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## CROSS-COUNTRY RIDING IN AMERICA.

### RIDING TO HOUNDS ON LONG ISLAND.

THE title of this article is chosen especially to emphasize the fact that what is often spoken of as fox-hunting around New York is not fox-hunting at all, in the English sense of the term, but an entirely different, although allied, form of sport; namely, riding to drag-hounds. In the North-eastern States riding to hounds is a sport of recent growth, but during the past decade it has taken a constantly increasing hold among young men fond of the more adventurous kinds of athletic pursuits, and there are now at least seven firmly established hunts,—the Elkridge in Maryland, the Rosetree near Philadelphia, the Genesee Valley in Central New York, the Essex County in New Jersey, the Meadowbrook and Rock-away on Long Island, and finally the one in the neighborhood of Boston, in many ways among the very best, the members of which are thorough sportsmen and both good and bold riders, but who have seen fit to curse themselves with the grotesque title of the "Myopia" hunt. There are also two clubs in Canada, the Montreal and the Toronto. The Elkridge pack, the oldest of all, hunts wild foxes, both the gray and the red; the Genesee Valley and the Myopia hounds are also used mainly after Reynard himself; but at least nine out of ten runs with the other packs are after a drag. Most of the hunts are in the neighborhood of great cities, and are mainly kept up by young men who come from them. A few of these are men of leisure, who can afford to devote their whole time to pleasure; but much the larger number are men in business, who work hard and are obliged to make their sports accommodate themselves to their more serious occupations. Once or twice a week they can get off for an afternoon's ride across country, and they then

wish to be absolutely certain of having their run, and of having it at the appointed time; and the only way to insure this is to have a drag-hunt. It is not the lack of foxes that has made the sport on this side of the water take the form of drag-hunting so much as the fact that the majority of those who keep it up are hard-working business men who wish to make the most out of every moment of the little time they can spare from their regular occupations. A single ride across country will yield more exercise, fun, and excitement than can be got out of a week's decorous and dull riding in the park, and a good many young fellows have waked up to this fact. One such finds that a good horse will stand hunting two afternoons a week; and so he will get perhaps twenty-five runs in a year, without very much expense, without neglecting his business, and with the knowledge that he is not only laying in a stock of health, but is also enjoying what is certainly the most exciting and perhaps also the manliest kind of amusement to be found east of the Mississippi River.

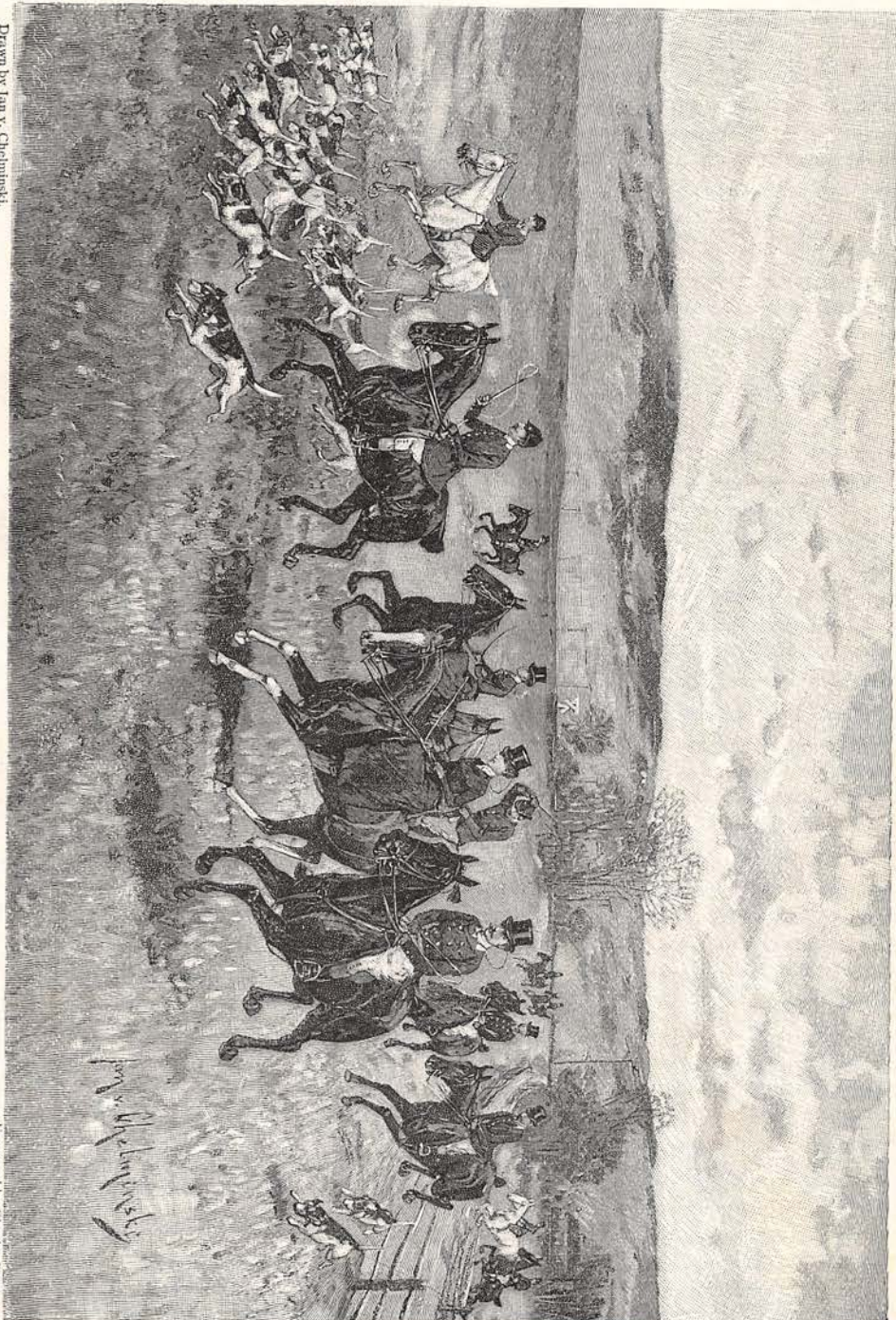
Unfortunately, so far the farmers themselves have taken little part or interest in the sport; but this remark does not hold true of the Genesee Valley, where the hunt of which Mr. Wadsworth is master is established more firmly and on a more healthy and natural basis than is the case with any of the others except the Elkridge. At Genesee the bulk of almost every field is composed of the hard-riding farmers from the country round about, who, be it said in passing, are beginning to find the breeding and selling of good hunters a very valuable part of their stock-raising, for their horses have already won for themselves the reputation of being uncommonly good fencers. Many of our

