

THE KEEPERS BOOK

A GUIDE TO THE
DUTIES OF A GAMEKEEPER



SIR PETER JEFFREY MACKIE

THE KEEPER'S BOOK

Peter Jeffrey Mackie writes in his introduction to *The Keeper's Book* that 'Sport and love of sport is part of the great heritage of our race.' He believes that sport and sportsmanship are what keeps society thriving and is undoubtedly one of our most powerful social forces in this day and age. This book pursues the sport of the hunt and the social interactions associated therein. This particular past time requires not only a love of adventure, but also self-discipline, patience and technical skill. Not only does Mackie discuss the pursuit and conquest of wild animals, but he also describes how to preserve them, covering all matters in great detail. Mackie goes on to cover everything from hunting to angling in astounding detail. Although first published in 1929, this timeless classic is sure to peak the curiosity of anyone interested in outdoors amusements and their impact today.

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THE KEEPER'S BOOK • SIR PETER JEFFREY MACKIE

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A Guide to the Duties of a Gamekeeper

BY
PETER JEFFREY MACKIE



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PREFACE TO THE 16th EDITION

THAT a Sixteenth Edition of this book is required after seventeen years implies little credit to the ability of the Author-Editor. It must be remembered that there is always growing up a new generation of young sportsmen who require to go through the Mill of Learning to "Play the Game," and that without this teaching they are a danger alike to themselves and their neighbours.

There is no finality to knowledge, and although in other respects this edition may not differ greatly from previous ones, it has been carefully revised and brought up to date as far as the knowledge of the Editor and of the various writers permits. As before, there are wide margins left for personal notes.

That many sportsmen may differ with the views expressed is to be expected, yet if this work forms the foundation on which other sportsmen of greater knowledge may add their experience, the object of the book will not have been sought in vain.

PETER J. MACKIE.

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P. J. M.

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INTRODUCTION



SPORT and love of sport is part of the great heritage of our race, and it is a far more important factor than many people realise. The Briton does not question his own conventions. It would be hard to frame a concise definition of all that we understand in the simple term "sportsman"; yet not only our own race but the civilised world in general, has learnt to take this word, divorced from its simple relationship to field sports, and to apply it as descriptive of a code of conduct, a standard of behaviour or a rule of life governing in a wide sense a man's relationship to his fellow-men. Sportsmanship is in essence the adhesion of self-disciplined individuals to a collective code, and it is perhaps the most powerful of all

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our modern social forces. It is the spirit which has regulated, maintained and cemented the bonds of our own commonwealth of nations. Interpreted in a myriad ways, adapted to meet the needs of complex situations and difficult and wayward races, it has served us as statecraft, as diplomacy, as a code of justice, and above all as a code of honour and social service. Imperial Rome may have left on the world the impress of its laws and its roads. Imperial Britain has evolved this curious but entirely admirable code of sportsmanship.

One cannot deny the utility of ball games as distinct from sport in fostering something of the same spirit, but there is in these games a competitive or a team play spirit which, admirable in itself, is something apart from the essential quality of real sport. We must not be led to confuse the narrower and more specialised outlook and training of the athlete with the very much higher craft of the hunter. The one is an accomplishment, the other in a much wider sense a liberal education.

There are few better schools for a youngster than a good training on moor and hill, covert and marsh. He learns not only to shoot, but to shoot—clean. He learns

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not only the pursuit and conquest of wild creatures, but how to preserve them. He learns self-discipline, patience, and technical skill, and he learns how to use his eyes and how to see for himself. This is a book about shooting and the arts, crafts and responsibilities of our hunters of to-day, but I who write and you who read, know full well that no book can be more than a guide or a reminder. It can at best help you to know what to look for—but you must see and do for yourself.

In a quarter of a century there has been progress not only in methods and the technical development of sport, but in its economic importance and to a certain extent in the opposition to it. The growth of the English industrial town populations and the journals which cater to this class have accentuated the difference of outlook which exists between the town-dweller and the country-man. An extremist group of misguided and unduly imaginative folk are definitely against all "blood sports," *i.e.*, shooting, hunting and fishing. Their avowed object is the legal prohibition of all sport. They are blind to any side of the case but their own, and they do not at the moment represent a serious menace. On the other hand, it would

be idle to suggest that all the measures on our Statute Books have been placed there because they represented the genuine opinion of the majority of voters. Political experience suggests that any organised minority with funds may succeed in pressing through legislation which affects an unorganised majority. The mass of voters are uninterested in a question which so far as they can see does not affect them personally, and in any intensive political campaign fact and truth are apt to be lost sight of in a mist of distortion and propaganda.

The economic side of shooting is far more important than the average townsman knows. He does not realise that sporting rights are proportionately as valuable to the farmer freeholder as the greatest estate owner. Still less does he realise that, except for the amenities of sport, the countryside would lose many of its residents. The local shopkeeper may not realise to what extent the claims of sport affect many of his best customers. It is not a matter which one can definitely balance in account books, but in general it is a matter which should be borne in mind by all concerned—and mentioned whenever casual conversation swings round to anti-sport talk.

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It would be difficult to assess the amount of general unemployment caused if shooting were to be prohibited. It is not only a matter of a catastrophic fall in land values and, so far as many parts of Scotland are concerned, ruin to landowners and keepers alike, but it affects gunmakers and the steel factories, and the men who make the raw metal from which the guns are fashioned by hundreds of skilled craftsmen. Millions of cartridges are fired in a year ; we can put our pen through so many tons of paper, and the people who make it : the smokeless powder and lead shot industries—felt wadding. We can wipe out the game food industry, we can take a substantial load of traffic and passengers off the railroads, reduce motoring a little, hit the sale of tweeds, and generally carry the ever-widening ripples of our devastation farther and farther afield.

Viewed in this light we can count the probable cost of sentimentality ——?, but it is also fair to question whether any direct benefit would occur to the animal world in general by the relaxation of our present system of preserving. The experience of the war years was that lack of keeping meant an entirely disproportionate increase of vermin—who did not confine their attention to game but made matters worse for the farmer. Nature

is a good deal more cruel than man, but the sentimentalist seldom knows anything about Nature at first hand.

