

MISCELLANEOUS

WHEN THE KING RIDES IN ROTTEN ROW

King George is the first British sovereign in two hundred years to ride in Rotten Row, and the fact that he is taking his daily horseback exercise in this famous haunt is said to be one of the most generally approved things he has done since ascending the throne. In the first place, his patronage of the Row will restore, as by magic the former popularity of this famous haunt. It will draw society from its downy bed at a wholesome morning hour and check the demoralization that has been traced to the automobile by making riding once more extremely fashionable. Rotten Row will once more become the accepted rendezvous of the great world, and members of the aristocracy will be afforded an opportunity of keeping in touch with each other, such as they have not enjoyed for the past twenty years.

One fashionable commentator says that in rendering the Row and the adjacent walks in Hyde Park the trysting place of fashion once more, the King has not only given a much needed fillip to the London season, but has likewise taken a great step toward restoring the former cohesion of society. Its discipline cannot but gain thereby. It is far easier to mark distances, to administer much needed rebuffs, and, in one word, to keep people in their places in the Row, when riding, or even when walking, in the park, than in salons and ball-rooms, that are nowadays overrun with so many self-invited guests, whose lack of breeding is only equalled by their impudence. Many such a lesson was administered in the good old days of twenty or thirty years ago, before the late King Edward grew too stout for riding. Attended by a couple of gentlemen the Prince of Wales rode for an hour each morning in the Row, while the Princess of Wales rode attended by another suite.

It is recalled that it was in the Row that the prince restored Sir Chas. to society, after the ostracism he had suffered as a result of the Crawford divorce scandal. Sir Charles was by no means an intimate of the prince's; indeed, the former cabinet minister had previously identified himself with parliamentary attacks on royalty. Nevertheless, when the Prince of Wales saw him riding alone in the Row, ignored and cut on every hand, he spurred his horse alongside of him, greeted him cordially, and bade him accompany the royal suite for the remainder of the ride. Queen Victoria was not a rider, but she made a point of invariably driving on the Row when on her way from Buckingham Palace to Paddington. Her object in doing so was to assert an ancient prerogative, for the right of driving on Rotten Row is restricted to two persons. One is the British Sovereign, the other is the Duke of St. Alban's. It is not shared by members of the Royal family, not even by the Queen Consort or Queen-Mother. The privilege of the Duke of St. Alban's is due to a freak on the part of Charles II., his ancestor, and father of the first Duke of the House, who was the son of Nell Gwynne. The first Duke was made Lord High Falconer of England, an hereditary office that carries with it the right of driving in the Row, and every subsequent Lord St. Alban's has jealously guarded this privilege. It is interesting to recall a queer wager once made by Admiral Lord Charles Beresford on the subject of this prerogative. The Admiral bet a number of his friends that he could drive in the Row without being molested. He won quite a nice pot by bribing one of the drivers of a watering cart to let him take his place, and so disguised in an old tarpaulin and a sou' wester, he triumphantly drove on the sacred Row. Another odd regulation that prevails in the Row is that no grown woman may ride astride there. The Row and the park that includes it is the private property of the Sovereign, although the nation contributes to its maintenance, and therefore no progressive county

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council is likely to interfere with the venerable regulations.

The origin of the name of the famous resort has been the subject of much controversy among etymologists. The generally accepted explanation of that Rotten Row is a corruption of "Route du Roi," that is to say, the King's Road. This theory is assailed by the fact that there are scores of Rotten Rows in England and Scotland, many of which bore the names hundreds of years before the London bridle path was known. These other rows took their names from the old word "roteran," meaning "to muster," and which survives in the modern "roster." A file of six or twelve soldiers was known as a "rot," and Scotch antiquarians agree that their Rotten Rows were named because they were used as roteran grounds, or places of muster for soldiers. In Cromwell's time this part of Hyde Park was put to similar use for squads or "rows" of soldiers, and since then the name has survived.

"I do not think," said Edmund Yates in his book, "Recollections and Experiences," "I ever met a man more hopelessly deaf than Charles Kemble at seventy. Some of us were sitting one afternoon at the Garrick Club when a tremendous thunderstorm broke over the house.

"It raged with extraordinary fury, one clap exploding with terrific noise immediately above us like a volley of artillery.

"We looked round at each other almost in horror, when Charles Kemble, who was calmly reading, lifted his eyes from his book and said, in his trumpet-tone, "I think we are going to have some thunder; I feel it in my knees."

"You remember dat guy, Jim Burke?" asked an irate Bowery denizen. "He's that stiff dat's doin' time up der river—Sing Sing—boiglarly—ten years. Well, you know all I done fer dat stiff. When he was pinched didn't I put up der coin fer der lawyers? Didn't I pay der witnesses? Sure I did. De oder day I t'inks I'll just go an' see dat mutt jus' t' leave him know his frien's ain't tied de can on 'im. So I drives out to d' jail and goes into d' warden's office and he says I gotter send me card in. Me card! D' ye get dat? Well, anyway, I writes me name on a piece o' paper an' a guy takes it in to Jim Burke, an' what d' you t'ink dat stiff tells dat guy to tell me?"

"I've no idea," said the listener. "He tells him," concluded the angry one, "t' tell me dat he ain't in!"

During a portion of the South African war Lord Kitchener had as an orderly a young scion of a noble house who had joined the Imperial yeomanry as a trooper. He could not quite understand that he was not on terms of perfect equality with the members of the staff, and having been summoned one morning to carry some dispatches for the commander-in-chief, he entered the room with a jaunty air. "Did you want me, Kitchener?" he asked calmly, while the rest of the staff gasped for fear of what would happen next. Kitchener, however, merely looked at him with a quiet smile. "Oh, don't call me Kitchener," he remarked gently, "it's so beastly formal. Call me Herbert!"