

part
in
his hope

DRAG-HUNTING :

By HENRY B. AMOS.

DRAG-HUNTING, we may say at the outset, for the benefit of the uninitiated, is hunting to a scent made by dragging a bag containing aniseed or other odorous substance along the ground.

The drag hunt is not by any means a novel idea. It has long been recognised amongst sporting people, and some hunts have been in the habit of employing it in Hants, Cambridge, Berks, Oxford and Surrey. This seems to imply that it has been held to have certain advantages over the more cruel method of hunting, and that there can be no particular reason why our sporting men should not be required to adopt it in preference to the less justifiable practice now employed.

The adoption of the Drag would sweep away at once all the abominations which make these blood sports so objectionable to thinking people, i.e. the long-drawn-out terror of the animal hunted; the end, when the creature with lolling tongue and drooping head, is "dead-beat" and worried to death by the dogs; and the cruelty to the victim who has sought sanctuary in a burrow after a long and hard run, and is dug out and thrown to the dogs.

The advantages of the drag may be summarised thus: It enables the hunter to choose his own run; he can make it long or short, over high ground or low, across ploughed field or pasture, through wood or scrub or brake, and with fences, ditches, hedges and any other obstacle thrown in as and when he pleases.

It would reduce to a minimum the long rôle of accidents, alike to humans, hounds and horses, caused by barbed wire and other entanglements.

It would lessen the costs to be paid for damage done in breaking down gates and fences and riding over seedland and crops.

It would do away altogether with the Poultry Funds—usually a heavy item, running into hundreds of pounds annually in some Hunts—which is often a source of much irritation and discord between the Hunt and the poultry-keepers whose roosts have been raided.

It would obviate riding over forbidden paths and on main roads and railways; through private grounds and gardens or into villages and towns for which the hunted animals so often make in search of shelter.

It would, as indicated above, put an end to the discreditable practice of "digging-out."

There would be no more checks or wandering from cover, to cover in quest of a scent, and there would never be need for either another blank or "bad" day.

Thus one can see hunting being elevated into manly and honourable sport, for it would still combine all the exhilaration of a rattling gallop across the moor or heath to the music of a "Ruby and Ringwood, Bellman and True" echoing through the glen. It would still provide gates and ditches and brooks in plenty to be negotiated, and as many hard "point-to-points" as desired.

We know, of course, that, at first, those who had inherited and had cultivated the primitive hunting instinct would vote the drag stale and flat. We know, too, that there would be no "blooding" of hounds—no! nor of children either. The latter practice is one of the most savage relics of barbarism still existing in any land. Neither would any fair young miss or gallant young scion get a brush or a mask to "adorn" the hall of their future home, or a pad to help to make an inkstand for the library table.

The law of the jungle, however, cannot go on for ever along with the evolution of a healthy, humane civilisation. Hunting is a menace to such, and is long overdue to be superseded by the spirit which enjoins us

"Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
with sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

In this connection the spectacle of fifty to a hundred boys at Eton—that one-time nursery of the rulers of the country—chasing a terrified hare, with twenty to thirty dogs, is a sight surely not easy to match for sheer callousness and stupidity.

We appeal to those who now follow the chase to come into line with the more enlightened opinion of the day, and to discard the live animal for the drag. In doing this they would have the satisfaction of knowing, not only that they are aligning themselves with the humane spirit of the day, but that they are doing something to act up to that excellent motto—"Noblesse oblige"—which the glorification of blood-sports has done so much to discredit.

Be that as it may, a different conception of the responsibility of Education, Refinement and Culture, to their less fortunate fellow-creatures is abroad, and it is becoming increasingly realised that in proportion as we exploit for selfish and debasing ends any non-human creatures, it becomes easier to exploit and debase our fellow-men. Thus, the indulgence in blood-sports is coming to be considered an anti-social act, and, as such, it is time that it should be relegated to the limbo of the barbaric past.

"NEW OCCASIONS TEACH NEW DUTIES."

N.B.—Humanitarians would greatly help the work of the League by notifying the Secretary of anyone interested, so that leaflets may be sent to them; by purchasing and distributing our leaflets; by organising a Group of those interested in their district, and by sending Press cuttings (with name and date of paper) of cruel sporting incidents, so that these may be followed up promptly.

DONATIONS in aid of the work are needed and will be warmly welcomed. Cheques and money orders should be made payable to Mr. Ernest Bell, Treasurer.

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