of them would be killed before they had done their first season's work. Jumped on, ridden over, or kicked, that is the lot in Leicestershire of a hound slow in the uptake—a big, heavy, clumsy hound.

Pace, pace, pace in everything, is the motto; but when you



ride over the finest hunting pastures in the world, what more can you want for enjoyment ?

You ask if the same dozen who cut out the work to-day always do so, or will others get away better another time and take their places ? To this I decidedly answer, ' They will be the same,' even though, as you say, so many seem to go well. It does not matter in what country or in what hunt, there are always a few men, or even women, who *will be first* if hounds really run. Every hunt has first flighters, second flighters, third flighters, and so on, and any huntsman can tell you the names of half a dozen who will always be there or thereabouts after hounds have run a few fields. A quick eye and ear, a mind made up in a second, and a bold heart are the essentials to cut out the work, provided the animal you ride is, in a country like Leicestershire, the best, or very near it.

With the provincial packs a good man to hounds can often get there with a toss or two on a bad horse.

Second-flight men and women will always be second-flighters, which means that they will jump anything after a pilot, but just want that extra bit of nerve and knowledge to lead the way, and not be always on the ground.

Then again, where do you usually see the tosses ? Is it generally the first man over the place ?

Very seldom. They come usually among the rank and file, or bold young subalterns, who, through want of knowledge, pick the wrong place, but mean to do or die.

I could never curse them for breaking fences unnecessarily, although I knew that it should sometimes be done, as there was nothing they seemed to love better than to feel that they were ' for it ' at every other fence. In time some of them develop this sense of knowing the best place to take in a fence, and there is nothing like tosses, and plenty of them, to teach you that. In a season or two they may become the sound leaders.



## LETTER VII

### ON FOOT

**W**HICH seems to you after the last chapter rather a senseless letter to write.

There, however, you are wrong, for even on foot we may learn something of hunting. Moreover, a man who goes out on foot, and at the same time knows the game, is a sportsman; of that there is no doubt; unfortunately, most of those who follow on foot know very little if anything of fox-hunting, and more often than not spoil the fun for those who do.

First of all you can take off those thin shoes and put on some serviceable shooting boots.

You thought we were going in the car ?

So we are, but only as far as the meet; you look as if you were going to take your best girl out to lunch. Get into some serviceable shooting kit, or breeches and gaiters, for you will have more walking across fields than sitting in a car, if you want to see anything of the fun with me.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now your costume is better and we will make a start.

Ten miles to the meet. We will arrive by 10.45 and see the hounds before they move off, at the same time 'parking' our car in a position easy to get away from and not in the way of people riding.

By coming early we can see the field arrive.

Leaving our car to take care of itself, there is plenty to interest us, and as hounds move off to draw, we follow *on foot*. I underline on foot because it is not advisable, or in the interest of sport, to follow hounds in a car.

Cars should be left at the meet until hounds have gone right away from the neighbourhood.

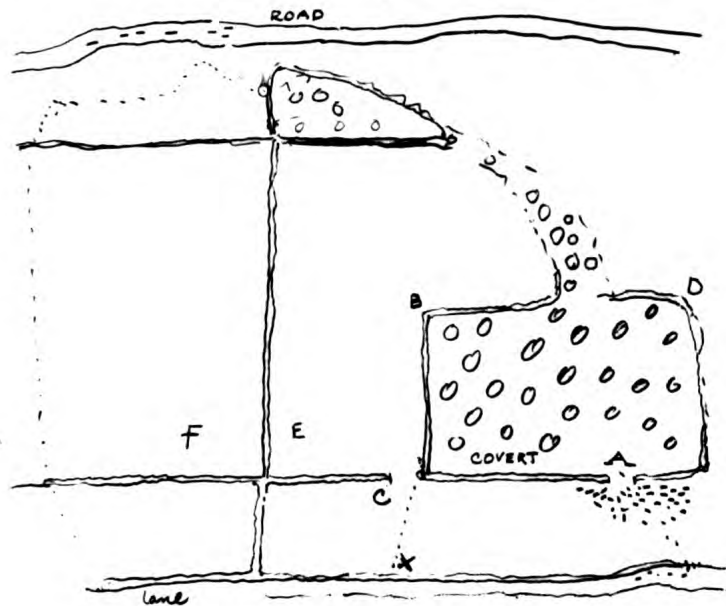
Nothing is more annoying to a Master than to see a string of cars following the field, and waiting to dash off after, or even before, the fox as soon as they find.

On foot, he has no objection to us as long as we know what hounds are doing; but in a car dashing round the lanes it's a thousand to one, as no one can hear when driving, that we may head the fox.

For this reason, then, we have put on our stout walking kit and will follow on foot.

At the meet, the huntsman (in a whisper) has told me the covert he will draw first.

It is only about a quarter of a mile from the meet, and by starting early we get there just as the last horsemen are going through the gate from the lane into a field adjoining it. Here,



perhaps, a small plan will make the geography of the covert easier.

The field are all being held up at the gate (A) which gives entrance to the covert, and a whipper-in is stationed at the corner (C), while another is at (D).

Hounds have not yet been put into covert in order to give time for the whipper-in at (D) to get to his point. There will be no harm in our crossing field (X) to the gateway (C) on the dotted line marked.

It is advisable to do this as quickly as possible before hounds are thrown into covert. In any case we are likely to do less harm by being close to the covert than out in the lane up which we have come.

Now that hounds are drawing and we are at the gateway (C) where the whip is stationed, we must not talk, but efface ourselves as much as possible by keeping close into the covert hedge and *standing still*.

Presently a hound opens and soon the whole pack join in as the huntsman cheers them on to the line of a fox.

From our point we can see two sides of the covert. We can see the field bunched at the gateway and we can also see a side which they are unable to do.

There is a scent in covert and hounds are having a good tow-row round it with their fox, who is in no hurry to leave.

Some of the field are getting anxious. Someone has evidently murmured, 'they're away,' although the whipper-in knows, and we know by using our ears, that the pack is still running *inside* only, although some distance away from us.

Presently some eight or ten of the field make a dash to our gateway, while others enter the covert until the Master once more holds them up.

The lot with us have stopped behind the whipper-in by our

side, but as they hear a keeper holloa the fox over a ride they dash past us along the outside of the covert towards the point (B), leaving the whipper-in and ourselves once more alone.

If they had only used their sense of hearing, as the whipper-in has done, they would have stayed where they were. Now, in their excitement, they may head the fox when he tries to break, they will also get into trouble should the Master see them before hounds are away. For, as we know, our fox has not yet gone away.

There has been no 'holloa away,' neither has the huntsman doubled his horn *outside* covert.

The holloa we heard was a keeper, a very different holloa from a whipper-in's, and moreover we could hear that it was inside the wood. A holloa inside a covert sounds very different from one on the outside and may only mean a keeper's view across a ride.

Our fox evidently is in no hurry to leave, it is early in the season, and he is probably a young fox and the covert has not been much cub-hunted.

Listen ! Now they are at the far end again, near the point (B), and hounds have checked ; this we can hear by the sudden cessation of the cry of the pack. He has probably doubled back again, so we must keep an eye on our side, where he might possibly break.

No, he has crossed to the stragging belt which joins the two big woods, for there is a holloa forward from a whipper-in who has been posted at (D). Then once more, as the pack get to the holloa, they open again in real earnest and the fresh ground carries a better scent.

In front of us, left-handed, we can hear them running and our whipper-in now dashes away with a furrard away for any tail hounds as he goes. We are left with only our ears to tell us which way the pack is running.

