



WATCHING THE HERD AFTER HAVING KILLED A STAG.

A

HANDBOOK OF DEER-STALKING

BY

ALEXANDER MACRAE

LATE FORESTER TO LORD HENRY BENTINCK

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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INTRODUCTION.

FOR more than fifty years I have contemplated writing what I may call a handbook to the most fascinating of all British field-sports—Deer-stalking. I am ashamed to confess it, but indolence and procrastination have made me defer until to-morrow what I should have done to-day. Time has passed with railway speed, and my handbook has remained buried in my own brain. To my surprise—I should add, to my shame—a little work on this to me most interesting subject has been placed in my hands. I have been requested to state my opin-

ion as to whether it was worth publishing, and I have in consequence read it very carefully. It gives me no ordinary pleasure to be able to say that it is the very thing that was required, and that I am sure every old stalker will read it with delight, and every beginner with advantage. The writer, who has filled the place of a forester for many years, and in one of the best of our deer-forests, is evidently a man of great observation, and has improved the opportunities he enjoyed, of making himself thoroughly acquainted with the habits of red-deer, and the whole science of stalking them.

I have said, I think, enough to incline deer-stalkers to look at this little work ; and I am confident that, like myself, they will thoroughly enjoy its perusal, for they will find in almost every page something that will bring back to their

recollection having been placed in similar difficulties, which are so well described by this old forester. For my own satisfaction—I ought perhaps to say, for my gratification — I shall very briefly touch on some of the leading points referred to.

First, as to judging distance, nothing can be better than the advice he gives. I add to it, that every young stalker—and some old ones also — will derive advantages, even with modern *express* rifles, if, when they have an opportunity of practising on hilly ground, they devote some time to firing at stones, or any other mark, in every possible position. Try down and up hill, on level ground, and from the side of a steep hill to an opposite hill, carefully noting in their memory the sighting at each mark. If blessed with good eyesight, a Henry express

rifle, and ordinary coolness and observation, they will very soon conquer the difficulties of judging the distances, they will know the sighting required for all varieties of ground, and they will be spared the bitter disappointment of seeing a good stag rapidly vanishing from their view, and hearing the grumbling remark of the stalker, "Your ball gaed twa feet clear ower his back." A few days' practice such as I recommend are worth months spent in firing at targets placed on level ground, and at known distances.

I agree with all the Old Forester says as to the smelling power and vision of deer. As a rule, three or four times as many stalks are spoiled from deer getting the wind of a stalker, as from seeing him. I have sometimes, during the sixty years I have been a stalker, tried

experiments as to the power of deer's sense of smell, and I am sure that I have started them, when there was a pretty strong wind, at the distance of three-quarters of a mile. The actual distance was not measured, but I guessed it at the long range I mention.

The Old Forester devotes a very considerable portion of his short pamphlet to wind. He evidently knows by long experience how treacherous the wind often is—in fact, *wind* is *the* great difficulty in getting at deer. I think every experienced stalker will agree with me, that all his remarks about wind are most judicious; but long practice is the only way by which a real knowledge of how to manage with various kinds of wind can be gained.

His “directions for crawling” remind me of what once happened to myself. It

made me angry at the moment, but it has given me many a good laugh since then.

I was stalking for a young man. We had to cross some flat ground, and before we came to it I gave my young friend strict injunctions to keep low, and do just as I did. Flat as a flounder, I moved at the rate of about a yard in five minutes, keeping my eye steadily on the deer. When almost within shot of them up jumped an old hind, stared in our direction, gave a bark, and off they went. I looked round, and there was the novice, with his chin almost ploughing up the ground, and his feet well in the air, at right angles to his body.

I must now take leave of 'A Handbook of Deer-Stalking,' at the same time strongly recommending it to the notice of both old and young deer-stalkers. Before doing so, I shall make some ob-

servations of my own on using dogs and driving deer. I have not taken a dog out deer-stalking for five-and-twenty years at least, nor have I allowed one to be used by any of my friends who have visited me. I grant that occasionally a deer has been recovered by dogs which might have escaped; but the mischief they do in a forest is quite heart-breaking. Far better watch the wounded deer; and in nine cases out of ten he will stop before going very far, when a fresh stalk will generally allow the stalker to get a second shot.

As to driving large herds of deer to passes, it is very injurious to a forest. In my humble opinion, it is a most Cockney, unsportsmanlike proceeding, and reduces the noble sport of deer-stalking to a level with a "battue" of pheasants and hares.

I have neglected to refer to a most important point connected with deer-stalking, and which is only slightly alluded to in the very clever little work for which I have written this introduction,—I mean, the great change in the power of modern rifles, as compared with those we formerly used.

This has certainly made stalking much easier, for it was getting safely over the last fifty or sixty yards that was often the most difficult part of a stalk.

In the last generation 100 yards was about the longest distance at which any old careful stalker thought it right to fire at deer. At that range the accuracy of my worthy old friend Purdey's rifle was simply perfect, and I believe has never as yet been equalled by those now in use.

The latter, however, shoot sufficiently well to make it a certainty killing a stag at 150 yards, if the chance is a fair one, and the Express rifle is in good hands.

As very few of the stalkers of the present day were born at the period when these splendid rifles were in use, I venture, although I fear I may be considered egotistical, to mention, as a proof of their marvellous accuracy, what I once did with a double Purdey.

I was in the habit of shooting very often at his ground, and on this occasion he asked me to fire some shots with a rifle he had just finished for Lord Macdonald (it was in 1832 or 1833).

The mark was a chalk disc exactly the size of a rifle patch, distance 100 yards. I fired six double shots, and broke

eleven discs. Old Purdey was one of the most rigidly honest men I ever knew, and finding that these chalk discs were frequently broken by the *splinters* from bullets when they were placed close to the iron target, and being determined not to let people be deceived as to the shooting of his rifles, he had a crutch made to hold the disc, and this was placed eighteen inches in advance of the target, and could not be broken unless actually hit by a bullet.

