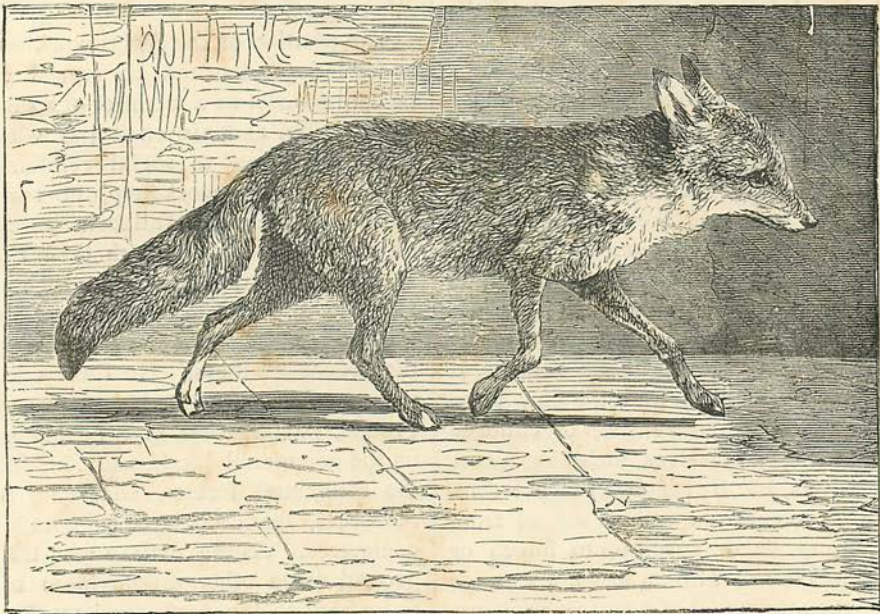


YOUNG FOXES.



F all the beasts of prey, we may safely say that the fox (*vulpes vulgaris*) is the most cunning and sagacious, whether it exercises its wonderful craft in eluding its enemies, or in obtaining its food. As the sun sinks behind the hills, and the lengthening shadows foretell the coming darkness,

Foxes, so it has been related, sometimes visit the rocks at low tides and seize upon the crustaceans and molluscs; and they will readily devour small rodents, and even reptiles and insects, in cases of extreme hunger. We read wondrous accounts, in some of the older works upon natural history, of the fox employing its bushy tail as a fishing line. "Sitting on the rocks, it lets its



A RESTLESS CUB.

then Reynard creeps from out his lair to go in search of prey. Nothing comes amiss to this prince of poachers: rabbit warrens, poultry yards, game preserves, are alike suitable to his taste; and when times are rather hard, and a dainty leveret, a plump pheasant, or a fat wild duck cannot be obtained, Reynard is quite contented to levy contribution upon any living thing that may by chance fall in his way.

tail drop into the sea, and so hauls out quantities of crabs." We need hardly comment upon the untruthfulness of such an absurd belief. The fox not only has a habit of carefully providing for its present necessities, but has likewise a keen eye to the future, and, having gorged as much as it reasonably can, selects a spot adapted to its purpose, and there carefully buries the unconsumed portions of the banquet.

I once (says Mr. J. K. Lord), whilst fishing in a small trout river in Devonshire, observed a fox come down to the stream near to where I was standing; the animal was panting and breathing heavily, and otherwise exhibiting evidence of great distress. After lapping the water thirstily and greedily, it crept beneath the bushes, and scrambled along under the bank for quite a hundred yards, or perhaps more, until it reached a stick which crossed the stream from bank to bank. The stick was so small that I never for a moment imagined an animal so large as a fox would attempt

had left the field to go under the bank. The huntsman never imagined the fox had crossed the river, for the hounds swam over at the spot where the fox had lapped the water, but as there was no scent on the opposite bank they swam back again.

At length, after making a wide cast, the huntsman called off the hounds and went away. I did not tell him what I had seen, because I thought the poor fox fairly deserved my protection. Now it would have been far easier for the fox to have swum straight across the stream, and a greater saving of time, than tak-



INNOCENT SLUMBERS.

to cross the river upon it; but, to my astonishment, slowly and cautiously the frightened animal made its way along this dangerous bridge, and landed safely on the opposite side. Not a moment too soon for its own safety, for the hounds were rapidly hunting along upon its track. On they came, but failed to make out the scent farther than where the fox

ing a difficult course under the river bank and making a hazardous crossing upon a small pole. I thought at the time, and I am still of the same opinion, that its instinctive natural cunning prompted it to adopt the expedient I witnessed, as being the most likely means to throw the hounds off the scent, and so increase the chances of escape.