ERRORS—continued

the principal English libraries containing desirable unpublished material. There is also, strangest of all, no bibliography upon books of the chase, for the so-called "Bibliography of Hunting" to be found in the volume on Hunting of a well-known series is so extremely inaccurate and inadequate, at least in its reference to the older literature (there are twelve mistakes in the titles of the first three books), that the student accepting this as an authoritative

list would be indeed badly served.

The first modern book in which the subject of old hunting, treated retrospectively, is honoured with a whole chapter all of its own is Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes of the English People," about the most frequently quoted work that the ordinary reader with a liking for sport comes across. Published in 1801, it remained for a whole century the source of inspiration for the little that has been written on our subject, and in spite of the fact that the learned Thomas Wright forty years ago showed up some of the mistakes in Strutt's account of old sport, all writers on our theme, excepting Dryden, have continued to copy from his pages without apparently making the slightest attempt to verify his statements. Let me here recite some of his errors. He introduces the subject thus:

"We have several English treatises upon the subject of hunting, but none of them very ancient; the earliest I have met with is a MS. in the Cotton Library at the British Museum, written at the commencement of the FOURTEENTH century." In a footnote Strutt identifies this MS. as Vesp. B. XII, which is the MS. that has been published in the present volume. He is just one century out in its age, for even if it be a contemporary copy made soon after the original was written, we know that the latter was not compiled before the first decade of the fifteenth century. He proceeds: "These compositions bear great resemblance to each other, and consist of general rules for the pursuit of game, together with the names and nature of the animals proper for hunting and such other matters as were necessary to be known by sportsmen. Hawking most commonly forms a part of these books, and though this pastime can only be considered AS A MODERN INVENTION when it is put in competition with that of hunting, yet it has obtained the precedency, notwithstanding the sanction of antiquity is so decidedly against it."

That Strutt was incorrect when speaking of the age of hawking is now well known, and it is singular that he should have made this comment, considering that in the subsequent chapter on hawking he repeatedly acknowledges that the origin of it "is not well known," and that he "cannot trace the origin of hawking to an earlier period than the middle of the fourth century." However, this misapprehension concerns us less than does the subject of the first of his illustrations representing, as he says, "Swine hunting in the IX. Century." This picture,

as Thomas Wright showed (Domestic Manners in England, 1862), is really a representation of nothing so interesting as a boar hunt, but is simply an Anglo-Saxon calendar picture showing swine herders driving their swine into a forest in the month of September to feed upon acorns. That the herds are carrying spears and one has a horn and some dogs shows merely they were armed as would be necessary to protect themselves and their swine in the forest. Moreover, it is not of the ninth, but of the eleventh century, as any one at all conversant with the styles of drawing in the two centuries can at a glance detect.<sup>2</sup>

Quite as singular as the above are Strutt's mistakes concerning Twici, for he considers the so-called English translation to be found in Vesp. B. XII, which was written a hundred years after Edward II.'s death, as nearly coeval with the original, and states that the treatise we know as the "Master of Game" (the one now before the reader) is little more than an enlargement of Twici. Now Twici contains under 2500 words, while the "Master of Game," as the reader can see for himself, contains close upon 50,000 words; so even if the matter were the same, which it is not, except in a few brief passages, it can hardly be called an enlargement. One might as well say that the Books of Euclid are an enlargement of the Multiplication Table!

Equally wrong is Strutt when he says that Twety and Gyfford were both "maisters of game to King Edward II." (see Twici). There is no mention whatever in any known document of Twici having been Master of Game or Grand Huntsman to Edward II. He is always spoken of as Veneur or huntsman, and as his wages amounted to  $7\frac{1}{2}d$ . per day this is almost certainly correct: Neither is there any mention of a Gyfford in the original treatise, nor have diligent students been able to find any trace of such a hunter in contemporary records; there is therefore good reason to believe that Gyfford either existed only in the imagination of the scrivener who transcribed the "translation" a hundred years or so after the death of Twici, or that he was a personage not connected with the King's hunting establishment.

Another mistake is made by Strutt when he states that Twici introduces the subject with a kind of poetical prologue. Twici has no prologue whatsoever, but plunges us abruptly into the prose of his hunting lore (see Bibliography: Twici). The thirty-six lines of doggerel rhymes that precede the "translation" in Vesp. B. XII were written certainly three generations after Twici's time, and to attribute them to him in so positive a manner shows lack of care.

In Strutt's remarks about ancient dogs there are several obvious mistakes, and when alluding to the hunting terms, he devotes almost the whole space to the enumeration of trivialities which, amusing as they may be, have little bearing upon the subject, and quotes but half a dozen of the hundreds of technical terms of venery with

<sup>1</sup> Italics where not otherwise stated are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Both text and miniatures are correctly ascribed to the 11th century by Planta in the catalogue of the Cotton MSS. (1802); see also Sir E. M. Thompson's Class Catalogue of Illuminated MSS. This MS. (Tib. B. V.) was, moreover, described by Wanley in Hickes' Thesaurus (1704), vol. ii. p. 215.

which the MSS. he quotes teem. He concludes his chapter by a very misleading explanation of the term "time of grace," as he writes what should be "time of grease." This "time of grace," Strutt declares, "begins at Midsummer and lasts until Holvrood day" (September 14), which, of course,

ERRORS—continued

Holyrood day " (September 14), which, of course, was the very period when deer were hunted. How, after even only glancing through the MSS. which he quotes, he could possibly give an explanation so contrary to fact is difficult to understand, but even more so is the fact that this very obvious mistake has been carefully repeated by many writers.