We walk along the hedge and over fields (*A*) and (*E*) listening and watching all the while as we keep close to the hedgerows. Once again we hear them turn in the distance, and this time it is towards us. Now we must be careful not to head him should the fox come within sight of us, for it is obvious that he has been headed by cars in the road and is turning back towards us. Watch the far hedgerows and stand still.

There he is, on the far side of the plough we are in ; ten yards on the plough he stops, sits up, and looks back, listening to hounds.

Now is the time we must get completely out of sight until he has gone well past us.

Flat on our backs we lie in the main deep furrow at our feet (how about the old shooting jacket now?), for the fox when we last saw him was pointing straight in our direction. Not moving hand or foot we lie for the space of a minute, and then I venture to get one eye cautiously on the horizon of my furrow's edge. Not a hundred yards away is 'Charley,' heading straight for us, and down goes my head again into the wet earth.



ONE EYE ON THE HORIZON OF MY FURROW'S EDGE.

Now, on the soaked plough, we can hear his soft patter-pat, and we become dead as frozen meat. The patter-pat passes not five yards from our feet, for a fox very seldom 'winds' you if you are absolutely still, and, raising our heads, we see him spring over the ditch through the hedge which divides us from the next field.

Cautiously and slowly even now, we get to our feet and see him lopping along half-way across the next field, going through the hedge by the old oak tree at the far corner.

Once clear of this and out of our sight we may holloa, as we can hear hounds have thrown up a few fields away.

One shrill holloa on a high-pitched note, with a finger in my ear, and then after a pause of a few seconds another, to tell the huntsman that we have viewed him. Then, as soon as we hear him coming towards us, we can keep quiet.

While he is doing so I get up in the hedge at the *actual place* the fox went through it and put my cap on the top of my stick, to cut the skyline.

When the huntsman has seen this I wave my cap slowly and very distinctly in the *direction* the fox has gone through the hedge, but on no account do I holloa or cheer.

The huntsman is the man to cheer his hounds on to the line when they have lost it, not a member of the field or a man on foot.

The huntsman is also the man who should get the *kudos* from his pack for having found the line for them when they have lost it.

The only time when we should give one or two holloas is, as I have mentioned above, when hounds have checked and when the huntsman or hounds are *not* in sight.

Even when doing this we should be as sure as we can that a brace of foxes are not on foot.





THROUGH THE HEDGE WHICH DIVIDES US FROM  
THE NEXT FIELD.





In this case, when we could hear hounds running straight towards us until they checked, we were fairly sure it was the hunted fox. He tried to get over the road (*K*), but was headed by cars and foot-people.

My stick is still kept pointing straight for the point we last saw the fox.

'Out by the old oak tree,' we call to the huntsman as he passes us; but hounds have hit off the line before they get to us, and we see the whole field charge and jump, some in, some over, some through the fence by our side.

A wonderful view of the fox, field, and pack in full cry, which we should have completely missed had we not hidden in that wet furrow.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

They are well away now and we can walk quietly back to the car, for to continue to follow on foot would be of very little use.

As we go back across the fields we take care to shut any gates left open, and arrive at the car in about ten minutes' time.

Luckily we know the country. From the direction in which they went they should be at Snowhill by now. We will go along slowly in that direction, and may pick up some of the second horsemen on the road who can give us information, for a car moving off in the direction hounds have gone a quarter of an hour after they have left the covert very seldom does any harm if driven with care.

The car that does the damage is the one that madly dashes off after the field directly they find—very often before the fox leaves covert.

In nine times out of ten the car or procession of cars soon gets in front of the pack and often, I am sorry to say, in front of the fox.

For this there is no excuse, as by heading the fox you will be spoiling everybody's sport.

A chauffeur generally knows as much about fox-hunting as he does about milking cows.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

On the top of this hill we shall be able to see them if our fox has continued in the direction for which he was heading, and Biglow Wood was probably his point.

Switch off the engine and we will get out and prospect.

Half a mile away in the vale below we can see the hunt second horsemen jogging along the road ahead of us, so we are evidently going in the right direction. We shall do no harm by following them on the road, being ready to stop our engine directly they pull up to listen for hounds.

They are turning up the grassy lane on our left and are probably now in touch with the field. Once more we switch off and get out.

Listen! I can hear the horn ahead of us left-handed. We will get on the rising ground in the next field and we may get a view of them again, below us.

Here standing above them we see the whole panorama of the chase.

We see the huntsman throw his hounds into covert. He has killed or lost his first fox, and we hear him as he cheers his hounds in the big wood a mile or more below us.

A holloa from the far end tells us a fox is away, and we see a movement of men and horses at the other end where the Master is holding up the field. Then as the huntsman doubles his horn and cheers his hounds out of covert, the Master drops the flag to his field, and a mad gallop along the outside of the covert ensues. Some jump the fences, others make for convenient gateways, but

all are set with the one idea of getting to the now racing pack as quickly as they can.

Now the leaders have jumped into the field in which hounds are running. This time they are not turning in our direction but running parallel to us, and we are able to keep them in sight for a mile or more. We see the first-flighters taking their fences. We see the string of more nervous riders waiting to take their turn at the places the leaders have selected for them, and we see how these places become smaller and smaller until finally the welter-weights have practically nothing left to jump.

We see how well the women 'go,' and we can even from here spot the confirmed funkies making for the nearest lane or road leading in the direction hounds have gone.

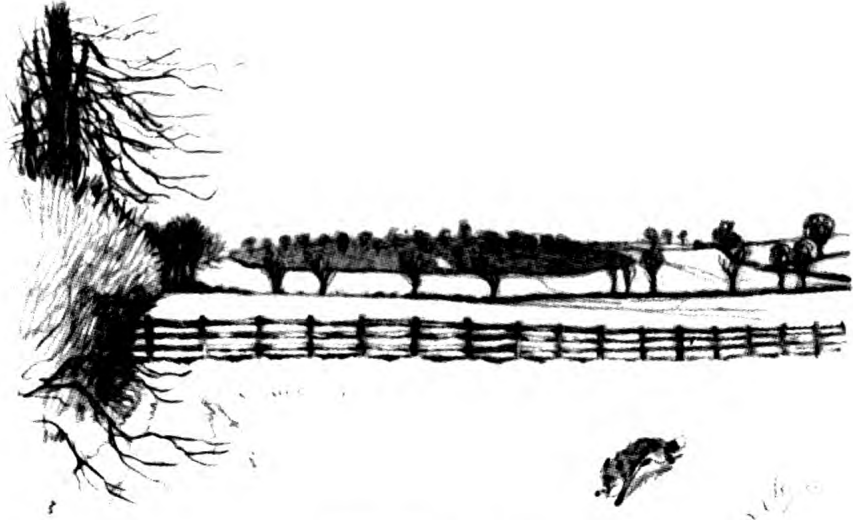
We see loose horses galloping on with the field, until kind-hearted sportsmen catch them, and then the racing field go out of sight.

The hunt second horsemen come jogging along the road, followed by cyclists and a motor car or two, the final group in this picture of English sport, and as we walk back to the car we feel that our morning has not been wasted.

Just one more find on foot.

For half an hour we have waited patiently, tucked away in an uncut boundary fence within two hundred yards of the covert that hounds will presently draw, in the hope that we may view a fox away from Aston Abbots.

On the other side of the fence in which we are sheltering, rises a steep hill possibly a better place to get a view from, but we have not chosen this as our grandstand, as in that position, silhouetted against the skyline, we should be certain to head the fox should he run in that direction. Sitting quietly and completely hidden in this overgrown double where we now are, there



ASTON ABBOTTS COVERT.

is very little possibility of this, if we continue to keep quiet and out of sight.

