

CHAPTER II

THRILLING ADVENTURES

A linseed poultice—A surprising accident—Philosophical "Hero"—He is given away—Hero returns—Good-bye—An awkward mount—A plaster of Paris suit—A kindly farmer—His pocket-handkerchief—Collapse of a hireling—A restless night—A lady's new teeth—Schopenhauer's views on "happiness"—Bank Holiday crowds—Some masters of hounds—Their troubles—And peculiarities—Parson Milne—Tempers in the hunting-field—An exciting chase—A gallant master's sore throat—An unfortunate remark—A hunting flask's surprising contents.

As I married very young, I soon left the old home and began plunging about the world with my sporting spouse. He loved horses, dogs, and creepy-crawlies, and so did I; between us we risked our necks rather often.

We made a training ground for horses and ponies. When they were not schooling us we schooled them. It was most exciting at times when our mounts insisted on going through the jumps instead of over them. We picked each other up in turns, sometimes rather shaken and piano, at others thinking it great fun and full of the joys of life.

We carried out the same idea in India. My husband was a lucky man and as hard as nails, never ill and seldom hurt. When a horse rolled over him and I expected to see him like a pancake, he would emerge from under the animal, smiling and often not much the worse, until one day, when he and a horse were struggling on the ground, he was badly kicked on the chest.

Things did not go as satisfactorily as usual, and it

ended in a doctor being called in, who ordered a hot linseed poultice to be applied at once.

As soon as the doctor had gone, my lord said he was a silly "foo-foo," and the poultice he would not have. I took no notice of this, and carried out my orders faithfully, appearing with a nice hot poultice. My man refused to have it near him, and it ended in more or less of a romp, for he seized the thing out of my hands and stood it on my head. By this time it was too cold to be of the smallest use, so I took it away, returning shortly with a fresh one, putting on an injured air, not a vestige of blandishment about me.

This time, in consequence of the forbidding air I had adopted, I succeeded in placing the poultice where it was needed; but before I had time to sit down beside him and congratulate him on his powers of endurance, the poultice flew over my head and fell with a plop on the floor, near the purdah hanging between the dining-room and our bedroom. In India this curtain is considered sufficient privacy. The bearer (my husband's body servant), coming in at the moment, put his foot in the middle of it, and my man laughed until he made himself worse.

Had he been obliged to have a leg off I do not think he would have made any fuss, but a hot poultice he would not have at any price. He recovered for a time without one, but later much more unpleasant steps had to be taken, and there was no fuss at all.

Having nursed a good many sick people at one time and another in my life, I have come to the conclusion that men are the easiest to manage and make comfortable; also the most grateful for our endeavours. The more seriously ill people are, the better they are to nurse; it is the convalescent stage which is the most trying both for the patients and those nursing them. I know from experience how

hard it is, when feeling better and wanting to do things, to be told we must not do anything of the kind, but lie still and be patient, for I have at different times had some ugly spills, which necessitated a certain amount of leisure and contemplation. Unsympathetic people have on these occasions said to me: "Well, what can you expect if you will ride wild, unbroken brutes?" It was not worth an argument, but some of my tosses have been with experienced hunters, as the following will show.

I was riding a favourite mount of mine, a big, powerful, accomplished hunter. He was very fresh; the scent had been bad, so we had not had a successful morning. When riding towards a fresh cover, we had to pass along a narrow sheep track, with a nasty drop on one side, the bottom of which I could not see owing to trees and undergrowth.

Hero, the name of my favourite, objected to being restrained along this razor-blade path, and began to play antics, ending in wriggling his hind-legs over the side of the path, and away we went, crashing to heaven knew where. Being in a cross-saddle, I was able to fall clear, but had time to think to myself that Hero and I had probably had our last day's hunting. I landed in a tree about halfway down the young precipice, but poor Hero went crashing on to the bottom.

By the time help came I was tired of pretending I was a dicky-bird on the tree-top, but I really was not much the worse—a good many gory scratches, looking more alarming than they were serious; some beautiful bruises, calculated to take the heart out of any rainbow; a broken arm and a broken thumb.

Hero was found on his back, wedged in between two big boulders close to the river's edge. It was a big stream, but called by the Welsh a river. The old

horse was stretching his head to nibble little bits of grass wherever he could reach them, being much too philosophical and experienced to worry about trifles.

