

Werk

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very much to the astonishment of the spectators.

I shall not tire you, gentlemen, with the politics, arts, sciences, and history of this magnificent metropolis of Russia; nor trouble you with the various intrigues, and pleasing adventures, I had in the politer circles of that country, where the lady of the house always receives the visitor with a dram and a salute. I shall confine myself rather to the greater and nobler objects of your attention, horses and dogs, my favourites in the brute creation; also foxes, wolves, and bears, with which, and game in general, Russia abounds more than any other part of the world, and to such sports, manly exercises, and feats of gallantry and activity, as show the gentleman better than musty Greek or Latin, or all the perfume, finery, and capers of French wits, or petit maitres.

CHAPTER III.

An encounter between the Baron's nose and a door post, with its wonderful effects—Fifty brace of ducks and other fowl destroyed by one shot—Flogs a fox out of his skin—Leads an old sow home in a new way and vanquishes a wild boar.

It was sometime before I could obtain a commission in the army, and for several

months I was perfectly at liberty to sport away my time and money in the most gentleman-like manner. You may easily imagine that I spent much of both, out of town with such gallant fellows as knew how to make the most of an open forest country. The very recollection of those amusements gives me fresh spirits and creates a warm wish for a repetition of them. One morning I saw through the windows of my bed-room, that a large pond, not far off, was covered with wild ducks. In an instant I took my gun from the corner, ran down stairs and out of the house in such an hurry, that I imprudently struck my face against the door-post. Fire flew out of my eyes, but it did not prevent my intention; I soon came within shot, when levelling my piece, I observed, to my sorrow that even the flint had sprung from the cock, by the violence of the shock I had just received. There was no time to be lost. I presently remembered the effect it had upon my eyes, therefore opened the pan, levelled my piece against the wild fowls and my fist against one of my eyes. [The Baron's eyes have retained fire ever since and appear particularly illuminated when he relates this anecdote.] A hearty blow drew sparks again: the shot went off, and I

killed fifty brace of ducks, twenty wid-geons and three couple of teals. Presence of mind is the soul of manly exercises. If soldiers and sailors owe to it many of their lucky escapes, hunters and sportsmen are not less beholden to it for many of their successes. In a noble forest in Russia, I met a fine black fox, whose valuable skin it would have been a pity to tear by ball or shot. Reynard stood close to a tree. In a twinkling I took out my ball, and placed a good spike nail in its room, fired and hit him so cleverly that I nailed his brush to the tree. I now went up to him, took out my hanger, gave him a cross cut over the face, laid hold of my whip, and fairly flogged him out of his fine skin.

Chance and good luck often correct our mistakes : of this I had a singular instance soon after, when, in the depth of a forest, I saw a wild pig and sow running close behind each other. My ball had missed them, yet the foremost pig only ran away, and the sow stood motionless, as fixed to the ground. On examining into the matter, I found the latter one to be an old sow, blind with age, which had taken hold of her pig's tail in order to be led by filial duty. My ball having passed between the two, had cut his leading string, which the

old sow continued to hold in her mouth : and as her former guide did not draw her on any longer, she had stopped of course ; I therefore laid hold of the remaining end of the pig's tail, and led the old beast home without any reluctance or apprehension on the part of the helpless old animal.

Terrible as these wild sows are, yet more fierce and dangerous are the boars, one of which I had once the misfortune to meet in a forest, unprepared for attack or defence. I retired behind an oak tree, just when the furious animal levelled a side blow at me, with such force, that his tusks pierced through the tree, by which means he could neither repeat the blow nor retire.—Ho, ho! thought I, I shall soon have you now—and immediately I laid hold of a stone wherewith I hammered and bent his tusks in such a manner, that he could not retreat by any means, and must wait my return from the next village, whither I went for ropes and a cart, to secure him properly, and to carry him off safe and alive, in which I perfectly succeeded.