

FOXHOUNDS

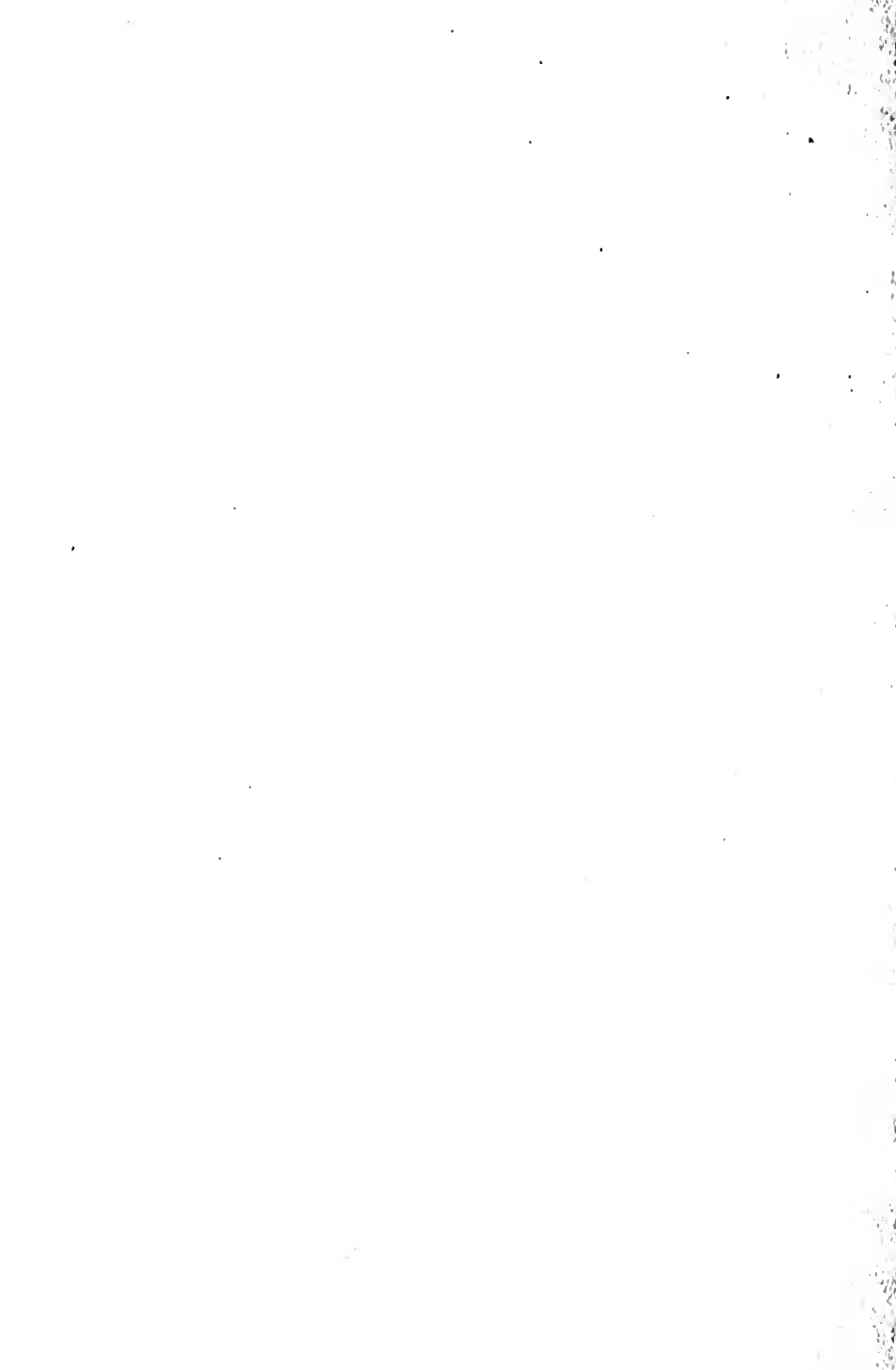
AND THEIR HANDLING IN
THE FIELD

BY
LORD HENRY BENTINCK
(1804-1870)

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
VISCOUNT CHAPLIN

LONDON
ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS
187 PICCADILLY, W. 1
1922

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INTRODUCTION

By VISCOUNT CHAPLIN

THE history of the little treatise, by the late Lord Henry Bentinck, on handling a pack of hounds out hunting is not without its interest, and it has authority, I may add, of the highest order.

