

## SPANIEL TRAINING.

BY D. BOULTON HERRALD.

MANY a dog is ruined for the field by injudicious training. With all the good intentions in the world he trains his puppy to retrieve, using a stick or a stone, and encourages him to chase the sparrows in the street, because, forsooth, he thinks that checking him would have the effect of blunting his hunting enthusiasm when on game. The result is a dog that reduces the birds to a pulp while retrieving them, and who rushes about the covert at railroad speed, hundreds of yards ahead of the gun, flushing the birds far out of range, and chasing everything he sees, until, exhausted, he is forced to return to his master and rest.

The following lines are penned especially for the benefit of the sportsman (and his name is legion) who pursues this mode of training (?) in the hope that his next spaniel, taught under the rules laid down in this article, will be at least an improvement on the one he at present owns.

Before commencing work, remember that you must always be firm but kind, and that above all things you must not lose your temper with your pupil. Never give in to the dog; always make him do what he is told. Be sure that he knows what he is being punished for when it becomes necessary to do so, and don't delay the punishment long enough for him to forget for what he is being corrected. Do not stint your praise when he does well.

The first lesson to be taught is retrieving. The nearer the puppy is to two months old the better, in my opinion, for our purpose. Some writers recommend waiting until he has lost his milk teeth and the new ones are well grown in, as they say that a dog taught to retrieve before getting rid of these first teeth is apt to be hard-mouthed in retrieving birds, etc.; but the experience of the writer has been that if properly taught, however young, the puppy will not develop that evil habit. If a youngster of any "go," he can be taught more easily at that age, though a dull one cannot be taken in hand so early.

Roll an old and soft woolen sock into a ball, then sit down and call your pupil to you. Push the ball in his face to attract his attention to it, making him try to take hold. Then, throwing it six inches away, say, "Go fetch it, Jack" (as we will call

him), motioning him towards it with the right hand at the same time. If he refuses to pick up the ball, go to him, and, placing it in his mouth, force him to go with you to the place you threw from, making him hold it until you have said, "dead bird!" or "dead!" Should he refuse to give up the ball, force his jaws open with the thumb and second finger of the left hand inserted at the base of the jaws, removing it with the right, saying the while, "Dead! dead!" Never *pull* anything away, as he will pull too, and a nice state your partridge or duck would be in were such a proceeding permitted. He *must* be taught to drop whatever he is carrying when commanded to do so by voice or sign. For a sign, hold up the right hand, with the forefinger erect and the rest folded. Never let him worry nor mouth anything.

Should he pick up the ball, and run away, refusing to bring it to you, take him behind the shoulders and drag him to the place where you were sitting when it was thrown. Make him hold the ball until you get there, and then proceed as herein before directed. He will soon learn this lesson. Throw the ball farther and farther as he progresses, and continue until he is perfected in it.

When he has learned to retrieve the thrown ball he can be advanced a stage. Show him the ball, not letting him take it, and, saying "Dead!" place it on the ground and walk away, telling him to follow. After going a few steps, turn, and, waving the hand in the direction in which he is to go, say, "Go, seek dead!" Should he fail to understand your meaning, go back, show him the ball, and, after again taking him away some little distance, order him to get it and then deliver to you.

When three or four months old, if he is perfect in his other lessons, take, say, a game bird's wing, or in default of that, a fowl's, show it him, and, putting him out of the room (I am supposing that you teach him in the house), shut the door. Then hide it where it can easily be found, and let him in, saying, "Go, seek dead!" motioning the direction in which he is to quest. Continue this for some time until he does it perfectly, hiding the wing in out-of-the-way places about the house as he progresses.

Never let his search be a fruitless one. If he cannot find for himself, show him the hiding-place, and make him fetch the wing to the place from which you sent him.

To teach the puppy to retrieve from water after he has learnt to do so on land, take him, when the water is warm, to a shelving beach. First throw his ball to the water's edge (for this work fold some cork shavings in it), then into the water far enough to force him to wet his feet, and so on, farther and farther, until at last he is obliged to swim. This should be gone about gradually, and with extreme care, so as to give him confidence in his powers. Above all things do not throw him into water over his depth, as it will only tend to make him dislike it, and may ruin him for water retrieving altogether. It is well to make your pupil retrieve sometimes *in the dark*, as if only worked by daylight he is apt to depend too much on eyesight, which practice must not, of course, be tolerated for a moment.

The next lesson to be taught is "coming to heel." When you are out walking, and he is running ahead, call sharply, "Heel, Jack—heel!" forcing him behind you at the same time. Should he try to break away, tap him smartly with your whip or walking-stick, saying, "Heel! heel!" Continue this until he will come in at once when called, and thrash him if he breaks away without the order to "hie on" or "go on." To teach this, wave the hand forward while verbally giving the order, and run a few steps onward. This lesson will be easily inculcated, and it will be to him the most welcome order he has to obey.

Few spaniels in this country are trained to drop to shot or command: but presuming my reader to be desirous of giving his pupil a finished education. I will describe an easy mode of teaching it. Order him sharply to "drop!" when standing beside you, at the same time forcing him to the ground by placing the knee on his shoulders, and keep him there for a few moments, saying "Drop! drop!" Then removing your hand or foot from-off him, say "Up!" making him rise. When ordering him to drop, hold your right (or left) arm erect above the shoulder, so that in time he will associate the uplifted arm with the verbal command. In due course he will drop at the signal alone. Do not allow him to get up until ordered to do so, whether you walk away and leave him or not.

Next take some firearm, a muzzle-loading horse-pistol for choice, and, command-

ing him to drop by voice and sign, fire it. In time he will associate the report with the other orders to drop, and so "drop to shot."

Never weary your pupil; stop the lesson before he tires of it. Always have him alone with you when at work, as his attention must not be distracted from the matter in hand. *Never deceive him.* It is well to reward him now and again for good behavior with some dainty of which he is fond. Use the whip as little as possible; but when you do whip, *whip soundly.*

And now for the field. On arriving at the covert in which you purpose beginning operations, order him in; instinct then teaches him to quest for a scent. At first allow him to range at will to put a keen edge on his appetite for the work, and do not check him when so hunting. If he goes too far away, hide carefully and make him find you without assistance from you. He will think he is lost, and be wary of going too far in future.

When he begins to enjoy his work thoroughly you can begin to curb his ranging propensities. If he runs too far, call "Close, Jack—close!" and should he persist in doing so, thrash him, repeating the while, "Close! close!" He should not be allowed to range farther than twenty or twenty-five yards from the gun.

Should he give chase to a flushed bird, shout "Ware chase, Jack!" and if he persists, call him in and thrash him, repeating the order whilst doing so. If he springs a hare and attempts to chase her, shout "Ware fur, Jack!" and calling him to where you stand, scold and thrash him. He must be broken of noticing "fur" at all hazards.

When you shoot the first bird over him order him to "go seek dead!" motioning the direction in which it fell. If he cannot find it, go and find it for him, then pointing to it, say "Dead!" and calling him to follow, go back to where you stood at firing, and order him to get it. If he refuses to pick the bird up, put it in his mouth and force him to carry it to where you stood. Order him to put it down, and praise and make much of him, and ten to one next time he will retrieve. Use every endeavor to kill the first bird you fire at to his flush.

After this, "practice makes perfect," and the reader will in time own a dog of whose accomplishments afield he may be proud.