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JOHN A. SEAVERN

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OLD SPORTS AND SPORTSMEN.

Engraved by W. Harrison

From a portrait by Sir J. Smith

For the

OLD SPORTS AND SPORTSMEN

Or, the *Willet* Country

WITH SKETCHES OF SQUIRE FORESTER

AND HIS WHIPPER-IN

T O M   M O O D Y

("You all knew Tom Moody the Whipper-in well").

BY JOHN RANDALL, F.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "THE SEVERN VALLEY," ETC.

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PREFACE.

It is too much to expect that these pages will altogether escape criticism; my object will have been gained, however, if I have succeeded in collecting and placing intelligibly before the reader such noticeable facts as are interesting matters of local history. Should it appear that there has been imported into the work too many details touching the earlier features of the country, the little that is generally known on the subject, the close connection of cause and effect, and the influences the old forests may have had in perpetuating a love of sport among some members of a family whose name appears to have been derived from pursuits connected therewith, must be my excuse. Dr. Arnold once remarked upon the close connection existing between nature and mankind, and how each in turn is affected by the other, whilst a living writer, and a deeper

thinker, has gone still further, in saying that "He is great who is what he is from nature." Of course it is not intended to claim greatness for Squire Forester in the sense in which the word is ordinarily used, or qualities, even, differing very much from those bearing the impress of the common mould of humanity; but simply that he was what he was from nature, from pre-disposition, and from living at the time he did. Also, that he was in many respects a fair representative of the squirearchy of the period, of a class of squires in whom we recognise features discoverable in those in the enjoyment of the same natural vigour in our own day, but who may have chosen different fields for its development.

It did not appear to come within the scope of the work to enter to the same extent upon the doings of other sportsmen of Squire Forester's time, or to dilate upon those of gentlemen who subsequently distinguished themselves. It would have required many additional pages, for instance, to have done justice to the exploits of the first Lord Forester; or to those of the present right honourable proprietor of Willey, who upon retiring from the mastership of the Belvoir hounds was presented with a massive piece of plate, representing an incident which hap-

pened in connection with the Hunt. Of both Nimrod has written in the highest terms. The names of several whose deeds the same felicitous writer has described in connection with Shropshire will occur to the reader, as Mr. Stubbs, of Beckbury; Mr. Childe, of Kinlet; Mr. Boycott, of Rudge—who succeeded Sir Bellingham Graham on his giving up the Shifnal country; Lord Wenlock; Squire Corbett, and the Squire of Halston; names which, as Colonel Apperley has very justly said, will never be forgotten by the sporting world. As the reader will perceive, I have simply acted upon the principle laid down in the “Natural History of Selborne” by the Rev. Gilbert White, who says, “If the stationary men would pay some attention to the district in which they reside, and would publish their thoughts respecting the objects that surround them, from such materials might be drawn the most complete county history.” This advice influenced me in undertaking the “Severn Valley,” and I have endeavoured to keep the same in view now, by utilising the materials, and by using the best means at command for bringing together facts such as may serve to illustrate them, and which may not be unlooked for in a work of the kind.

Since the old Forest Periods, and since old Squire Forester's day even, the manners and the customs of the nation have changed; but the old love of sport discoverable in our ancestors, and inherited more or less by them from theirs, remains as a link connecting past generations with the present.

It matters not, it appears to me, whether either the writer or the reader indulges himself in such sports or not, he may be equally willing to recall the "Olden Time," with its instances of rough and ready pluck and daring, and to listen to an old song, made by an aged pate,

"Of a fine old English gentleman who had a great estate."

Shropshire and the surrounding counties during the past century had, as we all know, many old English gentlemen with large estates, who kept up their brave old houses at pretty liberal rates; but few probably exercised the virtue of hospitality more, or came nearer to the true type of the country gentleman of the period than the hearty old Willey Squire. Differ as we may in our views of the chase, we must admit that such amusements served to relieve the monotony of country life, and to make time pass pleasantly, which but for horses and hounds, and the

opportunities they afforded of intercourse with neighbours, must have hung heavily on a country gentleman's hands a hundred years ago.

It is, moreover, it appears to me, to this love of sport, in one form or another, that we of this generation are indebted for those grand old woods which now delight the eye, and which it would have been a calamity to have lost. The green fertility of fields answering with laughing plenty to human industry is truly pleasing; but now that blue-bells, and violets, foxgloves and primroses are being driven from the hedgerows, and these themselves are fast disappearing before the advances of agricultural science, it is gratifying to think that there are wastes and wilds where weeds may still resort—where the perfumes of flowers, the songs of birds, and the music of the breeze may be enjoyed. That the love of nature which the out-door exercises of our ancestors did so much to foster and perpetuate still survives is evident. How often, for instance, among dwellers in towns does the weary spirit pant for the fields, that it may wing its flight with the lark through the gushing sunshine, and join in the melody that goes pealing through the fretted cathedral of the woods, whilst caged by the demands of the hour, or kept

prisoner by the shop, the counter, or the machine? Spring, with its regenerating influences, may wake the clods of the valley into life, may wreath the black twigs with their garb of green and white, and give to the trees their livery; but men who should read the lessons they teach know nothing of the rejoicings that gladden the glades and make merry the woods. Nevertheless, proof positive that the love of nature—scourged, crushed, and overlaid, it may be, with anxious cares for existence—never dies out may be found in customs still lingering among us. In the blackest iron districts, where the surface is one great ink-blot, where clouds of dust and columns of smoke obscure the day, where scoria heaps, smouldering fires, and never-ceasing flames give a scorched aspect to the scene, the quickening influences that renew creation are felt, teaching men—ignorant as Wordsworth's "Peter Bell"—to take part in the festival of the year. When the sap has risen in the tree when the south wind stirs the young leaves, and the mechanism of the woods is in motion, when the blackbird has taken his place in the bush, and the thrush has perched itself upon the spray, in the month of pelting showers and laughing sunshine, when the first note of the cuckoo is heard

from the ash in the hedge-row or the wild cherry in the woods, an old custom still proclaims a holiday in honour of his arrival. When the last lingering feature of winter has vanished; when brooks, no longer hoarse, sink their voices to a tinkling sweetness, flooding mead and dingle with their music; when the merry, merry month, although no longer celebrated for its floral shows and games as formerly, arrives, the May-bush may be seen over the door of the village smithy and on the heads of horses on the road.

It would have been of little use passing acts of Parliament, like the one which has just become law, for the preservation of members of the feathered tribes, if their native woods had not been preserved to us by sportsmen. To have lost our woods would have been to have lost the spring and summer residences of migratory birds: to have lost the laugh of the woodpecker, the songs of the blackbird and the thrush, the woodlark's thrilling melody, and the nightingale's inimitable notes, to say nothing of those faint soothing shadowings which steal upon one from these leafy labyrinths of nature. As some one taking deeper views has said:—

“There lie around
Thy daily walk great store of beauteous things,
Each in its separate place most fair, and all
Of many parts disposed most skilfully,
Making in combination wonderful
An individual of a higher kind ;
And that again in order ranging well
With its own fellows, till thou rise at length
Up to the majesty of this grand world ;—
Hard task, and seldom reached by mortal souls,
For frequent intermission and neglect
Of close communion with the humblest things ;
But in rare moments, whether memory
Hold compact with invention, or the door
Of heaven hath been a little pushed aside,
Methinks I can remember, after hours
Of unpremeditated thought in woods.”

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Valley of the Severn, near Willey.

INTRODUCTION.

A SIMPLE reading of the history of the earth is sufficient to show that hunting is as old as the hills—not figuratively, but literally; and that the hunter and the hunted, one furnished with weapons of attack, and the other with means of defence, have existed from the earliest periods of creation to the present. That is, the strong have mastered the weak, and in some instances have fallen side by side, as we see by their remains. In the economy of

Nature, the process of decay appears to have been the exception, rather than the rule; with beak or tooth, or deadly claw, the strong having struck down the less defended in a never-ending arena. What a hunting field, in one sense, the Old World must have been, when creatures of strange and undefined natures infested the uncertain limits of the elements, and what encounters must have taken place in the ooze and mud periods, when monsters, enormous in stature and stretch of wing, were the implacable hunters of the air, the water, and the slime! Nor can the inhabitants of the earth, the water, and the air, taking the term in its broad rather than in its technical sense, be said to be less hunters now, or less equipped with deadly weapons. Some have supernumerary teeth to supply the loss of such as might get broken in the fray. One strikes down its prey at a blow, another impales its victims on thorns, and a third slays by poison. Some hunt in company, from what would seem to be a very love of sport—as crows and smaller birds give chase to the owl, apparently rejoicing in his embarrassment, at break of day.

We need but refer to those remotely removed stages of human life illustrated by drift beds, bone

caves, and shell heaps—to those primitive weapons which distinguished the lowest level of the Stone Age, weapons which every year are being brought to light by thousands—to give the *genus homo* a place among the hunters; indeed one of the strongest incentives which helped on Pre-historic Man from one level to the other through the long night of the darkest ages, appears to have been that which such a pursuit supplied. To obtain the skins of animals wilder than himself he entered upon a scramble with the wolf, the bear, and the hyena. Driven by instinct or necessity to supply wants the whole creation felt, his utmost ingenuity was put forth in the chase; and in process of time we find him having recourse to the inventive arts to enable him to carry out his designs. On the borders of lakes or on river banks, in caverns deep-seated amid primeval forest solitudes, he fashioned harpoons and arrow-heads of shell, horn, or bone, with which to repulse the attack of prowlers around his retreat and to arrest the flight of the swiftest beast he required for food; and when he emerged from the dark night which Science has as yet but partially penetrated, when he had succeeded in pressing the horse and the dog into his service, and when the

cultivation of the soil even had removed him above the claims of hunger, he appears equally to have indulged the passion—probably for the gratification it gave and the advantages it brought in promoting that tide of full health from which is derived the pleasing consciousness of existence.

Tradition, no less than archæology and the physical history of the country itself, lead us to suppose that when those oscillations of level ceased which led to the present distribution of land and water, one-third of the face of the country was covered with wood and another with uncultivated moor, and that marsh lands were extensive. * Remains dug up in the valley of the Severn, and others along the wide stretch of country drained by its tributaries, together with those disinterred from the bog and the marsh, show that animals, like plants, once indigenous, have, at comparatively recent periods become as extinct as Dodos in the Mauritius. Old British names in various parts of the country, particularly along the valley of the Severn, exist to show that the beaver once built its house by the stream, that the badger burrowed in its banks, and that the eagle and the falcon reared their young on the rocks above. At the same time, evidence exists

to show that the bear and the boar ranged the forests as late as the conquest of England by the Normans, whilst the red deer, the egret and the crane, the bittern and the bustard, remained to a period almost within living memory.

River loams, river gravels, lake beds, and cave breccias, disclose hooks and spears, and sometimes fragments of nets, which show that hunting and fishing were practised by the primitive dwellers along river plains and valleys.

The situations of abbeys, priories, and other monastic piles, the ruins of which here and there are seen along the banks of rivers, and the records the heads of these houses have left behind them, lead us to suppose that those who reared and those who occupied them were alive to the advantages the neighbourhood of good fisheries supplied. Some of the *vivaries* or fish-pools, and meres even, which once afforded abundant supplies, no longer exist, their sites being now green fields; but indications of their former presence are distinct, whilst the positions of weirs on the Severn, the rights of which their owners zealously guarded, may still be pointed out. Sometimes they were subjects of litigation, as with the canons of Lilleshall, who claimed

rights of fishing in the Severn at Bridgnorth, and who obtained a bull from Pope Honorius confirming them in their rights. In 1160 the Abbot of Salop, with the consent of his chapter, is found granting to Philip Fitz-Stephen and his heirs the fishery of Sutton (*piscarium de Sutana*), and lands near the said fishery. These monks also had fisheries at Binnal, a few miles from Willey; and it is well known that they introduced into our rivers several varieties of fish not previously common thereto, but which now afford sport to the angler.

Fishing, it is true, may have been followed more as a remunerative exercise by some members of these religious houses, still it did not fail to commend itself as an attractive art and a harmless recreation congenial to a spirit of contemplation and reflection to many distinguished ecclesiastics. That the Severn of that day abounded in fish much more than at present is shown by Bishop Lyttleton, who takes some pains to describe it at Arley, and who explains the construction of the coracle and its uses in fishing, the only difference between it both then and now, and that of early British times, being that the latter was covered with a horse's hide.

A jury, empannelled for the purpose of estimating the value of Arley manor upon the death of one of its proprietors, gave the yearly rental of its fishery at 6s. 8d.,—a large sum in comparison with the value of sixty acres of land, stated to have been 10s., or with the rent of a ferry, which was put down at sixpence. There must have been fine fishing then. Trout were plentiful, so were salmon; there were no locks or artificial weirs to obstruct the attempts of fish—still true to the instinct of their ancestors—to beat the tide in an upward summer excursion in the direction of its source. The document states that the part of the river so valued “abounded in fish.”

NOTE.—The Bishop of Worcester, by his regulations for the Priory of Little Malvern, in 1323, enjoins the prior not to fish in the stew set apart from ancient times *for the recreation of the sick*, unless manifest utility, to be approved by the Chapter, should sanction it; in which case he was, at a fit opportunity, to replace the fish which he caught.

We fancy it is not difficult to recognise a growing feeling against that separation of religion, recreation, and health which unfortunately now exists, and in favour of re-uniting the three; and we are persuaded that the sooner this takes place the better for the nation.

CHAPTER I.

THE MARSH AND FOREST PERIODS.

Early Features of the Country—The Hawk an acquisition to Sportsmen—Hawk aeries—Hawks according to Degrees—Brook and other kinds of Hawking—Hawking and Hunting—A Shropshire Historian's Charge against the Conqueror—Bishops and their Clergy as much given to the Sport as Laymen—The Rector of Madeley—The Merrie Days, &c.

DIVERSIFIED by wood and moor, by lake and sedgy pool, dense flocks of wild fowl of various kinds at one time afforded a profusion of winged game; and

the keen eye and sharp talons of the hawk no doubt pointed it out as a desirable acquisition to the sportsman long ere he succeeded in pressing it into his service; indeed it must have been a marked advance in the art when he first availed himself of its instinct. Old records supply materials for judg-

ing of the estimation in which this bird was held by our ancestors, it being not uncommon to find persons holding tenements or paying fines in lieu of service to the lord of the fee by rendering a *sore* sparrow-hawk—a hawk in its first year's plumage. Stringent restrictions upon the liberty the old Roman masters of the country allowed with respect to wild fowl were imposed; the act of stealing a hawk, and that of taking her eggs, being punishable by imprisonment for a year and a day. The high-born, with birds bedecked with hoods of silk, collars of gold, and bells of even weight, but of different sound, appeared according to their rank—a ger-falcon for a king, a falcon gentle for a prince, a falcon of the rock for a duke, a janet for a knight, a merlin for a lady, and a lamere for a squire. From close-pent manor and high-walled castle, to outspread plain and expansive lake or river

bank, the gentry of the day sought perditch and plover, heron and wild fowl, many of which the fowling-piece has since driven from their haunts, and some—as the bustard and the bittern, the egret and the crane—into extinction.

Mention is often made of hawk aeries, as at Little Wenlock, and in connection with districts within the jurisdiction of Shropshire forests, which seem to have been jealously guarded. The use of the birds, too, appears to have been very much restricted down to the time that the forest-charter, enabling all freemen to ply their hawks, was wrung from King John, when a sport which before had been the pride of the rich became the privilege of the poor. It was at one time so far a national pastime that an old writer asserts that “every degree had its peculiar hawk, from the emperor down to the holy-water clerk.”* The sport seems to have divided itself into field-hawking, pond-hawking, brook-and-river hawking; into hawking on horseback and hawking on foot. In foot hawking the sportsman carried a pole, with which to leap the brook, into which he sometimes fell, as Henry VIII. did upon his head in the mud, in which he would have been

* Appendix A.

stifled, it is said, had not John Moody rescued him; whether this Moody was an ancestor of the famous Whipper-in or not we cannot say.

Evidence is not altogether wanting to show that during the earlier history of the Marsh period, the gigantic elk (*Cervus giganteus*), with his wide-spreading antlers, visited, if he did not inhabit, the flatter portions of the Willey country; and it is probable that the wild ox equally afforded a mark for the arrow of the ancient inhabitants of the district in those remote times, which investigators have distinguished as the Pile-building, the Stone, and the Bronze periods, when society was in what has been fittingly called the hunter-state. At any rate, we know that at later periods the red deer, the goat, and the boar, together with other "beasts," were hunted, and that both banks of the Severn resounded with the deep notes of "veteran hounds." Of the two pursuits, Prior in his day remarks, "Hawking comes near to hunting, the one in the ayre as the other on the earth, a sport as much affected as the other, by some preferred." That the chase was the choice pastime of monarchs and nobles before the Conquest, and the favourite sport of "great and worthy personages" after, we learn

from old authors, who, like William Tivici, huntsman to Edward I., have written elaborate descriptive works, supplying details of the modes pursued, and of the kinds of dog which were used.

Our Saxon ancestors no doubt brought with them from the great forests of Germany not only their institutions but the love of sport of their forefathers, pure and simple. With them the forests appear to have been open to the people; and, although the Danes imposed restrictions, King Canute, by his general code of laws, confirmed to his subjects full right to hunt on their own lands, providing they abstained from the forests, the pleasures of which he appears to have had no inclination generally to share with his subjects. He established in each county four chief foresters, who were gentlemen or thanes, and these had under them four yeomen, who had care of the vert and venison; whilst under these again were two officers of still lower rank, who had charge of the vert and venison in the night, and who did the more servile work. King William curtailed many of the old forest privileges, and limited the sports of the people by prohibiting the boar and the hare, which Canute had allowed to be taken; and so jealous was he of the privileges of

the chase that he is said to have ordained the loss of the eyes as the penalty for killing a stag. His Norman predilections were such that an old Shropshire historian, Ordericus Vitalis (born at Atcham), who was at one time chaplain to the Conqueror, charges him with depopulating whole parishes that he might satisfy his ardour for hunting. Prince Rufus, who inherited a love of the chase from his father, is made by a modern author to reply to a warning given him by saying :—

“ I love the chase, 'tis mimic war,
And the hollow bay of hound ;
The heart of the poorest Norman
Beats quicker at the sound.”

King John stretched the stringent forest laws of the period to the utmost, till the love of liberty and of sport together, still latent among the people, compelled him to submit to an express declaration of their respective rights. By this declaration all lands afforested by Henry I. or by Richard were to be disafforested, excepting demesne woods of the crown ; and a fine or imprisonment for a year and a day, in case of default, was to be substituted for loss of life and members.

To prevent disputes with regard to the king's

forests, it was also agreed that their limits should be defined by perambulations ; but as a check upon the boldness of offenders in forests and chaces, and warrens, and upon the disposition of juries to find against those who were appointed to keep such places, it was deemed necessary on the other hand to give protection to the keepers.

Large sums were lavished by kings and nobles on the kennels and appliances necessary for their diversions. Nor were these costly establishments confined to the laity. Bishops, abbots, and high dignitaries of the Church, could match their hounds and hawks against those of the nobles, and they equally prided themselves upon their skill in woodcraft.

That the clergy were as much in favour of these amusements as the laity, appears from an old Shropshire author, Piers Plowman (Langland), who satirically gave it as his opinion that they thought more of sport than of their flocks, excepting at shearing time ; and likewise from Chaucer, who says, "in hunting and riding they are more skilled than in divinity." That Richard de Castillon, an early rector of Madeley, was a sportsman appears from the fact that when Henry III. was in Shrewsbury in September, 1267, concluding a treaty with Llewellyn, and settling

sundry little differences with the monks and burghesses there, he granted him license to hunt "in the royal forest of Madeley," then a portion of that of the Wrekin. In 1283 also, King Edward permitted the Prior of Wenlock to have a park at Madeley, to fence out a portion of the forest, and to form a haia there for his deer. It has been said that Walter, Bishop of Rochester, was so fond of sport, that at the age of fourscore he made hunting his sole employment. The Archdeacon of Richmond, at his initiation to the Priory of Bridlington, is reported to have been attended by ninety-seven horses, twenty-one dogs, and three hawks. Walter de Suffield, Bishop of Norwich, bequeathed by will his pack of hounds to the king; but the Abbot of Tavistock, who had also a pack, was commanded by his bishop about the same time to break it up. A famous hunter was the Abbot of Leicester, whose skill in the sport of hare hunting was so great, that we are told the king himself, his son Edward, and certain noblemen, paid him an annual pension that they might hunt with him. Bishop Latimer said: "In my time my poor father was as diligent to teach me to shoot as to learn me any other thing, and so I think other men did their children. He taught

me how to draw, how to lay my body in my bow, and not draw with strength of arms as other nations do ;” and the good bishop exclaims with the enthusiasm of a patriot, “ It is a gift of God that He hath given us to excel all other nations withal ; it hath been God’s instrument whereby He hath given us many victories over our enemies.”

Such were the “ merrie days,” when the kennels of the country gentry contained all sorts of dogs, and their halls all sorts of skins, when the otter and the badger were not uncommon along the banks of Shropshire streams, and ere the fox had taken first rank on the sportsman’s list. An old “ Treatise on the Craft of Hunting ” first gives the hare, the herte, the wulf, and the wild boar. The author then goes on to say—

“ But there ben other beastes five of the chase ;
The buck the first, the second is the doe,
The fox the third, which hath ever hard grace,
The fourth the martyn, and the last the roe.”

MORFE FOREST.

CHAPTER II.

MORFE FOREST.

Morfe one of the Five Royal Forests of Shropshire—Its History and Associations—Early British, Roman, Danish, and Norman Mementoes—Legends and Historical Incidents—Forest Wastes—Old Names—Hermitage Hill—Stanmore Grove—Essex Fall—Foresters—Old Forest Lodge, &c.

THE hunting ground of the Willey country embraced the sites of five royal forests, the growth of earlier ages than those planted by the Normans, alluded to by

Ordericus Vitalis. In some instances they were the growth of wide areas offering favourable conditions of soil for the production of timber, as in the case of that of Morfe. In others they were the result probably of the existence of hilly districts so sterile as to offer few inducements to cultivate them, as in the case of Shirlot, the Stiperstones, the Wrekin, and of the Clee Hills. Some of these have histories running side by side with that of the nation, and associations closely linked with the names of heroic men and famous sportsmen. Morfe Forest, which was separated from that of Shirlot by the Severn, along which it ran a considerable distance in the direction of its tributary the Worf, is rich in traditions of the rarest kind, the Briton, the Roman, Saxon, Dane, and Norman, having in succession left mementoes of their presence. Here, as Mr. Eyton in his invaluable work on the "Antiquities of Shropshire" says,—“Patriotism, civilisation, military science, patient industry, adventurous barbarism, superstition, chivalry, and religion have each played a part.”

The ancient British tumuli examined and described more than one hundred and thirty years ago by the Rev. Mr. Stackhouse have been levelled by the plough, but “the Walls” at Chesterton, and the

evidence the name of Stratford supplies as to Roman occupation, to which Mr. Eyton refers, as well as the rude fortifications of Burf Castle, constructed by the Danes when they came to recruit after being outmanœuvred by Alfred on the Thames, remain. At Quatford, a mile and a half west, on three sides of a rock overhanging the Severn, near to Danesford, are trenches cut out of the solid sandstone which, whether Danish or Norman, or in part both, shewed by the vast number of wild boar and red deer remains disclosed a few years ago the success with which the chase had here at one time been pursued.

