

CROSS COUNTRY REMINISCENCES

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Cross Country Reminiscences by Fox Russell

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FOX RUSSELL

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BY

FOX RUSSELL



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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

PLEASANT it is for a man whose hand has oftener grasped a hunting crop than a pen, to sit down and try to put a few notes on paper, of some of the good things he has had the luck to participate in, and indulge in some homely-printed chat—to coin an expression—of good horses and good men. It is, perhaps, the next best thing to “fighting one’s battles o’er again” over the walnuts and wine; and what more delightful thing is there than that same talk

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—after a rattling burst over a good country—when, with a bottle of the '47 and the prospective cigar, a bright, cheery log fire, and a genial spirit, who has shared your day's pleasures and pains, you chat over your own luck, and your friends' misfortunes?—the latter, I am grieved to say, affording considerably more satisfaction to us than we should care to acknowledge in so many words.

Long may the day be distant when Englishmen shall cease to reckon the subject of such chat amongst their pleasures!

I have often wondered which man gets the keenest enjoyment out of hunting: he who makes it the business of his life, and goes out regularly four or five days a week, or the busy toiler in big cities, snatching his chance day here and there, stopped, it may be, by a telegram, as he buckles on his second spur, and dragged unwillingly up to

his office by a change of markets, or to his chambers by an unexpected Brief. One would naturally think the latter was the keener of the pair ; but the closest observation has left me still in doubt. A good sportsman is never anything *but* keen, and in discussing this question, one is always reminded of the octogenarian who had been a four-days-a-week man all his life : on his death-bed he said he had but one regret—that he had not smoked less and hunted more ! It is certainly just one of those good things in life, that one can never have too much of.

In the way of comfort, I venture to think that between hunting from home, and hunting from a distance, there can be no comparison, and no man would take the latter as a pure matter of choice. In fact so patent is it, upon a moment's reflection, that it would be absurd to dilate upon the

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difference between hurriedly resigning the good beast, who has carried you all day, to a hireling, without the opportunity of knowing whether he is well "done" or not; bolting into a stuffy, draughty railway carriage, in which, hungry, sleepy, and mud-stained, you are rushed up to town, and perhaps transferred to a still more unpleasant conveyance in the shape of a cab, which eventually lands you at home at so late an hour, that appetite is gone, and a natural disinclination for the bother of "changing" induces you to crawl miserably up to bed without delay. Then again, unless you are a naturally—or, shall we say, an *unnaturally*—early riser, recall, oh my reader, the horror you went through at being called at 6.30 a.m., fighting your way dismally into that forbidding-looking "tub" in the grey light, and how the first spongy of its contents wrung from your agonized