To revert to the Express rifles, I am afraid they have led to much abuse, and I may add cruelty. We hear often of very long shots having been made, but we do not hear of the many noble stags that have been wounded by reckless shooting at extreme distances.

People, especially young stalkers, get

excited when they see deer galloping off, and sometimes keep up a fire with their long-range Express breech-loaders as long as they can see the deer.

I won't mention names or place, but simply say it occurred in the Highlands during this century. I was watching a party stalking. He got a chance and missed, but fired EIGHT consecutive shots at a single stag galloping, and when he disappeared, he was certainly a quarter of a mile from his stalker.

I cannot accuse myself of having often wounded deer, because I make it a rule never to fire at deer beyond the range of 150 yards, and then only if I had a good steady view of the deer.

However well men may shoot at a small mark on a target at a long distance, I venture to implore them to think of the

misery and pain they may cause to poor deer for years by reckless shooting; and I beseech them to keep in mind, when getting near the end of their stalk, the words—one hundred and fifty yards.

HORATIO ROSS.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE thought occurred to me many years ago, that a small handbook on deer-stalking would be of great use to the young and inexperienced sportsman; and that if it were written by a man who knew the subject thoroughly, it might prove of value even to some of those whose knowledge of deer-stalking is extensive.

However, on making inquiry, I failed to discover that any work of the kind had been published. Some pamphlets, indeed, have been written, but they contain not so much a general discussion of the subject, as a history, describing—sometimes

with praiseworthy minuteness—what the writer saw taking place on special occasions. Such pamphlets, having little or no general application, are not of much service in deer-stalking. One good reason why such a handbook as I have spoken of has not been written, is that those men who possess the most thorough knowledge of deer-stalking have not received a sufficient education to enable them to write a book, especially on such a complicated subject as that now before us; and that the learned sporting gentleman who otherwise is qualified to write a book, may know too little of deer-stalking to enable him to write on that particular subject. If with incomplete knowledge he did write such a book, he would bring himself under the criticism of his inferiors, who, knowing deer-stalking better than himself, would easily discover the faults

of his book, although they could not compose one themselves. Since I possess perhaps an average knowledge of deer-stalking, I have resolved to publish the following chapters on the subject, notwithstanding the fact that I am not only not a scholar, but also that my knowledge of the English language is limited. If I can succeed in expressing myself intelligibly, I have no fear that sensible men will blame me for not clothing my thoughts in beautiful language; and should foolish men attack me, I shall regard their attacks as only an illustration of their folly. I am satisfied, however, that with better knowledge of the language, I could do more justice to myself and to my subject. If this little book should induce abler men than myself to study deer-stalking, and to write more extensively and correctly upon it than I can

pretend to, I would regard my labour as not having been in vain. To compose a treatise, even on a less complicated theme than deer-stalking, that would stand above criticism, would be a hopeless task ; but I trust that at least the younger class of my sporting countrymen will do me, an old deer-stalker, the justice of allowing that I have made an honest attempt to supply a want felt by many young stalkers.

KATEWELL, EVANTON,
ROSS-SHIRE.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION,	v
AUTHOR'S PREFACE,	xvii
PRELIMINARY STEPS IN DEER-STALKING,	23
SMELLING POWER IN DEER,	27
POWER OF VISION IN DEER,	29
ACCIDENTAL SUCCESS,	31
FIRST DAY'S STALK,	33
SECOND DAY'S STALK,	35
A LOT OF STAGS IN VIEW,	37
HOW TO BEHAVE WHEN DEER SUSPECT YOU,	40
STALKING DEER LYING IN A BAD PLACE,	41
DEER RISING IN PROGRESS OF STALK,	42
DIRECTIONS FOR CRAWLING,	44
SHOULD THE STALKER APPROACH DEER FROM ABOVE OR BELOW?	45
REMARKS ON THE WIND,	46
SIDE-WIND,	47
SLANT-WIND,	49
DOWN-HILL WIND,	50
CROSS-WIND,	51

UP-HILL WIND,	54
STALKING UP-WIND,	55
STALKING DOWN-WIND,	57
CALM WEATHER,	58
SUN-SHADE,	60
STALKING ON MOSSY GROUND,	60
RUTTING SEASON,	61
HIND-SHOOTING,	66
STALKING IN WOODS,	69
DRIVES,	70
STALKING DEER LYING WITH DOUBTFUL WIND,	70
A MAN STALKING FOR HIMSELF,	71
ALLOWING DEER TO GET THE WIND,	72
DUNCAN MACINTYRE'S POETICAL DESCRIPTION OF DEER-STALKING,	73
WOUNDED DEER,	75
DEER-HOUNDS,	76
DRESS IN SNOWY WEATHER,	78
REMARKS,	79
THE MAKING AND PRESERVING FORESTS,	80
HEATHER-BURNING,	81

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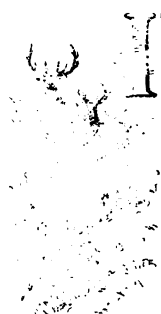
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DEER ALARMED.

HANDBOOK OF THE SPORTSMAN

THE SPORTSMAN'S GUIDE TO THE HUNTING



IT may be observed, in the first place, that when a sportsman has provided himself with a gun, he should look to his gun as he would to his horse, as a good servant in any other service. They should be provided with powerful spying-glasses; and the sportsman himself would be much the better of a good glass, and partic-



DEER ALARMED.

A

HANDBOOK OF DEER-STALKING.

PRELIMINARY STEPS IN DEER-STALKING.



IT may be observed, in the first place, that when a sportsman has provided himself with a forest he should look out for *good* keepers, for these are as necessary in their way as *good* servants are in any other service. They should be provided with powerful spying-glasses; and the sportsman himself would be much the better of a good glass, and particu-

24 *Preliminary Steps in Deer-Stalking.*

larly of a good rifle. On this account one ought to practise a good deal with the rifle, at different objects, in different places, and at different distances—from 50 yards to 300 yards, or more, according to taste. Thus he would make himself acquainted with the variations incident to such changes. One also ought to get acquainted with the judging of distance—a thing not difficult to acquire on plain ground.

