

IS THE "BEAGLER BOY" A HOAX?

The Beagler Boy

A JOURNAL CONDUCTED BY OLD ETONIANS.

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IS THE "BEAGLER BOY" A HOAX?

WE can hardly bring ourselves to answer so insulting a question. Little did we foresee, when we published our first number a few weeks ago, that the *Beagler Boy* would soon be compelled to defend itself against the opprobrious charge of being (must we write the word?) a fraud, a skit, a satire on the arguments by which our beloved sport is justified—in short, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the good old sporting philosophy! But the hateful thing has been said—in the *Morning Leader*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Freethinker*, the *Humanitarian*, and elsewhere—and it is now our stern duty to disprove it. We deeply regret that so brilliant a writer as "S.L.H." of the *Morning Leader*—led away, we must suppose, by that habit of jesting which is the bane of modern journalism—has joined in throwing doubt on the absolute seriousness of the *Beagler Boy*, and has made the unsettling suggestion that we have come before the public with "an irreverent wink." Fortunately we are able to produce the most decisive proof of our earnestness, on the highest

possible authority; for surely if any paper ought to know a genuine sporting argument it is the *Sportsman*, and here is what the *Sportsman* says of us:—

The *Beagler Boy* is a publication after our own heart for both matter and manner. It is not only a gallant defence of the sport of hunting, but a slashing attack upon the sickly sentimentalists who are plotting its ruin. We quote the introductory article in full, and hope, if space permits, to give additional extracts on a future day. There is a boyish enthusiasm about the paper that is delightful, and so is the touch of impudence in the judgment passed upon "that much overrated pedagogue," the great Dr. Arnold.

"Far more interesting and invigorating than anything we are capable of," is the *Sportsman's* too complimentary conclusion. Now it may be said, perhaps, that the *Sportsman's* eulogy of the *Beagler Boy* is capable of another explanation, viz: that the humorous instinct is not very strong in those who hunt the hare. This, indeed, was the insinuation in "S.L.H.'s" article; and a writer in the

Sphere (we hope it was not Mr. Clement Shorter), did not scruple to remark that the alleged hoaxing of the *Sportsman* "must have given the satirists [*sic*] more pleasure than any praise could do." We have been profoundly pained, too, by the following scurrilous parody in the *Humanitarian*, which has made covert allusion to Dr. Warre and Canon Lyttelton in a most unwarrantable manner.

THE BEAGLER BOY: AN ETON MELODY.

(Air: "The Minstrel Boy to the War is gone.")

The Beagler Boy to the Warre is gone,
At the Canon's side you'll find him;
His motley suit he has girded on,
And his fool's-cap slung behind him.
"Sport of sports," said the Beagler bold,
"Though all the Press betrays thee,
"One goose-quill shall thy fame uphold,
"One faithful print shall praise thee!"
The Beagler lied; but the *Sportsman's* brain
Could not see his thin veil under;
So they took the vacant chaff for grain,
And acclaimed their nine-days' wonder!
And we mused, as we saw the forged coin pass,
Those fatuous dupes inveigling:—
"Is there aught, in the crassest mind, too crass
"To be said in defence of beagling?"



Now to all this we have a conclusive answer. It might be possible to argue that the *Sportsman* had been the victim of a hoax, if it stood alone in regarding the *Beagler Boy* seriously. But it does *not* stand alone; for we have a multitude of witnesses to our integrity. What, for example, says *Sporting Life*?

It is with considerable pleasure that we welcome the first number of the *Beagler Boy*. The first issue is ably compiled, and sets forth in convincing fashion the reason why the Eton College Beagles should remain.

We have no space to quote the hearty welcome given us by *Horse and Hound* and other genial papers, but we cannot refrain from reproducing the following extract from a lengthy article in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*. Is it believable, we ask, that a journal which describes itself as "bright, entertaining, and original," would avow this whole-hearted appreciation of a bogus print?

The *Beagler Boy* is not an apology for a sport that needs no apology, but a rating to those lame friends who give sport away by their half-hearted utterances . . . That is the spirit that the *Beagler Boy* has come to deal with, and not before something of the sort is required. . . . That is the reason why we welcome the spirit that has actuated the publication of the *Beagler Boy*. It cannot fail to set an example, even if it only holds up to ridicule those clever men who, because they take themselves too seriously, do harm while attempting to do good. For instance, the authors of the *Beagler Boy* ask whether they should be permitted to differ from great thinkers like Herbert Spencer, who helped to petition for the extinction of the Eton Beagles. They answer themselves by affirming that Spencer was neither an Etonian nor a sportsman, and consequently could not know as well as men who are both. Surely that is reason enough to disqualify Spencer's opinion . . . In other phrase, the nation wants men of action, not men of mere words. In order to get them, beagles are found useful at Eton and at the Britannia School of Naval Cadets. As long as the Bible is taught in schools, we have the highest warrant for hunting, though we have none at all for football and cricket.



HERE, surely, is a sufficient answer to the scepticism of the *Freethinker*!

The Testimony of Science. But it is not only on sporting testimony that we rely. There is a paper of the highest standing, solemn, intellectual, scientific, the scorner of faddists, the

bulwark of vivisection,—the *British Medical Journal*. Will our critics dare to tell us that this great organ of the medical profession is wholly devoid of humour? For this is how our famous contemporary regards us.

