



JUNE.

## OTTER-HUNTING

THE chase of the Otter is still an item in the catalogue of "the sports of England;" but its proudest records must be sought in the older annals of sporting in this country.

"The pomp and circumstance" of the olden Otter-chase were very striking: the huntsmen sallied forth arrayed, in vests of green, braided with scarlet, their caps of fur encircled with bands of gold, and surmounted with ostrich plumes. Boots, much of the fashion of those known to modern hunting-fields, reaching to the tops of the thighs, and water-proof, encased their lower limbs, and were ornamented with gold or silver tassels. Their spears were also embellished with carving and costly mountings; the whole set-out of the higher classes engaged in these water-huntings being of a very picturesque and imposing character. "Towards the latter end of the last century, otter-hunting was one of the most popular of our field sports, and the list of establishments supported for its pursuit would have, probably, outnumbered those devoted to hunting in any of its other forms. Regular packs of otter-hounds were kept in almost every parish, and an otter-pole was as common an instrument in the peasant's hands as a walking-stick. It was much more simple than the spear now in use; it was merely a stick of straight ash, shod with a common iron barb head, or a fork of two prongs, also arrow-headed. With these weapons in their hands, and a motley group of miscellaneous curs at their heels, the village rustics would hie them to the neighbouring streams, to chase, in humble imitation of their betters, the *Mustela lutea* of the naturalist." (Craven.—*Sporting Review*.)

But otter-hunting is now fast dying away, though it is still kept up in parts of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Mr. Macgillivray informs us that Mr. Lomair hunted the Dumfriesshire rivers in 1833, 1834, 1835: and that Lord John Scott keeps a pack of otter-hounds for the streams of Roxburghshire. "The modern otter-spear," says Craven, "is an article of some artistic pretension. It is, like its predecessor, a long flexible ash pole, but headed with a barb somewhat scientifically constructed. The smaller end of the pole being bored and fitted with a counter-sink (a female screw and collar), a spring barb is screwed to it. The barb is so constructed, that, being driven into the hide of the quarry, it expands, and gives out two hooks, which effectually prevent the hold of the spear being destroyed by any efforts of the animal to release itself."

In England but few other packs exist, but a splendid run is occasionally enjoyed. Thus, on September 14, 1841, the Haworth and Stockton otter-hounds commenced running on the river Tees; at Dinsdale Spa fish-locks, and, on the first day, terminated at Low Middleton Deep, where the otter was seized, but again set at liberty, and hunted till dark. The chase was renewed next day at Dinsdale-bridge, when, after another glorious run, the otter was secured. His length was four feet two inches and a half; and, taking the time occupied during both days, fifteen hours were devoted to the chase—a circumstance unparalleled in the annals of otter-hunting.

The best of modern otter-slayers, however, and the most experienced authority on the sport, is the Hon. Grantley Berkeley, of Beacon Lodge, in Hampshire: who, with four old fox-hounds and three white terriers, enjoyed some splendid otter-hunting in the New Forest, during the summer of 1840, when he put four other otters down, and killed them all.

We understand that the crack pack of otter-hounds belonging to E. Dixon, jun., Esq., of Worcester, has had some splendid hunts of late. Near Bromyard no fewer than three otters were killed in one day, but not before some of the hounds were so knocked up as to require putting into a warm bath.

Although the otter rejects all baits in the trap, an instance occurred in August, 1799, in the river Buckland, near Dover, of his taking a line bait. An otter suddenly darted from his hold, and seized the bait of a gentleman trolling for pike, who thought the bait was taken by an overgrown fish, in conse-

quence of the animal's violent struggles. After a long contest, in which the troller displayed much skill, to his great astonishment and that of others upon the spot, he drew the otter to the shore completely exhausted.

## RACING.

THE Sporting Calendar of this month boasts of the gaiety and splendour of the races at Epsom and Ascot Heath. The Derby day at Epsom is an illustrated epitome of the history of English sports, manners, and society. It is, truly, a national scene, and one so peculiarly and so completely national, so identified with the very nature of Englishmen, that it will show more of the national character to a foreigner in a few hours than months of residence and inquiry could furnish even to an industrious and judicious investigator. There is a sort of magic in the words Epsom Races, which arouses the hopes, recollections, anticipations, and sympathies of hundreds of thousands of people of all classes of society throughout the great metropolis of Britain, from one end to the other, and throughout the whole length and breadth of the land. The spirit of horse-racing is peculiar to this country; it is a spirit indigenous with Englishmen, and though it has of late years been extended to the Continent, it is there as yet but a sickly importation, and can only be kept alive by the usual means and appliances for the preservation of exotics and interpolations. Here may be seen an almost endless succession for several hours of those elegant carriages, the workmanship of the celebrated builders of Long Acre, &c., unequalled, and not to be equalled, in lightness, strength, convenience, and beauty, by the coachbuilders of all the rest of the world put together. These carriages are drawn by horses of matchless strength and action—horses that are superior to any others to be met with in France, Italy, Germany, or Spain. Here may be seen, "going along" at twelve miles an hour, nearly five hundred pairs of "posters," the property of a single post-master, driven by "boys" dressed in the neat costume of their "profession," besides several hundred of other "posters" of nearly, if not of quite, equal worth and goodness. Here, too, are to be seen the splendid "turn-outs" of the noblemen and gentlemen who drive their own "teams," the Corinthian "drags" of the "four-in-hands" of the crack "whips" of the day, all hurrying to Epsom, and freighted with the most fashionable and lovely women in the world, by whose presence the sports are exalted, and the whole business of the day harmonized and humanized into rational and elegant recreation. The train of carriages that passes along this outlet of the western end of the town is of itself a sight well worth the being seen—a sight which, to look at, as the Roman poet says,—

"Would make old Nestor young."

and one which many will long remember with pleasure, and talk of hereafter as one of the best things in memory's waste.

The first Arabian, which had ever been known as such in England, was purchased by the royal jockey, of a Mr. Markham, a merchant, at the price of five hundred pounds. That illustrious master of the science of equitation, the Duke of Newcastle, in his treatise, describes this Arab as a little bay horse, of ordinary shape, and judges he was good for nothing, because, being trained and started, he could not race, but was beaten by every horse which ran against him.

## ANGLING.

IN JUNE, roach, dace, minnows, bleak, gudgeons, eels, barbel, ruffe, perch, pike, and trout, are in season. Carp, tench, bream, and gudgeons spawn. The white gnat, cock-tail, gold spinner, governor, blue gnat, whirling dun, hares' ear, and kingdom flies, make their entrée. The gold-spinner, governor, and kingdom flies continue till August; the blue gnat for about a fortnight, and the other flies in this month's list, during the summer.