crack Long Island hunters have come from the Genesee Valley, and, indeed, only high-jumping horses can live with Mr. Wadsworth's hounds, as the country is very stiff, though the pace is not fast.

My own hunting has been done with the Meadowbrook hounds, in the northern part of Long Island. There are plenty of foxes around us, both red and gray, but partly for the reasons given above, and partly because the covers are so large and so nearly continuous, they are not often hunted, although an effort is always made to have one run every week or so after a wild fox, in order to give a chance for the hounds to be properly worked and to prevent the runs from becoming a mere succession of steeple-chases. The sport is mainly drag-hunting, and is most exciting, as the fences are high and the pace fast. It has very little in common with English fox-hunting, however, beyond the fact that both call for jumping and galloping. We lack the variety which gives such a charm to English hunting, where water-jumps, hedges, ditches, and fences alternate with each other, and where a man can never tell what is coming next; nor is there with us the chance for a rider to show so much head-work in getting along, and of course there is no opportunity at all to avail one's self of knowledge of the habits of a hunted animal. But skillful and daring horsemanship is called for quite as much, if not more, while drag-hunting, especially over such an exceedingly stiff country as that along the north shore of Long Island. The land is pretty well wooded, and generally rolling or hilly, except when we come out on the great stretches of level plain towards the middle of the island. The fields are small and bounded almost exclusively by high posts and rails, so that, although we occasionally meet a stone wall or hedge, our jumping is almost exclusively over timber. Some of these fences are of the kind called "snake" or "Virginia" zigzags, with a pair of upright poles at every angle crossing each other to bind in the rails. Such a fence may be very high, and, of course, the horse has to be brought up to it diagonally, so as to face fairly the panel he is to take; but if struck, the rails generally give way. The common kind of fence, however, is a much stiffer affair, consisting of mortised posts and rails; the posts are heavy, upright logs, and the rails, three, four, or five in number, so stout as not to break unless a horse strikes them uncommonly fair and hard. Three-fourths of our fences are of this sort, which average somewhat better than four feet in height, with an occasional rasper that will come well up to five. The country being open, and the fences

as described, there is nothing to check the speed of the hounds, that run like smoke; and towards the end of the season the pace becomes terrific. By the way, it may be as well to mention, for the benefit of those foggy-brained individuals who appear to have got it into their heads that drag-hunting is a rather tame amusement as compared with hunting a wild animal, that no other kind of riding, with the sole exception of steeple-chasing, calls for such hard galloping and high jumping as does riding to drag-hounds. Indeed, the trouble with drag-hunting, as we now carry it on, is its tendency to become more and more like a steeple-chase, in which none but the very best horses can take part; and the men who are sincerely desirous of seeing the sport become popular should do all they can to guard against this tendency, and to make the runs such that moderately fair riders on decent horses will be able to have their share of the fun. Drag-hunting will not be fairly established until we see at the meets large fields of horsemen who like the exercise of riding, like to see the hounds work, and enjoy the hours they are spending in the open air, but who cannot afford to purchase the animals to carry them across country at a racing pace, or who cannot run the risk of being laid up and kept away from their business by an accident. At present the field usually consists of a score or so of young men, all of them very well mounted, many of them good, and most of them hard riders, and almost every one bound to be just as well up in the first flight as his horse can carry him. This is just as it should be, as far as it goes; but in addition to this group of neck-or-nothing men there ought to be, but there is not, a large representation of the men—and women—who are more modest in their ambition. The men who ride hard and straight should of course form the nucleus of every hunt; but they should only be a fractional part of those who come out to the meets, for the chief charm of the sport is that almost every man who rides at all can, if he chooses, enjoy it after his own fashion.