Within the forest were four manors, the continuous estate in Saxon times of Algar, Earl of Mercia, which after the Conquest were granted in their integrity to the first Norman Earl of Shrewsbury, and which in 1086 were held wholly in demesne by his son Hugh. The predilections of the first Norman Earl of Shrewsbury for this vast forest, lying between those of Kinver, Wyre, and Shirlot,—the whole of which wide wooded district seems to have been comprehended under the old British name of *Coed*—are shown by the fact that he built his famous castle on the Severn close by, and founded

there his collegiate church, the stones of which remain to attest its erection by a Norman founder. The legend relating to the erection of the church seems so well to bear out the supposition that Morfe was the favourite hunting ground of the earl that, although frequently quoted, it may not be out of place to give it. In substance it is this :—

In 1082, Sir Roger married for his second wife a daughter of Sir Ebrard de Pusey, one of the chief nobles of France. On coming over to England to join her husband a storm arose which threatened the destruction of the vessel when, wearied with much watching, a priest who accompanied her fell asleep and had a vision, in which it was said :—
“ If thy lady would wish to save herself and her attendants from the present danger of the sea, let her make a vow to God and faithfully promise to build a church in honour of the blessed Mary Magdalene, on the spot where she may first happen to meet her husband in England, especially where groweth a hollow oak, and where the wild swine have shelter.” The legend adds that upon awaking the priest informed his lady, who took the prescribed vow ; that the storm ceased, that the ship arrived safely in port, that the lady met the earl hunting the boar where

an old hollow oak stood, and that at her request, and in fulfilment of her vow, Sir Roger built and endowed the church at Quatford, which a few years ago only was taken down and rebuilt.

On the high ground a little above the church there are still several trees whose gnarled and knotted trunks have borne the brunt of many centuries, two of which are supposed to have sprung

from the remains of the one mentioned in the legend.

Not only legends, but traditions, and some historical incidents, as those brought to light by the Forest Rolls, afford now and then an insight of the sporting kind of life led within the boundary and jurisdiction of the forest and upon its outskirts. The bow being not only the chief weapon of sport but of war, those with a greater revenue from land than one hundred pence were at one time not only permitted but compelled to have in their possession bows and arrows, but, to prevent those living within the precincts of the forest killing the king's deer, the arrows were to be rounded. These were sometimes sharpened, and disputes arose between their owners, the dwellers in the villages, and the overseers of the forest, the more fruitful source of grievance being with the commoners, who, claiming pasturage for their cows and their horses, often became poachers. On one occasion a kid being wounded by an arrow at Atterley, on the Willey side of the Severn, and the culprit not being forthcoming, a whole district is in *misericordiâ*, under the ban of the fierce Forest Laws of the period. On another occasion a stag enters the postern gate of the Castle of Bridgnorth, and the vision of venison

within reach proving too strong for the Castellan, he is entrapped, and litigation ensues. Sometimes the stout foresters and sturdy guardians of the castle, and burgesses of the town, indulge in friendly trials of skill at quarter-staff or archery, or in a wrestling match for a cross-bow, a ram, or a "red gold ring." In Ritson's "Robin Hood" we read:—

“By a bridge was a wrastling,
And there taryed was he :
And there was all the best yemen
Of all the west countrey.
A full fayre game there was set up,
A white bull up y-pight,
A great courser with saddle and brydle
With gold burnished full bryght ;
A payre of gloves, a red golde ringe,
A pipe of wyne good fay :
What man bereth him best I wis,
The prize shall bear away.”

In 1292, a wrestling match at a festive gathering on Bernard's Hill takes place, when from ill blood arising from an old feud a dispute ensues, and a forester named Simon de Leyre quarrels with Robert de Turbevill, a canon of St. Mary's, Bridgnorth, over a greyhound, which the latter, contrary to the regulations of the courts, had brought within the forest; and a jury of foresters, verderers, and re-

gardeners, in pursuance of the king's writ, is empowered to try the case. The evidence adduced shows that the foresters were to blame, the verdict come to being that the men of Brug, although at the wrestling match with bows and arrows, were in no way chargeable with the assault upon the forester. "They had been indicted for trespass," the jurors said, "not under any inquest taken on the matter, but by one Corbett's suggestion to the Justice of the Forest; they had been attacked and imprisoned under the warrant of the said Justice, Corbett's grudge being that two men of Brug had once promised him a cask of wine, a present in which the corporate body refused to join." Corbett was pronounced by the jurors "a malevolent and a procurer of evil."

To correct evils like these the "ordinatio" of Edward I. was introduced, containing many beneficial regulations, and stating that proceedings had been taken in the forest by one or two foresters or verderers to extort money, also providing that all trespassers in the forest of green hue and of hunting shall be presented by the foresters at the next Swainmote before foresters, verderers, and other officers. In the same year the king

confirmed the great charter of liberties of the forest.

Various official reports of this Chace, drawn up from time to time, show how the great forest of Morfe gradually diminished, as the vills of Worfield and Claverley, and other settlements, extended within its limits, causing waste and destruction at various times of timber. During the Barons' War the bosc of Claverley was further damaged, it was said, "by many goats frequenting the cover;" it suffered also from waste by the Earl of Chester, who sold from it 1,700 oak trees. Other wastes are recorded, as those caused by cutting down timber "for the Castle of Bridgnorth," and "for enclosing the vill before it was fortified by a wall." The report further states that "there were few beasts," because "they were destroyed in the time of war, and in the time when the liberty of the forest was conceded." By degrees, from one cause or another, and by one means or another, this, the "favourite chace of English kings and Norman earls, which, so late as 1808, consisted of upwards of 3,820 acres, disappeared, leaving about the names of places it once enclosed an air of quaint antiquity, the very mention of some of which may be inte-

resting. Among them are Bowman's Hill, Bowman's Pit, and Warrener's Dead Fall—names carrying back the mind to times when bowmen were the reliance of English leaders in battles fought on the borders, and before strongholds like the Castle of Bridgnorth. Gatacre, and Gatacre Hall, suggest a passing notice of a family which witnessed many such encounters, and which remained associated with a manor here from the reign of Edward the Confessor to the time when Earl Derby sought shelter as a fugitive after the Battle of Worcester. As Camden describes it, the old hall must have been a fitting residence truly for a steward of the forest. It had, in the middle of each side and centre, immense oak trees, hewn nearly square, set with their heads on large stones, and their roots uppermost, from which a few rafters formed a complete arched roof.

The Hermitage, with its caves hewn out of the solid sand rock, by the road which led through the forest in the direction of Worfield, meets us with the tradition that here the brother of King Athelstan came seeking retirement from the world, and ended his days within sight of the queenly Severn. Besides tradition, however, evidence exists to shew that this

eremetical cave, of Saxon origin, under the patronage of the crown, was occupied by successive hermits, each being ushered to the cell with royal seal and patent, in the same way as a dean, constable, or sheriff was introduced to his office; as in the case of John Oxindon (Edward III., 1328), Andrew Corbrigg (Edward III., 1333), Edmund de la Marc (Edward III., 1335), and Roger Boughton (Edward III., 1346). From the frequency of the presentations, it would appear either that these hermits must have been near the termination of their pilgrimage when they were inducted, or that confinement to a damp cell did not agree with them: indeed, no one looking at the place itself would consider it was a desirable one to live in.

Other names not less significant of the former features of the country occur, as Stoneydale, Copy Foot, Sandy Burrow, Quatford Wyches, and Hill House Flat,—where the remains of an old forest oak may still be seen. In addition to these we find Briery Hurst, Rushmoor Hill, Spring Valley, Stanmore Grove, and Essex Fall, the latter being at the head of a ravine, half concealed by wood, where tradition alleges the Earl of Essex, grandson of the Earl who founded St. James's, a refuge, a little

lower down, for sick and suffering pilgrims, which had unusual forest privileges allowed by royal owners, was killed whilst hunting. Here too, higher up on the hill, may still be seen the remains of the old Forest Lodge, which, with its picturesque scenes, must have been associated with the visits of many a noble steward and forest-ranger. Many a hunter of the stag and wild boar has on the walls of this old Lodge hung up his horn and spear, as he sought rest and refreshment for the night.

The names of some of the stewards and other officers of the forest are preserved, together with their tenures and other privileges. By an inquisition in the reign of Henry III., it was found that Robert, son of Nicholas, and others were seized of "Morffe Bosc."* In the 13 Hen. IV., "Worfield had common of pasture in Morffe." Besides many tenures (enumerated in Duke's "Antiquities of Shropshire," p. 52), dependent upon the forest, the kings (when these tenures were grown useless and obsolete) appointed stewards and rangers to take care of the woods and the deer; in the 19 Rich. II., Richard Chelmswick was forester for life: in the 1 Henry IV., John Bruyn was forester; and in

* Inquis. Henry III., incerti temporis, Nu. 6, 156.

the 26th Henry IV., the stewardships of the forest of Morfe and Shirlot were granted to John Hampton, Esq., and his heirs. Again, we find 9 Henry VII., rot. 28, George Earl of Shrewsbury, was steward and ranger for life, with a fee of 4*d.* per day. Orig. 6 Edward VI., William Gatacre de Gatacre, in com. Salop, had a lease of twenty-one years of the stewardship; and in the 20th Elizabeth, George Bromley had a lease of twenty-one years of the stewardship, at a rent of 6*s.* 8*d.*, et de incremento, 12*d.*; and 36 Elizabeth, George Powle, Gent., was steward, with a fee of 4*d.* per day.

One of the descendants of George Earl of Shrewsbury sold at no very distant period the old Lodge and some land to the Stokes family of Roughton, and the property is still in their possession. The remains of the old Lodge were then more extensive, but they were afterwards pulled down, with the exception of that portion which still goes by the name. As we have said, these places have about them interesting forest associations, reminding us that early sportsmen here met to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, with a success sometimes told by red-deer bones and wild-boar tusks, dug from some old ditch or trench. Where the plough-share now

cleaves the sandy soil, the wild-boar roamed at will ; where fat kine feed in pastures green, stout oaks grew, and red-deer leaped ; where the Albrighton red-coats with yelping hounds now meet, the ringing laugh of lords and ladies, of bishops and their clergy, hunting higher game, was heard. Then, as good old Scott has said,—

“ In the lofty arched hall
Was spread the gorgeous festival,
Then rose the riot and the din
Above, beneath, without, within,
For from its lofty balcony,
Rang trumpet, shawm and psaltery.
Their clanging bowls old warriors quaff’d,
Loudly they spoke and loudly laugh’d,
Whisper’d young knights in tones more mild,
To ladies fair, and ladies smiled.
The hooded hawks, high perch’d on beam,
The clamour join’d with whistling scream,
And flapped their wings and shook their bells,
In concert with the stag-hounds’ yells.”

CHAPTER III.

ROYAL CHASE OF SHIRLOT.

Afforestation of Shirlot—Extent—Places Disafforested—Hayes—Foresters—Hunting Lodges—Sporting Priors—Old Tenures—Encroachments upon Woods by Iron-making Operations—Animals that have Disappeared—Reaction due to a Love of Sport—What the Country would have lost—"The Merrie Greenwood"—Remarkable old Forest Trees, &c.

"Where with puffed cheek the belted hunter blows
His wreathed bugle horn."

MR. EYTON thinks the afforestation of Shirlot was probably suggested by its proximity to the Morville and Chetton manors, where Saxon kings and Mercian earls had their respective demesnes, and that Henry I. and his successors, in visiting the Castle of Bridgnorth, or as guests of the Prior of Wenlock, had

obvious reasons for perpetuating there the exclusive rights of a Royal chase. Although Shirlot Forest was separated from that of Morfe by the Severn, its jurisdiction extended across the river to Apley, and embraced places lying along the right bank of the river, in the direction of Cressage. Bridgnorth with its surroundings was not taken out of its jurisdiction or thrown open by perambulation till 1301, when it was disafforested, together with Eardington, Much Wenlock, Broseley, and other places. The extent and ancient jurisdiction of this forest may be estimated by the number of places taken from it at this date, as Benthall, Buildwas, Barrow, Belwardine, Shineton, Posenall, Walton, Willey, Atterley, the Dean, the Bold, Linley, Caughley, Little Caughley, Rowton, Sweyney, Appeleye (the only vill eastward of Severn), Colemore, Stanley, Rucroft, Medewegrene, Cantreyne, Simon de Severn's mesuage (now Severn Hall), Northleye, Astley Abbot's Manor, La Dunfowe (Dunwall), La Rode (now Rhodes), Kinsedeleye (now Kinslow), Tasley, Crofte, Haleyghton (Horton, near Morville), Aldenham, the Bosc of the Earl of Arundel within the bounds of the forest of Schyrlet, which is called Wiles Wode (*i.e.* Earl's Wood), Aston Aer, Momerfield (Mor-

ville), Lee, Underdone, Walton (all three near Morville), Upton (now Upton Cresset), Meadowley, Stapeley, Criddon, Midteleton (Middleton Scriven), the Bosc of the Prior of Wenlock, called Lythewode, half the vill of Neuton (Newton near Bold), Faintree, Chetton, Walkes Batch (Wallsbatch, near Chetton), Hollycott, Hapesford (now Harpswood), Westwood (near Harpswood), Oldbury, a messuage at the More (the Moor Ridding), a messuage at La Cnolle (now Knowle Sands), and the Bosc which is called Ongerres.

The ancient extent of the forest must have been about twelve miles by five. The names of the places mentioned to which the limits of the chace are traced are so different in many instances from the present that it may be of interest to give a few of them. From Yapenacres Merwey the boundary was to go up to the Raveneshok (Ravens' Oak), thence straight to the Brenallegrene, near the Coleherth (Coal Hearth) going up by the Fendeshok (Friends' Oak) to the Dernewhite-ford. Thence upwards to the Nethercoumbesheved; and so straight through the Middlecoumbesheved, and then down to Caldewall. Then down through the Lynde to the Mer Elyn. Thence down to Dubledaneslegh,

and then up by a certain watercourse to the Pirle ; and so up to Wichardesok ; and so to the Pundefold ; and so down by the Shepewey to the Holeweueu, and then up by a certain fence to Adame's Hale (Adam's Hall), and thus by the assarts which John de Haldenham (Aldenham) holds at a rent of the king to the corner of Mokeleyes Rowe (Muckley Row) ; and thence down to Yapenacres Merwey, where the first land-mark of the Haye begins. There was also, it was said, a certain bosc which the King still held in the same forest, called Benthleghe Haye (Bentley Haye).

In addition to this Haye there was the Haye of Shirlot, opposite to which a portion of the forest in the fifth of Henry III.'s reign was ordered to be assarted, which consisted in grubbing up the roots so as to render the ground fit for tillage.

In connection with these Hayes, generally a staff of foresters, verderers, rangers, stewards, and regards was kept up ; and forest courts were also held at stated times (in the forest of the Clee every six weeks), at which questions and privileges connected with the forest were considered. Philip de Baggesour, Forester of the Fee in the king's free Haye of Schyrlet in 1255, in the Inquisition of

Hundreds, is said to have under him "two foresters, who give him 20s. per annum for holding their office, and to make a levy on oats in Lent, and on wheat in autumn." "The aforesaid Philip," it is said, "hath now in the said Hays of Windfalls as much as seven trees, and likewise all trees which are wind-fallen, the jurors know not by what warrant except by ancient tenure." These privileged officers had good pickings, evidently by means of their various time-sanctioned customs, and jolly lives no doubt they led.

In the forty-second of Henry III. Hammond le Strange was steward of this forest, and in the second of Edward I. the king's forester is said to have given the sheriff of the county notice that he was to convey all the venison killed in the forests of Salop, and deliver it at Westminster to the king's larder, for the use of the king's palace. According to the same record, the profits that were made of the oaks that were fallen were to be applied to the building of a vessel for the king. In the nineteenth of Richard II., Richard Chelmswick was appointed forester for life; and in the twenty-sixth of Henry III. the stewardship both of the forests of Morfe and of Shirlot was granted to John Hampton and his heirs.

Some of the chief foresters also held Willey, and probably resided there; at any rate it is not improbable that a building which bears marks of extreme antiquity, between Barrow and Broseley, called the Lodge Farm, was once the hunting lodge. It has underneath strongly arched and extensive

cellaring, which seems to be older than portions of the superstructure, and which may have held the essentials for feasts, for which sportsmen of all times have been famous. Near the lodge, too, is the *Dear-Loape*, or Deer Leap, a little valley through which once evidently ran a considerable stream,

and near which the soil is still black, wet, and boggy. A deer leap, deer loape, or *saltory*, was a pitfall—a contrivance common during the forest periods, generally at the edge of the chace, for taking deer, and often granted by charter as a privilege—as that, for instance, on the edge of Cank, or Cannock Chace. Sometimes these pitfalls, dug for the purpose of taking game, were used by poachers, who drove the deer into them. It is, therefore, easy to understand why the forest lodge should be near, as a protection. It was usually one of the articles of inquiry at the Swainmote Court whether “any man have any great close within three miles of the forest that have any saltories, or great gaps called deer loapes, to receive deer into them when they be in chasing, and when they are in them they cannot get out again.”

Among sportsmen of these forest periods we must not omit to notice the Priors of the ancient Abbey of Wenlock. The heads of such wealthy establishments by no means confined themselves within the limits of the chapter-house. They were no mere cloistered monks, devoted to book and candle, but jolly livers, gaily dressed, and waited upon by well-appointed servants; like the Abbot of Buildwas, who

had for his vassal the Lord of Buildwas Parva, who held land under him on condition that he and his wife should place the first dish on the abbot's table on Christmas Day, and ride with him any whither

Chapter House of Wenlock Priory.

within the four seas at the abbot's charge. They had huntsmen and hounds, and one can imagine their sporting visitation rounds among their churches, the chanting of priests, the deep-mouthed baying of

dogs, early matins, and the huntsman's bugle horn harmoniously blending in the neighbourhood of the forest. Hugh Montgomery in his day gave to the abbey a tithe of the venison which he took in its woods, and in 1190 we find the Prior of Wenlock giving twenty merks to the king that he may "have the Wood of Shirlott to himself, exempt from view of foresters, and taken out of the Regard." As we have already shown, the priors had a park at Madeley, they had one at Oxenbold, and they also had privileges over woods adjoining the forest of the Clees, where the Cliffords exercised rights ordinarily belonging to royal proprietors, and where their foresters carried things with such a high hand, and so frequently got into trouble with those of the priors, that the latter were glad to accept an arrangement, come to after much litigation in 1232, by which they were to have a tenth beast only of those taken in their own woods at Stoke and Ditton, and of those started in their demesne boscs, and taken elsewhere. These boscs appear to have been woodland patches connecting the long line of forest stretching along the flanks of the Clee Hills with that on the high ground of Shirlot and, as in the case of others even much further removed, their

ownership was exceedingly limited. One of the complaints against Clifford's foresters was, that they would not suffer the priors' men to keep at Ditton Priors and Stoke St. Milburgh any dogs not *expedited*, or mutilated in their feet, nor pasture for their goats.

Imbert, one of these priors, was chosen as one of the Commissioners for concluding a truce with David ap Llewellyn in July, 1244. He was subsequently heavily fined for trespasses for assarting, or grubbing up the roots of trees, in forest lands at Willey, Broseley, Coalbrookdale, Madeley, and other places, the charge for trespass amounting to the large sum of £126 13s. 4d.

A survey of the Hays of Shirlot, made by four knights of the county, pursuant to a royal writ in October 21, 1235, sets forth "its custody good as regards oak trees and underwood, except that great deliveries have been made by order of the king to the Abbays of Salop and Bildewas, to the Priory of Wenlock, and to the Castle of Brug, for the repairs of buildings, &c."

Some curious tenures existed within the jurisdiction of this forest, one of which it may be worth while deviating from our present purpose to notice,

as it affords an insight into the early iron manufacturing operations which, at a later period, led to the destruction of forest trees, but, at the same time, to the development of the mineral wealth of the district within and bordering upon the forest. Of its origin nothing is known; but it is supposed to have arisen out of some kingly peril or other forest incident connected with the chase. It consisted in this, that the tenant of the king at the More held his land upon the condition that he appeared yearly in the Exchequer with a hazel rod of a year's growth and a cubit's length, and two knives. The treasurer and barons being present, the tenant was to attempt to sever the rod with one of the knives, so that it bent or broke. The other knife was to do the same work at one stroke, and to be given up to the king's chamberlain for royal use.*

That iron was manufactured at a very early period in the heart of the forests of Shirlot and the Clees, is shown by Leland, who informs us that in his day there were blow-shops upon the Brown Clee Hills in Shropshire, where iron ores were exposed upon the hill sides, and where, from the fact that

* For additional particulars respecting this interesting tenure we refer the reader to the Appendix B.

wood was required for smelting, it is only reasonable to look for them. Historical records and monastic writings, as well as old tenures, traditions, and heaps of slag, tell us that iron had been manufactured in the midst of these woods from very remote periods. As far back as 1250, a notice occurs of a right of road granted by Philip de Benthall, Lord of Benthall, to the monks of Buildwas, over all his estate, for the carriage of stone, coal, and timber; and in an old work in the Deer Leap, very primitive wooden shovels, and wheels flanged and cut out of the solid block, and apparently designed to bear heavy weights, were found a short time since, which are now in possession of Mr. Thursfield, of Barrow, together with an iron axletree and some brass sockets, two of which have on them "P. B.," being the initials of Philip Benthall, or Philip Burnel, it is supposed, the latter having succeeded the former. At Linley, and the Smithies, traces of old forges occur; so that there is good reason for supposing that knives and other articles of iron may have been manufactured in the district from a very early period. Among the assets, for instance, of the Priory of Wenlock, in the year 1541-2, is a mine of ironstone, at Shirlot, fermed for

£2 6s. 1*d.* per annum; and a forge, described as an Ierne Smythee, or a smith's place, in Shirlot, rented at £12 8s. Another forge produced £2 13s. 4*d.* per annum; and the produce of some other mineral, probably coal, was £5 3s. 10*d.* These large rents for those days show the advance made in turning to account the mineral wealth of the district, and the superior value of mines compared with trees, or mere surface produce.

Wherever powerful streams came down precipitous channels, little forges with clanging hammers were heard reverberating through the woods as early as the reigns of the Tudors. Their sites now are—

“Downy banks damask'd with flowers:”

but they reveal the havoc made of the timber by cutting and burning it for charcoal down to the reign of Elizabeth, when an act was passed to restrict the use for such purposes.

These iron-making and mining operations caused the forest to be intersected by roads and tramways, as old maps and reports of the forest shew us; so that few beasts, except those passing between their more secluded haunts, were to be found there; and,

as the stragglers preferred the tender vegetation the garden of the cottager afforded, even these were sometimes noosed, or shot with bows and arrows, which made no noise.

To such an extent had destruction of timber in this and other forests in the country been carried, that it was feared that in the event of a foreign war sufficient timber could not be found for the use of the navy. A reaction, however, set in: wealthy

landowners set themselves to work to remedy the evil by planting and preserving trees, especially the oak ; and many of the woods and plantations which gladden the eye of the traveller in passing through the country, and which afford good sport to the Wheatland and Albrighton packs, were the result.

To this indigenous and deep-rooted love of sport we are therefore indebted, to a very great extent, for those beautiful woods which adorn the Willey country and many other portions of the kingdom. But for our woods and the "creeping things" they shelter, we should have imperfect conceptions of those earlier phases of the island :—

" When stalked the bison from his shaggy lair,
Thousands of years before the silent air
Was pierced by whizzing shafts of hunters keen."

The country would have been wanting in subjects such as Creswick, with faithful expressions of foliage and knowledge of the play of light and shade, has depicted. It would have lost the text-work of those characteristics Constable revelled in, and those Harding gave us in his oaks. We should have lost subjects for the poet as well as for the painter ; for the ballad literature of the country is redolent of sights and sounds associated therewith.

