

# THE EVENING NEWS.

Saturday, March 20, 1874.

## FOX HUNTING IN ENGLAND.

[CONTINUED.]

Seven miles from Peterborough, in the dismal little village of Wansford, near the borders of Northamptonshire and Rutlandshire, there, perhaps, the only remaining old posting-inn in England that is kept up in the unchanged style of the ante-mail road days. The post-houses are gone, but the posting stables are filled with horses; the travelling public used to be the chief traffic, and Wansford is forever deserted of them; but the old "Haycock" keeps up its old cheer, and Tom Percival, who boasts that he has had the Princess Victoria for a guest, and has slept five dukes in his bed, is still here to complain of neglect. The good wife that needs no bush still makes her cellar known, and no one should criticise English cooking until he has dined once at the "Haycock." Nowhere is the inn-man so fond of such simple, tidy and courteous perfection, and nowhere, in short, can one find so completely the solid comfort of hospitable life. Half old farm-house and half wayside inn, with a marvellous collection of glassware inside, the guest sees visions of joints and jams and pastry in lavish profusion; backed by a stable-yard where boys are always exercising good horses, and flanked by a yardful of quaint clipped trees—the old house at Wansford is well worth a visit from those who would get out of the sight and sound of steam; and see the old, old country life of England. The visitor is not numbered and billeted and pigeon-holed, as in the days of the mail-coach station of host and guest, is well kept up. Your coming should be announced in advance; and you are received as in some sort a member of the family, whose ways are made to conform more or less to the wishes of host and guest convives, making smalls from the persons who are few, and who are there as you are, not for business, but for rest, good living, and regular sport. Three packs of hounds are within reach; and on the days when none of the meets is near, there is always the "hunting"—the training of young hounds—of which the constitution, as far as the riding goes. One who cares for hunting pure and simple, rather than for the gay life of Leamington and Cheltenham, cannot do better than to make the season, or a part of it, at the "Haycock," with regularly engaged huntsmen, who do not dare to ride a week as he may choose to ride. It costs—but it pays. One is none the less welcome among the guests for being an amateur.

I think every day with the George Fitz William hounds. Not being, as yet, quite at home in the field, I took a wise old horse, "Cook Robin," who was well up to my weight, and who, as Percival told me, could teach him to ride. We started with the other hunters, and I took a "hack" to ride to cover. We were a party of four, and we went through the fields and the lawns and the rale, to where the meet was fixed for eleven o'clock, at Barnwell Castle, a fine old Norman ruin, square and round, four great corner towers draped in ivy.

It was a dreary morning, and not more than sixty were out; but among them, as always, there were half a dozen foxes, and the usual proportion of fine hounds. Our cover was drawn blank, and we moved to another, where a fox was found, and whence the run was sharp, and too straight for a hundred yards to see very much of it; and it was soon明白 to all that Cook Robin and his rider came up with the hounds, who had come to a check in a large wood. Throughout the day there was a good deal of waiting about different covers, between which the fox ran back and forth. Finally, it became evident for a long, quick burst over the fields, which lay to the left of a farm-road down which we were riding, and which was flanked by a high and bold looking hedge. Near the hedge the party was a well-known old blighter, who had hitherto seemed to avoid the open country and to keep prudently near to his mother and her groom. The sight of the splendid run, fast leaving us behind, was too much for her; and she turned straight for the hedge, clearing it with a bound, and was soon taken that day, and flying on over hedges and ditches in the direct wake of the hounds. A young German who followed her said, as we rode back to the "Haycock," "It is a tort to come from America or from Ostravia to see such long, long runs go by."

Luck often favors the timid. Cook Robin and I were quite alone—so disgusted, and I half ashamed, with my prudence—when the fox, who had found straight running of no avail, came swerving to the right along the bank; at the corner of the field he turned again to the right, still keeping by the hedge, which gave the hounds an immense advantage, and cutting off the angle, they came so closely upon him that with still another turn of the brook ahead of him, he had but one chance for his life, and that was a desperate one for a fox. He did not stop, but did not consider, but went at the brook, and cleared it with a leap of nearly twenty feet. The foremost hounds whimpored for a moment on the bank before they took to the water, and when they were across Raynard was well out of sight, and they had come out on the opposite bank, and had to go back to a check; and finally, after half an hour's skirmishing, he ran down a railway cutting in the wake of a train, and got finally away.

Individually here was an opportunity for an English gentleman to show how good form and breeding than it is one's daily lot to see. He was one of a bridgeful of horsemen watching the hounds as they vainly tried to unravel the fox's secret. In his construction than any other, and able to get out of any difficulty, he was full of interest, and of the last malediction, and not "native and to the manner born," but not an American, rode directly on to his horse's heels. To the confusion of my lady, the horse, like a sensible horse as he was, resented the attack with both front feet. His rider got him at once out of the check, and turned, bowing his venerable head in regretful apology, and trusting that no serious harm had been done. "How can you ride such a hideous brute?" was the gracious exclamation.

In this stupid little island one is never for long out of the presence of places on the traditions of which our lifelong fancies have been fed. Our road home lay past the indi-

tinct mass of rubbish clustered with ivy which was once a thriving hotel, and which we passed into the village my companions pointed out the still serviceable but long-unsuspected "stocks" where the minor malefactors of the older time expiated their offences.

We reached the village at three o'clock, having run far from ample and body of tired and dirty men, having ridden, since nine in the morning, over fifty-five miles, mostly in the rain, and often in a shower of mud splashed by galloping hoofs. By six o'clock we were good to get to the station, after dinner for a long time talk over the events of the day, and horses and fox-hunting in general. My own interest in the sport is confined mainly to its equestrian side, and I am not able to give many information as to its details. Any stranger must be impressed with the firm hold it has on the affections of the people, and with the little public sympathy that is shown for the rare attempts that are made to restrict its rights.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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