

THE JUCKLINS.

By OPIE READ.

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Miscellaneous Reading.

AN OTTER HUNT.

British Sport of a Kind We Do Not Know.

A bright, sunny morning, and a meet of otter hounds. What a crowd it is! Young men, old men, women, children, and members of the hunt in neat blue serge, smart vests and bright colored caps. Every one carries a stout pole, some six feet long with niches cut upon it indicating "kills," and all wear a silver-mounted otter pad as a badge.

There are the shaggy-coated hounds rolling in the meadow grass, the huntsman in their midst, and the whips at a little distance off, flicking lightly at any that wander too far away. See, now, the master approaches and hounds are about to be laid on.

Away runs the huntsman toward the river, blowing his horn as he goes, and the whole pack scamper after him. Half of the hounds are whipped in and, swimming the stream, take up the further bank; half remain on the near side, and then all are nosing it diligently as we proceed up stream.

Bouncing like a very keen dog, he leaps over the little bushes, pokes into every crack, sniffles at the willow trees, and every now and then takes the water. Listen, hounds are voicing from the other bank! The hound that has spoken is Old Booser, the surest dog hound in all the pack.

White, shaggy, and so stiff that he can make no pace, he has yet a nose which never deceives him.

"Get to him," cries the huntsman, and plunging and leaping, hounds roving round with muzzles down and wagging tails. They take up stream and then a great pace, for a "drag" once established must be hotly pursued, since sent must cool with the advance of day. We come to more shallow water and banks bordered with reeds. Hounds check, they have "put down" their otter. Here, or hereabouts, Lutra is hiding. Old Booser has marked a hollow tree. "Try in there; try in there!" cries the huntsman.

They have marked a halt; they will not leave the spot. Poles are used to tap the withered trunk, but Lutra is not there. He must be below, in some hollow in the tree's roots, approached only by diving beneath the water's surface. We can trace his stamp in the mud. The master collects a dozen men who jump simultaneously down the bank, and presently the otter is bolted from below. A cry of "got" comes from thirty yards up stream. A little whiskered black head has popped into view and instantly disappeared again. Hounds romp to the spot, and old Booser, plunging into the water, shows us one of the most interesting sights in otter hunting, for he swims along, nosing his quarry through the water. Once there is a view, and then for several minutes we do not see him. If he comes up it is behind some tiny covert which screens him. We do, however, see his chain, a little double row of bubbles, rising at regular intervals. He is making for deeper water ahead and if he reaches it he will escape us.

The master takes a number of volunteers up stream. They all go into the river, stretch from bank to bank, and line their poles along wedged by their legs. They are not a moment too soon, for like a flash a black object dashes beneath the surface, thuds against the barrier and is driven back. Under the stream we hear a man cry "Tally-ho!" and then we see him jump frantically into the reeds. He has attempted to tail the otter. We are secretly glad of his misfortune, for tailing is not a very sportsmanlike practice, and is absolutely forbidden by many masters. It is the business of hounds to kill their quarry, and the otter is no exception to the better. Sometimes a tailed otter will get a rich revenge, for unless he is grasped by the rudder close to the body he can twist up and bite his pursuer. His rudder, too, is very slippery, and this adds to the danger.

As our too ardent sportsman struggles to the bank and stands pressing the water from his clothes he explains that he had seen the otter draw itself up to the reeds and lie with its head just out of the water. Always a most intelligent animal, the otter will positively think in extreme moments. Note how he remembers. He does not seek again the hole from which he has been bolted; the recollection of the thud overheard, caused by the jumping, has led him to doubt the security of his hiding place. Next he tries down stream. In this direction would probably be safe if he were not hunted far enough, but being a bit of a philosopher, he must come up for breath, and, rising he winds the hounds so plainly that he turns back.

Now he will essay a desperate part. A tributary stream lies half across a tiny wooded space. It is only a few yards, or he would never venture. With great courage he climbs out, hobbles across, and plunges in on the other side. Fatal error! He had been seen, as it is now much more confined space. Master and huntsman know the end is near, and hounds lying to the horn plunge into the stream volitionally and vigorously as they own to the dog and feel their quarry is at hand.

