

hither and thither, with momentary sudden turns, like those of a greyhound, this way or that, to snap its tiny prey; the other, a winged shot, as an arrow from the archer's hand, too rapid for the eye to follow; besides their less powerful cousin, the modest marten, whether its nest of clay be stuck against a house-wall, or it belong to the sand-marten species, burrowing its deep chamber in a rustic bank of earth. The motions of this tribe are a most interesting study for the naturalist; and that delightful writer, the Rev. Gilbert White, of Selborne, has filled several of his most agreeable pages with the charming topic. He was, to be sure, as many writers upon other themes were a hundred years ago, totally mistaken in some of his opinions; but we like him none the worse for that, as it gratifies the self-complacency of the modern age, when "school-boys laugh at the jargon which deceived Bacon." The fancied hibernation of swallows is an exploded delusion. Their rule of annual migration from the north coast of Africa, usually arriving here about the middle of April, was perfectly recognised by Gilbert White, whose brother, residing in Spain, furnished some useful notices of their passage in spring-time. He had also paid much attention to the dates and the manner of their autumnal departure for a southern clime. But he was misled by a few ill-authenticated stories of birds found here in a state of torpidity during our English winter, and being revived by warmth, as is probably the case with certain insects and reptiles.

Our British birds, whose daily course of life has been slightly reviewed, are the best vocalists to be heard in any region of the earth; of course, including the nightingale, which is a bird of passage, coming to us yearly from Greece, Syria, Persia, and India, whither she returns for the winter season. But we cannot boast an equal superiority in the merit of beautiful plumage for the birds of this country. It is to the tropical forest regions of the Malay Islands or South America that we must look for those magnificent creatures of the parrot tribe, the macaw, the lory, and the parakeet, and the exquisitely pretty finches, that claim so much admiration at our Zoological Society's Gardens. The most richly coloured of our native birds is the rather handsome kingfisher, who cuts a dash with his shining green and blue livery, as we have often seen him, driving post-haste along the course of a pleasant stream well known to us in Devonshire, upon some errand he would not stop to explain. He is, like some other gay personages, an elegant figure to look at when he goes abroad, but a nasty, sordid, shabby fellow at home. If ever you peeped into a kingfisher's private abode, which is merely some old hole in the river bank, deserted by the water rat, and serving instead of a nest, you must have sickened at the filthy heap of fish-bones and garbage, vomited by its foul tenant for the procreant cradle of the kingfisher's young. The "halcyon," forsooth! a graceful, classical name for this unworthy creature—was anciently believed such a favourite of the gods as to ensure fair weather at sea while this bird's eggs were hatched in some far inland recess. And it was a superstition of the Middle Ages that its body hung up in your kitchen or parlour would serve to indicate the changes of the wind, as Shakspeare in "King Lear" speaks of flattering courtiers—

Who turn their halcyon beaks  
With every gale and vary of their masters.

But we have no scruple in declaring that the kingfisher is a snob, for all his brilliant outside. There is a large Indian bird, one of the same tribe as the stork and heron, which is not particularly nice in its habits, but is really useful to the troops in our military cantonments. It has been promoted, as it were, to a brevet rank, and bears the title of adjutant, for its punctual appearance on parade. The services it actually performs are less dignified, being those of a scavenger in the removal of butcher's offal. With its bald head and bare neck, having a raw fleshy appearance, its presence is scarcely ornamental to the barrack-yard. Its native name is the Argala, and its natural way of living, as an aquatic bird of prey, feeding on water-snakes, frogs, and other small reptiles, is shown in our "Morning" Illustration. The beautiful Mandarin Duck of China, which has been recently introduced to the ponds of English pleasure-grounds, is represented in the same coloured picture. Its green and purple crest, wing-fans erect above the back, and bosom of a rich chestnut hue, relieved with bands or stripes and deep-green borders, surpass all other ducks. This is "a duck of a duck," as a lady would say, and we can say no more.

#### ENGLISH SPORT AND FRENCH SPORT: HUNTING.

The national pastime of riding to a pack of fox-hounds is not yet out of fashion with those classes whose rural residence and practice of horsemanship, or their command of money as well as leisure, allows them to indulge this taste. There are, we believe, about one hundred and forty recognised packs in England, not reckoning those of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland: and the cost of maintaining a good pack is estimated at £2000 a year, but may here and there exceed that sum. This would be found, however, to bear a very small proportion to the probable aggregate expenses of the individual foxhunters, each keeping several horses for the purpose, besides special grooms, with much travelling, staying at hotels, or renting of furnished houses, during the season. It cannot be doubted that foxhunting in England represents a yearly expendi-

ture of more than one million sterling, which is the estimate adopted by the author of "Covert-side Sketches," a recently published volume containing much information upon this subject.