We must not approach the covert until after hounds have drawn it. On account of its small size it is dangerous to be nearer than a couple of fields to it, and we can only hope that the fun may pass, when it does come, in our direction.

And what a typical fox covert it is, standing on a hillside surrounded by grass fields, with an easy view away for a whipper-in from any side.

We are on the downwind side.

Presently we can hear the tap of many horses' feet on the main tarmac road, a field or two away on the far side of the hill beyond the covert, and almost at the same time a jay screeches on the top side, as a whipper-in and hunt second horseman sent on by the Master canter down and take up their appointed positions, where we see them standing motionless at two different points close in to the covert fence.

For the space of a minute or two no one else appears in sight, and then over the brow of the hill appear the huntsman and pack, specks of red, tan, black, and white. Behind the pack another mass of red, white, chestnut, and black now forms up in a solid mass on the skyline; this is the field with the draw below them.

Then very distinctly in the silence we hear the huntsman's cheer to hounds as they feather about in this fox-tainted home. Every now and then on the side of the hill we see him, as his scarlet coat gleams against the green and brown tree stems. We see and hear him draw down towards one of the watchers on the covert edge below, and we see the questing pack straggle across the main ride, and draw on the far side.

We watch the field packed together drawn up like a regiment of soldiers on the hill above, and yet no fox has pushed his nose outside, and no hound has given a whimper.

You are afraid our half-hour's vigil is all for nothing—wait! we will still keep securely hidden in our hedge. Clearly we can see one or two foot-people on the hill behind us and others on the one opposite. They are, however, in a very dangerous position for heading a fox, especially as they are spread out instead of all keeping together. Let us hope a fox does not break in their direction.

It is a most unusual thing for this well-known covert to be drawn blank, for so it now rather seems it may be, as hounds have apparently drawn all through it without finding, and the huntsman is blowing them out on the top of the hill near where the field are congregated.

The second horseman now turns away and canters up the hill towards the huntsman, and the whipper-in a moment or two later turns in the gate which gives entrance to the central ride, canters up this to the 'field' above.

We, however, will not be in such haste, for there is no hurry for us to move.

Suddenly from where the whipper-in has been standing at the far corner of the covert, we see an elongated smudge of russet appear from the covert side. Even from this distance, two fields away, we can at once see it is a fox streaking away from the covert. If he comes straight on through the fence below, he must cross the field, one side of which our fence encloses. Now we are glad we had not moved, and that we are completely hidden in the thick hedge.

Now he comes into our field, slips under the post-and-rails, running away from us across it, and begins to eat up the ground in his galloping action, looking rather like a mechanical toy as someone views him from the hill in front of us and holloas like a madman.

If we make a sound, however, we may turn him back again; we will holloa them away as soon as he has got two hundred yards past us.

Looking back at the 'field' on the hill all is movement, but not progressive movement, spots of red, black and white interchanging, giving the mass of men and horses a feeling of suppressed excitement. Then come the pack and huntsman galloping to the holloa, which being on the hill facing us at least two fields from the line the fox actually took, will do more harm than good. Hounds of course make nothing of it in those two fields above us. We can hear the man who holloa'd shouting to the huntsman and pointing in our direction.

Now as our fox is well past us we may put things right by getting to the nearest point to us of his actual line, and holding a cap up for the huntsman to see.

One holloa at any rate will be enough to call attention to ourselves and show the huntsman that it was this field that the



fox actually crossed, although our friend on the hill when he saw him could not resist a dozen view holloas. Now the huntsman is shouting to us 'Where did he go?' and we wave our caps and shout back 'Where we are standing is the line.'

In a few moments hounds hit it off almost at our feet and the whole field comes charging down upon us. A few yards from us is a gateway in the timber fence; we open this and hold it back for those who prefer a gate to timber topping, and once more we have a fine view of a fox away and the pack and field in his wake.



## LETTER VIII

### A BAD DAY

**T**HIS is a day when you may wish you had stayed at home.

At 10.30, as we get into the car, a strong easterly wind is blowing, with prospects of rain or snow, and you may be forgiven for filling a flask with the best old brandy.

The meet is ten miles away, and as we purr along, we try to think that the weather will improve, although it shows very little sign of doing so.

As soon as we arrive at the meet the rain begins, and we push our hands into the woollen gloves (which, by the by, you should always carry under your saddle flap), discarding our leather ones. It is not raining very hard, but unfortunately there are signs of heavy showers overhead, with half a gale blowing, and we wish we had taken Jorrocks's advice, 'Never take hounds out on a wery windy day.'

The first draw is a largish covert, where to-day, unless we are down-wind of the huntsman, we shall never hear what he is doing.

Although in most cases I advise you to stay outside, in this case we follow hounds into covert. In fact, the Master himself suggests this, or we shall be left. Even inside we could not hear a sound fifty yards from the pack if we were drawing down-wind.

As a rule, however, a huntsman will draw up-wind on a day like this, as he stands more chance of getting away closer to his fox; and we follow him through the covert, as we wade through mud in the rides up to our horses' hocks.

The Master is not in his usually sweet temper; his heated conversation with the keeper at the meet may account for this, as he was only at that moment advised that this covert had been shot only the day before. Unfortunately he was relying on this for his morning draw, and it is three or four miles to the next fox covert. Then, to make his temper worse, he sees hares jumping up all over the place, and after an hour's blank draw the young hounds begin trying a hunt on their own after riot, until finally he gives the order for the next draw.

By this time the rain is coming down in deluging showers. Until now the wet has not got through, but a cold feeling at sundry points of our anatomy warns us that it is now only a matter of moments. You think that a long coat of the 'dressing-gown' description would be more protection than the short flaps of your own. There, however, I think you are wrong. On a day like this, when once these flaps are wet through, the shorter they are the more comfortable you will be. A dressing-gown coat is like having a soaked sponge dabbed on your thighs every second. The only thing that will keep your knees dry is the horrible trouser garment in macintosh that you occasionally see. They are only suitable, however, for those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis.

It is not so much the wet that matters—and it matters very little, you will find, if hounds run—but it is the east wind on wet knees and elbows that chills you.

For once we jog along to the next draw at a little faster pace than the orthodox hound-trot, for which we are sincerely grateful, and arrived at the covert, our hopes once more revive.

It is usually a sure find.

The covert is only a small one, and we take what shelter we can behind some adjoining ricks.

Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, and no sign of a find, and

we see the huntsman in earnest conversation with the Master as he blows his hounds out.

The reason of the blank draw is only too plain. A lazy keeper, a soaking night, and earths put to in the morning instead of stopped out at night; and as the huntsman passes, he tells us, what is worse, that the main earth has not been stopped properly; that is to say, a few shovelfuls of sandy soil had been stamped into its mouth, which an old dog-fox had soon scratched out, to get into warmer shelter as the deluge became unpleasant.

Some hounds apparently had actually marked at the earth where probably two or three foxes were now snugly tucked away.

Now is the time we must be more than ever careful not to annoy the Master.

Don't speak to him, or you will have your head snapped off; and don't on any account get in his way.

Once more we take the road, this time with the wind behind us, but driving the rain on to our saddles underneath us, and we feel as if we were sitting in a cold bath with all our clothes on.

A day of disaster.

At the next draw, however, we find a fox, and all our troubles are forgotten. They run him three or four fields, when an extra heavy shower comes down in a solid mass. Hounds try to carry on the line but finally come to a check on the washed-out line.

There is no time to lose, so our huntsman does not give them quite so long as usual, but casts them forward on some grass fields.