The sport being so new with us in the North, and the country hunted over being generally so very stiff, there has been a good deal of trouble about getting proper horses. Now, however, the demand has created a supply, and first-class hunters are to be had by those who can pay fair prices. The Long Island country needs a peculiar style of horse, the first requisite being that he shall be a very good and high timber-jumper. Quite a number of crack English and Irish hunters have at different times been imported, and some of them have turned out pretty well;



Drawn by Jan V. Chelmski.

“FULL CRY.”

Engraved by Charles Stone.

but when they first come over they are utterly unable to cross our country, blundering badly at the high timber. Few of them have done as well as the American horses. Very probably English thoroughbreds in a grass country, and over the peculiar kind of obstacles they have on the other side of the water, would gallop away from a field of our Long Island horses; for they have speed and bottom, and are great weight-carriers. But on our own ground, where the cross-country riding is more like leaping a succession of five- and six-bar gates than anything else, they do not as a rule, in spite of the enormous prices paid for them, show themselves equal to the native stock. The highest recorded jump, as is well known, was made by the American horse "Leo." Since I have been with the Meadowbrook hounds they have been hunted in succession by Messrs. Morgan, Belmont, and Hitchcock. If the pace is fast and the fences high, any man who will keep in the same field with either of the above-mentioned gentlemen must have moderately good nerve and a first-rate horse; and this is especially true if the animal to be followed is Mr. Morgan's "King Cole," of Kentucky blood, Mr. Belmont's "Carmelite," a West Virginian horse, or one of Mr. Hitchcock's Genesee hunters. The trotting stock, rather curiously, is apt to turn out excellent timber-jumpers. There is much of this blood in Central New York, and very many of our best horses come from there, and were originally intended for use in light wagons. It is impossible to come up at full speed and "fly" a high post-and-rails, in the way a hedge, brook, or low fence can be gone at; the horse generally has to be brought to a canter or even a trot, and then bucks over the obstacle by sheer strength of loins and haunches. An animal with trotting-blood in him seems to take naturally to such work.

A horse thought to be of no account whatever may unexpectedly turn out to be a good jumper; more than once I have known a solemn animal, taken out of a buggy, fairly to astonish everybody by the indifference and quiet with which he went over anything he came to. But, to keep up with the Meadowbrook pack, pace and bottom are needed as well as jumping power; and a common, coarse horse, even if a clever fencer, is very apt to be left behind when there is any galloping, and is also apt to shut up before getting to the end of a severe run. Most of the crack hunters have a great deal of thoroughbred blood in them. The main difficulty with our horses so far has been to find weight-carriers, and mere size is not by any means always a safe test in this respect. Occasionally a small horse will prove able to stand a much heavier

weight than one would think; I have in mind now a little fifteen-two sorrel thoroughbred, that carries one of the heaviest, as well as one of the hardest, riders in the whole hunt well up in the front rank, once or twice a week throughout the entire season.

Most of the meets are held within a dozen miles or so of the kennels: at Farmingdale, Woodbury, Wheatly, Locust Valley, Syosset, or near any one of twenty other queer, quaint, old Long Island hamlets. They are almost always held in the afternoon, the business men who have come down from the city jogging over behind the hounds to the appointed place, where they are met by the men who have ridden over direct from their country-houses. If the meet is an important one, there may be a crowd of onlookers in every kind of trap, from a four-in-hand drag to a spider-wheeled buggy drawn by a pair of long-tailed trotters, the money value of which probably surpasses many times that of the two best hunters in the whole field. Now and then a breakfast will be given the hunt at some country-house, when the whole day will be devoted to the sport, and perhaps after wild foxes in the morning there will be a drag in the afternoon.

After one meet, at Sagamore Hill, I had the curiosity to go on foot over the course we had taken, measuring the jumps; for it is very difficult to form a good estimate of a fence's height when in the field, and five feet of timber seems a much easier thing to take when sitting around the fire after dinner than it does when actually faced while the hounds are running. On this particular hunt in question we ran about ten miles, at a rattling pace, with only two checks, crossing somewhat more than sixty fences, most of them post-and-rails, stiff as steel, the others being of the kind called "Virginia" or "snake," and not more than ten or a dozen in the whole lot under four feet in height. The highest measured five feet and half an inch, two others were four feet eleven, and nearly a third of the number averaged about four and a half. There were also several rather awkward doubles. When the hounds were cast off some forty riders were present, but the first fence was a savage one, and stopped all who did not mean genuine hard going. Twenty-six horses crossed it, one of them ridden by a lady. A mile or so farther on, before there had been a chance for much tailing, we came to a five-bar gate, out of a road—a jump of just four feet five inches from the take-off. Up to this, of course, we went one at a time, at a trot or hand-gallop, and twenty-five horses cleared it in succession without a single refusal and with but one mistake; which speaks pretty well for the mounts we were riding. Owing to the severity of the pace, combined with the

