



NOTES

BY 'RAPIER'

THE subject of Lord William Beresford's sincerely lamented death has of course been exhaustively treated in many quarters, but it is impossible to write about contemporary sport without making reference to the loss of one of the very best all-round sportsmen of the generation. For some time before the malady seized him he had been looking extremely ill, and considering the buoyancy of his disposition his reply, 'Not very grand, old man!' to an inquiry about his health, showed too plainly that his looks revealed the truth. The afternoon before his death a telegram was received at Hurst Park saying that though he had passed a bad night his strength was well maintained; but anticipation of the worst could not be dismissed, as the severe fall he met with four years previously had rendered the complaint from which he was suffering peculiarly dangerous to him. I have known many men who were widely popular on the turf, but never one for whom such an affectionate regard was so widely entertained. Though he was not such a master of humorous expression as is his brother Lord Marcus, Lord William had a particularly keen wit and a characteristically quaint way of summing up a situation; he always seemed delighted to do any one a good turn, and warmly to appreciate any attempt to render him a service. It is no figure of speech to say that his loss will be severely felt. Perhaps no man who went racing last year would be more severely missed.

It is natural to speak of Lord William's personal character and to lament the disappearance of his genial presence before writing of what he did in the racing world, though this was certainly more than merely remarkable. It was he who practically introduced the American methods of training and riding which have been so extraordinarily successful. Something of the same sort had been tried before. Iroquois was trained by an American

when he secured the Derby and other races, and Simms, with the forward American seat, had won races at Newmarket and elsewhere. I well remember the first time Simms rode at headquarters, when we were inclined to deride his performance, till he jumped off and came in alone with a very fair field and some of our best jockeys behind him. On the whole, however, these early experiences were not very encouraging, and many people were inclined to believe that Lord William was making a mistake when he threw in his lot with Transatlantic styles and customs. I recollect Sloan's arrival at Newmarket, and a talk to some of our own jockeys about him before he had ever worn silk in England. One of the best of our own men was derisive about the American seat, after watching Sloan at exercise on the Heath ; but all the same 'He can ride, you know !' the English jockey was shrewd enough to add ; though another of our own men demonstrated to me on his own hack why it was that an American jockey could have little control over his horse when getting up his whip to finish, the English critic not then realising the American underhand style of using the whip. It is a matter of history that Lord William was absolutely on the right tack, and it was a bold thing indeed to depart from tradition as he did and find out a new way to continuous victory. But from whom could one expect boldness if not from a Beresford ? And it did not need his Victoria Cross, gained by one of the bravest deeds ever done in warfare, to prove that no bolder man ever lived than 'Bill Beresford.'

It was naturally supposed in 1899, when Lord William won no fewer than sixty-nine races, worth in all £42,796, that he must have had a brilliantly successful year. The Duke of Westminster was ahead of him in the list of winning owners with only £35 short of £44,000 ; but this large sum was the result of sixteen successes only, and it was exceedingly surprising to learn that Lord William had had a bad year. The failure of Sibola in the Oaks, when Sloan for once rode a very poor race and was beaten a head by Musa, was the heaviest blow of the season ; for the rest, though so many good things came off, others that seemed equally good went down. How desperately hard it is to win money by backing horses has rarely been more strikingly demonstrated than by the result of Lord William Beresford's racing experiences during the season before last. Those who have had most experience of the turf, however, will be least astonished, for it is wonderful how quickly

men who have been carrying all before them go out when their luck ceases—though, of course, Lord William is not an instance of this, as he was far too wise and wary ever to get out of his depth. I call to mind going down to Newmarket to a July meeting, not very long ago, in a railway carriage in which was the plunger of the period, who showed me his book with a long array of four-figure wins on one side and very few losses on the other. Nothing was easier, he assured me, than to win money if one had certain qualifications and advantages (which he fortunately possessed); and after the first two races that day he had added very largely to his store with two real dashes. ‘Will he last till the end of the year?’ a friend who was talking to me suggested as the plunger turned away having told us of his continued success. I thought it improbable, and, as a matter of fact, that all-victorious backer was hopelessly broken before the Houghton meeting. Such a result is, however, by no means singular. It is not very long ago since a dashing young owner made a meteoric appearance on the Turf, carrying off, amongst other races, first the St. Leger and then the Cesarewitch, this latter one of the events on which a man who plunged and had faith in his star was likely to win a fortune; but two years afterwards the colours of the owner in question had finally disappeared from the racecourse.