To come down from the earliest times. How the old Druids revered them ! how the compilers of that surprising survey of the country we find in Domesday noted all details concerning them ! what

joyous allusions Chaucer, Spenser, and later writers make to them ! what peculiar charms the “merry green-wood” and the deep forest glades had for the imagination of the people ! Hence the popular sympathy expressed by means of tales and tradi-

tions in connection with Sherwood's sylvan shade, and the many editions of the song of the bold outlaw, and of the adventures contained therein. Even the utilitarian philosopher and the ultra radical, fleeing from the stifling atmosphere of the town, and diving for an hour or so into some paternal wood, is inclined, we fancy, to sponge from his memory the bitter things he has said of the owners and of that aristocratic class who usually value and guard them as they do their picture galleries. Thanks to such as these, there is now scarcely a run in the Willey country but brings the sportsman face to face with vestiges of some sylvan memorial. Nature or man has planted along the hill and valley sides, memorials renewed again and again, as winter after winter rends the red leaves from the trees: and the man who has not made a pilgrimage, for sport or otherwise, through these far-reaching sylvan slopes along the valley of the Severn, stretching almost uninterruptedly for seven or eight miles, or through some similar wooded tract, witnessing the sheltered inequalities of the surface, varied by rocky glens and rushy pools—the winter haunt of snipe and woodcock—has missed much that might afford him the highest inte-

rest. Here and there, on indurated soils along the valley sides, opportunities occur of studying the manner in which trees of several centuries' growth send their gnarled and massive roots in between the rocks in search of nourishment, for firmness, or to resist storms that shake branches little inferior to the parent stem. Few places probably have finer old hollies and yew-trees indigenous to the soil, relieving the monotony of the general grey by their sombre green—trees rooted where they grew six or eight centuries since, and carrying back the mind to the time of Harold and the bowmen days of Robin Hood.

Spoonhill, a very well-known covert of the Wheatland Hunt, was a slip of woodland as early as a perambulation in 1356, when it was recorded to lie outside the forest, its boundary on the Shirlot side being marked by a famous oak called Kinsok, "which stood on the king's highway between Weston and Wenlock."

The Larden and Lutwyche woods for many years have been famous for foxes. The late M. Benson, Esq., told us that a fox had for several seasons made his home securely in a tree near his house, he having taken care to keep his secret. The woods, too,

on the opposite side of the ridge, rarely fail to furnish a fox; and it is difficult to imagine a finer spot than Smallman's Leap,* or Ipikin's Rock, on the "Hill Top," presents for viewing a run over Hughley and Kenley, or between there and Hope Bowdler. Near Lutwyche is a thick entangled wood, called Mog Forest; and in the old door of the Church of Easthope,† near, is a large iron ring, which is conjectured to have been placed there for outlaws of the forest who sought sanctuary or freedom from arrest to take hold of. Now and then, in wandering over the sites of these former forests, we come upon traditions of great trees, sometimes upon an aged tree itself, "bald with antiquity," telling of parent forest tracts, like the Lady Oak at Cressage, which formerly stood in the public highway, and suffered much from gipsies and other vagabonds lighting

* There is a legend that Major Smallman, a staunch royalist, surprised by some of Cromwell's troopers, hotly pursued over Presthope, turned from the road, spurred his horse at full gallop to the edge of the precipice, and went over. The horse is said to have been killed on the trees, whilst the Major escaped, and secreted himself in the woods. Facts and local circumstances concur in giving a colouring to the tradition, and deeds extant show that the family resided here from the reign of Henry III. to the time mentioned. See Appendix C.

† See Appendix.

fires in its hollow trunk, but which is now propped, cramped, and cared for, with as much concern as the Druids were wont to show to similar trees. A young tree, too, sprung from an acorn from the

Lady Oak.

old one, has grown up within its hollow trunk, and now mingles its foliage with that of the parent.

There are a few fine old trees near Willey, supposed to be fragmentary forest remains. One is

a patriarchal-looking ash in the public road at Barrow; another is an oak near the Dean; it is one of which the present noble owner of Willey shows the greatest pride and care. There are also two noble trees at Shipton and Larden; the one at the latter place being a fine beech, the branches of which, when tipped with foliage, have a circumference of 35 yards. A magnificent oak, recently cut down in Corve Dale, contained 300 cubic feet of timber, and was 18 feet in circumference. This, however, was a sapling compared with that king of forest trees which Loudon describes as having been cut down in Willey Park. It spread 114 feet, and had a trunk 9 feet in diameter, exclusive of the bark. It contained 24 cords of yard wood, $11\frac{1}{2}$ cords of four-feet wood, 252 park palings, six feet long, 1 load of cooper's wood, $16\frac{1}{2}$ tons of timber in all the boughs; 28 tons of timber in the body, and this besides fagots and boughs that had dropped off:—

“What tales, if there be tongues in trees,
Those giant oaks could tell,
Of beings born and buried here;
Tales of the peasant and the peer,
Tales of the bridal and the bier
The welcome and farewell.”

The old oak forests and chestnut groves which sup-

plied the sturdy framework for the half-timbered houses of our ancestors, the rafters for their churches, and the beams for their cathedrals, are gone ; and the mischief is, not only that we have lost former forests, but that our present woods every year are growing less, that much of that shrubby foliage which within our own recollection divided the fields, forming little copses in which a Morland would have revelled, have had to give way to agricultural improvements, and the objects of sport they sheltered have disappeared. The badger lingered to the beginning of the present century along the rocks of Benthall and Apley ; and the otter, which still haunts portions of the Severn and its more secluded tributaries, and occasionally affords sport in some parts of the country higher up, was far from being rare. On the left bank of the Severn are the “Brock-holes,” or badger-holes, whilst near to it are the “Fox-holes,” where tradition alleges foxes a generation or two ago to have been numerous enough to have been a nuisance ; and the same remark may apply to the “Fox-holes” at Benthall. As the district became more cultivated and the country more populated, the range of these animals became more and more circumscribed, and the cherished sports of our forefathers came to form the staple topics of neighbours’ oft-told tales.

Within our own recollection the badger was to be found at Benthall Edge; but he had two enemies—the fox, who sometimes took possession of his den and drove him from the place, and the miners of Broseley and Benthall, who were usually great dog-

fanciers, and who were accustomed to steal forth as the moon rose above the horizon, and intercept him as he left his long winding excavation among the rocks, in order to make sport for them at their annual wakes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WREKIN FOREST AND THE FORESTERS.

The Wrekin Forest—Hermit of Mount St. Gilbert—Poachers upon the King's Preserves—Extent of the Forest—Haye of Wellington—Robert Forester—Perquisites—Hunting Matches—Singular Grant to John Forester—Sir Walter Scott's Tony Foster a Member of the Shropshire Forester Family—Anthony Foster Lord of the Manor of Little Wenlock—

The Foresters of Sutton and Bridgnorth—Anthony Foster altogether a different Character from what Sir Walter Scott represents him.

“ I am clad in youthful green, I other colours scorn,
My silken bauldrick bears my bugle or my horn,
Which, setting to my lips, I wind so loud and shrill,
As makes the echoes shout from every neighbouring hill ;
My dog-hook at my belt, to which my thong is tied,
My sheaf of arrows by, my wood-knife by my side,
My cross-bow in my hand, my gaffe on my rack,
To bend it when I please, or if I list to slack ;
My hound then in my thong, I, by the woodman’s art,
Forecast where I may lodge the goodly hie-palm’d hart,
To view the grazing herds, so sundry times I use,
Where by the loftiest head I knew my deer to choose ;
And to unherd him, then I gallop o’er the ground,
Upon my well-breathed nag, to cheer my learning hound.
Some time I pitch my toils the deer alive to take,
Some time I like the cry the deep-mouthed kennel make ;
Then underneath my horse I stalk my game to strike,
And with a single dog to hunt or hurt him as I like.”

DRAYTON.

It is important, to the completion of our sketch of the earlier features of the country, that we cross the Severn and say a word or two respecting the forest of the Wrekin, of which the early ancestors of the present Willey family had charge. This famous hill must then have formed a feature quite as conspicuous in the landscape as it does at present. As it stood out above the wide-spreading forest that

surrounded it, it must have looked like a barren island amid a waving sea of green. From its position and outline too, it appears to have been selected during the struggles which took place along the

Needle's Eye.

borders as a military fortress, judging from the entrenchments near its summit, and the tumuli both here and in the valley at its foot, where numbers of broken weapons have been found. At a later period

it is spoken of as Mount St. Gilbert, in honour, it is said, of a recluse to whom the Gilbertine monks ascribe their origin. Whether the saint fixed his abode in the cleft called the Needle's Eye (which tradition alleges to have been made at the Crucifixion); or on some other part of the hill, there is no evidence to show; but that there was a hermitage there at one time, and that whilst the woods around were stocked with game, is clear. It is charitable to suppose, however, that the good man who pitched his tent so high above his fellows abstained from such tempting luxuries, that on his wooden trencher no king's venison smoked, and that fare more becoming gown and girdle contented him; so at least it must have been reported to Henry III., who, to give the hermit, Nicholas de Denton by name, "greater leisure for holy exercises, and to support him during his life, so long as he should be a hermit on the aforesaid mountain," granted six quarters of corn, to be paid by the Sheriff of Shropshire, out of the issues of Pendlestone Mill, near Bridgnorth.

That there were, however, poachers upon the king's preserves appears from a criminal prosecution recorded on the Forest Roll of 1209, to the effect that four of the county sergeants found venison in

the house of Hugh le Scot, who took asylum in a church, and, refusing to quit, "there lived a month," but afterwards "escaped in woman's clothes."

Certain sales of forest land made by Henry II. near the Wrekin, and entered on the Forest Roll of 1180, together with the assessments and perambulations of later periods, afford some idea of the extent of this forest, which, from the Severn and the limits of Shrewsbury, swept round by Tibberton and Chetwynd to the east, and included Lilleshall, St. George's, Dawley, Shifnal, Kemberton, and Madeley on the south. From the "Survey of Shropshire Forests" in 1235, it appears that the following woods were subject to its jurisdiction: Leegomery, Wrockwardine Wood, Eyton-on-the-Weald Moors, Lilleshall, Sheriffhales, the Lizard, Stirchley, and Great Dawley. A later perambulation fixed the bounds of the royal preserve, or Haye of Wellington, in which two burnings of lime for the use of the crown are recorded, as well as the fact that three hundred oak-trees were consumed in the operation.

Hugh Forester, and Robert the Forester, are spoken of as tenants of the crown in connection with this Haye; and it is an interesting coincidence that the land originally granted by one of the Norman

earls, or by King Henry I., for the custody of this Haye, which included what is now called Hay Gate, is still in possession of the present noble owner of Willey. It seems singular, however, that in the

“Arundel Rolls” of 1255, it should be described as a *pourpresture*, for which eighteen pence per acre was paid to the king, as being held by the said Robert Forester towards the custody of the Wellington Haia.

Among the perquisites which the said Robert Forester was allowed, as Keeper of the Hays, all dead wood and windfalls are mentioned, unless more than five oak-trees were blown down at a time, in which case they went to the king. The Hays is spoken of here as an "imparkment," which agrees with the descriptions of Chaucer and other old writers, who speak of a Haia as a place paled in, or enclosed, into which deer or other game were driven, as they now drive deer in North America, or elephants in India, and of grants of land made to those whose especial duty it was to drive the deer with their troop of followers from all parts of a wide circle into such enclosure for slaughter. The following description of deer-hunting in the seventeenth century by Taylor, the Water Poet, as he is called, will enable us to understand the plan pursued by the Norman sportsmen :—

"Five or six hundred men do rise early in the morning, and they do disperse themselves divers ways; and seven, eight, or ten miles' compass, they do bring or chase in the deer in many herds (two, three, or four hundred in a herd) to such a place as the noblemen shall appoint them; then, when the day is come, the lords and gentlemen of their com-

panies do ride or go to the said places, sometimes wandering up to the middle through bourns, and rivers; and then, they being come to the place, do lie down on the ground till those foresaid scouts, which are called the Tinkheldt, do bring down the deer. Then, after we had stayed three hours or thereabouts, we might perceive the deer appear on the hills round about us (their heads making a show like a wood), which being followed close by the Tinkheldt, are chased down into the valley where we lay; then all the valley on each side being waylaid with a hundred couple of strong Irish greyhounds, they are let loose as occasion serves upon the herd of deer, that with dogs, guns, arrows, dirks, and daggers, in the space of two hours fourscore fat deer were slain."

Hunting matches were sometimes made in these forests, and one, embittered by some family feud respecting a fishery, terminated in the death of a bold and ancient knight, an event recorded upon a stone covering his remains in the quaint and truly ancient church at Atcham.

"The bugle sounds, 'tis Berwick's lord
O'er Wrekin drives the deer;
That hunting match—that fatal feud—
Drew many a widow's tear.

“ With deep-mouthed talbe to rouse the game
His generous bosom warms,
Till furious foemen check the chase
And dare the din of arms.

“ Then fell the high-born Malveysin,
His limbs besmeared with gore ;
No more his trusty bow shall twang,
His bugle blow no more.

“ Whilst Ridware mourns her last brave son
In arms untimely slain,
With kindred grief she here records
The last of Berwick’s train.”

Atcham Church.

Robert Forester appears to have had charge not only of the Hays of the Wrekin, but also of that of

Morfe, for both of which he is represented as answering at the Assizes in February, 1262, for the eight years then past. A Robert Forester is also described as one chosen with the sheriff, the chief forester, and verderers of Shropshire in 1242, to try the question touching the *expeditation* of dogs on the estates of the Lilleshall Abbey, and his seal still remains attached to the juror's return now in possession of the Sutherland family at Trentham.

A Roger de Wellington, whom Mr. Eyton calls Roger le Forester the second, is also described as one of six royal foresters-of-the-fee, who, on June 6th, 1300, met to assist at the great perambulation of Shropshire forests. He was admitted a burgess of Shrewsbury in 1319. John Forester, his son and heir, it is supposed, was baptised at Wellington, and attained his majority in 1335;* and a John Forester—a lineal descendant of his—obtained the singular grant, now at Willey, from Henry VIII., privileging him to wear his hat in the royal presence. After the usual formalities the grant proceeds:—"Know all men, our officers, ministers, &c. Forasmuch as we be credibly informed that our trusty and well-

* In 1390, Sir Humphrey de Eyton, an ancestor of T. C. Eyton, Esq., of Eyton, was ranger of this forest.

beloved John Foster, of Wellington, in the county of Salop, Gentilman, for certain diseases and infirmities which he has on his hede, cannot consequently, without great danger and jeopardy, be discovered of the same. Whereupon we, in consideration thereof, by these presents, licenced hym from henceforth to use and were his bonet on his said hede," &c.

It will be observed that in this grant the name occurs in its abridged form as Foster, and in the Sheriffs of Shropshire and many old documents it is variously spelt as Forester, Forster, and Foster, a circumstance which during the progress of the present work suggested an inquiry, the result of which—mainly through the researches of a painstaking friend—may add weight and interest to the archæological lore previously collected in connection with the family. It appears, for instance, that the Anthony Foster of Sir Walter Scott's "Kenilworth" was descended from the Foresters of Wellington; that he held the manor of Little Wenlock and other property in Shropshire in 1545; that the Richard Forester or Forster who built the interesting half-timbered mansion,* still standing in

* The Old Hall, which we suppose to have been the old hunting lodge, the residence of Dr. Cranage, Watling Street, is another

the Cartway, Bridgnorth, where Bishop Percy, the author of "Percy's Reliques," was born, was also a member; and that Anne, the daughter of this

Richard Forester or Forster, was married in 1575 at Sutton Maddock to William Baxter, the antiquary,

interesting specimen of the residences of the Forester family, and of the style of building and profusion of wood used therein during the great forest periods. Dothill, now the residence of R. Groom, Esq., is another of the old family residences of the Foresters.

mentioned by the Rev. George Bellet at page 183 of the "Antiquities of Bridgnorth." Mr. Bellet, speaking of another mansion of the Foresters at Bridgnorth, says, "One could wish, as a mere matter of curiosity, that a remarkable building, called 'Forester's Folly,' had been amongst those which escaped the fire; for it was built by Richard Forester, the private secretary of no less famous a person than Bishop Bonner, and bore the above appellation most likely on account of the cost of its erection." William Baxter, who, it will be seen, was a descendant of the Foresters, has an interesting passage in his life referring to the circumstance.*

We believe that the Forester pedigree in the MS. collection of Shropshire pedigrees, now in possession of Sidney Stedman Smith, Esq., compiled by that careful and painstaking genealogist the late Mr. Hardwick, fully confirms this, and shows that the Foresters of Watling Street, the Foresters or Forsters of Sutton Maddock, and the Forsters or Fosters of Evelith Manor were the same family. The arms, like the names, differ; but all have the hunter's horn stringed; and if any doubt existed as to the identity of the families, it is still

* Appendix D.

further removed by a little work entitled "An Inquiry concerning the death of Amy Robsart," by S. J. Pettigrew, F.R.S., F.S.A. Mr. Pettigrew says: "Anthony Forster was the fourth son of Richard Forster, of Evelith, in Shropshire, by Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Gresley, of an ancient family. The Anthony Forster of Sir Walter Scott's novel is supposed to have been born about 1510; and a relative, Thomas, was the prior of an ecclesiastical establishment at Wombridge, the warden of Tong, and the vicar of Idsall, as appears by his altar-tomb in Shifnal Church. He is conjectured to have attended to the early education of Anthony, whose after-connection with Berks is accounted for by the fact that he married somewhere between 1530 and 1540 a Berkshire lady, Ann, daughter of Reginald Williams, eldest son of Sir John Williams. He purchased Cumnor Place, in Berks, of William Owen, son of Dr. G. Owen, physician to Henry VIII. He was not, therefore, as Sir Walter Scott alleges, a tenant of the Earl of Leicester, to whom, however, he left Cumnor Place by will at his death in 1572." It is gratifying to find that Mr. Pettigrew, in his "Inquiry," shows how groundless was the charge built up by Sir Walter Scott against the Earl of

Leicester; and, what is still more to our purpose, that he completely clears the character of Anthony Forster, who was supposed to have been the agent in the foul deed, of the imputation, and shows him to have been quite a different character to that represented by this distinguished writer. This, indeed, may be inferred from the fact that Anthony Forster not only enjoyed the confidence of his neighbours, but so grew in favour with the people of Abingdon that he acceded in 1570 to the representation of that borough, and continued to represent it till he died; also, from the inscription on his tomb, which is as follows:—

“Anthonius Forster, generis generosa propago,
 Cumneræ Dominus Barcheriensis erat;
 Armiger, Armigero prognatus patre Ricardo,
 Qui quondam Iphlethæ Salopiensis erat.
 Quatuor ex isto fluxerunt stemmate nati,
 Ex isto Antonius stemmate quartus erat.
 Mente sagax, animo præcellens, corpore promptus;
 Eloquii dulcis, ore disertus erat.
 In factis probitas fuit, in sermone venustas,
 In vultu gravitas, religione fides;
 In patriam pietas, in egenos grata voluntas,
 Accedunt reliquis annumeranda bonis:
 Sic quod cuncta rapit, rapuit non omnia Lethum,
 Sed quæ Mors rapuit, vivida fama dedit.”

Then follow these laudatory verses:—

“ Argute resonas Citharæ prætere chordas,
Novit et Aonia concrepuisse lyra.
Gaudebat terræ teneras defigere plantas,
Et mira pulchras construere arte domos.
Composita varias lingua formare loquelas,
Doctus et edocta scribere multa manu.”

Cleared of the slanders which had been so unjustly heaped upon his memory, one can welcome Anthony Forster, the Squire of Cumnor, as a member of the same distinguished family from which the Willey Squire and the present ennobled house of Willey are descended.* But before introducing the Squire, it is fitting to say something of Willey itself.

* For a more complete account of the Forester family, we refer the reader to the Pedigree given in the Appendix E.

CHAPTER V.

WILLEY.

Willey, close Neighbour to the Royal Chace of Shirlot—Etymology of the Name—Domesday—The Willileys—The Lacons—The Welds and the Foresters—Willey Old Hall—Cumnor Hall as described by Sir Walter Scott—Everything Old and Quaint—How Willey came into possession of the Foresters.

“’Bove the foliage of the wood
An antique mansion might you then espy,
Such as in the days of our forefathers stood,
Carved with device of quaintest imagery.”

To commence with its earlier phase, it was clear that Willey would be close neighbour to the Royal Chace of Shirlot, and that it must have been about the centre of the wooded country previously described. The name is said to be of Saxon origin ; and in wattle and dab and wicker-work times, when an osier-bed was probably equal in value to a vineyard, the place might have been as the word seems

WILLEY OLD HALL.

to suggest, one where willows grew, seeing that various osiers, esteemed by basket makers, coopers, and turners, still flourish along the stream winding past it to the Severn. The name is therefore redolent of the olden time, and is one of those old word-pictures which so often occur to indicate the earlier features of the country. Under its agricultural Saxon holders, however, Willey so grew in value and importance that when the Conquest was complete, and King William's generals were settling down to enjoy the good things the Saxons had provided, and as Byron has it—

“Manors

Were their reward for following Billy's banners,”

Willey fell to the lot of a Norman, named Turolde, who, as he held twelve other manors, considerably permitted the Saxon owner to continue in possession under him. Domesday says: “The same Turolde holds Willey, and Hunnit (holds it) of him.” “Here is half a hide geldable. Here is arable land sufficient for ii ox teams. Here those ox teams are, together with ii villains, and ii boors. Its value is v shillings.” At the death of Hunnit the manor passed to a family which took its name from the place; and considerable additions resulted from

the marriage of one, Warner de Williley, with the heiress of Roger Fitz Odo, of Kenley. Warner de Williley appears to have been a person of some consequence, from the fact that he was appointed to make inquiry concerning certain encroachments upon the royal forests of Shropshire; but an act of oppression and treachery, in which his wife had taken a part, against one of his own vassals, whose land he coveted, caused him to be committed to prison. Several successive owners of Willey were overseers of Shirlot Forest; and Nicholas, son and heir of Warner, was sued for inattention to his duties; an under tenant also, profiting probably by the laxity of his lord, at a later period was charged and found guilty of taking a stag from the king's preserves, on Sunday, June 6th, 1253. Andrew de Williley joined Mountford against King Edward, and fell August 4th, 1265, in the battle of Evesham; in consequence of which act of disloyalty the property was forfeited to the crown, and the priors of Wenlock, who already had the seignioriness usual to feudal lords, availing themselves of the opportunity, managed so to increase their power that a subsequent tenant, as shown by the Register at Willey, came to Wenlock (1388), and "before

many witnesses did homage and fealty," and acknowledged himself to hold the place of the lord prior by carrying his frock to parliament. They succeeded too, after several suits, in establishing their rights to the advowson of the Church, founded and endowed by the lords of the place.

By the middle of the 16th century Willey had passed to the hands of the old Catholic family of the Lacons, one of whom, Sir Roland, held it in 1561, together with Kinlet; and from them it passed to Sir John Weld, who is mentioned as of Willey in 1666. He married the daughter of Sir George Whitmore, and his son, George Weld, sat for the county with William Forester, who married the daughter of the Earl of Salisbury, and voted with him in favour of the succession of the House of Hanover.

Who among the former feudal owners of Willey built the old hall, is a question which neither history nor tradition serves to solve. Portions of the basement of the old buildings seem to indicate former structures still more ancient, like spurs of some primitive rock cropping up into a subsequent formation. Contrasted with the handsome modern free-stone mansion occupied by the Right Hon. Lord

Forester close by, the remains shown in our engraving look like a stranded wreck, past which centuries of English life have gone sweeping by. Some of the walls are three feet in thickness, and the buttressed chimneys, and small-paned windows—"set deep in the grey old tower"—make it a fair type of country mansions and a realisation of ideas such as the mind associates with the homes of the early owners of Willey.

Although occupying a slight eminence, it really nestles in the hollow, and in its buff-coloured livery it stands pleasingly relieved by the high ground of Shirlot and its woods beyond. In looking upon its quaint gables, shafts, and chimneys, one feels that when it was complete it must have had something of the poetry of ancient art about it. Its irregularities of outline must have fitted in, as it were, with the undulating landscape, with which its walls are now tinted into harmony, by brown and yellow lichens. There was nothing assuming or pretentious about it; it was content to stand close neighbour to the public old coach road, which came winding by from Bridgnorth to Wenlock, and passed beneath the arch which now connects the high-walled gardens with the shaded walk leading to its

.

modern neighbour, the present mansion of the Foresters.

