

## DOGS AND DOG BREAKING.

BY CAPT. THOMAS S. BLACKWELL.

"Dog will have his day."  
—*Hamlet*, Act V., Scene 1.

No doubt the immortal William was a lover of the canine race, as tradition tells us that he got mixed up in some poaching business occasionally, and in the play in which Denmark's prince is the hero he gives us the above line. The dog has had his day in all the sports in which his human (I am sorry I cannot add an "e" in many cases) master took part, and will in ages yet to come occupy a prominent part in field sports. There is no question that, to the thorough sportsman, the working of his canine companions is one of the chief pleasures of the chase, be it in the hunting field when in pursuit of the stag, the fox, or the hare; "among the purple heather" with the grouse; in the stubbles and turnips with the partridges; on the marshes and fens with the snipe and duck—in fact, wherever the dog assists us in our sports by flood and field. The plethoric "bag" yielded by the "drives" or the battue of the present day does not afford a tithe of the pleasure that a few brace of birds picked up over a steady pair of pointers or setters will give.

To perfectly appreciate a good dog one must have trained him one's self. No doubt you will be able to purchase plenty of thoroughly broken animals, or can get your youngsters well initiated by professional dog breakers, but it is not at all the same thing as when you have seen Don and Juno grow up under your eye and hand from raw puppyhood into a staunch, reliable pair.

One of the first things to instil into a puppy is a perfect idea of obedience. Commencing very early with a young dog it is wonderful how soon he will discriminate between right and wrong.

As a rule, seven or eight months old is about the proper time to begin the puppy's breaking in proper. Some leave their young dogs to be a year, or a few months over it, but it is easier and better to commence earlier.

A well-bred dog is always much easier to break than one with a bar sinister on his escutcheon, but the particular strain is a matter of choice or opinion,

In pointers a great many sportsmen have a penchant for the large lemon, or red and white, which are fine, noble-looking animals, but for work and true grit commend me to the small, thick set, rather common-looking Irish breed. A great fault with pointers, especially the large, heavy class, is the tendency to become footsore and knock up altogether by the close of a hard day.

Once a pointer is well broken you have him always with reasonable care. The setter you have always to be at. No matter how well trained, the wild, high-spirited blood seems to ooze out on the first laxity of discipline. Still, with this fault, the setter is a great favorite with knights of the gun. There is a dash and "go" in him that are not in the pointer, and he can last out a long day much better. Let a setter get a good bath in a pool or stream and he freshens up at once.

Here, again, there is much diversity of opinion. One man will swear by the handsome black and tan Gordons, another by the Laveracks, another by the English setter, but for looks, dash and endurance there is nothing that comes up to the Irish red setter.

Occasionally we find a most excellent worker in a "dropper," as a cross between the pointer and setter is called, but as a rule the purest blood of whichever particular breed is fancied should be obtained. We will presume that our canine recruit has been thoroughly grounded in his preliminary drill, and that he can be taken to try what effect the said drill has had on him when introduced to active service in

Fresh fields and pastures new.

There is very great difficulty often experienced in trying to get young dogs to beat a field properly. They will, especially if any way shy or timid, stick to your heels, or if they do venture away from you will be back again like lightning, with their tails between their legs, at the unexpected sight of a pig doing a bit of amateur gardening in a potato patch, or a goat on her hind legs *budding* one of her master's trees; anything, in fact, that is an optical novelty.

Sometimes, again, a dog is of a high-

mettled, fearless, dashing disposition, chasing sparrows, cats, butterflies, etc. Let him chase away for a while; it is better than that he should get the habit of sticking to your heel.

I had a red and white setter in my youthful days that used, when quite a pup, to set everything—wagtails running about the yard, sheep in the fields, crows on the tree tops—in fact everything that came in his way. He spent months, I should say, in setting and tearing after small birds, cats, bees, etc., and yet, after all, turned out one of the best dogs I ever owned. I do not recommend this system, but merely mention the case to show that a young dog *may* be let take his fling and make a good one after.

It is strange to see the change that comes

O'er the spirit of his dream  
when a dog comes for the first time on the scent of partridge, or other game birds.

The old foolish feather-headed look is gone, and the eager, transfixed eye and quivering jaw tell the intensity of his feelings.

Generally speaking, when once a young dog has found birds and knows the scent there will be no occasion to encourage him to beat—he will, if anything, be only too willing to oblige you in that way. If the youngster persistently refuses to beat for you, do not reverse the tables by beating him. If petting and coaxing will not make him work, take out with him a steady old dog that you can depend on. Let the veteran find some birds and bring the youngster up as close as possible. When the birds get up, lead the juvenile to the place they have left to sniff and run about over. The chances are that he will very soon commence galloping after the old one wherever he goes. I have known a terrier that kept near one being used as “the encourager,” but should prefer the legitimate sort of dog.