He was right, for the leading hounds are just able once more to carry on the line, but they can only go at a walk, and a few hundred yards again washes scent completely away.

Then right under their noses a hare jumps up, and Random and Rollicker, two of the young entry, dash after it.

The huntsman d—ns his whipper-in, the whipper-in under his breath curses the hounds, and the Master curses huntsman



AN OLD DOG FOX HAD SOON SCRATCHED OUT.



and everyone else, knowing no one is really to blame, which makes his own temper all the worse.

Other coverts are drawn with similar results, and at 3.30 o'clock we come to the last stopped covert of the draw for the day ; then it is that our Master gives the welcome word for home ; and we turn our dripping selves and horses for the jog back.

You ask why we did not keep the car out. You are stone cold and so am I, but a six or eight mile sharp trot will get a little warmth into our bodies, be better for us, and save us from catching cold. A drive in wet clothes in a car would not be a good thing.

Your feet are frozen, so we will pour a double whisky neat into each boot to help the circulation, and at the same time finish our flasks ourselves.

In an hour we are home. Not tea and eggs first before the tempting fire, for we must first pull off our wet things and possibly jump into a hot bath ; then for some old flannel slops and *tea*, armchairs, and our feet on the fender.

After all, a bad day has some compensations, if they do not come until last ; and if you have learnt nothing else, you have at least learnt how to thoroughly enjoy tea, eggs, muffins, and a roaring fire.





## LETTER IX

### THE HUNTING VISITOR

**W**HEN hunting with a strange pack of hounds—that is, not the one you usually hunt with—there was at one time an impression that no one would notice that you were a visitor.

To-day all that is changed. A stranger at a meet is invariably noticed by the regular members of the field, and should at once be spotted by the Hon. Secretary, whose duty it is to know everybody who is out hunting.

In the old days before the institution of the ‘capping system,’ which means taking a donation of a fixed sum from every visitor, there were very often a good many strangers out with a pack of hounds, and the Master, Secretary, and field did not worry themselves very much as to who they were, or where they came from, as any sportsmen were always welcome for an occasional day.

To-day, however, everything has changed. Every member of a hunt knows who every other member is, even if he or she is not one of his particular cronies. We know who they are. A strange face, even in a field of 200, is soon spotted; he is not a member of the club, so to speak, and is at once noticed by the Secretary.

For this reason it is always advisable when hunting with a new pack of hounds, unless you are a guest staying with a member, to find out the Secretary before hunting begins and offer to pay the necessary ‘cap,’ whatever the sum may be with that particular hunt. It may vary from two to three guineas per day.

This system of finding the Secretary yourself and settling his little account before getting on your horse is a much more satisfactory and pleasant way of paying the dole than doing so when asked for it at a gateway while hounds are drawing, and when your wallet is in an inner pocket and a crowd of people are looking on. Moreover, by doing so at once upon arrival, you put yourself right with one of the officials of the hunt.

When capping first started there were a few 'dodgers,' who hunted with the full intention of dodging the Secretary and if possible a 'cap' or subscription.

All that is now impossible with a Secretary who is worth his salt. The cap has to be paid, so by all means do it without being asked for it, and do it *now*. Anyone will point out the Secretary to you.

So much for a very important factor, the £ s. d. side. Having paid this you feel you are not so much of an intruder. If you are turned out right and your horse is a gentleman no one will object to you coming as a stranger.

If you usually hunt in scarlet it is quite correct, in fact it is a duty to the Master that you should do so with his pack of hounds.

Why some men when hunting with a neighbouring pack to which they do not subscribe come out in ratcatcher I never could understand. It certainly is a very poor compliment to the Master.

Scarlet is right, ratcatcher is wrong.

At the meet, should the Master cast his eagle eye upon you for a minute it is polite to raise your hat to him, and he will, seeing you are a stranger, say 'Good morning' to you if you do so.

One doesn't seek out a Master as formerly to do this, but you raise your hat to him the first time you catch his eye, and he at once recognizes that you know something of the game.

I always made a point of speaking a word or two to any stranger who recognized the uniform of the hunt in that way.

It is more important when out with a new pack, even than with your own, to have a horse that does not kick or play up in crowded gateways, but you will be perfectly right in taking a line of your own if you feel so inclined, as soon as hounds are away and the Master 'drops the flag.'

The one thing you must be very careful about is to remember that you *are* a stranger, or, shall we say, visitor, and for that reason more than ordinary care should be taken not to break any of the unwritten laws of hunting.

Watch for growing crops, and do not jump fences unless hounds are running. Always be ready to open a gate for any of the staff.

Do not follow the huntsman round when he is making his cast, even if some of the field may do so.

By standing still when hounds check you show your knowledge, and, should the field trail on, their ignorance. A Master notices these things.

When once the hounds have settled on the line you may go where you like, and I always think it is better, or rather teaches you more, to choose as soon as you can your own line in a strange country than to follow in the mob.

You may get pounded, or thrown out and get 'left,' but you will see where you were wrong and it will be a lesson to you in future.

Note which way the wind is at starting, keep your eye on, or at any rate your ear listening to, the hounds, and beware of them swinging towards you.

Remember that the majority of people who hunt never once look at hounds or listen for them until they come up at a check. Do not therefore rely on others to be your guide in this.





YOU ARE NOT HUNTING THE MAN IN FRONT OF YOU, YOU ARE  
HUNTING THE HOUNDS WHO ARE HUNTING THE FOX.

If the leaders fail to listen or look, that is when trouble occurs. You are not hunting the man in front of you, you are hunting the hounds, who are hunting the fox.

In suggesting a line of your own it would perhaps be better expressed to say 'taking your own place,' and I do not mean that you should go out clear of everyone, or follow with a few who may ride to points and not to hounds.

A line of your own is, where possible, in line with the other leaders, taking your own place in the fences and not always theirs.

A very good rule is never to take a place nearer than 20 yards from another man. Two horses jumping at places four or five yards apart will often at the last moment both try to jump at the same place, with disastrous results.

When you have once made up your mind—generally by the time you are in the centre of the field—where you intend going out of it, don't, if you are on top with others behind you, suddenly change your direction. Don't swerve across as you approach the fence, and if your horse should refuse don't walk up and down it. Come right back and take your place in the crowd again. I am afraid ladies, should their horses refuse, are very often the worst offenders in this way.

One refusal, and back, is an unwritten law of the hunting field, not three tries as in the show-ring; but how few people realize it.

Always make way for the Master, huntsman and whippers-in at a gateway, and never let a gate swing on to any of the field.

If you are slightly ahead, hold the gate until the next one catches it, at the same time calling back 'Gate, gentlemen' if it is a heavy swinging one. It is just little things like these that one might classify as the manners of the hunting field, the 'courtesy of the wall,' as we say in Mah Jong.

Should you get put down and fail to keep hold of your horse, do not let anybody go out of their way, or lose their place, by chasing him, if you can help it. A dealer's man or second horseman will soon do this for you. In any case you will have a lot of leeway to make up, and it is rather rough on a member of the hunt if he should have to do the same through your troubles.

If an offer to catch him comes, always say 'Don't bother, go on, there are plenty of second horsemen, etc., who will do it.' After all a toss is your concern, the fortune of war; there is no reason why others should be penalized for your bad luck, and a second horseman can earn a little something for his trouble. Which reminds me that a small amount of loose silver in the ticket-pocket of your coat acts as an insurance against trouble. A bit of silver to the labourer who opens a gate for you never does any harm.