Sir Walter Scott, in his description of Cumnor Place, speaks of woods closely adjacent, full of large trees, and in particular of ancient and mighty oaks, which stretched their giant arms over the high wall surrounding the demesne, thus giving it a secluded and monastic appearance. He describes its formal walks and avenues as in part choked up with grass, and interrupted by billets, and piles of brushwood, and he tells us of the old-fashioned gateway in the outer wall, and of the door formed of two huge oaken leaves, thickly studded with nails—like the gate of an old town. This picture of the approaches to the old mansion where Anthony Foster lived was no doubt a more faithful representation than the one he gave of the character of the man himself. At any rate, it is one which would in many respects apply to old Willey Hall and its surroundings at the time to which the great novelist refers. Everything was old and old-fashioned, even as its owners prided themselves it should be, and as grey as time and an uninterrupted growth of lichens in a congenial atmosphere could make it. Hollies, yews, and junipers were to be seen in the grounds, and

outside were oaks and other aged trees, scathed by lightning's bolt and winter's blast. Here and there stood a few monarchs of the old forest in groups, each group a brotherhood sublime, carrying the thoughts back to the days when "from glade to glade, through wild copse and tangled dell, the wild deer bounded." Trees, buildings, loose stones that had fallen, and still lay where they fell, were mossed with a hoar antiquity. Everything in fact seemed to say that the place had a history of its own, and that it could tell a tale of the olden time.

From the lawn and grounds adjoining a path led to the flower-gardens, intersected by gravel walks and grassy terraces, where a sun-dial stood, and where fountains, fed by copious supplies from unfailing springs on the high grounds of Shirlot, threw silvery showers above the shadows of the trees into the sunlight.

Willey, augmented by tracts of Shirlot, which was finally disafforested and apportioned two centuries since, came into possession of the Foresters by the marriage of Brook Forester, of Dothill Park, with Elizabeth, only surviving child and heiress of George Weld, of Willey; and George Forester, "the Squire of Willey," was the fruit of that marriage.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WILLEY SQUIRE.

Squire Forester—His Instincts and Tendencies—Atmosphere of the Times favourable for their Development—Thackeray's Opinion—Style of Hunting—Dawn of the Golden Age of Fox-hunting, &c.

It will be seen that around Willey and Willey Hall, associations crowd which serve to make the place a household word and Squire Forester a man of

mark with modern sportsmen and future Nimrods, at any rate if we consent to regard the Squire's characteristics as outcrops of the instincts of an ancient stock. Descended from an ancestry so associated with forest sports and pursuits, he was like a moving plant which receives its nourishment from the air, and he lived chiefly through his senses. He was waylaid, as it were, on life's path by hereditary tendencies, and his career was chequered by indulgences which, read in the light of the present day, look different from what they then did, when at court and in the country there were many to keep him in countenance. At any rate, Squire Forester lived in what may be called the dawn of the golden age of fox-hunting. We say dawn, because although Lord Arundel kept a pack of hounds some time between 1690 and 1700, and Sir John Tyrwhitt and Charles Pelham, Esq., did so in 1713, yet as Lord Wilton, in his "Sports and Pursuits of the English" states, the first real pack of foxhounds was established in the West of England about 1730. It was a period when, for various reasons, a reaction in favour of the manly sports of England's earlier days had set in, one being the discovery that those distinguished for such sports were they who assisted most in winning on the

battle-fields of the Continent the victories which made the British arms so renowned. Then, as now, it was found that they led to the development of the physical frame—sometimes to the removal of absolute maladies, and supplied the raw material of manliness out of which heroes are made—a view which the Duke of Wellington in some measure confirmed by the remark that the best officers he had under him during the Peninsular War were those whom he discovered to be bold riders to hounds. Lord Wilton, in his book just quoted, goes still further, by contending that “the greatness and glory of Great Britain are in no slight degree attributable to her national sports and pastimes.”

That such sports contributed to the jollity and rollicking fun which distinguished the time in which Squire Forester lived, there can be little doubt. In his “Four Georges,” Thackeray gives it as his opinion, that “the England of our ancestors was a merrier England than the island we inhabit,” and that the people, high and low, amused themselves very much more. “One hundred and twenty years ago,” he says, “every town had its fair, and every village its wake. The old poets have sung a hundred jolly ditties about great cudgel playings,

famous grinnings through horse-collars, great May-pole meetings, and morris-dances. The girls used to run races, clad in very light attire; and the kind gentry and good parsons thought no shame in looking on." He adds, "I have calculated the manner in which statesmen and persons of condition passed their time; and what with drinking and dining, and supping and cards, wonder how they managed to get through their business at all." That they did manage to work, and to get through a considerable amount of it, is quite clear; and probably they did so with all the more ease in consequence of the amusement which often came first, as in the case of "Naughty idle Bobby," as Clive was called when a boy; and not less so in that of Pitt, who did so much to develop that spirit of patriotism of which we boast. It was a remark of Addison, that "those who have searched most into human nature observe that nothing so much shows the nobleness of the soul as that its felicity consists in action;" and that "every man has such an active principle in him that he will find out something to employ himself upon in whatever place or state he is posted."

Those familiar with the *Spectator* will remember

that he represents himself to have become so enamoured of the chase, that in his letters from the country he says: "I intend to hunt twice a week during my stay with Sir Roger, and shall prescribe the moderate use of this exercise to all my country friends as the best kind of physic for mending a bad constitution and preserving a good one." He concludes with the following quotation from Dryden:—

"The first physicians by debauch were made;
Excess began, and sloth sustains the trade:
By chase our long-liv'd fathers earned their food;
Toil strung their arms and purified their blood."

But a country squire of Mr. Forester's day even more pithily and quaintly expresses himself as to the advantages to be derived from out-door sports:—"Those useful hours that our fathers employed on horseback in the fields," he says, "are lost to their posterity between a stinking pair of sheets. Balls and operas, assemblies and masquerades, so exhaust the spirits of the puny creatures over-night, that yawning and chocolate are the main labours and entertainments of the morning. The important affairs of barber, milliner, perfumer, and looking-glass, are their employ till the call to dinner, and the bottle or gaming table demand the tedious hours that inter-

vene before the return of the evening assignations. What wonder, then, if such busy, trifling, effeminate mortals are heard to swear they have no notion of venturing their bodies out-of-doors in the cold air in the morning? I have laughed heartily to see such delicate smock-faced animals judiciously interrupting their pinches of snuff with dull jokes upon fox-hunters; and foppishly declaiming against an art they know no more of than they do of Greek. It cannot be expected they should speak well of a toil they dare not undertake; or that the fine things should be fit to work without doors, which are of the taylor's creation."

Childers, Pilot, and Pigmy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WILLEY KENNELS.

The Willey Kennels—Colonel Apperley on Hunting a Hundred Years ago—Character of the Hounds—Portraits of Favourites—Original Letters—Style.

“Tantivy! the huntsman he starts for the chase,
In good humour as fresh as the morn,
While health and hilarity beam from his face,
At the sound of the mellow-toned horn.”

THE style of hunting in vogue in Squire Forester’s day was, in the opinion of authorities on the subject, even more favourable to the development of bodily

strength and endurance than now. The late Mr. Thursfield, of Barrow, was wont to say that it was no unusual thing to see Moody taking the hounds to cover before daylight in a morning. The Squire himself, like most other sportsmen of the period, was an early man.

Col. Apperley says: "With our forefathers, when the roost-cock sounded his clarion, they sounded their horn, throwing off the pack so soon as they could distinguish a stile from a gate, or, in other words, so soon as they could see to ride to the hounds. Then it was that the hare was hunted to her form by the trail, and the fox to his kennel by the drag. Slow as this system would be deemed, it was a grand treat to the real sportsman. What, in the language of the chase, is called the 'tender-nosed hound,' had an opportunity of displaying itself to the inexpressible delight of his master; and to the field—that is, to the sportsmen who joined in the diversion—the pleasures of the day were enhanced by the moments of anticipation produced by the drag. As the scent grew warmer, the certainty of finding was confirmed; the music of the pack increased; and the game being up, away went the hounds in a crash. Both trail and drag are at pre-

sent but little thought of. Hounds merely draw over ground most likely to hold the game they are in quest of, and thus, in a great measure, rely upon chance for coming across it; for if a challenge be heard, it can only be inferred that a fox has been on foot in the night—the scent being seldom sufficient to carry the hounds up to his kennel. Advantages, however, as far as sport is concerned, attend the present hour of meeting in the field, independently of the misery of riding many miles in the dark, which sportsmen in the early part of the last century were obliged to do. The game, when it is now aroused, is in a better state to encounter the great speed of modern hounds; having had time to digest the food it has partaken of in the night previous to its being stirred. But it is only since the great increase of hares and foxes that the aid of the trail and drag could be dispensed with without the frequent recurrence of blank days, which now seldom happen. Compared with the luxurious ease with which the modern sportsman is conveyed to the field—either lolling in his chaise and four, or galloping along at the rate of twenty miles an hour on a hundred-guinea hack—the situation of his predecessor was all but distressing. In proportion to the

distance he had to ride by starlight were his hours of rest broken in upon, and exclusive of the time that operation might consume another serious one was to be provided for—this was the filling his hair with powder and pomatum until it could hold no more, and forming it into a well-formed knot, or club, as it was called, by his valet, which cost commonly a good hour's work. The protecting mud boots, the cantering hack, the second horse in the field, were luxuries unknown to him. His well-soiled buckskins, and brown-topped boots, would have cut an indifferent figure in the presence of a modern connoisseur by a Leicestershire cover side." "Notwithstanding all this, however," he adds, "we are inclined strongly to suspect that, out of a given number of gentlemen taking the field with hounds, the proportion of really scientific sportsmen may have been in favour of the olden times."

The Willey Kennels were within easy reach of the Hall, between Willey and Shirlot, where the pleasant stream before alluded to goes murmuring on its way through the Smithies to the Severn. But in order to save his dogs unnecessary exertion there were others on the opposite, or Wrekin, side of the river—

“Hounds stout and healthy,
Earths well stopped, and foxes plenty,”

being mottoes of the period. The dogs were of the “heavy painstaking breed” that “stooped to their work.” How, it was said,

“Can the fox-hound ever tell,
Unless by pains he takes to smell,
Where Reynard’s gone?”

Experience taught the Squire the importance of a principle now more generally acted upon, that of selecting the qualities required in the hounds he bred from ; and by this means he obtained developments of swiftness and scent that made his pack one good horses only of that day could keep up with. He prided himself much upon the blood of his best hounds, knew every one he had by name, and was familiar with its pedigree. Portraits of four of his favourites were painted on canvas and hung in the hall, with lines beneath expressive of their qualities, and the dates at which the paintings were made. The Right Hon. Lord Forester takes great care of these, as showing in what way the best dogs of that day differed from those of the present ; and through his kindness we have been enabled to get drawings made, of which his lord-

ship was pleased to approve, and we fancy there is no better judge living.

Three of these are shown in our engraving at the head of this chapter.

Pigmy, the bitch in the group nearest to the fox, is said to have been the smallest hound then known. Underneath the portrait are the following lines:—

“Behold in miniature the foxhound keen,
Thro’ rough and smooth a better ne’er was seen;
As champion here the beauteous Pigmy stands,
She challenges the globe, both home and foreign lands.”

1773.

The one the farthest from the fox, is a white dog, Pilot; and underneath the painting is the following:—

“Pilot rewards his master Rowley’s care,
And swift as lightning skims the transient air;
Famed for the chase, from cover always first,
His tongue and sterne proclaimed an arrant burst.”

1774.

The dog in front, with his head thrown up, is Childers; and underneath the picture are these lines:—

“Sportsmen look up, old Childers’ picture view,
His virtues many were, his failings few;
Reynard with dread oft heard his awful name,
And grateful Musters thus rewards his fame.”

1772.

The following letters from Mr. Forester to Walter Stubbs, Esq., of Beckbury, afterwards of Stratford-on-Avon, where he became distinguished in connection with the Warwickshire Hunt, show how particular he was in his selection. It would seem that whilst admiring the Duke of Grafton's hounds, which under the celebrated Tom Rose ("Honest old Tom," as he was called), who used to say, "a man must breed his pack to suit his country," gained some celebrity, he not unnaturally preferred his own. We give exact copies of two of his letters, they are so characteristic of the man. In all the letters we have seen he began with a considerable margin at the side of the paper, but always filled up the space with a postscript:—

"WILLEY HALL, March 15, 1795.

"DEAR SIR,

"I beg leave to return you my hearty thanks for your civility in sending your servant to Apley with three couple of my hounds that run into your's ye other day. Could I have returned compliment in sending ye three couple, that were missing from you, I should have been happy in ye discharge of that duty, so incumbent on every good sportsman.

I hear you are fond of the Duke of Grafton's hounds. It's a sort I have ever admired, and have received favours from his Grace in that line, having been acquainted together from our infancy up; and on course, most likely to procure no very bad sort from his Grace's own hands. I have sent you (as a present) a little bitch of ye Grafton kind, which I call Whymsey, lately taken up from quarters, and coming towards a year old. She's rather under size for me, or otherwise I see not her fault. She's, in my opinion, a *true Non-Pareil*. Your acceptance of her from me *now*, and any other hound of ye Grafton sort, that may come in near her size, will afford me singular satisfaction; as I make it a rule that no man who shows me civility shall find me wanting in making a proper return.

"I am, dear sir,

"Your obliged and very humble servant,

"G. FORESTER.

"P.S.—Next year Whymsey will be completely fit for entrance, but rather too young for *this*. The Duke's hounds rather run small enough for this country. I see no other defect in them. They are

invincibly stout, and perfectly just in every point that constitutes your real true fox hound."

"WILLEY, April 19, 1795.

"DEAR SIR,

"Per bearer I send you yr couple of bitches I promised you. The largest is near a year old, the lesser about half a one, and if she be permitted to walk about your house this summer, will make you a clever bitch; further, she's of Grace Grafton's kind, as her father was got by his Grace's Voucher, and bred by Mr. Pelham. Blood undeniable, *at a certainty*. As to yr dam of her, she's of my old sort, and a bitch of blood and merit. The other bitch I bred also, *to ye best* of my judgment, from a dog of Pelham's. I call her handsome in my eye, and not far off *being a beauty*. Her dam was got by Noel's famous Maltster, out of a daughter of Mr. Corbet, of Sundorn, named Trojan. I wish you luck and success with your hounds, and when I can serve you *to effect*, at any time, you may rely on my faithful remembrance of you.

"I remain, dear sir,

"Your very humble servant,

"G. FORESTER.

“P.S.—The largest bitch is named Musick, the lesser is named Gaudy.

“P.S.—We have had good sport lately ; and *one particular* run we had, upon Monday last, of two hours and one quarter (from scent to view), without one single interruption of any kind whatever.”

Savory.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WILLEY LONG RUNS.

The Willey Long Runs—Dibdin's Fifty Miles no Figure of Speech
 —From the Clee Hills to the Wrekin—The Squire's Breakfast
 —Phœbe Higgs—Doggrel Ditties—Old Tinker—Moody's
 Horse falls Dead—Run by Moonlight.

"Ye that remember well old Savory's call,
 With pleasure view'd her, as she pleased you all;
 In distant countries still her fame resounds,
 The huntsmen's glory and the pride of hounds."

1773.

THE portrait at the head of this chapter is from a carefully drawn copy of a painting at Willey of a

favourite hound of the Squire's, just a hundred years ago.

Dibdin, in his song of Tom Moody, speaks of "a country well known to him fifty miles round;" and this was no mere figure of speech, as the hunting ground of the Willey Squire extended over the greater part of the forest lands we have described. There were fewer packs of hounds in Shropshire then, and the Squire had a clear field extending from the Clee Hills to the Needle's Eye on the Wrekin, through which, on one remarkable occasion, the hounds are reported to have followed their fox. The Squire sometimes went beyond these notable landmarks, the day never appearing to be too long for him.

Four o'clock on a hunting morning usually found him preparing the inner man with a breakfast of underdone beef, with eggs beaten up in brandy to fill the interstices; and thus fortified he was ready for a fifty miles run. He was what Nimrod would have called, "a good rough rider" over the stiff Shropshire clays, and he generally managed to keep up with the best to the last;

"Nicking and craning he deemed a crime,
And nobody rode harder perhaps in his time."

He could scarcely "Top a flight of rails," "Skim ridge and furrow," or, charge a fence, however, with Phoebe Higgs, who sometimes accompanied him.

Phoebe, who was a complete Diana, and would take hazardous leaps, beckoning Mr. Forester to follow her extraordinary feats, led the Squire to wager heavy sums that in leaping she would beat any woman in England. With Phoebe and Moody, and a few choice spirits of the same stamp on a scent, there was no telling to what point between the two extremities of the Severn it might carry them. They might turn up some few miles from its source or its estuary, and not be heard of at Willey for a week. One long persevering run into Radnorshire, in which a few plucky riders continued the pace for some distance and then left the field to the Squire and Moody, with one or two others, who kept the heads of their favourites in the direction Reynard was leading, passed into a tradition; but the brush appears not to have been fairly won, a gamekeeper having sent a shot through the leg of the "varmint" as he saw him taking shelter in a churchyard—an event commemorated in some doggrel lines still current.

Very romantic tales are told of long runs by a

superannuated servant of the Foresters, old Simkiss, who had them from his father; but we forbear troubling the reader with more than an outline of one of these, that of Old Tinker. Old Tinker was the name of a fox, with more than the usual cunning of his species, that had often proved more than a match for the hounds; and one morning the Squire, having made up his mind for a run, repaired to Tickwood, where this fox was put up. On hearing the dogs in full cry the Squire vowed he would "Follow the devil this time to hell's doors but he would catch him." Reynard, it appears, went off in the direction of the Clee Hills; but took a turn, and made for Thatcher's Coppice; from there to the Titterstone Hill, and then back to Tickwood, where the hounds again ousted him, and over the same ground again. On arriving at the Brown Clee Hills the huntsman's horse was so blown that he took Moody's, sending Tom with his own to the nearest inn to get spiced ale and a feed. By this time the fox was on his way back, and the horse on which Tom was seated no sooner heard the horn sounding than he dashed away and joined in the chase. Ten couples of fresh hounds were now set loose at the kennels in Willey Hollow, and these

again turned the fox in the direction of Aldenham, but all besides Moody were now far behind, and his horse fell dead beneath him. The dogs, too, had had enough; they refused to go further, and Old Tinker once more beat his pursuers, but only to die in a drain on the Aldenham estate, where he was found a week afterwards.

“A braver choice of dauntless spirits never
Dash’d after hound,”

it is said, and to commemorate one of the good things of this kind, a long home-spun ditty was wont to be sung in public-houses by tenants on the estate, the first few lines of which were as follows:—

“Salopians every one,
Of high and low degree,
Who take delight in fox-hunting,
Come listen unto me.

“A story true I’ll tell to you
Concerning of a fox,
How they hunted him on Tickwood side
O’er Benthall Edge and rocks.

“Says Reynard, ‘I’ll take you o’er to Willey Park
Above there, for when we fairly get aground
I value neither huntsmen all
Nor Squire Forester’s best hound.

“ ‘I know your dogs are stout and good,
That they’ll run me like the wind !
But I’ll tread lightly on the land,
And leave no scent behind.’ ”

Other verses describe the hunt, and Reynard, on being run to earth, asking for quarter on condition that

“ He will both promise and fulfil,
Neither ducks nor geese to kill,
Nor lambs upon the hill ; ”

and how bold Ranter, with little faith in his promise, “ seized him by the neck and refused to let him go.” It is one of many specimens of a like kind still current among old people. An old man, speaking of Mr. Stubbs, for whom, he remarked, the day was never too long, and who at its close would sometimes urge his brother sportsmen to draw for a fresh fox, with the reminder that there was a moon to kill by, said, “ One of the rummiest things my father, who hunted with the Squire, told me, was a run by moonlight. I’m not sure, but I think Mr. Dansey, Mr. Childe, and Mr. Stubbs, if not Mr. Meynell, were at the Hall. They came sometimes, and sometimes the Squire visited them. Howsomever, there were three or four couples of fresh hounds at the kennels, and it was proposed to have

an after-dinner run. They dined early, and, as nigh as I can tell, it was three o'clock when they left the Hall, after the Beggarlybrook fox. Mind that was a fox, that was—he was. He was a dark brown one, and a cunning beggar too, that always got off at the edge of a wood, by running first along a wall and then leaping part of the way down an old coal pit, which had run in at the sides. Well, they placed three couples of hounds near to this place in readiness, and the hark-in having been given, the gorse soon began to shake, and a hound or two were seen outside, and amongst them old Pilot, who now and then took a turn outside, and turned in, lashing his stern, and giving the right token. 'Have at him!' shouted one; 'Get ready!' said another; 'Hold hard a bit, we shall have him, for a hundred!' shouted the Squire. Then comes a tally-ho, said my father, and off they go; every hound out of cover, sterns up, carrying a beautiful head, and horses all in a straight line along the open, with the scent breast high. Reynard making straight for the tongue of the coppice, finds himself circumvented, and fresh hounds being let loose, he makes for Wenlock Walton as though he was going to give 'em an airing on the hill-top.

“ ‘ But, headed and foiled, his first point he forsook,
And merrily led them a dance o’er the brook.’ ”

Some lime burners coming from work turned him, and, leaving Wenlock on the left, he made

Buildwas Abbey.

for Tickwood. It was now getting dark, and the ground being awkward, one or two were down. The Squire swore he would have the varmint out of Tickwood; and the hounds working well, and old Trumpeter's tongue being heard on the lower

side, one challenged the other, and they soon got into line in the hollow, the fox leading. Stragglers got to the scent, and off they went by the burnt houses, where the Squire's horse rolled over into a sand-pit. The fox made for the Severn, but turned in the direction of Buildwas, and was run into in the moonlight, among the ivied ruins of the Abbey."

CHAPTER IX.

BACHELOR'S HALL.

Its quaint Interior—An Old Friend's Memory—Crabbe's Peter at Ilford Hall—Singular Time-pieces—A Meet at Hangster's Gate—Jolly Doings—Dibdin at Dinner—Broseley Pipes—Parson Stephens in his Shirt—The Parson's Song.

WE have already described the exterior of the Hall and its approaches. In the interior of the building the same air of antiquity reigned. Its capacious chimney-pieces, and rooms wainscoted with oak to the ceiling, are familiar from the descriptions of an old friend, whose memory was still fresh and green as regards events and scenes of the time when the Hall stood entire, and who when a boy was not an unfrequent visitor. Like Crabbe's Peter among the rooms and galleries of Ilford Hall,

“His vast delight was mixed with equal awe,
There was such magic in the things he saw;
Portraits he passed, admiring, but with pain
Turned from some objects, nor would look again.”

Against the walls were grim old portraits of the Squire's predecessors of the Weld and Forester lines, with stiff-starched frills, large vests, and small round hats of Henry VII.'s time; others of the fashions of earlier periods by distinguished painters, together with later productions of the pencil by less famous artists, representing dogs, cattle, and favourite horses. In the great hall were horns and antlers, and other trophies of the chase, ancient guns which had done good execution in their time, a bustard, and rare species of birds of a like kind. Here and there were ancient time-pieces, singular in construction and quaint in contrivance, one of which, on striking the hours of noon and midnight, set in motion figures with trumpets and various other instruments, which gave forth their appropriate sounds. A great lamp—hoisted to its place by a thick rope—lighted up that portion of the hall into which opened the doors of the dining and other rooms, and from which a staircase led to the gallery.

