



BOARS AND BOAR HUNTING.

BY DR. G. ARCHIE STOCKWELL, F. Z. S.

THE boar (*sus aper*) is unknown to the New World. The peccary is a species by itself; and the "waree" of Central America, and the feral swine of Mississippi and Arkansas, are but the domestic breed run wild. Britain, too, celebrated in history and song as the home of the race, knows it no more, the only traces of occupancy being vested in the forest pigs of Hampshire, whose high manes and crests betray descent from the importations from Ardennes forests made by Charles I.

From earliest times the creature appears to have been held in the utmost respect. A boar's head pertains to the escutcheons of many ancient English and Scottish families. At Yule tide the head, soured, garnished with sprigs of holly and evergreen, and "attended by minstraels," was borne before the Celtic chiefs in their march to the banquet hall. Under King Hoeddah of Wales even the nobility were forbidden to hunt save in the month of November, when the boar is "brimming," or in rut, and his flesh consequently unfit for food. And in England, up to the Saxon restoration under Henry II., it was less criminal to take the life of a fellow-man than to wound one of these forest monarchs. The former might be condoned by fine, but the usurpation of the royal privilege admitted only of choice between the axe and the halter. Even further back in history we find the chase of the boar esteemed a princely diversion and prerogative; and on the walls of the Ruined Cities monarchs of Chaldea and Assyria are depicted engaged therein on foot, on horseback, and in chariots. Xenophon tells us he encouraged his sons thereto, as "inculcating courage, self-reliance and



taste for war," and in the Greek myth, the beauteous Adonis is slain by the tusks of a boar he had wounded and brought to bay.

The boar hunts of Europe are no longer the spirited affairs Terniers, Snyders and Despartes loved to depict. And the famous Pomeranian boar-hounds, valued so highly—a leash (couple and a half) was the most desirable of gifts for a crowned head—and the usually celebrated breed, half mastiff, half bloodhound—are extinct. Driven by beaters with horns and bells, harried by curs of all sizes and ages, and of high and low degree, dispatched by firearms at long range after being brought to bay, the chase affords as little excitement and danger as the pursuit of an escaped denizen of the sty.

Legitimate "pig-sticking," however, is quite a different affair. Hindustan, more especially the Dekkan, is the favorite resort of sportsmen, and the wild hogs of this peninsula are larger, fiercer and more dangerous than those of either Africa, Europe or the Levant. Here, too, they are no less the pests of agriculturists, for they delight to ravage the paddy fields, and will undergo no end of trouble and fatigue to banquet upon the succulent stalks of the sugar cane; and they are supremely cunning and wary in this respect, for though their lairs may be in the midst of most ravishing sweets, the feeding ground is invariably selected at a distance, and approached only after nightfall and deserted with the rising sun. For this reason early morning is usually chosen for hunting, since pigs with full paunches are less capable of speed and more readily brought to bay. Nevertheless, once afoot they put the stanchest steeds upon their mettle, and lead the way in a mad race over ditches, down nullahs and dry water-courses and through swamps and jungles, not infrequently distancing the whole field. Even a sheer descent of many feet will not balk them; and more than once I have known a routed boar to tuck legs under, fling himself headlong over precipices that would be instantly fatal to either horse or man, and, striking upon the "shield,"² pick up and go on again with no abatement of power or speed.

The aim in pig-sticking always is to bring the quarry to bay and then ride him down, impaling him upon a spear. This last is a weapon of great power—a keen blade of razor steel, shaped something like a laurel leaf, set in a stout shaft of bamboo, the size and weight being matters of regulation, according to locality and district. The spear of the Bengal hunts is six and one-half feet long, the shaft weighted at its upper extremity to balance a broad, stout blade, always carried with the point forward, projecting in front of the stirrup-iron half a yard or more, so that when a charge is made and the horse dexterously swerves to one side, the boar impales himself. Those of Bombay, Hyderabad and Mysore are considerably lighter, though longer in both shaft and blade, and commonly employed for overhand thrusts.

A boar at bay is by no means a pleasant creature to contemplate, with his huge neck and bristling crest, his fiery eyes, and his glistening, white and champing tusks, rattling like castanets as they toss off bits of adhesive foam that fleck his brindled sides. It is impossible for those who have never encountered him in his native wilds to realize his fierce and terrible aspect, his lumbering but swift gallop, the bold rush that lifts a horse from the ground, and leaves the imprint of his teeth in its flank as an extended gory rut, or his rage when impaled upon the spear. His last effort is to force himself up the spear-shaft in eagerness to avenge the wound. Little wonder that Orientals accept him as a type of supreme Evil, and condemn his body as the abode of demons and disembodied spirits and Captain Shakespeare, the "East Indian Nimrod," asserts that no creature aside from, the boar and panther ever made good its charge against his spear or bullets of his heavy rifle!