To begin with, a mark can be set up, and a distance of 50 paces measured from it, where another mark should be put up; and then, as the eye is the only guide in this sort of measurement, one should stand at the second mark, and take a good look at the distance between one's self and the first mark, and then look in some other direction, and try if one can judge 50 yards. If found to be much wrong,

Preliminary Steps in Deer-Stalking. 25

after pacing it, change the place and try again; and when one finds that he can judge pretty near the thing, 100 yards can be tried in like manner, and so on, for any distance. It should be observed that there is a great difficulty in judging distance where the ground is uneven and partly hidden, for it must depend entirely upon how far the eye supposes the object to be away, independent of the intervening surface. Some people may say that I have trifled too long with the judging of distance, since the improvement in modern arms has removed the necessity for sportsmen being so particular about the distance at which they shoot at deer. Fifty yards here or there does not make much difference to the heavy-charged guns now in use, which do not require to have the sight altered twice during a season. Very true, the improvement in

26 *Preliminary Steps in Deer-Stalking.*

modern arms has saved a great deal of labour and anxiety to a good shot, but I still think that the knowledge of judging distance, even in modern deer-stalking, is a very useful acquisition, especially in connection with long distances.

It is a little surprising that deer are not killed at longer distances than they generally are with the enormous power and precision of the new sporting rifles. I believe more deer are killed every season at about 100 yards than outside of it. The young stalkers of to-day do not understand the uncertainty that attended shooting deer *up* and *down* hill with the old rifles. The bullet was so heavy in proportion to the charge of powder that its path was very curved. The gun being sighted for level ground, the bullet was sure to go over the mark when shooting down hill, unless a lower aim was taken

than on level ground ; and when shooting up hill, a higher aim. These allowances were regulated according to the steepness of the ground ; but the bullet of the new gun travels so straight that scarcely any of these allowances are required.

SMELLING POWER IN DEER.

Having made these preliminary remarks, I shall now invite the attention of the young stalker to some facts about deer, and I shall begin with their smelling power. When a person begins deer-stalking, there are two things to which he must pay particular attention, and these are, the *eye* and the *nose* of the deer, for both are equally hostile to his success. Deer can smell an enemy at a considerable distance, whether he be in view or not. But although the power of smelling

in deer is so acute, and so annoying to the stalker, many other animals in the country possess the same power to a very high degree. No doubt the faculties of deer may be keener on account of their habits.

I believe it was never definitely ascertained—and perhaps never will be—at what precise distance a deer can smell a human being; but where the ground is plain and open, and the wind blowing strongly, I would not consider it safe to pass much within a mile on the windward side of a lot of deer. Where, however, the ground is undulated, with hollows and hillocks here and there in the course of the wind, and the weather moderately calm, the danger is not so great. The difference between a moderate breeze and strong wind cannot be well understood by people having little knowledge of these

things ; but it is a fact that a strong wind carries the scent beyond the limit to which a moderate breeze can ; and the reason seems to be that a moderate breeze travelling slowly permits the scent to become diffused through the atmosphere, and therefore the tainted air to become purified before reaching the herd ; while a strong wind moving with great speed carries the scent over the same space in too short a time to allow its influence to be diminished.

Deer can also scent your track if they cross it a few hours after. In any case trust as little to the nose as you can, whatever you do to the eye.

POWER OF VISION IN DEER.

Having said a little about the smelling power of deer, I shall now refer to their

power of vision. Whether deer can see an object at a longer distance than a man I cannot say ; but if they are standing on ground where they are easily seen, a man will see them at a distance where he is in no danger of being seen by them. This is apparently the result of carelessness on their part, because when on the retreat they see nearly as well as man at a long distance, if not equally well. From this it may be inferred that deer, although of a suspicious disposition, on account of their fear of man, generally confine their attention, when undisturbed, to a space within which the eye is perfectly sure to decide whether the enemy is in view or not ; but that they can see up to 400 or 500 yards as well as a man is well known to any one who has spent some of his time after deer. In mist and in the gloaming their power of vision is far su-

perior to that of man. So, on the whole, it may be concluded that if a man's eye is in any way superior to that of a deer, it must be at a long distance. I scarcely need mention that they are more watchful after being disturbed than they were before, on account (sometimes) of a well-grounded fear that they may be pursued. After being disturbed they generally take up a well-chosen position for defence the first time they settle.

ACCIDENTAL SUCCESS.

When a young stalker goes to the forest, perhaps for the first time, and happens to get a chance of a deer without trouble, which may sometimes occur, he may suppose that deer-stalking is not at all such a difficult thing as people try to make him believe, and that he can get at

deer whenever he chooses. A person of this class may very properly be left in charge of the deer themselves; and he will soon be taught the necessity of studying both the movements of the wind and the powers of vision of these noble animals. He will discover before he is very long under tuition that he may find deer in a place where it may be next to impossible to get within reasonable range of them, on account of the ground, the wind, or something else. As an illustration of one of the many difficulties of getting at a particular herd, I may state that, especially in largely stocked forests, a flock of inferior deer may happen to be placed on the very pass where it was possible for you to approach those you wanted.

FIRST DAY'S STALK.

If you are determined not to try this lot, supposed to be in such a bad situation, you may look out for others that may be in a more favourable place ; but, in case you are determined to try these, several expedients may be resorted to. If they have settled where they are, you can wait to see if they will remove to some other place, where your chance may be better, or, if time will not permit waiting, and they are not near a neighbour's ground where they would be likely to go, they should be moved. But the mode by which this should be accomplished depends much upon the nature of the ground and other circumstances. A person might go and show himself at some distance, or might whistle, or make some other noise without showing him-

self. Whichever of these expedients is tried, it ought to be done in such a manner as to alarm the deer as little as possible. As this work of removal is not so likely to be attempted by a person alone, I shall suppose the party to consist of a gentleman and one or two attendants. While the person removing the deer is at work, the others ought to be on the look-out, if the ground and the wind admit of it, to see if they can get a chance of the deer in course of removal. If this cannot be done, it only remains for them to keep sight of the deer till they settle in some other place, where I hope they will be more successful. I may remark that I do not call this mode of going to work a drive (although it looks very like it), for it does not disturb a forest like a drive. Removing deer in the manner I have here indicated does not disturb them

so much as firing at the same herd twice in one day.

