

# The Beagler Boy.

A JOURNAL CONDUCTED BY OLD ETONIANS.

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## OUR MISSION.

IT is the mission of the *Beagler Boy* to save a gallant school sport from extinction. We come into the field to cry "hands off" to the faddists and busy-bodies who for years past have carried on a persistent and malignant agitation against the keeping of School Beagles, whether at Eton College, the Royal Naval College, or elsewhere. We do not conceal from ourselves the gravity of the present situation. Owing largely to the feebleness and mismanagement with which these attacks have been met, the so-called Humanitarian League has, to a large extent, persuaded the public in general, and schoolmasters in particular, that hare-hunting is unsuitable as a pastime for youngsters; and, as a disastrous consequence, we have seen the Clayesmore School Beagles abolished, the expenses of the Britannia Beagles put upon the parents instead of the public, and the Eton Beagles subjected to most insulting criticism in quarters where they should have been better understood. It

seems to be assumed that because that much over-rated pedagogue, the great Dr. Arnold, put down the Rugby Beagles years ago, his example points to the gradual discontinuance of school beagling at Eton and elsewhere. We entirely refuse to acquiesce in this monstrous assumption. We intend to prove that hare-hunting is the very best form of exercise that can be provided for British boys—that it is a scriptural sport, an imperial sport, and a sport which (even more than rifle-shooting) ought to form an integral part of the public school curriculum.

What has hitherto discouraged and hampered the advocates of this splendid pastime, has been the half-hearted excuses put forward in its defence by those who were regarded as its champions. We entertain the utmost respect for Dr. Warre, the late headmaster of Eton, but we must say that the somewhat apologetic tone adopted by him when writing on this subject, was very painful to us.

Why, for example, should he have encouraged the humanitarian agitators by forbidding the school journal, the *Eton College Chronicle*, to continue to use such recognised sporting terms as the "blooding" of hounds and the "breaking up" of hares? "The phrases in question," he said, "are objectionable in sound and liable to misinterpretation; I understand, however, that they do not imply anything more than that the dead hare is devoured by the hounds." Can it be wondered that the question was immediately asked whether it is the habit of Eton boys "to hunt a dead hare"? It is impossible, of course, to defend an old institution such as Beagling, unless one defends it in its entirety; the bolder line in this controversy is at once the safer one and the line of least resistance.

Again, when the Eton Beagles were absurdly condemned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as "contrary to the principles of the Society," and it was pointed out in the press that Dr. Warre was himself a member of the Committee of the Windsor Branch of the R.S.P.C.A., how much wiser it would have been if he had taken the dignified course of resigning his membership, instead of attempting to justify his ambiguous position by arguments which convinced nobody, while they were most injurious to the true interests of the sport which he desired to conserve!

Yet again, when the Eton College Hunt received a stab in the back from a recreant sporting journal, the *County Gentleman*, which raised new prejudice against the boys' sport by pointing out that, owing to the lateness of the hunting at Eton, "heavy" hares must not infrequently be killed, how feeble was the defence made by the present headmaster of Eton! Instead of urging, as he might have done, that the occasional killing of pregnant animals is incidental to *all* forms of hunting (notably the

hunting of Exmoor hinds), what did he do but give to an amused public the opinion of his "kennel man"—a disinterested official who naturally thought that "once a sitting doe was chopped," but would not commit himself positively even to that very moderate estimate! The reader laughed; and another hit had been made at the expense of this cruelly betrayed institution.

We only recall these past blunders because we feel that if the Eton Beagles, and other school packs, are to be perpetuated, a bolder and wiser policy must be adopted—we must have no more faltering, no more sitting on the fence, but a straightforward, manly claim for the general adoption of Beagling at all our great public schools as a perfectly sane, safe, healthy, moral, and indeed religious recreation. We trust we make our meaning sufficiently clear?

When we are asked if we venture to set up our opinion against that of Mr. Herbert Spencer and the long list of well-known public men, regarded as chief authorities on matters of ethics and education, who have signed protests against the Eton Beagles, we unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative. In a matter pertaining to sport, who shall judge but a sportsman? In a matter pertaining to sport at Eton, who shall judge unless he be both sportsman and Etonian? Mr. Herbert Spencer, whatever his merits may have been, was not a sportsman, was not educated at Eton College; and the same complete disqualification can be proved against nearly all the signatories of the Humanitarian League's memorials.