Most terriers have vulgar tastes and a rat or rabbit in a hedgerow is more to their fancy than the best of game in the open. Still I have known small dogs—a white nondescript terrier, *exempli gratia*—that would beat a field, turnips or potatoes for choice, as well as it could possibly be done, and would set birds for a few seconds before running in on them.

I remember one great triumph I had when I was an enthusiastic youngster, in reforming a “blinked” one. A Mr.

C—, my Gamaliel in all sporting matters, had a very handsome Irish red bitch that got into the aggravating fashion of sticking to heel. One day he got so vexed with Molly, when he had exhausted all his patience and blandishments on her, that he turned and made a kick at her. Poor Molly was off like a shot, but not fast enough to escape a peppering of No. 6 that she got as she ran through a gateway.

He declared he would shoot her as soon as he got home, but I got the death sentence commuted to transportation for life. I kept petting and fondling Molly till she became very fond of me.

The first day I took her out with the gun she was very timid, and the first couple of shots I fired she cut away about forty yards from me, looking back in a most bewildered, frightened fashion, as if fully expecting a second dose of the lead pills. She was a lovely animal as she stood looking at me with those big, soft, beseeching, gazelle-like eyes, and pity determined me to do my best by her. My reputation, too, I felt was at stake.

In a very short time she came to understand that she was not to be put through another course of allopathic treatment, and my homœopathic system of small bits of biscuit or bread after every shot had a capital effect. Molly eventually turned out a most valuable animal, and Mr. C— was only too glad to grant her a free pardon and remove the ban of outlawry passed on her.

A “gun shy” dog is a most aggravating thing, and if gentle means will not effect a cure, the case is hopeless. In India they had a custom of firing off pistols or guns before feeding young horses intended for chargers, so that they came to look on a shot with most agreeable feelings. Might not the same custom be pursued with regard to young sporting dogs?

Presuming that our youngsters will beat, the next thing to try and instil into them is a correct notion of how they are to work.

Now comes the first drilling into requisition. If the young ones have been taught to obey each motion of the hand, they will, without difficulty, soon take the cue from you as to what you wish them to do. If they are regular raw recruits, the probability is you will have to whistle and yell like a “bo’sun’s mate” to get them to pay any attention to you at all.

If the young dog makes a fair attempt at beating, it is better to take him out by himself. Always get into a field so that he may have the wind to help him, and try and make him cross you in front, to right and to left. The natural instinct is, of course, to go off straight in the "wind's eye," and not to "tack," but this must be checked and the proper method of ranging inculcated.

To make a dog a perfect ranger is a most difficult thing, but it is worth all the trouble you may take if you succeed in having an animal that works and quarters his ground in good style. You must have a large stock of patience and perseverance to get a young dog into this.

If he beats up to the fence of the field you are in, whistle to him, and when he looks up wave your hand in the direction you want him to take.

No doubt it will take you a long time to make him cross and recross you, especially when the youngster gets into company; but whatever may be the trouble persevere, and in time you will make good rangers of your young dogs.

I confess to having a great weakness for a fine high ranger, particularly for a heath-clad moor or mountain, provided you can depend on him.

Some dogs are very steady so long as they are within fair distance, but let them get away from you and they run riot at once.

I know the close beater—that is, never more than forty or fifty yards away from the gun—is a killing dog, but I back the dashing, brave-going fellow who will try the side of a mountain for you, like a collie going to drive in a lot of sheep, but will stand like a rock when he finds birds.

I think perfection is reached when you can have a dog that will do a sort of sentry-duty business in front of you, if you desire it, or dash off "à la Uhlan," scouring the country round.

I fear these are rather unorthodox sentiments, but many brother sportsmen may remember some day when the bags would have been easy to carry but for a "free lance" who did outpost duty in front of the orthodox dogs all day, never letting them get a point at all.

Since breech-loading guns have taken the place of the old muzzle loaders I fear that the same attention is not paid to the "down charge" that there used to be. This is a great mistake. The rule of

"down charge" should be religiously observed and not the slightest deviation allowed.

Old dogs get into the way of watching their masters, and the moment they see the cartridges in they are off like shots. This may perhaps be allowable in old ones that know their work, but it is better never to allow a dog, old or young, to stir till he gets the word.

We will suppose you are shooting to make your dog—not a bag. Suppose he finds and sets a covey steadily. When they rise, only shoot one bird—an outside one for choice—so as not to confuse and fluster him with seeing more than one fall.

