

...of its prime. A stag of size and  
...with goodly fat on his ribs and  
...times on his antlers. Thick mug, too,  
...what in the neck, for already the clear  
...of an autumn night tells of early frosts,  
...and soon the peaceful majesty of his repose  
...will change to turmoil and love and war. In  
...the meantime he feeds lazily on, turning  
...without apparent object in a different direc-  
...tion from the herd.

Thus he wanders over a broad surface of  
country—now cropping the rank grasses that  
border the Exe, ere he dashes through its  
swift and shallow stream as though disdain-  
ing a bath that only reaches to his knees.  
Anon dallying with the standing oats, that  
pierce thin and scanty on a bare hill farm, by  
the verge of the forest; then crossing the  
meagry skirts of Exmoor at his long, jerk-  
ing trot, to rouse the pattern and the curlew  
from their rest, he makes his way by many  
a broken path and device—sheep-track to the  
majors cups and steep wooded de-  
clivities of Clousham Hall. It is an hour or  
two before dawn when he reaches this well-  
known haunt, and the lordly beast, penetra-  
ting to its inmost thicket, lays himself down  
with the intention of sleeping undisturbed  
till late in the day.

With an indolent hoist of his haunches,  
that hardly seemed an effort, he has cleared  
the hazel spring bank round his resting-  
place in a spring that covered some five or  
six yards, but left imbedded in the yielding  
clay a distinct impression of his cloven feet.  
Therefore Red Rube, stooping over the slot  
at day-break, chuckles inwardly, and ob-  
serves to his flask a warrentable deer!  
"kneeling down to examine the imprint more  
closely, and measure its width by the fingers  
of his own brown hand. Then he takes  
a wide circuit, embracing several favorite  
passes for deer, and satisfies himself that,  
save one light hart or "brocket," as he calls  
it, not another animal of the species is this  
morning harbored in Clousham Hall.

The stag-hounds are to meet some two  
miles off the eastward. It must be travell-  
ing that distance with the sun in his eyes  
that causes Red Rube to blink and gripe  
and occasionally hiccough all the way to their  
accustomed trysting-place.

He is there betimes with his broken-kneed  
pony, yet two riders have appeared before  
him. Rube chuckles and slides up to them.

Your servant, Mistress Carow—your  
servant, your honor," says he, in a deferential  
tone. The spurs had need be sharp to-day,  
master. I'll warrant there'll be wicked rid-  
ing, with the likeliest lass in Devon looking  
on!

Nelly Carow deserved the epithet. The  
close-fitting blue habit so well set off her trim  
figure, the saucy little hat was so becoming  
to her fresh delicate face, that it seemed no  
wonder John Garnet's eyes should be fixed  
on his beautiful companion rather than on  
the opposite ridge of moor, over which  
hounds and horsemen were expected every  
moment to appear.

And Nelly, too, was more than proud of  
her cavalier. How handsome she thought  
him, and how princely, with his dark eyes,  
his rudy cheeks, his pleasant, careless smile,  
and clustering hair. Never another rider in  
the West, thought Nelly, could sit his horse  
so fairly, and where in the bounds of Eng-  
land was the steed to compare with Katerfelto?  
"I used to think Cowslip the most  
beautiful creature in the world," said she,  
patting her favorite's neck; "but your  
horse has quite put me out of conceit with  
mine."

"I know who is the most beautiful crea-  
ture in the world," answered John Garnet,  
not unconscious that he had arrived at the  
idiotic stage of his malady. "I have never  
seen her equal, and never shall; but we'll  
argue that point going home," he added,  
while his bright eye grew brighter. "There's  
no time to wrangle now, sweet Mistress  
Nelly, for here come the hounds!"

That the had robbed Sir Humphrey and  
his three variety single-handed by twelve  
months gone last Wint's-untide, by Upeot  
Sheep wash, and showered six hours after-  
wards in the market at Taunton town. It's  
fifty miles, squire, if it's a furlong. Ah, ay, a  
good horse, neighbor, and a bad trade.

"I heard tell he was hanged!" said the  
listener, opening round eyes of astonish-  
ment.

"He did ought to have been," replied the  
other. "But Galloping Jack had good friends  
in the West, and a good friend he's been  
himself, not so long ago, neither, to one or  
two honest fellows you and me would be  
main vexed to see called to account. Live  
and let live, says I, "but if we find a right  
stag in yonder hazels who knows his way to  
the sea, why, that gray horse and his rider  
are bound to be at one end of the hunt, and  
I leave it to you, neighbor, to say which!"