By the end of the day you will have made some acquaintances of the hunting field. There is a camaraderie of the chase still, even in these £ s. d. days of hunting, a democracy of the hunt to which all may enter if they know the game, a sort of club to which you become a visiting member, if you keep to the rules.

Princes of blood go out hunting just as ordinary commoners, and they take, and hold, their places with the best of the first-fighters.

Pilots! ye gods, they may sometimes officially be supposed to have these when Parliament begins asking questions, but what a supposition it is can be seen with any pack with which our Royal princes hunt—an official sinecure if ever there was one.

I have never seen one of our Royal family do anything but take a line of his own and hold his place with the best.

I think it is a mistake always to hunt with one pack, if it can be avoided. For many reasons, fresh fields and pastures new are always good for everybody.



With your own hounds, after a few seasons, the gaps and gates in your country become too well known if it is a provincial country; and there is instinctively a tendency to go for these, especially when you know you will get to hounds almost as soon as those who brave the flight of stiff rails or big fence, which you remember will soon loom in your path.

A strange country, occasionally, is good for both your horse and yourself. It sharpens you both up, so to speak, and also gives the added excitement of not knowing your fences.

A man who 'goes,' usually goes just as well in a country he does not know. He may 'take it' more often, but he certainly will enjoy himself, and both he and his horse will have to use their brains more.

For this reason never refuse an invitation from a friend to have a few days' hunting in his country. It may be better than your own, it may be worse, but in any case you will be learning something of other country's hounds, and the methods of other huntsmen, and be able to compare them with your own. If you are lucky and yours is a flying grass country, a day in a ditch and bank will teach both you and your mount something, for he will have to learn to creep and crawl as well as take his fences at a gallop. Above all it will teach him to jump off his hocks when the necessity arises.

A really clever hunter should be able to do all these things should the occasion occur. Even in the best of grass countries one sometimes comes up against a place which takes a steady and clever hunter to negotiate, and where many of the leggy flyers get into difficulties.

I once brought a little thoroughbred horse over to England that I had hunted in France with the Foret d'Halatte hounds. He had done nothing but hunt in the big woods round Chantilly and Fleurines, and with the exception of an occasional bit of

timber or bank, as far as I knew, knew nothing of 'lepping' as we know it in a good English hunting country. The first day I had him out here, the very first fence was one which, I discovered on rising at it, had a big swollen ditch on the landing side. Instinctively I loosened my feet in the irons preparatory, as I thought, for the inevitable toss, as it seemed by no possibility could we clear the ditch. When he saw the swollen ditch below him, the Irish blood in my horse must have surged to his brain, for I felt him give a vigorous kick with both hind legs at the top of the stiff fence, which gave the extra push to take us clear of the water below.

Needless to say he became one of the 'Not for Sales.' I hunted him subsequently in every description of country over every type of fence, none of which ever seemed to come amiss to him. His record was, I think, fourteen or fifteen different countries. Tosses we had—I have never had much faith in people who never have tosses—but never those which were his fault. One with a pack of staghounds comes to my mind, which I mention because it may be useful to you.

It was carted deer, and hounds had been held up for a minute or two in a lane.

When the pack were laid on again, I turned sharply to take a short cut out of the lane over, as I thought, a weak top-railed, but locked, gate.

That top rail, however, had more life in it than I imagined, with a slippery take-off. My little horse hit the rail and crash we both came down in the next field, wallop. As I went over his head I must have clutched him tightly round the neck, as on rising from the ground (we both did so at the same moment) I found his bridle detached from his head tightly clutched in my hand.

I just had time to fling my arms round my horse's neck on



NEVER LOSE YOUR HORSE IF YOU CAN HELP IT.

scrambling to my feet, unfortunately dropping the bridle rein from my hand in doing so, and away we went galloping across the field.

There was nothing to do but to hang on, or I should probably have never seen him again all day, being bridleless. By 'whoa-ing' to him and talking to him, I at last managed to get him to a trot, and finally a walk just as we neared the next fence. I think it was only being very pally together and knowing well my voice that enabled me to finally stop him and hold him by ear and nose until a yokel brought my bridle across to me, and we were able to follow on after the hunt.

A pal like that one doesn't sell.

But to go back to our fresh country. If you are keen on hunting the fox as well as riding to hounds, every minute you have with a strange pack will interest you.

The huntsman has perhaps slightly different methods to those of your own. He may be quicker or slower, as the case may be.



Then hounds may have more cry than your own pack, or vice versa, or may be handier in the field. There are a thousand and one things that will interest the newcomer to a fresh hunt. The country, the fences, everything is different, therein lies the charm of chasing the fox.

Perhaps this country is not a very good one, and it is really no good 'sitting down to ride' when hounds find, or you will be in wire, or jumping into lanes or gardens most of your time. But even here you have something to learn, for it is a much more difficult country to get about in than a good country, and valour tempered by a great deal of discretion is necessary.

In this sort of country, the Master probably hunts hounds himself; for if you are a Master, hunting hounds yourself in a bad country, it is better than being a Master and not hunting them in a good one—at least many of us have that idea.

He may be young, having a preliminary canter, so to speak, before taking a better country, or he may be of ample build above the saddle, and somewhat getting on in years for the strenuous work of hunting hounds. If the latter, he is very keen on a slow hunting day, but does not see much of it on a screaming scent, when his first whipper-in probably goes on with the pack and he comes along as best he can.

Possibly he is one of those extraordinarily keen and knowledgeable men on hunting the fox who are not built for horsemen, never could, and never has, jumped many fences even in his youth, valour, tempered with discretion again, having always been his motto.

For all that we take our hats off to him. The bravest men in the late war were those who were frightened stiff, and yet stuck it.

Again, our Master, by knowing every gap and gateway, main earth and covert in the country, is still able to get to his hounds, although sometimes a little late. This, however, is a too thickly

roaded—to coin a word—and populated a country for the huntsman always to be with his hounds, or for a fox to run in the orthodox way. In the course of the day ‘Look back’ is constantly heard, and our Master for this reason often knows a good deal as to where the headed fox has gone.

Hounds also have learnt to cast and hunt by themselves, which in this country is more necessary than in many better ones, and every hound throws his tongue, although some of them run to throatiness rather more than is expected of winners at Peterborough. One side of the country, however, is open downs, where our Master has had many great hunts, and where he can gallop and gallop, with not a beastly fence in sight to mar his view for miles.

What does figure or horsemanship matter to a keen hounds man on this side of his country? He can cast his hounds when necessary, wherever he thinks right, with no nasty big black fence looming in front of him where he feels sure his fox has gone—an ideal country for a Master of this description to hunt hounds in, and where in all probability his field are not thirsting for too big fences, and are perfectly contented as long as the pack has plenty of music, and long, slow hunts are the usual order of the day.

That is one side of hunting, but we take off our hats to them all the same. There is a motto attached to this: ‘Never crab a stout man for not jumping a fence’; think of the squelch if you were in his place and ‘took it.’ The fat, round-thighed men who ‘go,’ are in my opinion a thousand times braver than the light ones; and even these rounded figures may have been amongst the hardest riders before you were born.

One case, however, I have met, a real good fellow and one of the keenest of fox-hunters imaginable, yet who never was known to jump any appreciable fence. He never went home before hounds

turned for kennel, knew every hound in the pack by name, galloped like h—ll for points and gaps and generally managed to get there or thereabouts when they checked or killed. At the end of the hunt he knew nearly as much about the day as the huntsman himself. Now that man I call a sportsman, because it was really agony to him to miss so much of the hound-work—valour tempered with discretion again.

That is, however, one of the rare cases, where such a keen man was never able to face a big fence.

