Τηε pursuit and destruction of wild animals for security, food, clothing, or pastime, have been amongst the occupa- tions of men in all ages, since the primeval *brueré* over- spread the earth,

**And wild in woods the noble savage ran.**

Before the more refined arts are introduced into any coun- try, the chase is a necessity, and the chief business of life. The stronger and more noxious animals are destroyed for individual safety ; the weaker for food. It is not until civilization and her handmaid luxury have seated themselves, that the chase becomes a pastime. It does not ap- pear when the sportsman first sprang into existence. There is no corresponding word in any ancient language, since that could not be called a sport which was a necessity. It is probable that in the earliest ages of society the dog was the sole agent employed by the hunter. Afterwards various weapons, manual, missile, and projectile, as the club, the dart, the arrow, were used by the hunter and fowler. Then would follow springes, traps, nets, and all that class of devices for the capture of beasts and birds *feræ naturæ,* comprehended in the term toils. As dogs were employed to hunt quadrupeds, so, in process of time, hawks were trained to bring down birds for the service of their master. The arbalest, or cross-bow, preceded the matchlock, which, however, could scarcely be called an implement of the chose, but which, in the order of succession, brings us down to the rifle, and original fowling-piece with its long heavy barrel and flint and steel lock ; and, lastly, we arrive at the double barrels and detant locks of the modern shooter.

In the days of the Saxon and Norman kings, and long previously, the Britons were famous for their skill in arch- ery, both in war and in the chase. The feats of the bow were often introduced into the songs of the bards of the ancient Britons, and into the ballads of the Troubadours.

Archery is now confined to shooting at the target. Ladies not unfrequently contend for the prize in this elegant amusement. Their bows, however, are not such as were used by the amazons of yore, nor are those of the gentlemen of the archery clubs such as decided the battle of Cressy.

Falconry, coeval with, and subsequent to the decline of archery, occupied that rank in British field sports which is now enjoyed by shooting. Falconry is of high antiquity; but at what time hawks were first trained to the sport does not appear. Aristotle informs us that “ there was a district in Thrace, in which the boys used to assemble at a certain time of the year, for the sake of bird-catching ; that the spot was much frequented by hawks, which were wont to appear on hearing themselves called, and would drive the little birds into the bushes, where they were caught by children ; and that the hawks would even sometimes take the birds and fling them to these young fowlers, who, after finishing their diversion, bestowed on their assistants part of their prey.” Martial has the following epigram on the fate of a hawk :

**Prædo fuit volucram, famulas nunc aucupis, idem Decipit, et captas non sibi, mcerit, aves.**

There is no record of trained hawks previous to the time oι Ethelred. Under the Welsh laws of Hoel Dha, (a.D.

940), “ the falconer has a privilege, the day that the hawk shall bill a bittern, or a heron, or a curlew. Three services shall the king perform for the falconer on such a day ; hold his stirrup whilst he dismounts ; hold the horse whilst he goes after the birds ; and hold his stirrup whilst he mounts again. Three times shall the king that night compliment him at table.” Shakspeare often uses the language of falconry. It is chiefly employed in a scene in the second part of Henry VI., wherein the king, queen, lord protector, and cardinal, are the chief speakers; which goes to prove, that the falconer’s terms were, at one time, household words at the English court.

Hunting and archery, which were then almost synonimous terms, (for the sport was somewhat similar to what deer-stalking now is, the rifle being substituted for the how,) were in high repute with the Danish, Saxon, and Norman kings, whence arose the forest laws. Wolves and boars, which formerly infested the forests, were nearly exterminated in king Edgar’s time, when that monarch prohibited the killing of deer and game in his woods. The punishment depended upon the will of the king, until the celebrated forest laws of Canute, which defined the rights and privileges of the monarch and others ; but those laws were little regarded by succeeding kings, whose arbitrary will afterwards regulated the laws of the forest. “ Besides other prerogatives of the Saxon kings,” says Selden, “they had a franchise for wild beasts for the chase, which we commonly call forest, being a precinct of ground, neither parcel of the county, nor the diocese, nor the kingdom, but rather appendant thereto.” And these prerogatives, he quaintly observes, were maintained, “ that the world might see the happiness of England, where beasts enjoy their liberty as well as men.” Another old writer says, that “the Saxon kings and the Danish king Canute made no new forests, but were contented with the woods that were their own demesnes, and were never granted to, or possessed by the subject ; but the kings of the Norman race, not being satisfied with sixty-eight old demesne woods or forests, depopulated well-built towns and villages, to make to themselves places appropriated to their own diversion only. William the Conqueror laid waste thirty-six towns in Hampshire to make a forest, which still retains the name of the New Forest ; and his forest officers exercised such arbitrary rule, as to abridge even the great barons of the privileges they enjoyed under the Saxon and Danish kings, not at all regarding the liberties given to the subject by Canute’s forest laws. His son William Rufus is recorded in history for the severity of his proceedings against all that hunted in his forests, inflicting the punishment of death upon such as killed a stag or buck in his forests, without any other law than that of his own will.” The killing of deer was punished with loss of sight by William the Con- queror.@@l William Rufus “ did so severely forbid hunting a deer, that it was felony and a hanging matter to have taken a stag or buck.”@@1 In Cœur de Lion’s time, the law was very severe against offenders taking the king’s venison ; it was even unlawful to carry a bow, or take dogs through a royal forest. “ Qui arcus vel sagittas portaverint vel canes duxerint sine copulâ per forestam Regis, et inde attaintus fuerit, erit in miserecordiâ Regis.”@@3

The forest laws professed to be for the protection of “ vert and venison.” *Vert* was whatsoever bore green

@@@1 John Selden.

@@@2 William of Malmsbury.

@@@3 England's Eponimous, p. 34.