With these words he dismounted heavily  
to adjust girths and bridle, for Red Rube  
was already in close confabulation with the  
 huntsman, and business seemed about to  
begin.

The harbinger looked more than half-  
drunk, yet not for an instant was that sagac-  
ity of his at fault which partook rather of  
animal instinct than human experience.

"The old stag will move the brocket,"  
said he, with a laborious wink, "and it's  
your business to drive him to the moor,  
Abel. I'll warrant I bring you within a  
land-yard 'un, and all as you've got to do  
is to catch 'un if you can!"

"Tancred and Tarquin will do that much,"  
replied Abel, "a man off few words, and in less  
than a minute those venerable "tufters"  
were uncoupled and at his horse's heels,  
forcing their way through the tangled under-  
wood.

To control twenty couple of hounds hunt-  
ing different lines is no easy matter. One  
or two or held in command without diffi-  
culty, so that their staunch pursuit may be  
transferred from scent to scent till they have  
forced the right deer into the open, when  
they can be stopped, while the body of the  
pack are brought up and laid on. Then for  
the crash, the chorus, the jubilee! Hark to-  
gether! Hark! and forward away!

The brocket's heart beats fast at the first  
note of the "tufters," and well it may." Tan-  
cred and Tarquin are two majestic black-  
and-tan hounds, six and twenty inches high,  
with sweeping ears, pendant jowls, and large,  
lengthy frame, nearly as heavy as himself.  
For one palpitating moment the wild deer's  
instinct prompts him to leap from his lair,  
and scouring at speed across the moor to  
seek the distant fastnesses of Swincombe,  
the gorge of Badgeworthy, or wheeling down-  
wind, like a bird on the wing, by Culbone  
slopes, to take refuge in the hanging woods  
of Glenthorne, where they fringe the Severn  
Sea. But the next, a deep, loud and melo-  
dious roar, seems to paralyze his very heart,  
and he crouches to the earth, scarce daring  
to move an ear. Suddenly the branches  
crash behind him, an antlered head looms  
wide and stately between him and the sky,  
while he leaps to his nimbler feet in a bound  
that is hastened by the sharp thrust of a horn  
against his haunch. In less than a minute  
the old stag crouches in the young one's  
lair, and the brocket, scared with fear,  
is darting across the moor like an arrow from  
a bow.

"Hark back, Tancred! Tarquin! Tar-  
quin! Hark back!" Morose and solemn,  
conscientiously, yet sore against the grain,  
those veterans desist from their pursuit, soon  
to be rewarded for this disciplined sagacity  
by a nobler quarry, a higher and stronger  
scent. But for a leap that covers twenty feet  
of distance, and his his antlers twice his own  
height in air, the old stag's flank would be  
torn by Tancred's reeking muzzle, his haunches  
crushed under Tarquin's weighty paws.  
But no! with half-a-dozen hounds he crash-  
es through the hazels, speeds up a narrow

gigantic length. Seen from the vantage  
ground above, they seemed to be running at  
no great pace, though with much energy and  
determination; but John Garnet, who had  
plunged into the valley at their sterns, could  
have told a different tale. It taxed even  
Katerfelto's powers to keep on terms with  
them as they rose the opposite hill, Tarquin  
and Tancred swinging along at head with a  
steady persistency that implied endurance  
till the close of day. Except the stranger on  
the gray horse, not another rider was within  
a mile of the pack. Abel had adopted the  
same line, though not so skilfully, thought  
the Parson, as himself, and was leading his  
active, cat-like horse up a precipitous ascent  
to regain the ground he had lost. Mistress  
Nelly could be seen on the white pony, a  
speck in the distance, making for some rocks  
on the moor, where her experience taught  
her the deer was likely to pass, and was fol-  
lowed by no inconsiderable cavalcade. Other  
sportsmen rode at speed for other points,  
some in bold relief against the sky-line, some  
mere spots of red on the brown expanse of  
moor, all with their horses' heads in differ-  
ent directions, yet each persuaded that his  
own line was the best, and would eventually  
land him alone with the hounds!

Alas for the facilities of experience itself  
when pitted against chance! Alas for the  
caution of age and the cunning of wood-  
craft! Alas for the heavy weight rider and  
the horse that knew not how to gallop! After  
this one turn, of which the Parson so  
readily took advantage, the stag never paus-  
ed nor wavered, but sped across the open  
straight as an arrow six miles on end, with-  
out halt or hindrance, and hounds ran him  
without a check.