SECOND DAY'S STALK.

I will now suppose that one day of deer-stalking is over, and that we are going out next day. The first thing to be considered is what part of the ground the wind is suitable for (as you must be always very careful what direction the wind is from). If one understands the motions of the wind, and the configuration of the ground, one has got over two of the principal difficulties. A wrong beginning may spoil the sport of a whole day. Stalkers are often guided by the motion of the clouds, as they help to indicate the real direction of the wind, and to show if it changed since they started in the morning. A change in the direc-

tion of the wind may, and probably will, derange a stalker's plans; and when this happens he has only to consider the best that can be done under the circumstances.

When you come in sight of ground where deer are expected to be, spying should begin and be continued all along as fresh ground comes in view, excepting where the bare eye is sufficient. Do not be in too much hurry. It may be here observed that when a person is spying for deer, he must look more earnestly than when looking for anything else of the same size; for in the latter end of August, and the month of September, the colour of deer becomes extremely difficult to discern at a long distance, and some of them are far worse to see than others. A person not accustomed to look at deer through a glass, might go over them repeatedly without observing them.

A LOT OF STAGS IN VIEW.

I shall now suppose that a lot of good stags have been seen—and very often good stags are worse to get at, being generally old deer and well up to the art of defence and the choosing of the ground. The next thing to be ascertained is that there are no other deer in the direction likely to be traversed in the course of the stalk. You will then consider if the ground is bad. If so, and the deer are feeding, wait till they have lain down, as for the most part, on bad ground, you have more advantage of deer when lying than when feeding, because they are in a fixed position, and probably you will see the worst of it at once; but when they are feeding, you can hardly tell what changes may take place, and perhaps after you are well on in your stalk, on account of some

change or other in their position, you may find yourself in a place you cannot well get out of, which sometimes happens even to good stalkers. However, I do not lay down this as a rule to be invariably followed, but in general I would consider it the safest, and that not only on bad ground, but on favourable ground. A man can stalk deer when lying with more certainty than when feeding; but on good or bad ground, if you cannot get within the desired range at once, when deer are lying, go as near as you can, and watch your opportunity to get nearer when they rise; and be always mindful to keep out of a place where you cannot change your course if desirable.

I must now pause a little, and prepare the young stalker how to go about his stalk. When deer are to be stalked in

any place, whether lying or standing, when you have to go round a long way out of their sight, and when you lose sight of the ground they are on altogether for a considerable time—a thing not uncommon—you must take a particular observation of the place where the deer are before you start, and of the point at which you mean to arrive—taking as your mark anything prominent about the place, such as stones, rocks, burns, hillocks, &c.; and this will be still more necessary if you are a stranger. If convenient, you might, during your journey, take a look at the place, and at what the deer are doing, so as to get gradually acquainted with the locality. If they are feeding, more caution is required, for fear they might change their position in the interval. But one thing you

40 *How to Behave when Deer suspect you.*

must observe, and that is—don't come foul upon the wind: other mistakes you may possibly correct, but this one you cannot.

HOW TO BEHAVE WHEN DEER SUSPECT YOU.

If they happen to suspect you at any time, either in actual stalking or in looking for them, you are not to withdraw yourself too quickly, but to disappear gradually, or to remain steady as you are until they take their eye off you. If their suspicion be strong, perhaps you ought to give them time to take a second look at you—which they commonly do after a short interval—and then you should disappear slowly. They are more ready to start if two of them suspect you at the same time.

STALKING DEER LYING IN A BAD PLACE.

I shall now imagine the deer to be lying in rather a bad place—the wind not likely to be troublesome—a thing that often happens when the ground is bad. You must look at the best possible way to get at them, making use of everything at your disposal to protect you from view—such as burns, hollows, hags, hillocks, stones, long grass, and heather, as the case may be. If the young stalker is leading a gentleman, he must consider whether the gentleman is tractable enough. If not, in a dangerous stalk, their labours may be in vain. Every one in the company must act in the same manner, whether they are few or many, but the smaller the number the better: two are enough—gentleman and stalker. You should take care that you have some cover at

42 *Deer Rising in Progress of Stalk.*

or near the place where you intend to shoot. Whatever dangers you may run as long as you are at a distance, when you approach a reasonable space for shooting you must have something to conceal you; and this ought always to be looked into when surveying the ground before the particular work of the stalk commences, as stalkers seldom get up to deer on bare ground all through. I will suppose now that you have got within range of them, and are only waiting till they rise—as sportsmen seldom fire at deer lying—and that you wish, if possible, to get them broadside, for fear of spoiling the haunches.

DEER RISING IN PROGRESS OF STALK.

We may now deal with another phase in the action. Since deer may rise dur-

ing the progress of the stalk — as they often do if they were lying when first seen—you cannot have an idea how long they may remain as they are, for they have no fixed time for rest. But if you see them in the act of lying down, and not appearing agitated, you may rely (in the most of cases) upon an hour or two for the performance of your duty, unless they are disturbed. Such repose, however, is mainly to be looked for in the middle part of the day : late and early the length of their rest is not to be relied on ; but it may be observed that they sometimes take a considerable rest under the influence of fear. Now, supposing they rise, you are not to despair of success. If they are few in number so much the better. You should try to make as much progress as possible when their heads are down, and should keep a con-

stant watch that none of them will lift his head unawares to you, for if one of them does so, and takes a glimpse in your direction before you stop your motion, you have a chance to be caught.

DIRECTIONS FOR CRAWLING.

