

DRAWN BY MAX F. KLEPPER.

ON A HOT TRAIL.

ENGRAVED BY CHARLES STATE.

## FOX-HUNTING IN KENTUCKY.

WITH PICTURES BY MAX F. KLEPPER.

### I.



HE judge parted his coat-tails to the big pine blaze, and, with one measuring, vertical glance, asked two questions:

“Do you hunt coons? Do you hunt gray foxes?”

A plea of not guilty was made to both, and the judge waved his hand.

“If you do,” he said, “I decline to discuss the subject with you.”

Already another fox-hunter, who was still young, and therefore not quite lost to the outer world, had warned me. “They are cranks,” he said, “all of ’em.”

And then he who was yet sane went on to tell about his hound Red Star: how Red Star would seek a lost trail from stump to stump, or on top of a rail-fence; or, when crows cawed, would leave the trail and make for the crows; how he had once followed a fox twenty hours, and had finally gone after him into a sink-hole, from which he had been rescued several days later, almost starved. On cold winter nights the young hunter would often come on the lonely figure of the old one, who had walked miles out of town merely to sit on the fence and listen to the hounds. Against him the warn-

ing was particular. I made a tentative mention of the drag-hunt, in which the hounds often ran mute, and the fun was in the horse, the ride, and the fences. For a moment the judge was reflective.

“I remember,” he said slowly, as though he were a century back in reminiscence, “that the darkies used to drag a coon-skin through the woods, and run mongrels after it.”

A hint of fine scorn was in his tone, but it was the scorn of the sportsman and not of the sectionalist, though the judge, when he was only fifteen, had carried pistol and saber after John Morgan, and was, so the general said a moment later, the gamest man in the Confederacy.

“Why, sir, there is but one nobler animal than a long-eared, deep-mouthed, patient fox-hound — and that is a woman! Think of treating him that way! And the music is the thing! Many an old Virginian would give away a dog because his tongue was not in harmony with the rest. The chorus should be a chord. I shall never hear sweeter music, unless by the grace of Heaven I hear some day the choiring of angels.”

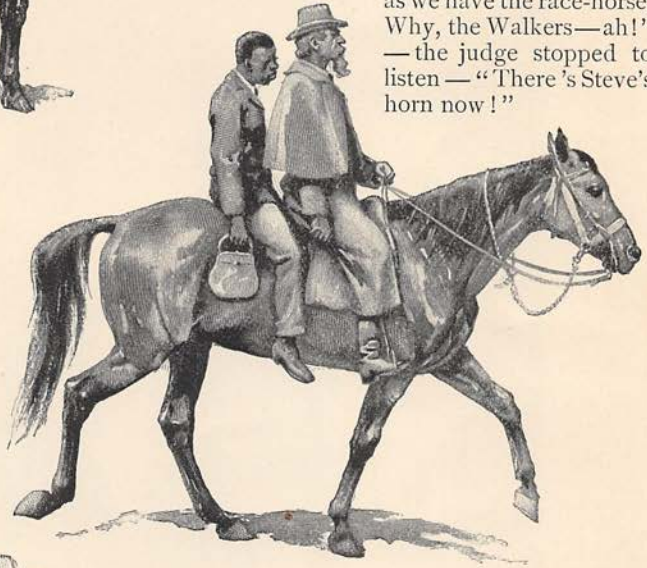
I was about to speak of the Maine and Massachusetts custom of shooting the fox before the hounds, but the judge forestalled me.



A TYPICAL HUNTER.

"I believe, sir, that is worse — if worse be possible. I do not know what excuse the gentlemen make. They say, I believe, that their dogs cannot catch their red fox — that no dogs can. Well, the ground up there, being rough, is favorable to the fox, but our dogs can catch him. Logan, a Kentucky dog, has just caught a Massachusetts fox for the Brunswick Fur Club, and we have much better dogs here than Logan.

