

profitable for more than two or three hunters, and we believe of late, some seasons have passed without any one engaging in the enterprise; notwithstanding off Point Granville, which is an old hunting ground, sixty otters were taken by only three hunters during the summer of 1868, a great annual increase over many past years.

It is said that the Russian American Company restricted the number taken yearly by the Aleutian Islanders—from whom the chief supply was obtained—in order to perpetuate the stock. Furthermore may it not be that these sagacious animals have fled from those places on the coasts of the Californias, where they were so constantly pursued, to some more isolated haunt, and now remain unmolested.

FALCONRY.

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As Falconry, before the discovery of gunpowder and fire-arms, was a favorite amusement of the kings and nobles all over Europe, and as it is even to the present day among the Turks in some parts of Asia Minor; among the Persians, the Circassians, the wandering hordes of Tartars and Turcomans, and as it forms one of the chief sports of some of the native princes of India, and is not unknown in the northern provinces of China, and among several other barbarous or half-civilized countries, it may not be uninteresting to my readers to know in what estimation it has been held. I will not in this article give any account of the manner of training falcons; suffice it to say that they were taught to fly at the game and capture it, and come at call. It required months, and sometimes years, to train them properly.

Hawking was not unknown to the Romans in the early

part of the christian era, but was first introduced into England from the north of Europe during the fourth century. In 920 the Emperor Henry was called the fowler on account of his great fondness for the sport. In the eleventh century when Canute, king of Denmark and Norway, ascended the English throne, the amusement became more and more prevalent. After the ascension of William of Normandy to the English throne, none but persons of the highest rank were allowed to keep hawks. The killing of a deer, or boar, or even a hare by a serf, was punished with the loss of the delinquent's eyes, when the killing of a man could be atoned for by paying a moderate sum. In the twelfth century this was the favorite recreation of all the kings and nobles of Europe. "It was thought sufficient for noblemen's sons to wind the horn, and to carry their hawk fair, and leave study and learning to the children of meaner people." A German writer, about the year 1485, complains that "the gentry used to take the hawks and hounds to church with them, disturbing the devotions of those religiously inclined, by the screams and yells of the birds and beasts." This diversion was in so high esteem all over Europe, that Frederic, one of the emperors of Germany, thought it not beneath him to write a treatise on hawking. In 1481, in the reign of Richard III, Juliana Berners, sister of Lord Berners, and prioress of the nunnery of Sapewell, wrote a tract on falconry, which was loudly applauded by her cotemporaries, and became what Hoyle has on games,—a standard treatise. In 1615 and 1619, two works on the same subject were published in London, the former, by Gervase Markham, the latter, by Edmund Bert.

In the thirteenth century the arbitrary law of William, then Duke of Normandy, was somewhat modified by King John, "allowing every freeman to have his eyries of hawks, falcons, etc., in his own woods." In the fourteenth century, Edward III, of England, made it felony to steal a hawk, or take the eggs, and "punished the offender by imprisonment

for one year and one day, together with a fine, at the king's pleasure." Any person finding a hawk was to carry it to the sheriff of the county, who was immediately to cause a proclamation to be made in all the principal towns in the county (each falcon had a ring put around his leg with the owner's name engraved on it, and a small bell was suspended from the neck of the bird so that it might be discovered when lost in the chase). Any attempt of the finder to conceal or appropriate it was to be punished the same as stealing. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth the imprisonment was reduced to three months, but the culprit was to lie in prison "till he got security for his good behavior for seven years."

The dignitaries of the church even indulged in the sport, and the poet Chaucer represents them as being more learned in hunting than in divinity. During the middle ages a European showed his rank by having a hawk on his fist, and when he died the bird was generally carved on his monument. Among the Welsh princes the king's falconer was the fourth officer in the state; yet he was "forbidden to take more than three drams of beer from his horn lest he should get drunk and neglect his duty." The grand falconer of France had four thousand florins per annum, was allowed three hundred hawks, and had fifty gentlemen and fifty attendants to follow him. He rode out with the King on all great occasions.

The prices paid for falcons were enormous. Sir Thomas Monson paid five thousand dollars for a pair. In Persia the gersfalcon of Russia is not allowed to be kept by any person except the king, and each bird is valued at fifteen hundred crowns. Hawks were sent as royal tokens from kings to kings, and formed a customary present from the sovereign to the ambassador of a friendly power. In more ancient times they were bequeathed as valuable and honorable legacies, with the injunction, "that the legatee should behave kindly and dutifully by the said bird."