You will take care, when in view of deer on bare ground, and endeavouring to approach them, that your motions be slow like those of a snail, especially when in close quarters. You must not move either hand or foot too suddenly. Your head should be foremost when going up hill, your feet when going down, and you should creep on your belly or hands and knees when on level ground. Some people have a bad practice of lifting their feet when on their belly in the struggle for getting on. It will be greatly in your

Approach Deer from Above or Below? 45

favour if the colour of your clothes corresponds with that of the ground.

SHOULD THE STALKER APPROACH DEER FROM
ABOVE OR BELOW?

As ordinary people differ much in their tastes, so do deer-stalkers in theirs, and we find that while some of them choose to stalk up-hill, others prefer the downward direction. For my own part, I would elect to be above the deer when stalking, since I consider the advantages on the whole greater when above than when below the deer, unless, indeed, one is caught on the sky-line. But as people do not always get their choice, things must be taken as they come, and deer may be stalked from any direction, if the ground and the wind are favourable. Some people say that this wind or that is

better for deer-stalking. This is a mistake; but that a particular wind is better for some ground is quite true, and this ought to be studied in the morning before leaving home. As a general rule, I consider the wind that blows against the water in any locality the best.

REMARKS ON THE WIND.

To treat satisfactorily of the action of the wind as it passes over the different sorts of ground is far above and beyond my pretensions. The formation of the different parts of the earth, especially of the mountains, is so vast and various, with peaks, corners, corries, and gullies—each of which, differing from every other in some detail, and each detail, whether small or great, having its own effect upon the action of the wind—that any attempt

at directions in several cases would be as likely to mislead as to assist the young stalker. Instances of the truth of this remark may be seen in high hills on a stormy day, when, in some of the circular-shaped corries not seldom formed round the upper part of rocks and peaks, with the wind blowing over the top, the mist may be seen driving through them, like water in a boiling caldron.

SIDE-WIND.

When the wind is blowing straight along the side of a hill or glen, and the ground comparatively level, with a pretty open sweep of country leeward, you can, if the ground will force you, go very close upon the side-wind.

It may be here explained that *side-wind* means the wind passing between

you and the deer. Going windwards, and towards the line of wind that passes the deer, means to go too close upon the side-wind. You have some advantage of being windward of the deer—if you don't go too far—as they are not nearly so watchful on the wind side as they are on the lee. There are more deer killed by side-wind than by any other, as they generally secure the lee side from attack. Now, if the ground is not such as above described, but consists of hollows and hillocks here and there, which may impart a false turn to the current, you cannot give so much trust to the side-wind; and if the wind be very high, the danger is always greater. When the wind is blowing with great force, and meets with any obstruction, it is sure to go farther off its natural course than in ordinary circumstances. I always found high winds subject to gusts and

changes, particularly on elevated ground ; and this is more likely to be the case if they are blowing off a higher ground of irregular formation in your immediate neighbourhood. Deer are always in good shelter when the wind is high, and a place of good shelter is seldom one in which the stalker can take much liberty with the wind if it be a side-wind and a gale blowing ; for, depend upon it, the deer are the best of judges as to where to take shelter : they know how to provide comfort and security at the same time.

SLANT-WIND.

When the wind is blowing with a slant on any hillside or glen, the upper side of the slant is generally the best for side-wind, except near the lee end of hills or ridges, where two currents are very likely

to meet. But of course the form of the ground or other circumstance may render the lower side available, or even the best.

DOWN-HILL WIND.

Wind blowing straight down the hill is generally considered unfavourable, as in that case deer are very often located where two winds meet—a sort of place they are very fond of, because it affords security from more than one point, besides being often the warmest place they can find. These two winds or currents are commonly caused by some rise in the ground above, of less or more extent, with an opening or slope on each side, by which the wind is driven with greater force, and converges towards some point in the place below.

Although side-wind is very commonly tried on a stalk in such a place as this,

it is often attended with uncertainty; and should a trial from below seem practicable, care ought to be taken lest there is anything in the way likely to obstruct the current and turn it up again. This is more to be dreaded if the deer are in some basin or corrie. As it is very hard to determine which side of this conjunction of currents is the best for side-wind (the causes and effects being so various), it may be as well to leave the solution to the attacking party. But where the down-hill wind does not appear to be deceitful, and the ground favourable, the stalk should be conducted in the ordinary way.

CROSS-WIND.

Deer-stalking in narrow glens and gullies, when the wind is blowing straight

across, is a very uncertain business, especially if the wind is high. We naturally expect the deer to be on the shelter side of a glen — the side which is, of course, worst to stalk. The rapid fall in the ground generally, and the obstruction to the current often caused by the opposite side of the glen, makes the confusion in the air sometimes quite incalculable. Here we have to face down-hill wind again in one of its worst forms : side-wind most likely must be tried, but you cannot depend much upon it. If the deer are near the brow of the glen, it is so much in your favour ; but to be more sure of your business, keep as far to aside as your shooting-range will admit, lest by going too near a wind-current you warn them of your approach. If they are so far down the side as to require you to go much down from the top to

get within reach of them, your chance will become more uncertain, especially if it is one of those places where the wind, after striking against the exposed side of a glen, returns upon itself, and drives sometimes half-way up the sheltered side—for the deer are very likely to be about the place where this receding current ceases to ascend, since this is naturally a calm place. A receding current may occur in a place of this kind, independent of the opposite side, if the edge of the glen is very steep; but its effects are seldom felt far down, and when this occurs, you must just take your chance of them, or give them up. Deer sometimes are on the exposed side in glens of this description, and I would expect them to be below where the receding wind-current parted from the direct one, and you might stalk them with suc-

cess if you did not go so far down as where the reversing wind takes the turn ; but if you find yourself in a calm, which signifies that you have come to where the wind divides, you may be sure that you advanced past the safe limit. My remarks on the action of reversing currents are to be regarded as principally applicable to stormy days : when the weather is moderate, things are more favourable, and it is easier to judge how to proceed.

UP-HILL WIND.

Up-hill wind is considered so favourable that little need be said about it ; but the judging of the ground may not be less necessary than on other occasions, as less or more of this will have to be done in every case. Reversing currents are not likely to be so troublesome, unless

one happens to be, on a stormy day, near steep rocks, which by obstruction may cause the current to reverse.