"Yes," he added tranquilly; "I believe it is generally conceded now that the Kentucky dog has taken a stand with the Kentucky horse. The winnings on the bench and in the field, the reports wherever Kentucky dogs have been sent, the advertisements in the sporting papers, all show that



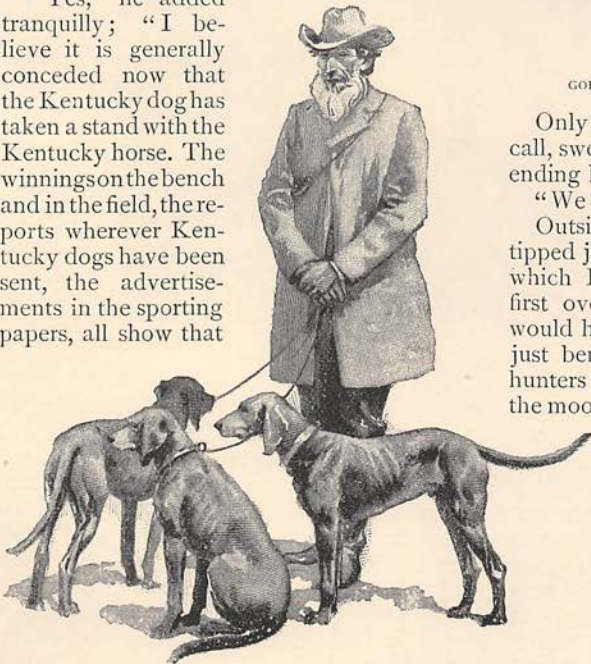
GOING TO THE HUNT.

Only one man could blow that long mellow call, swelling and falling without a break, and ending like a distant echo.

"We better go, boys," he said.

Outside the hotel, the hunter's moon was tipped just over one of the many knobs from which Daniel Boone is said to have looked first over the Blue Grass land. A raindrop would have slipped from it into the red dawn just beneath. And that was the trouble, for hunters say there is never rain to drop when the moon is tipped that way. So the field trials

had been given up; the country was too rough; and the elements and the local sportsmen, who hunted the ground by night that we were to hunt by day, held the effort in disfavor. That day everybody and everybody's hound were to go loose for simple fun, and the fun was beginning before dawn. In the stable yard darkies and mountaineers were bridling and saddling horses. The

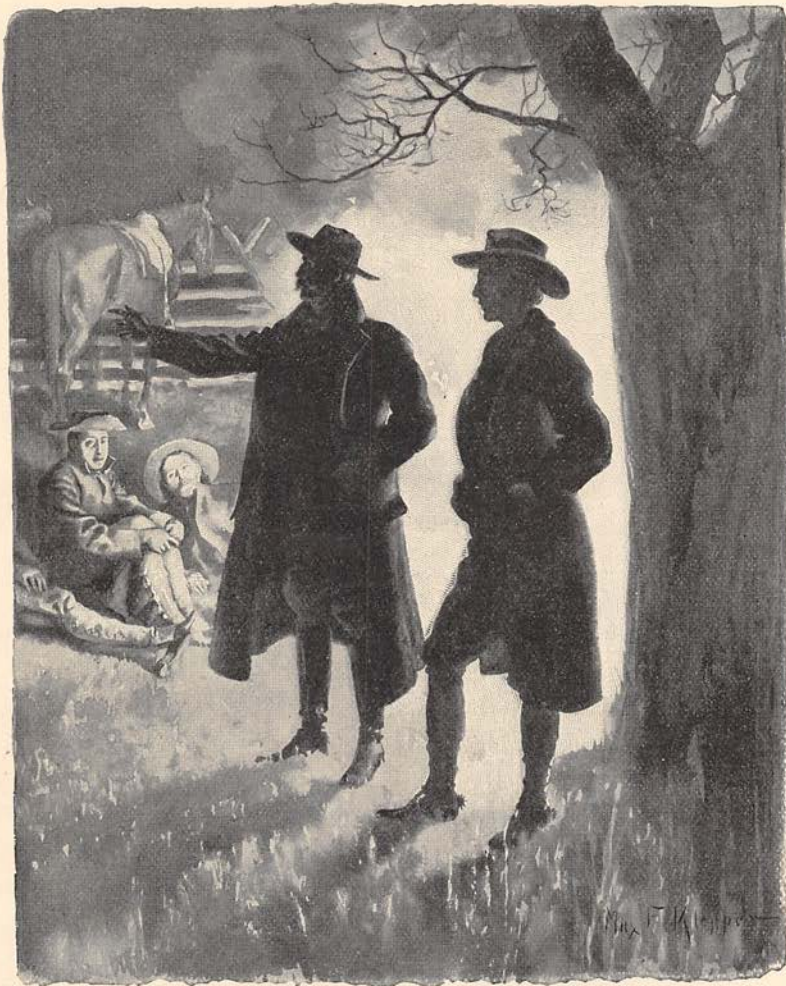


DRAWN BY MAX F. KLEPPER.