average height of the timber (although no one fence was of especially noteworthy proportions), a good many falls took place, resulting in an unusually large percentage of accidents. The master partly dislocated one knee, another man broke two ribs, and another—the present writer—broke his arm. However, almost all of us managed to struggle through to the end in time to see the death; and as the score of battered riders turned their horses' heads homeward, I could not help thinking that we looked a good deal as if we had been taking part in some feat of arms as gentle and joyous as that of Ashby-de-la-Zouche. But it would be very unfair to think the sport especially dangerous on account of the occasional accidents that happen. A man who is fond of riding, but who sets a good deal of value, either for the sake of himself, his family, or his business, upon his neck and limbs, can hunt with almost perfect safety if he gets a quiet horse, a safe fencer, and does not try to stay in the front rank. Most accidents occur to men on green or wild horses, or else to those who keep up in front only at the expense of pumping their mounts; and a fall with a done-out beast is always peculiarly disagreeable. Most falls, however, do no harm whatever to either horse or rider, and after they have picked themselves up and shaken themselves, the couple ought to be able to go on just as well as ever. Of course a man who wishes to keep in the first flight must expect to face a certain number of tumbles; but even he probably will not be hurt at all, and he can avoid many a mishap by easing up on his horse whenever he can, that is, by always taking a gap when possible, going at the lowest panel of every fence, and not calling on the old fellow for all there is in him unless it cannot possibly be avoided. It must be remembered that hard riding is a very different thing from good riding. A good rider to hounds must also at times ride hard; but the furious galloper who goes headlong at everything is quite likely to be exceptionally brainless rather than exceptionally brave, and may in addition know nothing whatever of horsemanship.

Cross-country riding in the rough is not a difficult thing to learn; always provided the would-be learner is gifted with or has acquired a fairly stout heart, for a constitutionally timid person is peculiarly out of place in the hunting field. A really finished cross-country rider, a man who combines hand and seat, heart and head, is of course rare; and though there are a number of such among the men who follow the Meadowbrook hounds, yet their standard is too high for most of us to hope to reach. But it is comparatively easy to acquire a light hand and a capacity

to sit fairly well down in the saddle; and when a man has once got these, he will find no especial difficulty in following the hounds on a trained hunter; and after he has once taken to the sport, he will hardly give it up again of his own free will, for there is no other that is so manly and health-giving, while at the same time yielding so much fun and excitement. While he is learning horsemanship, by the way, the tyro had best also learn to show a wise tolerance for styles of riding other than that he adopts. At some of the meets, although unfortunately not by any means at all of them, he will see a few outsiders, who are not regular members of the hunt; and because one of these, perhaps, rides an army saddle, wears a slouch hat, and has a long-tailed horse, the man whose rig is of the swellest very probably looks down on him, while the slouch-hatted horseman, in return, and quite as illogically, affects to despise, as a mark of effeminacy, the faultless get-up of the regular hunt member. The feeling is quite as absurd on one side as on the other, and is in violation of the cardinal American doctrine of "live and let live." It is perfectly right and proper that the man who wishes to and can afford it should have both himself and his horse turned out in the very latest style; only he should then make up his mind to live well in the front, for it is hardly the thing for a man with a very elaborate get-up to be always pottering about in the rear or riding along roads. On the other hand, there are plenty of men who cannot or will not come except in the dress which happens to suit their own ideas; and certainly their appearance does not concern anybody else but themselves. It is the true policy to welcome warmly any man who cares for the sport, provided he is plucky, good-tempered, and rides his own line; and whether he wears a stiff silk hat, or a broad-brimmed felt one, has nothing whatever to do with the question.

Again, the cross-country rider is apt to look with contempt upon what is commonly called school-riding; a contempt which can only arise from ignorance, as any one must acknowledge who has seen the really wonderful feats of horsemanship performed by a first-class school-rider. In return, the latter, with equal injustice, often speaks of riding to hounds as if it merely called for a kind of half-barbarous capacity to urge a horse along in any kind of way over obstacles.

But aside from all questions of comparative skill, the attraction of cross-country riding arises from its surroundings, and from the excitement attendant upon it. A sharp gallop in the crisp fall weather, under the stress of an eager though friendly rivalry with a dozen



THE MEET.

other well-mounted men, crashing along among the half-leafless trees or over the brown fields, facing stiff timber without flinching, when the sky overhead is of the brilliant, metallic blue scarcely seen save in America, and the foliage that is still left on the trees shows crimson and yellow, dull red and russet brown—such a gallop, I say, will make a man's heart leap and his nerves thrill and tingle with an almost fierce pleasure that could not be given by the performance of the most difficult feat known to the admirers of the *haute école*.