STALKING UP-WIND.

I have been endeavouring hitherto to treat of the more difficult cases of deer-stalking. Perhaps I should say something about the more simple—that is, the up-wind—cases, where there is no danger of reversing currents being met. It may be remarked, however, that chances at deer by going straight up against the wind, and therefore without taking any turn to aside, are of more rare occurrence than might perhaps be expected, since deer, as already mentioned, commonly secure the lee side from attack. But however favourable the circumstances may appear, the usual precaution is to be

observed—that one makes the best use of one's eyes and brain. I have seen cases that looked most promising at first, entangled with something that perhaps could not be easily foreseen, for deer are not at all destitute of wisdom. For example, it is very common to see some rubbish of beasts lingering on the lee side of a lot of deer, as if by instinct to guard the rest from danger. They seem to be perfectly well aware that since the lean beasts run no risk of being shot, they are the safest sentinels to post in those positions of danger from which the wind can communicate no warning. Here, as in other cases, the judging of the ground is the principal point. How a certain rise of ground, or a low place, stands with regard to elevation to where the deer are—that is to say, whether such a place, between you and the deer,

is likely to cover you, when passing a certain other place, still farther from them—is a matter you must study carefully; and you may have more than one difficulty of this kind during a single stalk. If you can master these things, and the action of the wind, you may conclude that you can stalk deer. But the amount of brain labour required in this business renders some men naturally incapable of becoming good stalkers.

When stalking up-wind, if rubbish may turn up in your way, and the ground and the wind will allow, a change to side-wind would seem to be the remedy.

STALKING DOWN-WIND.

Chances are sometimes got of deer from above with down-wind, if they are below very sharp and steep edges or

rocks, where the wind begins to reverse quickly after passing the edge of the top, or where it passes over them altogether; as also in places where two winds meet, if the currents have a tendency to work up to the top, after coming in contact with each other. The greatest danger in these places is that you may give them the wind on either of the sides before you come to the place where the reversing current is ascending in your favour. Cases of this kind are tried more for experiment than for any certainty that appears to have attended them. One ought to be well up to his work, and acquainted with the ground, before attempting such a case.

CALM WEATHER.

I have been for some time treating of the effect of winds upon deer-stalking,

and it may be well now to say a little about calm weather. As sure as deer are in shelter on a blowy day, they are on exposed ground on a fine calm day. There is no wind they can depend upon, and therefore they place themselves where the eye can work to advantage in all directions. Very often there is some difficulty in getting a chance of deer in calm weather, especially if there are any midges. The ground which they occupy is generally bare and open; and if there be any wind, it is commonly so changeable that it cannot be depended upon by the stalker. On some calm, hot days the wind blows alternately from all points of the compass, and that even on the tops of high hills; but there is always a chance that it will blow regularly from one point towards the evening.

SUN-SHADE.

I have successfully taken advantage of places under shade to get at deer in the evening when the sun was low and shining brightly on them. One may possibly do without the shade, if on a level with the deer at some distance, and in a straight line between the deer and the sun—a position that can be determined by observing that one's shadow points towards the deer—for then the deer's eyes are dazzled by the sunbeams; but in either case, one must be provided with a place to hide one's self some time before a place of shooting is reached.

STALKING ON MOSSY GROUND.

On open moors and mossy ground, where the surface is unbroken, stalking is

very troublesome ; but where the ground is broken with hags and burns here and there, it does not prove by trial so bad as it looks. When a stalker is examining the ground before commencing a stalk, he ought to notice if there is any apparent run of water on the course he would like to follow, as where there is a run of water, and the moss deep, trenches are sometimes cut in it to the depth of four or five feet, although it might look from a distance smooth and whole ; and these zigzag trenches prove occasionally very advantageous to the stalker.

RUTTING SEASON.

I think I have now gone over the most of the common cases in deer-stalking, except those that occur during the rutting season ; and I expect that the points al-

ready touched upon, however imperfectly, may be found generally applicable to this season also, except in so far as the derangement in the order and behaviour of the deer may alter the case. To describe the scenes that take place on some occasions at this time, when a large herd of deer are together, would defy the most expert writer. Our forefathers alluded to this time in their sporting songs with more than ordinary interest. For my own part, I consider the first twelve days of October the most exciting part of a shooting season. But our modern sportsmen do not appear to care more about it than in so far as it may contribute to increase the number of heads. To revert to our former subject, I may observe that, after the rutting season commences, there is no use in looking for good stags but among or in the vicinity of hinds. In

large forests good stags are seldom alone, until they begin to look for hinds ; but on sheep ground, in former times, it was a common thing for the best stags to be alone except during the time of rut. When the stags commence to look for hinds, they begin to break up in forests, as if they began to dislike each other, which, in fact, they do. Again, it will be observed in this restless season that hinds are very largely come in contact with, and these are not, in some respects, easier dealt with than stags ; for, when approaching them, great caution is necessary, as their eye may be about the first thing that will come into view. They don't wear traitors on their heads like the stags, and whatever mistakes they may commit at long distances, depend upon it they see at least as well as the most keen-eyed stalker. There is, however,

one advantage to be derived from the fact that the stags are roaring, which may sometimes be very useful in directing your course when stalking. When you happen to be after a lot of hinds with a good stag among them, at which you wish to get a chance, you will perhaps find, if he is any way suspicious, that he will spend the most of his spare time on the wind side of the hinds; and should they begin to move in the way of feeding while you are in a fixed position, and should the stag appear to get out of danger, you should neither give up hope nor make a rash effort, for if you keep within range of some of the hinds, there is always a chance that he may come round to see what is going on. This is more to be hoped for if there are more stags about the place. Deer are not quite so easily disturbed at this time, on account of the

commotion among themselves. Where there is a great concourse of deer, should you happen to start a few small stags, the rest would be very ready to suppose that they ran away from some other stag. You may by chance at this time meet with a single stag, looking for hinds. Though a stag might be alone at the beginning of this season, they don't commonly move much in the daytime; but when the rut is well on, they go from one place to another in the height of the day, and when it is desired to come in contact with one of them, great care is required, as they are naturally so much on the look-out, that the least thing will attract their eye.