It is the copy of a letter written to me by the late Lord Henry Bentinck himself, one day not very long after I had bought his pack of hounds, from Loch Ericht, his small shooting lodge in the famous deer forest of Ardverickay, only six miles from Dalwhinnie station, on the Highland line. It was written on a day when there was such a tremendous blizzard that even he, who was never known to miss a day in any week in the course of the stalking season, was unable to go out.

So he occupied himself by writing to me, in a letter, the contents of the little pamphlet in question, and its republication, which has been the subject of our correspondence. To this I replied by saying that I thought it ought to be published, and I asked his leave to do it.

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But this he would not give me, saying he could write something much better than that, and would do so, some day.

But I had it printed for private circulation, and I gave a copy to several of the older Masters, and among others one to Mr. George Lane Fox, of Bramham Moor celebrity, who the day after Lord Henry's death sent a copy to *Baily's Magazine*, who published it.

And here a word about my own relations with the late Lord Henry may not be out of place.

He was the fourth son of the fourth Duke of Portland, who died in 1854, being succeeded by his second son, the Marquis of Titchfield (the eldest son having died in 1821); the third being Lord George Bentinck, who in his earlier days was the Napoleon of the Turf; and the fourth, Lord Henry, who in the hunting world was very much what his brother George had been upon the turf.* And these three brothers it was, or rather the forces they were able to command, which enabled them to establish Mr. Disraeli as Leader of the Conservative Party, and finally to defeat, and oust, Sir Robert Peel from power, after their homeric conflicts in connection with the Repeal of the Corn Laws.

* See *Life of Disraeli*, by Buckle, Vol. III., pp. 116-128, 129, 133.

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For reasons I need not enter into now Lord Henry shortly afterwards abandoned politics altogether, and his favourite pursuits were, for the remainder of his life, hunting in the winter, deer-stalking in the autumn, and playing whist in the summer, in which he was *facile princeps*—in fact, in those days he was said to be the finest player in Europe.

My acquaintance with him was on this wise: I knew him, and well, from the time I was a boy. He had been Master of the Burton Country in Lincolnshire for many years—nearly thirty, I think—one of the three countries in England which were hunted six days a week at that time, and where his chief supporter was my uncle, Mr. Charles Chaplin, who gave him a subscription of 1200*l.* a year, and whose tenants on an estate of between twenty and thirty thousand acres used to walk for him a very large number of puppies, than which nothing is more important for the successful breeding of a first-class pack of hounds. And I succeeded him within no long period after I became of age, my uncle having died while I was still at Christ Church, in the University of Oxford, when I continued the old subscription. It was shortly after that, however, that Lord Henry expressed his wish to give up the country, whereupon I bought his hounds for 3500*l.* and took the Burton Country

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myself, of which he had been the Master for so many years.

Lord Henry was a man of quite exceptional ability, as I had every reason to believe—not only from what I knew myself, but, some years afterwards, from no less an authority than that of Mr. Disraeli, and in the way I shall describe directly. And, from all the experience I have had since then, I have very little doubt that his was probably the best brain ever given to the breeding of hounds, and hunting; and he was also, I think, upon the whole, one of the best horsemen, and with the finest hands upon a horse that was difficult to ride I ever knew, with the possible exception of Lord Lonsdale.