For some years past there has been an agitation on foot against the continuance of hare-hunting—a sport long practised at certain public schools. We have not hitherto referred to the matter, for the reason, among others, that it did not appear to have any special medical-bearings. We have, however, recently received a copy of the first number of a new journal, the *Beagler Boy*, to which we believe readers will be glad to have their attention directed. It gives the extreme sportsman's point of view with a breezy directness and candour to which this circumspect age has grown unaccustomed, and, though "conducted by Old Etonians," is quite free from any evidences of senility. . . . One of the accusations brought against beagling as practised at Eton, that sometimes pregnant hares have been hurted and killed, is declared to be illogical and unpatriotic. "We are sorry for the fact," they write, "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." With this quotation we take leave of the editors, *who apparently sincerely hold the opinions they so vigorously express.* [Italics ours].

Together with the verdict of the *British Medical Journal* we would link that of one of the most distinguished scientists of the age, Mr. E. Kay Robinson, editor of the *Country-Side*, and author of that remarkable book, "The Religion of Nature," in which it is demonstrated that animals have no consciousness of pain. "Clever and strenuous, but of course *ex parte*," is what Mr. Robinson says of the *Beagler Boy*.



NOR is this all; for we call to **Army, Navy, and Court.** witness also the Army, the Navy, and the Court. No testimony has gratified us more than the following from the *Army and Navy Gazette* :—

The "Imperial Aspect of Beagling," is a subject which we find discussed in the first number of the *Beagler Boy*, a journal conducted by Old Etonians. They declare that what was good enough for the men who fought at Minden, Trafalgar, and Waterloo should be good enough for us. The Duke of Wellington said that the Battle of Waterloo was won in the playing fields at Eton, but the writer of the article surmises that the Iron Duke had really in his mind the adjacent country, hunted over by the Eton College beagles. Moreover, the stout writer feels quite sure 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. Proudly is it said that many of the brilliant qualities exhibited by British officers in the Boer War, *as for example their superiority in scouting and avoiding ambuscades* [italics ours] were due to a large proportion of them having been educated at Eton College and having run with the school beagles in their youth. We have ourselves very little patience with the so-called humanitarians, and we are quite sure that the beagling at Eton, as at Dartmouth, played its part in developing the fine qualities of officers.

Here, too, is the opinion of that mirror of fashion, the *Court Journal* :—

It is conducted by old Etonians, who in the first number point out in vigorous fashion the advantages of hare-hunting as the very best form of exercise that can be provided for British boys, and maintain 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." It would not, perhaps, be easy to establish the letter of these contentions, but most people, who are not faddists, will agree

with the spirit, and, seeing the fanatical attacks to which beagling has been subjected, it is necessary that the defence should be whole-hearted.



Need we say more? Is it necessary for us to quote the weighty letters received by us from many correspondents—including, we may say, Captain W. E. Goodenough, R.N., the Commander of the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and two Headmasters of Schools—who, if we may judge by their communications, are wholly free from these base suspicions as to the *bona fides* of the *Beagler Boy*? We think not; but we shall preserve these letters in our archives as possessions of which we are proud.

To conclude then: Is the *Beagler Boy* a hoax? Let a thunderous *no* be our answer! For if once the duplicity of the *Beagler Boy* be admitted, admitted also is the fact that among the foremost defenders of the hare-hunt are many portentous dullards—sporting dullards, scientific dullards, military and naval dullards, educational dullards—who are so bereft of the sense of humour as to accept, and repeat, a bitter mockery of their own brainless arguments! Such a case is unthinkable. We regret that we have been compelled to devote so much space to the disproving of it—space which were better devoted to the more pleasant subject of the “breaking up” of hares, and the “bleeding” of hounds, with the Eton or the Dartmouth Beagles.



Postscript. We regret to say that, since the above remarks were written, the *Sportsman* has so far changed its attitude towards

the *Beagler Boy* as to publish the following statement:—

We received friendly warning some days ago that the *Beagler Boy* was writ sarcastic, and that we had better not touch it in the way of reproduction. Now the *Sphere* chuckles over our supposed discomfiture. We accept the situation cheerfully. If the *Beagler Boy* will go on publishing scathing attacks of the kind, we will continue to give them a wider publicity, for whatever the intention, sarcastic or scathing, or what not, the fact remains that the article was a capital advocacy of beagling. After the caution, we submitted the article to an outside expert, who looked for the sarcasm, and, though forewarned, failed in the search.

Well, if our first number was “a capital advocacy of beagling,” and if the *Sportsman's* expert has failed to detect any irony in the *Beagler Boy*, are we not acquitted of the charge? Is it fair that we should be subjected, even in sporting papers, to these cruel suspicions? We are confident that when the *Sportsman* sees our array of witnesses, it will recognise, as the *British Medical Journal* does, that we “sincerely hold the opinions we so vigorously express.” We could not honourably accept the somewhat ambiguous position which the *Sportsman* allots to us—that of being a sort of wolf within the fold, only a wolf whose baa is not distinguishable from that of the sheep. Besides, what of the “boyish enthusiasm” that the *Sportsman* found so “delightful” in the *Beagler Boy*? No, no. We are a publication after the *Sportsman's* “own heart” (*vide* its first notice), and we will not allow this union of hearts to be broken. The dear old *Sportsman* shall not forget its *Beagler Boy*. We will take good care of that.