NATIVE DOGS.

hunters were noisily coming and going from the little hotel that was a famous summer resort in the Bath County Hills forty years ago, and, once owned by a great Kentuckian, was, the tradition goes, lost by him in a game of poker. Among them were several Blue Grass girls in derby hats, who had

in the South, who dress and hunt after their own way, and whom I shall call Walkers, because they are never seen on foot. No Walker reaches the age of sixteen without being six feet high. There were four with us, and the shortest was six feet two, and weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds. They wore



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LISTENING TO THE MUSIC OF THE DOGS.

been in the saddle with us on the previous day from dark to dark, and on to midnight, and who were ready to do it again. There were fox-hunters from Maine, the Virginias, Ohio, and from England; and the contrasts were marked even among the Kentuckians who came from the Iroquois Club of Lexington, with bang-tailed horses and top-boots; from the Strodes Valley Hunt Club and the Bourbon Kennels, who disdain any accoutrement on horseback that they do not wear on foot; and from the best-known fox-hunting family

great oilskin mackintoshes, and were superbly mounted on half thoroughbreds. Not long ago they carried their native county Democratic for one friend by two hundred and fifty majority. At the next election they carried it Republican by the same majority for another friend. "We own everything in common," said one, who asked me to come over and spend a few months, or a year, or the rest of my natural life with him, "except our dogs." No Walker's dog will follow any other Walker or come to his horn. All the Walkers had great,



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CALLING OFF THE DOGS.

ENGRAVED BY C. W. CHADWICK.

soft musical voices and gentle manners. All were church members, and, *mirabile dictu*, only one of the four touched whisky, and he lightly. About one of them the general told a remarkable story.

This Walker, he said, got into a difficulty with another young man just after the war. The two rode into the county town, hitched their horses, and met in the court-house square. They drew their pistols, which were old-fashioned, and emptied them, each man getting one bullet. Then they drew knives. They closed in after both had been cut slightly. The other man made for Walker's abdomen, just as Walker's knife was high over his head for a terrible downward stroke. Walker had on an old army belt, and the knife struck the buckle and broke at the hilt. Walker saw it as his knife started down. He is a man of fierce passion, but even at that moment he let his knife fall and walked away.

"It's easy enough in a duel," commented the general, "when everything is cool and deliberate, to hold up if your adversary's pistol gets out of order; but in a hand-to-hand fight like that! They have been close friends ever since—naturally."

Being such a company, we rode out of the stable yard through the frosty dawn toward the hills, which sink by and by to the gentle undulations of Blue Grass pasture and woodland.

## II.

IN Kentucky the hunting of the red fox antedates the war but little. The old Kentucky fox-

hound was of every color, loose in build, with open feet and a cowhide tail. He had a good nose, and he was slow, but he was fast enough for the gray fox and the deer. Somewhere about 1855 the fox-hunters discovered that their hounds were chasing something they could not catch. A little later, a mule-driver came through Cumberland Gap with a young hound that he called Lead. Lead caught the eye of old General Maupin, who lived in Madison County, and whose name is now known to every fox-hunter North and South. Maupin started poor, and made a fortune in a frolic. He would go out hunting with his hounds, and would come back home with a drove of sheep and cattle. He was a keen trader, and would buy anything. He bought Lead, and in the first chase Lead slipped away from the old deerhounds as though he knew what he was after; and it was not long before he captured the strange little beast that had been puzzling man and dog so long. Lead was thus the first hound to catch a red fox in Kentucky; and since every foxhound in the State worthy of the name goes back to Lead, he is a very important personage. General Maupin never learned Lead's exact origin; perhaps he did not try very hard, for he soon ran across a suspicion that Lead had been stolen. He tried other dogs from the same locality in Tennessee from which he supposed the hound came, but with no good results. Lead was a *lusus nature*, and old fox-hunters say that his like was never before him, and has never been since.