When at last the poor fellow was dragged through the glorified stream, I am told he was a sorry sight. I did not see him, as I was otherwise engaged having my bones set. After six weeks of doctoring he was much himself again, and longing for the chase. The sound of the horn made him almost unmanageable, so great was his delight.

This hunter was a curious tempered animal. When out and being ridden he was most amiable, confiding, and charming, trying his best to please and do all that was required of him; but in the stable he was a terror. Probably at some early date in his life he had been badly used in his box, for he considered it his duty to eat or kick to death any who went to groom him. Some of the stable men refused to go near him under any circumstances whatever. He was always gentle with me; it was the men he looked upon as his natural enemies.

I must tell you a pathetic story about this old friend of mine. When war was declared—happily his age prevented him from being taken to the carnage in Flanders—hunting was at a standstill more or less, and my health obliged me to give up riding. My son had gone to do his bit, and all the men of our establishment had gone to do the same with the exception of one very old gardener. So I presented Hero to a friend who lived about fifty miles away, knowing he would give a good home to him and an occasional day with the hounds by way of refreshment, and who had promised that when Hero could no longer enjoy his life he would have him mercifully put to sleep.

One night, a few weeks after he had gone to his new home, when all around me slept, and I, being

restless from anxiety, was only half asleep, I thought I heard Hero's whinny, which I knew so well and with which he used to greet me. I told myself not to be absurd, as the horse was miles away; but I was now wide awake, and again thought I heard the whinny, though faintly.

So impressed was I that I scrambled into my motor-coat, lighted a hurricane-lamp, and set off down the avenue in the direction of the gates, from where I could now clearly hear the home-sick hunter's request to be taken back.

Outside the iron gates he stood, pressing himself against them, trying to get in and calling for help. His excitement on seeing me was great; but I could not move the heavy iron gates, so I called up the gardener, poor old man, who lived in the lodge to come and open them. The moment one side was opened Hero rushed through, nearly knocking me down in his joy. We walked together to the stables, he rubbing his nose against me, and then he entered his old box, happy and content.

He was in a shocking mess, covered with mud, probably having come cross country as the crow flies. I wrote to my friend, telling him the horse had come home, and in reply was told he would be sent for at once; he had broken away from the groom, and they had been very anxious, as they could hear nothing of the horse's whereabouts.

Of course I would not allow the beast to be taken away again; it would be treacherous. He should not go away any more, and as he could not be properly looked after with me now all the men had gone who would dare go near him, and he was growing old, I had him mercifully put to sleep in his old home by that little instrument made on purpose for these miserable moments. It is like a needle, and it opens a vein

a little, air is blown in, and death is instantaneous. All veterinary surgeons have them, or ought to have them. We can then leave the dear animals who have given us so much pleasure, covering up their eyes in all decency, and move away, saying: "Dear friend, the wound is yours but the pain is mine."

Some years have passed since those days, but I still find a lump in my throat when I think of Hero. He was never savage with me, though he bit my little finger once in mistake, hoping to nip a groom. I have had a double nail on that finger ever since—a little souvenir.

That I should break my neck has been often prophesied, but it has not come off yet. I have had many thrilling moments, but am still going strong, and regret none of my experiences. All have been simply glorious, and I never cease being thankful for all my happy days.

All sorts of mounts have come my way—racehorses (by no means the pleasantest to ride), camels, mules, donkeys, even an old bus horse that looked lonely without the bus and its support. He stood over alarmingly, but was a plucky old gee, with his heart in the right place, ready to do or die, and could push along surprisingly with his head towards home at the end of a day.

My lord and I added pleasantly to our incomes by training horses and polo ponies and then selling them. When any did not do all we required of them, we found it an advantage to be able to say they had been regularly ridden and hunted by a lady, and we then sold them. I was the individual who had to pass them as suitable hacks or hunters for timid ladies.

One time we had in the stable a fiery chestnut named Bronswing, of whom we expected great things, hoping she was fast enough to win us a modest chase or

two, being very clever over the sticks. Unfortunately, she proved to be so difficle when with other horses that we had to abandon the idea of racing her.

