HUNTING PIE
Does he catch the Master’s horse or his train?
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TO
MY WIFE—J O I N T M A S T E R
OF
THE TANATSID E H U N T
1 9 2 6 — 1 9 2 9
AND TO
O U R F R I E N D A N D S U C C E S S O R
Quite a number of people have written and go on writing about hunting which, so long as they make money out of it, is a splendid thing to do. But in these highly intelligent times a literary critic—if such a person has ever seriously connected foxhunting with literature—would be mildly excited by one discovery—so long, of course, as it was his own discovery. He would point out, in one of the more formidable quarterlies, that whereas the fiction of foxhunting is almost invariably jocose and hearty, the standard works of such bracing subjects as Hound Breeding and the art of hunting are as sturdy reading as an approved classic on artificial fertilisation. It must be for this cause that our popular novelists steer resolutely clear of such romantic subjects as the Master, the Huntsman, the Hounds and even the Fox. It cannot be that they know very little about these high and legendary figures because a novelist is what is called an imaginative writer. No, it is because these heroic men belong to the standard works and carry on their shoulders an abysmal burden of classic learning and monastic isolation. Apart from those tremendous country house reminiscences of Victorian times the Master has remained as remote as an archbishop, the huntsman as a ship's pilot (about whom nothing whatever is known), while even the hounds come as near high emotion as one of those stand-
ing committees which (when the speeches are over) settle down and run the Empire.

This is not as it should be. It should be possible to approach a Master—even in fiction—without losing courage and making him a retired grocer, or a wild Irishman, or a plea for Prohibition. Many Masters of great and historical packs have suffered this neglect with a stern but wounded silence. They have not complained, but perhaps you may have noticed a certain acerbity when you headed a fox? That's the reason. There's nothing gnaws like injustice. It is the same with the Huntsman. Sitting there marooned from a friendly hand-clasp, amongst all those ravenous hounds, have you not seen a pensive look in his eye? That's because he is misunderstood.

We desire to break down that ancient heritage of exile and adulation. Believe me these men are human. Many have families. Even a Master was young once—at least we hold that view. We would go further and anticipate the day when, in a West End theatrical success, a Hunt Staff will be represented in some powerful or moving drama. The spectacle of a Master about to propose would without question strongly impress any well-dined audience and reward the author with many and repeated calls from all parts of the house.

However, there it is. In these brief silhouettes of the background of a Hunt some of the little problems and lesser delights of the great ones are scrupulously indicated. That they do not occur in every Hunt all the time is gladly,
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even hurriedly admitted. That they don't even happen in some Hunts more than once a century is reluctantly allowed. That they never happen in any Hunt at any time is stoutly, aggressively and, if necessary, legally denied.

To those Masters, huntsmen, and hounds who appear in our studies in prose and pencil we cannot be too cordial. But, in order to avoid any suggestion of favouritism, or arouse petty jealousies in the English Shires and the United States we have considered it advisable to refrain from personal acknowledgement. To genuine hunting men, by which we mean the ones who hunt with every pack in England, all the characters in this book will be—unless our artist has signally failed us—instantly and affectionately familiar.

July, 1931.

Frederick Watson.

Bodynfoel,
Llanfechain,
Montgomeryshire.¹

¹ This is a genuine address.
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FOREWORD

LAST winter, while Mr. Harry Worcester Smith was our guest in Aiken, he received from England the manuscript of "Hunting Pie." We spent several very pleasant evenings reading these sketches aloud,—which is really the way they should be read to be thoroughly appreciated. It was like greeting old friends to see two of them again in the June number of The Sportsman, and now Mr. Connett has asked me to write a foreword for all of them in book form. I cannot imagine anyone wanting to read my foreword; probably nobody will. Why should they when they can go right on and read the book itself? But just in case some curious minded person should happen to glance at this page, I will say to them that in procuring this little sporting pie, they have insured for themselves some happy hours, and also added to their collection a book which will be a valuable addition to any sporting library.

Mr. Watson, who is himself an experienced Master of Hounds, has such a keen appreciation of the amusing side of hunting, and the incidents, trials, and difficulties connected with the management of a hunt, that I feel sure that every old Master of Hounds, and ardent follower of the chase, will thoroughly enjoy this offered delicacy,—especially so, as they cannot fail to recognize in the material used some familiar and well remembered experience of their own.
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I may also venture to say that even the entirely uninitiated, upon the opening and investigation of this delightful and originally concocted pie, will receive more surprise and pleasure than could be afforded to them by the unexpected discovery of four and twenty black birds in full song.

July, 1931.                                       MRS. THOMAS HITCHCOCK.
Broad Hollow Farm,                              
Westbury,                                        
Long Island.
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CHAPTER I.
WHY FOXHUNTING GOES ON

Far too little is known about the evolution of foxhunting. All over the British Isles great numbers of educated and even thoughtful people are riding to hounds (and occasionally over them) without what is so finely called "the historical sense." There is in consequence a widespread impression amongst the best kind of Deans that foxhunters don't understand Professor Einstein's simplest convictions. One must steel oneself to go further. Many foxhunters have even a lot to learn about the origins and ideals of the chase. Why in a word, does foxhunting go on?

Let us consider "The Evolution of Foxhunting." (There is something about the term "evolution" which is like an upheaval. Probably more loud speakers are disconnected at that word than any other in the English language. But we are not loud speakers.)

Now it is a commonplace amongst research scholars like ourselves that people have always hunted pretty well everything — and everybody. But there were the delicacies. If one has the historical sense the subject is elementary. In the Middle Ages, for instance, the chase was largely prompted by the number of guests for dinner. No other authority has sufficiently emphasised that superlative truth. Take, let us say, those old French tapestries with paralytic stags hotly
pursued by barons, fair ladies, scullions, princes, pursuivants, falcons, harpoons and dragnets. Note how everyone blew musical instruments of various shapes and capacities. Perceive how those who did not possess oxhorns, fog horns, or klax-horns, uplifted their voices instead and cantered over pages in narrow rides (which is why the old Masters — who evidently painted on non-hunting days — included so many spare ones in mediaeval pleasances). Another point. Imaginative writers get a good deal worked up about “the pageantry” of it all. They infer — if no more — that, after the Middle Ages, hunting decayed so that nowadays the huntsman is content with three problematical notes on his horn which nobody understands — not even the huntsman. Resent that attitude. Challenge it. Prove by old documents in the British Museum that your opponents are living under a delusion. Send the whole correspondence to the Times. That should finish the matter. It will.

But to return to the historical background. Upon the authority of Professor Schnuff of Bortsch, the great mediæval pedant, (or is it savant?) hunting and hospitality were synonymous between the heydays of Gollywurth the Gosh and King Tankard the Fourth. Today apart from a few hastily compiled sandwiches and one of the grocer’s lighter ports, the modern host welcomes a meet as a chance to float some of the cigars his favourite niece Bertha sent along for Christmas. Not so in the good old days. What happened was this. Upon a nasty dawn on November 1st when the baron Sir Morte d’Arthur still lingered within his bleak bedstead,
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a sorry knave — the term was prophetic — would announce (even then running) that a neighbour from the next county was blowing a few fanfares without. Full of the traditional surprise and delight of the host Sir Morte d’Arthur would peer blasphemously over the outer subterfuge. He would note that, clustered around his visitor, had come a covey of poor relations, the local yeomanry, the parson, a jester, a seneschal, some serfs and a few villeins (Note greater courtesy of spelling in those goodly times.)

Now within the larder where the scullions slept was nothing.

“Covers for fifty,” roared the baron, “we’ll go hunting.”

And that is how “covers” became a recognised hunting term.

It should by this time be clear that in pre-foxhound days meets were never arranged far ahead. The reason is not obscure. If you scrutinise once again those old tapestries and friezes you will perceive upon every face an expression of ferocious expectancy. This has hitherto baffled antiquarians, who merely regard it as an indication of the sporting instinct. What did it really imply? We know. Was it excitement to be honoured with the stag’s horns or the antelope’s hoof? No. It was inspired by what is known as “The Spirit of the Chase,” or “First Come First Served,” or “Anticipation is the Mother of Indigestion,” or any of those other less innocent old proverbs which our great families leave so delicately in the Latin. But the point is this — until the eighteenth century to hunt meant to eat, and even the Christmas
Annual squires and Deserted Village parsons, who bumped so amiably after a hare, were not oblivious to lingering over it with currant jelly and a glass of sound port at evensong.

Consider now the appalling intrusion of the fox. What a land-mark in English social life and thought! Here was a vagrant, a vermin, a public nuisance, and a creature derided by Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Somerville suddenly applauded as though it were fish, fowl, or good red herring. Was it edible? The fox as an aperitif recalls no tender poetic muse. It is a graceful, ardent creature but, garnished upon a side-table, even hardened cannibals have turned away in genuine confusion.

And so, about two centuries ago, it became, quite suddenly, an imperial duty to explain why men of affairs—Prime Ministers like Walpole, dignified clerics, and grave leaders of industry were eager to gallop headlong over saturated landscapes in the wake of a small and unprofitable war objective. It is now advanced that men of such intellectual prowess behaved in this ingenuous fashion because deep down under their eighteenth-century waistcoats there brightly gleamed the banner of the Anglo-Saxon message to civilisation. Otherwise why should George Washington take his hounds more seriously than his colleagues or the great Duke of Wellington chase foxes in preference to Frenchmen?

Unhappily there have been many schools of thought and it is a painful and at times treacherous tendency of human nature to advance varying solutions of this intricate prob-
Hunting survives as an essential training for cavalry officers
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lem. Let us consider some of the highly technical and ingenious explanations of that vexed question "Why Fox-hunting goes on."

