BERT'S TREATISE OF HAWKS AND HAWKING: FOR THE FIRST TIME REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL OF 1619

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Bert's Treatise of Hawks and Hawking: For the First Time Reprinted from the Original of 1619
by Edmund Bert

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EDMUND BERT

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Trieste

Falconry

Edmund Bert's Treatise

of

Hawks and Hawking

For the First Time Reprinted from the
Original of 1619

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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LONDON
BERNARD QUARITCH, 15 PICCADILLY
1891

INTRODUCTION.

OF the three treatises by our old English masters of falconry, Turbervile, Latham, and Bert, that of Bert at the present time is unquestionably the scarcest. In the course of twenty years' book-collecting, I have heard of but two copies for sale; while in regard to the others, hardly a year elapses in which a few examples do not come into the book-market, although, it must be confessed, at sufficiently high prices, if in good condition.

Of Turbervile's work two editions appeared;[1] of Latham's, four.[2]

The "Treatise" by Bert, first published in 1619, has until now never been reprinted—a circumstance, no doubt, which in some measure accounts for its greater rarity.

From certain statements of the author, it would seem

[1] The Booke of Faulconrie or Hawking; for the onely delight and pleasure of all noblemen and gentlemen. Collected, &c. . . . By George Turbervile, gentleman, 1575. Second edition, 1611. For the full titles of both editions, with critical notes, see Harting, *Bibliotheca Accipitraria*, pp. 12, 13.

[2] Falconry, or the Faulcon's Lure and Cure: in two Books, 1615. New and second Booke of Faulconry, 1618. Second edition of both, 1633. Third, 1653. Fourth, 1658. For the full titles see Harting, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–17.

to have been printed chiefly to oblige his friends, and was not intended for general circulation.

"I did never purpose (he says) to publish in common these my labours, but to have given them privately to whom they are dedicated, and to whom I stand devoted; but being discovered to some of my friends, and by them made knowne to many of the rest, their importunities and earnest persuasions have made mee put it to the presse."

Farther on he remarks (p. 8), "It hath long laine by me, and that I have not beene forward to publish this but in a manuscript, is very well knowne to many of my friends." From this it may be inferred that only a limited number of copies were originally printed.

But whatever cause or causes may have conduced to its scarcity, the fact remains that at the present time the work is practically unprocurable; and this is the more to be regretted, because having been composed by an English falconer of great experience, it is still of utility and value to those who at the present day would keep hawks and fly them at game.

Under these circumstances, I have undertaken the present reprint, in the belief that there are others who will be glad to possess a copy, if, like myself, they have tried in vain to procure the original.

The text has been set up with great care by Messrs. Ballantyne & Hanson, at the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh, from an original copy in the possession of the Hon. Gerald Lascelles, to whom I am indebted for the loan of it; and it will be found on examination that not only is this a *verbatim et literatim* reprint, but that in regard to type, headlines, initials, and other ornaments,

it is as nearly a *facsimile* as it is possible to make it without the aid of photography.

One hundred copies only have been printed.

Of the author, Edmund Bert, little is known beyond what he himself has told us in his "Treatise." He lived at Collier Row, near Romford, Essex, and was somewhat advanced in years and in failing health when he was persuaded to publish the results of his experience as a falconer. Some of his recipes, it appears, he had used for sixteen or seventeen years (p. 103), and his method of hooding a shy hawk, he says, he "did privately deliver to some of my friends by word of mouth above twenty yeares since (1599), and some did carefully follow my direction, and did not faile." But it was after he had been ill for some time that he began seriously to think of publication. "By gentlemen that have come to visite and comfort me (he says) in the time of my sicknes, which hath continued with me for the most part these three yeares, I have been over-powred (desiring that my knowledge might not be buried with mee) to thrust out my labours to publike view" (p. 8).

Amongst his friends and acquaintances a few are mentioned by name. He alludes to Sir Edward Saliard, a knight of high estimation in this art (p. 40). Old Sir Robert Wroth, who had an excellent goshawk, and Master Raineford, who had a hawke, are referred to (p. 68), and to the worthy Baron whom he on one occasion met "in the Strand," he "did deliver a very sound hawke, and had for her thirty pounds" (p. 106). Mention is also made of "Master Batcheler, that was Master of all the Faulconers by Powles" (p. 95).

But, as a rule, his friends and neighbours are referred to as "a worthy knight to whom I stood bound for many former kind guifts" (p. 88), or "two knights, both of them very judicious austringers, and two gentlemen of the same family though dwelling tenne miles asunder" (p. 88), or "an ancient and skilful austringer" * (p. 96), and so forth.

He used to ride out of Essex into Sussex to hawk over the downs, where (he says) "I have killed for the most part of a moneth together with an intermewed goshawke eight, nine, or tenne partridges in a day. The day of my going thither and the day of my returne to London was just five weeks, and it was a fortnight or more in Michaelmas terme when I came backe. I killed in that time with that one hawke foure score and odd partridges, five pheasants, seven rayles, and foure hares against my will" (p. 29).

Elsewhere (p. 99) he alludes to flying at the brooke (that is, at waterfowl) in Leicestershire. He was very successful in training and flying the goshawk, to which species, indeed, his instructions chiefly relate. He had for one goshawk and a tarsell a hundred marks, both sold to one man within sixteen months. For another he was offered forty pounds (p. 105), and ultimately sold her for thirty.

He particularly delighted in pheasant-hawking with a goshawk and spaniels, and at the time of writing his remarks on the subject, had had seven years' experience in this branch of the sport (p. 37). The hints and advice which he gives in relation to it are accordingly most practical and useful.

* One who kept a goshawk, *astur*, Fr. *autour*.

The following passage, which occurs on p. 36, explains how pheasant-hawking was pursued:—"If I spring a phesant, I cannot in the covert have my dogs at that command that I have them in the field. Let me make all the hast I can after my hawke, I might misse of the quick finding her, if by my dogs questing I were not drawne where she is: it is ten to one she will not hunt for it upon the ground; if she should, it will teach her wit; but it is more likely that she will, if the covert with broome or furzes be not thicke in the bottome, but that she may see it, she will, as it runneth, tend it, flying ouer it from tree to tree, and when the dogs doe spring it, she is so over it, as that it will never rise to goe to a high pearch; if it should, the hawke would have it before it come there."

His method of making a shy hawk to the hood (p. 44) has been already referred to. His contrivance for preventing a goshawk from perching (p. 69) is equally ingenious, and, it is believed, original.

Apropos of the Dedication to the Right Honourable Henry Earl of Oxenford, it may be noted that in 1795 a silver "varvel," engraved with the name "Oxenforde," was found near Headingham Castle, the ancient seat of this family in Essex. It is figured and described in the *Archæologia*, vol. xii. pl. 51, p. 410, and may well have belonged to the nobleman to whom this book is dedicated.

J. E. HARTING.

BURLINGTON HOUSE,
Christmas 1890.