People came for miles to see the red fox



ENGRAVED BY CHARLES STATE.

A BIT OF BRUSH.

DRAWN BY MAX F. KLEPPER.

that Lead ran down, and the event was naturally an epoch in the history of the chase in Kentucky. Nobody knows why it took the red fox so long to make up his mind to emigrate to Kentucky, not being one of the second families of Virginia, and nobody knows why he came at all. Perhaps the shrewd little beast learned that over the mountains the dogs were slow and old-fashioned, and that he could have great fun with them and die of old age; perhaps the prescience of the war moved him: but certain it is that he did not take the "Wilderness Road" until the fifties, when began the inexplicable movement of his race south and southwest. But he took the trail of the gray fox then, just as the tide-water Virginians took the trail of the pioneers, and the gray fox gave way, and went farther west, as did the pioneer, and let the little red-coated aristocrat stamp his individuality on the Blue Grass as his human brother had done. For a long while he did have fun with those clumsy old hounds, running a hundred easy lengths ahead, dawdling time and again past his den, disdainingly to take refuge, and turning back to run past the hounds when they had given up the chase—great fun, until old Lead came. After that General Maupin and the Walkers imported Martha and Rifer from England, and since then the red fox has been kept to his best pace so steadily that he now shows a proper respect for even a young Kentucky foxhound. He was a great solace after the war, for Kentucky was less impoverished than other Southern States, horses were plentiful, it was inexpensive to keep hounds, and other game was killed off. But fox-hunting got into disrepute. Hunting in Southern fashion requires a genius for leisure that was taken advantage of by ne'er-do-weels and scapegraces, young and old, who used it as a cloak for idleness, drinking, and general mischief. They broke down the farmer's fences, left his gates open, trampled his grain, and brought a reproach on the fox-hunter that is alive yet. It is dying rapidly, however, and families like the Clays of Bourbon, the Robinsons and Hamiltons of Mount Sterling, the Millers and Winns of Clark, and the Walkers of Garrard, are lifting the chase into high favor. Hitherto the hunting has been done individually. Now hunt clubs are being formed. Chief among them are the Bourbon Kennels, the Strodes Valley Hunt Club, and the Iroquois Club, the last having been in existence for ten years. This club does not confine itself to foxes, but is democratic enough to include coons and rabbits, which last are hunted on horseback, without dog or gun—a unique and rather dangerous sport peculiar to the Blue Grass.

Except in Maine and Massachusetts, where

the fox is shot before the hounds, fox-hunting in the North is modeled after English ways. In Kentucky and elsewhere in the South it is almost another sport. The Englishman wants his pack uniform in color, size, tongue, and speed: a hound that is too fast must be counted out. The Kentuckian wants his hound to leave the rest behind if he can. He has no whipper-in, no master of the hounds. Each man cries on his own dog. Nor has he any hunting terms, like "cross-country riding," or "riding to hounds." To hunt for the pleasure of the ride is his last thought. The fun is in the actual chase, in knowing the ways of the plucky little animal, in knowing the hounds individually, and the tongue of each, in the competition of one man's dog with another, or of favorites in the same pack. It is not often that the hounds are followed steadily. The stake-and-ridered fences everywhere, and the barbed wire in the Blue Grass, would make following impossible even if it were desirable. Instead, the hunters ride from ridge to ridge to wait, to listen, and to see. The Walkers hunt chiefly at night. The fox is then making his circuit for food, and the scent is better. Less stock is moving about to be frightened, or among which the fox can confuse the hounds. The music has a mysterious sweetness, the hounds hunt better, it seems less a waste of time, and it is more picturesque. At night the hounds trot at the horses' heels until a fire is built on some ridge. Then they go out to hunt a trail, while the hunters tie their horses in the brush, and sit around the fire telling stories until some steady old hound gives tongue.

"There's old Rock! Whoop-ee! Go it, old boy!" Only he does n't say "old boy" exactly. The actual epithet is bad, though it is endearing. It reaches old Rock if he is three miles away, and the crowd listens.

"There's Ranger! Go it, Alice, old girl! Lead's ahead!"