(a). There are trainers and owners who say that fox-hunting has evolved and maintained the finest blood stock in the world and without it racing would wilt and fade away, which would mean revolution, chaos, no daily papers, no Derby or Aintree.

(b). There are the people who remind us what hunting means in the dreary winter time to farmers who cheer as the merry cavalcade crosses their wheat in all the abandon of a hot dart to draw another covert.

(c). There are Socialists, Communists, Pacifists, and other vegetarians prepared to perish in Bermondsey for Russia, who would be gravely rationed in rhetoric without the red-coated tyrants of old England. Are these passionate pilgrims to be allowed to wilt and expire? Yes.

(d). There are the Pall Mall Clubs who assert in a gale warning of sherries and bitters that it survives as an essential training for cavalry officers whose eye for a country does not necessarily mean colonial expansion, though these two admirable virtues are historically sympathetic.

(e). There are Conservatives who applaud it as the explanation of the British Commonwealth, referring of course to the democracy of the hunting field which means all fences are common property.

(f). There are economists who work out figures of oats, hay, bridles, spurs, habits (good and bad), mansions, wines,
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shoes, wages, hats, wreaths, cups, hospitals, and having finished, prove that if foxhunting went phut, so would the Exchequer but not the super-tax, which would only be lowered to accommodate all incomes, instead of merely incomes over five hundred with ten children of school age and an indigent grandmother.

Now you understand why foxhunting goes on despite railways, tarmac, wire, taxation, motors, financial depression, and the falsetto outcries of professional humanitarians. Now you are satisfied that it exists purely and completely to serve the good offices of industry, economics, democracy, agriculture, and the white man's gospel. Or aren't you?

Personally I am not.

I believe, and will continue to believe, that people, whether they are Prime Ministers or prime simpletons or whether they lived in the eighteenth or twentieth centuries galloped after foxes for one reason only.

What, pray, was that?

Because it's such jolly good fun.
CHAPTER II.

THE MASTER

There is a Master attached to every pack.

In the golden age of foxhunting the Master frequently owned both the hounds and the country and wore a seraphic smile. When he passed down the village street the tenants put on their smocks and cheered, the white-haired parson raised his eyes to heaven, and the children warbled the national anthem.

Nowadays things are rather different. It is quite usual for a Master to own nothing — not even the smile. But how tradition lingers. In one respect all Masters of every generation are united — they have always been expected to pay for everything and please everybody. Let us be perfectly candid — there is not much use being a Master unless such elementary duties are properly carried out.

A Master must therefore be a millionaire, an Adonis, a loss to the diplomatic service and possessed of all the virtues and aspirations of the early Christian martyrs with none of their ultimate recompense. When one reflects that there are about two hundred Masters in Great Britain alone it is a solemn and uplifting thought.

Apart from attending all functions of every description a Master should dine out on every possible occasion. It enables him to hear about little cases of local friction which
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otherwise might not have caused him the worry which is a Master's perquisite. It also provides openings for helpful information about his predecessors all of whom were quite evidently men notorious for their public virtues, intrepid bravery over a country, and as companions full of wit, genius, money, and personal charm.

That is one reason why highly strung Masters prefer to start new packs. There are others. . . .

It is absolutely essential that the Master speaks upon every possible occasion. There is no need for a Master to make a long speech or a different speech. In fact the most celebrated Masters have been content to make the same speech. It was first delivered in 1757 and was used continuously by Meynell, Osbaldeston, Warde, John Mytton, Corbet, and many other two-bottle men. It can be adapted for horse shows, political meetings of all parties, religious denominations of every creed, jumble sales, and eisteddfods. It is included in The Oxford Book of British Eloquence and The Perfect English Gentleman Vol. 10.

Here is the Master's speech —

"I am as you know a man of few words." (hear, hear) "I want to thank you all for turning out in such numbers today. Whatever people say about agriculture — and no one knows better than I do what the present government has brought it to — (outbreak of applause) . . . . Better times are on their way (heartening outburst) . . . . and so long as we all stick together (cheers) and keep the foreigner out (pandemonium) the interests of the land-owner, the
farmer and the tenant will remain very near the heart and prosperity of the British Empire.” (Sustained tumult and “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.”)

Many Masters prefer to arrange the Meets. This is done by asking shooting syndicates if it is convenient for hounds to draw their coverts on such and such a day. They answer that it isn’t. When a Master is keeping his mind pure and sweet as midnight toils in another year, he strives to think without profanity of shooting syndicates. Sitting there with a little toddy (solely as a tribute to the immortal memory of Charles Dickens) the Master tries to convince himself that there is some good in every man, including gamekeepers, poultry farmers and professional humanitarians. But even at eleven fifty-five his better nature revolts at shooting syndicates.

A shooting syndicate is composed of a band of exhausted business men who combine together on a strictly financial basis to “have a bit of sport” by peppering pheasants on Saturday afternoons. They rent small coverts, at discreet distances, in case their boundary neighbours happen to rear, and they bring their luncheons with their wives in the car to save extravagance at the local inn. If you are interested in “The Country Day by Day” you will find that these migrants seldom fail to arrive later than October 1st and depart reluctantly on February 1st. They shoot throughout that period with extraordinary pertinacity and fortitude, and are arrayed in suitings which haunt the memory. They can be relied upon to shoot everything, and as they fire by
volleys (rapid), a fox running down the line is frequently hit according to the law of averages. So are the members of the syndicate, but then they are not preserved for any authorized sport or pastime.

The Master's postbag is a formidable one. By his breakfast plate there is a heap of letters which would remind a romantic person of Washington Irving's "Old Christmas." A Master is not romantic. Nor has he heard of Washington Irving. But he does not require a séance to know all about those letters. One lot is addressed to Colonel Sir Parlow Stringhalt, Bt., C.B.E., M.F.H., D.L., etc.

Dear Sir,

At a committee meeting of (here fill in Agricultural Show, District Nursing Association, Conservative or Liberal or Labour Organization, Flower Show, Canary Show, Organ Fund, Ploughing and Hedging, Fire Brigade) it was unanimously proposed and seconded that you be elected our President for 1932. I take this opportunity of enclosing our subscription list for 1931 and remain, dear sir, etc.

The other lot is more terse. It is addressed to "The Owner of the Fox-dogs" and snarls:

Dear Sir,

I wont have your dogs over my land no more. It is no use and must stop.

Your obedient servant,

John Jones.
Busy blowing "I want my sandwich case"
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The second letter usually costs considerably more than the first. It may mean anything from twenty acres of wheat to a cow in a bog. Every Master of experience (which comes gently as the hail from heaven) knows that the better the run the larger the mail. For that reason a Master dreads a quick find, a splendid hunt, or a large Field. What is called "the younger generation" — by which is meant a gang of unspeakable Christmas children — makes no appeal to a Master's heart. All he craves for is solitude. He would be so happy if nobody came out hunting and if there were no farmers, or shooting syndicates, or pedigree hens.

There has been an alarming tendency within recent years for Masters to carry the horn. This is very undesirable. It takes up the Master's time, makes the hounds self-conscious and creates a very natural indignation amongst the Field who claim an old right to run down the Master and huntsman separately. There is also the outrageous insinuation that the Master may actually aim at economy on the wages. Once started this canaille may end anywhere. If it were untrue it could not be more contemptible.

When a Master persists in hunting hounds he is very liable to make a study of the science of hunting which, as everyone knows, is purely a question which way the fox has gone. Not only that, but when a Master hunts hounds he is apt to produce all kinds of noises with his horn and expect a Field to recognize "The Fanfare de L'équipage" from "The Recheat" when it is windes apart. There is only one consolation here. Masters who are busy blowing "I want
my sandwich case” are usually unaware that hounds have already left covert and are well away under the sympathetic eye of the whipper-in.

Finally the Master who hunts hounds is tempted to educate the Field in the technique of it all. He wants them to understand what a difficult and scientific business it really is. So he usually carries Beckford and when faced by timber or merely befogged at a check, he will explain the various problems which would baffle a professional huntsman, and when a hound speaks will know in which direction to look for a gap.

There is also the Lady Master about whom we know very little indeed. If any Lady Master also hunts hounds we should prefer to know nothing at all.

The Master dresses in the same uniform as the huntsman. This is the Master’s perquisite, but it is an old tradition that no huntsman need lower himself by being mistaken for the Master. Hunt uniforms are purchased second-hand near Covent Garden and may fit or not according to whether the Master is a stock size. (This explains why Selection Committees lay such stress on a personal interview.)

To the expert the huntsman is unmistakable. His clothes are made to measure and he has the best horse. But if in doubt trot briskly into the heart of the pack and above the outcries of chicken-hearted hounds you will hear a vintage voice, “Thanks for turning out, old boy.”

That is the Master.
CHAPTER III.

THE FIELD MASTER

A KIND of unwritten law has agreed to ignore the calling of Field Master. Scrutinise those snappy little text books of breezy instruction for the young rider. Explore their page of contents. You will see quite a mouthful about popping ponies over fallen timber, taking care not to arrive in a cloud of steam at the meet, and behaving in a reverent fashion towards the Master, his wife, his horse, his ox — and in fact all other items to do with the Master. What about the Field Master? Nothing; Simply nothing. And yet far more than the Master (who may even hunt hounds, so lost to all decency are some of them), or the Secretary (who merely cadges for cash) is the Field Master.

Who holds the Field in conversation when the young Master is blowing his new horn with a cracked lip? The Field Master.

Who explains why the hounds don’t find or don’t kill their fox? The Field Master.