So, too, as regards the proposed substitution of the drag-hunt for the hare-hunt. No doubt it is used in some schools, and it may be true, as stated in books on Eton, that it was formerly employed successfully at Eton itself. Well, who cares if that

be so? Our point is that hare-hunting is a more exciting, and therefore a more appropriate sport than any drag-hunt can be. Spirited lads don't care to hunt an old stocking dipped in aniseed or some other stinking substance. They *do* care to hunt the living animal; and who shall blame them? We heartily endorse the words of an Eton boy on this matter: "A hare is a useless animal, and the only use to be made of it is for the exercise of human beings." The lad who wrote that sensible remark had in him the making of a good man, sportsman, and Imperialist.

To conclude, then, it is our ambition to make such defence of the glorious school sport of Beagling as shall induce the public to view it in a less distorted light, and shall commend it to the headmasters of our great schools as a form of manly exercise to be adopted, not a cruelty to be shunned. This is to be the guiding principle of the *Beagler Boy*, and we confidently rely on the moral support of genuine sportsmen and educationists.

**The Scriptural Sanction for Beagling.**

THE shameless design of some secularist and agnostic politicians to drive the Bible out of our national schools, has ended, as it deserved, in ignominious failure; just as the conspiracy of a certain portion of the Dissenting Proletariate, to exclude the Anglo-Catholic Catechism, was happily frustrated by the intervention of the Spiritual and Temporal Aristocracy of the realm.

Fortunately we need not fear lest any attempt should ever be made to banish the Scriptures from that ancient foundation where "Henry's holy shade" is still, and always will be, more reverently adored than "Huxley's shady hole"—as the Science School has been jocosely, but not inappropriately designated. The Eton boy indeed—to his credit be it

said—is not in the habit of parading his knowledge of the Bible to all the world; he does not wear it on his sleeve for daws to peck at; he is, it may be, content to regard it as a flower which may well be left to "blush unseen"; but he is, nevertheless, honestly proud to preserve the simple faith of his forefathers untainted by the rationalizing theories, whether of professed freethinkers, or of those who so absurdly style themselves "the higher critics." When, therefore, he is exhorted by certain neurotic and hyper-æsthetic persons, calling themselves Humanitarians, to relinquish the manly and invigorating sport of Beagling, or to substitute for the healthy excitement of the living hare, the flabby puerilities of anæmic aniseed, he naturally turns to the inspired volume to see what warrant can there be found by these bilious busybodies for their new fangled doctrines, so opposed to the faith and practice of his ancestors.

But here his doubts, if he ever had any, are soon laid to rest. Here he finds an answer plain and definite—one that "who runs may read," yea, even though he run with the hounds. So far from there being any warrant for such teaching, it is plainly opposed to the whole scheme of Creation as revealed to us by Holy Writ, and as exemplified in those "Laws of Nature," in which the Divine Wisdom has made itself manifest to mankind. In the first place, we read that the Creator "out of the ground . . . formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air," and delivered them over to man, who was to have "dominion" over them that he might use them, as he might choose, for such purposes as seemed good to him. That hunting had the divine sanction is unquestionable, for not only do we read of Nimrod, the son of Cush, that he was "a mighty hunter," but that he was "a mighty hunter *before the Lord*"; plainly show-

ing that he was a righteous man and blessed by the approval of the Supreme Being. Esau, too, was a hunter, and was, on one occasion, expressly sent out by his father Isaac, a man whose life is held up to us as a model for our imitation, with his quiver and bow to take venison, *i.e.*, to hunt and kill the deer. And do we not read in the Proverbs that it is only "the slothful man" who "roasteth not that which he took in hunting"?

As for the hare, why should it be exempt from being hunted? Are we not justified in believing that this may be one of the purposes for which it was created, and delivered over into the dominion of man? The hare has every quality and aptitude necessary to fit it for the chase. It carries a fine scent, which the "*odora canum vis*" will readily and delightedly follow. It is made for flight, and yet is not capable of running at top speed for any great distance, more especially as, being by nature one of the most timid of animals, terror seems at times to exercise an almost paralysing effect upon it. It has a convenient habit of running in rings, so that the panting schoolboy is not obliged to pursue the direct line of its course, but has a good chance of being in at the death if he only follows the chord of the arc. And, finally, it does not, like the elusive coney, dig inconvenient holes in the ground, wherein it may take refuge from its pursuers. Moreover, we are expressly told by the inspired writer that the hare is an unclean animal (Deut. xiv., 7), and therefore the Israelites were forbidden to eat of it. That prohibition has, no doubt, been removed at the passing of the Old Dispensation, and the modern hare does not "chew the cud," a habit which undoubtedly appertained to its Mosaic progenitors, since it is so recorded in the Divine Code; but, setting aside these unimportant details, we may say with certainty that nowhere in Holy

Writ do we find any injunction against hunting this or any other animal.