It is, I think, wise and timely to stress the economic importance of sport as well as its educative and character-forming side, and when we come across these people who know nothing about it and are therefore ready to condemn the pleasures of others, it is as well to put to them points of view they have not taken into consideration. You will probably not convince the fanatic, but you will certainly win over the ordinary moderately intelligent but badly-informed man who has only heard one side of the case. This I would put among the duties of a modern gamekeeper, that he should make clear to all and sundry that he is not only a skilled keeper of game, but a preserver of wild life in general, and that but for the keenness and sportsmanship of owners and keepers, eagles and wild cats, and even the noble red deer, would be as extinct as wolves in Britain within a generation.

A second and a more serious menace to sport might arise from legislation designed to attach the small farmer's vote to a Party programme. The problems raised by the question of sheep *versus* grouse are difficult, but it is

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undeniable that in the great majority of cases it is the value of the grouse rather than the sheep which has brought moors under good management, which has enhanced the farming value as well as the game value of the land. Here again an appreciation of the underlying economics of sporting estates is the best argument, and a clear conception of the value and function of sport in our present state of social development is in itself the best safeguard for the continuance of things as they are and have been in our father's time.



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CHAPTER I

GAMEKEEPERS

SOME years ago when visiting a school in the West Highlands, and after having listened for some time to a cross-examination of one of the classes on powers of observation, the writer asked the question, "What is a gamekeeper?" and the answer received from a bright-eyed, sandy-haired Celt of about ten years of age was, "A big man that gangs about in a braw suit of claites wi' a dug and a gun, and daes naethin'." Now, though out of the mouths of babes and sucklings one should expect wisdom, one must not attempt to justify humour at the expense of justice. The little Highlander's answer was very much on the line of the street boy's definition of a Club as "A house where gentlemen read newspapers on Sunday." No doubt there is more of actual truth in the latter than in the former reply. But both indicate a real impression made upon a fairly observant youngster, and neither reply is to be despised as a subject for reflection.

There are three classes of keepers—good, bad, and indifferent: by indifferent we mean inefficient.

It must be admitted that there are many keepers whose chief occupation up till the 12th of August, or even till the 1st of September or the 1st of October, seems to consist in going about with a dog and a gun, and in virtually doing nothing—that is, nothing of real value to the shooting under their control. In no other class of men do we find such extremes: on the one hand of skill, energy, and efficiency, and on the other, of stupidity, laziness, and incapability. Taking the occupation as a whole, and regarding it as a department of skilled labour, we must admit, though the admission may give offence, that it does not reach the average level of efficiency of other skilled labour.

The fact that an outstanding minority of keepers are more than efficient, and combine the qualities of patient and intelligent keepers of ground and stock with all the instincts and capacities of thorough sportsmen, does not get rid of the truth of the general criticism. Of course no one would insult the profession of gamekeeping by placing it in the same category with any branch of unskilled labour in the industrial community. It is because we believe the duties of a keeper demand a high standard of observation, skill, patience, and energy, that we have to admit the failure, in the common run of the calling, to reach that standard. Viewing them on the side of moral character alone, we readily recognise that, for probity and general temperance, gamekeepers compare favourably with any other section of society. In fifty per cent. of cases they are sober, honest, good-tempered, and natur-

ally generous, and to all these qualities they add, as a rule, an exceptionally keen sense of humour. But, considering the responsibilities of their work, the percentage of efficient and trustworthy workmen is very much smaller than the figure quoted above.

This book is written for "all good keepers who know their work, and for the indifferent ones who do not." How competent a person is the good keeper! He is not only a grand sportsman, but a splendid servant—a man who knows nearly everything that is to be learnt of the habits and habitats of game, and of the necessary methods of managing and improving the ground, stock, and shootings under his care, and yet is always on the outlook to learn more. The really first-class keeper is a precious jewel in the crown of sport—a man who often puts to shame the knowledge and skill of the best-read and most keenly observant master. This capable servant is the man of all others who deplors the fact that the status of his craft is lowered by infusion of men with the sporting knowledge of farm labourers, the energy of vagabond hucksters, the initiative of village boors—and who are thoroughly convinced that they know everything.

It has been said that the ideal keeper combines skill with energy, but even in ordinarily good keepers the combination is rare. An ideal keeper, in our view, would combine the sporting capacities of the Highlander with the energy and perseverance of the Lowlander. The first has probably more insight and general intelli-

gence, the latter more initiative and energy. As Mr. Stuart Wortley has so aptly said : " Highlanders are, as all the world knows, a very fine race of men, courageous and loyal, courteous and amiable—they make the best sportsmen and the best soldiers in the world ; but they are neither so practical nor so energetic under ordinary conditions as the northern Englishman, and laziness is their great failing."

The fact of the matter is that the Highlander is a born hunter, and the descendant of a long line of hunters. His ancestors having been brought up under the clan system, " sporting " blood runs in his veins, and his instincts are still strong for fighting and hunting, not for butt-building and draining. He is a lineal descendant of men of the type of Maclean of Ardgour, " strong Donald the hunter, Macgillean Mohr."

Low down by yon burn that's half-hidden with heather,
 He lurked like a lion, in the lair he knew well ;
 'Twas there sobbed the red deer to feel his keen dagger ;
 There pierced by his arrow, the cailzie cock fell.
 How oft when at e'en he would watch for the wild fowl,
 Like lightning his coracle sped from the shore ;
 But still, and for aye, as we cross the lone lochan,
 Is Donald the hunter, Macgillean Mohr.

Time and circumstances of civilisation have done much to modify the Highland spirit and instincts, but the independence, pride, and tradition, which make a Highlander naturally antagonistic to that manual labour which is a necessary accompaniment of a gamekeeper's duties, still remain to a marked extent, especially amongst the

keepers of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Give a keeper of this breed a gun or rod in his hand, or let him be spying out your deer in the forest, or tracking your birds on the moor, and there is no man in the world to compare with him. But put him to drain your water-soaked ground, repair or rebuild your butts, or to do any of the innumerable prosaic duties inseparable from a gamekeeper's responsibilities, and he is not to be compared with either the Yorkshire or Norfolk keeper, or with the man from the Lothians.