Last spring I had to leave the East in the midst of the hunting season to join a roundup in the cattle country of western Dakota, and it was curious to compare the totally different styles of riding of the cowboys and the cross-country men. A stock-saddle weighs thirty or forty pounds instead of ten or fifteen, and needs an utterly different seat from that adopted in the East. A cowboy rides with very long stirrups, sitting forked well down between his high pommel and cantle, and depends greatly upon mere balance. In cutting out a steer from a herd, in sitting a bucking broncho, in stopping a night stampede of many hundred maddened animals, or in the performance of a hundred other feats of reckless and daring horsemanship, the cowboy is absolutely unequaled; and when he has his

own horse gear he sits his animal with the ease of a centaur, and yet he is curiously helpless the first time he gets astride of one of the small Eastern saddles. Last summer, while purchasing cattle in Iowa, one of my ranch foremen had to get on an ordinary saddle to ride out of town and see a bunch of steers. He is perhaps the best rider on the ranch, and will without hesitation mount and master beasts that I doubt if the boldest rider in one of our Eastern hunts would care to tackle; yet his uneasiness on the new saddle was fairly comical. At first he did not dare to trot, and the least plunge of the horse bid fair to unseat him, nor did he begin to get accustomed to the situation until the very end of the journey. In fact, the two kinds of riding are so very different that a man only accustomed to one feels almost as ill at ease when he first tries the other as if he had never sat on a horse's back before. It is rather funny to see a man who only knows one kind, and is conceited enough to think that that is really the only kind worth knowing, when first he is brought into contact with the other. Two or three times I have known men try to follow hounds on stock-saddles, which are about as ill-suited for the purpose as they well can be; while it is even more laughable to see some young fellow from the East or from England,

who thinks he knows entirely too much about horses to be taught by barbarians, attempt in his turn to do cow-work with his ordinary riding or hunting rig. Each kind is best in its own place; and the man only accustomed to one will at first find himself at a disadvantage when he tries the other. It must be said, however, that in all probability cowboys would learn to ride well across country much sooner than the average cross-country rider would

needed which neither rowing nor any other form of athletics, except, perhaps, foot-ball, calls for. Moreover, hunting can be enjoyed in different ways and degrees by almost everybody who has a horse, while but a limited number can take part in a boat-race or even a base-ball contest. It is really an essentially democratic amusement, where every one stands on the same plane. If this is once realized, and if men get to appreciate that every one who can



THE START.

master the dashing and peculiar style of horsemanship shown by those whose life business it is to guard the wandering herds of the great Western plains. A cavalry officer trained at West Point is, perhaps, for all-round work, not unlikely to surpass as a horseman both cowboy and fox-hunter.

Riding to hounds has the immense advantage over most other athletic sports, that it implies in those who follow it the possession of moral even more than of physical good qualities. Of course in hunting a man has to have a good deal of skill and a certain amount of wiry toughness and endurance, and his physique and health, which should be already good, will rapidly become much better; but there is no need for anything like the bodily development necessary to one who wishes to become a crack oarsman, for instance; while on the other hand there is an amount of pluck and nerve

get on a horse can take such part as his powers and tastes incline him to, in one of the most manly and healthy of outdoor sports, hunting can hardly fail to become popular. Moreover, the bolder, wilder spirits, certain to be found in any community, who in time of war develop into men like Ulric Dahlgren or young Cushing, but who in time of peace are apt to go to the bad merely from the revolt against the decorous tameness of their life, find in hunting an outlet for their superabundant energies. If in 1860 riding to hounds had been at the North, as it was at the South, a national pastime, it would not have taken us until well on towards the middle of the war before we were able to develop a cavalry capable of withstanding the shock of the Southern horsemen.

As is always the case when an attempt is made to introduce anything new or out of the common, the effort to make riding to hounds

a recognized amusement in the Northern States has given rise to a great deal of criticism, mostly of a singularly senseless sort, characterized by the sheerest and densest ignorance of the whole subject. Much of this criticism comes from men themselves too weak or too timid to do anything needing daring or involving the slightest personal risk, and who are actuated simply by jealousy of those who possess the attributes that they themselves lack. A favorite cry is that hunting is with us artificial and un-American. Of course it is artificial; so is every other form of sport in civilized countries, from tobogganing or ice-yachting to a game of base-ball. Anything more artificial than shooting quail on the wing over a trained setter could not be imagined. Hunting large game in the West with the rifle undoubtedly calls for the presence of a greater number of manly and hardy qualities in those who take part in it than is the case with riding to drag-hounds; but, unless the quarry is the grizzly bear, it does not need nearly as much personal daring. To object to hunting because they hunt in England is about as sensible as to object to lacrosse because the Indians play it. We do not have to concern ourselves in the least as to whether a pastime originated with Indians, or Englishmen, or Hottentots, for that matter, so long as it is attractive and health-giving. It goes without saying that the man who takes to hunting, not because it is a manly sport, but because it is done abroad, is a foolish snob; but, after all, he stands about on the same intellectual level with the man who *refuses* to take it up because it happens to be liked on the other side of the water.