Who congratulates the farmer on his {roots? wheat? pigs? children?}

Chorus of Testimony — The Field Master.
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Who suppresses the indecent exuberance of the young even if he cannot altogether curb the perennial ignorance of the mature? The Field Master.

Then why should the Field Master be treated as though his very profession forbade that he could be a man of clean domestic habits and high national ideals? The more one ponders upon such things the more one is moved to indignation (or ought to be) by the loneliness, the neglect, even the veiled antagonism which surrounds, amid the giddy throng, the obese and scarlet figure of the Field Master.

Let us not hesitate to pursue the matter. But how discouraging a subject it is. When was the office established? When did the first Field Master raise that desolating hand? No one knows. The past is mute. Who were the historic Field Masters at whose mild asides tolerant members raised a dolorous laugh? There is no record. By common consent this heroic and unapplauded race of men has been encouraged to slip from the scene in silence. Can you recall any ornate and heavily tooled volume entitled Field Masters I have Known, with formidable portraits in oils? I greatly doubt it. Can you even amongst hunting reminiscences — a department of literature surely the most innocent in the selective faculty — can you in those gigantic pantechnicons of the commonplace produce even one sentence such as this: "How well I remember that doyen of Field Masters, dear old claret-nosed 'Hold-hard Hugh'." I await your conclusion with confidence.

To press the matter to its poignant finality it will be ad-
mitted that it is impossible to occupy any position on a Hunt Staff for more than a season without receiving a dinner wagon, an illuminated address, a picture of your favourite hounds, your horse, and anything else that is yours. And yet I can trace no occasion upon which a Field Master has been presented even with an electro-silver pepper pot and a tea caddy for his wife. To pursue the matter into the abyss — I have never yet discovered whether a Field Master has ever retired or died. Masters — yes. But not Field Masters. By reason of no expenditure, gentle abdominal exercise, and an avoidance of risks and the modern tendency to rush about, they turn out season after season and were — unless I am mistaken (and I frequently am) — the inspiration of that noble song "Forty Years On."

But why this long conspiracy of silence? What qualities should a perfect Field Master possess? What are his duties? These are questions which for the first time in the literature of hunting will now be faced in a frank and scholarly fashion.

It may be said, as a very general introduction, that the Field Master is appointed for his gift of oaths, his subscription, or because the ordinary courtesies will not otherwise prevent him riding over hounds. The perfect Field Master should be in age and substance well past his prime and should be mounted, at his own expense, upon an imposing and reluctant hunter. If he has, some thirty seasons previously, been a moderate performer over a downland country that is no disadvantage because it means he has reached
a time of life when he is content to teach the young ones hunting manners.

The perfect Field Master should be a little hard of hearing because that enables hounds to slip away while he is shouting his congratulations to a distant farmer upon his root crop. A little delay of this sort can only be resented by persons who have hired their hunters for the day and do not distinguish between making sport a pleasure and a business.

During the first draw the Field should be enticed into some isolated enclosure out of sight and sound of hounds. Here everything will be snug and friendly until a passing farmer tells a neighbour on the highway below that he has sold the old pig and that when he last saw the dogs they were running in full cry for Toad-in-the-Hole. The perfect Field Master can then bid his party Godspeed, his task accomplished, and his mind at peace.

But there are others. There is the Field Master who not merely represents himself but the Master as well. This occurs when the Master has been elected because of his long passion for the chase in Lombard Street, or less indecently because he hunts hounds himself. This usually means he is young, keen, on the bone, and takes a deal of following. Here, in consequence, is the very cream of the Field Master's calling. Here is a type calling for all the qualities of all the Hunt Staff put together.

This brand of Field Master is usually found in those hazardous and brutal countries upon whose mention even provincial hunts assume a pained and superior smirk. In
such uncivilised places, unrecorded amongst memoirs and unknown to fame, the Master who conducts the Hunt upon a subscription of two hundred and another three hundred from his Aunt Euphemia, plunges into the undergrowth accompanied by, or in anxious pursuit of fifteen couple of hounds in variety and general gusto like the comic dog show at Blackpool. This sort of Field Master requires to be both hard and sound. He rides the kind of interested young horse who will lead some other Field at some future date — not yet. Clustered about this Field Master are the only two subscribers, six farmers on the sort of horses that were nearest the field gate at nine o'clock, and a parcel of boys and girls on squealing ponies. At the far end of the covert — which stretches more or less into the next county — in stained and tattered scarlet is Tom the kennel-huntsman, whipper-in, and knacker-cart man. Tom would not know what to do with his spare hours in a proper hunting establishment. As he does for his own horse there is no need to engage a stud groom to say he won't be out for a fortnight. A whipper-in is essential in a hunt like this because although hounds are in full cry he never "holloas" for mountain sheep, rabbits, roe-deer, but only for the genuine article.

When that happens the Field Master gets busy. There is no damage or poultry fund so the local farmers turn out in a body with forks and shot-guns to cry "God Speed" to their colleagues as they misjudge a post and rails. It would only infuriate the local shooting syndicates to ask permission to draw their coverts, so speed is more than an exhilara-
tion. Nor does the Field Master look twice at a thick place because a mountain fox may have travelled twenty miles on a visit to his fiancée, and when he decides not to break the journey home there is certain to be a good deal of give and take.

In such intrepid establishments the Field Master — who frequently sports a hunting cap to break his abysmal falls and is therefore indistinguishable from the huntsman — may be called upon to save the situation. There is only one drawback (apart from money) which such a Hunt admits, and that is the entire absence of a fox. As all persons of any hunting experience know, blank days invariably occur when strangers come out. Like the down-pour at every important summer fête there may be some scientific reason for this. But that does not comfort the huntsman nor is it balm to a Master's sensitive heart. It occurs at fixtures where foxes are carefully suppressed by the keepers of the magnate who wears a hunt coat after sunset. To this meet strangers come without breakfasting and mount in a spirit of anticipation and unaccustomed fervour. They are even prepared to be capped. But how empty is the cupboard! At about three minutes to eleven there passes between the Master and the Field Master, Secretary, Treasurer and occasional whipper-in a look which is both guarded and unmistakable. It means that only the Field Master can make the day worth a couple of guineas to anybody under eighty. As a matter of fact if one includes the Cottage Hospital it often tots up to considerably more.
The Field Master was carrying a plump rabbit.
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All the Field Master has got to do, in such a formidable country, is to slip away. Never mind about the Master now enjoying a cigarette with the hounds in the peaceful undergrowth. They will emerge later on. The Field Master merely slips away and is seen no more until he reappears going strong on some prominent place. In his scarlet coat and hunting cap he holds the eye. But not for long. Some eager young man yells “They’re running.” Someone else hears them in full cry. Someone else views the fox. What a bustle! What a mortified expression clouds the faces of the game-keepers!

Every competent Field Master with a good start and a key for the gate over the canal can now promise real sportsmen the run of their lives. The fox is running straight for Harlem Hall. That means he will cross a bog, a mountain, a nice slice of imitation Leicestershire (with the gates locked) and the Llangwlch Burn — a sullen but receptive affair with india-rubber banks. Why should he take that desperate line of country? Because that is his way home. That is why such astonishing points crop up in small hunts with long names. All that is required is an intimate knowledge of fords, gaps, quarries and dingles. There is a way over and under everything if you only know it. It is more than likely the old fox runs safely to ground in his earth at Harlem Wood. He usually does and if you could see the Field Master (who happens to live there) about ten o’clock that evening you would notice he was carrying a plump rabbit towards the moonlit bank above the stream.
HUNTING PIE

A LAST WORD

Don't ever sneer at the Field Master. He mayn't be much to look at but where would the Hunt be without him? Probably careering after the hounds.

THE FIELD MASTER (MOTOR CARS)

We hear from reliable sources that they are a temperate and respectable body of men who are compelled by law to carry the horn. We would prefer to leave the matter at that.
Hunt servants are entitled to draw the line somewhere.
CHAPTER IV.

THE HUNTSMAN

The huntsman lives beside the Kennels in order to hear the hounds. So he sleeps near them. He is sleeping there now. When hounds are ‘drafted’ it means they have wakened the huntsman. Huntsmen are great sleepers. It is due to their professional duties. Every fine summer morning a huntsman exercises hounds to show people how well their puppies look, and partakes of a little refreshment. He also shows young hounds favourite meeting places such as taverns and inns, and, as a huntsman must never give offence, he partakes of a little more refreshment. Then there are the farmsteads and subscribers with week-end visitors where, if it is a hot day, everyone partakes of a little refreshment.

So the huntsman sleeps a good deal.

In the best conducted Kennels the hounds all recognise the huntsman almost instantly. They know him by his coat and the bits of biscuit he throws them in advance, and because he has learned some of their names from the whipper-in.

But principally because hounds are the same to everyone. The best huntsmen are rather aloof. Anyone acquainted with the social standing of modern Fields will appreciate that Hunt servants are entitled to draw the line somewhere.
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But if you are near him he will turn and snarl — "No scent today, sir." Don’t be upset by that. It is the huntsman’s slogan. If there was a scent he’d be expected to catch a fox and, if he failed, some member of the Field would ask the Secretary out to dinner, and the Secretary would whisper to the Master, and the Master would get up a heartbroken subscription to enable the huntsman to “better himself.”

So the most famous huntsmen make their names in notoriously bad scenting countries.

You will require to know all about what happens hunting.