Being beautiful to look at and a clever fencer, we decided that she must be one of the hunters regularly ridden by a lady. She did not seem to have any objection to me, and I rode her in a side-saddle, on purpose to see if a skirt worried her. It proved to be a matter of indifference. My husband thought we had better take her out quietly by ourselves at first to see how she behaved. For some time we jogged along serenely, then my man said: "She seems all right and in a good temper; let us take her on to the race-course and put her over the jumps. You will be delighted with her.

The moment we arrived on the course, she began shaking her head and trying to get the bit between her teeth, so to occupy her mind I set her to business. My husband and I took the first fence abreast, after which I saw him no more, for Bronswing thought it was her business to go round the course before anyone else had a chance. Finding I could not get a pull at her at all, I simply laid myself out to steady her, if possible, at her fences.

All were accomplished in the most finished style, then, swishing round to leave the course in the accustomed manner, during which manœuvre she nearly threw herself down and all but unseated me, I thought the fun was over. Not so; she now dashed off to her stables without consulting my wishes

The stable door was open, but the top beam was too low to allow us both, horse and rider, to enter at the same time. I laid myself as flat as I could along her neck, putting my ears back in the hope of living to fight another day; then, seeing I was about to be brained, I slipped off, falling heavily on my

back, and only just escaped a parting salute from her heels.

She certainly was wonderful, but as matters stood it would be impossible to pass her as a pleasant mount for a timid lady. Perhaps she would be more manageable with hounds, and after all she had done nothing wrong, and negotiated the jumps, some of them rather stiff, exceedingly well.

So out with the hounds we went, and I had her bitted differently. I soon found I was in for some fun, and must keep wide of the pack; this I did, while she enjoyed a few capers. As we rode off to draw cover, a friend cantered up to pass the time of day and to wish me luck with my restive mount. That settled it. Off we flew, where to I had not the least idea, not being allowed much to say in the matter. I could only trust in my mount's ability to clear anything that came in her way—say a haystack, a church, or some trifle like that!

As we tore along we passed a second horseman riding inoffensively along the grass at the side of a lane. Bronswing snatched savagely at the rider's leg as we passed, but without pausing; and on we went until we came to an awkward bullfinch with a ditch on the near side, and, as I found to my cost, a ditch on the far side as well. I put up my arm to save my face as we crashed through the tall straggly fence. So far so good. But on landing the ground gave way, and back we went into the ditch.

The breath was knocked out of me for a bit, as part of my mount was on top of me; the depth of the ditch saved me from having the whole of her weight on me. She seemed a little dazed and surprised herself, but only for a moment or two, and then she was on her feet again, which was more than I was. All I could do was to endeavour to hold the reins and try to keep

her from prancing on my diaphragm until help came in some form or other.

The result of that day's work was two broken ribs, a broken collar-bone, and a few dislocated fingers, not to mention a squashed inside. My chief garment for some time was a suit of plaster of Paris.

When better I wanted to have one more try with the mare, but my husband would not hear of it, and sold her for a cruel price, considering what we had paid for her. I know the sum did not half pay my doctor's bill, nor did it recompense me for having to put up with a collection of hospital nurses, who gave themselves more airs and graces than the entourage of any royalties it has been my honour and pleasure to entertain; and that is saying a good deal, for while the royalties themselves have been in all ways considerate and charming, some of their followers have not. The nurses not only gave a great deal of trouble, but upset the whole household.

The last I heard of poor Bronswing was that she had been seen in a cab in Northampton and looking very sorry for herself. She must have been in poor form to allow herself to be put between the shafts.

But all the falls are not bad ones, and there is nothing like a good-natured toss for giving confidence. Finding no bones broken and our physiognomy much as we have been accustomed to see it certainly is encouraging and gives confidence.

A curious thing happened to me after my first baby was born. I had been looking forward so much to being in the saddle again, and my husband longed to see me there—even went so far as to say derogatory things about the baby for keeping me so long at home. Then, when able to ride again and my mount came to the door, I found my nerve had completely gone; I dared not get into the saddle.

With open-eyed wonder and despair my man looked me up and down, begging me not to make a fool of myself, and that if I behaved like that all the pleasure would be gone out of his life. In fact, he hardly knew whether to be angry or pained.