The pride and other characteristics of race, which so long confined the Highlander's instincts to hunting and fighting, also assert themselves in a marked way in his relations to his master. If the latter is "the laird"—one of a line of fifty Campbells, a hundred Mackintoshes, or a thousand Grants—then the Highlander is a much more satisfactory workman than if his master comes of a branch of what he still regards as virtually an alien people. In the former case he is one of a family: in the latter he has an instinctive feeling of resentment against being reduced to a position of servitude. He is slow to come into line with modern social conditions.

But though these reflections on the abilities and disabilities of race may be allowable, it is dangerous to generalise further, and, while admitting the marked distinctions between Highlander and Lowlander, it would be idle to shoot their characters as keepers into separate pigeonholes. We have in our mind many Highland keepers who combined keen sporting instincts and

capacities with indomitable energy and perseverance in the pursuit of their more irksome duties ; and can also recall many Lowlanders and English shire keepers who were preternaturally lazy.

It is to be regretted that the qualities of charm and laziness so often go together. Some of the most interesting keepers we have known have been the most indolent. We have in remembrance particularly a keeper in Perthshire, whose knowledge of sport and whose capacity for narrative made of him a fascinating companion in the chase, yet who invariably neglected such duties as the killing of vermin, the digging out of springs, the proper burning of heather, and the hundred little duties for which, more especially, he was paid. Of course he knew all about the rights and wrongs of these matters, but, in dealing with subjects of the kind he spoke in the vaguest generalities, and promptly turned the conversation to some famous day on the hill when, late in the season, "the Captain," his master, killed forty brace to his own gun, or to a story of some record stalk in the forests of Ross-shire or Aberdeenshire. There was not an experience of the new master that he could not cap with a story of brilliant shooting on his old master's part, or equally skilful manœuvring on his own, and his exploits were all told with such a power of picturesque description that any criticism of his constant disregard of the moor and stock improvement was disarmed.

The net result of this keeper's inequalities has been a sad deterioration of the shooting capacities of the

moor which was under his control—a deterioration which it will take many years for a new, and probably more reticent, keeper to repair. The particular moor in question is loaded with vermin, the heather is long and rank, the springs are clogged with undergrowth, and a thousand-acred shooting now realises about ten brace of grouse a year. In our younger days, before we began to understand the science of maintaining a moor as breeding-ground for grouse, we considered this old keeper infallible. He could cast a better line than any other man : he seemed to know the actual capacity of every fly. We can vouch to the brilliance of his shooting, to his knowledge of the habits and haunts of birds, and to his skill in leading his master through the intricacies of the most difficult stalk. But, sad to say, on reviewing in cold blood the inefficiencies of his character as a responsible keeper, we have had to dethrone him from the pedestal on which he had been placed.

Let it be frankly admitted that the blame of the prevalence of inefficiency lies, to a great extent, at the door of the owners or occupiers of the shootings. There has been, and there is, too little recognition of the services of good keepers. There is in general not sufficient of a slide in the scale of wages to urge on the keeper to improve his knowledge and his capacity for work. Remuneration for labour is on all too stereotyped lines : the efficient keeper is too often paid the same wage as the inefficient. There is too little recognition of superiority and too little condemnation of the

reverse ; and, this being the case, the result is obvious. The keeper has little stimulus to improvement, outside his own personal self-respect, and, in consequence, the standard of general efficiency is kept lower than it should be.

Much of the inefficiency of the keeper is also due to the ignorance or indifference of the master or his factor. Except in a few cases of prominent land-agents, this profession is lacking in efficiency, which accounts largely for the deplorable state into which land has drifted of late years ; in land, where the margin of profit and gain is so narrow, thoroughly capable and efficient men are required. Where the property is managed by the lawyer-factor in a large town efficient supervision cannot be expected, and so the estate drifts on from bad to worse without the proprietor being able to get clear himself. The lawyer-factor has been the curse of Scottish land-owners ; they cannot supervise or check the work of the keeper and other estate employees. There are few men in this world, even among the best of us, who can be trusted to do their work efficiently and well, and for the love of the work, without proper supervision.

But it must be pointed out that, if the ignorance or carelessness of a master may account for a keeper's slackness and inefficiency, it does not excuse it. Even taking the master on the highest plane, he can seldom be more than a very good amateur. The keeper is, or ought to be, a specialist. Within the limits of his duties, a keeper should know all that is to be known, and, in the majority of cases,

should know infinitely more than his master. Not only should he be independent of any chance instruction from his employer, but he should also be in the position, when called upon to do so, to give advice and convey information on all points. In fact, the highest state of perfection can only be reached if a keeper bases his knowledge and his work on the possibility of his master being an absolute ignoramus on all matters connected with sport, not even excepting the handling of a gun. Another cause of inefficiency of the keeper arises from so many shootings being let, and from the constant change of tenants, many of whom know little of sport ; the keeper naturally takes advantage.

The relationship between master and keeper varies largely on all shootings. In some cases the master takes little or no concern with the details connected with the improvement and management of his ground and stock, and is only interested in the sport of the days on which he or his friends may shoot. In other cases he assumes meticulous direction of, and dictation regarding, all matters affecting his sport, and requires that his keeper should make him conversant with every step he takes in the pursuit of his calling.

Between these two extremes are found masters whose interest and attention are keen on some and indifferent on other points. It is chiefly in dealing with these that the keeper will have to use such discretion and tact as he possesses, discerning when and where he is expected to seek or give advice, and when and where this is not

required of him. In those cases where the masters virtually assume the whole control of the details connected with their shootings, it is often found that, through a desire to please—especially developed in the courteous Highland race—keepers often hold back definite knowledge or valuable advice which may be of essential importance to their employers. The intelligent and responsible keeper can always give information, or make suggestions, without being dogmatic, and he is but a poor gamekeeper who hides his knowledge and his opinions in order to curry favour, or out of fear of meeting contradiction. Civilly, quietly, yet firmly he should state his facts and express his views, and he will find that he is seldom misunderstood and always more highly respected. The man who prevaricates for the sake of pleasing, who pretends to know when he is ignorant, or pretends to be ignorant when he knows, is a bad servant, and a keeper who is sure in the long-run to get into difficulties.

