

just about that time she had four new little ones, after which neither she nor my father seemed to think any more about us. My sister and I hated those little ones. We two alone remembered my brother, and sometimes wondered whether he was quite gone or would one day come back. The fox, I am glad to say, got caught in a trap. At least I am not glad now--I was glad because, you see, I was so much afraid of her.

THE SHOOTING

I was quite close by one morning when the fox, who was smelling about after me, I suppose because it had liked my brother so much, got caught in the big trap which was covered over artfully with earth and baited with some stuff which stank horribly. I remember it looked very like my own hind-legs. The fox, not being able to find me, went to this filth and tried to eat it.

Then suddenly there was a dreadful fuss. The fox yelped and flew into the air. I saw that a great black thing was fast on its forepaw. How that fox did jump and roll! It was quite wonderful to see her. She looked like a great yellow ball, except for a lot of white marks about the head, which were her teeth. But the trap would not come away, because it was tied to a root with a chain.

At last the fox grew tired and, lying down, began to think, licking its

paw as it thought and making a kind of moaning noise. Next it commenced gnawing at the root after trying the chain and finding that its teeth would not go into it. While it was doing this I heard the sound of a man somewhere in the wood. So did the fox, and oh! it looked so frightened. It lay down panting, its tongue hanging out and its ears pressed back against its head, and whisked its big tail from side to side. Then it began to gnaw again, but this time at its own leg. It wanted to bite it off and so get away. I thought this very brave of the fox, and though I hated it because it had eaten my brother and tried to eat me, I felt quite sorry.

It was about half through its leg when the man came. I remember that he had a cat with a little red collar on its neck, and an owl in his hand, both of them dead, for he was Giles, the head-keeper, going round his traps. He was a tall man with sandy whiskers and a rough voice, and he carried a single-barrelled gun under his arm.

You see, now that I am dead I know the use of these things, just as I understand all that was said, though of course at the time it had no meaning for me. Still I find that I have forgotten nothing, not one word from the beginning of my life to the end.

The keeper, who was on his way to the place where he nailed the creatures he did not like by dozens upon poles, looked down and saw the fox. "Oh! my beauty," he said, "so I have got you at last. Don't you think yourself clever trying to bite off that leg. You'd have done it

too, only I came along just in time. Well, good night, old girl, you won't have no more of my pheasants."

Then he lifted the gun. There was a most dreadful noise and the fox rolled over and lay still.

"There you are, all neat and tidy, my dear," said the keeper. "Now I must just tuck you away in the hollow tree before old Grampus sneaks round and sees you, for if he should it will be almost as much as my place is worth."

Next he set his foot on the trap and, opening it, took hold of the fox by the fore-legs to carry it off. The cat and the owl he stuffed away into a great pocket in his coat.

"Jemima! don't you wholly stink," he said, then gave a most awful yell.

The fox wasn't quite dead after all, it was only shamming dead. At any rate it got Giles' hand in its mouth and made its teeth meet through the flesh.

Now the keeper began to jump about just as the fox had done when it set its paw in the trap, shouting and saying all sorts of things that somehow I don't think I ought to repeat here. Round and round he went with the fox hanging to his hand, like hares do when they dance together, for he couldn't get it off anyhow. At last he tumbled down

into a pool of mud and water, and when he got up again all wet through I saw that the fox was really dead. But it had died biting, and now I know that this pleased it very much.

It was just then that the man whom the keeper had called Grampus came up. He was a big, fat man with a very red face, who made a kind of blowing noise when he walked fast. I know now that he was the lord of all the other men about that place, that he lived in the house which looked over the sea, and that the boy and girl who put me in with the yellow-toothed rabbit were his children. He was what the farmers called "a first-rate all-round sportsman," which means, my friend--but what is your name?

"Oh! Mahatma," I answered at hazard.