The huntsman having conferred in sepulchral whispers with the gamekeeper, (in order that he may leave nothing to chance), lets the whipper-in understand that there’ll be trouble if he “rides jealous” (a technical expression for “taking just and honourable credit”) and thus buttressed with every possible hostage to fortune, throws hounds into covert and disappears from view. He is now utterly alone. The hounds are invisible, either chasing rabbits, baying a hedgehog, or walking in single file because of the brambles. To amuse the subscribers every proficient huntsman will now proceed to carol in a reedy tenor old London cries, tootle his horn, and occasionally crack his whip and rate the vacant landscape in guttural adenoids. Thus he moves along and wonders if Caractacus will win the two-thirty at Warwick.

Upon the Field a kind of lethargy falls gently as the golden autumn leaves. How peaceful! What a life! Oh to be a huntsman! Believe me such silence is dangerous. The
HUNTING PIE

huntsman is lost to sight. But so are his hounds. He pushes his horse along sodden and blinding rides. He discovers the stile has been stoutly made up since he kicked it to bits and pieces at the end of last season. Delay. His mortified gaze searches the undergrowth for a way round. He cannot see any. Every huntsman quakes at that tense moment. Why? Because that is without exception when the whipper-in exalts his agonized throat and holloas to the wind that a fox has broken covert and in fact “gone clean away.”

Almost instantly a hound “opens.” The huntsman knows that trusted note. It is Paragon out of Melody by Crasher. No respite there. True — always true. “Curse him,” snarls the huntsman, “he’s always right.”

Everywhere movement. Far ahead, the fox, like a ball of thistledown. Riding right, the whipper-in. Plunging out of covert, the hounds. Two fields behind, the galloping, barging, — “you first, sir” — Field. That is when all the standard works on hunting agree that it is quite imperative that a huntsman gets away on the brush of his fox. Consider then the huntsman. His face full of brambles he is separated from his duties by about two hundred yards of pioneer country. With the courage of despair he whips out his horn and disperses a couple of shorts and a long — a couple of shorts and a long. He sees old Boisterous and Hermitage, real “huntsmen’s friends”,¹ and screaming “For-

¹ When a hound is called the huntsman’s friend it means he never does anything wrong from birth. He has never rioted or babbled or run mute or skirted or eaten deceased sheep in solitary places or bitten the best dog-
"rard away" as though the whole pack were with him, digs in his spurs and swears with the traditional recitative. It is in fact a moment when every huntsman worth his salt risks life and limb by remembering the gap in the covert fence. But how well he gauges the odds against him. Fifteen couple have left him in the lurch because they believe they hunt by instinct instead of a direct line to Beaufort Boozer. The whipper-in is scattering the heart of English right and left to give him the slip and take the credit for a kill. How true, is it not, that a huntsman has no real friend except the fox which knows if he doubles back even the stickiest huntsman will have time to catch up and cast the hounds.

Casting hounds is child's play. All that is necessary is for the huntsman to order the Field to stand quite still while he makes sure that the hounds have their heads up as otherwise they will cast for themselves, (which is what a huntsman is paid to do). That accomplished, it is customary to shout at a deaf tramp in a distant lane, and then argue with a half-witted boy on a manure cart. As time is everything the best huntsmen then cast in the direction the fox ought to have gone, after that in the direction it might have gone, hound or given the huntsman any sleepless nights. He is the huntsman's friend because he keeps him company in covert and gallops along when he blows his horn, and is the right sort for the flags at Peterborough and impresses visitors no end. He doesn't care much about hunting but there are plenty of others who do.

For the oaths which have comforted the greatest huntsmen, see our forthcoming book *Curses for Coverts*. 5 guineas net. Signed by author as though he knew you personally, 10 guineas net.
then Mr. Smith's famous cast which is round everybody and everywhere, and if that fails (as it will) the huntsman will blow his horn and "picking up the line" as it is called, bustle his hounds along to the nearest covert where, in a properly conducted country, a fresh fox is certain to go away like blazes.

That is why hunting hounds, though a great art, is also a great craft. But believe me it isn't everybody's job. Old huntsmen never quite lose the habit of peering over the left shoulder. Is it memories of the Master's languishing eye? No sir, it is not. Is it because a couple of hounds are missing? It'll learn 'em to catch up. Is it for a Christmas Box? Certainly not.

No. A huntsman is haunted — forever haunted — by the menacing thunder of the galloping Field.
CHAPTER V.

THE WHIPPER-IN

When near the Kennels, pop in for an hour or two because it shows interest and steadies the staff. If you shout, toot your motor horn, and finally search the premises, you will come upon a sad looking, emaciated man with a hatchet face, a sombre jowl and a stained kennel coat. That is the whipper-in. He will find the huntsman. While you sit in a reverie under the fragrant shelter of the boiler house you may care to give — he seldom receives more — a kindly thought to the whipper-in.

You may wonder why he always looks like a Burne-Jones study without a safety razor. You may speculate (until the wind veers abruptly over the boiler house) whether the parents of whippers-in are people who have made a hideous failure of life, and as a kind of challenge to civilisation have solemnly produced this brand of Hunt servant. It is a sociological problem upon which even wireless professors have shown reluctance to embark.

To the casual observer the whipper-in is the forlorn figure mounted on a rawboned horse in the most exposed angle of a rain-slashed landscape. There he crouches — his jaundiced eye upon the angle of the dripping covert, a succession of cold drops vacating his frigid nose, a hopeless hedge and ditch before him and a fox just sneaking out of the bracken.
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Far away, the huntsman is croaking in the shelter of the larches strange foreign sounds like "eu in there" and "Lu lu" or "Ike to Seamstress — good old betch." In the hollow of the slope cluster the affrighted Field. Gosh — what a day for a fall!

The whipper-in watches the fox out of the corner of his eye. Nothing moves except the continuous procession of drops from the tip of his nose. The fox pauses an instant, one delicate foot upraised, the perfection of agility, balance, and the eternal spirit of an English winter. The whipper-in has a greater personal knowledge of a fox at that dramatic moment than all the poets, naturalists, humanitarians, and other sensitive souls in Christendom. But he is not a poet or a naturalist — he is a whipper-in. And even a humanitarian confronted by that drenched and incorruptible thorn hedge would turn aside and weep a tear for a Hunt servant with so much wear and tear dependent upon so small and energetic an objective.

The whipper-in stares drearily at the fox which, satisfied that hounds are approaching, reaches the hedge — that ruthlessly made hedge — and twitching his brush is off like a wind-spun red leaf for Cobblers Copse.

Instantly the whipper-in is galvanised. He raises himself in his stirrups. (The rain now pours from his coat upon his saddle.) He thrusts a finger in his ear (because that is traditional and whippers-in are die-hards to a man). He opens his ugly disillusioned jaw. He emits with the full force of his lungs a piercing and electrifying "holloa!"
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Then — his primary duty done — he shoves his Roman-nosed grey at the least impregnable part of the fence, closes his eyes, and, with a sullen crash, has once again acted up to his mournful creed of self-obliteration.

Having viewed the fox away the whipper-in becomes part of the landscape until there comes a check. When the huntsman has made his regulation casts he may take pity on him and put him right. What else does he do? He looks after hounds in Kennels, treats the Master with unfailing tolerance, and receives no tips or perquisites. A good whipper-in seldom becomes a huntsman, because huntsmen do not favour that sort of man. But if he has saved sufficient he prefers to enter the undertaking business where his sad air will receive its just recognition and recompense.
He must collect from a stranger who has turned up discreetly late.
CHAPTER VI.

THE HUNT SECRETARY

A HUNT COMMITTEE is represented by a Hunt Secretary, who is also the Treasurer if there is any money about. Otherwise he is called an Honorary Treasurer which as everyone knows means there isn’t.

The Hunt Secretary should be a youngish, bachelorish, highly confidential retired cavalry officer. In the good old days the best Hunt Secretaries were drawn from the Mounted Infantry because if they weren’t on they were off or both. An efficient Secretary should be mounted on a cross between an Aintree runner and a Metropolis charger, because it is quite essential that he outshines the thrusters at the top of the Hunt and also convoys the dowagers at the tail. He must be neither fast nor slow, hot nor cold. During a quick dart across country he must shout a cheery word to a farmer shaking — through sheer excitement — a gleaming pitchfork, collect a couple of guineas from a stranger who has turned up discreetly late, and yet arrive in time to register his official guffaw when the Master is reminded of a favourite anecdote at the kill.

Hunting, as everyone knows who has heard the Master’s favourite speech,¹ is conducted solely for the benefit of farmers. So after there has been a successful run (with

¹ See page 8.
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heaps of strangers and holiday children) it must be a real pleasure for the Secretary to trot round and talk it all over with dear old Mr. Short over whose land half the fun happened. People say that next to the hunt itself comes the joy of taking every fence in retrospect. That is exactly what the Secretary does with old Mr. Short. They trudge about in the drizzle and the Secretary sees once again just where Miss Pumphrey (“The fat old girl on the broken-winded slug,” snarls old Short) crashed badly in a boundary fence, thus enabling old and young to pass unscathed into further realms of hope and glory, ardently followed by the bullocks all agog for the clover next door.

During this preliminary outburst the Secretary should be quite mute. It is then his duty to agree with old Mr. Short that no-one must ever cross his land again, and that the Hunt is, in fact, warned off.

The correct procedure then is to walk in absolute silence for fifty yards.

Old Mr. Short, whose homicidal fury is now on the ebb, will complain that it is a great shame considering hounds have crossed his farm for a century that he should be compelled to take such a drastic step. The Secretary must agree as before, but say firmly that it is inevitable and the Master did not close an eye because he knew he would do exactly the same himself.

The correct procedure then is to walk in absolute silence for another fifty yards.

Old Mr. Short will then say it is the strangers who ruin
everything. That no countryman minds his neighbours like the Master, or old Colonel Noodle, or the Lampeters, or the Jacks of Jacks Hall. The Secretary grudgingly admits that and says the Master wrote Miss Pumphrey a terrible letter that very morning which would probably prevent her ever being shoved on to a saddle again. Not, of course, that it affects the position, only the Master wanted old Short to know.