It will be gathered from what has been said that we are dealing with the keeper as a skilled specialist. There is not much to say concerning that anomaly—the “occasional” keeper. We mean the man who is not really a gamekeeper at all, but a farm-hand who goes out with the guns, and who is the only person in charge of the shooting. To attempt to instruct such a person would be a waste of energy and a squandering of sensible advice. Such a man may learn a little, but he has neither the time nor, as a rule, the instincts for sport. And yet how many

of our so-called keepers are but mere unskilled labourers ! They might possibly know the difference between a grouse and a grey hen, but as to the habits and habitats of game, as to the destructive capacity of vermin, or as to the tempers and temperaments of dogs, they are as ignorant as the sedentary Cockney whose only knowledge of game has been obtained at the " Jungle " at Earl's Court.

There are three occupations which contain a specially large proportion of men of great charm and gentleness, and a superiority of tone and character to the general run of mankind : and they are all open-air pursuits—those of gamekeepers, shepherds, and gardeners. They are men who live in close touch with Nature, and are students of natural history ; and, as someone has said, the closer to Nature the closer to God.

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CHAPTER II

THE IDEAL KEEPER

THE good keeper, as has been said, is a treasure—generally one of Nature's gentlemen, and not too common nowadays. The bad keeper is a curse, luckily not a prevalent one—an affliction that should not be passed on to others by the help of a false or evasive certificate of character ; while the indifferent keeper comprises the greatest number of the calling, and must be “ tholed ” as one of the more or less inefficient.

What has been written will enable the reader to picture the main lines along which the good keeper may be evolved. Much will depend on the man's innate character—on his sense of responsibility, his sense of duty, his ambitions, his perseverance and persistence under difficulties, his determination to succeed in a career that has a history behind it of honour and fame. A good keeper should be an optimist. No man ever did much in this world who started in life with the resolution only to be as competent as his fellows. It is well to have the ambition to be better. The history of general progress is the story of personal endeavour. This is

no doubt a truism, an oft-repeated commonplace, but commonplaces after all are the most valuable, and at the same time, most despised and neglected things in our modern world. If a keeper would only make up his mind that, in addition to the careful carrying out of his duties, he would add one single solid fact to our practical knowledge of the science of sport, he will have earned a claim to the gratitude of the great host of people who find in this form of recreation the best way to cultivate the *mens sana in corpore sano*.

There are so many curbs on human endeavour that it is impossible to reach perfection. It is good for us, however, to have practical ideals—signposts which point to success—even although we find in the long-run that our reach far exceeds our grasp. One thing is certain, that the good keeper seldom stands still; he never stagnates; his knowledge and his capacity ripen with the years. How many keepers there are who never seem to improve, who gradually forget all they have learned, and become impervious to new ideas, adding to this mental deterioration the slow disease of indolence.

The average gamekeeper is the most conservative man on earth. Not only does he cling to the long-practised methods of his father and his grandfather; he is impatient of any suggestion that might interfere with his own settled convictions. Even the best of keepers is apt to be solid, stable, and stationary. It may be said of him, as of the old-fashioned Tory in politics: “Firmly rooted in the past, he draws his nourishment

from the traditions of his fathers, submits himself willingly to the constituted authorities of the present, the heritage of the past, and finds his proper field of action in the administration of things as they are. His disadvantage lies in his blindness to the future, and in his systematic ignoring of the principles of change and progress in the universe. When all things are moving around him, from his want of adaptability to new circumstances, he is at last forced to accept, ungraciously, changes which it would have been his wisdom to anticipate."

On the whole, it must be admitted that very little has been learned of recent years beyond what was known to our progenitors regarding the habits and habitats of game. But much has been discovered as to its care and preservation, and more as to the best ways of bringing it to the gun. It is in dealing with these latter problems that the keeper should show himself amenable to ideas, and try to keep in touch with the newest views, and profit by them—not, indeed, by blindly accepting each new theory as gospel, but by testing it carefully in the light of his own experience—in other words, by giving it a fair trial. One has only to use one's eyes to observe how the old-fashioned and discredited practices of the past are still followed on some of our best shootings. The prehistoric butts on the skyline, the indiscriminate burning of heather, the smoking-out of rabbits, the bands of yelling beaters, advancing in a straight line to the guns—all remain with us as persistent monuments

of the conservatism of the keeper, despite what comes to his ears of greater success achieved under newer methods. As far as some keepers—and their masters—are concerned, Lord Walsingham, Sir R. Payne Gallwey, Mr. Stuart Wortley, Mr. Lloyd Price, Mr. Harting, Mr. Tom Speedy, and The Mackintosh of Mackintosh, might never have made an experiment or written a word. They seem to forget that sport is not like doctrinal theology—final and irrevocable ; but a branch of science, varying under the stress of thought and experience.

The mention of certain famed authorities on matters of sport leads us to observe how little advantage has been taken of the literature of sport by the gamekeeper class. No doubt the keen and intelligent master puts his keepers in possession of the ideas he has accumulated from books, but this is not in itself absolutely satisfactory. Keepers should be encouraged to read for themselves ; in some cases to correct their own opinions, and in others to add to their own extensive knowledge. Many keepers are apt to despise books on sport as the writings of mere theorists, and to shun them accordingly. It would be as well for them to understand that this is an error of the first magnitude. Nothing is more fortunate for sport than that its literature emanates from some of its most practical exponents, for up till now there has been no valuable work on sport that has not been written by a great sportsman. A similar remark cannot be made of other branches of literature, and this fact should help to upset the prejudice amongst

keepers against that which they regard as mere book-learning. It will be found that most masters are only too delighted to lend to their keepers such books as the volumes of the Fur, Feather, and Fin series ; those of the Badminton Library dealing with shooting ; the *Encyclopædia of Sport*, and the contributions of Mr. Speedy, Mr. John Colquhoun, Mr. Hutchinson, Mr. Bromley Davenport, Sir E. Grey, Mr. Innes Shand, Mr. Lloyd Price, Mr. Harting, Mr. Carnegie, and others. In fact, it is the master's duty to see that his keeper is put in possession—temporarily or otherwise—of some of the more practical of these writings, and to insist that advantage be taken of the advice there put forward.