To say the sport is un-American seems particularly absurd to such of us as happen to be in part of Southern blood, and whose forefathers, in Virginia, Georgia, or the Carolinas, have for six generations followed the fox with horse and hound.

*Theodore Roosevelt.*

#### GENESEO AND HAMILTON.

IN Livingston county, New York, in the valley of the Genesee, from which it takes its name, there is a hunt-club older than either of those on Long Island which have been described in the preceding pages. Some ten years ago fox-hunting was started there by the efforts of Mr. W. A. Wadsworth, Mr. James Wadsworth, and Mr. Carroll Fitzhugh. At the outset everything was very simple. There were foxes in some of the coverts, and, of course, the practice of pursuing them on foot with dog and gun was familiar; and when it was proposed to make common cause, and follow

on horses, there were plenty of people to join in and take part. Each man brought his own hound to the meet, and the scratch pack thus formed was then put into covert. If they drew successfully, the highly independent, although for the nonce confederated, pack would set out in full cry, each hound working out his own line, and satisfying himself individually as to the scent. The hounds were stanch, keen, and sagacious enough, but, of course, undisciplined and utterly ignorant of "scoring to cry" and of other niceties of their profession. The horses, too, were necessarily perfectly green at the business, and wholly untrained, so that obstacles were regarded with much respect, and rails were removed oftener than they were jumped over. Nevertheless the sport was liked. The taste for it grew and extended, and very soon every one who could get a mount of any sort would turn out. After a season or two it became obvious that there was too much states-rights feeling among the hounds to make them effective, and it became necessary to follow the example of certain distinguished gentlemen of 1789 and form a better Union. Mr. Austin Wadsworth accordingly took charge of, or rather established, a pack of his own, instead of relying on one made up for the occasion, where the hounds did not know each other and recognized no common master. Under Mr. Wadsworth's management the pack has grown to thirteen couple of good hounds, of which some are imported and some home-bred. Mr. Wadsworth hunts his pack himself, supplies a hard-riding and competent whip, has the kennels on his own estate, and cares for and maintains the whole establishment. In process of time a club was formed, with a membership drawn from Buffalo, Batavia, and other neighboring towns, and even from New York itself, as well as from the farmers of the valley.\* The head-quarters of the hunt are, of course, at Genesee, where the Wadsworth homestead is situated, and the sport is now so thoroughly rooted that there seems no reason why it should not last.

The best feature of the Genesee hunt is its thoroughly popular character. The region is given to horse-raising, and anything involving horses appeals to almost every one. The interest in the hunt is, therefore, very widespread, and the younger men among the farmers usually belong to the club, in which they hold many of the offices, and are out with the hounds whenever they can get an opportunity and the meet is in their neighborhood. They all take an intense interest in

\* The statistics of the club are as follows: Number of regular members, 54; honorary members, 8; lady riders and members, 16; hounds, 26; coverts, 37; litters of foxes, 1885, 21.



the sport, and ride hard and straight. Their horses are sometimes a little rough-looking, the tails have not always the most approved bang, the manes are not pulled, the saddles perhaps are a little shabby, and the stirrup-irons a trifle rusty; but in all essentials there is nothing to be desired, and the men and horses go straight and well, which is far more important than any amount of style. They do not turn from anything, and a man who will follow some of them through a run may rest satisfied with his exploits. I chanced to be out one day when the field was almost exclusively made up of the farmers of the valley. At the end of a run of over ten miles we came to a stiff rail fence more than four feet six inches in height by measurement, which makes a good strong jump at the end of a rather long run. Two or three highly bred and well-trained horses which had the speed went first, but every one followed; not a man flinched, and not a horse fell, although one or two were a good deal over-weighted and had to be ridden with much judgment. This general interest, which is natural enough in reality, is worth mentioning, because the idea has prevailed that fox-hunting here was something purely exotic, and a mere fashionable fancy of the rich and idle in the community. Such a notion is false. If fox-hunting is carried on under proper conditions and in the right spirit, it is in its very nature genuinely popular. It is, of course, essentially a country sport, and not one in which the great mass of people in a city can engage. Let it start, however, in the country, and no one will take to it more kindly or succeed at it better than the American farmer, who is a lover of horses, and is bold, intelligent, and as eager for wholesome amusement as any one in the world. The hunting at Geneseo proves this, and, moreover, the men there ride over their own land, and over that of neighbors, who welcome them heartily.