I may add that it was from Lord Henry I learnt everything I ever knew—about horses, hounds, deer-stalking and deer-forests, and sport of all kinds, and a great deal about politics, too. And it was by him practically, before he abandoned politics, as is shown in one of Mr. Buckle's most admirable volumes of the *Life of Disraeli*—it was by him and his exertions, freely admitted by Mr. Disraeli himself, that he was successfully run into the leadership of the Party after Lord George Bentinck's death.*

* See *Life of Disraeli*, by Buckle, who showed himself in that work as another great English historian. Vol. III., pp. 116, 128-132, 133, 135.

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Lord Henry Bentinck died at Tathwell, on the last day of 1870, in one of my houses in Lincolnshire, which I had lent him with ten thousand acres of shooting, and there he used to practise rifle-shooting in the summer, with peaarifles, at both rabbits and hares, which were rather plentiful on some parts of the estate at that time, in preparation for the stalking season in the autumn, where he seldom missed a stag with a different weapon, killing, on an average, about a hundred every year himself.

And, when Parliament met, early in February afterwards, if I remember rightly, and I was shown into Mr. Disraeli's room, at his Party Dinner, to which he was kind enough to invite me when the Queen's Speech was read, he accosted me as follows :

‘ Ah ! ’ he said, ‘ you and I have both lost a great friend since we parted.’

‘ Yes, sir,’ I replied ; ‘ I know that Lord Henry and yourself were great friends at one time, and he has often talked to me about you.’

‘ Yes,’ he said ; ‘ and I always wished it could have remained so.’ And then, after a pause, he added : ‘ I have always said that, take him all round, I think upon the whole that Henry Bentinck was probably the ablest man I ever knew.’ And very soon afterwards dinner was

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announced, and we went into the dining-room.

I make no comments on Lord Henry's description of *Goodall's Practice*, in the handling of his hounds, excepting this: I agree with everything he says, but it is necessary to remember this—the Burton Country, where his chief experience lay, was a country of comparatively small and manageable fields of horsemen; very different from those you see in the Quorn, the Cottesmore, the Pytchley, and the chief fashionable grass countries, and sometimes the Belvoir, on the grass side of that country. But the principles which are inculcated, nevertheless, hold good; and, once a pack of hounds have learnt to know, and believe in, their huntsman, they are never happy away from him, and there is nothing they won't do, and no effort they won't make, to get back to him. Tom Firr was a notable instance of this in the Quorn; but then he had the best Master in England (Lord Lonsdale) to help him, and no one could handle a big field better than he could, that I've ever seen; and the way in which he controlled a field of possibly five or six hundred horsemen on a Quorn Friday was a triumph of organization I have never seen surpassed.

For instance, when drawing one of their crack coverts in that country, the field was kept

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away some distance from it, often nearly a whole field, until the fox had gone away, and the huntsman had got hold of his hounds sufficiently to get a start with him; and then, when the field got the order to go, my word! There was a charge of cavalry with a vengeance, to get up to them.

Lord Annaly did the same thing in the Pytchley and had the same complete control of his field; and in this way with the combination of Lonsdale and Firr in the Quorn, and Annaly and Freeman in after years in the Pytchley, there could not have been a happier arrangement for successful sport out hunting, if there was any scent at all.

They were two first-rate huntsmen also. The rarest and most difficult thing in the world to find in my experience is a really good huntsman.

And here I can't omit some reference to Tom Smith, who was originally my second whipper-in—who was afterwards huntsman to the Bramham Moor hounds, and became so celebrated for many years in that country; and though it never was my fortune to see him hunting hounds myself, I know it must have been so—from so many sources, all of which came from men who were absolutely reliable.

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He comes, too, of a famous family of huntsmen of that name, three generations of whom, I think I am right in saying, had been huntsmen to the Brocklesby hounds—one of the oldest and best packs of hounds in the country at that time.

I have often said it was easier to find a good Prime Minister than a real good huntsman, and Heaven knows that either is difficult enough; and I incline to think it is more so than ever now for Ministers to-day, whose difficulties are far greater than they ever were in my time. How many have there been since Lord Palmerston, the first that I remember?