After the 12th of October stag-shooting may be said to be at an end; and unless a shot be taken at a hind, nothing else remains.

HIND-SHOOTING.

When hind-shooting begins, the picking of good yeld hinds is such a difficult business that few, if any, attain to such a degree of perfection in it that they may not be mistaken. And this is not to be wondered at when we consider the uncertainty of judging the condition of any animal at such a distance as this must be done. The real wonder is the perfection which some men come to in this branch of the business. At this time, as well as at others, the glass is very useful, for it will decide, say, at three or four times the distance at which the eye can.

Yeld hinds are in their best condition in October and November; but to give directions how to know a good yeld hind is not an easy task. What might be quite sufficient for determining the

condition of a hind when looking at it with the naked eye, must be far worse to describe. But I am so anxious to help my friend the young stalker that I can hardly pass this subject without giving him some assistance. There are, in our country, at least three classes of deer distinguishable by colour, and the distinction is more visible in winter than at other times. Some of them are yellow, called golden colour; others are somewhat brownish; and the third are of a somewhat dark blue. The first two kinds have the best haunches; the other kind may be in fair condition, and well tasted, but they seldom have fat haunches. There are occasional light-grey ones, apparently old hinds, that are in good condition. Young beasts of any kind are not in such good condition as those that have come to maturity. Yeld hinds are

shorter and thicker in the neck, more rough about the ears, better coated, more plump and well made up, and not so large in the belly as milk hinds, till late in the season, when the fawn begins to increase the bulk. Many yeld hinds, it is true, do not carry the marks I have mentioned ; but if one of that description is got, she ought to be worth killing. They are more shy than the other deer, take good care of themselves if disturbed, and are fond of the less frequented parts of a forest. I have observed, when there was any disturbance among deer, that the best animals (both stags and hinds) were the most difficult to get at, for they have a wonderful tendency to be farthest from the point of danger.

STALKING IN WOODS.

Stalking in woods is not so agreeable as in the open country on a fine day. Stormy days are best in woods, and deer are fond of being there in rough weather. Very commonly you have a bad view in woods, and often are within shooting range of deer before you see them; and since they are extremely sharp in the power of hearing, the noise you make going through a wood on a calm day may start them before you are aware of their presence. Therefore stormy days are better in woods, as the noise of the wind baffles their hearing; but the wind is as much to be dreaded for carrying the scent in woods as in the open country, although it does not carry quite so far.

DRIVES.

There is little occasion to say much about drives. This is a coarse sort of way of going to work, and depends for its success not so much upon knowledge as upon force. Yet some drives go wrong for want of foresight. I would think it advisable, when the nature of the ground admits of it, that the men on the passes should be so placed as to be able to change their position unseen, if the appearance of things, in the progress of the drive, seemed to require it.

STALKING DEER LYING WITH DOUBTFUL WIND.

If you are stalking deer lying where the wind is very doubtful, and the ground favourable, you may as well not go so near them as you wish until they begin to rise, for the longer you have

to remain near them the greater the danger: but if the place is well adapted for shooting after they start, this precaution is not so necessary.

A MAN STALKING FOR HIMSELF.

A man that can stalk for himself has a considerable advantage in case of a hurry at close quarters over a man who is guided by another. It often happens that ~~the~~ most precious moments of time are lost in preparations at the time of shooting; whereas a man not obstructed by these trammels might perhaps have his two deer killed before the ceremony of instruction was over. It would be useful for the man intending to shoot, that he should be initiated so as to be able to take the lead a little before the time of shooting.

ALLOWING DEER TO GET THE WIND.

In some places there is a certain way in which the stalker, when otherwise defeated, can approach deer, and possibly get a pick of them, provided the wind is favourable and the ground adapted for the purpose. If they are so numerous as to cover a considerable extent of ground, and that it is possible only to get at the outskirts of the flock, it might be well to allow the lee end of the herd to get the wind. The bulk not being aware of the presence of the enemy, would move windward; but the ground they will have to traverse must be circular, or otherwise so advantageous to the stalker as to enable him to meet them at a certain point. But the worst of it is, that few places are suited for this sort of stalking.

DUNCAN MACINTYRE'S POETICAL DESCRIPTION
OF DEER-STALKING.

The following lines, both in Gaelic and English, are taken from Duncan Macintyre's poem, "The praise of Ben-doirain." These lines having exclusive reference to deer-stalking, I thought they would be of interest to some of the readers of this little work, the translation into English being made by no less a personage than Professor Blackie.

"Tha'n eilid anns a' ghleannan so ;
Cha n-amadan gun eólas
A leanadh i mar b'aithne dha
Tigh'n furasda na códhail ;
Gu faiteach bhi 'na earalas,
Tigh'n am faigse dhi mu'n caraich i,
Gu faicilleach, gle earraigeach,
Mu'n fairich i ga cóir e ;
Feadh shloc, a's ghlac, a's chamhanan,
A's clach a dheanamh falach air,
Bhi beachdail air an talamh,
'S air a' char a thig na neóil air.

74 *Macintyre's Poetical Description.*

'S an t-astar bhi ga tharruinn air
Cho macanta 's a b'aithne dha,
Gu'n glacadh e gu h-haindeoin i
Le anabharra seóltachd."

TRANSLATION.

"The hind that dwelleth in the glen
Is light of foot and airy ;
Who tracks her way upon the Ben
Must be full wise and wary.
Softly, softly on her traces,
He must steal with noiseless paces,
Nigh and still more nigh,
Lest she turn with sudden starting,
And, like feathered arrow darting,
Cheat the eager eye.

He must know to dodge behind
Rock and block in face of wind ;
In the ditch and in the pit
Dripping lie, and soaking sit.
Stoop, and creep, and crawl,
Ever with quick eye to note
Face of earth and clouds that float,
In the azure hall.

