

of danger is no more connected with any moral stigma than the other. Had he fired west, and wilfully shot a sheep or goat, the case would, of course, be altogether different; but he is merely an occasional poacher,—not a scoundrel. And if the game-laws be not strictly enforced in the district, he remains, as at first, a good and useful member of society, in no degree either the better or the worse for now and then shooting a coot or wild goose that has no standing in the game list, and now and then picking down a partridge or heath hen that has.

But in those parts of England where game are rigidly preserved, and the game-laws strictly enforced, the process is different. The commencement of the poacher's course is nearly the same in both cases. There is the same instinctive love of sport, and the same general conviction that game is not real property,—a conviction which every view of the subject serves but to strengthen and confirm. The Englishman sees that if his neighbour the shopkeeper or banker detects a rascal robbing his till or breaking his strong box, he never once thinks of engaging him as his shopman or cashier; and that, on the same principle, the sheep-feeder or farmer avoids hiring as his shepherd a man notorious for stealing sheep, or declines employing as his farm-servant a man who has been tried and cast for stealing horses. He finds, too, that the fair trader never bargains with habit-and-repute thieves for their stolen goods. But he sees that an entirely different principle obtains among game-preservers. Not a few of them, bent on stocking their preserves, deal freely with poachers for live game; and still more of them, in choosing their gamekeepers, prefer poachers,—clever, active fellows, extensively acquainted among their own class,—to any other sort of persons whatever. Nor, if the poachers be nothing worse than poachers, can there be a single objection to the arrangement, save on the unrecognisable, unten-