Not that all the knowledge of sport is to be found in the brains and memories of the writers of books. There are skilful arts, practised by some of our best keepers, that have never yet been put down in black and white. There are many "tricks of the trade" that are still sacred to particular shootings. For sport, in its widest sense, as embracing the preservation of game, is, like shooting, not only a science—it is an art. A man may know much about law without being a great lawyer ; a man may be conversant with most of the facts of medical science, and yet be a poor physician. A keeper, like a poet, is "born," not "made." But a belief in this fact often leads to the most disastrous results. The men who are thoroughly convinced *in their own minds* that they are heaven-born keepers are apt to be conceited, opinionative, dogmatic, and imperious, "given to run

riot in idolatries, drifting into vanities, congregating in absurdities, planning short-sightedly, plotting dementedly." They regard with disdain the suggestions of the man who has learned his business by mere patient plodding. Let even the man who is a sportsman by instinct, and a keeper by nature, not hesitate to learn of men who are his inferiors, perhaps, in everything except a little knowledge.

Enthusiasm, although it is not everything, is an invaluable quality in the good keeper. It inspires enthusiasm not only in his underlings, but in the sportsmen themselves. Nothing is more depressing to a day's shooting than to have a keeper who seems bored by his work. Such a day is bound to be a failure, or, at best, an imperfect success. The joy of sport ; the keenness for a good bag ; the evident and just pride in knowledge which the keeper is only too willing to impart ; the calm, firm, and deliberate manner in carrying out a plan, skilfully and patiently constructed—these are the conditions that inspire confidence in, and respect from, the sportsman. But seeming indifference ; evident ignorance ; a noisy, changeful, aimless plan of campaign ; shouting at his dog—these are the conditions that make for the irritation of " the guns " and for a general feeling of dissatisfaction. When these conditions exist, it will in all likelihood be found that the courtesy of the keeper is in proportion to the size of his " tips " and his geniality to the number of his " nips."

Such a man is a disgrace to an historical and responsible calling. He can be of no satisfaction to himself, and he is a nuisance to everybody else. He quarrels with the farm servants ; he indiscriminately shoots every suspicious dog that he meets ; he is outwitted by poachers, and is hated by his assistants. Knowledge, skill, perseverance, discrimination, firmness, order, courtesy, and enthusiasm—these are the eight primary requirements for a good keeper. Knowledge of the technicalities of his craft, skill to carry them out, perseverance in face of difficulty and failure, discrimination in dealing with superiors, equals, neighbours, and inferiors, firmness in all he does, order in all his methods—in his books, his kennels, and his sporting arrangements—and enthusiasm to carry out what he has carefully planned, modified by a gracious civility—all these will tend to his own, his master's, and his assistants' satisfaction.

Above all things the ideal keeper is *humane*. His humanity is shown by his careful consideration not only of his fellow-men, but of those faithful servants of the chase—the horse and the dog ; and if his humanity is of the right quality he will extend his gentleness and consideration so as to prevent unnecessary suffering to the quarry itself. The hunting song says : “ Though we all hunt reynard, we love him.” In the same way the instinct of love and pity also extends to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. A cruel keeper is a monster.

NOTES.

CHAPTER III

THE APPRENTICE KEEPER

WHAT we have already said should give the young man who aspires to be a gamekeeper some idea of the qualities of character and temperament, and of the knowledge and skill, that go to make a successful servant. There are one or two other points that we may indicate which may be of use to the uninitiated at the threshold of his career.

A boy brought up in the town is not likely to make a good keeper, and, let it be stated, that the sooner a boy starts his work the easier it will be for him to learn.

It goes without saying that no man deficient in power of observation or in ordinary intelligence should ever think of giving his life up to the care and the pursuit of game. The 'prentice hand must not only have a good groundwork of the common rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but he must also be keenly interested in natural history. For, unless he be careful in reading up and noting the haunts, habits, and peculiarities of the various beasts and birds which people his district, he will never be a success in the sphere he has selected for

his life's work. And having noted the facts, he will never attain to any great height of trustworthiness and dependence unless he is able to put them together in his mind and make the necessary deductions. How often do we find a keeper whose brain is well stored with facts and experiences, yet so arranged that each item seems to be pigeonholed in a separate compartment in his brain, and not on speaking terms with any other ?

Let, therefore, the wise apprentice start in life with the belief that everything is done for a purpose, and that there is some connecting link between cause and effect. Let him always be asking in his own mind the question—why ? At first he may have great difficulty in finding an answer, and then the question must be repeated aloud to those who know, whose duty it will be to explain, and to direct the eyes and the brain of the 'prentice to observe facts and reasons which have eluded him. Let him remember this law—that everything is done either from reason or from experience, and that the rule-of-thumb gospel is only for the inefficient and incapable workman. There are very few things in this world that should be done merely from routine and habit.

The 'prentice must therefore get into the practice of using his eyes, his memory, and his power of reasoning. In saying so much, let us recall what was expressed in the first chapter. On no account should he pretend to know when he is ignorant, or pretend to be ignorant when he knows. The man who is too conceited to admit his ignorance will never learn anything, and the man who is

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so good-natured or complaisant as to hide his knowledge for the sake of being pleasant, may be a good courtier, but he is a dishonest servant.

Generally speaking, the first duty of the apprentice gamekeeper is to be kennel-boy. Simple as it may appear, the keeping of a kennel requires a good deal of attention and intelligence. It is sad to see how often a valuable kennel of dogs is subjected to neglect. Unless the head-keeper has a knowledge and a keen love of dogs, it is impossible that the kennel-boy can be properly trained. It will add to his store of knowledge if he can borrow or acquire books written on the subject, provided he has sufficient intelligence to discriminate what is practical from what is not. There are two or three points which may be briefly noted—(1) The kennels should be kept scrupulously clean, and periodically disinfected with weak carbolic and water ; (2) the bedding, which should consist of clean straw, should be shaken up every day and any dust swept out of the benches. Let the 'prentice keeper note the appearance of a dog that sleeps in a stable among clean straw, and he will at once understand the necessity for cleanliness in the bedding of dogs. There is nothing a dog seems to revel in more than a roll among clean straw when it is put into his bed. (3) After the kennel has been washed, or during very hot sunshine, dogs should not be allowed to lie upon the pavement, as their bodies are apt to draw damp from it and rheumatism to result. Many dogs are rendered unfit for work by neglecting this important precaution. (4) The dogs

should get plenty of fresh water, and be fed regularly, and have daily exercise.