The correct procedure then is to enter the yard and leaning on the wall stare at the pigs. (Old Mr. Short is a great one for Middle Whites.) The Secretary then remarks that the Hunt is giving the challenge cup (now in Mr. Short’s kitchen) to the winner outright this coming show. Old Mr. Short (who is a certainty) says nothing to that, but rams the point of his stick into a pig.

The correct procedure now is to enter the kitchen and stare at the cup itself, during which young Miss Short (who is certain to admire the Hunt Secretary a good deal) fetches some home-brewed. As every Hunt Secretary carries a good brand of cigar for such moments they just sit and puff and have a refresher and puff again, and the Secretary recalls, with a far off smile, how young George (old Short’s son) used to have a dart at anything before he went overseas, and what a row there was when he smashed William Pinchup’s new gate. To which old Short (who hates Pinchup) is certain to remark that it’s a pity when there’s no give and take amongst neighbours over a bit of sport. Old Short will then remember how he rode even harder than young George

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when he was young, and how Sir Richard ("dead and buried now these forty years, poor dear gentleman") told him where to go to many a time.

The correct procedure then is to sit and smoke and have another refresher and puff their cigars up into the hams. The Secretary can then remark that the Labour people are bucked no end about this trouble because they abominate the Hunt. At which old Mr. Short (who is a Tory) says they'll laugh the wrong side of their faces if they aren't careful.

In fact by the time the Hunt Secretary has left, carrying a rare chunk of cheese and waving to old Short (not to speak of Miss Short) all down the road, the main outcome of the conference is that hounds meet next Saturday at Little Barrow (which is the name of old Short's farm) just to show there is no ill feeling, and that the enemies of fox-hunting can go to another shop this time.

It is, you will perceive, not every man who can be a successful Hunt Secretary and that is why he deserves your utmost allegiance and generosity.

It is better, of course, that the Secretary shall remain a debonair and confirmed bachelor, because it means he can cajole maidens and even matrons, in the right kind of households, to walk a puppy. It means that he dines out more assiduously, which is much nearer a subscription than giving a lead over rails, (though shepherding nervous Dianas is a kindly occupation and holds a Hunt together). But even Hunt Secretaries wax and wane. Time plays the dirty
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on us all. We may never lose our charm but we fluctuate in figure and contemplate stiff timber with a deepening reluctance. It is then that the ideal Hunt Secretary makes (like those heroic insects who perish in matrimony) his final exit from the scene. A new and ardent Secretary is appointed to convince farmers that foxhunting and agricultural property are synonymous. Which is as it should be.

But what of that battered veteran the retiring Hunt Secretary? Are his duties over and his harness laid aside? By no means. It is an old, an honourable albeit poignant custom that he proposes, and is without exception instantly accepted by the plainest daughter of the largest subscriber.
CHAPTER VII.

THE HOUNDS

MODERN hunting people are rather prejudiced against the hounds because they are so apt to get under horses' feet when they are jumping fences or in full gallop over wheat. But tradition is tradition, and every pack of any standing maintains a few hounds for Peterborough, and the Puppy Show, and to go about with the huntsman when he passes the village inns. Always remember hounds are counted in couples. It is important to mention this as sometimes you hear it said the huntsman must have had a couple. That refers to his duties.

In the good old days before huntsmen knew so much and rode so fast the hounds were expected to find their fox and hunt him too. As no one knew the exact spot where a fox might be it was customary while the hounds were busied about their duties for the Hunt staff and the members of the Field to combat the inclement weather within a tavern. Now it is quite obvious, when the hounds push up their fox that unless they let the huntsman know, there would be disappointment all around. So it was absolutely essential that every hound possessed a resonant, carrying, long distance call. A secondary but by no means unworthy ambition of every Master was that the music of a pack should harmonise. There might be small hounds with penetrating
sopranos or huge hounds with reverberating basses or medium hounds with throaty tenors. But harmonise they must. So in old records you may still see if you can find any (which we must admit we have failed to do) Master thanking Providence that he can trace back his eminent mezzo-contralto Plaintive to that great basso-profundo Quorn Caroller.

Only in Wales today does this reverence for hound music survive. Why is that? This is the first time the truth has been revealed. It is entirely due to the national weakness for local eisteddfods which are competitions in voice endurance either alone or in parties of resolute friends. In many a lonely cottage all through the winter months grandfather and grandmother, parents, Auntie Rebecca from Bwlch-y-gwlch, and the man who feeds the calves—all of them inflamed with high tea and indigestion—sing without cessation for eight hours by the old kitchen clock that passionate summons "Awake Beloved" to the fine old tune of Aberystwyth. Consequently hound puppies who have been walked in such melodious homes acquire a range of tongue which is never heard with the Bicester. Indeed its practical object has in these modern times quite disappeared. For one thing everyone (even the huntsman) knows just where a fox will be found and in which direction he is bound to run. In fact only very athletic and carefully dieted foxes can hope to keep much ahead of members who are trying out blood horses with an idea of Cheltenham or Aintree. For another in these hard times, when the influence of the City
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must be scrupulously observed, a mute hound does not make such an infernal rumpus when a large subscriber lands on his stern over a post and rails.

Now about the puppies. A whelp is the innocent with the trustful gaze who is walked by those simple persons who hope they will win the silver cup for the parlour window. A puppy does not become a hound until he has eaten all the hens and killed all the cats at the farm where he is walked, taken his place in the Puppy Show and met the huntsman.

Every Hunt must have a Puppy Show because that is how a Master has his young entry kept and fed and taught incurable habits for nothing. Puppies enter to fox in the cubbing season. As they have hitherto entered to everything else it is quite a new thrill for them. The Puppy Show is held in order that the simpletons who have walked a puppy, or even a couple, may put on their Sunday clothes and realise how much better their puppy looks than the other people’s.

Puppies are destructive, expensive, homicidal, and full of sorrow. Fortunately they never live. It is rumoured that some busybody has invented a vaccine which will preserve them from distemper. That is, we suppose, what short­sighted people call progress. Do we speak too strongly? Without a surplus of puppies there will be no puppy walkers and without puppy walkers no Puppy Show. Don’t forget that a fifty-to-one chance for a prize, a dish of tea and the Master’s speech is about all the farmer’s wife gets out of the Hunt. And if the farmer’s wife loses interest what
then? What indeed! Where's your precious vaccine now?

It is customary at a Puppy Show for the Master to invite two or even three fellow Masters to come over and judge his puppies. With derisive smiles these Masters accept. They arrive and put on kennel coats and have little books and look very knowing indeed. In a ring where all the walkers can see their puppies dragged and propelled about the ring the judging goes on for hours and hours. The only other function comparable to it in length of time, solemnity, and absence of all spiritual or physical compensations is the pibroch playing at a Highland gathering.

After the judging is over the whole party with hosts of members, strangers, farmers, and all their friends troop towards the tea-tent. Here the Master, whose smile has never fluctuated throughout the day, is surrounded by fellow Masters of all kinds—even of beagles and otter hounds—so broken down are social distinctions on that great day.

After tea—with which cold beef and ham may be eaten if the Master can run to it—the prizes are presented. Then come the speeches. These are always given by the same people at every Hunt because it is absolutely essential that the right thing is said every year. After the most coherent visiting Master has congratulated the Hunt on such a fine show of puppies, old Mr. Dumbleday gets up. There is one of his sort in every Hunt. He has retired long enough to forget what farming is really like, or possibly he has lived so long he goes back before the bad times; in any case he has spent an hour with the Hunt Secretary, who writes all
the speeches anyhow, for fear they don't stop. Mr. Cracklethorpe, the Field Master's gamekeeper (who either has a fox in the home coverts or makes out his own advertisement for The Field) then deprecates the notions of some keepers who blame the fox for their own lack of knowledge. He recalls instances of vixens adopting pheasant poults who had lost their mother (he doesn't say how). There is then a steady old subscriber to express the feelings of the gathering towards the Master. Finally the Master rises and consulting his notes from time to time makes the Master's famous speech.¹

What now about the hounds?

Well there are hounds and Welsh hounds. The English hound is a depressed looking replica of another English hound. The Welsh hound looks like no other hound nor like a hound at all. It prefers its hair on end, is voracious, and usually lurks in a butcher's shop. But it can kill foxes. In fact it can kill anything. On hunting days in Wales, Secretaries advise farmers to shut up all stock smaller than a Hereford cow. Welsh hounds, through what advanced French scholars call "joie de vivre," will hunt any line from the postman reading the morning mail to the widow's only nanny goat, and they will speak with authority and all together to anything from a weasel to the vicar's Angora rabbits. The Welsh hound is also useful for sheep dog trials in the summer because it keeps him in practice for the riot later on and may even earn a bit in between.

There are harriers and beagles, but no real gentleman

¹ See page 8.
Members can pull one rein and still maintain the usual grip on the saddle.
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knows much about these. The harrier chases a hare in small circles so that members can pull one rein and still maintain the usual grip on the saddle. When the hare crosses the same field for the seventh time, how the farmer cheers and waves his hat. The beagle is smaller and therefore eats less. It is followed quite a long way off by persons of maturity acting under medical advice.

To establish a pack is child’s play. The proper procedure is to write a nice boyish letter to some Master — anyone will do — and put yourself in his hands. Explain that you have money but no practical knowledge (because he will reply more quickly then), and that you feel it is cheaper in the end to pay a good figure for really good hounds which will hunt all day and kill foxes all the time and be steady and not eat the sandwiches at the Meets. Don’t lose your head if he puts through a long distance call.