But master and huntsman have reckoned wrongly their host. They realize very shortly that an otter does not leave a broad for a narrow stream for nothing. His sagacity is far too great. This last one was cut down, nearly dead, and taken to the hospital at Monaca, where he is being cared for in the greatest secrecy. A woman also has poisoned herself at Monaca, only a few steps from the museum that was raised to his own glory by Albert I. Still another, a young man, 30 years of age, shot himself dead on Monday evening at 9 o'clock on one of the benches fronting the great staircase of the Casino. He had just regularly at the Hague to combat the scourge of war, not a single delegate has yet dreamed of suggesting the suppression of the slaughter house at Monaca.

An elephant's burden is from 1,300 to 2,500 pounds, and that of a horse from 200 to 250.

PREDICTS WAR IN SKIES.

Fleet of Aircrafts Armed With Guns to Act as Scouts.

Hudson Maxim, the famous inventor, has just worked out the plans for a new submarine motor boat, says the New York American, which will act, itself, as a monstrous torpedo and, after blowing up the warship it has chased, safely escape on the wave caused by the explosion. It will be driven by only a couple of men, travel at terrific speeds, have a "steaming radius" of several hours, be practically invulnerable and carry in its deadly nose a ton of high explosives, which it can place with surety wherever the other fellow wants to have it.

Pressed for details of this remarkable new engine of destruction, which, it is believed, will create a new era in naval warfare, Mr. Maxim refused to talk. "I am saving them for my lecture tomorrow evening before the American Chemical society and am sorry that anything about it has leaked out beforehand. I had hoped to have kept it secret altogether."

The representative of the American asked if he did not think these deadly instruments would put an end to war by making it impossible.

"Quite the reverse," Mr. Maxim replied. "So far from war in the world being anywhere near its end, it is, as far as only just commencing its scientific period."

"The idea about the 'zone of death' that two armies would reach a point where neither could attempt to cross the interval without facing certain annihilation, is a fallacy. It is all right in theory. But in practice it only discloses a need which science at once sets about providing for. I have now many ways for enabling an army to cross that 'zone of death.' The simplest buries the enemy in a cloud of dense smoke. Another still better, is used at night, and so lights them up that, while they can be plainly seen, they are too dazed to see anything themselves."

"In the warfare of the future, armies will line up on opposing skylines and fire at each other over the enormous arena in between them. They will have their scouts and riflemen armed with silent guns, and the sky will be clouded with fleets of scout-aircraft. There will be many a shrill between aerial pickets, and a catapult and canister will be directed toward the sky as well towards the enemy's firing line."

"But is it a mistake to suppose that flying machines will play havoc by dropping high explosives. Explosives so used would do very little damage in the horizontal plane, and kill very few men in an army."

"By that time army generals will be expert scientific engineers, and explosives will be used in machines that will annihilate thousands of men in a few minutes."

"But as a political factor, war may be kept out of account if one keeps prepared. In war dollars fly more quickly than bullets. The only way to keep war off is to let the promoters of war see that the plunder won't repay them for the money outlay."

"What Russia may do in the event of a war cloud in Europe, at the break of which she no doubt is, cannot be forecast from her defeat by Japan. I should not be surprised if this time she obtained her long-sought goal—Constantinople, and a water outlet by way of the Dardanelles. England will hardly face another war. If France joined her, Germany would rush in, and in the end all Europe would be at the mercy of her yellow peril."

MANY EMPTY HOUSES.

Fifty Thousand of Them in the City of London.

Fifty thousand empty houses in London, it is said, are now for sale. John Burns made this startling announcement in the house of commons recently. Large as this number is there are those who believe it is under rather than over the mark.

Remarkable change has taken place during the past five or six years. Whereas formerly landlords were masters of the situation, tenants have now the whip hand in nearly every district, and are offered all manner of inducements to take houses.

It is not long since that a premium—or what amounts to the same thing, "key money"—was demanded by property owners in some parts of London. Today a tenant who has such men will actually allow tenants a discount, which consists in the case of small property, of the expenses of removal up to £1, or else so many weeks' occupation free. Usually no rent is required for the first fortnight; but in certain localities the competition between property owners is so keen that the period in some cases is one month, making the discounts about £25, or £45.

A more curious bait is fire insurance. One company gratuitously insures each of its tenants against fire; while another, besides safeguarding the householder against this contingency, relieves him of apprehension respecting any damage to his furniture by lightning or flood.

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