The 'prentice keeper should always be out with the head-keeper when he is training his dogs. As to the management of dogs in the field, experience can only be gradually acquired, but the perusal of books on dog-breaking by such authorities as General Hutchison, Sir Henry Smith, and others, may be useful in giving hints. Still, without observation, common sense, patience, and perseverance, he will never become a practical dog-breaker. However pure the breed, and however satisfactory the condition in which dogs are kept, perfection in breaking is neither to be secured nor expected unless with very considerable experience amongst game. The proportion of keepers who handle dogs well is small.

The 'prentice keeper must also, as soon as possible, be put in contact with ferrets. He must be instructed as to the cleaning of their sleeping and their feeding quarters, and learn in detail the whole question affecting their breeding, their feeding, and their working. Next to these, the management of hill ponies, and other horses used in sport, must come under his observation.

Of other matters for early observation, mention must be made of the burning of heather, the improvement of soil, and questions of draining, fencing, and planting. In all these matters the 'prentice keeper should be compelled to use his hands as well as his brains. His early days must be jointly those of a labourer, a carpenter, and a forester. He will find that, having dealt with these

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matters in a practical way, he has laid a better foundation for his position as keeper than if his knowledge were only based on observation and theory. Let him have an accurate knowledge of the use of the spade, the saw, and the hammer, long before he knows the use of a gun.

The third part of his training should be concerned with the "engines" of sport—with the construction and use of snares, traps, and nets, and, finally, of guns. He must not only see the snares and traps set by others, but he must be allowed to set them himself; great care being taken that he understands the why and wherefore of his procedure, and to see that he acts, not from theory or imitation merely, but from his knowledge of the habits and habitats of game.

While he is learning these branches of his craft, he will, of course, be out with the guns, acting as beater, driver, stop, flank, or marker, and thus slowly accumulating valuable knowledge as to the questions of finding birds and bringing them to the guns.

At this stage the present book, it is hoped, will be intelligible to him, and he will be well on the road to become a qualified keeper.

NOTES.

CHAPTER IV

RELATIONS WITH FARMERS, ETC.

THE war, together with Socialistic legislation, has made the duties of the keeper more difficult, farmers having in many cases taken advantage of the situation by making inroads into the rights of proprietors, as steps towards abolishing the Game Laws.

However skilful and energetic a keeper may be, however brilliant his qualifications, or original his ideas, he will find himself considerably handicapped unless he be able to keep at peace with his neighbours. It is not only the cantankerous "fathead" or the uncouth barbarian who butts against the susceptibilities and prejudices of others. It is often the man of character and ideas. Knowledge is apt to breed impatience with stupidity and irritation against ignorance. The clever man is by no means the most popular one. The one thing to remember is that every man looks out upon the world from a distinct and individual point of view, and that, to earn friendship and sympathy, it is necessary to gauge your opponent's standpoint when dealing with what may seem his prejudices and wrong-headed convictions. As

in heaven, so on earth, there are more mansions than one, and the keepers who start with the motto, "We are the people, and wisdom will die with us," will soon find that they are going to have a very poor time of it indeed. Let them remember the old definition: "A gentleman is a man who combines a high and well-grounded self-esteem with an habitual nice and delicate regard to the rights and feelings of others." Let us admit that this is no easy matter. But as John Stuart Blackie said: "Difficulties are the true test of greatness: cowards shrink from them; fools bungle them; wise men conquer them." And again: "Prudence yields to circumstance; folly quarrels with it; pride defies it; wisdom uses it; and genius controls it."

So far as the keeper in his official position is concerned, his principal neighbours are the shepherd, the farmer and his labourers, the neighbouring keepers, and the townsfolk and villagers. In dealing with these, let us remember that a little tact is worth a world of bullying, a little give-and-take more powerful for good than endless protestation and argument. In all his relations the main point to be remembered is, that consideration for a neighbour's interests is the first step towards the security of one's own. And if serious difficulties do present themselves, say with prejudiced and unreasoning farmers, it is better for the keeper to refer the matter to his master, who can speak and act with greater authority than he, than to undertake a campaign which might make his position unpopular, if not untenable. There

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is nothing more difficult to learn than the art of correction, unless it be the discipline of accepting it in the right spirit. The work achieved in this direction by the Services and our public schools is noteworthy and admirable. But we must remember that it is only the minority who have served with the colours, or who have learned manly self-control at the great public schools.

Let us take the case of a shepherd or his master, the sheep-farmer, who may have the grazing on a moor on which the keeper is in charge of the game. Enmity or tactlessness can only result in more damage to the interests of the owner of the game than to those of the owner of the sheep stock. A resentful shepherd has a tantalising habit of destroying nests and of making friends with poachers, and, by a curious coincidence, it may somehow happen that he collects his sheep on the very days when we wish the hill to be kept quiet. During the breeding and nesting season, his dog has a habit of ranging the moor, with the result that many eggs are destroyed, many young birds perish, and the moor is generally disturbed. Heather is badly burned : oftentimes butts and springs are tampered with. All of which unsatisfactory state of affairs might have been different if a little tact had been used, and a friend made of the shepherd, and this friendship shown in many little acts of consideration, as helping an occasional sheep or lamb in distress, or giving information to the shepherd as to their possible danger, or as to the whereabouts of a sheep that has gone

astray. An occasional present of rabbits—of course with the consent of the master—may also be recommended.

A great number of farmers are not easy to satisfy, and many have been spoiled by rich shooting tenants meeting them much more than half-way. Farmers should be treated justly, yet firmly. In many cases the harm done is overrated, and is used as a threat to blackmail wealthy Sassenachs, innocent of other open-air conditions than those of Piccadilly or the Park. Good relations with the farmers are more important in low ground than on moor shootings. Here, antagonism between keeper and farmer, owner or shooting-tenant and farmer, may possibly be disastrous to good sport. Of course, farmers have no right to enter coverts, if these are, as they should always be, strictly reserved in the lease to the landlord.