Then they listen to the music. Sometimes the fox takes an unsuspected turn, and they mount and ride for another ridge; and the reckless, daredevil race they make through the woods in the dark is to an outsider pure insanity. Sometimes a man will want to go on one side of the tree when his horse prefers another, and the man is carried home senseless. Sometimes a horse is killed, but no lesson is learned. The idea prevails that the more reckless one is, the better is his chance to get through alive, and it seems to hold good. In their county, the Walkers have both hills and blue grass in which to hunt. The fox, they say, is leaving the hills, and taking up his home in the plantations, because he can get his living there with more ease. They hunt at least three nights out of the week all the year around, and

they say that May is the best month of the year. The fox is rearing her young then. The hunters build a fire near a den, the she-fox barks to attract the attention of the dogs, and the race begins. At that time the fox will not take a straight line to the mountains and end the chase as at other times of the year, but will circle about the den. It is true, perhaps, that at such times the male fox relieves the mother and takes his turn in keeping the hounds busy. The hunters thus get their pleasure without being obliged to leave their camp-fire. Rarely at this time is the fox caught, and provided he has had the fun of the chase, the Kentucky hunter is secretly glad, I believe, that the little fellow has gone scot-free.

Such being the hunt, there is, of course, no ceremony whatever in its details; it is go as you please as to horse, way of riding, dress, and riding accoutrements. The effect is picturesque and individual. Each man dresses usually as he dresses on foot, his seat is the military seat, his bridle has one rein, his horse is bridle-wise, and his hunter is his saddle-horse. The Kentuckian does not like to trot anywhere in the saddle. He prefers to go in a "rack," or a running walk. His horse, when he jumps at all, does not take fences in his stride, but standing. And I have yet to see anything more graceful than the slow rear, the calculating poise, the leap wholly from the hind feet, and the quick, high gather to clear the fence. It is not impossible to find a horse that will feel for the top rail with his knees, and if they are not high enough, he will lift them higher before making his leap. I have known of one horse that while hitched to a stake-and-ridered fence would jump the fence without unhitching himself.

It was an odd and interesting crowd that went through the woods that morning,—those long-maned, long-tailed horses, and their riders, the giants in slouched hats and oilskins, the pretty girls with a soft fire of anticipation in their straight, clear eyes,—especially to the hunters from the East, and to the Englishman with his little hunting-saddle, his short stirrups, his top-boots thrust into them to the heels, and his jockey-like seat—just as he was odd to them. I saw one Kentuckian double on his horse, laughing at the apparent inefficiency of his appearance, little knowing that in the English hunting-field the laugh would have been the other way.

To the stranger the dogs doubtless looked small and wiry, being bred for speed, as did the horses, because of the thoroughbred blood in them, livery hacks though most of them were. Perhaps he was most surprised at the way those girls dashed through the woods, and the way the horses galloped over stones and roots, and climbed banks, for which purpose the Eastern

hunter would have been inadequate, through lack of training. The Southern way of riding doubtless struck him as slovenly—the loose rein, the toes in the stirrups (which upheld merely the weight of the legs), the easy, careless, graceful seat: but he soon saw that it was admirably adapted to the purpose at hand—staying on the horse and getting out all that there was in him. For when the Southern fox-hunter starts after his hounds through wood and thicket, in daylight or dark, you know whence came the dashing horsemanship that gave the South a marked advantage some thirty years ago. And when he gets warmed up, and opens his throat to cry on his favorite hound, you know at last the origin of the "rebel yell," and you hear it again but little changed to-day.

### III.

WITHIN ten minutes after the dogs were unleashed there was an inspiring little brush through the woods. A mule went down, and his rider executed a somersault. Another rider was unhorsed against a tree. How the girls came through with their skirts was a mystery; but there they were, eager and smiling, when we halted on the edge of a cleared field. The hounds were circling far to the left. The general pointed to a smoldering fire which the local sportsmen had used through the night.

"It's an old trail," he said, and we waited there, as we waited anywhere, with an unwearying patience that would have thrown an Eastern hunter into hysteria.