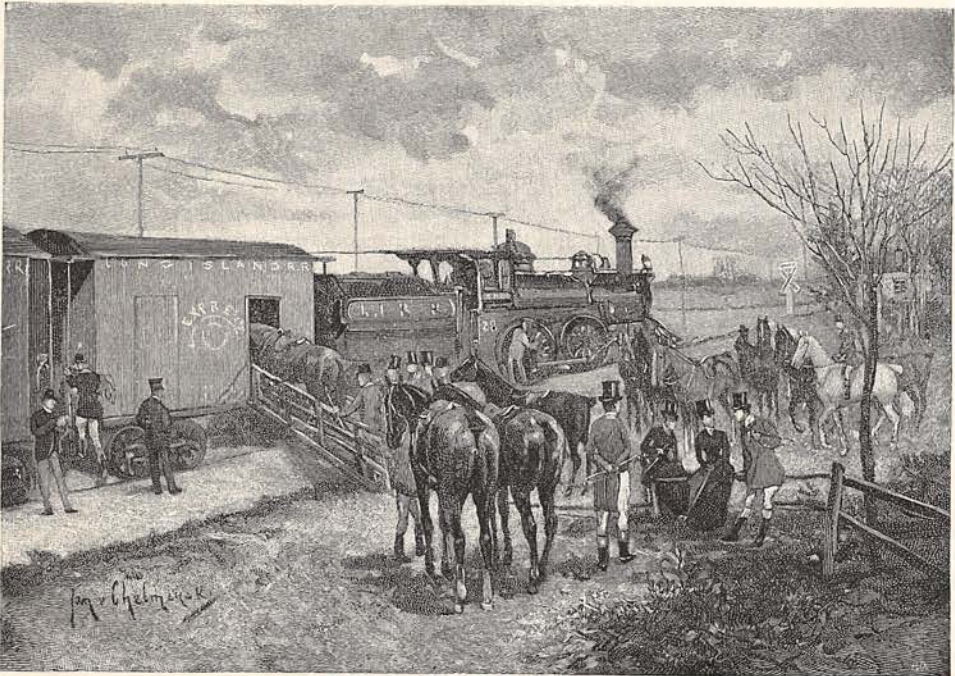
The Geneseo country is wonderfully well adapted for hunting. The river, which has cut for itself a deep channel, winds in graceful curves through the broad valley, while from the edge of the steep banks level pastures usually stretch away on either hand, occupying hundreds of acres and giving food to large herds of cattle. From these meadows gentle hills slope upwards on each side covered with rich farms, broken here and there by fine groves of oaks and chestnuts. The view from the high ground on which the village of Geneseo stands is very beautiful. It has the gracious charm of a rich farming country, free from the monotony of a mere extent of flat meadow-lands, and stretches away as far as the eye can see over the gentle and changing slopes of the low hills.

All this beauty of nature adds, of course, immensely to the pleasure of riding across country; but there are other more material advantages. The farms and pastures are of great extent and as a rule very smooth, so that the galloping is excellent, and one is generally sure to have a clean take-off and a good landing at the jumps. In certain parts of the country hunted over, the hills are more abrupt and broken, and deep gullies which are made usually by the small streams tributary to the Genesee, and which are very steep and rough and by no means attractive to riders in haste after the hounds, are frequently encountered. Ditches or dry water-courses are not uncommon, and these with an occasional stone wall give that variety of jumps which is so essential to the making of a really good hunter. The characteristic barrier, however, and that which is met with nine times out of ten, is the rail or board fence, the former being the more common of the two. The old form, which still prevails quite largely, is that of the snake or zigzag fence. The rails are laid one on the other until the desired height is obtained, and then they are held in place by stakes driven in and crossed at the angles. Fences of this description absorb, of course, a great deal of lumber, and as they gradually wear out and timber grows scarcer, the good rails are selected and used to build the successor of the zigzag, which is straight and is called by way of distinction a line fence. In this form two stout posts are driven into the ground close together and with regular intervals between each pair. These pairs are then bound together by heavy wire, and the rails laid from pair to pair between the posts and held in place by the wire lashings. As a rule, although there was not enough timber for a zigzag, there is more than enough for a line or straight fence, and the rails are accordingly piled on until all are thus disposed of simply to get them out of the way. The result is that the line fences generally make big jumps. They are apt to be very well over four feet, and not infrequently are five and more in height. The redeeming features are that the rails are close together, thus making a solid-looking obstacle which always causes a horse to jump well, and that the rails are frequently somewhat rotten and break with comparative ease. One will meet as big fences in the Genesee Valley as in any hunting country in the world; but they announce their size plainly to horse and rider, and will often give way on compulsion. They are not like the mortised oak rails of Long Island, with their wide spaces and absolute solidity, a form of fence so high and stiff as to make hunting well-nigh impossible, and cer-

tainly too difficult and dangerous for the best interests of the sport. The other form of barrier at Geneseo is the board fence. The boards, like the rails, are apt to be rotten, and are a good deal thinner. These fences do not run much over four feet in height, if at all, but they usually make the doubles or in-and-outs, and are sufficiently high, especially when they close in a narrow cattle-path. There is also one form of board fence which tops off

tempted to rush them, but is obliged to take one's horse at them coolly and collectedly. It is a good school for any rider, and the proof of this is obvious in the quality of the riding and the nerve and skill shown by the field, which has few stragglers, many really brilliant performers, and means going always.