The Master will invite you down to his kennels either for the night or for luncheon. (No-one ever sees kennels before a hearty meal.) When he has explained that he has the best pack and huntsman in England you will know your luck is in. But be prepared for a rather trying scene. It happens when the Master tells the huntsman he has decided to part with old Chorister. The huntsman will start back and in a strangled voice exclaim “Not old Chorister, Sir!” proving beyond cavil what a one old Chorister must be. Himself considerably moved, the Master will explain. He will say that you are a beginner going to hunt hounds yourself and that Masters must cling together.
You will be surprised when you see old Chorister. He will strike your inexperienced eye as very old, very tired, and extremely deaf. But you will know by his price you must be mistaken. Dreadnought, Captain, Hornet, and Champion will also be yours. As they are all sixth season hounds they have nothing to learn and will in fact teach you far more than you might suspect.

If you pay half a dozen calls like that you will have your pack, and very soon you will know where you are. You will also know where they are. Some will have kennel lame¬ness, and some will only hunt now and again. The rest will follow you about in covert with dog-like devotion or tarry with the Field. Never mind. Console yourself with the thought that some day you will get a letter too.
CHAPTER VIII.

The Hunter

There is nothing easier than buying a hunter. All you require is a recognised bank and a cheque book. In order to make a start refer to the advertisements written by owners compelled to part with exceptional performers and frequently delighted to throw in a photograph as well. These are all the property of owners rejoining their regiments abroad. To anyone with the welfare of the Empire at heart it is a constant stimulus to tot up every week the steady increase in these fine young fellows. But this class of hunter is best suited to the purchaser who has learned his hunting from the Christmas calendars. These are the "very bold and gallops-on" sort. That means they never fail to do so when you hit the turf. These hunters also "never turn their heads" and are consequently a reassurance for timid riders approaching heavy timber. A favourite advertisement which may mislead keen horsemen remarks, "A stayer to the last ditch." This merely warns you that when this kind refuse too late and are received by three feet of water it will take two shire horses and farm tackle to get home before lighting-up time.

For elderly horsemen who shrink from the first flight—I mean, of course, with the horse—hunters should be "confidential," which means they will stand for hours be-
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side the decanters on the lawn. This type of hunter has usually "carried owner's wife and children." Better see him even if you have to travel into Somersetshire or Llangagogoch, and choose a market day as that will prove whether he carries the basket of eggs and butter as well.

Some people are so self-sacrificing that they detest entering into rivalry with fellow members in front of some barely possible place in an otherwise impregnable fence. The market phrase for their kind of horse is "Never misses his turn." Nothing could be more accurate nor yet more delicately phrased.

Then there are the hunters "to good homes only." These old favourites make a very natural appeal to the true animal lover, and if they are quoted at a creditable figure it is because that rules out dealers and unscrupulous people who want to get commercial value out of a horse, which, in a dumb animal, is rather shocking. Although unable to do more than a short day a fortnight these family friends will trot briskly for an apple in the paddock, and it is reassuring to discover that they eat just as much oats as the work-a-day ones. Recently, too, the horse-box and motor trailer have enabled people to convey elderly hunters to and from meets so that they can be mounted and kept in touch until the hounds move off. A word of warning. We know very little about motor boxes or trailers but we noticed only last week an advertisement of one which guaranteed "a ramp at both ends." We hope not. It has always been the proud boast of the hunter trade that at least one party must be of an honest if credulous disposition.

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That's The Knacker all over. That's your horse, sir
Then there is the auction. There are so many horses there on a Monday that you cannot fail to pick up as many as you please. Just buy a catalogue and embark with quiet and gentlemanly mien upon your mission. If you study the catalogue behind each horse in turn you will act with courtesy and equal fairness to all, and — believe me — owners and stud grooms realising you invite their cooperation will lay aside every call to oblige you. Whenever you see a horse that catches your eye, be sure and stop. If the groom is a simple honest fellow he will ask what kind of hunter you require. There is only one known answer to that question. “I want,” you will reply, “a confidential hunter with perfect manners, rising eight, that will gallop on or creep and crawl, win a point-to-point, carry a lady, snaffle bridle, jump stiff timber from a standstill or twenty-five feet of water from a hand canter. He should win at the summer shows and —”

The groom who has nodded dreamily up to that point will probably check you there. He will say “That’s ‘The Knacker’ all over. That’s your horse, sir.” At that point a blue-eyed gentleman with a high complexion and an old-fashioned tie will proceed, in an absent-minded way, to remove the rug, and the groom starting from his reverie will whisper with hoarse reverence, “There’s the Capting, sir — there’s my master.” So long as it is his horse and he really holds the rank of Captain, the rest is child’s play.

The Captain will warn you that the horse is practically sold as the whole Hunt is coming up by special train to bid for him. Don’t show the white feather. He will respect you
all the more if you merely enquire, "Is he sound?" To that the Captain will reply that he never has a hunter vetted because if it carries him six days a week at the top of the Hunt there can't be much wrong with it beyond a few hunting "lumps and bumps." These will probably be noticeable. If they weren't the Captain would, of course, feel it his duty as an officer and a gentleman to point them out.

About this stage in the conversation a friend of the Captain will pass accidentally, which is unfortunate in a way as you will learn with chagrin that he has come up specially from the wilds of Jermyn Street to buy "The Knacker" for his wife who is nervous and must have a hunter which has never fallen or "takes hold" or behaves, in short, like a hunter. This places you all in a very awkward position but as you are men of the world you will act in a straightforward fashion by stating your limit, so that the Captain's old friend can know whether he can afford to bid you up — I mean of course bid against you, or whether he had better catch the last express back to Jermyn Street. You will discover, however, if you manage to be beside him (which is unlikely) that he stops nodding a guinea below your outside figure so that you get the horse after all and no unpleasantness, which is as it should be between true sportsmen.

Finally there are the Hunt horses. These appeal very strongly to suspicious catchpenny bidders who never ask our advice. They are satisfied these must be genuine performers because they have carried the Master and the Hunt
Staff in the first flight all the season. That is why even very small provincial establishments with an amateur whipper-in have such a fine show of blood hunters when the summer sales come on. The stud grooms in charge of Hunt horses are certain to be guarded to your enquiries. Don't be discouraged by this. After all they have only seen them a few hours longer than you have. One little point. If you prefer a horse "ridden by the Master" make sure he is under eighty (I mean the Master). Some of these confirmed M.F.H. are wonderfully long-lived if they go quietly and don't jump.

When one of the Hunt horses is finally knocked down to you, don't misjudge the confidential and pensive smiles which haunt the large gathering who attend Hunt sales. Remember they know all about the horse. Never mind, so will you very soon. Possibly he is not all you were led to believe. Possibly you will desire to consult us on the best way to dispose of him without loss or even with a reasonable profit. The knowledge of many years' practical experience is contained in our next section.

Selling a Hunter

There is no way so far as we are aware.
CHAPTER IX.

The Fox

The fox is the patron saint of old ladies of both sexes who think he is misunderstood and that to follow hounds is a sure proof of plutocracy, alcohol, and the kind of blood pressure which splits the Conservative Party.

To the humble foxhunter the subject lacks a good deal of this high political fervour. To him the fox is a very volatile creature being seen in every covert immediately before hounds arrive by persons of unspeakable integrity like gamekeepers, small boys, and vagrants. The covert is then drawn blank and the exasperated landowner fortifies the opinion (always latent in every Hunt) that the huntsman is a half-wit. In other words the fox is a very disconcerting animal. Apart from what he looks like (and even here there is a disturbing hesitancy amongst many followers of fashionable Hunts) the private thoughts and aspirations of this animal continue to baffle the most serious investigation.

A select committee of unchallenged impartiality and fealty to pure knowledge has accordingly been invited to sit in secret session to settle this vexed question once and for all. You will be able to examine their final conclusions under Sub-Committee on Vulpines page 1084, Blue Book sect. iv, April 1st, 1940.
The Master of Hounds invited to count the head of game in an earth opened for his inspection
From a confidential copy just to hand I would like to draw the attention of students to one or two prominent features. To take as a start the simple and one might presume rudimentary question, "What do foxes eat?" The replies of the members all written in separate rooms, folded and sealed and opened by the Chairman, afford astonishing evidence of the catholic habits of the fox as a diner-out. Permit me to indicate from the following opinions a strange divergence of conviction:

(a). Farmers' Representative. (Agricultural and Arable Section): "Foxes devour lambs, newborn calves, young pigs, Christmas geese, fat ducks and the wife's pet guinea fowls."

(b). Small Holder. (A Representative drawn from The Lady Beamish New Jerusalem Scheme for Placing Patriots on Derelict Land in Desolate Areas): "Foxes eat pedigree pullets only."

(c). Head Gamekeeper of Sir Isaac MacGregor the well-known shooting Magnate. "Foxes exist entirely on pheasants, partridges, and hares. I invited the Master of Hounds to count the head of game in an earth which I had previously opened for his inspection. In my opinion he did not address me as a gentleman should."

(d). General Sir Whymper Wrew, M.F.H. "Foxes live on one sort of food only. It is that pest of the farmer — the wild rabbit. In my opinion the extinction of foxes for that reason alone would result in the bankruptcy of British farming and consequently lay this country open to starvation by
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a foreign power; and I may add, sir, I think I know which foreign power—" (Chairman hastily: "Thank you — thank you, General").