Curiously enough, the only two men prominent in public life that I knew personally and at all well, when I became a member of the House of Commons in 1868, were Lord Palmerston and the old Lord Derby; but they were both of them members of the Jockey Club, and in that way I got to know them well.

To go back to *Goodall's Practice* from which I'm afraid I have rather strayed—I think that the good work done by *Baily's Magazine* for so many years should not be thrown away, and that this admirable little treatise called *Goodall's Practice* should be preserved in the interest of Fox-hunting for the use of this and future generations.

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The language is so simple, and so much of it is ordinary common-sense, that any one can understand it.

It would be invaluable for Hunt servants, both huntsmen and their whippers-in who serve under them *in particular*—many of whom are seldom taught enough by their superiors or masters. I think it is a better education in their case which is needed more than anything, and I will conclude with an instance of what I mean.

I was rather late one morning in arriving at a gorse covert in the Belvoir Country; Coston covert, I think it was, into which the hounds had just been put to draw. I had come from Barley Thorpe, and I saw at once it wasn't the huntsman who was in the covert with the hounds, and I was told it was the first whip, Freeman, who had never hunted them before, the huntsman being disabled by a fall the previous day. I knew him quite well, so I went into the covert to see if I could help him.

'So you are handling the hounds, I understand,' I said, 'for the first time to-day?'

'Ah, yes, Squire,' he said, 'and I can do nothing with them,' he replied.

'Well,' I said, 'I've been at it all my life, and perhaps I could tell you one or two things which might be useful.'

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‘ I should be most grateful if you would,’ he said.

He had been blowing his horn whenever the fox crossed a ride, with the same note that ought only to be used when he has gone away, or he has caught him.

So I replied, ‘ Put your horn into its case to begin with, and don’t blow it again like you have been doing, till your fox has gone away, or till you want to draw your hounds out of covert, which you should do with one or two long-drawn notes ; or till you have caught your fox and got him lying dead before you. Then you may blow the note you’ve been using as long as you like. That is one thing.

‘ The next thing is this : when you’ve gone away with a fox, and come to a check, don’t go to help your hounds till they ask you, and the way you will know they are asking you is this, and these hounds (who at that time were constantly interfered with) will ask you immediately because they are accustomed to it.

‘ You will see them standing with their heads up, wagging their tails, and doing nothing to feel for the scent or to help themselves. When you see that, go straight into the middle of the pack, turn your horse, say “cop-cop,” or anything you like, trot off, and they will go with you like a flock of sheep.

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‘Trot gently up to wherever you think your fox is most likely to have gone, and if you are lucky enough to hit off his line, they will go all the easier with you the next time.

‘Now,’ I said, ‘that is enough for to-day, and I shall stay out to see how you get on.’

I stayed out till quite late in the evening. It was in the Spring. He was fortunate enough to hit off his fox the first time, and before the evening the hounds had taken to him completely, and he could do anything he liked with them.

He was so nice and modest-minded a fellow that he came half a mile out of his way to meet me on his way home, and when we met he said, ‘I couldn’t go home, Squire, without thanking you for what you told me this morning. The ambition of my life is to be a huntsman. I am most anxious to learn, and you are the first person, gentleman or huntsman, who has ever told me a single thing.’

‘Well,’ I said, ‘you seem very appreciative, and whenever you find yourself in a difficulty either as whipper-in or huntsman, if you will write and tell me what it is, I will tell you anything I can to help you.’

That is the difficulty, I fear, with too many of the younger ones in that profession, and nothing could help them more than what they

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would learn from Lord Henry Bentinck's plain and simple letter to me on *Goodall's Practice*. I sent a copy of it to Freeman very shortly afterwards, and we corresponded frequently, and do still; and no one that I know has a better reputation as a huntsman to-day, or shows more sport than he does.

CHAPLIN.

April, 1922.

THE LATE LORD HENRY BENTINCK.