A meet in the neighbourhood of Willey was usually well attended: first, because of the certainty of good sport; secondly, because such sport was often preceded, or often followed by receptions at the Hall, so famous for its cheer. Jolly

were the doings on these occasions; songs were sung, racy tales were told, old October ale flowed freely, and the jovial merits and household virtues of Willey were fully up to the mark of the good old times. The Squire usually dined about four o'clock, and his guests occasionally came booted and spurred, ready for the hunt the following day, and rarely left the festive board 'neath the hospitable roof of the Squire until they mounted their coursers in the court-yard.

Dibdin, from materials gathered on the spot, has, in his own happy manner, drawn representations of these gatherings. His portraits of horses and dogs, and his description of the social habits of the Squire and his friends are faithfully set forth in his song of "Bachelor's Hall:"—

"To Bachelor's Hall we good fellows invite
To partake of the chase which makes up our delight;
We've spirits like fire, and of health such a stock,
That our pulse strikes the seconds as true as a clock.
Did you see us you'd swear that we mount with a grace,
That Diana had dubb'd some new gods of the chase.
Hark away! hark away! all nature looks gay,
And Aurora with smiles ushers in the bright day.

"Dick Thickset came mounted upon a fine black,
A finer fleet gelding ne'er hunter did back;

Tom Trig rode a bay full of mettle and bone,
And gaily Bob Buckson rode on a roan ;
But the horse of all horses that rivalled the day
Was the Squire's Neck-or-Nothing, and that was a grey.

Hark away ! &c.

"Then for hounds there was Nimble who well would climb rocks,
And Cocknose a good one at finding a fox ;
Little Plunge, like a mole, who would ferret and search,
And beetle-brow'd Hawk's Eye so dead at a lurch :
Young Sly-looks that scents the strong breeze from the south,
And Musical Echo with his deep mouth.

Hark away ! &c.

"Our horses, thus all of the very best blood,
'Tis not likely you'd easily find such a stud ;
Then for foxhounds, our opinion for thousands we'll back,
That all England throughout can't produce such a pack.
Thus having described you our dogs, horses, and crew,
Away we set off, for our fox is in view. .

Hark away ! &c.

"Sly Reynard's brought home, while the horn sounds the call,
And now you're all welcome to Bachelor's Hall ;
The savoury sirloin gracefully smokes on the board,
And Bacchus pours wine from his sacred hoard.
Come on, then, do honour to this jovial place,
And enjoy the sweet pleasures that have sprung from the chase.

Hark away ! hark away ! while our spirits are gay,
Let us drink to the joys of next meeting day."

On the occasion of Dibdin's visit there were at the Hall more than the usual local notables, and Parson Stephens was amongst them. As a treat intended specially for Dibdin, the second course at

dinner consisted of Severn fish, such as we no longer have in the river. There were eels cooked in various ways, flounders, perch, trout, carp, grayling, pike, and at the head of the table that king of Severn fish, a salmon.

Dibdin : "This is a treat, Squire, and I can readily understand now why the Severn should be called the 'Queen of Rivers;' it certainly deserves the distinction for its fish, if for nothing else."

Mr. Forester : "Do you know, Dibdin, that fellow Jessop, the engineer, set on by those Gloucester fellows, wants to put thirteen or fourteen bars or weirs in the river between here and Gloucester; why, it would shut out every fish worth eating."

"What could be his object?" asked Dibdin.

"Oh, he believes, like Brindley, that rivers were made to feed canals with, and his backers—the Gloucester gentlemen, and the Stafford and Worcester Canal Company—say, to make the river navigable at all seasons up to Coalbrookdale; but my belief is that it is intended to crush what bit of trade there yet remains on the river here, and to give them a monopoly in the carrying trade, for our bargemen would be taxed, whilst their carriers would be free, or nearly so."

“We beat them, though,” said Mr. Pritchard.

“So we did,” added the Squire, “but we had a hard job: begad, I thought our watermen had pretty well primed me when I went up to see Pitt on the subject; but I had not been with him five minutes before I found he knew far more about the river than I did:

“‘I am no orator, as Brutus is,
But, as you know me all, a plain and honest man.’”

Several voices: “Bravo, Squire.”

To Stephens: “Will you take a flounder?—‘flat as a flounder,’ they say. I know you have a sympathy with flats, if not a liking for them.”

“The Broseley colliers made a flat of him when they dragged his own pond for the fish he was so grateful for,” said Hinton.

The laugh went against the parson, who somehow missed his share of a venison pasty, which was a favourite of his. He had been helped to a slice from a haunch which stood in the centre of the table, and had had a cut out of a saddle of mutton at one end, but he missed his favourite dish.

“Is it true,” inquired Dibdin, looking round at roast, and boiled, and pasties, “what we hear in

London, that there is very considerable *scarcity* and *distress* in the country ? ”—(general laughter). This brought up questions of political economy, excess of population, stock-jobbing, usury, gentlemen taking their money out of the country and aping Frenchified, stick-frog fashions on their return. The latter was a favourite subject with the Squire, who could not see, he said, what amusement a gentleman could find out of the country equal to foxhunting, and gave him an opportunity of introducing his favourite theory of taxing heavily those who did so. The discussion had lasted over the fifth course, when more potent liquors were put upon the table, together with Broseley pipes. The production of the latter was a temptation Stephens could not resist of telling the story of the Squire purchasing a box, for which he paid a high price, in London, and finding, on showing them to one of his tenants, as models, that they were made upon his own estate. The laugh went against the Squire, who gave indication, by a merry twinkle in his eye, that he would take an opportunity of being quits. Discussions ensued upon the virtues and evils of tobacco, and the refusal of Parliament to allow a census to be taken ; one of the guests expressing a belief, founded upon a state-

ment put forth by a Dr. Price, that the population of England and Wales was under five millions, or less, in fact, than it was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. "Which," added the Squire, "is not correct, according to poor-law and other statistics produced before Parliament, which show that there are from three to four births to one death."

Mr. Whitmore : "I can readily believe that this is true in your parishes of Willey and Barrow, Forester, where a certain person's amours, like Jupiter's, are too numerous to mention." (Laughter, in which the Squire joined.)

Mr. Forester : "A truce to statistics and politics, let us have Larry Palmer, our local Incedon, in to sing us some of Dibdin's songs." (General approbation.)

And Larry, who was blind, and who was purposely kept in ignorance of Dibdin being present, then gave in succession several of what Incedon called his "sheet-anchors," including "The Quaker," "My Trim-built Wherry," "Tom Bowling," &c., with an effect and force which made the author exclaim that he never heard greater justice done to his compositions, and led to an exhibition of feeling which made the old hall ring again.

Dibdin's health was next given, with high eulogiums as to the effect of his animating effusions on the loyalty, valour, and patriotism which at that time blazed so intensely in the bosom of the British tar.

Dibdin, in acknowledging the toast, related incidents he had himself several times witnessed at sea; and how deeply indebted he felt to men like Incledon and others, adding that the inspiration which moved him was strongly in his mind from his earliest remembrance. It lay, he said, a quiet hidden spark which, for a time, found nothing hard enough to vivify it; but which, coming in contact with proper materials, expanded.

"Tell Dibdin of Old Tinker," cried Childe, of Kinlet.

The tale of Old Tinker was given, the last bit of court scandal discussed, and some tales told of the King, with whom Mr. Forester was on terms of friendship, and the festivities of the evening had extended into the small hours of the morning, when, during a brief pause in the general mirth, a tremendous crash was heard, and the Squire rushing out to see what was the matter, met one of the servants, who said the sound came from the larder, whither

Mr. Forester repaired. Looking in, he saw Stephens *in his shirt*, and, with presence of mind, he turned the key, and went back to his company to consider how he should turn the incident to account.

It appears that Stephens had been several hours in bed, when, waking up from his first sleep, he fancied he should like a dip into the venison pie, and forthwith had gone down into the larder, where, in searching for the pie, he knocked down the dish, with one or two more. The Squire was not long in making up his mind how he should turn the matter to account; he declared that it was time to retire, but before doing so, he said, they must have a country dance, and insisted upon the whole household being roused to take part in it. There was no resisting the wishes of the host; the whole of the house assembled, and formed sides for a dance in the hall, through which Stephens must necessarily pass in going to his room. Whilst this was taking place Mr. Forester slipped the key into the door, and going behind Stephens, unkennelled his fox, making the parson run the gauntlet, in his shirt, amid an indescribable scene of merriment and confusion !

The very Rev. Dr. Stephens had paid for his

nocturnal escapade, one would have thought, sufficiently to satisfy the most exacting. But the Squire and his guests, just ripe for fun, insisted that he should dress and come down into the dining-room to finish the night. The further penalty, too, was inflicted of making him join in the chorus of the old song, sung with boundless approbation by one of the company, beginning—

“A parson once had a remarkable foible
Of loving good liquor far more than his Bible;
His neighbours all said he was much less perplexed
In handling a tankard than in handling a text.
Derry down, down, down, “derry down.”

The gist of which lies in the parson's reply to his wife, who, when the pigs set his ale running, and he stormed and swore, reminded him of his laudation of the patience of Job, whereupon he denies the application, with the remark—

“Job never had such a cask in his life.”

“The hunting in the Cheviot,”

now called “Chevy Chase,” succeeded, and the night closed with Dibdin singing his last new song, to music of his own composing, with a jolly, rollicking chorus by the whole company.

CHAPTER X.

THE WILLEY RECTOR, AND OTHER OF THE SQUIRE'S FRIENDS.

The Squire's Friends and the Willey Rector more fully drawn
—Turner—Wilkinson—Harris—The Rev. Michael Pye
Stephens—His Relationship to the Squire—In the Commission
of the Peace—The Parson and the Poacher—A Fox-hunting
Christening.

BESIDES professional sportsmen who were wont to make the Willey roof-trees echo with their shouts, the Squire usually assembled round his table, on Sundays, the leading men of the neighbourhood, each of some special note or importance in his own district, who formed at Willey a sort of local parliament. Among these were brother magistrates, tenants, and members of the clerical, legal, and medical professions. Thomas Turner, a county magistrate, and the chairman of a court of equity, to establish which the Squire assisted him in obtaining an Act of Parliament, to whom was dedicated a

sermon delivered before the justices of the peace by the Rev. L. Booker, LL.D., was one of these. Mr. Turner carried on the now famous Caughley works, where he succeeded in producing, by means of English and French workmen, china of superior merit, which, like the old Wedgwood productions, is now highly prized by connoisseurs. He was the first producer of the "willow pattern," still so much in demand, and his general knowledge gave him great influence. The Squire paid occasional visits to his elegant château at Caughley, and gave him one of the two portraits of himself which he had painted, a picture now in possession of the widow of Mr. Turner's son, George, of Scarborough, in which the Squire is represented—as in our engraving—in his scarlet hunting coat, with a fox's brush in his hand—a facsimile of the one from which our woodcut is taken. Another, but only an occasional visitor at the Hall, was John Wilkinson, "the Father of the Iron Trade," as he is now called, who then lived at Broseley, and who was one of the most remarkable men of the past century. He was for some years a tenant of the Squire, and carried on the Willey furnaces. He was also a friend of Boulton and Watt, and was the first who succeeded

in boring their cylinders even all through ; he was the first, too, who taught the French the art of boring cannon from the solid. He built and launched at Willey Wharf the first iron barge—the precursor of all iron vessels on the Thames and Tyne, and of the Great Eastern, as well as of our modern iron-clads. Mr. Harries of Benthall, Mr. Hinton of Wenlock, Mr. Bryan of The Tuckies, and Mr. John Cox Morris, farmer of Willey, who took the first silver cup given by the Agricultural Society of Shropshire for the best cultivated farm, and who had still further distinguished himself in the estimation of sportsmen by a remarkable feat of horsemanship for a large amount, were among those who visited the Squire.

But a more frequent guest at the Hall and at the covert-side was the Willey Rector, the Rev. Michael Pye Stephens, whose family was related to that of the Welds, through the Slaneys. The Rector was therefore, as already shown, on familiar terms with the Squire, and the more so as he was able to tell a good tale and sing a good song. The rural clergy a century ago were great acquisitions at the tables of country squires, and were not unfrequently among the most enthusiastic lovers of the chase. It was by

no means an uncommon thing, forty years ago, to see the horse of the late Rector of Stockton, brother to the Squire of Apley, waiting for him at the church door at Bonnigale, which living he also held, that he might start immediately service was over for Melton Mowbray. His clerk, too, old Little-hales, who to more secular professions added that of village tailor, has often told how his master, being sorely in need of a pair of hunting breeches for Melton, undertook to close the church one Sunday in order to give him the opportunity of making them, with the remark, "Oh, 'd——n the church, you stop at home and make the breeches." But the Rector of Willey was by no means so enthusiastic as a sportsman. He was not the

"Clerical fop, half jockey and half clerk,
The tandem-driving Tommy of a town,
Disclaiming book, omniscient of a horse,
Impatient till September comes again,
Eloquent only of the pretty girl
With whom he danced last night!"

Neither did he resemble those more bilious members of the profession of modern times—

"Who spit their puny spite on harmless recreation."

On the contrary, he held what it may be difficult

to gainsay, that amusements calculated to strengthen the frame and to improve the health, if fitting for a gentleman, were not unfitting for a clergyman. His presence, at any rate, was welcomed by neighbouring squires in the field, as "Hark in! Hark in! Hark! Yoi over boys!" sounded merrily on the morning air; and as he sat mounted on the Squire's thorough-bred it would have been difficult to have detected anything of the divine; the clerico-waistcoat and black single-breasted outer garment having given place to more fitting garb. Fond of field sports himself, he willingly associated with his neighbours and joined in their pastimes and amusements. A man who was a frequent guest at the Hall, who received letters from the Squire when in London, and who would take a long pipe now and then between his lips, and moisten his clay from a pewter tankard round a clean-scoured table in a road-side inn, was naturally of considerable importance in his own immediate district.

The Rector of Willey had, we believe, been brought up to the legal profession, he had also a smattering knowledge of medicine, which enabled him to render at times service to his parishioners, who

called him Dr. Stephens. He was in the commission of the peace, too, for the borough ; and so completely did the characters combine—so perfectly did law and divinity dove-tail into each other—that he might have been taken as a personification of either.

“Mild were his doctrines, and not one discourse
But gained in softness what it lost in force.”

Without stinginess he partook of the good things heaven to man supplies ; he was “ full fed ;” his face shone with good-humour, and he was as fond of a joke as of the Squire’s old port. As a justice of the peace he was no regarder of persons, providing they equally brought grist to his mill ; he had no objection to litigants smoothing the way to a decision by presents, such as a piece of pork, a pork pie, or a dish of fish ; once or twice, however, he found the fish to have been caught the previous night out of his own pond. Next to a weakness for fish was one for knee-breeches and top-boots, which in the course of much riding required frequent renewal ; and, ’tis said, that seated in his judicial chair, he has had the satisfaction of seeing a pair of new chalked tops projecting alike from plaintiff’s and defendant’s pockets. In which

case, with spectacles raised and head thrown back, as though to look above the petty details of the complaint, after sundry hums and haws, with inquiries after the crops between, and each one telling some news about his neighbour, he would find the evidence on both sides equally balanced and suggest a compromise! A good tale is told of the justice wanting a hare for a friend, and employing a notorious poacher to procure one. The man brought it in a bag. "You've brought a hare, then?" "I have, Mr. Stephens, and a fine one too," replied the other, as he turned it out, puss flying round the room, and over the table amongst the papers like a mad thing. "Kill her! kill her!" shouted Stephens. "No, by G——," replied the poacher, who knew that by doing so he would bring himself within the law, "you kill her; I've had enough trouble to catch her." After two or three runs the justice succeeded in hitting her on the head with a ruler, and thus brought himself within the power of the poacher.

The parson was sometimes out of temper, and then he swore, but this was not often; still his friends were wont to joke him on the following domestic little incident:—His services were sud-

denly in demand on one occasion when, a full clerical costume being required, he found his bands not ready, and he set to work to iron them himself. He was going on swimmingly as he thought, and had only left the iron to go to the bottom of the stairs, with a "D——n you, madam," to his wife, who had not yet come down; "d——n you, I can do without you," when, on returning, he found his bands scorched and discoloured.

A foxhunter's christening in which the Willey Rector played a part on one occasion is too good to lose. He was the guest of Squire B——t, a well-known foxhunter, who at one time hunted the Shifnal country with his own hounds. A very jovial company from that side had assembled, and it was determined to celebrate a new arrival in the Squire's family, and to take advantage of the presence of the parson to christen the little stranger. The thing was soon settled, and Stephens proceeded in due form with the ceremony necessary to give to the fair-haired innocent a name by which it should be known to the world. The conversation of the company had of course been upon their favourite sport, a good many bottles of fine sherry and crusty old port had been drunk, and under their influence,

it was settled that one of the company should give the child a name in which it should be baptized, let it be what it would. Stephens having taken the child in his hands, in due form asked the name ; it was given immediately as Foxhunting Moll B——t ! With this name the little innocent grew up, and finally became the wife of Squire H——s ; with this name she of course signed all legal documents —first, as Foxhunting Moll B——t, and, secondly, as Foxhunting Moll H——s.

Moody's Horn, Trencher, Cap, Boots, &c.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WILLEY WHIPPER-IN.

The Willey Whipper-in—Tom's Start in Life—His Pluck and Perseverance—Up Hill and down Dale—Adventures with the Buff-coloured Chaise—His own Wild Favourite—His Drinking-horn—Who-who-hoop—Good Temper—Never Married—Hangster's Gate—Old Coaches—Tom Gone to Earth—Three View Halloos at the Grave—Old Boots.

"The huntsman'a self relented to a grin,
And rated him almost a whipper-in."

TOM MOODY never rose above his post of whipper-in, but he had the honour of being at the top of his profession ; and before proceeding further with our sketch of Squire Forester it may be well to dwell for a time upon this well-known character, whom Dibdin immortalised in his song, so familiar to all

GONE TO EARTH.

sportsmen. He was in fact, in many respects, what Mr. Forester had made him : Nature supplied the material, and Squire Forester did the rest. Tom had the advantage of entering the Squire's service when a youth. Like most boys of that period, he had been thrown a good deal upon his own resources, a state of things not unfavourable to a development of self-reliance, and a degree of humble heroism, such as made life wholesome. Tom had no opportunities of obtaining a national-school education, nor of carrying away the prize now sometimes awarded to the best behaved lad in the village. But in the unorganized school of common intercourse, common suffering, and interest, was developed a pluck and daring which led him to perform a feat on the bare back of a crop-eared cob that gave birth to the after events of his life. It appears that he was apprenticed to a Mr. Adams, a maltster, who had sent him to deliver malt at the Hall. On his return he was seen by the Squire trying his horse at a gate, and repeating the attempt till he compelled him to leap it. It is said that—

“He who excels in what we prize,
Appears a hero in our eyes.”

And Squire Forester, struck by his pluck and perseverance, made up his mind to secure him. He sent to his master to ask if he were willing to give him up, adding that he would like to see him at the Hall. The message alarmed the mother, who was a widow, for, knowing her son's froward nature, she at once imagined Tom had got into trouble. On learning the true state of the case, however, and thinking she saw the way open to Tom's promotion, she consented to the change in his condition. His master, too, agreed to give him up, and Tom was transferred to the Willey stables, where, from his good nature and other agreeable qualities, he became a favourite, and from his daring courage quite a sort of little hero. It was Tom's duty to go on errands from the Hall, and once outside the park, feeling he had his liberty, he did not fail to make use of opportunities for displaying his skill. In riding, it was generally up hill and down dale, at neck-or-nothing speed, stopping neither for gate nor hedge—his horse tearing away at a rate which would have given him three or four somersaults at a slip. He seldom turned his horse's head if he could help it, and if he went down he was soon up again. Extraordinary tales are told

of Tom's adventures with the Squire's buff-coloured chaise, in taking company from the Hall, and in fetching visitors from Shifnal, then the nearest place to reach a coach. Having a spite at a pike-keeper, who offended him by not opening the gate quick enough, "Tom tanselled his hide," and resolved the next time he went that way not to trouble him. Driving up to the gate, he gave a spring, and touching his horse on the flanks, went straight over without starting a stitch or breaking a buckle. On another occasion he tried the same trick, but failed; the horse went clean over, but the gig caught the top rail, and Tom was thrown on his back. "That just sarves yo right," said the pike-keeper. "So it does, and now we are quits," added Tom; and they were friends ever after. This, however, did not prevent Tom trying it again; not that he wanted to defraud the pike-man, whom he generally paid another time, but for "the fun of the thing." Indeed, with his old wild favourite, with or without the buff-coloured gig, there were no risks he was not prepared to run. "Ay, ay, sir," said one of our aged informants, "you should have seen him on his horse, a mad, wild animal no one but Tom could ride. He could ride him though, with his eyes shut,

savage as he was, and on a good road he would pass milestones as the clock measured minutes ; but give him the green meadows, and Lord how I have seen him whip along the turf !” “ He was like a winged Mercury, making light both of stone walls and five-foot six-inch gates. He was a regular centaur, for he and his horse seemed one,” said another. “ I cannot tell you the height of his horse,” said a third, “ but he was a big un ; whilst Tom himself was a little one, and he used to be on horse-back all day long. If he got into the saddle in a morning he rarely left it till night.”

In giving the qualifications necessary for one aspiring to the post of whipper-in, a well-known authority on sporting subjects has laid it down that he should be light (not too young), with a quick eye and still quicker ear, and that he should be—what in fact he generally is—fond of the sport, or he seldom succeeds in his profession. Now Moody, or Muddy, as his name was pronounced, answered to these conditions.

“ His conversation had no other course
Than that presented to his simple view
Of what concerned his saddle, groom, or horse ;
Beyond this theme he little cared or knew :

Tell him of beauty and harmonious sounds,
He'd show his mare, and talk about his hounds."

He was what was called *Foxy* all over—in his language, dress, and associations. He wore a pin with a knob, something smaller than a tea-saucer, of Caughley china, with the head of a fox upon it; and everything nearest his person, so far as he could manage it, had something to put him in mind of his favourite sport. His bed-room walls were hung with sporting prints, and on his mantelpiece were more substantial trophies of the hunt—as the brush of some remarkable victim of the pack, his boots and spurs, &c. His famous drinking-horn, which we have engraved together with his trencher in the trophy at the head of this chapter, was equally embellished with a representation of a hunt, very elaborately carved with the point of a pen-knife. At the top is a wind-mill, and below a number of horsemen and a lady, well mounted, in full chase, and with hounds in full cry after a fox, which is seen on the lower part of the horn. A fox's brush forms the finis. The date upon the horn, which in size and shape resembles those in use in the mansions of the gentry in past centuries when hospitality was dispensed in their halls with such a free and generous

hand, is 1663. It is a relic still treasured by members of the Wheatland Hunt, who look back to the time when the shrill voice of Moody cheered the pack over the heavy Wheatlands; and together with his cap, of which we also give a representation, is often made to do duty at annual social gatherings.

Tom was a small eight or nine stone man, with roundish face, marked with small pox, and a pair of eyes that twinkled with good humour. He possessed great strength as well as courage and resolution, and displayed an equanimity of temper which made him many friends. The huntsman was John Sewell, and under him he performed his duties in a way so satisfactory to his master and all who hunted with him, as to be deemed the best whipper-in in England. None, it was said, could bring up the tail end of a pack, or sustain the burst of a long chase, and be in at the death with every hound well up, like Tom. His plan was to allow his hounds their own cast without lifting, unless they showed wildness; and if young hounds dwelt on a stale drag behind the pack he whipped them on to those on the right line. He never aspired to be more than "a serving-man;" he wished, however, to be considered "a good whipper-in," and his fame as such spread through the country.

There was not a spark of envy in his composition, and he was one of the happiest fellows in the universe. The lessons he seemed to have learnt, and which appeared to have sunk deepest into his unsophisticated nature, were those of being honest and of ordering himself "lowly and reverently towards his betters," for whom he had a reverence which grew profound if they happened to have added to their qualifications of being good sportsmen that of being "*Parliament* men."