For upwards of half a century Strutt's chapter satisfied the English public, and while in other countries, especially in France, renewed attention was being paid to old sport (Napoleon III.'s reestablishing monarchical institutions having given a great impetus to the study of old Venery in the latter country), no English writer followed this example, always excepting Dryden, till "Cecil's" Records of the Chase made its appearance in 1854. This author, who as Mr. Cornelius Tongue was a widely known sportsman, was the first to exploit our "Master of Game," a copy of it having been "discovered" by him. He gives the following account of it:

"I have met with a very old and curious treatise on hunting, in the possession of the late Mr. Richard Dansey, a gentleman of ancient family, for many years residing in Hertfordshire, and a true lover of sporting. The book, although the leaves are of vellum, encased in oak boards, by the ravages of time is slightly mutilated that is, the titlepage is wanting (sic); but I have no doubt it is the production of Edmund de Langley, one of the sons of Edward III whose reign commenced in 1327, Earl of Cambridge and afterwards Duke of York. The writing is well executed, and it may no doubt be received as one of the best authorities descriptive of the chase as it was followed during the period when the book was composed. It would be difficult to assign a precise date to this work; it is sufficient to state that it must have been written about the close of the fourteenth century, prior to the invention of the art of printing, which was introduced from Germany during the reign of Edward IV, by William Caxton, a citizen and mercer of London in 1474."

Considering that at the time "Cecil" discovered this book, the shelves of the British Museum contained no fewer than ten, and those of the Bodleian three, copies of the "Master of Game," it would not have been very difficult to find out that the ascription of it to Edmund instead of to his son Edward of York was wrong.

In translating a few selected passages into what "Cecil" calls a "somewhat modernised form," he makes a series of very misleading mistakes which at once show that he was as little conversant with old English, as with the spirit of mediæval hunting. These errors are the more unfortunate as his remarks have been quoted and re-quoted by a number of writers—in fact by almost all who have treated the subject up to the present day. Thus such monumental mistakes as that hunters "hired others" to start the hart, or that "travail"

meant "travel," or that the kennel should be cleaned but once in the week, instead of once in the day (as the "Master of Game" emphasises—see p. 69), or that the hunter shall harbour the stag well and readily "without little compass," when in the original it reads "within a little compass" (meaning within a small district)—an error which causes one writer to theorise about the employment of the compass in old hunting!—have been accepted without cavil or doubt as the result of competent research.

If the nineteenth century commenced badly so far as old hunting literature was concerned, it did not end much better, for in the two volumes on "Hunting" and on the "Poetry of Sport," in the Series already alluded to, the many errors made by Strutt and "Cecil" have not only been perpetuated, but new ones have been added. In the former volume the writer of the chapter: "The History and Literature of Hunting" states that Edward II., "as became a royal sportsman, had another 'Maister of the Game,' an Englishman, one John Gyfford, and he it was who made the translation of the Frenchman's treatise (why Frenchman?) that Strutt saw. A second translation, or rather a rescript of the first with additions, was made later by Henry's huntsman, for the special edification of that 'imp of fame' Harry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales. This may be identical with the 'Maister of the Game' to be mentioned later, but neither Strutt nor Cecil (who in his 'Records of the Chase' quotes largely from it) makes this clear."

A page further on this writer says: "Somewhere between these two comes 'The Maister of the Game' not mentioned by Strutt, but a copy of which 'Cecil' says he had seen in the possession of a Mr. Richard Dansey, of Herefordshire. He supposes it to have been written by Edmund de Langley, Duke of York, son of Edward III. . . . From the extracts quoted by Cecil it seems to be superior in point of style to Twici's work, and also more exhaustive and practical, but to those extracts our knowledge is confined."

What an extraordinary confusion this contributor to our standard series has succeeded in creating by the above, our previous remarks and a glance at the Bibliography at the end of the present volume will disclose.

As to the "Poetry of Sport," in so far as it relates to old hunting, one can only express surprise that the author should have thought proper, considering that it deals avowedly only with Britain's poetry, to illustrate his English songs with foreign prints alike unsuitable for this purpose regarding period and subject. All the modern illustrations in his book are by modern English artists, and notwithstanding that they explain their meaning perfectly well, they are supplied with descriptive legends. The old prints, on the contrary, have no word of explanation or acknowledgment of their origin underneath them. We have a hunting song of Walter Scott (p. 193) illustrated by an engraving by a Dutch master who lived in the sixteenth century; Thompson's "The Seasons" is "explained" by one of Stradanus's engravings depicting sport in Italy also in the sixteenth