WILLIAM GOODALL'S METHOD WITH HOUNDS.

IN handling his Hounds in the open, with a Fox before him, he *never* had them rated or driven to him by his whips; *never* hallooed them from a *distance*. When he wanted them he invariably went himself to *fetch them*, anxiously watching the moment that the Hounds had done trying for themselves, and felt the want of him. He then galloped straight up to their heads, caught hold of them, and cast them in a body a hundred yards *in his front*, every Hound busy before him with his nose snuffing the ground, his hackles up, his stern curled over his back, each Hound relying on himself and believing in each other. When cast *in this way*, the Huntsman learns the exact value of each Hound, while the young Hounds learn what old Hounds too believe in and fly to, and when the scent is taken up no Hound is disappointed. When the Huntsman trails his Hounds behind him, four-fifths of his *best Hounds* will be *staring at his horse's tail, doing nothing*.

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The Hounds came to have such confidence in Goodall, that with a *burning scent*, he would cast them in this way at a *hand gallop*, all the Hounds in his front making every inch of ground good ; while with a poor scent he would do it in a walk, regulating his pace by the quality of the scent ; the worse the scent, the more time the Hounds want to puzzle it out.

On this system the Hounds are got to the required spot in the very *shortest time*, with every Hound busily at work, and with his nose tied to the ground.

On the opposite *vulgar* plan, the Huntsman, galloping off to his Fox, hallooing his Hounds from a distance, his noise drives the Hounds in the first instance to *flash wildly in the opposite direction* ; four or five minutes are lost before the whip can come up and get to their heads ; then they are flogged up to their Huntsman, the Hounds driving along with their heads up, their eyes staring at their Huntsman's horse's tail, looking to their Huntsman for help, disgusted, and not relying upon themselves, especially the best and most sagacious Hounds. A few minutes more are lost before the best Hounds will put their noses down and begin to feel for the scent, a second check becomes fatal, and the Fox is irretrievably lost. Often enough, in being whipped up to their Huntsman in this way,

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when crossing the line of the Fox with their heads up, they first catch his wind, and then, as a matter of course, they must take the scent heelways, the Fox, as a rule, running down the wind. This fatal piece of bungling, so injurious to Hounds—is always entirely owing to the Huntsman; it is neither the fault of the whips or the Hounds; it never can occur when the Huntsman moves his Hounds in his front with their noses down. In these two different systems lies the distinction between *being quick* and a *bad hurry*.

2.—When the Fox was gone, in place of galloping off after his Fox without his Hounds, blowing them away *down the wind* from such a distance that half the Hounds would not hear him, and he would only get a few leading Hounds still further separated from the body, Goodall would take a sharp hold of his horse's head, quick as lightning turn back in the opposite direction, get *up wind* of the *body* of his Hounds, and *blowing them away* from the tail, *bring up the two ends together*, giving every Hound a *fair chance* to be away with the body.

It is impossible to over-estimate the mischief done to a pack of Hounds by *unfairly* and *habitually* leaving a Hound behind out of its place: it is *teaching them to be rogues*. For this

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purpose, Goodall had one particular note of his horn *never* used at any other time except when his Fox *was gone*, or his Fox was in *his hand*: the Hounds, learning the note, would leave a Fox in covert to *fly* to it. Hounds are very sagacious animals; they cannot bear being left behind, nor do they like struggling through thick covert; but if that note is ever used *at any other time* the charm is gone; the Hounds will not believe in it; you cannot *lie* to them with *impunity*. This was Goodall's great secret for getting his Hounds away all in a *lump* on the *back* of his *Fox*, and hustling him before he had time to empty himself. This was his system for getting his Hounds through *large woodlands*: to come tumbling out together without splitting, and sticking to their run Fox. This is the explanation of the famous old Meynell saying, 'In the *second field* they gathered themselves together, in the third they commenced a *terrible burst*.'