"Which means, my friend Mahatma, that he spent most of the year in killing the lower animals such as me. Yes, he spent quite eight months out of the twelve in killing us one way and another, for when there was no more killing to be done in his own country, he would travel to others and kill there. He would even kill pigeons from a trap, or young rooks just out of their nests, or rats in a stack, or sparrows among ivy, rather than not kill anything. I've heard Giles say so to the under-keeper and call him 'a regular slaughterer' and 'a true-blood Englishman.'

"Yet, my friend Mahatma, I say in the light of the truth which has come

to me, that according to his knowledge Grampus was a good man. Thus, what little time he had to spare from sport he passed in helping his brother men by sending them to prison. Although of course he never worked or earned anything, he was very rich, because money flowed to him from other people who had been very rich, but who at last were forced to travel this Road and could not bring it with them. If they could have brought it, I am sure that Grampus would never have got any. However, he did get it, and he aided a great many people with that part of it which he found he could not spend upon himself. He was a very good man, only he liked killing us lower creatures, whom he bred up with his money to be killed.

"Go on with your story, Hare," I said; "when I see this Red-faced Man I will judge of him for myself. Probably you are prejudiced about him."

"I daresay I am," answered the Hare, rubbing its nose; "but please observe that I am not speaking unkindly of Grampus, although before I have done you may think that I might have reason to do so. However, you will be able to form your own opinion when he comes here, which I am sure he does not mean to do for many, many years. The world is much too comfortable for him. He does not wish to leave it."

"Still he may be obliged to do so, Hare."

"Oh! no, people like that are never obliged to do anything they do not like. It is only poor things such as you and I, Mahatma, which must

suffer. I can see that you have had a great deal to bear, and so have I, for we were born to suffering as the Red-faced Man was born to happiness."

"Go on with your story, Hare," I repeated. "You are becoming metaphysical and therefore dull. The time is short and I want to hear what happened."

"Quite so, Mahatma. Well, Grampus came up breathing very heavily and looking very red in the face. He held his hat in one hand and a large crooked stick in the other, and even the top of his head, on which no hair grew, was red, for he had been running.

"What the deuce is the matter?" he puffed. "Oh! it is you, Giles, is it? What are you doing, sir, looking like that, all covered with blood and mud? Has a poacher shot you, or what?"

"No, Squire," answered Giles humbly, touching his hat. "I have shot a poacher, that's all, and it has given me what for," and he lifted the body of the fox from the water.

"A fox," said Grampus, "a fox! Do you mean to say, Giles, that you have dared to shoot a fox, and a vixen with a litter too? How often have I told you that, although I keep harriers and not fox-hounds, you are never to touch a fox. You will get me into trouble with all my neighbours. I give you a month's notice. You will leave on this day

month."

"Very well, Squire," said Giles, "I'll leave, and I hope you'll find some one to serve you better. Meanwhile I didn't shoot the dratted fox. At least I only shot her after she'd gone and got herself into a trap which I had set for that there Rectory dog what you told me to make off with on the quiet, so that the young lady might never know what become of it and cry and make a fuss as she did about the last. Then seeing that she was finished, with her leg half chewed off, I shot her, or rather I didn't shoot her as well as I should, for the beggar gave a twist as I fired, and now she's bit me right through the hand. I only hopes you won't have to pay my widow for it, Squire, under the Act, as foxes' bites is uncommon poisonous, especially when they've been a-eating of rotten rabbit."

"Dear me!" said the Red-faced Man softening, "dear me, the beast does seem to have bitten you very badly. You must go and be cauterised with a red-hot iron. It is painful but the best thing to do. Meanwhile, suck it, Giles, suck it! I daresay that will draw out the poison, and if it doesn't, thank my stars! I am insured. Look here, a minute or two can make no difference, for if you are poisoned, you are poisoned. Where can we put this brute? I wouldn't have it seen for ten pounds."

"There's an old pollard, Squire, about five yards away down near the fence, which is hollow and handy," said Giles.

"Quite so," he answered, "I know it well. Do you bring the--dog, Giles. Remember, it was a dog, not a fox."