Last year, in the February number, before the weights for the Grand National were published, I suggested that it would be easy to pick the winner in fifteen tries. Only six of the horses selected went to the post, and my lot included the first, third, fourth and fifth, whilst Hidden Mystery, another of the six starters, was knocked down, and so, as a great many persons thought, prevented from achieving an almost inevitable victory. I missed the second, Barsac, after much consideration as to whether I would have him in the fifteen or give Cathal another chance. This year I am inclined to think that the winner might be discoverable in a smaller number. I am of course writing before the weights are out, and handicappers sometimes do odd things; but assuming that the burdens are reasonably adjusted, my little lot this year would include Manifesto, Ambush II., Hidden Mystery, Romanoff, Levanter, Uncle Jack, Covert Hack, Cushendun, Bloomer, and Fanciful, which makes ten. It is doubtful whether Romanoff will stand, and I have heard a whisper to the effect that Hidden Mystery is not the soundest horse in training. Rumour has it at the time of writing that the Duke of

Westminster will bid for Uncle Jack and that the horse is expected to fetch four thousand guineas ; but I am not convinced that he will stay the course nor is he the best of jumpers. Before the Manchester Steeplechase last year I had a long talk with Lord William Beresford about that race, and he was by no means confident of the success he so easily achieved, backing two other horses as well as his own—the Uncle Jack in question. Model is an old slave whose victory would astonish many people ; still he jumps well, stays apparently for ever, and such animals sometimes effect a surprise. Bloomer is another possibly moderate animal who keeps on winning. Ambush was, I thought, rather lucky to win last year, and as he must have well over 12 st. this time, I should not fancy him very much ; still a National winner is always to be respected. Cushendun's failure at Manchester last year scarcely suggests success at Liverpool, and he has never been over the course, but he is an improving young horse and jumps well. Of those I have not named I leave out Barsac, because I think he grows more and more disinclined to try. Cathal is, I fear, too old ; Timon has been too long under suspicion and Grudon seems to be training off. I shall have another opportunity of referring to the race next month.

I have little space in this number to resume the question of the quantity of the different sorts of game killed, about which I have had many letters, including a particularly interesting Game-book from one of those small manors to which I have made reference. The owner occasionally, but not always, has kept account of every cartridge he used and the result ; thus, for instance, in the season 1892-3, he expended 376 shots and killed 155 head ; two years later 386 cartridges accounted for 132. The point we have discussed is the proportion of the various birds and beasts.' Last season this Game-book records the bagging of 258 pheasants, 273 partridges, 7 hares, 219 rabbits, 8 woodcock, and one ' various ' ; and these figures seem to be about maintained. In 1893, for instance, there were killed on the estate 295 pheasants, 223 partridges, 17 hares, 229 rabbits, and 11 woodcock, affording many pleasant little shoots for autumn and winter days. Of the woodcock there should have been twelve. A note in the book states that the writer brought one down, his dog found it and carried it to him, when, just as he was taking it, the bird flew away and was seen no more. On the first page of this book is the famous

record of the game killed by Lord de Grey from 1867 to 1895, and this is worth reproducing in case the reader has not come across it. It begins with 2 rhinoceros, 11 tiger, 12 buffalo, 19 sambur, 97 pig, 186 deer and 381 red deer. Coming to more familiar creatures there are 47,678 grouse, 89,401 partridges, 111,190 pheasants, 2077 woodcock, 2735 snipe, 1393 wild duck, 94 black game, 45 capercailzie, 26,417 rabbit, 26,747 hares, 8424 'various,' making in all 316,699. It would be interesting to have the figures up to date, and if Lord de Grey has kept them they may possibly be obtainable for another number.

There were several odds and ends to which I wanted to refer this month, but considerations of space render my references necessarily brief. Three 'Constant Readers' and a variety of others who, I hope, are not inconstant, want to know something more about 'C. C. W.'s' roulette system, particularly the nature of the progression which led to the results tabulated in the last number. Whether my friend C. C. W. would be inclined to let us further into his secret I do not know, but I shall hope to return to the matter on a future occasion. I fancy, however, that as he has found his discovery remunerative he will scarcely be inclined to give it away; though for my own part I am still sceptical about systems, and shall not be surprised at any time to hear from him that after going strong for a certain period he has met with the melancholy fate of Humpty Dumpty. Another thing that deserves mention is a particularly useful Hunting Diary edited by Mr. T. F. Dale, and published at the *Land and Water* Office on behalf of Messrs. Thomas, the Hunting Outfitters of Brook Street. This is something more than a trade publication, as it contains some really serviceable hints on hunting matters, and bits of shrewd advice which are too often neglected, together with reproductions of the buttons of the various hunts, winners of the Peterborough Foxhound Shows, a hunting map showing the centres of the sports throughout England and Wales, and in addition to tables, &c., useful information, and reproductions of Mr. Cecil Alden's quaint illustrations of hunting subjects. I wanted also to say a few words about the series of natural history tableaux lately completed at the Crystal Palace, including upwards of fifteen hundred animals arranged to form a collection of singularly realistic pictures. To the student of natural history these are not only interesting but valuable.