3.—Goodall's chief aim was to get the hearts of his Hounds. He considered Hounds should be treated like women: that they would not bear to be *bullied*, to be *deceived*, or *neglected* with impunity. For this end, he would not meddle with them in their casts until they had done trying for themselves, and *felt the want of him*: he paid them the compliment of going to *fetch*

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them; he never deceived or neglected them; he was continually cheering and making much of his Hounds; if he was compelled to disappoint them by roughly stopping them off a suckling vixen or dying Fox at dark, you would see him, as soon as he had got them stopped, jump off his horse, get into the middle of his pack, and spend ten minutes in making friends with them again. The result was that the Hounds were never happy without him, and when lost would drive up through any crowd of horsemen to get to him again, and it was very rare for a single Hound to be left out.

It is impossible to over-rate the *mischief* done to a pack of Hounds by leaving them out; it teaches them every sort of *vice*, upsets their condition, besides *now* exposing them to be destroyed on the railway line. There is no more certain test of the capacity of a Huntsman than the manner in which his Hounds *fly* to him and *work* for him with a *will*.

Goodall, Old Musters, and Foljambe were undoubtedly the three Master-minds of our day. Their general system of handling Hounds was much the same, though each had his *peculiar excellence*, and each has often said that if they lived to be a hundred they would *learn something every year*. All three agreed in this, that it was ruinous to a pack of Hounds to meddle with

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them before they had done trying for themselves. The reasoning upon this most *material point* is *very simple*. If the Hounds are habitually checked, and meddled with in their natural casts, they will learn to stand still at every difficulty, and wait for their Huntsman; every *greasy wheat-field* will bring them to a *dead stop*, and however hard the Huntsman may ride on their back, two or three minutes must be lost before he can help them out of their difficulty, whilst in woods he cannot ever know what they are about. (For *once* the Huntsman can help them, *nineteen* times the Hounds must help themselves.) It was Old Muster's remark that for the first *ten minutes* the Hounds knew a good deal more than he did, but after they tried all they knew then he could form an opinion where the Fox was gone, but not before.

Mr. Foljambe attached the *greatest importance* to getting his Hounds away together. Before his Hounds were a field away from a wood you might hear him *sing out*, 'Want a Hound,' and his horn would be going at their tails until he *got him*, and when *got*, he would drop back and not care to go near them until they had been five or ten minutes at a check. But if a single Hound was wanting when a Fox was killed, however great the run, he would harp upon it for a month.

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Goodall combined, with his other excellencies in the field, condition and kennel management quite the best. Mr. Foljambe was by far the best breeder of Hounds, and had the keenest eye for a Hound's work—nothing escaped him. Mr. Musters was the best hand at fairly hunting a Fox to death, and could make a *middling lot* work like *first-rate* Hounds.

Old Dick Burton was Lord Henry's first huntsman in the Burton Country, and showed great sport for many years. He was the best hand at breaking a pack of Hounds from hares, and teaching them *to draw*, upon which so much depends. He always drew his woods *up the wind*, throwing his Hounds in fifty or sixty yards from the wood, and allowing them to *spread*, so that every Hound should be busy, with his head down, looking for his Fox; and had them in his front, making *noise enough* to cheer them and enable them to know where he was; and in *cub-hunting* made the Hounds find *their cub* for themselves, and would not have him hallooed at *first* across the ride. (Nothing is truer than the old saying, 'A Fox *nicely found* is half killed.') He would trot through the *hollow covert* with his Hounds behind him, and an occasional blow of his horn, to wake up any *chance* Fox, and get Hounds in the thick covert, where they could not use their eyes, as quick as possible, and then

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give them as much time as they liked. Nothing is worse than hurrying Hounds through strong covert, or forcing them to draw over again a covert when they are satisfied that there is not a Fox in it. The blackthorn and gorse coverts he would always *draw down the wind*, keeping carefully behind his Hounds: by so doing, first, the Hounds have their heads down, and never *chop* a Fox—they do not see him. The Fox hears them, and the wildest Fox is off at once, and the cubs learn to steal away after the Hounds are gone. Second, it enabled him to get the body and tail Hounds out of the covert without hunting the line of the Fox through the strong gorse; brought the *two ends* together all away on the *back* of the *old Fox*—the true secret of getting a *sharp burst*.