I had to begin my riding again on a tame old pony that lopped along as if asleep. Happily, my nerve soon returned, and my man smiled upon me once more.

What kind folk farmers are! I have an affection for them; many times they have come to my rescue in awkward moments. Once, when out with the York and Ainsty, my horse and I landed on our heads in a very wet, ploughed field; neither of us were any the worse. I was soon busily engaged in wiping the mud off the horse's head and bridle with tufts of grass gathered from a bank, when I discovered a redfaced farmer looking at us from over a neighbouring hedge.

He asked if I were hurt, but I observed he was laughing all the time. Evidently his merriment was caused by my appearance, for my hat resembled a derelict concertina, while a few pounds of mud adorned my neck, face, and hair.

The amused man suddenly disappeared, and I thought him heartless until he appeared again, this time through a gate farther down the field; he had come to see if he could assist me in the cleansing process. Taking a big red pocket-handkerchief out of his pocket, he proceeded to mop my face with it, then picked bits of mud from my neck and hair. Over this we had jokes and laughter.

Taking off my hat, I tried to put it into some sort of shape again. It did not lend itself kindly to the operation, so I put my foot inside it and gave one or two little friendly kicks, which so amused the kindly farmer that he rocked himself backwards and forwards, growing redder and redder in the face until

at last he subsided on to the bank of the hedge, helpless from laughter.

I wanted to be off and see if I could pick up the hounds again somewhere, so presenting the farmer with a little remembrance I remounted. The dear man said: "What is this for? I don't want nothing; you have done no harm." As I rode off I shouted: "It is for all the mud I am carrying away from your field;" and we waved a friendly farewell.

The scent of that farmer's red handkerchief comes back to me now; I think he must have carried his luncheon in it, consisting of apples, cheese, and baccy.

Another time when a farmer and his wife befriended me was when I was hunting from Oxford. All our own horses were crocked, so I was hiring, and waiting for my brother to join me and bring his horses in a day or two.

I started out alone the first day on my hireling, who carried me like a bird. It proved to be a most exacting day, and towards evening, when far from any landmark that I could recognise, the horse suddenly collapsed. Something had gone wrong; it was evidently ill. Usually when a horse is tired and had enough it tells you so by chancing its fences, changing its legs, and so on. None of these little notices had been given to me.

The first important thing to be done was to get the animal into stables somewhere and attend to him. Looking round, I espied a light in the window of what I thought might be a farmhouse, judging by the number of outhouses, haystacks, etc., surrounding it. Having loosened the girths, I led the horse, which was looking very bad, with dull eyes and in a mighty sweat, to the front door of the house, which proved to be a farm. A comely woman answered my knock.

I asked her if she would give hospitality to a tired horse. She said she would call "Thomas," who was in the backyard.

Thomas proved a treasure, who at once proceeded to call helpers, prepared a shed with clean straw, gruel, and other comforts. He had evidently not lived in a good hunting country for nothing.

To my dismay neither gruel nor oats of the finest quality tempted the hireling; he stood with drooping head, taking no notice of anything or anybody. I had, of course, taken off saddle and bridle, wiped under his throat and round his neck with a pad of dry hay, knowing that they find that refreshing; but I saw no signs of enjoyment, so resorted to what I have seldom known to fail in refreshing a tired horse—namely, standing by his head and gently pulling his ears through my hands. The poor thing almost leaned on me, asking for more. "Thomas" thought something had gone wrong with the horse's heart.

The farm lady came to see how we were getting on, and invited me to have some tea. This I gladly accepted, saying I would come in as soon as I saw the invalid more comfortable.

"You leave all that to Thomas and come along with me." But I was adamant; I could not leave the animal that had done its best for my pleasure until I had done my best for him. I always think it is so disgusting to neglect a horse because it is a hireling—more reason, surely, to be merciful and considerate.

I saw not the faintest chance of my being able to return to my starting-point that night, and the outlook was not pleasant, as I was wet to the skin, in consequence of our not having made good over a stream earlier in the day.

My kind host and hostess persuaded me to stay the night with them. They were sorry there was no spare

room, as the apples were stored in it; but Thomas could sleep on the "sofe" in the parlour, and if I did not mind I could share the bed with my hostess!

The invalid hunter having by now recovered enough to partake of some gruel with beer in it and ready to play with some oats, I went to enjoy the tea which had been so thoughtfully suggested.