No. Man has certain divinely implanted instincts, and, as it has been well said, "the bed-rock instinct for hunting and fighting (as a last resource) remains, and will always remain. The love of sport rings as true to-day as it did in the days of Nimrod, the 'mighty hunter before the Lord.'"<sup>\*</sup> This can only be denied by those (and happily they are few) who presume to question the divine inspiration of the Sacred Book, or who think they are able to improve upon the scheme of creation—to

"Shatter it to bits, and then  
Remould it nearer to *their* heart's desire"

But until they can do this, hunting will stand broad-based upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture.

"That, in common with all carnivorous creatures," writes Mr. H. W. Seton-Karr, "we do possess God-planted instincts of the chase is a fact." How then can we be called upon to combat instincts which God Himself has planted in us, so long, that is, as we exercise them in a reasonable manner, and not in excess? As the same powerful writer excellently puts it, "If a person experiences pleasure in the chase, such as in fox-hunting, or deer-stalking . . . the rights and wrongs of that natural instinct are a personal matter between that man and his God." By what right then, I should like to know, do these morbid meddlers presume to interfere between a man and his God? Such an interference has been, in my opinion, already carried much too far, and many pleasures which our more robust ancestors enjoyed, and which a by-gone Society was content to recognize as purely personal matters between a man and his God, are, as it seems, threatened by the maudlin humanity of this new school

<sup>\*</sup> See *The Sportsman*, April 22nd, 1905.

of sickly sentimentalists. Yet how much better is it "*stare super antiquas vias*"! Surely what was good enough for "the men who fought at Minden," and the men of Trafalgar and Waterloo, should be good enough for us! It is the part alike of good "muscular Christians," and of "holy and humble men of heart," to bow their heads before the wisdom of divine ordinances, rather than foolishly to repeat the false and insolent boast of Sthenelus.

*ἡμεῖς τοὶ πατέρων μὲν ἀμείνων εὐχόμεθ' εἶναι.*

It has pleased the Divine Creator to ordain that suffering shall be rule of the Universe, and if it is necessary that one of the inferior animals should suffer in order that our boys may be strengthened in wind and limb, and learn the lessons of courage and endurance—if through such suffering the sinews of an imperial race may be braced and fortified, surely it is for us to accept the gift of a benign Providence with unquestioning gratitude, and not to be led astray by these decadent prophets of a morbid millennium, the realization of which would assuredly synchronize with the downfall of the British Empire.

**The Imperial aspects of Beagling.**

WE all know the great historical saying of the Duke of Wellington's—that the Battle of Waterloo was won in the Eton Playing Fields. Certain unpatriotic writers have indeed questioned the authenticity of the remark, but no Etonian can doubt it; though we may venture, perhaps, to surmise that what the Iron Duke had in mind was not so much the actual Playing Fields of Eton—the scene of the cricket and football matches—as the adjacent country hunted over by the Eton College Beagles. *There* it was, in the splendid runs afforded by that fine educational pastime, that the victory of Waterloo was anticipated; for what form of

exercise can be so well adapted to the formation of a soldier's character as the hunting and "breaking up" of the hare? Nothing could be better than the following answer written by the mother of an Eton boy to some humanitarian busybody who had sent her a pamphlet against the Beagles.

"Mrs. — — presents her compliments to Mr. — — and begs to return the papers sent to her. She thinks it a great impertinence interfering with the old Institutions of Eton College, which has produced most of England's greatest and strongest sons. She also begs to say that she is proud of having a son a scholar of Eton, and ardent pursuer of the said Beagles, which have given him strength of lung, limb and muscle, and helped to make him of a sound mind in a sound body, capable of defending his country should occasion arise."

That is worthy of the Mother of the Gracchi herself!

Can it be doubted that the fear of a German invasion is sensibly lessened by the fact that so many of our future soldiers are being trained in this quickening and hardening sport? For our part, we feel certain that many of the brilliant qualities exhibited by British Officers in the Boer War—as, for example, their superiority in scouting and avoiding ambushes—were due to this cause, that a large proportion of our commanders had been educated at Eton College, and had run with the School Beagles in their youth.

In like manner it is beyond doubt that the supremacy of our glorious Navy, depending as it does on the efficiency of our naval officers, rests largely on the same manly sport of Beagling, as practised by the cadets of the "Britannia," or (to use the new name) of the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth. As Waterloo was won in the fields of Eton, so assuredly Trafalgar was won on the banks of the river Dart! What then are we to think of the lack of patriotism on the part of those misguided Englishmen—including, we grieve to see, a

number of well-known headmasters of public schools—who would withdraw from our young Etonians and naval cadets this incomparable exercise in the Imperial qualities of hardihood and physical vigour, on the ground, forsooth, that the sufferings of a hunted hare are to be weighed in the balance against the fostering of a dominant race? We hold that we are justified in breaking up a thousand hares, and blooding a thousand packs of hounds, if we can thereby increase the chance of producing for our beloved country another great military or naval hero—another Wellington or Nelson!

