

themselves greeted by a careless nod and a muttered "How do?" Or if the M. A. happened to be in an unusually amiable and loquacious mood, he might even go the length of saying, "Fine day. Looks like a scenting morning."

But this was quite an oratorical effort, and generally meant, "There! I've done the civil to you, because you are a covert owner, but for goodness sake don't expect me to go talking to you any more to-day."

As a matter of fact, no real M. A. would ever unbend so far as to be seen carrying on a conversation with a "Half-and halfer." They kept their conversations and their ideas for themselves. They were too precious, or perhaps too scarce, to be showered upon the world of "outsiders." Anyhow, they were not scattered like pearls before swine.

The *bonâ-fide* Mutual Adorationites did not number more than a dozen.

When they went a-hunting they formed a coterie apart.

They rode together, talked or rather kept silence together, and jogged home together.

All the rest of the field were made to feel themselves without the pale.

But the M. A.'s, for all their exclusiveness, were not jovial. There was none of that friendly, harmless, good-natured chatter going on amongst them which is one of the characteristic features of most covert sides, and often is carried to too great an excess.

Occasionally one of their number would jerk out an observation, and his companion would grunt out a reply. But there was no mirth, or jollity; no fun and geniality.

They were stately, and solemn, and dull to a degree. As for a joke—but there! they never condescended to anything half so vulgar or so abominably plebeian. A joke would have been considered bad form.

The mere fact of riding about in each other's company seemed to afford a kind of sedate pleasure. Any interchange of thought was quite superfluous.

Unfortunately, their very exclusiveness rendered them few in numbers.

Death and absence had thinned their ranks to such an