

HUNTING.

THE MELBOURNE HOUNDS.

BY TORTOISE.

Thursday, 18th Inst., 10 a.m., Seaford, near Wilhamstown, was the rendezvous for the followers of this pack. With very little delay the acting master, Mr. J. T. Lempriere, followed by a field of over 30 followers, proceeded to try for a fox under the guidance of Mr. Hastie, the manager of the Werribee station. We first appealed to the tussocks and reeds in the valleys, but although these coverts are said to be the lurking place of several of the vulpine herd, not one of the brown coated varmint could be found on this occasion, the cause of their absence being the excessively cold and stormy weather prevailing throughout the day, which no doubt had prompted them to seek covert in the far away hills or go to earth in the numerous sand ridges along the bay. During our search for reynard several strong hares jumped up, but the pack were promptly whipped off, puss not being our quest on this occasion. We now jogged on to the Werribee Estate proper, and on reaching the big fresh water lignum swamp, a small herd of beautiful red deer were quickly afoot; riding through them a big stag was soon singled out. He swung away leisurely in a south-

erly direction, but suddenly finding the pack on his heels in full cry he smartly mended his pace, and the field had to ride their hardest as he tore along towards the sea, but after holding to this direction for about three miles he bore to the left and on his route passed over several paddocks, ere he swept by the Point Cook homestead, and through the homestead paddocks, still racing along we passed close by Mr. Baldwin's farm, and thence on through the cultivation paddock, and our game now galloped over a growing crop, which was, however, skirted by his equestrian pursuers, many of whom were by this time well strung out, owing to the terrific pace hounds were running. Eventually the stag reached Skeleton Creek, and it was found impossible to dislodge him from the boggy lagoons which abound in its vicinity, so hounds were reluctantly whipped off. We had a fast run of seven miles. During the hunt Mrs. J. Brandon's beautiful chestnut hunter, Shakspeare, fell in a very trappy dug-out rabbit warren, and broke its neck, Mrs. Brandon escaping with a broken collar bone and a severe shaking.

After losing the deer the fern rises near the sea shore were tried without success, and as time was now flying, the kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. George Chirnside to adjourn to Point Cook house was accepted, and all present were most hospitably entertained. Before leaving the acting master thanked our hosts on behalf of the Melbourne Hunt Club for their kindness, and spoke of the pleasure it was to all the members to return once more to this charming hunting country, the scene of such excellent sport for many years gone by, and he also explained the absence of so many of the leading members of the hunt, owing to the season being regarded as practically ended before the recent timely and copious rain fell and gave those with horses still available another opportunity or two to enjoy their favorite sport. Mr. Chirnside, however, invited the Melbourne hounds to meet early next season at Point Cook, and it goes without saying that this invitation will be gladly availed of when the time comes.

The going on this occasion was splendid, and except for the regrettable accident before referred to, we had a most enjoyable day. Amongst those present I noticed, besides the acting master, who was on Bobs, Mrs. Geo. Chirnside on Sylvester,

present I noticed, besides the acting master, who was on Bobs, Mrs. Geo. Chirnside on Sylvester, and her daughter on a handsome black pony going very keenly with the leading contingent; Mrs. Watt on a bay, Miss Watt on Chesney, Miss Buckley on Kangaroo, Miss L. Robertson on Pilot, Miss D. Lempriere on Malade, Miss M. Lempriere on Foli, Miss Macmullen on Rocket, Messrs. J. Brandon, on Bee-wing, H. Wood on Joker, C. A. Lempriere on Rumbo, T. E. Lempriere on Blossom, T. Hastie on Tracker, W. P. Smith on Blueskin, G. Missen, J. Ross, C. Baldwin, J. Kerr, T. H. Berndt, R. Taylor, L. Batten, Mr. Geo. Chirnside and party driving, and several local sports whose names I cannot recall.

The hounds were out again on Tuesday last, the kennels, Oakleigh, at 7 a.m., being the tryst. Some young hounds have lately been entered to this already fine pack, and as foxes were still heard to be lurking in this district and playing much havoc with the hen roots, it was thought advisable to, if possible, blood the hounds before throwing them into their summer quarters. A small but select field turned up, and no time was lost in appealing to the coverts south of the kennels, but it was not till reaching Bald Hills that the pack proclaimed a find in "South Hollow." The field dashed after hounds as they streamed away towards Clayton's-road, which was soon crossed, but our quarry, after running westerly for another mile or two, doubled back over a narrow lane, and going easterly, soon led us through a big market garden, when the varmint ran away lefthanded and hopped over Centre-road, and on reaching the big common hounds were running very fast indeed; and now going in a northerly direction, we crossed the Gippsland railway line into Mr. Burke's, it giving horses all they knew to keep even within hail of the flying beauties as they swept along full steam ahead over several well grassed properties subdivided with formidable post and rail fences. Ere we crossed the North-road reynard was shortly afterwards viewed, and hounds fairly hustled him along for a couple of miles before they ran into him, after a very fast run of seven miles, with jumping enough to satisfy the most ardent.

After a brief check we proceeded to try for more game, and after several likely coverts proved empty, a fox was viewed away near the sandpits on Dunlop's Common. The pack were quickly in his wake, and reynard, evidently perplexed by the suddenness of their onslaught, circled round, and was fairly coursed for about two miles ere the pack dragged him down.

We now tried several ti-tree coverts in properties hereabouts, and on reaching Mr. Smith's "triangle" paddock fortune again smiled on us, for hounds soon hustled a fine dog fox out of the dense timber, and going south towards East Brighton, the varmint led us over several trappy drains and through several fields, when he doubled back to almost the same spot where we found him; but finding his pursuers were still at him, he dashed over Clayton's-road and ran through Messrs. Murphy and Wilson's properties, but was eventually bowled over near the stone quarries, after a merry run of four miles. We had now accounted for our three foxes, and as riders and steeds were showing signs of hunger and fatigue, it was decided to relinquish hunting for the day. The going after the recent rains was excellent, and scent was also holding, consequently hounds were never in doubt, and hunted all three foxes without ever having to be lifted. Miss L. Robertson was riding Pilot, acting masters J. T. Lempriere and H. M. S. Cox were riding Highlow and Rumbo respectively, S. O. Wood on Bellamy, H. Wood on Joker, C. A. Lempriere on Bobs, J. Taylor, H. Young, D. Tomlin and several locals. Owing to the Hunt Club races in the afternoon at Moonee Valley, these hounds will not be out today.