Then they went to the pollard, and as Giles's hand was hurt the Red-faced Man climbed up it, though Giles tried to prevent him.

"Now then, Giles," he said, "give me the fox--I mean the dog, and I will drop it down. Great Heavens! how this tree stinks. Has there been an earth here?"

"Not as I knows of, Squire," said Giles sullenly.

Grampus stretched his hand down into the hollow of the pollard and dragged up a rotting fox by its tail.

"Giles," he said, "you have been killing more foxes and hiding them in this tree. Giles, I dismiss you at once and without a month's wages."

"All right, sir," said Giles, "I'll go, and I prays you'll find some one what will keep your hares which you must have, and your pheasants which you must have, and your partridges which you must have, without killing these varmints of foxes what eats the lot."

The Red-faced Man descended from the tree holding his nose and looked at Giles. Giles sucked his bleeding hand and looked at him.

"Foxes are very destructive animals," said the Red-faced Man to Giles, "especially when one shoots and keeps harriers."

"They are that, sir," said Giles to the Red-faced Man, "as only those know what has to do with them."

"Put the other in, Giles," said the Red-faced man, "and when you have time, throw some soil on to the top of the lot. This place smells horrible. And look you here, Giles," he added in a voice of thunder, "if ever I find you killing a fox upon this property, you will be dismissed at once, as I have often told you before. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Squire, I understand," answered Giles, "and I'll see to the burying of them this same afternoon, if the pain in my hand will suffer it."

"Very well," said the Red-faced Man, "that's done with--except the cubs. As you have killed the vixen you had better stink the cubs out of the earth. I daresay they are old enough to look after themselves--at any rate I hope so. And now, Giles, we must shoot some of these hares when we begin on the partridges next week. There are too many of them, the tenants are complaining, ungrateful beggars as they are, seeing that I keep them for their sport."

At this point I thought that I had heard enough, and slipped away when their backs were turned. For, friend Mahatma, I had just seen a fox

shot, and now I knew what shooting meant.

About a week later I knew better still. It came about thus. By that time the turnips I have mentioned, those that grew in the big field, had swelled into fine, large bulbs with leafy tops. We used to eat them at nights, and in the daytime to lie up among them in our snug forms. You know, Mahatma, don't you, that a form is a little hollow which a hare makes in the ground just to fit itself? No hare likes to sleep in another hare's form. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I answered, "I understand. It would be like a man wearing another man's boots."

"I don't know anything about boots Mahatma, except that they are hard things with iron on them which kick one out of one's form if one sits too close. Once that happened to me. Well, my form was under a particularly fine turnip that had some dead leaves beneath the green ones. I chose it because, like the brown earth, they just matched the colour of my back. I was sleeping there quite soundly when my sister came and woke me.

"There are men in the field," she said, her eyes nearly starting out of her head with fear, for she was always very timid.

"I'm off."

"Are you?" I answered. "Well, I think I shall stop here where I shan't be noticed. If we begin jumping over those turnips they will see us."

"We might run down the rows, keeping our ears close to our backs," she remarked.

"No," I said, "there are too many bare patches."

At this moment a gun went 'bang' some way off; and my sister, like a wise hare, scuttled away at full speed for the wood. But I only made myself smaller than usual and lay watching and listening.

There was a good deal to see and hear; for instance, a covey of partridges, troublesome birds that come scratching and fidgiting about when one wants to sleep, were running to and fro in a great state of concern.

"They are after us," said the old cock.

"I remember the same thing last year. Come on, do."

"How can I with all these young ones to look after?" answered the hen.

"Why, if once they are scattered I shall never find them again."

"Just as you like, you know best," said the cock. "Goodbye," and away he flew, while his wife and the rest ran to a little distance, scattered and squatted.