As for the farm labourers, they possess opportunities of poaching which render them particularly dangerous. They can with ease set traps, nets, and snares without being observed. Their presence in the fields seldom arouses suspicion, and they may take the opportunity of following the principle of every man for himself, unless a friendly sentiment towards the master and the keeper has stimulated their interest in sport and in justice. Far too little is attempted by the average keeper in the direction of conciliating the farm labourer, either by common sympathy and kindness, or by an occasional present, say of rabbits or hares. The keeper is often too apt to be oppressed by the idea of his own dignity, and

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to despise the mere clod of the fields. Let him remember that dignity does not necessarily mean austerity. A keeper can be firm, and even suspicious, without being “a pompous ass.”

We remember once, at a big covert shoot in the north of England, taking particular note of the relationship that existed between the head-keeper and his corps of beaters—chiefly made up of farm labourers, hired at *2s. 6d.* a day, plus a scratch lunch of bread and cheese. The month was December, it may be added, and the temperature stood not very far above zero. At a glance one discovered that not only was the keeper feared—not a bad condition of affairs—but that he was actively hated. One or two stray remarks dropped by the beaters in highly flavoured Yorkshire dialect soon convinced us of this. As for the keeper, he ordered his rank and file about as if all of them combined roguery with stupidity and laziness. No doubt many of his beaters were brainless, lumbering louts, but it is not always wise in this sensitive world to call a fool a fool, especially if numerous adjectives of a sanguinary and condemnatory nature are prefixed.

Nobody expects the keeper to proceed in this style : “Would you mind, my dear sir, kindly accompanying the rest of the men in beating out this cover?” But there is a medium between this and the not uncommon, “Nah, then, ye ——, stir yer —— legs and look sharp, you —— ——.” Not only does such gross want of common consideration, such absolute ignorance

of human nature—which in all its manifestations has some form of pride and self-respect at its base—tend to the detriment of a particular shooting ; it has in the long-run a damaging effect on sport in general. It is not suggested that the keeper's attitude should be one of obsequious fawning for favour ; but he should remember that, apart from the question of taste, there are elements in society which are daily becoming more antagonistic to the Game Laws, and that there is no need for him to emphasise the antagonism of class against class.

Let it be repeated that on all occasions when the help of farm-hands is called in for the purposes of sport, the keeper should, where such is needed, give the master a gentle hint as to the advisability of ministering well to the stomachs of these temporary employees. Irish stew or hot-pot, with, in cold weather, a glass of whisky, does not cost much, and at most would be but “a drop in the bucket ” of shooting expenses.

Even in shootings where farm-hands are not engaged, much valuable information may be at the disposal of the farm servant, and this is likely to be given or withheld in proportion to the popularity of the master, but more particularly of the keeper. Where an amicable feeling exists on all sides, sport is cleared of many of its handicaps. Good relations with the farmer may lead to the latter acquiescing in the desire that he should cut his corn *towards* the cover, so as to keep the birds upon the sportsman's ground. On the other hand, enmity will in all likelihood deter him from assisting the keeper, as, for

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example, by leaving a strip of uncut corn in the middle of a field so that he may drive out the game that remain in it before the reaping be finished.

A good understanding with the farmer may also checkmate the poaching propensities of his underlings. Despite his powers under the Ground Game Act, hares and rabbits will not be overshot, and orders may be given that the driver of the mowing-machine should keep a good look-out for birds, so that any possible damage may be averted. Information as to the movements and whereabouts of poachers will be placed at the keeper's disposal, and an altogether intelligent interest taken in, and considerable assistance given to, the sporting capabilities of the land. Surely so satisfactory a return is worthy of more outlay than mere condescension or indifference.

Let there be, at all costs, some considerable respect for the pets of the neighbourhood. The keeper should not treat all dogs and cats as vermin. If he does he will not only break the law, but also cause offence to the neighbourhood. In another chapter he will get some hints as to the law of the matter. It is only necessary to say here that, while as a rule the collie and the pet tabby should be respected, no mercy should be shown to the stray lurcher, or that king of poachers—Tom the vagabond. An intelligent keeper will soon discover the ownership of every living creature on his ground, and be able to judge fairly well as to the way they should be treated. There are many other points at which the

interests of keeper and farmer meet, and which may suggest problems to the thoughtful man. Those we have indicated may assist him in endeavouring to encounter any other possible clashing of interests in a spirit which combines tact with firmness, and justice with not too sacrificing nor yet too niggling a form of generosity.

Friendship with neighbouring keepers is an absolute necessity where there is much interchange of shooting. In most cases, where an owner or tenant finds a difficulty in getting assistance for his drives or beats in a not over-thinly populated country, he may safely set this down either to the indolence or the unpopularity of his keeper.

It will be to the interests of the employer for the forester and keeper to be friendly, and work together.

If black game in Spring are plucking the buds of newly planted Scots fir, or if rabbits are in a newly planted cover, and the forester asks the keeper's attention, he should at once make matters right. We have known stupid keepers refuse to take orders from a forester who happened to be in charge, there being no resident factor, the result being that the plantations were ruined.

Every keeper who is worth his salt will, of course, soon have a good general knowledge of the character of every man and woman, dog and cat, that comes within the radius of his shootings. He will have fairly well gauged the potential poacher, and know whom to appease, of whom to seek favour, and whom to control. And, of all general rules, he should keep this one foremost in his mind : Let him not make a habit of drinking

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with his neighbours. There is a curious notion abroad in some parts of the earth that a man's courtesy should be judged by his acquiescence in an expressed desire that he should have a drink. To drink habitually with any man diminishes authority, and no keeper can ever afford to lose that most valuable of assets. No person who counts will value a man less because he is temperate or because he refuses to give way to the harmful habit of promiscuous "treating." The keeper is to be warned even of the occasional glass with the suspicious stranger. If a man must have his glass, let him have it at home, or with men with whom he is thoroughly acquainted—men whom he respects and by whom he is respected—men who will neither misunderstand him nor inveigle him into slackness of duty or active mischief. The man who to-day seems a friend, and is laughing with us, may turn out to-morrow to be a poacher who is laughing at us. There is no law in the country, outside the laws of physiology and the law of any religion he may profess, that prevents a man from taking a fairly good "skinful of liquor," but the general rule must be emphasised—that no drunkard, or even habitual "nipper," can retain respect, and without that priceless jewel in the chaplet of authority, a keeper had better change his occupation and take to breaking stones.

