

CHAPTER II.

JACK never read a book if he could help it, unless it was something to do with hunting or fishing. The *Field* was enough for him. At the age of twenty, he was perhaps the finest and most ignorant all-round Englishman between the Tweed and the Torridge. He had forgotten the Latin grammar, and that was his claim to education. He spelt amazingly, and was totally untrammelled by tradition in all such matters. But he knew all about fish, as he believed, for he had caught several salmon at his cousin's place in Scotiand. At Charteris there were some foxes' tails. He could shoot with the first flight of shots. After his calamity with Molly Botfield, he was shy with women, and worked harder than ever at field sports. And all the time he groaned that he was not in the army. And so did his father.

"Nevertheless," said Sir John, "he is such an ass that I'm afraid he would have never passed."

It was the old man's only consolation.

"I suppose I am a jolly idiot, you know," said Jack to his father.