

THE WORLD'S SPORT.

WITH RIFLE AND HOUNDS.

By W. BLEW.

Chamois-Shooting in Switzerland, Boar-Shooting in Austria, and Fox-Hunting in the Campagna.

IN the eyes of an English sportsman the fox is about the most graceful animal to be seen; but perhaps he who has seen the chamois on his native mountains might be puzzled to say which carries off the palm for gracefulness. For activity the chamois must surely be ranked first. A ravine from fourteen to eighteen feet wide offers to him no more obstruction than would a five or six foot ditch to a fox. He jumps from a height on to any projecting ledge, and after poising himself easily on a spot which hardly affords foothold, makes another and another descent, and reaches the bottom of a ravine in safety. Ten or twelve feet of wall will hardly stop the chamois, who manages to get over somehow. This lithe animal is about the size of a large goat, but his neck is longer in proportion to the size of his body, which is somewhat short.

It is easy and pleasant to sit in an arm-chair and read about the chamois and the doings of those who have stalked him; but to bring him to bag is a very different matter, the pursuit of the chamois being one of the most difficult and dangerous sports in which a man can indulge; yet it is, or was, the favourite amusement of the Emperor of Austria, a sportsman to the backbone. Unlike our game birds, or even the red deer in Scotland, the chamois prefers to dwell in the most inaccessible of places. In the summer he keeps himself to the highest point of the Alps at the snow-line, and then no one who does not "like heights" need propose

to follow him. Like the game he pursues, the Alpine Jäger is nimble in the extreme, and can find foothold on places which the Englishman or a man of any other nationality would regard as impassable; and if the hunter whom the Jäger undertakes to chaperon be not proof against dizziness at great heights—well, the Jäger would rather be without the job. He will make some allowance for want of familiarity with the ground, and will render some little assistance at the most trying times, but he is ever mindful of the fact that he is a huntsman, and not an attendant to look after his employer's convenience and comfort. It is his duty to mark and stalk the chamois—to hunt him, in fact, and he is not pleased if his attention be distracted from his proper duties. In the winter the chamois will come down nearer to the valleys, and if this time of year renders stalking a trifle easier on the score of the ground, extreme fatigue and cold have to be encountered; but where the snow is too deep, stalking is impossible, and driving must be resorted to. In England a huntsman's calling is an open profession; but the Jäger has to pass an examination before he can take an engagement, and although he is employed by those anxious to stalk the chamois, he is a servant of the State. This precaution is not, perhaps, too great, for the Jäger must know every inch of the ground he traverses, or he and his employer may speedily come to certain death.

Austria contains some of the finest sporting ground in the world. The

number of preserves, excluding those in Hungary, are more than fifteen thousand in number, and records show us that on them there were shot in one year 32 bears, 113 wolves, 24 lynxes, 9490 stags, 60,252 roebucks, 7709 chamois, 2998 wild boars, 26,411 foxes (what a stock for a hunting country!), 9729 polecats, and, among other animals, 1,439,134 hares! The 2998 wild boars are suggestive of much sport, and like chamois-hunting, wild-boar shooting is a favourite diversion with the Austrian Kaiser. The wild boar is found in a

is really a very old form of sport, deer and boar having been killed in that fashion from very early times. The sight of a number of boars coming helter-skelter through the undergrowth of a covert may be exciting; but when they are shot in this way they have not the opportunity of showing their true nature. Still, in Austria boar-drives are very popular, and, as the figures cited above show, tolerably successful. Wherever the wild boar is seen, he is found to have nearly the same habits and presents much