"Curse him! curse him! how he rides!"  
muttered the Parson, watching that gray  
horse sail over the moor, in smooth and  
easy stride, like the stroke of a bird's wing,  
while John Garnet sat home in the saddle,  
and chose his ground with the judgment of  
one bred in the West. Katerfelto earned his  
master without difficulty alongside of the  
hounds; Parson Gale, half-a-mile off, with  
no immediate prospect of getting nearer, ad-  
mired and envied the daring rider, even  
while he swore to have his blood.

Half-a-mile astern, in an enclosed coun-  
try, is bad enough; but to be half-a-mile be-  
hind a good horse crossing Exmoor at speed  
with a pack of hounds in front, is virtually  
to be in another kingdom! To save  
his life, the Parson could not come with-  
in halting distance of his foe, do what he  
would.

Yet he tried his wickedest! Cassock's  
side was scored with the unaccustomed spur.  
Cassock's speed was taxed unfairly up steep  
incline and over level marsh. The black  
nag was as good a beast as ever looked  
through a bridle, but he carried a stone and  
a half more weight, and had neither the  
blood, nor the size, nor the speed and scope  
of Katerfelto. "He's a heavy deer," mut-  
tered the Parson, with an unclerical oath and  
a strong pull at his horse. "He'll hang in  
Badgeworthy woods, or 'soil' in Badgewor-  
thy water. It's the only chance in the game  
now, for at such a pace as this, the farther I  
ride the farther I am left behind."

Not once in a season, not once in ten sea-  
sons, had the Parson been so out in his reck-  
oning. The wild red deer, while he is the  
noblest and most courageous of those forest  
creatures that trust for safety in their speed,  
is also the most eccentric and unaccountable  
in his flight. Let us borrow the gray-  
speckled wings of the moor-buzzard hunting  
leisurely overhead, and accompany our stag  
through the rush-grown swamps of Exmoor,  
as he crosses its undulating surface  
at that free pitching gallop which he seems  
so rarely to hasten in alarm, or to modify  
from fatigue.

His taper head and noble antlers are  
thrown slightly back, his dark and gentle eye  
seems fuller than in repose, but brightened  
by a consciousness of intelligence rather than

driven through that stronghold, and forced  
into the open once more, shall he not make  
his point in the chills beyond Combe Martin,  
steering for yonder thread of blue on the hori-  
zon, that promises death or freedom in the  
Severn Sea?

Who shall say that all this calculation,  
this strategy, this reflection, is so far below  
reason as to be called instinct? Even Red  
Rube, many a mile behind on his pony, tax-  
ing his resources of intellect and cunning,  
backed by the observation of fifty years, that  
he may arrive somehow at the finish in time  
to hear the "bay," confesses he is but a fool  
when his wits are pitted against those of a  
deer driven to its last shifts.

He is riding slowly and doggedly, due west  
without a soul in sight. He could not ex-  
plain why he should have chosen this direc-  
tion, but some mysterious instinct of the  
hunter tells him that thus only has he the  
slightest chance of seeing any more of the  
chase.

In the meantime, vexation, confusion and  
distress prevail for many a weary mile of  
rocky steep, tangled heather and holding  
swamp. Here a good horse, floundering to  
the girths, emerges from the mire with a  
throbbing flank and staring eye that tell too  
plainly their own sad tale. His master,  
pretty well exhausted also in the struggle,  
standing hopelessly on foot, while friends  
and neighbors, in but little better plight,  
come laboring past, each man riding faster  
than his horse, and pointing eagerly forward  
to that distance he must never hope to  
reach.

The last of the string, whose powers are  
dying out like the flame of a candle, sinks  
from a false and laboring trot to a reeling  
walk, which soon collapses in a dead stop.

"I've shot my bolt too, neighbor!" says  
the defeated sportsman to his comrade in  
distress. "It's many a long day since  
we've seen such a brush as this over Exmoor,  
and I'd try to finish the run now in my  
boots, only I've grown so plaguy lusty for  
climbing these hills!"

So they lead their horses homeward des-  
pondently enough, with many a longing,  
lingering look at those lessening forms that  
are yet far in the rear of the actual chase,  
and many a speculation as to when it will  
end, what direction it will take, and who  
are the lucky ones with the hounds.

There can be no run so good in reality as  
that which we lose in imagination when  
beaten off by exigencies of country or pace.