The sport suffered no decline on the accession of the Tudors. Henry VII. made laws about hawking as did also Queen Elizabeth, who occasionally indulged in the amusement with the ladies of her court. Sir Walter Raleigh, alluding to her sylvan sports, compares her and her retinue to the goddess Diana and her nymphs. John of Salisbury, who wrote in the thirteenth century, said, "that the women even excelled the men in the knowledge and practice of falconry." Henry the VIII. followed the sport until he grew so fat and unwieldy, that in attempting to vault a ditch, he fell in where the "bottom had fallen out," and would have drowned but for the assistance of a John Moody. Says Hall, "God in his goodnesse preserved hym."

In 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot "lamented that providing the numberless hawks then kept by the English gentry, with their customary food of hens, almost threatened the total extinction of the valuable race of domestic poultry." In 1536, in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Henry VIII, owing to the inroads made upon the game, he issued a proclamation to protect them, and made it imprisonment, and such other punishment as should seem meet to his highness the King, for "any person of whatever rank who should kill, or in any way molest herons, partridges and pheasants from his palace at Westminster to St. Giles's-in-the-Fields, and from thence to Islington, Hampstead, Highgate and Hornsey Park."

Falconry had in a great measure lost its prestige in England by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Hawking was then classed among "the amusements of squires and country gentlemen generally." In a book of advice which James I. wrote for the benefit of his eldest son Henry, Prince of Wales, after recommending manly exercises, hunting, etc., he adds, "as for hawking, I condemn it not, but I must praise it more sparingly, because it neither resembleth the warres so near as hunting doeth, in making a man hardie and skilfully ridden in all grounds, and is more uncertain and

subject to mischances; and which is worst of all, is there through an extreme stirrer-up of the passions.”

The greatest falconer of modern times was one of the Lord Orfords who died toward the close of the last century. This nobleman spent a princely fortune in attempting to revive an obsolete taste. He had a large number of hawks and a regular establishment of falconers. Each hawk had its separate attendant; “they were all sent on occasional voyages to the continent for the sake of a more congenial atmosphere during their time of moulting.”

Having now traced falconry through the English dynasty, and as they confined it mostly to the smaller game, I will give some account of it among other nations who have carried it to a greater degree of perfection. There was no nation in Europe prior to the fifteenth century but what the emperor, kings and nobles indulged in this sport, and it was considered “as the exclusive attribute of noble blood.” Even in China and Tartary in the thirteenth century, it was strictly forbidden “to every tradesman, mechanic or husbandman throughout his Majesty’s dominions to keep a hawk, or any other bird used for the purpose of game, or any sporting dog.” In China, Tartary, India, and some other eastern nations, they capture the stork, swan, heron and hubara with their falcons and train dogs to act in concert with them, so that they pursue and take hares, foxes, wolves, deer and antelopes.

Father Rubruquis and Marco Polo make frequent mention of the practice of hawking during the thirteenth century among the wandering Tartars. A sport which Marco was excessively fond of, and frequently indulged in. The old Venetian informs us, that the grand Khan (Kublai), who was at once Emperor of Tartary and China, kept at one place, where he was accustomed to resort for the purpose of hawking, two hundred falcons, which during his stay there “he always visited and inspected in person, at least, once a week.”

The Emperor after residing the usual time in China, always proceeded to enjoy the field sports in the plains of Tartary, attended by full ten thousand falconers, who carried with them a vast number of gerfalcons, peregrine falcons and sakers. He has also with him ten thousand men who are called taskaol, distributed all over the country, whose business it is to watch the hawks, assist them when necessary, and secure the falcon when he has captured the game. Marco tells us, that the Grand Khan takes his wives and the ladies of the court with him on these expeditions, who have their own hawks and join in the sport. These with their attendants, physicians, astrologers, courtiers, slaves and falconers formed an immense retinue. Dividing up into parties of one hundred and two hundred, they proceed to the lakes and river, where they capture great numbers of storks, herons, swans, ducks and smaller game. Each bird belonging to his Majesty, or to any of his nobles, has a small silver label fastened to his leg, on which is engraved the name of the owner and the name of the keeper so that it can be readily restored. The manner of taking the prey shows great skill and sagacity, the falconer usually carries his hawk to the field on his fist protected by a glove, and on seeing game, removes the head-gear (a hood to cover the head and eyes of the bird) and casts the bird off with a loud whoop to encourage her. If the bird flushed is a duck, partridge, pheasant, or any bird that does not soar high, the hawk quickly strikes and brings it down, but if it is a heron, or some bird strong on the wing, it will attempt to keep above the hawk. Now comes the tug of war, each trying to mount above the other until nearly out of sight, when the falcon by performing a succession of spiral circles rises above the game, and darts down upon it with all her force and velocity, when both tumble from the sky together, the sportsman hastening to the spot with all possible dispatch assists the hawk in her struggle with the prey. Marco informs us that "the Emperor had reclaimed eagles which

were trained to swoop at wolves, and such was their strength that none, however large, could escape from their talons."