Be ready to check him at once should he attempt to rush in on it. Keep him religiously to the "down charge," not allowing him to make the slightest move. Load very slowly and deliberately, so as to make him patient and steady. When you have loaded, say quietly "Seek dead," and let him go on taking care that he does not start off with a dash in on the bird, when probably there will be a somersault and a cloud of feathers, as if some one had ripped open a bed—the whole much to the detriment of both dog and bird.

Let him go quietly up to the bird, and when near hold up the hand sharply and call "To-ho!" so as to make him set it, and not go in and grip it. Go slowly up to him, raise the bird and lay it before him, letting him nose and sniff it, but on no account let him snap it. Keep him over the bird for a long time, caressing and fondling him, and smoothing down the feathers. Great care is necessary to prevent the young dog rushing in on the dead, or worse still, the wounded bird, as if he once contracts this horrid habit it might be just as well to shoot him.

How often we see a fine dog—a grand ranger and finder—steady as a rock on his point, and there it ends! What style, what nose, what steadiness on a point can make up for the mangled *pulp* we have to pick up after each shot?

I remember a friend who had a grand-looking setter that he bought at a long price. This dog was simply perfection till you were (un)fortunate enough to bring down a bird, when Rap went for it immediately. The man carrying the bag was always ready with a couple of good, big stones, and many a time I have seen the dog floored with one of them,

but it was all of no avail; Rap would have his "pound of flesh." Sometimes, if the birds were young and tender, he bolted them wholesale, but generally he only chewed them severely. My friend used afterward to hunt him with a muzzle, which was an improvement so far as the look of the bag was concerned.

If you "wing" a bird be sure and make the young dog stick to seeking for it. If he cannot find it at once he will probably be inclined to set off to look for something fresh; but do not allow this on any account. The practice gained in roading out the whereabouts of a wounded bird is of more value to the young dog than a dozen birds shot dead before him.

There is something very beautiful and exciting in seeing a dog work out the "foot" of a wounded partridge, down a potato furrow, up a hedgerow, down the other side, through all sorts of ins and outs, until at last he stands transfixed over some tuft or bush, where the bird has come to anchor.

Nothing is more congenial to a young pointer or setter than a rabbit hunt. If you value your youngsters nip the first tendency to "fur" in the bud, for nothing so soon demoralizes a dog as indulging in "bunny" hunting.

If your dogs are ever allowed to be at large, and there are any rabbits near, they (the dogs) will very soon become pottering brutes that will do nothing but stick about hedgerows and coverts.

Young dogs are seldom proof against the temptation to run after a hare or rabbit that jumps up before them, and the probability is that they are off before you get the chance to stop them. If so, take it easy; it will not mend matters to put yourself in a good way of getting an apoplectic fit from yelling and running after them. Sit down resignedly, take out your pipe and smoke away till the truants come back. This they will probably do in about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, looking very much blown and bedraggled and decidedly sheepish and ashamed of themselves. Rate them well, giving a few sharp cuts of the whip and calling out "Ware hare!"

If a young dog persists in chasing "fur," a good plan is to have a stout peg and short check line, and when he points a hare or you see one in the form, drive the peg very firmly into the ground and attach the line to his collar. He will be "brought to" with such a jerk that it will knock chase out of his head, and, if the collar is a spiked one, the lesson will be even more severe.

Killing a hare in the form to your dog's point, though not a sportsmanlike thing, is recommended as a good steadier to stop chasing.

A very necessary lesson to instil into your young pupil's mind is that of coming to "heel" and staying there as long as required.

In ordinary rough shooting this will be found most necessary—for instance, in stealing on a wild duck or any bird that "keeps his weather eye open." What chance of a shot have we if Ponto insists on seeing what is before him, or Ranger makes a mad charge off through water and mud when his patience is exhausted?

I have had pointers and setters that would crawl along after me for any distance, and some that would even stay in one spot when told, but I confess they were like "angels' visits."

Sometimes dogs will keep to heel well enough, but it is almost an impossibility to stop them from sitting up occasionally to see what is in the wind, and it is hardly necessary to say that Ponto's white head or big Ranger's red one peering up over the heath and rushes is not calculated to make an old mallard or duck stay there.

Anyone who has a likely young pointer or setter, and the time and patience, by all means let him do his own breaking in. No man thoroughly knows the pleasure of a day's shooting until he takes it over a brace of dogs that he has broken in himself.

Shooting a sackful of grouse or partridge is not *sport*. No one treasures up reminiscences of a big day of this sort, but every true sportsman can recall the sagacious doings of some canine favorite.