During a pig-sticking in Mysore in my younger days, the hunt, three mornings in succession, put up a boar known by a peculiarly marked ear, that baffled all attempts to bring to bay, and was speedily lost in the jungle. The fourth morning, finding escape cut off, he ensconced himself between the root-spurs of an enormous teak, and presented

²The shoulders and breast of the boar are protected by a thick deposit of cartilaginous material, overlaid by tough hide, in turn covered by an enormous growth of thick, heavy, matted hair. This is termed the *shield*.

and is almost impervious to bullets; and the resistance it offers to weapons not of the very keenest edge is, *in every sense*, evidence of the danger of the sport of pig-sticking.

such a bold front that it was impossible to bring the horses within spearing distance. Finally a captain of Lancers undertook to dislodge him, and, dismounting, approached sufficiently near to deliver (throw) a spear. He won "first blood;" but at this juncture the pig charged, the horse broke away from his master, and it would have been all up with our comrade but for a brother officer who, by superhuman effort and free use of the spur, managed to interpose and received the brute on his blade.

Badly wounded, the boar now broke the circle and dashed away, in the act receiving every blade in the hunt, the handles sticking out from his hide like quills on a porcupine. After a race of three or four miles, exhausted by loss of blood, he again came to bay, and was easily despatched by swords of the native hillless pattern such as are permitted.

Again a boar was routed that fairly drove the field, but finally succumbed to a bullet—a most sportsmanlike sequel. In this case it was necessary to preserve the life of a comrade; but for the extenuating circumstance, the act would have lost us caste in all sporting circles, native or foreign.

The art of riding a boar is to approach as closely as possible, constantly keeping him on the right or spear hand, which necessitates that the horse be turned with the pig. If the game flags, or comes to bay, the horse is sprung upon him with sufficient impetus to pass the spear through his body; and if he charges at the same instant, the increased momentum and shock generally drives the bamboo through and through, fairly from end to end. Underhand riding is by no means difficult or dangerous, and is readily acquired by a good horseman possessed of cool head and steady hand. But the overhand thrust demands experience, an iron nerve and will, a perfect seat, and, above all, a well-trained mount. Here the spear is grasped eighteen or twenty inches from the butt, and carried horizontally backward with slight downward inclination, the blade to the rear of the croup. When the boar charges at the horse, as he is sure to do, by rising in the stirrups and pivoting sharply to the left the sportsman delivers an overhanded downward stab, by which the blade reaches

the heart between the fore-shoulders. But should it fail its mark or not prove instantaneously fatal, there is great risk to both horse and rider, and the former, if not gashed about the legs and breast, is generally disemboweled! The position at the instant of pivoting and striking is very like that of St. George in the popular representations of his conflict with the dragon.

Abandoned wells, that have caved in until mere shallow pits, surrounded by rank herbage, are common to most sugar estates in India. These are always favorite lurking places of wild swine. Taking advantage of the dense growth, they excavate for themselves lairs that defy the closest inspection, even though one stands upon the very brink. An old boar will remain quiet until roused; but a young one or a sow—especially if with a litter—is apt to resent intrusion, and charge unexpectedly and wickedly. I was thus caught once and avoided the first mad rush, but the gun was knocked from my hand, and I was enabled to regain it and send a couple of bullets into the brute only by the courage of my dog, who for the moment interposed, at the expense of a ghastly wound.

French nomenclature is generally in vogue among sportsmen to designate the age, growth and characteristics of wild swine. Thus sucklings, wearing a livery of two shades of brown longitudinally striped upon a ground of white and fawn, are *marcassins*, or "boarlings." After six months, when the change their livery, they become "Little red beasts," *bêtes rouges*; and when a year old are *bêtes de compagnie*, going in troops. Pigs, two years old, are *ragot*; twelve months later, *sanglier a son tiers an*, literally boars that "scratch themselves," and with the fourth year are *quarterniers*. Subsequently the titles of grand *sanglier*, "big boar," *vieux sanglier*, "old boar," and *vielermite*, "old hermit," obtain. Also a boar is *farrowe* when he has obtained his full complement of teeth, and *pigaches*, an abbreviation of *pieds guaches*, when marked by a twisted and crescentic hoof or a toe longer than its fellows.

From the time a boar is *ragot* or *sanglier*, he is always solitary; but the sows and boarlings, along with *bêtes rouges*, and *bêtes de compagnie*, for nine months of the year associate in herds for mutual protection.