NOTES.

CHAPTER V

POINTS IN LAW A GAMEKEEPER SHOULD KNOW

By H. BURN-MURDOCH, Advocate and Barrister-at-Law

Master and Servant.—Fortunately the relations existing between gamekeepers and their employers are very often so satisfactory, and even so cordial, that questions as to the legal rights of parties rarely have to be discussed. It is always well, however, to know the nature of one's legal rights : they form part of the general law of master and servant which may be found explained in many large volumes. Only a very short statement can be given here. As to the contract of service, this will follow any conditions upon which both parties agree, as to length of service, wages, notice, etc. If no mention is made of the duration of employment, this is presumed in *Scotland* to be by the year, and whether by the year or half-year, forty days' clear notice must be given before the end of the time, in order to end the contract. In *England*, disputes on such subjects are usually settled by a jury, and the results of this are so uncertain that no rule can be exactly stated. It has, however, been decided that a head-gardener falls into the large class of employees who

are engaged on the common terms of a month's notice or a month's wages. A keeper's employment may be presumed to be on the same terms in *England* and *Ireland*, unless a different bargain is made.

But the contract will be broken and ended without any period of notice in certain cases. These may be shortly expressed as—(1) Disobedience of lawful orders, or want of proper respect ; (2) Dishonesty, drunkenness, insubordination, or other serious misconduct ; (3) Incompetence, general neglect, or absence from work. Where a servant breaks his contract by some such misbehaviour, he loses his right to any wages for the time since the last period of service, and the date when wages were last due. Thus, if a keeper were employed and paid by the half-year, ending say at Whitsunday, but was *justifiably* dismissed a few months or weeks before, he would not be entitled to any wages for the incomplete period. On the other hand, if *unjustifiably* dismissed, he would be entitled to the whole wages up to Whitsunday, even if dismissed months before. The employer must keep his side of the contract by paying the wages agreed upon, at the proper time. He must be a reasonable master, and, for example, must not expect a head-keeper, employed as such, to serve as under-keeper. These principles are recognised by the common law (i.e. non-statutory law) in all three countries.

It would perhaps be harsh to refuse to give a written "character" to a good servant, but it must be said that a master is under no legal obligation to do so. Indeed,

he becomes responsible if he does, and, if some other employer were deceived by a false and flattering testimonial, might be held liable in damages for any resulting loss. But a communication regarding a servant's character which a master makes to a prospective employer is privileged, that is to say, the writer will not be held legally liable for anything said honestly and without malice, even if it be uncomplimentary and incorrect.

Should a keeper suffer personal injury by an accident arising out of his employment and in the course of his work, he will be entitled to recover compensation from the master under the Workmen's Compensation Acts if any loss of wages results. Formal notice of the accident, preferably in writing, must be given at once to the employer, unless the latter has full knowledge of the accident at the time. Within six months from the occurrence a definite claim must be made for a specified amount of compensation. He will have no right to compensation where the accident was due to his own "serious and wilful misconduct" unless it causes serious and permanent disablement. It is desirable for the employer to insure against liability for compensation: heavy liabilities may be suddenly incurred without anyone being to blame.

Keepers, like many other agents and employees, frequently have to trade with dealers and tradesmen on behalf of their employers. Tempting opportunities are sometimes given by dealers and others to make a profit by a "commission" or "discount" on the account, or

in some similar way. It is necessary to keep in mind that all such secret profits by a servant or agent are improper, and that now anyone who "corruptly" offers or accepts such secret commissions is liable under the criminal law. A keeper should accept nothing of the kind without the full knowledge of his master. He will then be all right, not only with the law of the land, but also with his own self-respect.

The whole subject of game, in regard alike to its preservation and its destruction or capture, is so fenced about by law, that no keeper can properly do his work without knowing at least the main restrictions which the law places on himself and others. Space forbids that more than an outline be given here, but for the sake of those wishing more detailed information a list is given at the close of this chapter of the leading books on the subject. The law on the subject is in rather a confused state, owing to the careless wording of Acts of Parliament. Those who are fond of abusing lawyers and the law should remember that these laws have been manufactured in Parliament by laymen.

Game, in its general sense, means all birds and beasts which are both used as food for man and are usually shot or hunted by man for sport. But the word is also used in the narrow sense of the birds and beasts mentioned in the leading Game Act of each of the Three Kingdoms. These are hare, pheasant, partridge, grouse, heath or moor game, black game, and bustards. (Heath game and moor game only mean black game and

grouse respectively.) For Ireland add deer, landrails, and quail. In Ireland "moor game" is also supposed to mean black game and ptarmigan. Many Acts of Parliament use the word game in this sense when they state that the provisions of the Act apply to "game and rabbits, teal, widgeon, deer," etc. By various Acts it has been made illegal to kill birds during the nesting season. A table of the close times for each species of game is given at the end of this chapter.

Ownership of Game.—There is no property in game or other wild animals in their natural state. In Scotland they become the property of anyone who captures them (in the legal phrase, "reduces them into possession"), even if the captor breaks the law in taking them, unless forfeiture of the game is made a part of the penalty for the offence. In England and Ireland the law is more complicated. There, if game is flushed and killed on the ground of one proprietor, it becomes his property. If it is flushed on the ground of one man and killed or captured on another's ground, it becomes the property of its captor. Young game unable to leave the nest, or, at least, the soil of its home, is the property of the owner of the soil. In all three countries tame animals (or those which have been tamed) are the property of the person who keeps them. Young pheasants, hatched from a setting of eggs by a barn-door hen, are considered to be tame so long as they follow their foster-mother. To steal them is therefore punishable as theft, and they do not require the protection of the Game Laws. Dead