The arguments (if such they can be called) by which so-called humanitarians try to discredit this noble recreation are as illogical as they are unpatriotic. What, for example, can be the sense of pointing out that when hare-hunting is carried on in late March, as is the custom at Eton, there is a probability of "heavy" hares being victimised. We are sorry for the fact; but it is Nature, not the Eton College Hunt, that is responsible for it. It is only during the Lent school time that Beagling can be carried on at Eton (football demanding all the energies of the boys before Christmas); consequently the season available for hunting is very short, and cannot be still further limited by sentimental considerations for the hares. It must be, remembered, too, that in later life it may be the stern duty of these youths, as military commanders, to turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of women and children whose homes it is necessary, for strategical purposes, to devastate; so that it is well for them as schoolboys, to learn thus early to repress those promptings of compassion which, while wholly admirable in their due place and time, are not always compatible with the higher Imperial necessities.

Most unworthy attempts, again, have been made to discredit the Britannia Beagles, by the citation of such passages as the following, taken from the *Naval and Military Record* of March 1st, 1906.

"Just outside the covert a hare was moved in the ploughing by hounds, and gave a most exciting chase around two fields, and when killed was found to have only three legs."

The point of the criticism appears to be that it is demoralising for naval cadets to find "excitement" in the chase of a partially crippled animal. We prefer to look at the incident in a saner and more humorous spirit, and to see in it an early lesson in that art of cheerily *making the best of things*, which is so characteristic of our British sailors. A hare with only three legs would be regarded by some persons as insufficiently equipped for the chase; but to these fine sanguine young fellows, already trained to be equal to any emergency, and to "make a little go a long way," even a three-legged hare is the means of providing true sport!

With all our hearts and souls, then, we applaud these two excellent institutions. "Rule Britannia," "Floreat Etona," is our cry; and in spite of all the disparagement with which the Britannia Beagles and the Eton Beagles have been treated in the press during the past decade, we still believe they will continue to be a matchless training for heroes. Long live the hunt of the hare by our British schoolboys! "Floreat! Florebit!"

**Beagling Memories.** AMONG the many pleasant memories of boyhood and its sports, which, in later life, are the most fascinating? Those of cricket matches, shall we say? or of football, or rowing, or running, or rackets, or fives? All these amusements are delightful to recall to mind, but still more delightful, in our opinion, are the memorials of our school hare-hunting days—the unforgotten record

of how we found puss, and hunted, and "bustled" her, and broke her up. At most schools, of course, the boys are content with the ordinary athletic games and exercises—paper-chases, "hare and hounds," and so forth,—but at the royal foundation of Eton College they manage things better than that, so that our future soldiers and statesmen may be no mere milksops, but by early acquaintance with Beagling may imbibe the genuine spirit of sport. It is a joy to us then, Old Etonians as we are, to quote a few extracts from back numbers of our *Eton College Chronicle*, a journal which is written by boys for boys, and faithfully mirrors the thoughts and feelings of the school. It may be that, to some of our readers, as to ourselves, these passages (anterior to the date when the boys were forbidden to write freely of such matters) will kindle happy memories of glorious times.

"Thursday, February 4th, 1897, saw the Beagles at Dorney village. We started by drawing the ploughs the far side of Dorney, and before we got to the end of the first field a hare got up. . . . On hounds getting on the line again, they went at a screaming pace along the Dorney brook, into Dorney Court, where hounds pulled her down dead beat in the garden. Time, 1 hr. 5 min. This was the best and most satisfactory run we have had this Half, and may the E. C. H. have many more like it.

"On Tuesday, February 23rd, we met at Salt Hill. . . . We then went towards Farnham at a good pace, and again turning right-handed, to Lipscombe's farm. Our hare had here been viewed going towards the railway again; while hounds were hunting down a hedge-side, we viewed our hare coming back towards Lipscombe's farm scarcely able to move. On getting hounds on her she squatted, and on being put up ran into a hedge, where she was pulled down. Time, 35 mins. Those who went home early had the misfortune to miss a very nice run.