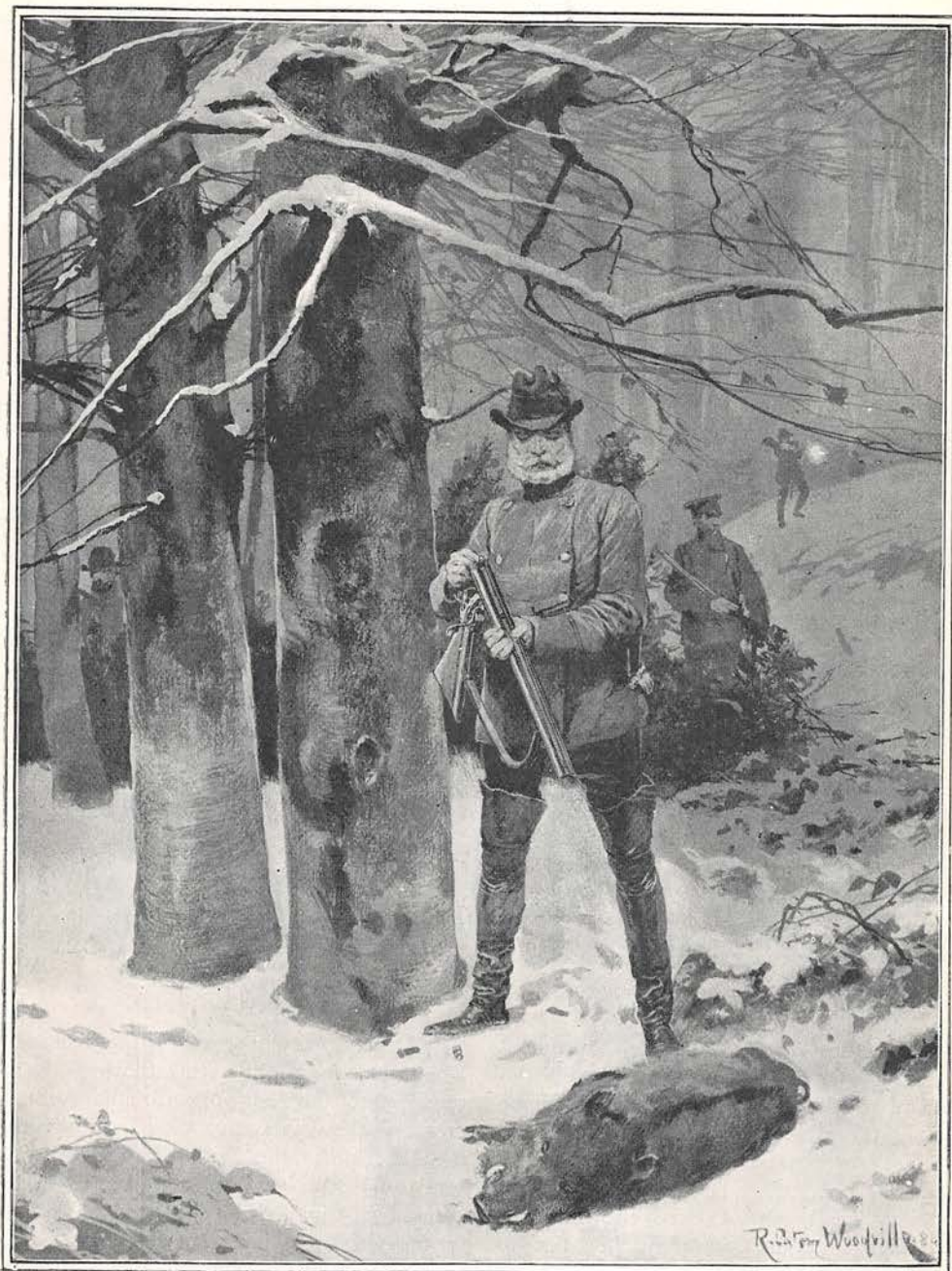
AN AWKWARD SHOT.

great number of places; until about three centuries ago he had his habitat in England. In India he is the game for pig-sticking; he is found in France and Germany, as also in Russia, Spain, Austria, and elsewhere. Anglo-Indians who have indulged in pig-sticking would probably aver that that is the only proper method in which to kill a boar; but he is quite fair game for the rifle.

In Russia and Austria, however, the wild boar is driven and shot, a form of hunting which by some is not considered worthy of the beast; yet driving, though now regarded a modern phase of sport so far as grouse and partridges are concerned,

the same appearance, and in his native state quite disproves the oft-made statement that he is filthy by nature. Acorns and chestnuts are his favourite food, though it is said that he will at times eat a carcase, just as our domestic pigs are said to do sometimes; and if he makes his lair near some swampy ground, it is only because he enjoys his bath. In the royal preserves wild boar were fairly numerous, and the Emperor of Austria was a very good shot, invariably accounting for a goodly number according to the cartridges fired.

When the Roman Foxhounds were first established the writer is not quite sure;



THE SPORT OF AN EMPEROR.

but it was probably about the year 1843, though something in the nature of a scratch pack may have been in existence before. At any rate, it appears that, on March 5, 1843, "Rome was in a tumult such as had not been known since the

days of her former glory." Lord Chesterfield, who founded the Richmond Driving Club in the 'thirties, and hunted the Pytchley country for two or three seasons from 1838, bought some English foxhounds and took them to Rome to hunt over the

Campagna, and this is why Rome was in a "tumult" on the day above mentioned. We in England are quite accustomed to a few strangely named fixtures, and though hounds occasionally meet at a monument, So-and-So's tomb never appears in the list of places. On this notable day in March, however, the rendezvous was the tomb of Cecilia Metella—classic ground truly; and this in succeeding years became the Kirby Gate of the Roman Hunt. It was a great meet. Carriages filled with all the flower of patrician Roman beauty were there, and

From that time to this the Roman Hunt has flourished. The country carries a good scent; there is plenty of grass; while as the fences are of the post-and-rail order, a good timber-jumper should be ridden by anyone who aspires to go straight. As a matter of fact, some very fine horses are, and have been, ridden with the Roman Hounds, Prince Odoscalchi, who was Master in the 'fifties, having given over six hundred guineas for two English hunters.

To English ears some of the accounts of runs sound curious. To find a fox crossing



FOX-HUNTING IN THE CAMPAGNA.

so were not a few of England's women-folk who were "wintering abroad." A member of the reigning house of Russia was present, and so were Ladies Chesterfield, Powerscourt, and Granville. The fox was no doubt a bagman; but he gave a very good run of forty-two minutes, choosing for his sanctuary the spot to which Leo XII. was wont to retire from the cares of the Quirinal. Lord Chesterfield went as well across the grass and posts and rails of the Campagna as he had done over the pastures of Northamptonshire, and he afterwards earned golden opinions by, as we should say, "presenting the hounds to the country," and Captain Langford became the next Master.

the Appian Way instead of the Roman Road, as we might term it over here; running to the left of Adrian's Villa, crossing the Via Latina, and bending in the direction of the Camp of the Horatii, sends us back to our schoolbooks and Roman history; while to run a fox to ground in the Catacombs appears to us a curious termination to a run. Many Italians, however, have since the pack was first started ably supported the hounds. They turn out in correct hunting costume, and take evident delight in the chase, while not a few of them "go" well; and, as a rule, the subscription list is on a scale which would compare favourably with that of many an English hunting country.