Wisely, wisely, winding round
Where she surely will be found ;
And then planted surely,
Where with fixed and steady aim
He may mark the dappled game
For his own securely."

WOUNDED DEER.

When deer are wounded they are almost sure to make for the place they consider their home. Thus in newly-made forests, whatever turn a deer at first takes when wounded, it will ultimately make for the mother forest, unless its wound is so severe that it cares little where it may go. When a deer, on being shot, falls, one should immediately run up to secure it, since, if the shot has taken effect above the backbone, the animal quickly falls, but will soon recover, rise, and escape, unless this precaution is taken.

A deer shot through the body may go a long way before stopping, particularly if it has a suspicion of being followed. If the shot has taken effect through the main bag only, and if none of the

tender parts are wounded, recovery is possible; but if any of the small intestines are cut, an inclination to lie down is sometimes shown, and then probably death will ensue within twenty-four hours. Without the help of a dog it is sometimes difficult to secure deer with broken legs.

DEER-HOUNDS.

Deer-hounds are now very much out of fashion, although a number of years ago in great demand. Sportsmen, I suppose, think that their usefulness does not repay the trouble and expense incurred in their keep and management. Besides, the quality of the hounds has become such that many of them are little better than good collie dogs. Although we are told, on good authority, that deer-hounds

in olden times performed such remarkable feats as that one of them could kill two deer out of one herd, yet our generation, by reason of its degeneracy, cannot be made to believe it. One thing may be taken as an undoubted fact, that a very good deer-hound can never be reared in a kennel. A deer-hound has more advantage when slipped from below than from above the deer. If the ground is broken, dogs are apt to fall when going down-hill, and the deer has the advantage of being at liberty to take a straight course wherever he chooses; but when slipped from below, the deer is more or less exhausted before the dog comes up to him, and the dog is all the better for getting a little warm by the time the deer turns from the hill, and has a good chance of intercepting him in the turn. Here is the time that the dogs of old did such havoc :

they took mostly in the turn, and killed them on the spot. Dogs should not be slipped too near the deer, for if they come too quickly in contact, the deer is too fresh, and the dogs are in great danger of being hurt or killed. Unless a dog can take a deer in three or four minutes, he will not take him at all. He may, by perseverance, make the deer turn on him; but he will not take him by speed.

DRESS IN SNOWY WEATHER.

In the time of snow a stalker would be much the better of some white covering over his clothes when stalking deer; and to be completely clad, even the gun-cover should be white, or, at the very least, a white cover on the head ought to be worn, as it is of immense advantage in close quarters.

REMARKS.

Some people when stalking, and required to keep themselves down, will only bend their heads, as if they had no joints. On this account a man leading a party must begin to crawl sooner than otherwise he would have occasion to do. There are other people who, if they lose sight of a place at which they wish to arrive, and go round some distance, cannot discover it again. I find people that are brought up in low countries and in towns greatly deficient in this faculty. In my opinion, none can come up in this respect to those that are brought up in the hills: they can judge where deer can be stalked by looking at the ground, better than any other class of men that I am acquainted with.

THE MAKING AND PRESERVING FORESTS.

This requires more attention than people often bestow upon it. When a forest is newly made, it should be very little shot, if any, the first year, and when you do take a shot, do it at the march from where the deer are coming, and that when the wind is favourable to take them into your ground, and never follow them for a second chance. Very little should be done on the farthest side from where the deer are coming until they can depend upon your forest as a home, and even then it should be done with consideration. I have known persons that would not be content to go to bed unless they had blown up every beast on the ground. People of this class cannot expect to have good forests, and when

they have deer they are seldom but rubbish, for old stags are too wise to remain in a place where a gun is pointed at their noses every time they cross a certain line. Every forest should have what is called a sanctuary, if the extent would afford it. If deer are about they may be induced to frequent a place, and that even near dwelling-houses, if they are properly treated. Heather should be burnt in forests as on sheep-farms.

HEATHER-BURNING.

In this age of knowledge it is curious that heather-burning is not better understood. Sportsmen and farmers have been differing about it from the beginning; but within the last twenty years a great improvement has taken place in their

relations. Notwithstanding this improvement, however, a number of people are still discontented on both sides. The grazier says he got too little burnt, and the sportsman says that he got too much. In this way a sort of antagonism exists between them; whereas, if things were better understood, the greatest harmony might prevail. One question ought to be decided—Are grouse fond of burnt ground? I affirm they are, after the young heather begins to sprout; and they can make use of it at a much earlier stage of growth than sheep can. Besides, all the animals in this country subsisting on hill-pasture are fond of burnt ground.

The tenth part of a moor may be burnt every year, not only without any harm, but with great advantage to the game,

as it enriches the pasture—both heather and grass ; and the grazing tenant, even in his own interest, should not burn more, for in burning too much in one year, too large a portion of his ground will, at one and the same time, become rank and distasteful even to sheep. Hence it would be better for him to burn a little every year than too much in one place. Too much should not be burnt in one place. Where possible, it should be in stripes, and in detached patches or stripes, as in this manner any stock will be better distributed over the ground, and will facilitate the moving about of young grouse. On those moors where heather is plentiful and continuous, it is dangerous to kindle fire in dry weather, as there is a risk of the whole moor being consumed. In such a case as

this, the direction of the wind and the point to begin at ought to be studied, with plenty of hands to keep the fire within proper limits. But where ground has been properly burnt, there is no such danger, except, perhaps, to a certain extent in extremely dry weather. One bad effect of having heather too long unburnt, is the length of time it takes to come to use again; but when it is burnt at ten or twelve years old, it will grow again very quickly. Where there is a patch of heather useful in a snow-storm, it ought to be preserved; but very small bits of it might occasionally be burnt to keep a fresh supply, since such a place as this is serviceable to all sorts of animals. When a piece of ground is properly burnt for pasture, it is equally so for game; but the amount

of labour required to keep a moor in proper condition is seldom bestowed. When either tenant has only a year or two of a place, he is apt to be careless, and therefore the landlord is the person who ought to look after these matters.



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