All the more honour to him for sticking to it all his life, for he must really have been keen on the chase as hunting, and not hunting for jumping's sake. I rather fancy, however, that cubbing early and late gave him the most enjoyment, for he hardly ever missed a fixture. Then he could see every move on the board, and knew as much about what the young hounds were doing as the huntsman.

It is not always the first-flighter who is the backbone of the hunt.





## LETTER X

### WHAT SHOULD A. DO ?

(I.) The field are all going through a handgate, but *hounds are not running*.

A. is on his best horse, a good performer, and the crowd at the gate is congested.

A nice fence runs away from the gate, but it has some timber in it.

A. says to himself, 'Why wait? Why not jump the fence?' He pulls out from the crowd to take it at a low place, where it has been repaired with timber.

His safe performer slips on the greasy take-off, tries to rise too close to the fence and smashes the timber, nearly unseating A. as he lands.

A. is in the wrong.

*Firstly, because he jumped a fence when hounds were not running.*

Secondly, he was wrong because he has smashed a repair rail unnecessarily, a rail which the farmer, to keep his cattle in the field, will have to repair the next day.



'SILLY ASS!'



Thirdly, he was wrong because there were plenty of bold men and women waiting before him at the gate who would have jumped it, instead of waiting, had it been the right thing to do.

And fourthly, he was wrong because he has brought down the Master's curses upon himself and 'Silly ass!' from the field.

(II.) The country is water-logged.

A. is following a file along a headland with a nice jumpable fence on his right. Hounds are running ahead of him swinging right-handed. The Master, a hard man over a country, leads this file. A. is about Number 20, with most of the hard-riding contingent before him. He has heard the Master shout something back, but could not quite hear what he said. Hounds ahead swung right-handed just as the Master shouted back his orders.

Although A. knows the Master never turns away from a fence of any description, he says to himself, 'Why not jump the fence and get to hounds on our right?' He pulls out, jumps it, and others behind him follow his example; galloping into the middle of the next field, where hounds have now checked.

The Master has turned in a gateway alone (where those who were following behind him are waiting), and is now galloping furiously towards A. and his followers.

'Why the h—ll did you go on to this land when I asked everyone not to? I have had an urgent request from the farmer to keep off it to-day,' he shouts. 'Do you suppose I should have turned away from that fence, the very obvious way to get to hounds, had there not been a very good reason?'

A. gets it in the neck, his followers get it in the neck, but for all that it is A.'s fault.

A. was in the wrong.

Firstly, because he heard the Master call something back.

Secondly, he knew he, the Master, would never funk a fence if it was the nearest way to the pack, unless he had a very good reason for doing so.

And thirdly, A. must have known that there were many better men to hounds before him, none of whom would have continued

to ride up the headland unless there had been a reason for it.

Fourthly, A. was wrong for not using his brains and thinking a moment before he decided to take the fence, for the Master's action should have been quite clear to him. He *knew* that some orders were shouted back.



GALLOPING INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE NEXT FIELD.

(III.) A. gets away well. Hounds breaking covert almost where he is standing, the huntsman has to go out of his way in the covert to get out.

A. dashes off on the tail of the pack with only a few of the field with him. These spread out right and left of him with A. and the pack in the centre.

A. is boldness personified, he has never got away so well before. A stiff stake-and-bound he takes in his stride, then crashes through the next fence—right into the middle of hounds.

Yells from both sides of 'Hold hard!' make his brain function once more, and he finds himself standing surrounded by the pack.

Up comes the huntsman, furious. Luckily for A., the Master has not arrived in time to see him.

'Dash it, sir, don't ride in the middle of the pack. *Do* let 'em settle down'—as A. slinks off, apologizing for doing what he did not know was wrong.

A. was wrong.

Firstly, because he started too close behind the pack, pressing them on before they had had time to settle to it. He forgot, or did not know, the old tag of fox-hunters, that a fox is generally lost in the first three fields, or when nearing the end.

A. was wrong because he was in a 'bad hurry' at the start. He was wrong because he took a line *dead behind* the pack instead of well to the right or left, and he was also wrong because the first thing he thought of was the fence in front of him, instead of listening and using his eyes to see what hounds were doing, and if and where they checked.

(IV.) A. is standing alone at the end of a ride in covert. Hounds are drawing towards him, but have not found. Some three hundred yards away he views a fox over the ride. A. hollas for all he is worth, and soon sees the huntsman galloping towards him from the opposite end of the ride with hounds at his heels.

A. gesticulates and points half-way up the ride towards the huntsman, who gallops past the place where the fox has crossed. Some of the tail hounds hit the heel-way and start running heel.

A. then gallops to the huntsman shouting 'Heel,' and the huntsman curses.

A. was wrong.

Firstly, because he should have galloped to the spot where he last *saw* the fox and then holloa'd once, 'Over—over—over,' standing across the ride, hat in hand, his horse's head pointing in the direction the fox had gone.

Secondly, he was wrong to continue holloaing after he knew the huntsman had once heard him. A huntsman likes to bring his hounds up to the spot where the fox was last seen with their noses on the ground feeling for the line, instead of in the air gazing at a fool holloaing.

(V.) Hounds have found in covert.

A. is outside and a fox breaks on his side of the wood; before the fox has got half across the field A. holloas and back goes 'Charley' into the covert again.



GAZING AT A FOOL HOLLOAING.

A. in this case was wrong, because he holloa'd too soon; he should have waited until the fox had got either across the field or through the opposite hedge, and he would by that time have heard whether hounds were running towards him on the line, in which case no holloa was necessary, or he might have holloa'd, 'Farrard, away,' twice. In the latter case it would tell the huntsman a fox was away. He should also have gone to the

place where the fox broke covert or to where he last viewed him, if he holloa'd.

By standing where he was some two hundred yards from where the fox broke he brings the huntsman to his point instead of where the fox left the wood.

Never holloa till you are at the spot where you last saw the fox, or as near to it as possible.

(VI.) Hounds have had a good hunt and their fox has begun to run short.

He has been viewed two or three times close in front of hounds. The pack have checked.

A. is standing by a fence with an overgrown ditch. Suddenly he sees the fox crawling along the ditch, and although the hunts-

man is casting towards him not a hundred yards away, he holloas like a madman.

The huntsman coming towards him calls, 'Keep quiet, sir, *please*.' A. does not hear on account of his excited holloas. Hounds come rushing up, heads in air.

A. was wrong.

Firstly, because he should not have holloa'd at all, but simply put his hat up, and



SEES THE FOX CRAWLING ALONG THE DITCH.

pointed to the place he had last seen the fox and in the direction he was crawling.

Secondly, one of the worst faults in hunting is to get excited when you see a beaten fox. The quieter you are then the less likely he is to move and the more likely hounds to catch him !

(VII.) Hounds are running. A. is rather badly placed in front of a fence with only one jumpable place. The man in front of him takes it and A., in a bad hurry again, is at the place almost before his leader has safely landed ; as A. is about to rise at it, the horse in front blunders on landing, tries to save himself, and comes down six yards on the far side of the jump. A. tries to stop his horse, but he refuses to answer to the bit, and A. just misses by inches the head of the man on the ground whose liberal curses he receives.

A. was wrong for not giving his pilot enough room. Always see your pilot safely away before you put your horse at a fence.

(VIII.) A. is trying a new horse, with a wonderful record as a big lepper. He knows the horse's reputation for being able to clear anything.

A big black fence is the first one when hounds go away, and



SEE YOUR PILOT SAFELY AWAY BEFORE YOU PUT  
YOUR HORSE AT A FENCE.