"No, sir," said the general, courteously, in answer to a question; "I never sell a fox-dog; I consider him a member of my household. It would be a sacrilege to sell him." Then he continued learnedly and calmly:

"As is the fox, so in time is the dog; that is the theory. The old English dog was big-boned, coarse, and heavy, and he had to have greyhound blood before he could catch the English red fox. The English dog has always been, and is now, inadequate for the American red fox. By selection, by breeding winner with winner, we have got a satisfactory dog, and the more satisfactory he is, the more is he like the fox, having become smaller in size, finer in bone, and more compact in shape. The hunted molds the hunter: the American red fox is undoubtedly superior to the English red fox in speed, endurance, and stratagem, and he has made the American dog superior. The principle was illustrated when old Lead came over to Cumberland; for he was rather small and compact, his hair was long and his brush heavy, though his coat was coal-black except for a little tan about the face and eyes. The Virginia red fox had already fashioned Lead."

The hounds were coming back now; they were near when the music ceased. The great yellow figure of a Walker was loping toward them through the frost-tipped sedge, with his hat in his hand and his thick gray hair catching the first sunlight. The general was right; the trail was old, and it was lost. As we rode across the field, however, an old hound gave tongue. Sharp, quick music began, and ceased just as another Walker was reaching down into his trousers' pocket for his plug of tobacco.

"I believe that was a rabbit," he said. "I'm going over there and knock old Rock in the head." Without taking his hand from his pocket, he touched his horse, and the animal rose in his tracks, poised, and leaped, landing on a slippery bank. The plug of tobacco was in one corner of the rider's mouth when both struck the road. He had moved in his saddle no more than if his horse had stepped over a log. Nothing theatrical was intended. The utter nonchalance of the performance was paralyzing. He did not reach old Rock. Over to the right another hound raised so significant a cry that Rock, with an answering bay, went for him. In a moment they were sweeping around a knoll to the right, and the third Walker turned his horse through the sedge, loping easily, his hat still in his hand, a mighty picture on horseback; and as I started after him, I saw the fourth brother scramble up a perpendicular bank twice the length of his horse—each man gone according to his own judgment. I followed the swinging black hat, and caught up, and we halted in the woods to listen, both jerking the reins to keep the horses from champing their bits. One peculiar, deep, musical tongue rose above the pack's cry. The big Walker stood in his stirrup, with his face uplifted, and I saw in it what fox-hunting means to the Kentuckian. Had he been looking into heaven, his face could not have been more rapt.

"That's Rock!" he said breathlessly, and then he started through the woods. He weighed over two hundred, and was six feet four. A hole through the woods that was big enough for him, was, I thought, big enough for me, and I had made up my mind to follow him half an hour, anyhow. My memory of that ride is a trifle confused. I saw the big yellow oil-skin and the thick gray hair ahead of me, whisking around trees and stumps, and over rocks and roots. I heard a great crashing of branches and a clatter of stones. Every jump something rapped me across the breast or over the head; my knees grazed trees on each side; a thorn dug into my face not far from one eye; and then I lay down on my horse's neck and thought of my sins. I did not know what it was all about, but I learned when I dared to

lift my head. We had been running for a little hollow between the hills to see the fox pass, but we were too quick. Several hunters had crossed the trail before the hounds, and fox and scent were lost.

"You've bu'sted up the chase," said a hunter, with deep disgust.

"Who—we?" said the Walker. "Why, we have just been riding quietly up the ridge, have n't we?" *Quietly*—that was his idea of riding quietly!

I told the general about that ride, and the general laughed. "That's *him*," he said, with ungrammatical emphasis. "He's fifty-three now, but he's the hardest hunter in this State to follow."

We had to end the chase that day, and we went back to the hotel, early in the afternoon, so disheartened that the general threw his pride and his hunting traditions to the wind, and swore with a beautiful oath that the ladies should have a chase. He got a mountaineer to climb a mule and drag a coon-skin around the little valley. The natives brought in their dogs, and entered them for a quart of whisky. The music started, and Logan was allowed to let out his noble length for exercise, and Patsy Powell slipped her leash and got away, while her master swore persistently that she was running because the others were—that she scorned the scent of a drag, and would hardly run a gray fox, let alone the skin of a coon. Logan came in ahead; but a native got the whisky, and in half an hour every one of his friends owned the best dog in the county.

That last night, after a game of blindman's-buff, we had intersectional toasts and congratulations, and welcomes to come again. The conditions had all been antagonistic. It was too early; it was too dry; and there were many other reasons.