Tom's voice was something extraordinary, and on one occasion when he had fallen into an old pit shaft, which had given way on the sides, and could not get out, it saved him. His halloo to the dogs brought him assistance, and he was extricated. It was capable of wonderful modulations, and to hear him rehearse the sports of the day in the big roomy servants' kitchen at the Hall, and give his tally-ho, or who-who-hoop, was considered a treat. On one occasion, when Tom was in better trim than usual, the old housekeeper is said to have remarked, "La! Tom, you have given the who-who-hoop, as you call it, so very loud and strong to-day that you have set the cups and saucers a dancing;" to which a gentleman, who had purposely placed himself

within hearing, replied, "I am not at all surprised—his voice is music itself. I am astonished and delighted, and hardly know how to praise it enough. I never heard anything so attractive and inspiring before in the whole course of my life; its tones are as fine and mellow as a French horn."

When Squire Forester gave up hunting, the hounds went to Aldenham, as trencher hounds; the farmers of the district agreeing to keep them. They were collected the night before the hunt, fed after a day's sport, and dismissed at a crack of the whip, each dog going off to the farm at which he was kept. But it was a great trial to Tom to see them depart; and he begged to be allowed to keep an old favourite, with which he might often have been seen sunning himself in the yard. He continued with his master from first to last, with the exception of the short time he lived with Mr. Corbet, when the Sundorne roof-trees were wont to ring to the toast of "Old Trojan," and when the elder Sebright was his fellow-whip.

Like the old Squire, Tom never married, although, like his master, he had a leaning towards the softer sex, and spent much of his time in the company of his lady friends. One he made his banker, and the

presents made to him might have amounted to something considerable if he had taken care of them. In lodging them in safe keeping he usually begged that they might be let out to him a shilling a time ; but he made so many calls and pleaded so earnestly and availingly for more, and was so constant a visitor at Hangster's Gate, that the stock never was very large. Indeed he was on familiar terms with "Chalk Farm," as the score behind the ale-house door was termed ; still he never liked getting into debt, and it was always a relief to his mind to see the sponge applied to the score.

Tom was a great gun at this little way-side inn, which was altogether a primitive institution of the kind even at that period, but which was afterwards swept away when the present Hall was built. It then stood on the old road from Bridgnorth to Wenlock, which came winding past the Hall ; and in the old coaching days was a well-known hostelry and a favourite tippling shop for local notables, among whom were old Scale, the Barrow school-master and parish clerk ; the Cartwrights and Crumps, of Broseley ; and a few local farmers. One attraction was the old coach, which called there and brought newspapers, and still later news in

troubled times when battles, sieges, and the movements of armies were the chief topics of conversation. Neither coachmen nor travellers ever appeared to hurry, but would wait to communicate the news, particularly in the pig killing season, when a pork pie and a jug of ale would be sufficient to keep the coach a good half hour if need be. We speak of course of "The time when George III. was king," before "His Majesty's Mail" became an important institution, and when one old man in a scarlet coat, with a face that lost nothing by reflection therewith—excepting that a slight tinge of purple was visible—who had many more calling places than post offices on the road, carried pistols in his holsters, and brought all the letters and newspapers Willey, Wenlock, Broseley, Benthall, Ironbridge, Coalbrookdale, and some other places then required; and these, even, took the whole day to distribute. Although the lumbering old vehicle was constantly tumbling over on going down slight declivities, it was a great institution of the period; it was—

. "Hurrah for the old stage coach,
Be it never so worn and rusty!
Hurrah for the smooth high road,
Be it glaring, and scorching, and dusty!

“Hurrah for the snug little inn,
At the sign of the Plough and Harrow,
And the frothy juice of the dangling hop,
That tickles your spinal marrow.”

It was a great treat to travellers, who would sometimes get off the coach and order a chaise to be sent for them from Bridgnorth or Wenlock, to stop and listen to Tom relating the incidents of a day's sport, and a still greater treat to witness his acting, to hear his tally-ho, his who-who-hoop, or to hear him strike up—

“A southerly wind and a cloudy sky
Proclaim a hunting morning.”

Another favourite country song just then was the following, which has been attributed to Bishop Still, called—

THE JUG OF ALE.

“As I was sitting one afternoon
Of a pleasant day in the month of June,
I heard a thrush sing down the vale,
And the tune he sang was ‘the jug of ale,’
And the tune he sang was the jug of ale.

“The white sheet bleaches on the hedge,
And it sets my wisdom teeth on edge,
When dry with telling your pedlar's tale,
Your only comfort's a jug of ale,
Your only comfort's a jug of ale.

“I jog along the footpath way,
For a merry heart goes all the day ;
But at night, whoever may flout and rail,
I sit down with my friend, the jug of ale,
With my good old friend, the jug of ale.

“Whether the sweet or sour of the year,
I tramp and tramp though the gallows be near.
Oh, while I’ve a shilling I will not fail
To drown my cares in a jug of ale,
Drown my cares in a jug of ale ! ”

To which old Amen, as the parish clerk was called, in order to be orthodox, would add from the same convivial prelate’s farce-comedy of “Gammer Gurton’s Needle :”—

“I cannot eat but little meat
My stomach is not good ;
But sure I think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood.”

A pleasant cheerful glass or two, Tom was wont to say, would hurt nobody, and he could toss off a horn or two of “October” without moving a muscle or winking an eye. His constitution was as sound as a roach ; and whilst he could get up early and sniff the fragrant gale, they did not appear to tell. But he had a spark in his throat, as he said, and he indulged in such frequent libations to extinguish it, that, towards the end of the year 1796, he

was well nigh worn out. After a while, finding himself becoming weak, and feeling that his end was approaching, he expressed a desire to see his old master, who at once gratified the wish of the sufferer, and, without thinking that his end was so near, inquired what he wanted. "I have," said Tom, "one request to make, and it is the last favour I shall crave." "Well," said the Squire, "what is it, Tom?" "My time here won't be long," Tom added; "and when I am dead I wish to be buried at Barrow, under the yew tree, in the churchyard there, and to be carried to the grave by six earth-stoppers; my old horse, with my whip, boots, spurs, and cap, slung on each side of the saddle, and the brush of the last fox when I was up at the death, at the side of the forelock, and two couples of old hounds to follow me to the grave as mourners. When I am laid in the grave let three halloos be given over me; and then, if I don't lift up my head, you may fairly conclude that Tom Moody's dead." The old whipper-in expired shortly afterwards, and his request was carried out to the letter, as the following characteristic letter from the Squire to his friend Chambers, describing the circumstances, will show:—

“DEAR CHAMBERS,

“On Tuesday last died poor Tom Moody, as good for rough and smooth as ever entered Wildmans Wood. He died brave and honest, as he lived—beloved by all, hated by none that ever knew him. I took his own orders as to his will, funeral, and every other thing that could be thought of. He died sensible and fully collected as ever man died—in short, died game to the last; for when he could hardly swallow, the poor old lad took the farewell glass for success to fox-hunting, and his poor old master (as he termed it), for ever. I am sole executor, and the bulk of his fortune he left to me—six-and-twenty shillings, real and *bonâ fide* sterling cash, free from all incumbrance, after every debt discharged to a farthing. Noble deeds for Tom, you’d say. The poor old ladies at the Ring of Bells are to have a knot each in remembrance of the poor old lad.

“Salop paper will show the whole ceremony of his burial, but for fear you should not see that paper, I send it to you, as under:—

““Sportsmen, attend.—On Tuesday, 29th inst., was buried at Barrow, near Wenlock, Salop, Thomas

Moody, the well-known whipper-in to G. Forester, Esq.'s fox-hounds for twenty years. He was carried to the grave by a proper number of earth-stoppers, and attended by many other sporting friends, who heartily mourned for him.'

"Directly after the corpse followed his old favourite horse (which he always called his 'Old Soul'), thus accoutred: carrying his last fox's brush in the front of his bridle, with his cap, whip, boots, spurs, and girdle, across his saddle. The ceremony being over, he (by his own desire), had three clear rattling view haloos o'er his grave; and thus ended the career of poor Tom, who lived and died an honest fellow, but alas! a very wet one.

"I hope you and your family are well, and you'll believe me, much yours,

"G. FORESTER.

"WILLEY, Dec. 5, 1796."

We need add nothing to the description the Squire gave of the way in which Tom's last wishes were carried out, and shall merely remark that the old fellow kept on his livery to the last, and that he died in his boots, which were for some time kept as relics—a circumstance which leads us to

appropriate the following lines, which appeared a few years ago in the *Sporting Magazine* :—

“You have ofttimes indulged in a sneer
At the old pair of boots I’ve kept year after year,
And I promised to tell you (when ‘funning’ last night)
The reasons I have thus to keep them in sight.

“Those boots were Tom Moody’s (a better ne’er strode
A hunter or hack, in the field—on the road—
None more true to his friend, or his bottle when full,
In short, you may call him a thorough John Bull).

“Now this world you must own’s a strange compound of fate,
(A kind of tee-to-tum resembling of late)
Where hope promised joy *there* will sorrow be found,
And the vessel best trimm’d is oft soonest aground.

“I’ve come in for my share of ‘Take-up’ and ‘Put-down,’
And that rogue, Disappointment, oft makes me look brown,
And then (you may sneer and look wise if you will)
From those old pair of boots I can comfort distil.

“I but cast my eyes on them and old Willey Hall
Is before me again, with its ivy-crown’d wall,
Its brook of soft murmurs—its rook-laden trees,
The gilt vane on its dovecot swung round by the breeze.

“I see its old owner descend from the door,
I feel his warm grasp as I felt it of yore ;
Whilst old servants crowd round—as they once us’d to do,
And their old smiles of welcome beam on me anew.

“I am in the old bedroom that looks on the lawn,
The old cock is crowing to herald the dawn ;

There! old Jerry is rapping, and hark how he hoots,
'Tis past five o'clock, Tom, and here are your boots.'

"I am in the old homestead, and here comes 'old Jack,'
And old Stephens has help'd Master George to his back;
Whilst old *Childers*, old *Pilot*, and little *Blue-boar*
Lead the merry-tongued hounds through the old kennel door.

"I'm by the old wood, and I hear the old cry—
'Od's rat ye dogs—wind him! Hi! Nimble, lad, hi!'
I see the old fox steal away through the gap,
Whilst old Jack cheers the hounds with his old velvet cap.

"I'm seated again by my old grandad's chair,
Around me old friends and before me old fare;
Every guest is a sportsman, and scarlet his suit,
And each leg 'neath the table is cas'd in a boot.

"I hear the old toasts and the old songs again,
'*Old Maiden*'—'*Tom Moody*'—'*Poor Jack*'—'*Honest Ben* ;'
I drink the old wine, and I hear the old call—
'Clean glasses, fresh bottles, and *pipes* for us all.'"

CHAPTER XII.

SUCCESS OF THE SONG.

Dibdin's Song—Dibdin and the Squire's good fellows well met—
Moody a Character after Dibdin's own heart—The Squire's
Gift—Incledon—The Shropshire Fox-hunters on the Stage at
Drury Lane.

THE reader will have perceived that George Forester and Charles Dibdin were good fellows well met, and that no two men were ever better fitted to appreciate each other. Like the popular monarch of the time, each prided himself upon being a Briton; each admired every new distinguishing trait of nationality, and gloried in any special development of national pluck and daring. No one more than Mr. Forester was ready to endorse that charming bit of history Dibdin gave of his native land in his song of "The snug little Island," or would join more heartily in the chorus:—

"Search the globe round, none can be found
So happy as this little island."

A MEET AT HANGSTER'S GATE.

No one could have done its geography or have painted the features of its inhabitants in fewer words or stronger colours. We use the word stronger rather than brighter, remembering that Dibdin drew his heroes redolent of tar, of rum, and tobacco. He had the knack of seizing upon broad national characteristics, and, like a true artist, of bringing them prominently into the foreground by means of such simple accessories as seemed to give them force and effect.

In the Willey whipper-in Dibdin found the same unsophisticated bit of primitive nature cropping up which he so successfully brought out in his portraits of salt-water heroes; he found the same spirit differently manifested; for had Moody served in the cock-pit, the gun-room, on deck, or at the windlass, he would have been a "Ben Backstay" or a "Poor Jack"—from that singleness of aim and daring which actuated him. How clearly Dibdin set forth this sentiment in that stanza of the song of "Poor Jack," in which the sailor, commenting upon the sermon of the chaplain, draws this conclusion:—

"D'ye mind me, a sailor should be, every inch,
All as one as a piece of a ship;
And, with her, brave the world without off'ring to flinch,
From the moment the anchor's a-trip.

As to me, in all weathers, all times, tides, and ends,
 Nought's a trouble from duty that springs;
 My heart is my Poll's, and my rhino my friend's,
 And as for my life, 'tis my King's."

The country was indebted to this faculty of rhyming for much of that daring and devotion to its interests which distinguished soldiers and sailors at that remarkable period. Dibdin's songs, as he, with pride, was wont to say, were "the solace of sailors on long voyages, in storms, and in battles." His "Tom Moody" illustrated the same pluck and daring which under the vicissitudes and peculiarities of the times—had it been Tom's fortune to have served under Drake or Blake, Howe, Jervis, or Nelson—would equally have supplied materials for a stave.

From the letter of the Squire the reader will see how truthfully the great English Beranger, as he has been called, adhered to the circumstances in his song :—

"You all knew Tom Moody, the whipper-in, well.
 The bell that's done tolling was honest Tom's knell;
 A more able sportsman ne'er followed a hound
 Through a country well known to him fifty miles round.
 No hound ever open'd with Tom near a wood,
 But he'd challenge the tone, and could tell if it were good;
 And all with attention would eagerly mark,
 When he cheer'd up the pack, 'Hark! to Rockwood, hark! hark!
 Hie!—wind him! and cross him! Now, Rattler, boy! Hark!'

“Six crafty earth-stoppers, in hunter’s green drest,
Supported poor Tom to an earth made for rest.
His horse, which he styled his ‘Old Soul,’ next appear’d,
On whose forehead the brush of his last fox was rear’d :
Whip, cap, boots, and spurs, in a trophy were bound,
And here and there followed an old straggling hound.
Ah ! no more at his voice yonder vales will they trace !
Nor the welkin resound his burst in the chase !
With high over ! Now press him ! Tally-ho ! Tally-ho !

“Thus Tom spoke his friends ere he gave up his breath :
‘ Since I see you’re resolved to be in at the death,
One favour bestow—’tis the last I shall crave,
Give a rattling view-halloo thrice over my grave ;
And unless at that warning I lift up my head,
My boys, you may fairly conclude I am dead !’
Honest Tom was obeyed, and the shout rent the sky,
For every one joined in the tally-ho cry !
Tally-ho ! Hark forward ! Tally-ho ! Tally-ho !”

On leaving Willey, Mr. Forester asked Dibdin what he could do to discharge the obligation he felt himself under for his services ; the great ballad writer, whom Pitt pensioned, replied “ Nothing ;” he had been so well treated that he could not accept anything. Finding artifice necessary, Mr. Forester asked him if he would deliver a letter for him personally at his banker’s on his arrival in London. Of course Dibdin consented, and on doing so he found it was an order to pay him £100 !

When the song first came out Charles Incledon,

by the "human voice divine," was drawing vast audiences at Drury Lane Theatre. On play-bills, in largest type, forming the most attractive morceaux of the bill of fare, this song, varied by others of Dibdin's composing, would be seen; and when he was first announced to sing it, a few fox-hunting friends of the Squire went to London to hear it. Taking up their positions in the pit, they were all attention as the inimitable singer rolled out, with that full volume of voice which at once delighted and astounded his audience, the verse commencing:—

"You all knew Tom Moody the whipper-in well."

But the great singer did not succeed to the satisfaction of the small knot of Shropshire fox-hunters in the "tally-ho chorus." Detecting the technical defect which practical experience in the field alone could supply, they jumped upon the stage, and gave the audience a specimen of what Shropshire lungs could do.

The song soon became popular. It seized at once upon the sporting mind, and upon the mind of the country generally. The London publishers took it up, and gave it with the music, together with woodcuts and lithographic illustrations, and it soon found

a ready sale. But the illustrations were untruthful. The church was altogether a fancy sketch, exceedingly unlike the quaint old simple structure still standing. A print published by Wolstenholme, in 1832, contains a very faithful representation of the church on the northern side, with the grave, and a large gathering of sportsmen and spectators, at the moment the "view halloo" is supposed to have been given. It is altogether spiritedly drawn and well coloured, and makes a pleasing subject; but the view is taken on the wrong side of the church, the artist having evidently chosen this, the northern side, because of the distance and middle distance, and in order to make a taking picture. The view has this advantage, however, it shows the Clee Hills in the distance. Tom's grave is covered by a simple slab, containing the following inscription,

TOM MOODY,

BURIED NOV. 19TH, 1796,

and is on the opposite side, near the old porch, and chief entrance to the church.

In the full-page engraving, representing a meet near "Hangster's Gate," a famous "fixture" in the old Squire's time, the assembled sportsmen are

supposed to be startled by the re-appearance of Tom upon the ground of his former exploits. It is the belief of some that when a corpse is laid in the grave an angel gives notice of the coming of two examiners. The dead person is then made to undergo the ordeal before two spirits of terrible appearance. Whether this was the faith of Tom's friends or not we cannot say, but Tom was supposed to have been anything but satisfied with his quarters or his company, and to have returned to visit the Willey Woods. The picture presents a group of sportsmen and hounds beneath the trees, and attention is directed towards the spectre, an old decayed stump. The following lines refer to the tradition:—

“ See the shade of Tom Moody, you all have known well,
To our sports now returning, not liking to dwell
In a region where pleasure's not found in the chase,
So Tom's just returned to view his old place.
No sooner the hounds leave the kennel to try,
Than his spirit appears to join in the cry ;
Now all with attention, his signal well mark,
For see his hand's up for the cry of Hark ! Hark !
Then cheer him, and mark him, Tally-ho ! Boys ! Tally-ho ! ”

The First Iron Bridge.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WILLEY SQUIRE MEMBER FOR WENLOCK.

The Willey Squire recognises the Duties of his Position, and becomes Member for Wenlock—Addison's View of Whig Jockeys and Tory Fox-hunters—State of Parties—Pitt in Power—"Fiddle-Faddle"—Local Improvements—The Squire Mayor of Wenlock—The Mace now carried before the Chief Magistrate.

THERE is an old English maxim that "too much of anything is good for nothing;" the obvious meaning being that a man should not addict himself over much to any one pursuit; and it is only justice to the Willey Squire that it should be fully under-

stood that whilst passionately fond of the pleasures of the chase, he was not unmindful of the duties of his position. Willey was the centre of the sporting country we have described; but it was also contiguous to a district remarkable for its manufacturing activity—for its iron works, its pot works, and its brick works, the proprietors of which, no less than the agricultural portion of the population, felt that they had an interest in questions of legislation. Mr. Forester considered that whatever concerned his neighbourhood and his country concerned him, and his influence and popularity in the borough led to his taking upon himself the duty of representing it in Parliament. There was about the temper of the times something more suited to the temperament of a country gentleman than at present, and a member of Parliament was less bound to his constituents. His duties as a representative sat much more lightly, whilst the pugnacious elements of the nation generally were such that when Mr. Forester entered upon public life there was nearly as much excitement in the House of Commons—and not unlike in kind—as was to be found in the cockpit or the hunting-field.

As long as Mr. Forester could remember, parties

had been as sharply defined as at present, and men were as industriously taught to believe that whatever ranged itself under one form of faith was praiseworthy, whilst everything on the other side was to be condemned. Addison, in his usually happy style, had already described this state of things in the *Spectator*, where he says :—"This humour fills the country with several periodical meetings of Whig jockeys and Tory fox-hunters; not to mention the innumerable curses, frowns, and whispers it produces at a quarter sessions. . . . In all our journey from London to this house we did not so much as bait at a Whig inn; or if by chance the coachman stopped at a wrong place, one of Sir Roger's servants would ride up to his master full speed, and whisper to him that the master of the house was against such an one in the last election. This often betrayed us into hard beds and bad cheer, for we were not so inquisitive about the inn as the inn-keeper; and, provided our landlord's principles were sound, did not take any notice of the staleness of the provisions."

So that Whig and Tory had even then long been names representing those principles by which the Constitution was balanced, names representing those

popular and monarchical ingredients which it was supposed assured liberty and order, progress and stability. But about the commencement of Mr. Forester's parliamentary career parties had been in a great measure broken up into sections, if not into factions—into Pelhamites, Cobhamites, Foxites, Pittites, and Wilkites—the questions uppermost being place, power, and distinction, ministry and opposition—the Ins and the Outs. The Ins, when Whigs, pretty much as now, adopted Tory principles, and Tories in opposition appealed to popular favour for support; indeed from the fall of Walpole to the American war, as now, there were few statesmen who were not by turns the colleagues and the adversaries, the friends and the foes of their contemporaries. The general pulse, it is true, beat more feverishly, and men went to Parliament or into battle as readily as to the hunting-field—for the excitement of the thing. To epitomise, mighty armies, such as Europe had not seen since the days of Marlborough, were moving in every direction. Four hundred and fifty-two thousand men were gathering to crush the Prince of a German state, with one hundred and fifty thousand men in the field to encounter them. The English and Hano-

verian army, under the Duke of Cumberland, was relied upon to prevent the French attacking Prussia, with whom we had formed an alliance. England felt an intense interest in the struggle, and bets were made as to the result. Mr. Forester was returned to the new Parliament, which met in December, 1757, in time, we believe, to vote for the subsidy of £670,000 asked for by the king for his "good brother and ally," the King of Prussia. A minister like Pitt, who was then inspiring the people with his spirit, and raising the martial ardour of the nation to a pitch it had never known before, who drew such pictures of England's power and pluck as to cause the French envoy to jump out of the window, was a man after the Squire's own heart, and he gave him his hearty "aye," to subsidy after subsidy. As a contemporary satirist wrote:—

"No more they make a fiddle-faddle
 About a Hessian horse or saddle.
 No more of continental measures;
 No more of wasting British treasures.
 Ten millions, and a vote of credit.
 'Tis right. He can't be wrong who did it."

Mr. Forester gave way to Cecil Forester, a few

months prior to the marriage of the King to the Princess Charlotte; but was returned again, in 1768, with Sir Henry Bridgeman, and sat till 1774, during what has been called the "Unreported Parliament." He was returned in October of the same year with the same gentleman. He was also returned to the new Parliament in 1780, succeeding Mr. Whitmore, who, having been returned for Wenlock and Bridgnorth, elected to sit for the latter; and he sat till 1784. Sir H. Bridgeman and John Simpson, Esq., were then returned, and sat till the following year; when Mr. Simpson accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, and Mr. Forester, being again solicited to represent the interests of the borough, was returned, and continued to sit until the sixteenth Parliament of Great Britain, having nearly completed its full term of seven years, was dissolved, soon after its prorogation in June, 1790.

It is not our intention to comment upon the votes given by the Squire in his place in Parliament during the thirty years he sat in the House; suffice it to say, that we believe he gave an honest support to measures which came before the country, and that he was neither bought nor bribed, as many members of that period were. He was active in

getting the sanction of Parliament for local improvements, for the construction of a towing-path along the Severn, and for the present handsome iron bridge—the first of its kind—over it, to connect the districts of Broseley and Madeley. On retiring from the office of chief magistrate of the borough, which he filled for some years, he presented to the corporation the handsome mace now in use, which bears the following inscription:—
“The gift of George Forester of Willey, Esq., to the Bailiff, Burgesses, and Commonalty of the Borough of Wenlock, as a token of his high esteem and regard for the attachment and respect they manifested towards him during the many years he represented the borough in Parliament, and served the office of Chief Magistrate and Justice thereof.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SQUIRE AND HIS VOLUNTEERS.