"February 27th saw the E. C. H. at Dorney

village. . . . Here she doubled back towards Dorney, but not being able to pick up a line outside the village, we took hounds inside Dorney Court. Hounds had not been inside two minutes before they put up their hare, but she was fairly beat, and they pulled her down almost immediately. Time, 1 hour 45 mins. This was a delightful run, there being a very good scent, and hounds ran fast the whole time, and thoroughly deserved their hare.

"On Tuesday, March 16th, the Beagles met at Hargreaves' Park. . . . Turning back again towards the road, hounds got a view of their hare, dead beat, at the end of the field, and running her in view in a circle and back among some cabbages, they pulled her down absolutely dead beat. Time, 50 mins.

"Thursday, March 18th, the Beagles met at Dorney village. . . . Our hare had been seen going alongside the road, absolutely beat, but after taking the line along as far as a fence within five yards of the road, hounds could make absolutely nothing of it. We cast all round and tried along every fence, but in vain; so we had to give it up. This was very bad luck indeed, as hounds had worked splendidly the whole time, and thoroughly deserved their hare. The only thing which seemed likely was that some tramp on the Bath Road had quietly put our hare into his pocket and walked off. Time, 2 hours.

"Saturday, March 20th, saw the E. C. H. at Upton Church. A hare was soon put up in the first wheatfield, and running back through two small spinneys in the field she was found in, went away towards Ditton Park. Hounds ran very fast over the Bath Road, and straight away into Turner's gardens. After being hustled about for about fifteen minutes in the gardens, our hare went away at the far end of the gardens. Turning left-handed, our hare was viewed running parallel with the road and into some brick fields. Hounds never checked once, but took the line round and over the road into the brick fields. Here they checked, and after we had been casting round for some time without success among the rows of bricks, hounds were taken back into a small hut. Hardly had they got inside before old Varlet pulled

her out from under a rafter, absolutely stiff. Time, 45 minutes.

"Tuesday, March 30th, saw the E. C. H. at Upton Church. We started by drawing the wheatfield the far side of the Church, and a fine hare was soon on foot. . . . While casting round, a fresh hare got up, and ran back through Slocock's garden. Here they checked, and while they were hunting through the garden our first hare was viewed squatting by one of the field just outside the garden, absolutely beat. The end was very near now, for the hounds rolled him over immediately, dead beat. For two hours and twenty minutes had this gallant old Jack hare stood up before the pack, and right well did they deserve the blood they got."

"February 23rd, 1899.—Time, one hour, fifty minutes. A very good hunt, since scent was only fair, and we were especially unlucky to lose this hare, which was beat when she got back to Salt Hill. On the next day we heard that our hare had crawled up the High Street to Burnham, and entered a public-house so done that it could not stand, and was caught by some boys, who came to tell us half an hour afterwards, but we had just gone home. Too bad luck for words!"

**The Ruling Passion that Guards the Nation.** WE quote the following admirable eulogy of Beagling from the *Sportsman*, of December 13th, 1906. "The Humanitarian League, having failed to destroy the Eton Beagles, have now petitioned the First Lord of the Admiralty to put down those of the Britannia School. It would be more interesting to know what the sportsman First Lord thinks of these busy-bodies than what he says to them, for Ministers have to be guarded in their public remarks. There it nothing to wonder at in this new act of the Brute-arians, which would be much the most fitting name for a society which

persecutes humanity in the interest of the brute creation. What surprises is that a certain number of head masters should have signed this petition, the principles of which Dr. Warre would not endorse at Eton, and yet, judging by the testimonial and world-wide address, he has not lost popularity with men of the world. I wonder at these men, who should wish to make their schools popular, going our of the way to advertise the fact that they are out of touch with the age in which they live. I have just been presented with a copy of 'Baily's Hunting Directory,' in which I find abundant evidence of the constant increase of hunting, and especially of hare hunting. What with horse and foot harriers, horse and foot beagles, and bassets, one has but to take up 'Baily's Directory' to discover that there is one English ruling passion that guards the nation, as a whole, from giving itself up entirely to the pursuit of the man with the muck rake. Your present day Brute-arian cares nothing for these things, so he can stop the pleasures of the human race. These men are before their times. From Xenophon to Edward VII., the best men have been sportsmen, and both the above have kept harriers. In America, where men die young because of the everlasting strain of the strenuous brain work, the common-sense of the population has chosen the best sportsmen in the States to be President, and this head of the State does not allow his headship to interfere with his sport. He has his holiday as regular as a Britannia boy, and hunts 'bar' because there are no beagles."

**Notice to our Readers.**

As the publication of *The Beagler Boy* will be irregular, and not on fixed dates, subscriptions cannot be received in advance. Copies of the present number can be ordered through a bookseller, or from the publisher direct. The Editors cannot undertake to reply to correspondents.