

It is amusing when the hunter starts out of a winter morning to see his hound probe the old tracks to determine how recent they are. He sinks his nose down deep in the snow so as to exclude the air from⁵ above, then draws a long full breath, giving sometimes an audible snort. If there remains the least effluvium of the fox the hound will detect it. If it be very slight it only sets his tail wagging; if it be strong it unloosens his tongue.

¹⁰ Such things remind one of the waste, the friction that is going on all about us, even when the wheels of life run the most smoothly. A fox cannot trip along the top of a stone wall so lightly but that he will leave enough of himself to betray his course to the hound¹⁵ for hours afterwards. When the boys play "hare and hounds" the hare scatters bits of paper to give a clue to the pursuers, but he scatters himself much more freely if only our sight and scent were sharp enough to detect the fragments. Even the fish leave a trail²⁰ in the water, and it is said the otter will pursue them by it. The birds make a track in the air, only their enemies hunt by sight rather than by scent. The fox baffles the hound most upon a hard crust of frozen snow; the scent will not hold to the smooth, bead-like²⁵ granules.

Judged by the eye alone, the fox is the lightest and most buoyant creature that runs. His soft wrapping of fur conceals the muscular play and effort that is so obvious in the hound that pursues him, and he comes³⁰ bounding along precisely as if blown by a gentle wind. His massive tail is carried as if it floated upon the air by its own lightness.

The hound is not remarkable for his fleetness, but how he will hang!—often running late into the night³⁵ and sometimes till morning, from ridge to ridge, from peak to peak; now on the mountain, now crossing the valley, now playing about a large slope of uplying