As a manly, healthy, and tolerably harmless recreation, which serves to keep up a good breed of horses, and to encourage the accomplishment of bold and skilful riding, there is much to be said on behalf of this characteristic English sport. It may, indeed, be commended in preference to wholesale shooting massacres of feathered or four-footed game, in artificial preserves, where the *batue* has superseded the exercise of sportsmanlike ingenuity, and the use of dogs, with their admirable instinct of search and faculty of scent. The foxhunter does little or no real mischief to the agriculturist, either in the early days of his amusement, when he is after the cubs for an odd day or two, before the woods have lost their summer verdure, or in the regular season from November to the spring-time, when three or four days a week of good runs across country may be enjoyed in favourable weather. There are, it is well known, extensive districts in the midland, northern, and western shires, where landlords and farmers have long agreed to give ample facilities, in their method of fencing and other details of land management, for this popular kind of diversion. A strict economist might take objection to any such interference with the ideal of profitable cultivation; but, looking at the question of profit all round, and reckoning the large sums of money spent, as aforesaid, partly within the district, for the support of hunting, we are not prepared to say that there is any direct loss to the agricultural class. They are seldom heard to complain of foxes as they do of hares and rabbits. Leaving this point, however, to the Commission of Inquiry which is to find out the truth concerning all rustic business interests, let us briefly notice, as a conspicuous feature of English social history, two or three celebrated local establishments of foxhunting whose glories have not yet passed away.

The "Quorn" and the "Pychley" are twin names of foremost renown in this illustrious department, but little more than names to a great many quiet middle-class people, who have never cared to learn what and where they are. Quorndon Hall, near Charnwood Forest, towards the border of Leicestershire and Derbyshire, was the seat of the late Mr. Hugo Meynell, who hunted enthusiastically during the second half of the last century. He, in 1800, gave up the hounds to Lord Sefton, afterwards succeeded by Mr. Thomas Assheton Smith, a famous sporting hero of the age, Mr. Osbaldeston, and others of more recent memory, holding the office of Master for a society of gentlemen subscribers. The Pychley Hunt is so called from a little village in the heart of Northamptonshire, where it was established by Earl Spencer in 1750, almost contemporaneously with the Quorn. This pack has likewise been administered by successive Masters of high reputation, amongst whom were another famous Mr. Thomas Smith, the late Mr. George Payne, Mr. Anstruther Thomson, and the present Earl Spencer. The tracts of grass country, with suitable woodland coverts, and with fences and brooks of convenient height and width for leaping, which belong to the Quorn and the Pychley, are all that is to be desired. A short distance northwards lies the Belvoir Castle domain, on the confines of Lincolnshire, and not far east of Nottingham. The land is a deep and stiff clay, which severely tries the horses' strength in crossing ploughed fields. But the Duke of Rutland's hounds are greatly admired; their breed, with a rich mixture of colouring, black, white, and tan, and with perfection of form, is preserved in the utmost purity. The Cottesmore, of which hunt Lord Carington is now Master, commands a fine open country in the neighbourhood of Stamford. These are the principal associations for hunting purposes in that famous region of the East Midlands which is fondly called "the Shires" by sporting men. It lies within a hundred miles of London, between the Great Northern and the London and North-Western Railway lines, while the Midland Railway passes very near to the Quorn Kennels. Melton Mowbray and Market Harborough are notable places of sojourn for hunting gentlemen who patronise one or another of these packs. Still farther on, in the walden parts of Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire, good packs of dogs as well as good horses will be seen afield in pursuit of that useful animal, the fox, without whom the horses and dogs would have no *raison d'être*. In the West of England, though many second-rate packs are kept on foot, the only celebrated or fashionable one is the Badminton, which has passed from the Duke of Beaufort's management to that of the Marquis of Worcester. Londoners may perhaps be aware that foxhunting, such as it is, does take place almost within the metropolitan postal district, just beyond Harrow, in the one direction, and Croydon in the other. On the Brighton Downs, also, there is a tolerable style of preparation and performance suitable to the middle class of amateurs. *Non civis homini contingit adire* the "Shires."

French huntsmen, as shown in one of our coloured pictures, enjoy their triumph in the killing of the wolf, by the aid of powerful hounds, which run down the savage beast at sight after being led to his lair by tracking his footsteps in the snow. The wolf is often sometimes dispatched with a rifle shot, and he deserves no more respectful consideration. This ferocious animal has been known, even in recent times, to appear in the streets of a village or country town.