Presently, looking back over my shoulders without turning my head, as a hare can, I saw a line of men walking towards me. There was the Red-faced Man whom Giles called Grampus behind his back and Squire to his face. There was Giles himself, with his hurt hand tied up, holding a kind of stick with a slit in it from which hung a lot of dead partridges whose necks were in the slit. One of them was not dead or had come to life again, for it flapped in the stick trying to fly away. He held these in the hand that was tied up, and in the other, oh, horror! was a dead hare bleeding from its nose. It looked uncommonly like my mother, but whether it were or no I couldn't be quite sure. At least from that day neither my sister nor I ever saw her again. I suppose you haven't met her coming up this big white Road, have you, Mahatma?

"No, no," I answered impatiently, "I have already told you that you are the first hare I have ever seen upon the Road. Please get on with your story, or the Lights will change and the Gates be opened before I hear its end."

Just when I saw her I was thinking of running away, but the sight terrified me so much that I could not stir. You see, Mahatma, I really loved my mother as much as a hare can love anything, which is a good deal.

Well, beyond Giles was, who do you think? That dreadful boy, Tom, with a gun in his hand too. Did I say that they all had guns, except Giles and some beater men, only that Tom's was single-barrelled? Then there were others whom I need not describe, stretching to left and right, and worst of all, perhaps, there was Giles's great black dog, a silly-looking beast which always seemed to have its mouth open and its tongue hanging out, and to be wagging a big tail like the fox's, only black and more ragged.

As I watched, up got the old hen partridge and one of her young ones and flew towards me. The Red-faced Man lifted his gun and fired, once, twice, and down came first the mother partridge and then the young one. I forgot to say that Tom fired too at the old partridge, which fell dead quite close to me, leaving a lot of feathers floating in the air. As it fell Tom screeched out--

"I killed that, father."

This made the Red-faced Man very angry.

"You young scoundrel," he said, "how often have I told you not to shoot at my birds under my nose? No sportsman shoots at another man's birds, and as for killing it, you were yards under the thing. If you do it again I will send you home."

"Sorry, father," said Tom, adding in a low voice with a snigger, "I did kill it after all. Dad thinks no one can hit a partridge except himself."

Just then up jumped my father near to Giles, and came leaping in front of the Red-faced Man about twenty yards away from him.

"Mark hare!" shouted Giles, and Grampus, who was still glowering at Tom and had not quite finished pushing the cartridges into his gun, shut it up in a hurry and fired first one barrel and then the other. But my father, who was very cunning, jumped into the air at the first shot and ducked at the second, so that he was missed; at least I suppose that is why he was missed.

Giles grinned and the Red-faced Man said, "Damn!" What does 'damn' mean, Mahatma? It was a very favourite word with the Red-faced Man, but even now I can't quite understand it."

"Nor can I," I answered. "Go on."

"Well, my poor father next ran in front of Tom, who shot too and hit him in the hind legs so that he rolled over and over in the turnips, kicking and screaming. Have you ever heard a hare scream, Mahatma?"

"Yes, yes, it makes a horrid noise like a baby."

"Wiped your eye that time, Dad," cried Tom in an exultant voice.

"I don't know about wiping my eye," answered his father, turning quite purple with rage, "but I wish you would be good enough, Thomas, not to shoot my hares behind, so that they make that beastly row which upsets me" (I think that the Red-faced Man was really kind at the bottom) "and spoils them for the market. If you can't hit a hare in front, miss it like a gentleman."

"As you do, Dad," said Tom, sniggering again. "All right, I'll try."

"Giles," roared Grampus, pretending not to hear, "send your dog and fetch that hare. I can't bear its screeching."

So that great black dog rushed forward and caught my poor father in its big mouth, although he tried to drag himself away on his front paws, and after that I shut my eyes.

Then a lot of partridges got up and there was any amount of banging, though most of them were missed. This made the Red-faced Man angrier than ever. He took off his hat and waved it, bellowing--

"Call back that brute of a dog of yours, Giles. Call it back at once or I'll shoot it."

So Giles called, "Nigger. Come you 'ere, Nigger! Nigg, Nigg, Nigg!"