Mrs. Sweeting, that being the name of my hostess, insisted on my shedding my wet clothes, and brought forth her best Sunday-go-to-meeting dress for me to wear while my own things were drying. The dress would have folded round me two or three times. But what matter? It was dry and warm. But oh! the undergarments—were made of unbleached calico! I had to sit bolt upright in my chair, tired as I was, for the irritation of the calico nearly drove me mad—almost as bad as the prickly heat that one indulges in when in India and other tropical climates.

After a generous repast of ham, eggs, home-made cakes, honey, and other good things, I said that if they would not mind I would like to have another look at the hunter and then go to bed, thinking by that means I should get rid of the tickling clothes.

Alas! I found the night-dress put ready for me was made of the same material that was driving me mad. My heart failed me. I would much rather have slept in my wet things amongst the clean straw in the stables near the hunter. However, there was nothing to be done but make the best of the situation, especially when I was told with some pride that the crochet trimming on the night-dress was the work of Mrs. Sweeting's own hands.

A ginger-beer bottle was filled with hot water for my feet, and I was left to—scratch, not sleep; that was out of the question.

Later Mrs. Sweeting came to bed. I observed she did not take off very much, only removing her dress and corsets; the rest she slept in, because, she said, she was then ready for the work in the morning. It was some time before I slept. Thomas in the parlour beneath us snored like a grampus, and I was asked every few minutes by my bed-companion if I were *quite* comfortable.

“Comfortable!” Think of it! But I was forced to tell one of the white lies that oil the wheels of life, and which are often so much more Christlike than the bald and unkind truth. At last I dozed off, but was rudely awakened by loud knocking at the door. Thomas wanted his wife to “come quick.” I gathered that a cow was about to do something indiscreet and uncalled for, and the lady’s help was needed. When morning came I was not greatly rested, but the hunter was quite perky again, and succeeded in carrying me back to the point from which we had started the day before.

My kind host and hostess absolutely refused any sort of recompense, which was embarrassing, and were polite enough to say they had enjoyed having me—another white lie, no doubt, as the horse and I must have given a good deal of trouble.

As soon as I reached home I sent the Sweetings a silver teapot with an inscription on it “From a grateful friend,” etc.—all that sort of thing, and I was also able a little later to send a good customer for hay, oats, straw, and roots.

Yes, farmers and their wives, when taken the right way, are a real sporting lot, and most hospitable, the wives being distinctly practical. It was a farmer’s wife, I think, who when asked how she liked her new teeth replied. “Pretty well, but they as often misses as they ’its.”

Yes, there are so many joys in life it is difficult to say which brings most pleasure; but a day with hounds, mounted on a good horse, is hard to beat, especially when surrounded by friends who welcome you.

It is no use cynics telling me that happiness is a delusion of the heart. Schopenhauer maintains that pleasure and happiness only mean absence of pain or sorrow. I do not agree with that great thinker, for though we may consider ourselves happy to-day because we are not so unhappy as we were yesterday, there are surely distinct sensations of pleasure and pain; that is why we feel the changes registered on life's barometer so keenly. The defying mystery is the up and down see-saw of it all.

A Bank Holiday meet is not generally enjoyed by keen followers of hounds, and the Master dreads them, sport so often being spoilt by those ignorant of the rules and etiquettes.

I confess I love to see the Bank Holiday crowds come out for a day's enjoyment, happy though ignorant. What matter if they do head a fox now and again? It is so wonderful to see the good-natured, cheery folk happy in watching other people having a good time, while we have plenty of days when they are not able to be present.

It is a pleasure to stop and talk to the holiday-makers, explain to them what is happening, and hear their views and criticisms on hunting and people in general—their views on ladies riding astride, and so forth. A good many pass cynical and pungent remarks on what they call "women riding in men's saddles."

I remember once when I had a goodly crowd gathered round me explaining to them the early history of riding in that fashion. They were open-

mouthed with astonishment when I told them the ancient Norman and Plantagenet dames always rode astride when not bumping about on pillions behind their lords, the side-saddle being the later invention, and not used in this country until King Richard II.'s reign, when his wife, Anne of Bohemia, introduced it.