(e). Professor Trout (whose talks upon "The Fauna of the British Isles" are so popular a feature at 10:30 a.m. on the radio): "Foxes exist on rats, mice, beetles, and hedgehogs"

(f). Alicia Juniper (author of Foxcubs as House Pets in Our Amazing World Series): "Tippets, my pet cub, revels in bread-and-milk, a little steamed turbot daintily served and the wing of a pigeon (par-boiled) and handed with a crooning and wistful cadence at twilight."

You see how treacherous this subject is. Here are carefully selected and obviously scrupulous persons, with their fares paid and no personal bias whatever, all signally failing to come to any friendly and — might we add — Christian agreement upon what in the words of the Chairman (who has spent what has been boldly called his "active public life" entirely upon conferences of all kinds, sizes, and agendas) is nothing less than "a matter of grave concern to the whole English speaking world."

Or take just one more point. What about the vexed question of hunting the fox? Here one or two members were co-opted because it was considered by the Chairman that this matter must be finally settled, with entire agreement upon every aspect.

(a). Farmers' Representative: "Hunted foxes make a
point — as it is called — of crossing wheat, clover, and through boundary fences. On their way they deliberately chase sheep, cattle, and horses. So do the members of the Hunt. I have nothing against hunting except the hunting part.”

(b). Smallholder: “Until the flat rate of £1. a pullet is paid, the poultry industry will never be convinced that fox-hunting is not a barbarous survival.”

Chairman (smilingly): “And for older birds?”

Smallholder (firmly): “There are no older birds.”

(c). Gamekeeper: “Foxes should be shot — in fact they are shot.”

(d). General Sir Whymper Wrew, M.F.H. (speaking under considerable emotion): “I think I am in the best position to speak on this matter. I am satisfied the fox, as one of nature’s gentlemen, enjoys a hunt just as much — if not more — than the hounds. I can give incidents. I recall —”

(Chairman — “Thank you, General.”)

(e). Hildebrand Higgs (Founder, Secretary, Treasurer and Banker of the Spoilsport Society): “Might I ask one question, sir?”

The Chairman: “Certainly.”

Hildebrand Higgs: “Might I ask the General whether he would enjoy being chased for miles over land and water with every prospect of a distressing end?”

The General (stiffly): “It is obvious, sir, you are not acquainted with my reminiscences of the South African War.”

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(f). Professor Trout (urbanely): “The fox is a carnivorous animal, hunts and is hunted. The instinct is mutual. If one may recall the old Latin tag —” (proceeds to recall it.)

(g). Alicia Juniper: “I wish you could see Tippets stalking a cockroach. Frequently after the cook has retired —”

Chairman (hurriedly): “Thank you, Miss Juniper.”

You see how little real intellectual concord these persons blend together. But until the report is published let us reserve judgment. (Many of us cannot reserve that treacherous faculty too frequently.) From what I know of the Chairman the report will not fail to settle every debatable point and please everyone, and it is sure to be out at the earliest possible moment because next meeting is to be summoned **sine die** which as all Latin scholars are aware means “any old time.”
If you go to the Meet you will observe a concourse of cars, with hunters marooned here and there.
CHAPTER X.

THE FIELD

EVERY Hunt has a Field more or less. The press correspondents are fond of calling them "followers" but they don't really or not very far or much. If you go to the Meet you will observe a concourse of cars blocking up the highway for about half a mile. That's not the Motor Show — it's the Field. Here and there are hunters marooned between a Phantom Rolls, a Sunbeam, and an Austin Seven. In the Austin Seven is the Master. Some of these people have come as much as two miles. In the old days you splashed along muddy lanes to the Meet and at dusk were often twenty miles from home. What people call the golden age of foxhunting! Compare that with modern times. By the clever use of bye lanes, which have now nearly all a splendid smooth tar surface, it is possible for your chauffeur and groom to keep in touch with you all day removing the old threat of a chill on an empty stomach.

When hounds move off to draw the first covert it is prudent to have a clear understanding with your chauffeur in what part of the line of cars he will be located. In these early days there is — even with an efficient Road Master — the risk that you may, from the other end of the plough,

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1 We are informed that progressive firms with vision are instituting little luncheon grills for devilled kidneys or a wing of chicken.
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mistake your 12 cylinder Bizarre for the latest model of the Iwanta-Trashi. Granted that hunting is hunting and not for lounge lizards, still it is a little exasperating. But I hear that very soon the Road Master will issue numbers for cars.

Lastly by the use of a clear and distinguishable horn blown at regular intervals your chauffeur should be able to keep in direct and constant touch with you at the covert-side so that should clouds gather or hounds take an awkward line of obstacles you can return to a warm bath and that tired feeling about which you can read in old-fashioned hunting novels.

The proximity of cars to the hunt is also proving an additional attraction for all those who prefer to hunt from the chassis, and it is becoming a matter for a good deal of friendly rivalry in the evenings regarding the line taken by hounds and cars. Chauffeurs enter enthusiastically into the sport which calls for great powers of endurance, keen sight, quick decision at sharp corners, and a determination to turn the fox with precision and finesse. Frequently indeed the covert is entirely surrounded by motors and it is amusing to see the fox (crafty little beggar) dodging under the bonnets and quite evidently entering into the fun of the shouting and tooting of motor horns.

There are all sorts in every Field. Some people are never able to credit this. There are all sorts in every theatre, fish shop, and railway train. But that is evidently different. And yet if you glance around you it is astonishing how the members of the Field remind you of quite respectable persons
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you know in ordinary surroundings. No special symptoms of drink, crime, divorce, or strawberry leaves. Even the ones who mean so much to the revenue and polling returns of the Socialist Party are really surprisingly catholic in their tastes. Take for example that well-photographed couple Lady Lipstick and her present fiancé Lord Poop. We can provide authentic evidence that foxhunting is not their sole apologia for existence. Both were at the Crashers Point-to-Point, the Anglo-Catholic Bazaar, the Motor Show, the Albert Hall Revels (so lavishly organised for the slum mites by that tireless leader of society — Dahlia, Lady Maroon), and without question at Cowes. And were they not fourth from the left, in Sir Hiram Goldstein's select party of guns at his old clan seat Mucledram Castle on the twelfth?

A second more kindly delusion gathers about the more ardent question of "The Chase" — by which is meant following the young officer on leave to make certain whether wire is flagged. Judging by magazine stories, Christmas calendars, and dramatic poems, nothing can stop a Field except the Hunt Subscription. Are we not all familiar with that gay spectacle of ladies and gentlemen of the Hunt jumping the same gate in splendid comradeship with the hounds all about them and the huntsman blowing his horn through sheer high spirits half a length behind! This sturdy faith in the heroism of the Hunt is a delusion. Some of the Field are out to meet people or avoid people, some to sell horses or buy them, some to marry their dear children or to
support other people’s equally dear children. And there are the people who merely want entries for the comic dog show or the raffle for the new organ. But the backbone of every Field is o’ershadowed by the pale cast of internal combustion. It is Harley Street, not the ancient call of the wild, which is the real reason why hunting cannot stop.

There are, of course, the others. There are the uneasy band of pilgrims on disillusioned hirelings, a giggling friend of a giggling friend on the lawn mowing cob, the little man on the big horse and the large man on the little one. There are those high-spirited children on lashing ponies. There is the lonely lady of uncertain years whose jaundiced-eyed gelding carries a red banner. And there is the complete stranger, magnificently mounted, upon whom everyone except the Secretary glares with suspicion and hatred.

(There are even persons on foot with sandwiches.)

It will be readily understood that to the Field of every Hunt (except in Wales where we are informed a hunter carries a group) there is nothing more distracting than the “gone away.” That is why the best Hunts have experienced huntsmen, which means they do not find their first fox until about one forty-five, and draw consecutive blanks after three.

Masters frequently debate in their secret conclaves whether there is any way of abolishing the Field. They are confident that hunting would be removed above carping criticism if no-one hunted. But the Field are adamant. They say as they pay (which most Masters hotly deny), it wouldn’t greatly matter if the Master and Hunt Staff stood
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down, as half the fun is seeing the interiors of other people's houses, scattering their flower borders, and quaffing what is cynically labelled "Hunting port." You see how treacherous a subject is this matter of a Field. It is a nuisance, a menace, and the white man's burden. But it lingers. There is no day too hard or vile but some of it will turn up to see a Master does his duty. It is persistent, pugnacious, and pig-headed. And yet individually one is often startled and touched by the comparatively nice people in even the largest Fields.
CHAPTER XI.

HUNTING ETIQUETTE

This is the first exhaustive commentary upon the things that really matter. It deals with a subject which no other eminent authority has faced with the same passionate resolution to hold fast to the verities. It is not sufficient to counsel beginners to refrain from landing on recumbent colonels or bumping brigadiers in narrow places. In our opinion such behaviour is not etiquette — it is social hari-kari. We refuse, in short, to play with words. If we were invited by a Parliamentary Committee to express our deliberate opinion whether the hunter, the hounds, the huntsman or even the Master, poor dear gentleman, mattered most we should shake the head and staring with composure at the Chairman reply in one ringing word—CLOTHES.

It's clothes that matter. If you have manners too—for-give a father's honourable tears—but you'll go far, my son. As your Uncle Pumphrey was never tired of remarking, "Mind the conventions, Christopher, and the collar-bones will look after themselves." Memorable words and all the more precious from the author of What Foxhunters Owe to Macadam (SPORT AND SECURITY SERIES).

Hunting etiquette should cover the wardrobe, subscriptions and manners. It is open to question which of these is
the most imperative because the middle one will slump the others so long as it is big enough.