A., knowing his mount's capabilities, feels 'he will stop 'em.' At the 5-ft. fence he canters, up goes his show jumper in an enormous arc, and up goes A. as he reaches the top of the fence, in another and considerably larger arc.

A. was wrong, firstly, because he landed on his horse's neck, and because he forgot that many big 'leppers' can, when they bring their powerful hindquarters to work, jump you out of the saddle over a big place, and because he was not in rhythm with his horse and was sitting him too loosely; he forgot that this horse he was riding had twice the power and spring behind the saddle that his quiet old hunter had.



TWICE THE POWER AND SPRING BEHIND THE SADDLE THAT HIS QUIET OLD HUNTER HAD.

(IX.) A. has been asked by the Master to watch a corner of a covert while hounds are drawing it. It is only a small covert and A. canters to his corner rather bucked at being sent on for the first time to view a fox away. He hears hounds thrown into covert, and the huntsman's cheer to them as they draw down towards him. A. pulls out a cigar and lights it with a fusee. It is raining and there is a strong wind in his face on this side of the covert; he bangs his woollen-gloved hands on his knees to try to keep them warm. Not a sign of a fox does he see. 'No fox in here,' says A. to himself, as he walks up and down to keep himself and his horse warm on this windward side.



Presently he hears the huntsman blow hounds out with the long-drawn notes on his horn, and he immediately turns in the gate which gives entrance to the ride running through the centre of the wood, glad once more to get into the comparative warmth of the trees. When he has got three-parts up the ride, he hears a holloa behind him, and down the ride, galloping towards him, comes the Master, huntsman and pack.

'Where's he gone? Did you view him?' as they gallop by A. to the gate by which he entered the covert a few moments before.

Here a man on foot shows them where the fox broke a yard or two from the point where A. was originally sent to watch. This man instead of smoking and banging his hands about had hidden himself in the fence, and kept absolutely still, and without moving himself had watched A. dash away too soon.

A. never knew he was there at all.

A. was wrong for smoking, the wind blowing the smell from his cigar into the covert, for banging his hands about and making a noise, and lastly for moving away too soon from the point he had been sent to watch.

The Master will in future remember that A. was a failure, as he failed to view a fox which went



NOT A SIGN OF A FOX DOES HE SEE.

away from the actual point to which he had been sent on to watch.

If you are sent on to watch a point, hide yourself and your horse as much as possible as long as you can view the side of the covert you are watching, *stand still and don't smoke*.

(X.) The pack are drawing for an outlier in hedgerows, roots, etc. A. has viewed a fox, gallops to the spot and holloas.

There is a big sidewind blowing from A. towards hounds. A. distinctly saw the fox twenty yards in the field in which he is now standing and running parallel to the fence which divides him from the pack.

'Where did he go?' shouts the huntsman as he gallops up to the far side of the fence with hounds, and A. waves his hat in the direction of the line taken by the fox on *his* side of the fence.

To the astonishment of A., however, who distinctly saw the fox not in the next field where the huntsman and hounds are, but in the one he is in, the pack open and run hard up the far side of the fence opposite to him. A. shouts 'It's wrong; not there at all,' but the huntsman and pack take no notice, galloping on with a screaming scent until in the next field they turn upwind, and come through the dividing fence.

A. need not have shouted that the hounds were wrong, for they were not. The scent carried by the sidewind had blown towards the pack, and they consequently hit it off on the far side of the hedge instead of waiting until they had got into the field where A. had actually seen the fox go, and where he actually had gone.

A. was wrong, because he forgot that wind often carries scent a considerable distance downwind, and hounds will often hit off



'IT'S WRONG, NOT THERE AT ALL.'

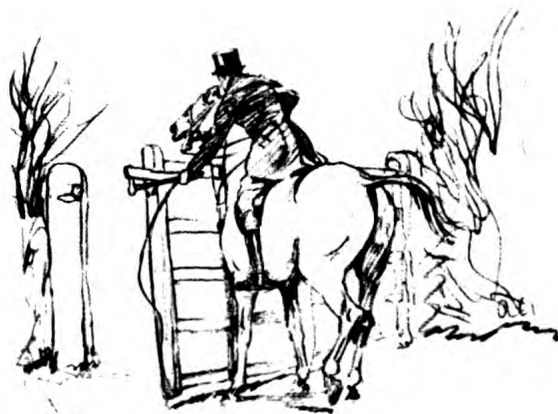


the line some distance on the downwind side from where the fox actually went.

(XI.) Hounds are running, and A. finds himself first at a gate to be opened. He has a crowd behind him. The gate opens towards him with an easy lift-up latch on the left-hand gatepost.

A. has his whip in his left hand, and easily lifts the latch by getting the handle of his whip under it. Twice he pulls the gate towards him but only succeeds in hitting his horse's shoulder with it, until one of the annoyed field finally has to come up and open it in the right way, using the right hand.

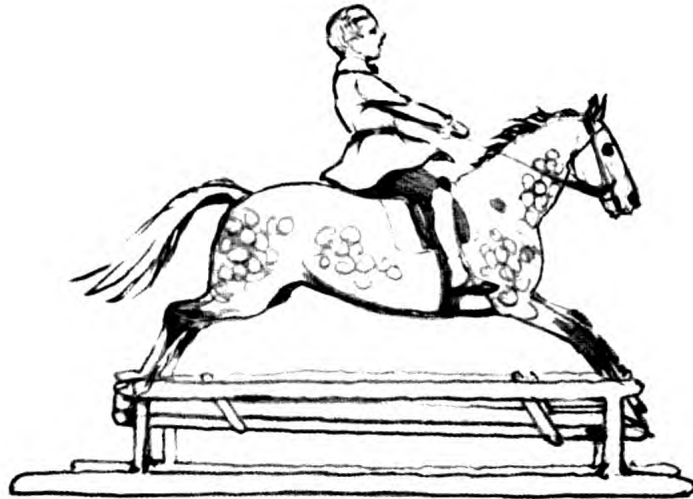
A. was wrong, because he did not have his whip in his right hand, and should have brought the right side of his horse towards the gate. In this case, as A. pulled the gate open his horse would have backed, and without leaving hold of it A. would have swung it open for the man behind him to catch.



LETTER XI  
FOR THE WHELPS

**T**HE first ride of all should be on a swinging rocking-horse. It teaches a child to hold a pair of reins, and to swing his body as the horse moves.

It also teaches the first lessons in balance and the use of stirrups.



TEACHES THE FIRST LESSONS IN BALANCE.

Any child of three or four years old can begin learning on a large rocking-horse. If not nervous, at five or six years old they can be sat on a dog-quiet pony, the smaller the better, but it is essential that the pony should be extremely *narrow*; the Shetland or fat driving pony usually used for this purpose is the worst type possible; a narrow old polo pony is the best, as long as it is so quiet that it wants kicking along. Fancy the agony to us if for our first ride we had to ride a cart-horse !



CLOUTSHAM FARM, EXMOOR.  
(‘THE DEVON AND SOMERSET.’)





The child may be allowed to sit on it for five or ten minutes each day, but no longer. One walk up and back in front of the house.

A groom should lead the pony, and at first each foot should be held on either side by men or women used to horses; a nervous nurse not used to horses is not a good person to do this.

The child even at that age should be taught to hold the reins, and to lean back when the pony is stopped.

Gradually children should learn to pull on the reins and stop the pony by themselves, but on no account should the man ever leave the pony's head.

Some weeks afterwards, when the beginner is able to stop the pony at any given spot and to kick him on into a walk again, a very quiet trot, the man and foot-holders on each side running with the pony all the time, may be tried. By slightly lifting the child from behind at the right moment of the rise in trotting, it will learn the rhythm of the trot.