The Squire and the Wenlock Volunteers—Community of Feeling—Threats of Invasion—"We'll follow the Squire to Hell if necessary"—The Squire's Speech—His Birthday—His Letter to the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*—Second Corps—Boney and Beacons—The Squire in a Rage—The Duke of York and Prince of Orange came down.

"Not once or twice, in our rough island story,
The path of duty was the way to glory."

WE fancy there was a greater community of feeling in Squire Forester's day than now, and that whether indulging in sport or in doing earnest work, men acted more together. Differences of wealth caused less differences of caste, of speech, and of habit; men of different classes saw more of each other and were more together; consequently there was more cohesion of the particles of which society is composed, and, if the term be admissible, the several grades were more interpenetrated by agencies which served to make them one. Gentle-

BRIDGNORTH.

men were content with the good old English sports and pastimes of the period, and these caused them to live on their own estates, surrounded by and in the presence of those whom modern refinements serve to separate; and their dependants therefore were more alive to those reciprocal, neighbourly, and social duties out of which patriotism springs. They might not have been better or wiser, but they appear to have approached nearer to that state of society when every citizen considered himself to be so closely identified with the nation as to feel bound to bear arms against an invading enemy, and, as far as possible, to avert a danger. Never was the rivalry of England and France more vehement. Emboldened by successes, the French began to think themselves all but invincible, and burned to meet in mortal combat their ancient enemies, whilst our countrymen, equally defiant, and with recollections of former glory, sought no less an opportunity of measuring their strength with the veteran armies of their rivals. The embers of former passions yet lay smouldering when the French Minister of Marine talked of making a descent on England, and of destroying the Government; a threat calculated to influence the feelings of old sportsmen like Squire Forester, who nourished a love of country, whose

souls throbbed with the same national feeling, and who were equally ready to respond to a call to maintain the sacredness of their homes, or to risk their lives in their defence. Oneyers and Moneyers—men “whose words upon ’change would go much further than their blows in battle,” as Falstaff says, came forward, if for nothing else, as examples to others. On both banks of the Severn men looked upon the Squire as a sort of local centre, and as the head of a district, as a leader whom they would follow—as one old tradesman said—to hell, if necessary. A general meeting was called at the Guildhall, Wenlock, and a still more enthusiastic gathering took place at Willey. Mr. Forester never did things by halves, and what he did he did at once. He was not much at speech-making, but he had that ready wit and happy knack of going to the point and hitting the nail on the head in good round Saxon, that told amazingly with his old fox-hunting friends.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “you know very well that I have retired from the representation of the borough. I did so in the belief that I had discharged, as long as need be, those public duties I owe to my neighbours; and in the hope that I

should be permitted henceforth to enjoy the pleasures of retirement. I parted with my hounds, and gave up hunting; but here I am, continually on horseback, hunting up men all round the Wrekin! The movement is general, and differences of feeling are subsiding into one for the defence of the nation. Whigs and Tories stand together in the ranks; and as I told the Lord-Lieutenant the other day, we must have not less than four or five thousand men in uniform, equipped, every Jack-rag of 'em, without a farthing cost to the country. (Applause.) There are some dastardly devils who run with the hare, but hang with the hounds, damn 'em (laughter); whose patriotism, by G—d, hangs by such a small strand that I believe the first success of the enemies of the country would sever it. They are a lot of damnation Jacobins, all of 'em, whining black-hearted devils, with distorted intellects, who profess to perceive no danger. And, by G—d, the more plain it is, the less they see it. It is, as I say, put an owl into daylight, stick a candle on each side of him, and the more light the poor devil has the less he sees." (Cries of "Bravo, hurrah for the Squire.") In conclusion he called upon the lawyer, the iron-master, the pot maker, the artisan, and the labourer

to drill, and prepare for defending their hearths and homes; they had property to defend, shops that might be plundered, houses that might be burned, or children to save from being brained, and wives or daughters to protect from treatment which sometimes prevailed in time of war.

As a result of his exertions, a strong and efficient company was formed, called "The Wenlock Loyal Volunteers." The Squire was major, and he spared neither money nor trouble in rendering it efficient. He always gave the members a dinner on the 4th of June, the birthday of George III., who had won his admiration and devotion by his boldness as a fox-hunter, no less than by his daring proposal, during the riots of 1780, to ride at the head of his guards into the midst of the fires of the capital. On New Year's Day, that being the birthday of Major Forester, the officers and men invariably dined together in honour of their commander. The corps were disbanded, we believe, in 1802, for we find in a cutting from a Shrewsbury paper of the 12th of January, 1803, that about that time a subscription was entered into for the purchase of a handsome punch-bowl. The newspaper states that "On New Year's Day, 1803, the members of the late corps of

Wenlock Loyal Volunteers, commanded by Major Forester, dined at the Raven Inn, Much Wenlock, in honour of their much-respected major's birthday, when the evening was spent with that cheerful hilarity and orderly conduct which always characterised this respectable corps, when embodied for the service of their king and country. In the morning of the day the officers, deputed by the whole corps, waited on the Major, at Willey, and presented him, in an appropriate speech, with a most elegant bowl, of one hundred guineas value, engraved with his arms, and the following inscription, which the Major was pleased to accept, and returned a suitable answer:—‘To George Forester, of Willey, Esq., Major Commandant of the Wenlock Loyal Volunteers, for his sedulous attention and unbounded liberality to his corps, raised and disciplined under his command without any expense to Government, and rendered essentially serviceable during times of unprecedented difficulty and danger; this humble token of their gratitude and esteem is most respectfully presented to him by his truly faithful and very obedient servants,

“‘THE WENLOCK VOLUNTEERS.

“‘Major Forester.’”

The following reply appeared in the same paper the succeeding week :—

“Major Forester, seeing an account in the Shrewsbury papers relative to the business which occurred at Willey upon New Year’s Day last, between him and his late corps of Wenlock Volunteers, presumes to trouble the public eye with his answer thereto, thinking it an unbounded duty of gratitude and respect owing to his late corps, to return them (as their late commander) his most explicit public thanks, as well as his most grateful and most sincere acknowledgments, for the high honour lately conferred upon him, by their kind present of a silver bowl, value one hundred guineas. Major Forester’s unwearied attention, as well as his liberality to his late corps, were ever looked upon by him as a part of his duty, in order to make some compensation to a body of distinguished respectable yeomanry, who had so much the interest and welfare of him and their country at heart, that he plainly perceived himself, and so must every other intelligent spectator on the ground at the time of exercise, that they only waited impatiently for the word to put the order into execution directly ; but with such

regularity as their commander required and ever had cheerfully granted to him. A return of mutual regard between the major and his late corps was all he wished for, and he is now more fully convinced, by this public mark of favour, of their real esteem and steady friendship. He therefore hopes they will (to a man) give him credit when he not only assures them of his future constant sincerity and unabated affection, but further take his word when he likewise promises them that his gratitude and faithful remembrance of the Wenlock Loyal Volunteers shall never cease but with the last period of his worldly existence.

“WILLEY, 12th Jan., 1803.”

Soon after the first corps of volunteers was disbanded, the Squire was entertaining his guests with the toast—

“God save the king, and bless the land
In plenty, song, and peace;
And grant henceforth that foul debates
'Twixt noblemen may cease——”

when he received a letter from London, stating that at an audience given to Cornwallis, the First Consul was very gracious; that he inquired

after the health of the king, and “spoke of the British nation in terms of great respect, intimating that as long as they remained friends there would be no interruption to the peace of Europe.”

One of the guests added—

“And that I think’s a reason fair to drink and fill again.”

It was clear to all, however, who looked beneath the surface, that the peace was a hollow truce, and that good grounds existed for timidity, if not for fear, respecting a descent upon our shores :

“Sometimes the vulgar see and judge aright.”

Month by month, week by week, clouds were gathering upon a sky which the Peace of Amiens failed to clear.

The First Consul declared against English commerce, and preparations on a gigantic scale were being made by the construction of vessels on the opposite shores of the Channel for invasion.

The public spirit in France was invoked; the spirit of this country was also aroused, and vigorous efforts were made by Parliament and the people to maintain the inviolability of our shores. Newspaper denunciations excited the ire of the First

Consul, who demanded of the English Government that it should restrict their power. A recriminatory war of words, of loud and fierce defiances, influenced the temper of the people on each side of the Channel, and it again became evident that differences existed which could only be settled by the sword. In a conversation with Lord Whitworth, Napoleon was reported to have said:—"A descent upon your coasts is the only means of offence I possess; and that I am determined to attempt, and to put myself at its head. But can you suppose that, after having gained the height on which I stand, I would risk my life and reputation in so hazardous an undertaking, unless compelled to it by absolute necessity. I know that the probability is that I myself, and the greatest part of the expedition, will go to the bottom. There are a hundred chances to one against me; but I am determined to make the attempt; and such is the disposition of the troops that army after army will be found ready to engage in the enterprise." This conversation took place on the 21st of February, 1803; and such were the energetic measures taken by the English Government and people, that on the 25th of March, independent of the militia, 80,000 strong, which were

called out at that date, and the regular army of 130,000 already voted, the House of Commons, on June 28th, agreed to the very unusual step of raising 50,000 men additional, by drafting, in the proportion of 34,000 for England, 10,000 for Ireland, and 6,000 for Scotland, which it was calculated would raise the regular troops in Great Britain to 112,000 men, besides a large surplus force for offensive operations. In addition to this a bill was brought in shortly afterwards to enable the king to call out the levy *en masse* to repel the invasion of the enemy, and empowering the lord-lieutenants of the several counties to enrol all the men in the kingdom, between seventeen and fifty-five years of age, to be divided into regiments according to their several ages and professions: those persons to be exempt who were members of any volunteer corps approved of by his Majesty. Such was the state of public feeling generally that the king was enabled to review, in Hyde Park, sixty battalions of volunteers, 127,000 men, besides cavalry, all equipped at their own expense. The population of the country at the time was but a little over ten millions, about a third of what it is at present; yet such was the zeal and enthusiasm that in a few weeks 300,000 men

were enrolled, armed, and disciplined, in the different parts of the kingdom.

The movement embraced all classes and professions. It was successful in providing a powerful reserve of trained men to strengthen the ranks and to supply the vacancies of the regular army, thus contributing in a remarkable manner to produce a patriotic ardour and feeling among the people, and laying the foundation of that spirit which enabled Great Britain at length to appear as principal in the contest, and to beat down the power of France, even where hitherto she had obtained unexampled success.

Thus, after the first Wenlock Loyal Volunteers were disbanded, Squire Forester found but little respite; he and the Willey fox-hunters again felt it their duty to come forward and enroll themselves in the Second Wenlock Royal Volunteers.

“Design whate’er we will,
There is a fate which overrules us still.”

No man was better fitted to undertake the task;
no one knew better how

“By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
And make persuasion do the work of fear.”

And, mainly through his exertions, an able corps was formed, consisting of a company and a half at Much Wenlock, a company and a half at Broseley, and half a company at Little Wenlock; altogether forming a battalion of 280 men. For the county altogether there were raised 940 cavalry, 5,022 infantry; rank and file, 5,852. Mr. Harries, of Benthall; Mr. Turner, of Caughley; Mr. Pritchard and Mr. Onions, of Broseley; Messrs. W. and R. Anstice, of Madeley Wood and Coalport; Mr. Collins, Mr. Jeffries, and Mr. Hinton, of Wenlock; and others, were among the officers and leading members. The uniform was handsome, the coat being scarlet, turned up with yellow, the trousers and waistcoat white, and the hat a cube, with white and red feathers for the grenadiers, and green ones for the light company. The old hall once more resounded with martial music, the clang of arms, and patriotic songs; drums and fifes, clarionets and bugles, were piled up with guns and accoutrements in the form of trophies, above the massive chimney-piece, putting the deer-horns, the foxes' heads, and the old cabinets of oak—black as ebony—out of countenance by their gaudy colouring. People became as familiar with the music of military bands

as with the sound of church bells; both were heard together on Sundays, the days generally selected for drill, for heavy taxes were laid on, and people had to work hard to pay them, which they did willingly. The Squire had the women on his side, and he worked upon the men through the women. There was open house at Willey, and no baron of olden time dealt out hospitality more willingly or more liberally. The Squire was here, there, and everywhere, visiting neighbouring squires, giving or receiving information, stirring up the gentry, and frightening country people out of their wits. *Boney* became more terrible than *bogy*, both to children and grown-up persons; and the more vague the notion of invasion to Shropshire inlanders, the more horrible the evils to be dreaded. The clergy preached about Bonaparte out of the Revelations; conjurers and “wise-men,” greater authorities even than the clergy, saw a connection between Bonaparte and the strange lights which every one had seen in the heavens! The popular notion was that “Boney” was an undefined, horrible monster, who had a sheep dressed every morning for breakfast, who required an ox for his dinner, and had six little English children cooked—when he

could get them—for supper! At the name of “Boney” naughty children were frightened, and a false alarm of his coming and landing often made grown-up men turn pale.

“This way and that the anxious mind is torn.”

The impulse was in proportion to the alarm; the determination raised was spirited and praiseworthy. Stout hearts constituted an *impromptu* force, daily advancing in organization, with arms and accoutrements, ready to march with knapsacks to any point where numbers might be required. Once or twice, when a company received orders to march, as to Bridgnorth, for instance, an alarm was created among wives, daughters, and sweethearts, that they were about to join the battalion for active service, and stories are told of leave-takings and weepings on such occasions. Beacons were erected, and bonfires prepared on the highest points of the country round, as being the quickest means of transmitting news of the approach of an enemy. Of these watch-fire signals, Macaulay says:—

“On and on, without a horse untired, they bounded still
All night from tower to tower, they sprang from hill to hill,

Till the proud peak unfurled the flag o'er Derwent's rocky dales,—

Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales,—
Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze on Malvern's lonely height,—

Till streamed in crimson on the wind the Wrekin's crest of light,—

Till broad and fierce the star came forth on Elsig's stately fane,
And tower and hamlet rose in arms o'er all the boundless plain."

Within a mile of Willey Hall a tenant of Squire Forester, and, as we have seen, an occasional guest—John Wilkinson, "the great ironmaster"—was urging his men day and night to push the manufacture of shot, shell, howitzers, and guns, which Mr. Forester believed were for the government of the country, but many of which were designed for its enemies. Night and day heavy hammers were thundering, day and night the "great blast" was blowing. He was well known to the French government and French engineers, having erected the first steam engine there in 1785, for which he was highly complimented by the Duke d'Angouleme, M. Bertrand, and others, and treated to a grand banquet, given to him on the 14th of January, 1786, at the Hôtel de Ville. Arthur Young, in his travels in France, tells us that until this well-known English manufacturer arrived the French

knew nothing of the art of casting cannon from the solid, and then boring them. When Wilkinson returned to England, he continued to send guns after war had been declared. This clandestine proceeding came to the knowledge of Squire Forester, who swore, and roared like a caged lion. Here was the Squire, who boasted of his loyalty to good King George, having the minerals of his estate worked up into guns for those wretched French, whom he detested. He declared he would hunt Wilkinson out of the country; but the latter took care to keep out of his way.

The exposure ended in a seizure being made. But Wilkinson, a money-getting, unprincipled fellow, finding he could not send guns openly, sent best gun-iron in rude blocks, with a pretence that they were for ballast for shipping, but which, like some of his water-pipes, were used for making guns. His warehouse was at Willey Wharf, on the Severn, by which they were sent, when there was sufficient water, in barges, which took them out into the British Channel, and round the coast to French cruisers; and it was at this wharf he built his first famous iron barge. The proprietors of the Calcutts furnaces, at which young Cochrane,

afterwards Earl Dundonald—one of the last of our old “Sea Lions”—spent some time, when a boy, with his father, Lord Dundonald,* were also casting and boring guns; but, in consequence of refusing to fee Government servants at Woolwich, the manufacturers had a number of them thrown upon their hands, which they sold to a firm at Rotherham, and which found their way to India, where they were recognised by old workmen in the army, who captured them during the Sikh war. At the same time cannon which burst, and did almost as much damage to the English as to their enemies, were palmed off upon the nation.

Mr. Forester wrote to the Duke of York, who came down, accompanied by the Prince of Orange, to examine the guns for himself; and a number of 18 and 32-pounders were fired in honour of the event. Others were subjected to various tests, to the entire satisfaction of the visitors.

At this period the Willey country presented a spectacle altogether unparalleled in Mr. Forester’s

* Lord Dundonald, who lived in the old mansion, still standing, at the Tuckies, was an excellent chemist, and constructed some ingeniously contrived ovens, by which he extracted from coal a tar for the use of the navy, and which also became an article of general commerce.

experience; his entire sympathy and that of his fox-hunting friends was enlisted in the warlike movements everywhere going forward, for the standards of the Wenlock and Morfe Volunteers now drew around them men of all classes. Farmers allowed their ploughs to stand still in the furrows, that the peasant might hurry with the artisan, musket on shoulder, to his rallying point in the fields near Wenlock, Broseley, or Bridgnorth. Whigs and Tories stood beside each other in the Volunteer ranks, heart-burnings and divisions as to principles and policy were for the time forgotten, and the Squire, although now unable to take the same active part he formerly did, contributed materially by his presence and advice to the zeal and alacrity which distinguished his neighbours.

Willey Church.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WILLEY SQUIRE AMONG HIS NEIGHBOURS.

The Squire among his Neighbours—Roger de Coverley—Anecdotes—Gentlemen nearest the Fire in the Lower Regions—Food Riots—The Squire quells the Mob—His Virtues and his Failings—Influences of the Times—His Career draws to a Close—His wish for Old Friends and Servants to follow him to the Grave—That he may be buried in the Dusk of Evening—His Favourite Horse to be shot—His Estates to go to his Cousin, Cecil Weld, the First Lord Forester.

LIKE Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley, the Willey Squire lived a father among his tenants, a friend among his neighbours, and a good master amongst

his servants, who seldom changed. He feasted the rich, and did not forget the poor, but allowed them considerable privileges on the estate; and there are a few old people—it is true there are but few—who remember interviews they had with the Squire when going to gather bilberries in the park, or when sent on some errand to the Hall. An old man, who brightened up at the mention of the Squire's name, said, "Remember him, I think I do; he intended that I should do so. I was sent by my mother to the Hall for barm, when, seeing an old man in the yard, and little thinking it was the Squire, I said, 'Sirrah, is there going to be any stir here to-day?' 'Aye, lad,' says he, 'come in, and see;' and danged if he didn't get the horse-whip and stir me round the kitchen, where he pretended to flog me, laughing the while ready to split his sides. He gave me a rare blow out though, and my mother found half-a-crown at the bottom of the jug when she poured out the barm." "Did you ever hear of his being worsted by the sweep?" said another. "He was generally a match for most, but the sweep was too much for him. The Squire had been out, and, being caught in a storm, he called at a public-house to shelter. Seeing that it was Mr. Forester, the

customers made way for him to sit next the fire, and whilst he was drying himself a sweep came to the door, and looked in; but, seeing the Squire, he was making off again. ‘Hollo,’ said Mr. Forester, ‘what news from the lower region?’ ‘Oh,’ replied the sweep, ‘things are going on there, Squire, much as they are here—the *gentlemen are nearest the fire!*’” A third of our informants remarked: “He was one of the old sort, but a right ‘un. Why, when there was a bad harvest, and no work for men, after one of them war times, and the colliers were rioting and going to break open the shops, to tear down the flour mill, and do other damage, the old Squire was the only man that could stop them—he had such influence with the people. The poor never wanted a friend whilst old George Forester lived. There were plenty of broken victuals to be had for the fetching, a tankard of right good ale, with bread and cheese, or cold mutton, for all comers.”

The years 1774—1782 were periods of local gloom and distress, when haggard hunger and ignorant force banded together to trample down the safeguards of civil rights, and armed ruffians took the initiative in violent scrambles for food. The

cavalry were called out, and fierce battles were fought in the iron districts, where the rioters sometimes took refuge on cinder heaps, which supplied them with sharp cutting missiles. In 1795 the colliers and iron-workers being in a state of commotion, were only prevented from rising by assurances that gentlemen of property were disposed to contribute liberally to their relief, and thousands of bushels of Indian corn were obtained by the Squire and others from Liverpool to add to the grain procurable in the neighbourhood to meet immediate necessities. A meeting of gentlemen, farmers, millers, and tradesmen was held at the Tontine Hotel, on the 9th of July in that year, to consider the state of things arising out of the scarcity of corn and the dearness of all other provisions, at which a committee was formed for the immediate collection of contributions and the purchase of grain at a reduction of one-fourth, or 9s. for 12s. Mr. Forester at once gave notice to all his tenants to deliver wheat to the committee at 12s., whilst he himself gave £105, and agreed to advance £700 more, to be repaid from the produce of the corn sold at a reduced price. Such were the wants of the district, the murmurs of

the inhabitants, and the distinctions made between those who were considered benefactors, and others who were not, that fear was entertained of a general uprising; and application was made to Mr. Forester, both as a friend and a magistrate. He assumed more the character of the former, and his presence acted like magic upon the rough miners, who by his kindness and tact were at once put into good humour. Having brought waggons of coal, drawn with ropes, for sale, the first thing the Squire did was to purchase the coal: he then bought up all the butter in the market, and purchased all the bread in the town, he emptied the butchers' shops in the same way, and advised the men to go home with the provisions he gave them.

We are quite aware that it might be said that Squire Forester was not a model for imitation; and it might be replied that no man ever was, altogether, even for men of his own time, much less for those of one or two generations removed, always excepting Him whose name should never be uttered lightly, and in whom the human and divine were combined. He had sufficient inherent good qualities, however, to make half a dozen ordi-

nary modern country gentlemen popular ; still his one failing, shared among the same number, might no less damn them in the eyes of society.

Some would, no doubt, have liked Dibdin's heroes better if he had been less truthful, by making the language more agreeable to the ear, by substituting, as one writer has said, "dear me" for "damme," and lemonade for grog ; but such critics are what Dibdin himself called "lubbers" and "swabs." In the same way, some would be for toning down the characters of Squire Forester and Parson Stephens ; but this would be a mistake : an artist might as well smooth over with vegetation every out-cropping rock he finds in his foreground. We might say a great deal more about the old Squire, and the Willey Rector too, but there is no reason why we should say less. If we err, we err with the best and gravest writers of history, who, without fear or favour, wrote of things as they found them ; and those who are familiar with the writings of men of the past—such as the Sixth Satire of Juvenal, will admit that men like Squire Forester were examples of modesty. Men of all grades, every day, are brought in contact with much that might more strongly be objected to in the public Press ; and there is no reason why the

veil should not be raised in order that we may view the past as it really was.

The fact is, the Squire found the atmosphere of the times congenial to his temperament. A very popular Shropshire rake and play writer, Wycherley, had done much to lower the tone of morality by representing peccadilloes, not as something which the violence of passion may excuse, but as accomplishments worthy of gentlemen,—his “Country Wife” and “Plain Dealer” being examples. Congreve followed in his wake, with his “Old Bachelor,” which may be judged by its apothegm :—

“What rugged ways attend the noon of life;
Our sun declines, and with what anxious strife,
What pain, we tug that galling load—a wife!”

A fair estimate of the looseness of the time may be formed from another representation :—

“The miracle to-day is, that we find
A lover true, not that a woman’s kind;”

and from the fact that even Pope, in his “Epistle to a Lady,” out of his mature experience could write—

“Men some to business, some to pleasure take,
But every woman is at heart a rake.”

The Squire had been jilted, and breathing such an atmosphere, no wonder he cast lingering looks to the time

“Ere one to one was cursedly confined,”

or that he never married. It is fortunate he did not, for Venus herself, we fancy, could not have kept him by her side. His amours were notorious, and some of his mistresses were rare specimens of rustic beauty. Two daring spirits who followed the hounds were regular Dianas in their way, and he spent much of his time in the rural little cottages of these and others which were dotted over the estate at no great distance from the Hall. As rare Ben Jonson has it:—

“When some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man that it doth draw
All his effects, his spirits, and his powers,
In their confluxion all to run one way,
This may be truly said to be a humour.”