They were greatly tickled when I told them that in 1560 Queen Elizabeth hunted in a cross-saddle, wearing breeches and boots. Roars of laughter greeted this information, with ejaculations of "Fancy a Queen in such a get-up! Hort to have been 'shamed of 'erself!" Still more shocked were they when I explained that in those days the present seemly long coat as worn to-day was unknown, and that people often rode in whatever they happened to be wearing when they desired to ride, even in satin dresses and frilled etceteras, though a few of my audience said they thought that preferable to breeches and boots for women.

It was not until Charles II.'s reign that the long, dangerous habit skirts became the fashion.

Nothing amused the crowd so much as to see someone come to grief and have a fall. It is curious the pleasure this gives to some people, other than the fallen.

When my son was hunting hounds he had a first whip whom we had never known to smile, he looked as though it would be painful to him. But one day, when a follower had a bad toss and was really hurt, the whip surprised us all by breaking into hilarious laughter.

Once when out with my son's hounds I was trying to entertain a Bank Holiday crowd, and a man said to me: "It is cruel to hunt a fox; I am surprised at a kind lady like you doing so." I then enlarged to him and others awaiting my reply on the cruelty of

foxes in their own lives; that a mother fox, called a vixen, though a wonderfully good mother to her babies in their early days, will, as soon as they are old enough for cub-hunting to begin, deliberately draw the attention of the hounds to her young, with the object of saving herself and her mate; that she will force her babies into the open while hiding herself to earth until all danger be passed.

My audience were much impressed; some of the women said nothing was bad enough for the heartless vixen.

The hunting field is a good place for the study of character. Books can be, and are, filled with the peculiarities of horse and hound, but what volumes could be written about the strange and wayward doings of those who hunt! There is some odd influence in the hunting field that seems to let loose the demons that dwell in men's hearts, which is only a florid way of saying that hunting has a way of revealing bad tempers and selfishness.

Not only are the men who hunt hounds prone to displays of temper in different keys, but the whole hunting community is, I think, inclined to be quarrelsome. There are few hunting centres where I have enjoyed sport that have not been torn by internal dissensions.

Indeed, there are some hunts where each successive Master's life is made a burden to him by the squabbles of his followers. The Blackmore Vale Hunt was such a country for many years until Major Wingfield Digby became Master. He has enjoyed comparative peace, largely because he is an excellent sportsman, also because he happens to own about 20,000 acres of the country. It is an unfruitful pastime to bait a man who owns half the country you want to hunt over.

The long-sustained dispute in the Whaddon Chase country, which figured so largely in the Press a short time ago, is one of the classic examples of hunting squabbles.

I have always maintained, and believe in all seriousness, that hunting people fight amongst themselves because they have too much to eat and not enough to do. These are the two finest ingredients with which to make a first-class row.

Masters of Hounds are often highly tried by their field, and some excuses must be made for them; but how do swear words help? It may relieve their feelings, but language is not necessary to the proper control of a field, as has been amply proved by the Rev. Edgar Milne while hunting the Cattistock country; no one ever heard him use an unseemly word. When his followers were not behaving themselves properly, I have seen him give them a little lecture on the whole duty of a field, with a view to the enjoyment of others as well as themselves, while the delinquents listened with downcast eyes and chastened mien.

But there are not many men like Parson Milne, nor many countries like the Cattistock, so I feel I must do homage to a great sportsman and one of the fairest hunting countries on earth.

I have known several Masters of Hounds with quick tempers—Mr. Carnaby Forster, who married the Duchess of Hamilton, for one. Then I know a man who for many years was a Master of Hounds who has, to put it politely, a very quick temper. One day when out with his hounds he observed a follower leaving a gate open after passing through it. Thinking this might lead to cattle straying, the Master thundered out: "You——" (something something). "Go and shut that gate." No notice was taken of this order, so the irate Master wheeled his horse round

and, holding up his whip threateningly, said: "Do you hear me? Go and shut that gate."

The offender replied: "I don't want the gate shut."

"Don't you? I will teach you to argue with me"—riding up to the man, who shouted:

"It's my gate; can't I do as I like with my own gate?"

The Master was addressing the farmer who owned the land, but had been unaware of the fact.

Naturally, profound apologies were expected—not so; instead the Master shouted: "I don't care; shut that gate."