When it has mastered this, it should be taught to stop suddenly and bring the pony into a walk at any given spot when trotting, and to kick it from a walk into a trot.

The child should on no account be allowed to ride without an active man at the pony's head, until it is perfectly proficient in stopping, starting, and rising at the trot.

I have seen so many children's nerves shaken by being allowed to start alone too soon, riding without anyone at the pony's head, that I make a very great point about this.

On no account should the first pony be corn fed. It should be for these first lessons rather low in condition than what is known as 'on its toes.' Nothing shakes a child's nerve more than for a pony to jump or fidget about.

A child has to learn by experience the amount of pull on the reins necessary to stop a pony, therefore this first mount should have neither a particularly light mouth nor a hard one.

Personally I prefer two thin reins on a curb bit only for a child with an ordinary mouthed pony.

On no account at this period must the pony ever be allowed to trot away with its rider alone, and the child must never think or feel that he cannot hold him and stop him when he wants to do so.

For that reason too much stress cannot be laid on the matter of teaching the rider to hold, stop, and kick on his pony for *himself*, while the groom is still at his head.

Never be in a hurry to take this man away—weeks and even months sometimes have to elapse before this is done—and never until the child is proficient at the walk and trot, turning and twisting in a figure of eight, and can easily manipulate his reins.

When the time has arrived for a further advance in tuition—such time being when nerve is good, the rising as the pony trots coming automatically as the reins are shortened—an advance may be made, and the canter and gallop taught.

Because these are the easiest paces, parents and especially old coachmen, I am sorry to say, are always in too much hurry to teach them.

It is not at the trot or walk with a man at the pony's head all the time that danger occurs, or that the child's nerve is damaged. It is at the canter and gallop, when the child finding how easy it is, and the pony possibly waking up a little may get out of hand enough, from the child's point of view, to give the rider a bad fright. Parents cannot be too careful about these faster paces.

Then it is that a good horseman should be mounted on a very quiet horse, for preference the pony's stable companion, with the pony on a leading-rein beside him. It is, however, not impossible for an active man at the first few trials of the canter to run by the side of the cantering pony for fifty yards or so,

and it is a good plan to have this done before the child is led by a mounted man. It then knows the movement of the canter before starting by the side of a big horse.

The man leading the horse should never check the pony if the child can do so. In fact the first thing in my theory is that a child should, as it learns the various paces, at the same time learn the pull necessary, the give-and-take pull, to stop his horse at any given pace.

As a rule the man who leads a child's pony just jogs by the side and pulls it up every time he wishes to stop.

This is wrong.

The child himself should always be taught to do this, the man by the side is only to be used as an emergency brake. The child must always give the initiative to go faster, slower, or stop ; and the man follow that initiative.

In this way the rider finds out he can stop his pony, and does not rely on his companion to do so.

The man should regulate his pace to his charge's, and not the child to the man's, as so often occurs.

Never urge the child to faster paces than he wants to try. Let the small rider urge for a faster pace himself when he finds it too slow. Here again usually the man proposes and the child has to acquiesce.

When the small rider is quite at home in all paces and can start off and stop quickly in any of these, then only is the time that the leading-rein can be done away with.



AND NOT THE CHILD TO THE MAN'S,  
AS SO OFTEN OCCURS.

It is always a good plan when first trying the trot or gallop, without the leading-rein, that the pony should be led away from his stable mate, and then turned round and his rider allowed to first walk, then trot, and then canter back to him.

After this test has been passed satisfactorily the use of the legs and heels in turning the pony should be taken seriously in hand, in fact it should of course be taught as much as possible from the beginning.

The child should be taught to use his heels to aid his hands before he begins riding alone.

When the rider is quite proficient in all these, a very low bar may be put up for the pony to walk over, 1 foot to 18 inches, and gradually raised until the pony has to give a slight leap to get over.

After this very small ditches should be negotiated, and little jumps on and off banks. A child should never be tired and should always finish a lesson wanting more.







WHEN WE GET TO THE AGE OF 'REMINISCENCING,' WE BECOME  
PRETTY HEAVY GOING.



## LETTER XII

### FOR THE OLD HOUNDS

ONE last word, not of advice but of suggestion. We live in a hunting country, we spend the happiest days of our lives hunting the fox in it, and when we grow too old for the saddle we sometimes spend much of our time dreaming of past glories and reading and hearing accounts of present-day hunts.

Old age, however, is always rather apt to crab the present. Never were there such hunts as in our day; never were so many foxes accounted for, such great huntsmen, or such great points achieved. This is as it always has been from the beginning and as it always will be. It is the heritage of *anno Domini*.

For all that, our duty is clear. We should never crab the young entry, or make too much of their faults and misdeeds in the field; rather, we should help them by advice, and by giving the reasons for such advice, and above all instil into them the love of the chase which has been handed down to us through the ages.

Youth, however, must be ridden with a light hand, like a high-couraged horse who is impatient of the curb; and we must not forget that many of us when we get to the age of 'reminiscencing' become pretty heavy-going.

Whatever we think, don't let us decry the present, for after all a bad fox-hunt, actually taken part in, is better than a ton of back numbers, however graphically described.

Youth, like young hounds, sometimes wants cheering on. To-day there is too much vague talk by octogenarians and correspondents in the newspapers of fox-hunting being on its

last legs. We should 'boost' the present, as the Americans say, and not crab it.

We all know that hunting to-day is much more difficult, and a Master now has to have much more tact than in our youth if he wants to keep all the wheels running smoothly.

The £ s. d. side of running a pack of hounds has to be thought of much more than in our time, and everyone who comes out now is forced to subscribe.

This is where we in our old age can help, and continue helping even when we are forced to stay at home.

Jorrocks's motto, 'It is the duty of every man to subscribe to a pack of hounds,' was a very good one, but many of the people now in possession of large estates do not realize this. Many of them have accumulated wealth in other spheres, and unfortunately some of them do not hunt or have ever heard of John Jorrocks.

For all that, it is the *duty* of owners of all large houses in a hunting country to subscribe to their local pack.

It is difficult to explain this in some cases. A new owner may say, 'But I don't hunt; I don't see why under these circumstances I should subscribe.' I think, Mr. New Owner, you are wrong. Hunting gives employment and pleasure to a very large number of individuals of every class in your county. It is not a business, and should not be looked at quite from a business point of view.

Fox-hunting is a national asset.

It helps the old and middle-aged to forget their troubles, and is a training-ground for the young. It teaches the latter to decide quickly in moments of emergency, to develop pluck and daring, and above all keeps girls and boys fit and clean, by giving them healthy exercise in the winter months. Hunting is a health asset for our children and grandchildren.

For that reason alone—if there were no others, and there are many which all hunting people know—it is the duty of every

resident in the country to subscribe to the local pack of hounds, in the same way that we hope he subscribes to the county hospital.

There is of course no *obligation* if the new owner is also a covert owner where hounds find foxes; but even in this case a small subscription from a wealthy man is not a great undertaking, and it shows that he intends to take an interest in the county in which he lives, although he may not actually take part in the sport himself. In a word, it brands him at once among a very large section of his neighbours as a good fellow.

Even if Mr. New Owner does not hunt himself, his children or grandchildren will surely want to do so. Support your local pack, however poor a fox-hunting country it may be, for all of us cannot afford to hunt in Leicestershire, and a bad country can hold some very good sportsmen. As they say at the board meetings, let us signify the same in the usual manner, and put our hands into our pockets to keep our national sport going, if only for the sake of the young entry.

THE END



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