Such a humour the old Squire had. Towards the last he found that some of his mistresses gave him a good deal of trouble; for in carrying out his desire to leave them comfortably provided for, his best intentions created jealousy, and he found it difficult to adjust their claims as regarded matters of income, Phœbe Higgs, who survived the Squire

many years, and lived in a cottage with land attached, on the Willey side of the Shirlot, being the most clamorous. She set out one night with the intention of shooting the Squire, but was unnerved by her favourite monkey, who had stealthily gone on before, and jumped unobserved on her shoulder as she opened a gate. On another occasion she succeeded in surprising the Squire by forcing her way into his room and pointing a loaded pistol at him across the table, vowing she would shoot him unless he promised to make the sum left for her maintenance equal to that of Miss Cal—t. He had his children educated; they frequently visited at the Hall, and some married well. He speaks of them as his children and grandchildren in his letters, and manifested the greatest anxiety that everything should be done that could be done, by provisions in his will for those he was about to leave behind him. Indeed the same characteristics which gave a colouring to his life distinguished him to the last; and if the old fires burnt less brightly, the same inner sense and outward manifestations were evident in all he did.

One thing which troubled him was the chancel of Barrow Church, as will be seen by the following

characteristic letter to his agent, Mr. Pritchard, asking him to procure a legal opinion about certain encroachments upon what he conceived to be his rights, and those of the parishioners:—

“DEAR SIR,—

“You must remember Parson Jones has oft been talking to me about the pews put up, unfairly, I think, in the chancel of Barrow church. The whole of the chancel is mine as patron, and I am always obliged to do all the repairs to it, whenever wanted. There is a little small pew in it of very ancient date, besides these other two; in this, I suppose, it is intended to thrust poor me, the patron, into; humble and meek, and deprived of every comfort on my own spot, the chancel. The parson, you know, has been saucy on the occasion, as you know all black Toms are, and therefore I’ll now know my power from Mr. Mytton, and set the matter straight somehow or other. I can safely swear at this minute a dozen people of this parish (crowd as they will) can’t receive the Sacrament together, and therefore, instead of there being pews of any kind therein, there ought to be none at all, but a free unencumbered chancel at this hour.

Rather than be as it is, I'll be at the expense of pulling the present chancel down, rebuilding and enlarging it, so as to make all convenient and clever, before I'll suffer these encroachments attended with every insult upon earth. Surely upon a representation to the bishop that the present chancel is much too small, and that the patron, at his own expense, wishes to enlarge it, I cannot think but it will be comply'd with. If this is not Mr. Mytton's opinion as the best way, what is? and how am I to manage these encroaches?

“ Yours ever,

“ _____

“ P.S.—If the old chancel is taken down, I'll take care that no pew shall stand in the new one. Mr. Mytton will properly turn this in his mind, and I'll then face the old kit of them boldly. The old pew I spoke of, besides the other two in the chancel (mean and dirty as it is to a degree), yet the parson wants to let, if he does not do so now, to any person that comes to church, no matter who, so long as he gets the cash. It's so small no one can sit with bended knees in it; and, in short, the whole chancel is not more than one-half as big as the little room I

am now seated in ; which must apparently show you, and, on your representation, Mr. Mytton likewise, how much too small it must be for so large a parish as Barrow, and with the addition of three pews—one very large indeed, the next to hold two or three people abreast, and the latter about three sideways, always standing, and totally unable to kneel in the least comfort.”

Years were beginning to tell upon the old sportsman, reminding him that his career was drawing to a close, and he appeared to apprehend the truth Sir Thomas Brown embodied in the remark, that every hour adds to the current arithmetic, which scarce stands one moment ; and since “the longest sun sets at right declensions,” he looked forward to that setting and made arrangements accordingly, which were in perfect keeping with the character of the man. He felt that his day was done, that night was coming on ; and it was his wish that those who knew him best should be those chosen to attend his funeral, that his domestics and servants who had experienced his kindness should carry him to the tomb. And let it be when the sun goes down, when the work of the day is done ; let each have a guinea,

that he may meet his neighbour afterwards and talk over, if he likes, the merits and demerits of his old master, as none—next to his Maker—know them better. The provisions in the will of the old Squire, in which he left his estates to his cousin Cecil, afterwards Lord Forester, father of the present Right Hon. Lord Forester, made about five years before his death, were evidently made in this spirit.

He became ill at one of his cottages on Shirlot, was taken home, attended by Dr. Thursfield (grandfather of the present Greville Thursfield, M.D.), and died whilst the doctor was still with him, on the 13th of July, 1811, in the seventy-third year of his age.

EXTRACTS *from the last Will and Testament (dated the 3rd day of November, 1805) of George Forester, late of Willey, in the County of Salop, Esquire.*

“I desire that all my just debts and funeral expenses, and the charges of proving this my Will, may be paid and discharged by my Executors hereinafter named, with all convenient speed after my decease, and that my body may be interred in a grave near the Communion table in the Parish Church of Willey aforesaid, or as near thereto as may be, in a plain and decent manner. And it is my Will that eight of my Servants or Workmen be employed as Bearers of my body to the grave, to each of whom I bequeath the sum of One Guinea, and I desire my Cousin Cecil Forester, of Ross

Hall, in the County of Salop, Esquire, Member of Parliament for the Town and Liberties of Wenlock, in the same County, the eldest son of my late uncle, Colonel Cecil Forester, deceased, to fix upon and appoint six of those of my friends and companions in the neighbourhood of Willey aforesaid, whom he knew to have been intimate with, and respected by, me, to be Bearers of the Pall at my funeral, and I request that my body may be carried to its burial-place in the dusk of the evening.

“And I do hereby direct that my chestnut horse, commonly called the Aldenham horse, shall be shot as soon as conveniently may be after my decease by two persons, one of whom to fire first, and the other to wait in reserve and fire immediately afterwards, so that he may be put to death as expeditiously as possible, and I direct that he shall afterwards be buried with his hide on, and that a flat stone without inscription shall be placed over him. And I do hereby request my Cousin Cecil Forester and the said John Pritchard, as soon as conveniently may be after my decease, to look over and inspect the letters, papers, and writings belonging to me at the time of my decease, and such of them as they shall deem to be useless I desire them to destroy.”

His wishes, we need scarcely say, were carried out to the letter. He was buried by torchlight in the family vault in Willey Church, beneath the family pew, to which the steps shown in our engraving lead. Founded and endowed by the lords of Willey at some remote period, this venerable edifice has remained, with the exception of its chancel, the same as we see it, for many generations past. It stands within the shadow of the Old Hall,

and might from its appearance have formed the text of Gray's ivy-mantled tower, where

“The moping owl does to the moon complain;”

being covered with a luxuriant growth of this clinging evergreen to the very top. Standing beneath, and peering through the Norman-looking windows, which admit but a sober light, glimpses are obtained of costly monuments with the names and titles of patrons whose escutcheons are visible against the wall. The Squire's tomb remains uninscribed; but in 1821 Cecil Weld, the first Lord Forester, erected a marble tablet near, with the simple record—“To the memory of my late cousin and benefactor, George Forester, Esq., Willey Park, May 10, 1821.”

THE SQUIRE'S CHESTNUT MARE.

A NEW HUNTING SONG.

Written for the present Work by J. P. DOUGLAS, Esq.

AWAY we go ! my mare and I,
Over fallow and lea :
She's carried me twenty years or nigh—
The best of friends are we.
With steady stride she sweeps along,
The old Squire on her back :
While echoes far, earth's sweetest sound,
The music of the pack.
Ah ! how they stare, both high and low,
To see the " Willey chestnut " go.

Full many a time, from dewy morn
Until the day was done,
We've follow'd the huntsman's ringing horn,
Proud of a gallant run.
Well in the front, my mare and I—
A good 'un to lead is she ;
For'ard, hark for'ard ! still the cry—
In at the death are we. !
My brave old mare—when I'm laid low
Shall never another master know.

The sailor fondly loves his ship,
The gallant loves his lass ;
The toper drains with fever'd lip,
His deep, full-bottom'd glass.
Away ! such hollow joys I scorn,
But give to me, I pray,
The cry of the hounds, the sounding horn,
For'ard ! hark, hark away !
And this our burial chant shall be,
For the chestnut mare shall die with me !

APPENDIX.

A.—*Page 10.*

STRUTT, quoting from the book of St. Alban's the sort of birds assigned to the different ranks of persons, places them in the following order :—

The eagle, the vulture, and the melona for an emperor.

The ger-falcon and the tercel of the ger-falcon for a king.

The falcon gentle and the tercel gentle for a prince.

The falcon of the rock for a duke.

The falcon peregrine for an earl.

The bastard for a baron.

The sacre and the sacret for a knight.

The lanere and the laneret for an esquire.

The marlyon for a lady.

The hobby for a young man.

The gos-hawk for a yeoman.

The tercel for a poor man.

The sparrow-hawk for a priest.

The musket for a holy-water clerk.

The nesterel for a knave or a servant.

Of some of the later and milder measures taken to protect the hawk, it may be remarked that the 5th of Elizabeth, c. 21, enacts that if any person shall unlawfully take any hawks, or their eggs, out of the woods or ground of any person, and be thereof convicted at the assizes or sessions on indictment, bill or information at the suit of the king, or of the party, he shall be imprisoned three months, and pay treble damages, and after the expiration of three months shall find sureties for his good abearing for seven years, or remain in prison till he doth, § 3.

The last statute concerning *falconry* (except a clause in 7 Jac. c. 11, which limits the time of hawking at pheasants and partridges) is that of the 23rd Eliz. c. 10, which enacts that if any manner of person shall hawk in another man's corn after it is eared, and before it is shocked, and be therefore convicted at the assizes, sessions, or leet, he shall pay 40s. to the owner, and if not paid within ten days he shall be imprisoned for a month.

B.—Page 41.

Mr. Eyton, to whose learned and valuable work on the "Antiquities of Shropshire" the author again acknowledges his obligations, as all who follow that painstaking writer must do, with regard to the holding at the More, says, "The earliest notice of this tenure which occurs in the Roll of Shropshire Sergeantries, is dated 13th of

John, 1211, and merely says that Richard de Medler holds one virgate of land, and renders for the same annually, at the Feast of St. Michael, two knives (knifeulos). A second contemporary roll supplies the place of payment, viz., the Exchequer; a third writes the name, Richard le Mener. In 1245 Nicholas de More is said to pay at the Exchequer two knives (cultellos)—one good, the other very bad—for certain land which he holds of the King in capite in More. In 1255 the Stottesden Jurors report that Nicholas de Medler holds one virgate in More, in capite of the Lord King, rendering at the Exchequer two knives, one of which ought to cut a hazel rod, and he does no other service for the said land. In that of 1274 Jurors of the same Hundred say at length that Nicholas de la More holds one virgate in that vill of the Lord King, in capite, by sergeantry, of taking two knives to the King's Exchequer, at the feast of St. Michael in each year, so that he ought to cut a hazel rod with one knife, so that the knife should bend (plicare) with the stroke; and again, to cut a rod with the other knife. The record of 1284 describes Nicholas de la More as holding three parts of a virgate and two moors, by sergeantry, &c. The Jurors of Oct. 1292 say that William de la More, of Erdington, holds one virgate in the More, by sergeantry of taking two knives to the King's Exchequer on the morrow of St. Michael, and to cut with the same knives two hazel rods."

C.—*Page 49.*

This bold projecting rock is called, from Major Thomas, "Smallman's Leap," from a tradition that the major, a staunch Royalist, being surprised by a party of Cromwell's horse, was singly and hotly pursued over Westwood, where, finding all hope of escape at an end, he turned from the road, hurried his horse into a full gallop to the edge of the precipice, and went over. The horse was killed by falling on the trees beneath, but the major escaped, and secreted himself in the woods. Certain historical facts, showing that the family long resided here, appear to give a colouring to this tradition. Thus, in the reign of Henry III. (57th year) William Smallman had a lease from John Lord of Brockton par Shipton, Corvedale, of $17\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land, with a sytche, called Wool-sytche, and two parcels of meadow in the fields of Brockton. John Smallman possessed by lease and grant, from Thomas de la Lake, 30 acres of land in the fields of Larden par Shipton, for twenty years from the feast of St. Michael, living 4th Edward II. (1310) 41st Edward III. (1367), Richard Smallman, of Shipton, granted to Roger Powke, of Brockton, all his lands and tenements in the township and fields of Shipton, as fully as was contained in an original deed. Witnesses—John de Galford, Sir Roger Mon (Chaplain), Henry de Stanwy, John Tyklewardyne (Ticklarton), of Stanton, John de Gurre of the same, with others. 1st Henry VI. (1422), John Smallman was intrusted with the collection of the subsidies of

taxes payable to the Crown within the franchise of Wenlock. Thomas Smallman, of Elton, co. Harford, and Inner Temple, barrister-at-law, afterwards a Welsh judge, purchased the manor of Wilderhope, Stanway, and the teg and estates, and had a numerous grant of arms, 5th October, 1589. Major Thomas Smallman, a staunch royalist, born 1624, compounded for his estate £140.

Underneath this bold projecting headland, sometimes called "Ipikin's Rock," is Ipikin's Cave, an excavation very difficult of approach, where tradition alleges a bold outlaw long concealed himself and his horse, and from which he issued to make some predatory excursion.

The term *hope*, both as a prefix and termination, is of such frequent occurrence here that it is only natural to suppose that it has some special signification; and looking at the positions of *Presthope*, *Easthope*, *Millichope*, *Middlehope*, *Wilderhope*, *Hopesay*, and *Hope Bowdler*, that signification appears to be a recess, or place remote between the hills. *Easthope* is a rural little village about two miles beyond Ipikin's Rock, pleasantly situated in one of these long natural troughs which follow the direction of Wenlock Edge.

It appears to have been within the Long Forest, and is mentioned in Domesday as being held in Saxon times by Eruni and Uluric; it was afterwards held by Edric de Esthop, and others of the same name. There was a church here as early as 1240, and in the graveyard, between two ancient yews, are two tombs, without either date or inscription, in which two monks connected with

the Abbey of Wenlock are supposed to have been interred.

Near Easthope, and about midway between Larden Hall and Lutwyche Hall, is an enclosure comprising about eight acres, or an encampment, forming nearly an entire circle, surrounded by inner and outer fosses. The internal slope of the inner wall is 12 feet, and externally 25, while the crest of the parapet is 6 feet broad. The relief of the second vallum rises 10 feet from the fosse, and is about 12 feet across its parapet. There is also a second ditch, but it is almost obliterated. It is supposed to have been a military post, forming an important link in the chain of British entrenchments which stretched throughout this portion of the county. Near it a mound resembling a tumulus was opened some years since by the Rev. R. More and T. Mytton, Esq., and in or near which a British urn of baked clay was discovered, on another occasion, while making a drain.

D.—*Page 66.*

“Proavus meus Richardus de isto matrimonio susceptus uxorem habuit Annam Richardi dicti Forestarii filiam qui quidem Richardus filius erat natus minor prænobilis familiæ Forestariorum (olim Regionum Vigorniensis saltûs custodum) et famoso Episcopo Bonnero a-Secritis Hic Suttanum Madoci incolebat, et egregias ædes posuit in urbi-
cula dicta Brugge, sive ad Pontem vel hodie dictas Forestarii Dementiam.”

E.—PEDIGREE OF THE FORESTER FAMILY, *Page 69.*

In his “Sheriffs of Shropshire,” Mr. Blakeway in speaking of the Forester family, says: “They were originally Foresters, an office much coveted by our ancestors, which latter seems probable, from the fact, that on the Pipe Rolls of 1214, Hugh Forester accounts for a hundred merks that he may hold the bailiwick of the forest of Salopscire, as his father held it before him.” King John, however, remits thirty merks of the payment in consequence of Hugh having taken to wife the niece of John l’Estrange, at *His Majesty’s request*. It does not seem clear, however, that Hugh, the son of Robert, can be traced to have been in the direct line of the Willey family, he having been ancestor to Roger, son of John, the first of the king’s six foresters. The other, Robert de Wellington, the late Mr. George Morris, in his “Genealogies of the Principal Landed Proprietors,” now in the possession of T. C. Eyton, Esq., to whose kindness we are indebted for this extract, says was the earliest person that can certainly be called ancestor of the present family of Forester. His sergeantry is described as the custody of the King’s Hay of Eyton, of which, and several adjoining manors, Peter de Eyton, lineal ancestor of the present Thomas Campbell Eyton, of Eyton, and grandson of Robert de Eyton, who gave the whole of the Buttery estate to Shrewsbury Abbey, was the lord.

Thomas, a son of Robert Forester of Wellington, in

the Hundred Rolls, in 1254, is said by the king's justices itinerant to hold half a virgate of the king to keep the Hay of Wellington. Roger le Forester of Wellington, who succeeded Robert, appears to have died 1277-8, and to have left two sons, Robert and Roger. Robert had property in Wellington and the Bailiwick of the forest of the Wrekin, and is supposed to have succeeded his father, whom he did not long survive, having died the year following, 1278-9. Roger his brother succeeded to his possession, and held also the Hay of Wellington, of which he died seized in 1284-5. Robert, the Forester of Wellington, Mr. Blake-way says, occurs in the Hundred Roll of Bradford in 1287, and is shown to have held the Hay of Wellington till 1292-3, when Roger, son of Roger, proving himself of age, paid the king one merk as a relief for his lands in Wellington, held by sergeantry, to keep Wellington Hay, in the forest of the Wrekin, &c. This is the Roger de Wellington before-mentioned, as one of King Edward's foresters by fee, recorded in his Great Charter of the forests of Salopssier, in the perambulation of 1300. He died 1331.

John le Forester, as John, son and heir of Roger le Forester de Welynton, succeeded to the property, and proved himself of age in the reign of Edward III., 1335. With John de Eyton he attested a grant in Wellington, and died 24th of Edward III., 1350.

William le Forester succeeded his father, John, in 1377, and died 19th of Richard II., 1395.

In 1397 Roger Forester de Wellington is described as holding Wellington Hay and Chace. He died in 1402.

Roger, his son and heir, was in 1416 appointed keeper of the same haia by the Duchess of Norfolk and the Lady Bergavenny, sisters and co-heiresses of the great Thomas Fitz-Alan, Earl of Arundel.

His son and successor, John, died 5th of Edward IV. 1465, seized of the lands, &c., in Wellington, and the custody of the forest of the Wrekin. He had two sons, William and John, also a son Richard; and William, son of the above, appears to have been the father of another John, the former John having died without issue. John, in 1506, witnesses a deed of Thomas Cresset, as John Forester the younger; he married Joice Upton, the heiress of Philip Upton, of Upton under Haymond, and obtained the estate of that place, which is still inherited by his descendants.

This John Forester first resided in Watling Street, where his ancestors for several generations had lived, in the old timbered mansion, now occupied by Dr. Cranage, but he afterwards removed to Easthope, whilst his son William resided at Upton; and Richard Forester, alias Forster of Sutton Maddock, secretary to Bishop Bonner, who built the old mansion in Bridgnorth, called "Forester's Folly," which was burnt down during the siege of the castle, when the high town became a heap of ruins, appears to have been a son of John Forester, of Easthope; and Anthony Forester or Foster of Sir Walter Scott's novel, who was born about 1510, was a son of his.

In the 34th of Henry VIII., 1542-3, Thomas Foster and Elizabeth his wife, account in the Exchequer for several temporalities in connection with the monastery of St. Peter's, Shrewsbury. Sir William Forester, K.B., married Lady Mary Cecil, daughter of James, third Earl of Salisbury. He was a staunch Protestant, and represented the county with George Weld, as previously stated, with whom he voted in favour of the succession of the House of Hanover, and the family came into possession of the Willey estates by the marriage of Brook Forester of Dottle Park, with one of the Welds, the famous George Forester, the Willey Squire, being the fruit of that marriage. George Forester left the whole of his estates to his cousin, Cecil Forester, of Ross Hall, who was allowed by George the Fourth, whose personal friendship he had been permitted to enjoy for many years, to add the name of Weld in 1821. Cecil Weld Forester, Esq., was ennobled the same year by George the Fourth, who, when Prince of Wales, honoured him with a visit at Ross Hall. He married Catherine, daughter of His Grace the fourth Duke of Rutland, and was not less renowned than his cousin, as a sportsman. His eagerness for the chase was happily characterised by the late Mr. Meynell, who used to say, "First out of cover came Cecil Forester, next the fox, and then my hounds." A famous leap of his, thirty feet across a stream, on his famous horse Bernardo, has been recorded in some lines now at Willey which accompany the portrait of the horse. He is supposed to have been one of the first who insti-

tuted the present system of hard riding to hounds, and a horse known to have been ridden by him, it is said, would at any time fetch £20 more than the ordinary price. Speaking of the classic proportions of a horse, and the perfection of the art of riding in connection with his lordship as a sportsman, Colonel Apperley, remarked some years ago, "Unless a man sits gracefully on his horse, and handles him well, that fine effect is lost. As the poet says, he would be incorporated with the brave beast, and such does Lord Forester appear to be. His eye to a country is also remarkably quick, and his knowledge of Leicestershire has given him no small advantage. On one occasion he disregarded the good old English custom of 'looking before you leap,' and landed in the middle of a deep pool. 'Hold on,' a countryman who saw him, shouted to others coming in the same direction. 'Hold your tongue—say nothing, we shall have it full in a minute,' said Lord Forester." The Colonel added, "In consequence of residing in Shropshire, a country which has been so long famous for its breed of horses, he has a good opportunity of mounting himself well. He always insisted on the necessity of lengthy shoulders, good fetlocks, well formed hind legs and open feet; and knowing better than to confound strength and size, his horses seldom exceeded fifteen hands. On anything relating to a hunter his authority has long been considered classic, and if Forester said so it was enough. Lord Forester will always stand pre-eminent in the field, whilst in private life he is a very friendly man, and

has ever adhered to those principles of honour and integrity which characterise the gentleman." He died on the 23rd of May, 1828, in his 61st year. He had, as we have said, ten children, the gallant Frank Forester, as Colonel Apperley styles him, being one. The oldest was the present Right Hon. J. G. W. Forester, whose popularity in connection with the Belvoir Hunt is so well known.

His lordship, whose portrait we give at the commencement of this work, and who is now in the 73rd year of his age, has added very much to the Willey estates, both by purchase and by improvements, and is very much esteemed by his tenantry.

The Right Hon. General Forester, who succeeded his brother in the representation of Wenlock, has sat for the borough for forty-five years, and is now the Father of the House of Commons. Whether out-door exercises, associated with the pleasures of the chase, to which the ancestors of the Foresters have devoted themselves for so many centuries, have anything to do with it or not we cannot say; but the Foresters are remarkable for masculine and feminine beauty, and the General has frequently been spoken of by the press as the best looking man in the House of Commons. Neither he nor his elder brother, the present Rt. Hon. Lord Forester, are likely to leave behind them direct issue. The younger brother, the Hon. and Rev. O. W. W. Forester, has one son, Cecil, who has several sons to perpetuate the name of Forester, which we hope will long be associated with Willey.

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At the end of each year the School is examined by the authority and direction of the Syndicate appointed by the University of Cambridge, and a copy of the Report is sent to the parents or guardians of each boy. There is also an examination at midsummer by the masters of the school on the work of the previous half-year; a report of which is sent to the parents.

The boy's Reading Room is furnished with good Periodicals and a well-selected Library.

There is a well-furnished Laboratory for the study of Chemistry, Photography, &c.; Dr. Cranage himself instructing in science in the school.

A Museum is established for collecting specimens to illustrate natural history, arts, and sciences, together with articles of virtue and antiquity—the boys themselves being the principal collectors and contributors.

There are three orders of distinction in the school conferred for proficiency, combined with good conduct:—1st, Holder of a Certificate; 2nd, Palmer, or Holder of the Palm; 3rd, or highest, Grecian.

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