Tancred and Tarquin are leading no long-  
er. The grandson of the former, nearly an  
inch higher than himself, has come to the  
front, and for the first time since his puppy-  
hood vindicates the purity of his lineage,  
and proves the staunch, determined qualities  
of his race. He has hitherto never run at  
head, but now, when the pace is the best, he  
takes the scent from his grandsire by sheer  
force of nose and wind and speed. Not another  
hound in the pack can wrest from him his  
post of honor in the front; and it is a pity  
that John Garnet, who knows nothing about  
him, and cares as little, should be the only  
man near enough to mark the excellence of  
his performance. Were they but there to  
see it, the young hound's dash and style,  
tempered by undeviating steadiness in pur-  
suit, would fill Abel's eyes with tears,  
and call forth a blessing from Parson Gale's  
lips.

That keen sportsman is cursing volubly in-  
stead, though none the less does he take  
every advantage of ground, cut off every  
angle, and avoid every swamp in the line;  
therefore Cassock gallops steadily on at a  
fair, regulated pace, which neither increases  
nor decreases the disheartening interval be-  
tween his rider and the hounds.

"I would give five years of my life," mut-  
ters the Parson, "to be lifted up by some  
supernatural power and set down half-a-mile  
farther on!—ten to be riding that gray horse  
instead of the man that owns him! But the  
reckoning must come at last, and may my

horseman for help he was unable to  
afford. The ground rose steep and high, the  
darkening copse that clothed these abrupt hill-  
sides shut out the light of the day. John  
Garnet was at a loss. Had the deer lain  
down? or was it forward still, and in which  
direction? He naturally looked for Tancred  
to inform him, but Tancred was nowhere to  
be seen.

The Parson, meanwhile, laboring dogged-  
ly on, had caught a distant glimpse of the  
hounds even as they disappeared over the  
brink of the precipitous combe, in time to  
play a bold stroke and merited success. He  
determined not to cross the valley at all, but  
to steer for that side of it on which the line  
of chase now seemed to lie, and so hoped to  
come in on the deer, refreshed by the bath  
he never doubted it had indulged in, as it  
rose the hill side once more and made for  
the open moor. Urging Cassock to further  
effort, he increased the pace for a stretch of  
another mile, but when he halted his good  
horse—who stopped willingly enough at the  
wished-for station—not a living object was  
to be seen dotting the brown expanse, not a  
sound to be heard but the wail of the curlew  
flitting softly over the waste. Deer and  
hounds and John Garnet must have sunk  
into the earth! The solitude seemed un-  
broken, the chase had come to a standstill,  
and the Parson was at fault!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

AT BAY.

Tancred, a marvel of canine sagacity, had  
good reason for deserting his comrades, to  
engage in some quiet researches of his own.  
It is unnecessary to inform those who love  
stag-hunting—and those who do not will  
hardly care to learn—that scent often hangs  
over running water, and travels downwards  
with the moving stream; therefore the deer  
wading craftily towards the river's source,  
emerged on its farther bank, refreshed and  
strengthened by the bath, at some consid-  
erable distance above the place where it plun-  
ged in. Such tactics were only in accordance  
with the calculation and reflection we call  
instinct; but Tancred was possessed of in-  
stinct too, and remembered, no doubt, many  
a cast he had made on similar occasions  
with successful result. The old hound,  
therefore, assuming an expression of judi-  
cious solemnity, dashed through the water,  
to enter without delay, on a close scrutiny  
of his own, along the opposite bank, in the  
reverse direction from that mistaken line on  
which his grandson was insisting with un-  
becoming clamor, and snuffed at every pebble,  
poked his black nose into every turf of  
brushwood, grass or heather, he came across.  
Soon, with a flap of his tented ears, a lash  
of his stern against his mighty ribs, up  
went the wise and handsome head in a roar  
of triumph—a roar that, for the first, struck  
terror to the red deer's heart some furlongs  
on in the front—a roar that brought the old  
hound's comrades to his side, with an alac-  
rity sufficiently denoting how, by the best of  
all judges, this lord of the kennel was trust-  
ed and revered.

"He's forward!" exclaimed John Garnet,  
plunging through briar and brushwood, with  
the rein on Katerfelto's neck. "Hold up,  
old! we shall soon be in the open again;  
and, by George, this is the best run you or I  
ever saw in our lives."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The son of Tom Sayers, England's pugil-  
istic champion, is a jockey in New York,  
and won a handicap race a few days since  
on Puryear's colt, Top, in a very cool and  
creditable manner.