But Nigger rushed about putting up partridges all over the place while Grampus stamped and shouted and every one missed everything, till at last Tom sat down on the turnips and roared with laughter.

At length, after Giles had beaten Nigger till he broke a stick over him, making him howl terribly, order was restored, and the line having reformed, began to march down on me. For, Mahatma, I was so frightened by what had happened to my father, and I think my mother, that I didn't remember what he, I mean my dead father, had told me, always to run away when there is a chance, as poor hares can only protect themselves by flight.

So as I had lost the chance I thought that I would just sit tight, hoping that they would not see me. Nor indeed would they if it hadn't been for that horrible Tom.

During the confusion the mother partridge which the Red-faced Man had shot had been forgotten by everybody except Tom. Tom, you see, was certain that he had shot it himself, being a very obstinate boy, and was determined to retrieve it as his own.

Now that partridge had fallen within a yard of me, with its beak and claws pointing to the sky, and when the line had passed where we lay Tom lagged behind to look for it. He did not find it then, whether he ever found it afterwards I am sure I don't know. But he found me.

"By Jove! here's a hare," he said, and made a grab at me just as he had done in the furze bush.

Well, I went. Tom shot when I wasn't more than four yards from him, and the whole charge passed like a bullet between my hind legs and struck the ground under my stomach, sending up such a shower of earth and stones that I was knocked right over.

"I've hit it!" yelled Tom, as he crammed another cartridge into his single-barrelled gun.

By the time that it was loaded I was quite thirty yards away and going like the wind. Tom lifted the gun.

"Don't shoot!" roared the Red-faced Man.

"Mind that there boy!" bellowed Giles.

I was running down between two rows of turnips and presently butted into a lad who was bending over, I suppose to pick up a partridge. At any rate his tail--"do you call it his tail, Mahatma?"

"That will do," I answered.

"Well, his tail was towards me; it looked very round and shiny. The shot

from Tom's gun hit it everywhere. I wish they had all gone into it, but as he was so far away the charge scattered and six of the bullets struck me. Oh! they did hurt. Put your hand on my back, Mahatma, and you will feel the six lumps they made beneath the grey tufts of hair that grew over them, for they are still there."

Forgetting that we were on the Road, I stretched out my hand; but, of course, it went quite through the hare, although I could see the six little grey tufts clearly enough.

"You are foolish, Hare; you don't remember that your body is not here but somewhere else."

"Quite true, Mahatma. If it were here I could not be talking to you, could I? As a matter of fact, I have no body now. It is--oh, never mind where. Still, you can see the grey tufts, can't you? Well, I only hope that those shot hurt that fat boy half as much as they did me. No, I don't mean that I hope it now, I used to hope it."

My goodness! didn't he screech, much worse than my father when his legs were broken. And didn't everybody else roar and shout, and didn't I dance? Off I went right over the fat boy, who had tumbled down, up to the end of the field, then so bewildered was I with shock and the burning pain, back again quite close to them.

But now nobody shot at me because they all thought the boy was killed

and were gathered round him looking very solemn. Only I saw that the Red-faced Man had Tom by the neck and was kicking him hard.

After that I saw no more, for I ran five miles before I stopped, and at last lay down in a little swamp near the seashore to which my mother had once taken me. My back was burning like fire, and I tried to cool it in the soft slush.

THE COURSING

Quite a moon went by before I recovered from Tom's shot. At first I thought that I was going to die, for, although luckily none of my bones were broken, the pain in my back was dreadful. When I tried to ease the agony by rubbing against roots it only became worse, for the fur fell off, leaving sores upon which flies settled. I could scarcely eat or sleep, and grew so thin that the bones nearly poked through my pelt. Indeed I wanted very much to die, but could not. On the contrary, by degrees I recovered, till at last I was quite strong again and like other hares, except for the six little grey tufts upon my back and one hole through my right ear.

Now all this while I had lived in the swamp near the sea, but when my strength returned I thought of my old home, to which something seemed to draw me. Also there were no turnips near the swamp, and as the winter