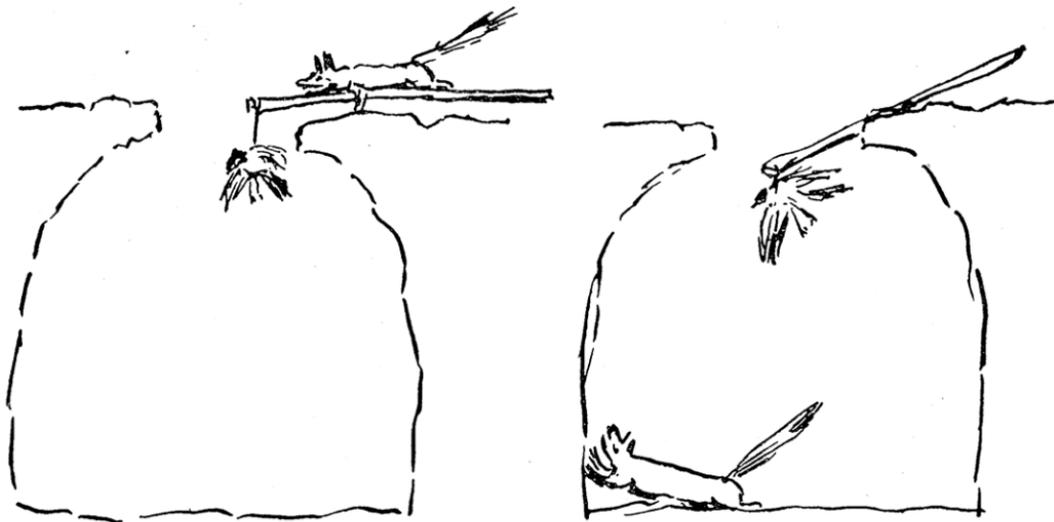


ART. IV.—*The Goose Bield.* By THOMAS HAY.

DURING a recent visit to Ennerdale I heard of a curious construction in which foxes were trapped and destroyed before the days of regular hound packs. On learning of this goose bield, as it is called, in which the fox was lured to destruction by the bait of a hen or goose I hunted up the long-disused trap and examined it carefully. It is on the slope of Great Borne immediately opposite to the summit of Bowness Knott at an elevation of about 1300 feet. There is a cleft in the south slope of Great Borne down which a beck makes its precipitous way. If the shepherds' track up the left bank of this beck be followed to the requisite height the bield will be readily found about 30 yards from the stream and lying between a great projecting knob of rock and the fellside.

There is a profusion of boulders about the spot as the Ennerdale granophyre, which is the local rock, has a blocky fracture giving a rough suitable building material. The trap is built in the shape of a beehive hut with walls overhanging on the inside. At present a good deal of the walling has fallen down, some on the inside and some on the outside, but even now the walls stand up about four feet and measure three to five feet thick. A kind of rude causeway of the granophyre blocks joins the trap to the fellside. Many of the blocks are big and the labour of building would be eased by carrying the blocks along this causeway and building the latter up as the walls of the trap grew upwards. The photograph is taken with the camera pointed downwards at the open top of the trap. This opening is much the worse for wear but it still shows



FOX TRAP IN ENNERDALE.

the roughly circular shape of the construction. To have lasted so long it must have been built with considerable skill when one remembers that it has a very decided overhang all round on the inside. The present internal depth is four foot six inches but allowing for the fact that blocks from the wall tumbling inwards not only diminish the wall height but raise the floor, it must have been deeper when in use.

As the method of operation is not at all obvious, I wrote to Dr. W. S. Eaton of Cleator Moor asking if he could give me any information. He very kindly sent a letter from which I give an extract and he also illustrated it by a couple of sketches to show the mode of action.

“ I have known this old fox trap about 40 years and have often visited it on my rambles and when out hunting with Bill Porter. It has long been out of use and has fallen in and become choked up as you would observe.

Originally it would be a deep pit, built with overhanging sides and the method of capturing Reynard as described to me by old hunters was as follows:—A plank with a goose or an old hen fastened to the end was nicely balanced over the mouth of the pit, and at night (no doubt after careful reconnoitring) Reynard would creep along the plank towards the bait, until his weight overbalanced the plank, and into the pit he would topple . . . to be found there by the shepherd in the early morning unless he managed to get out, which I think he would frequently do by his cunning and nimbleness.”



*Facing p. 30.*

GOOSE BIELD (Great Borne).  
tcwaas\_002\_1943\_vol43\_0007