The man from the Brunswick Fur Club explained that in his country the sportsmen shot the foxes because the dogs could not catch them fast enough. The foxes were so thick up there that they could hardly raise a Thanksgiving turkey. So they shot them to appease the farmers, whom they had to fight annually in the legislature to prevent them from having the fox exterminated by law as a pest. The Southern sportsmen were glad to hear that, and drank to his health, and argued that the solution of the difficulty was to try more dogs like Logan. Then everybody discussed phases and problems of the chase that emphasized the peculiarities of hunting in the South—how the dogs, like the race-horse, have grown lighter, more rangy in form, smaller, solid in bone; and how, in spite of the increase in speed, they yet win by bottom, rather than by speed; that it was, after all, a question



of the condition of the fox, whether he was gorged or not; that rough ground being favorable to the fox, more kills were made south of Virginia, because the ground is favorable to the dog; how since the war the breeding has been toward better feet, rougher hair, better brush, gameness, nose, and speed. Yet the Walkers say that hounds are not as good as they were twenty years ago; that the English dogs are tougher and have more bottom and less nose and speed; that the half-thoroughbred makes the best hunter, the thoroughbred being too high-strung, too fretful; that the right proportion of English blood in the hound is one fourth. And everybody wondered why some Kentucky horseman has never bred hunters for the Eastern market, arguing that the Kentucky hunter should excel, as the race-horse and the trotter have excelled.

One and another told how a fox will avoid a corn-field, because a muddy tail impedes him; how he will swim a creek simply to wash it out; and how, in Florida, he will swim a river to escape the dogs, knowing that they will not follow him through fear of the alligators. How he will turn up-stream when he is not hard pressed, and down-stream when he is. Does the red fox actually kill out the gray? One man had come on the fresh-bitten carcass of a gray in the snow, and about it there was not another sign than the track of a red fox. Or does the gray disappear because he is more easily caught, or does an instinctive terror of the red drive the gray off to other hunting-grounds? A hunter declared that a full-grown gray would show mortal terror of a red cub. Is the red fox a coward, or is he the only sporting member of the animal kingdom? Does he really enjoy the chase? Many had seen him climb a stump or fence to look back

and listen to the music. One man claimed that he often doubled out of curiosity to see where the dogs were, though another had seen a fox go through the window of a deserted house, through the floor, and out under it; and in doubling, go through it just the other way. He always did that, and that did not look like curiosity. Several had known a fox, after the hounds had given up the chase and turned homeward, to turn too, and run past the dogs with a plain challenge to try it again. Another said he had known a fox to run till tired, and then let a fresh fox take up the trail, and lead the hounds on while he rested in the thicket twenty yards away. All except one hunter had known foxes to run past their holes several times during the chase, and often to be caught within one or two hundred yards of a den. One opinion was that he would not go into his hole because he was too hot and would smother; another said he was game. But the doubting hunter, an old gentleman who was nearly seventy, and who had kept close behind the dogs on a big sorrel, with an arm that had been thrown out of place at the shoulder only the night before, declared that most fox-stories were moonshine, that the fox was a sneaking little coward, and would make for a hole as soon as he heard a dog bark. There was one man who knew another man who had seen a strange thing. All the others had heard of it, and many believed it. A fox, hard pressed, had turned, and, with every bristle thrown forward, had run back, squealing piteously, into the jaws of the pack.

"That 's a bluff game," said the old hunter.

"No," said another; "he knew that his end had come, and he went to meet it with his colors flying, like the dead-game little sport that he is."

*John Fox, Jr.*

## THE STRAYED REVELER.

AS she flees up the mountain-side  
The valley is astir  
With gay companions, racing wide  
In vain pursuit of her.

In every tangled copse they seem  
To see her streaming hair,  
And where the wild, white lilies gleam,  
Her face a lily there.

But laughing, hand to side, to still  
The beating of her heart,  
Tiptoe upon the lonely hill  
She stands, with lips apart.

The gay rout passes, and there falls  
A silence in the place;  
Again the cuckoo softly calls,  
The watchful squirrels race.

Then, like a sigh among the trees,  
A wind is softly heard,  
And, like a leaf blown down the breeze,  
There darts a songless bird.

For one swift moment then she slips  
Into a world apart:  
She thinks of mold upon her lips  
And dust about her heart.

*L. Frank Tooker.*