THE

MODERN SHOOTER:

CONTAINING

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND DIRECTIONS

FOR EVERY DESCRIPTION OF

INLAND AND COAST SHOOTING.

BY

CAPTAIN LACY.

" Form'd on the Samian school, or those of Ind,
There are who think these pastimes scarce humane:
Yet, in my mind (and not relentless I),
His life is pure that wears no fouler stain."

ARMSTRONG.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY RUDOLPH ACKERMANN,
191. REGENT STREET.

MDCCCXLVI.

bases of the pegs, or nipples, should stand exactly fair with the muzzles of the barrels, and not all awry.

As to the position of the peg on the barrel, I have seen it fixed in all forms, from the horizontal to the perpendicular, but prefer it as Purdey has always had it, with a slight obliquity backwards, or sloping towards the striker. A small implement, called a peg-clearer, keeps them from rust, with the occasional use of a little oil.

If a shot-corn, from any cause, get tightly wedged in the peg, or nipple, twist a piece of wire round it, and put it in the fire, and, *the moment the lead begins to melt*, take the nipple out, and give it a shake or two.

COPPER CAP.

Although the copper cap be a diminutive, yet there have been as many claimants to the honour of the invention, as, of old, there were contending cities for the honour of having given birth to Homer: still, it does not appear that the world has hitherto conceded to any *one* the right of appropriating that honour to himself exclusively; so that what Colonel Hawker calls "the wished-for discovery of the copper cap inventor," remains still a desideratum! and the *semper honos*, &c., is as yet applicable only to some "great unknown."

The Colonel himself, Mr. Egg, in Piccadilly, and Mr. Purdey, all appear to have strong claims to the merit of the discovery, and, probably enough, might each invent it unknown to the other; for each has invented better things, or, at all events, such as have displayed more ingenuity. The Colonel's pretensions are given in his book, and appear quite decisive of

his having been *an* inventor at the least, if not the original inventor, of this mode of ignition. Mr. Egg indisputably laid the earliest claim to the invention, and assured me, many years ago, that "the *first* copper cap"—for there is always a something extraordinary attending the birth of new inventions —"was made out of an old penny-piece!" That Purdey was "the great original" of this tidy little contrivance—this bit of "*thimble*-rig" in the art of gunnery—I by no means intend to assert; but that he himself, ever since the copper cap appeared, has been of that opinion, I am most thoroughly persuaded. Having, for some years previous to that event, been the leading man in Forsyth's establishment, Purdey was early and well schooled in the detonating system; no man, therefore, more likely than he who had become so conversant with the defects of Forsyth's lock—to strike out a new plan on the percussion principle. Be this as it may, the following is entirely in substance, and nearly *verbatim et literatim*, what he related to me some eighteen or twenty years ago. "I was," said Purdey, "sitting, one evening, with a friend, named Prior, who had just returned from a very wet day's shooting; the detonating patches were then in vogue, and Prior complained that 'he found them too much exposed to be waterproof,' and suggested the idea of 'enclosing them in some substance impervious to wet.'" "Yes," replied I, inverting an empty tumbler, "a metallic cap in this form, with a perforated peg to communicate with the charge." "The day following," continued Purdey, "at the request of Prior, I set to work to realize this new idea, and, from the *tag* of an old umbrella, produced a brass cap, which was handed about for some time, and, a year or two afterwards, Mr. Egg brought out the copper cap!"

These surely give strong indications, on the part of Purdey, of a Prior-ity of claim! But, if Purdey were not the inventor

of the copper cap, most certainly he was the first to bring it to the highest pitch of perfection. He always insisted on thick copper, well knowing that such caps, when once made to fit the peg, retain their shape, and are less liable to fly, and to stop up the orifice of the pivot when fired: they are manufactured from the best wrought copper, and with splits, so that, on explosion, instead of being shivered into splinters, they merely expand equably, giving full vent to the gass all around, the whole of the copper remaining under the concavity of the striker's head; whilst those caps which are made solid, and of thin copper (like the French ones), are apt to fly. A deep concave head is, certainly, a *sine quâ non* to every striker destined to fall on a copper cap; but, in addition to this, we must have the copper thick, so as not to break in firing.

In proof of the superior excellence of Purdey's copper caps, I know many who use them who do not shoot with his guns.

As a mode of ignition, the copper cap has long superseded flint and steel; is now in almost universal use; and, excepting for stanchion guns (which are the rather not adapted for it than it for them), is, take it for all in all, the very best mode yet known.

The accidents, and some of them very serious ones, which have occurred from the use of copper caps, are literally innumerable, despite which the plan loses no ground. The truth is, these accidents have not been, and are not incidental to the invention itself, but to the slovenly and inefficient mode of applying it, and to the shooter's own want of care.

Every country whitesmith, now-a-days, considers himself a dab at detonating. Nay, I know of a wheelwright who undertakes what he calls to "cushion" guns! So that, what with English cushioning and French caps, no wonder the doctors should have so much employment!

I do not know that I can conclude this subject more suitably, or beneficially, than with the following CARD, which Mr. Purdey has addressed to Sportsmen, and which I trust THE MODERN SHOOTER may be the means of conveying to the hospitable abode of many a worthy and gallant brother of the trigger.

"Copper Caps of the first quality, manufactured by J. PURDEY, 314½, Oxford Street, London.

"The superior advantages of these caps are—1st. They are perfectly waterproof. 2nd. Never missing fire. 3rd. And, on the explosion of the gun, they never break to pieces, or fly about.

"The extreme toughness of the copper, owing to the peculiar way in which they are made, prevents the possibility of the most powerful gun TO BREAK THEM; these caps are each made and primed separately; by which means they are accurately primed, and produce that uniformity of force, so very desirable for the accurate shooting of *pistols and rifles*. Caps are usually made and primed, a great number at a time, by machinery, *they therefore cannot be perfect;* some have too much priming, which causes them to explode too violently, force up the cock, and the broken caps to fly about; others miss from not having sufficient flash to fire the charge.

"N.B. In damp weather, lay the caps near the fire for a few minutes, it will cause them to fire much quicker.

"TESTS FOR COPPER CAPS.—Gentlemen are particularly recommended to try copper caps before using, in order to detect those that are primed with fulminating mercury, which the common caps sometimes are; these explode so extremely violently, as to force back the cocks, split the shields, and force the broken copper in all directions, to the *great danger of the eyes;* they are also not to be depended on, as the mercury being in contact with the copper, which it decomposes, in time they become quite useless, and will not explode.

"These caps may be detected by throwing a few into a clear fire; if they make a loud report and fly about, or if, after firing them on a gun, the cap is broken by the explosion, and pieces of broken copper are found about the nipple, reject them as highly dangerous and unfit for use.

"*N. B. Copper Caps of all sizes, and at Prices according to their Quality.*"