The accounts given by Father Rubruquis and Marco Polo would seem incredible were not their statements fully confirmed by other writers. The description given by Johnson of the number and magnificence of the hunting retinue of the Nabob-vizir of Lucknow makes it nearly, if not quite, equal to that of the Emperor of Tartary and China as described above.

The Persians, on some occasions when hunting hares and other four legged animals, dress their hawks with leather breeches. I will give the language of Sir John Malcolm respecting it. "When at Shiraz the Elchee had received a present of a very fine Shah-Baz or royal falcon. Before going out I had been amused at seeing Nutee Beg, our head-falconer, a man of great experience in his department, put upon this bird a pair of leathers which he fitted to its thighs with as much care as if he had been the tailor of a fashionable horseman. I inquired the reason of so unusual a proceeding. 'You will learn that,' said the consequential master of the hawks, 'when you see our sport;' and I was convinced at the period he predicted of the old fellow's knowledge of his business."

"The first hare seized by the falcon was very strong, and the ground rough. While the bird kept the claws of one foot fastened in the back of his prey, the other was dragged along the ground till it had an opportunity to lay hold of a tuft of grass, by which it was enabled to stop the course of the hare, whose efforts to escape I do think, would have torn the hawk asunder if it had not been provided with the leathern defences which have been mentioned."

The account given by Marco of the training of eagles for the chase is fully substantiated by a later writer, Thomas Witlam Atkinson. The following account of hunting with the eagle in Chinese Tartary is related by him in his "Seven Years Explorations and Adventures in Siberia, Mongolia, the

Kirghis Steppes, Chinese Tartary and a part of Central Asia." "A well-mounted Kirghis held the bearcoote, chained to a perch, which was secured into a socket on his saddle. The eagle had shackles and a hood and was perfectly quiet, he was under charge of two men. "We had not gone far when several large deer rushed past a jutting point of the reeds and bounded over the plain about three hundred yards from us. In an instant the bearcoote was unhooded and his shackles removed, when he sprung from his perch and soared up into the air. I watched him ascend as he wheeled round, and was under the impression that he had not seen the animals; but in this I was mistaken. He had now risen to a considerable height and seemed to poise himself for about a minute. After this he gave two or three flaps with his wing and swooped off in a straight line towards his prey. I could not perceive that his wings moved, but he went at a fearful speed. There was a shout, and away went his keeper at full gallop followed by many others. When we were about two hundred yards off the bearcoote struck his prey. The deer gave a bound forward and fell; the bearcoote had struck one talon into his neck, the other into his back, and with his beak was tearing out his liver. The Kirghis sprang from his horse, slipped the hood over the eagle's head, and the shackles upon his legs, and removed him from his prey without difficulty. The keeper mounted his horse, his assistant placed the bearcoote on his perch, and he was ready for another flight. No dogs are taken out when hunting with the eagle, they would be destroyed to a certainty; indeed, the Kirghis asserts that he will attack and kill the wolf. We had not gone far before a herd of small antelopes were seen feeding on the plains. Again the bird soared up in circles as before, and again he made the fatal swoop at his intended victim, and the animal was dead before we reached him. The bearcoote is unerring in his flight; unless the animal can escape into holes in the rocks, as the fox does sometimes, death is his certain doom." In another

place he says "next morning before starting, I sketched Sultan Beck and his family. He is feeding his bearcoote— hunting with the king of birds being his favorite sport."

The Persians have a peculiar kind that they train to fly at antelopes and to act in concert with dogs. The huntsmen proceed to a plain, or rather desert, near the seaside with hawks on their hands and greyhounds led in a leash. When an antelope is seen they endeavor to get as near as possible, but the animal the moment that it observes them goes off at a rate that seems swifter than the wind; the horsemen are instantly at full speed, having slipped the dogs. If it is a single deer they at the same time fly the hawks, but if a herd they wait till the dogs have fixed upon a particular antelope. The hawks skimming along near the ground soon reach the deer, at whose head they pounce in succession, and with so great violence as to confuse the animal so much as to stop his speed in such a degree that the dogs can come up and in an instant, men, horses, dogs and hawks surround the unfortunate deer and capture it. The antelope is supposed to be the fleetest quardruped on earth, and the rapidity of the chase is said to be wonderful and astonishing, the distance run, generally, not exceeding three or four miles.

In the spring of 1861, on the return from Russia of our late Ex-Governor, Thomas H. Seymour, who had been minister to that country for several years, in conversation with him, I learned that falconry was still a favorite sport in the East, and that he had joined in the chase several times; that eagles were trained as formerly, and that he had seen falcons with their leathern breeches on catch hares and hold them by inserting one talon into the game and holding on to the turf, or anything that came in the way with the other, and that they held on with such tenacity that their limbs would be dislocated or torn from their bodies were they not thus protected.