(a). Clothes. These are very treacherous and expensive. But as they are the only really important part of hunting please study our advice word by word. Remember that someday you will turn up at a Meet. Although a few people may cast a startled and mortified glance at your horse the accumulated stare will be at your clothes. Ladies are earnestly advised to face this just as though they were under cross examination in a divorce case. Be natural. Be quite at ease. Lean over the saddle and talk in an animated fashion with a friend. (You will have seen this pose in society photographs.) It lends an effective abandon to the back and even if you are sitting on the tail of your coat you won't look half so foolish. Some people slip gracefully out of the saddle and adjust a bit of tackle. Nothing could be more workmanlike and collected. But be sure you adjust a suitable bit and that you can mount again as though you had not a twinge of kidney trouble.

At this point we strongly advise a hunting tailor. There are second-hand places where one can be fitted up rather better for considerably less, but they are only for graduates who refuse to be persuaded that a misfit hunting cap is cheap at ten bob (except for the Master's face at the Meet).

A reliable tailor will do you well. Extremely well. But be modest because it costs so much less in the end. Every self-respecting hunting tailor knows that all the best people start hunting as tiny children amongst a bevy of cheering
tenants. He therefore assumes that you know that you cannot turn out with the "Holdhardshires" under two dozen sets of breeches, four brace of coats, and a covey of waistcoats. (For boots and headgear you hearten up commerce elsewhere.) Stop all that. When you enter his dim and cloistered place remark in a resonant voice, "I've never hunted before." You will then be hurriedly removed out of earshot into some secluded attic and handed over to the cutter who does not care a hoot if you hunt the slipper with your Aunt Alice. From him you can order sufficient for your modest propensities.

Boots. Upon entering the boot shop the headman—an exclusive figure with downcast moustaches—will indicate that you are in the Lancers, play polo at Hurlingham, ride at Cheltenham, and hunt the other days in Leicestershire. Cut out all that. (Behave as above.)

The emaciated subordinate—who does not care a whoop whether you stalk cockroaches with a lobster prong—will then proceed to take your measurements, and as every keen man to hounds would rather pinch his calves than scrap his pride you will be wise to order the most expensive and ruthless bootjack. (It may give you courage to reflect that this is a survival of the historical instrument which in earlier torture chambers used to extract the same agonized howls and execrations.)

Hats. You will require three sets. First a sort of deerstalker with a deliberate smell. This cannot be too offensive. Wear this for cub hunting if the Master asks you out. Some
You’ve seen those hoodoos farmers stick in the middle of seeds? That’s ratcatcher.
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Masters won't. Next there is the hard round hat popularised by Mr. George Robey. This shows you welcome a few practice falls before November. Then there is the funeral top hat for the season. But remember to detach the cord on graver occasions.

That's all about hats, except take all of them off to the Master at the Meet. (We have explained the difference between the Master and the Hunt staff in another section.)

Now for the real thing. First of all cub hunting. This has become so popular in the illustrated press that no Master can stem the heroic rush of young ladies astride, more or less, on glorious September mornings. This is the month when novelists dress their heroes in "ratcatcher." What is ratcatcher? You've seen those hoodoos farmers stick in the middle of seeds? That's ratcatcher. People will motor miles for a really seasoned set. They say the best ratcatcher must have travelled the Devonshire roads with the same tramp for eight years before it hung out with the rooks for a hard winter. But one hates to dogmatise. Many a good fellow must be content with the pick of the Union incinerator shed. After all there's more in ratcatcher than simply the smell.

November 1st, or thereabouts, will find you at the Opening Meet. If you are a member you will wear a scarlet coat, Hunt buttons, a tall hat, a Hunt waistcoat, a perfect stock, swan white breeches and gleaming boots with tops. You will also wear spurs. (You will have learned the wisdom of blunt ones.)
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If you are just a subscriber you will wear a black coat, top hat, discursive waistcoat, nicely tied stock, white breeches and boots without tops. You will also wear spurs. (Elderly subscribers usually ride the kind of hunter reconciled to every kind of minor anguish so these may or may not be acute.)

If you are just a small covert owner or one who hunts one horse for the love of it you will wear a check coat, a bowler hat, a loud waistcoat, a recently cleaned stock, buff breeches, and field or covert boots. You will also wear spurs. These vary from ones with black straps to the Mexican kind which make deafish members think they hear hounds running.

If you are a stranger of any local distinction in the preposterous country where you hunt, don't mention it. Assume instead the hang-dog air of a convict on probation, because that is how you will be regarded anyhow.

So off you go—whichever you are. And now you can see for yourself the unwritten etiquette of the hunting field, which is, as you must have read, the greatest sphere of the democratic spirit next to America where people can have a meal at almost any time so long as they aren't thirsty as well. Now watch the happy English scene. Away move the hounds with the Hunt Staff. After them trundles the Master with a few cronies. Then comes the scarlet members with their wives or other people's. Then come the black coats, then the more or lesses, then the keen men on scared young horses—then the whatnots. And finally the elderly farmer on a broken-winded trap mare, over whose acres the bobbing
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cavalcade are about to stir the upper crust. That’s the lot. Be good enough to select your proper democratic stratum.

Now about the Hunt Balls. These are usually held between December and April (according to the bookings of Jerry Hopper’s Zulu Jazz Band), and judging by the champagne the party is not run at a loss. For this you must have a scarlet coat, white waistcoat and the usual colour of trousers. There are one or two Hunts which wear plush knee breeches. Don’t shout at these members for double scotches. Also don’t be surprised at the number of members who turn out in your own Hunt buttons. There is a hatch of Hunt members all over the country at this time of year. You may be inclined to sneer at those venerable and sometimes not so venerable persons. Don’t. Join them when they are sitting out with a fair partner after a shuffle on the floor. You know that nasty place where the river runs deep under the willow tree? Well, hark to old scarlet!

(b). Subscriptions. There is only one rule for these. They cannot be too substantial or too soon. They are paid to the Hunt Secretary if you are out hunting or the Hunt Treasurer if you are confined to bed or called abroad. So you pay the Hunt Secretary. Some Hunts with a professional accountant work out a sliding scale for members who don’t want to pay for the days they won’t be using the hounds. On this scale a member can subscribe for one horse two days a month, or two horses for one day a month, or half a horse a fortnight, which means he hunts with a colleague from Threadneedle Street.
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But sooner or later in spite of coming late or falling off early, or having the measles, or frost in December you will surely have to pay something. Many prudent members have been in luck with foot and mouth breaking out about February 1st, and have gone away to shoot lions with flash lights from trees. That should not be. They usually groan on the outward steamer that hunting is not worth the candle nowadays. We have often felt that some Internationale Banque declaration of candle values should be broadcast for Hunt Secretaries.

(c). Hunting Manners. The text books carefully evade the real intricacies of this section. They are satisfied if they say "Never ride a kicker." Naturally. Far too many men have dropped a good cigar because their hunter lashed suddenly at hounds in the thick of a meet. Or take another point of etiquette. No gentleman in the first burst of a run requires to be reminded to stop and assist a lady in a ditch. It depends so much on the lady.

These are merely elementary problems which are not a matter of hunting manners but any manners. (We have never seen this put so succinctly.) No, the question is a deeper one than that. There are times when every man must use his school education (no matter how ancient and famous his dear old place may have been) and with a brain of ice make his great decision. We cannot do better than insert here two little problems for our first grade scholars and, as happens in all good text books, we will call them Fig. I. and Fig. II. Now in Fig. I. the dashing stranger to the hunt has,
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through sheer British phlegm, (to use a fine old word we particularly dislike) prostrated the Master in a wintry ditch.

"Does he catch the Master's horse or his train?"

In Fig. II you will perceive a really splendid young fellow—the sort who wants to do jolly well in any historical profession without an entrance exam — is suddenly confronted by the back view of a fellow sportsman at gaze in a narrow ride. Hounds are running on, but the pass is securely held. Now in these days back views are just back views, are they not?

"Does he say sir or madam?"

Finally manners after hunting. Books of etiquette ignore this section altogether and just as though all the best hunting was not over the port or read about in other people's Memoirs. Please grasp the unwritten laws. For instance it is customary for the host (dear old "Sticky John") to tell once again of the extraordinary fix he was in when "quite inadvertently" — that is the proper modest note — he found himself alone with hounds. In front of him was a six foot wall on the London road. He was quite alone. Did he jump it? He did sir. He was, you remember, quite alone. He did it on the old grey. Those wonderful old greys!

That over, the older guests come along. Then the younger lot. But remember, always praise the horse. Protest you never would have jumped twenty feet of canal had it not been for old "Bucko." Add that so far as you were concerned you would have preferred crossing by the foot bridge. Unless you did of course.

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One last word of caution. Go steady with all that big jumping. Settle where you did it and with what pack. It will prevent taking that huge bullfinch on the Sussex Downs or that Irish bank in Bucks. Remember that railway gates are taken as an in-and-out with the 12:50 Express roaring through the station. Any unprejudiced person who has measured the top of his bowler hat on the upper bar of a railway gate will swallow the second gate just as readily as the first, and that's where the express clinches the tale for all nice people. But confirm your station personally. It is maddening to discover years after that it never had a crossing anyhow.

VALE

Personally we have never wilfully jeopardized the truth. Our favourite exploits just grew like fond and lively children creeping to our waists, our shoulders, and finally smiling their indulgence over our bent and reminiscent heads.

In such fashion let your anecdotage conjure up many friendly and pensive silhouettes of men and horses so that as the years pass you may renew in the sound of a name the kindly shade of some good fellow's presence on a fire-lit Christmas Eve.

Thus and in such idle and harmless reveries your familiar conceits, your crystal vanities, will be accepted with affection and mellow like old wine until your own candle goes flickering round the oak turning for the last time and all your store of memories are laid away.

THE END
SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES OF
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