Peace was brought about by another follower closing it. This same Master was driving home from hunting one day when something went wrong with his car, which he was himself driving. He wrestled with it unsuccessfully for some time, then relieved his feelings by dealing it some heavy blows with his hunting crop, which neither solved the difficulty nor improved the appearance of the bonnet of the car or his crop.

There were no end to the diversions of this Master of Hounds. No one could very well say anything, as this gentleman hunted the pack entirely at his own expense.

One day he fell out with some man working in a field the hounds were passing through. Becoming very angry with this person who had offended him in some way, he jumped off his horse to settle the matter on the spot.

Scenting trouble, the individual thought he had better make himself scarce, the Master being a big heavy man. The offender managed to get a good start, and he was not running in top boots. It was an exciting chase, and there was some betting on it. The

runaway was a much younger and lighter man than his pursuer, also he knew the country well, for when they came to a fairly large stream he knew exactly where he could ford it to advantage.

The Master, hot, blown, and excited, took no notice of such trifles and plunged straight in where it was fairly deep. On reaching the other side, his boots were full of water, not conducive to rapid motion, so he stood on his head against some railings, calling upon those near, who had followed to see the end of the affair, to assist him in maintaining this attitude while the water ran out of his boots.

When in a position to continue the chase, the offender was nowhere to be seen. This story sounds almost too good to be true, but it is fact, and the Master has spoken of it to me. He is now amused on looking back at those days and that particular incident, but I am not sure that he now remembers what it was that had offended him.

In spite of these little peculiarities, this gentleman was popular, and, like most quick-tempered people, forgiving and most generous. When not upset about anything he was kind to all, besides being a clever and delightful companion.

Now I must tell you about a rotund and jolly M.F.H. who was called "Bubble" behind his back. His wife had a high-pitched, peevish voice; behind her back she was called "Squeak." Somehow, but nobody knows how, this sobriquet became known to this couple. Bubble was much amused, Squeak was not!

There is no end to the amusing things one comes across when hunting. There is a gallant little M.F.H. I know who is not quick tempered or savage, but has one most remarkable peculiarity. It takes the form of acute and ever-present anxiety about

his health. I have seen him cheering on his hounds with his very fine voice, which was a pleasure to listen to. Suddenly he has stopped and turned to the person nearest to him, saying, "My throat is inflamed, isn't it?" following the words by opening his mouth wide and beckoning to the individual to gaze down his throat. If after inspection he was told it looked all right, he immediately cheered up and galloped off, blowing his horn as gaily as ever; but if some rash person said, "It looks a little red," he would call his whipper-in, tell him to carry on, and make for home forthwith.

I have noticed that the loud bluster of a hot-tempered man is generally taken in good part, but never sneering remarks made in cold blood. One Master of Hounds that I know once addressed his followers, who were not generous subscribers to the sport they enjoyed, in the following words: "Gentlemen, you have neither money, morals, nor manners." Not a very happy way of relieving his feelings, and made him a host of enemies. I was the more sorry because he was really a very kind-hearted little man, but would occasionally say this sort of thing.

Now I really must curb my pen, for once I am off on hunting reminiscences I do not find it easy to stop; but I would like to say to one and all the Masters who have kindly welcomed me and shown good sport I am most grateful, for they have helped to keep the cobwebs from my brain and wrinkles from my heart.

Some people are as fussy and solicitous about their horses in the stable as a fussy maiden aunt over a schoolboy with the measles or mumps, yet so inconsiderate to their mounts when out hunting that I have felt ashamed of them.

I have often looked round at the other members

of the field during a check, and at times after, say, twenty minutes of the fastest going, have observed them sitting lumpishly in the saddle, partaking of the contents of their flasks, looking like self-satisfied aldermen, while their blown and sweating horses were struggling to regain their wind.

Now, if these inert folk had only got off, turned their horses' heads to the breeze, and loosened the girths, if possible, for a few minutes, the horses would have picked up much sooner, also quite possibly saved themselves falls arising out of tired horses chancing their fences.

Mentioning flasks reminds me of a dear old friend, one of the old school, a parson, who hunted hounds and used to offer his flask to anybody he thought might be in need of a pick-me-up. I loved to watch their faces, because it always contained quinine and water !