No man could turn out a highly-mettled pack of Hounds, and so *young a lot* steady from hares as old Dick Burton. In the year 1859, when the Hatton country was as full as Blankney with riot, we found in Hatton Wood, at a quarter before twelve, and in the month of *February*, ran from Fox to Fox until half-past three, when all the second horses being beat and a fog rising up, I rode amongst the Hounds, coming away from *Hatton Wood* the last time to see what I had got. To my astonishment, I found my pack consisted of

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11 *couples of puppies* and $5\frac{1}{2}$ of old Hounds!! We had had an old dog kicked, and old 'Darling' leading them, then five years old, and showing himself for the *first time*.

Old Dick's principle was to break his puppies by themselves, showing them all the riot he could in the summer, and drilling them severely, but never allowing a whip to FLOG THEM after they had escaped to his heels, or to flog them when coming out of a wood and cutting them off. After being well drilled, he would then take them amongst the cubs and smash up a litter of cubs, blooding them up to their eyes to make them forget their punishment, and to care for nothing but a Fox. Hounds being unsteady for hares, when FOXES ARE PLENTIFUL, is entirely the FAULT OF THE HANDLING. The highest praise that can be given to a Huntsman is for a fool to say: 'We had a great run, and killed our Fox; as for the Huntsman, he might have BEEN IN BED.' A Huntsman's FIRST BOAST should be that all his Hounds required was to be taken to the covert-side and taken home again. His greatest disgrace is, first, to have his Hounds squandered all over the country, and to leave them out; second, to be unable to get them out of a wood; third, not to know to a *yard* where he lost his Fox — if properly managed, the Hounds will always *tell it to him*.

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The causes that have produced the present unsteadiness in the Hounds from hares :—

1ST.—In 1863, seventeen *virtually blank days*, that is, not finding a Fox whilst there was light to kill him, and rarely a day with two or three Foxes to bring the Hounds to their senses and work them down, left that season's puppies unbroken.

2ND.—In 1864 the terrible *mistake* was made of leaving the Hounds at Home through the cub-hunting season, on account of the dryness of the ground. Regular hunting was commenced with the two-year-olds, worse than puppies entirely *undrilled*; and short days were made.

3RD.—In breaking the Hounds in 1865, they were completely ruined by being rated and flogged in coming out of covert to their Huntsman, taught to turn back to the woods, and to remain there, afraid to come out; and, when left to themselves, hunting hares by hours together.

4TH.—Taking the Fox's head away from the Hounds. No practice can be more abominable or more Cockney. A puppy that has once fought for the head and carried it home in triumph, trotting in front of the Hounds, will NEVER LOOK AT A HARE AGAIN; he is made from that day, and marks himself for a STALLION HOUND.

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5TH. — Neither the first, second, nor third being to be depended upon, the steady old Hounds never knew when to go to the cry, and at last joined the wild Hounds when a large body had got together. To get them right, it would be desirable to put together all the two-year-olds, and all determined hare-hunters, such as 'Saladin,' &c., of the three-year-olds, and drill them by themselves, then take them into the Wragby Woodlands, where you are sure of a large litter; work the cubs for four or five hours, and smash up three of them, having three or four lads to watch the cubs, so that as soon as they have eaten one you may know where to go and clap them on another LEG-WEARY CUB. The next time their turn is to go out, take them to Blankney and Ashby, and smash up another litter in the middle of the hares. After being hunted three weeks by themselves, then to mix them together. It is essential that the steady, quiet Hounds should not be exposed to the annoyance of hearing the wild Hounds rated and flogged; it disgusts them, and they will do nothing, merely following, NOT GUIDING, the pack.



