

do not belong to the times of the Chartist and the leveller. They have, on the contrary, been long embodied in our literature. The conventional game-laws had never the effect of creating in Britain a conventional morality, that learned to respect these laws as its code and standard. On this point our masters of fiction,—the men whose special work it was to draw character as they found it, draped in the manners of their age, and modified by its opinions,—are high authorities. When Goldsmith requires, for the purposes of his story, to get a thoroughly honest fellow into Newgate, he makes him knock down a hare. When Fielding,—an honourable magistrate at least, however lax in other matters, and a determined enemy of thieving,—wishes to bring his hero into trouble without rendering him culpable, he sends him, with all the eagerness of the young sportsman, after a covey he had started on his benefactor's grounds, into the grounds of a neighbouring proprietor, and makes him kill them there. "The Edwardses of Southhill!" says Mackenzie,—"and a worthy family they were!"—how came these same worthy Edwardses to be ruined? Young Edwards, "who was a remarkably good shooter, and kept a pointer," knocked down a partridge one day in the field of his neighbour, a country justice, and so the ruin was quite a matter of course. But there is no end of such instances; and the report on the game-laws shows on how broad a basis of reality these adepts in fictitious narrative (the prose-makers) founded their inventions. Unfortunately, in not a few cases a poacher *becomes* a bad character, and a source of loss and annoyance to the community; but it is not in the beginning of his career, when he is simply a poacher, that he is in any degree a bad character. He is in most cases either an adventurous young fellow, a "good shooter," like young Edwards, and fond of sport, like the game-preserving proprietors whom he annoys, or else some poor man out of employment, with a wife and