In October the runs are generally after drags. The members from Buffalo and elsewhere come from a distance, their time is



EMBARLING FOR A DISTANT MEET.

with an oak scantling nailed heavily to the posts, and which is as uninviting a jump as the most reckless rider can desire. I have dwelt somewhat on the fact that rails and boards break at Geneseo, but it is merely to emphasize the distinction between them and those of Long Island. The average height is about the same in both places, but the latter are far stiffer and more open. I would not have any one suppose from what I have said that you can ride with indifference at a Geneseo fence, secure in your ability to break it and have your horse stand up. It is best not to trifle with the rail and board fences of Geneseo; they are heavy obstacles, and must be jumped clean. Unless you have a horse ready with a fair chance to do his five feet cheerfully, you had better not attempt to ride in the first flight after the Genesee Valley hounds.

Such is the surface of the country, and such the obstacles. The galloping is generally perfect, and the fences are so big that one is not

limited, they want to be sure of a quick, good run, and cannot spend the larger part of a day, perhaps, in wandering about to find a fox. The drags are very skillfully laid, and are arranged by Mr. Wadsworth in the only true way, so as to resemble a run after a live fox as much and a steeple-chase as little as possible.

In November and December, and later still if the winter is open, the pack is used for wild foxes, which affords, of course, the very highest and best of the sport. The coverts are large, but as the trees are chiefly oaks, they are open enough to gallop through, and the turf is firm and good, instead of being destroyed by needles as in pine forests. Most important of all, there is rarely any undergrowth. The size of the coverts tends to make finding slow, but if time is no object this is far from objectionable. When they do find, moreover, it is not difficult to follow, get the fox into the open, and have a splendid run, than which nothing can be

more exciting or more delightful. It is also pretty certain that a find will be made. There are plenty of foxes, some native, some planted, and all wild. Their earths are well known to the master, and as so many of the farmers ride and are all interested and friendly, they do everything they can to preserve the fox, mark down his earth, and inform the proper authorities of his abode. The night before a meet an earth is stopped. The fox, as is the habit of his kind, returns from his nightly prowling, hangs round the closed earth until daylight, and then trots off, leaving a good scent for his enemies. The hounds are out early, and are thrown in near the earth. They soon get the scent; away they go, and if fortune is favorable there is a brilliant run and a kill in the open. As to the cruelty of it, any form of sport involving the death of an animal may be said to be cruel. But it is the nature of man to hunt and slay wild creatures, from the reed-bird up to the elephant. If there was no riding to hounds, the fox would be run down with one or two

sharp dogs by the local hide-hunter. He then would be either dug out of his earth and knocked on the head with a club, or he would be killed or badly wounded by a charge of buckshot. When the pack is after him he has a chance for his life, and often gets away, and when the hounds succeed in reaching him his sufferings are over almost as quickly as if a bullet put a period to his life.

I cannot give a more succinct statement of the merits of the Geneseo hunt than by borrowing the words of its master. Mr. Wadsworth says:

"I think hunting a good thing *because* it is the only field sport which must be absolutely open to all. The shooting in this part of the country will soon be confined to those who can afford game-preserves and game-keepers. It comes at a time when men living in the country have little to do. It encourages the raising of a *very* valuable class of horses. It is free from the betting and 'professional' blackguardism which spoil most other sports. It is healthy and encourages good qualities in a man, for no man can preserve his nerve and seat who is not habitually temperate and self-denying. The damage done by riders (which should always be promptly and generously settled) is much less than one would imagine. The worst thing



CLUB-HOUSE, GIBNEY FARM, HAMILTON, MASS.

they do is leaving gates open or rails down so that stock get out or mixed, which may occasion serious loss and should be guarded against. Of course no rider should ever cross winter wheat or new seeding when the ground is wet. There is no reason for it, and it should never be allowed. A few broken fences, easily repaired, are all the other harm done. The advantage of a *drag* hunt is that many men are limited in time and cannot potter round in the woods for hours looking for foxes. Also, when there is a large field they can be taken where they will best enjoy themselves and amuse others, and arrangements can be made to prevent any damage. It should be made as much like a fox-hunt and as little like a steeple-chase as possible. It is far more sportsmanlike than the performances of her Majesty's Royal Buckhounds with their 'carted deer.'"

The club which hunts in the neighborhood of Boston, by an unlucky accident, bears the meaningless and inappropriate name of "The Myopia." The club-house and kennels are on the Gibney farm, which lies just within the borders of the town of Hamilton adjoining the town of Wenham in Essex county, and are about thirty miles from Boston. The Myopia has two packs, one of beagles and one of foxhounds, each numbering some thirteen or fourteen couple. The beagles are used for

drags, the hounds exclusively for foxes. Now and again the beagles are taken to Dedham for a meet, or the hounds to Southboro', where the country is more open and where a good run is probable.

Most of the hunting of the Myopia Club, however, is at Hamilton. Drags are run there with the beagles in early autumn, and by the middle of October the hounds get out for foxes, the two packs giving four or five runs every week. Until November the fields are large, often numbering forty or fifty riders at the start; and these large and increasing fields are one of the best features of the Myopia hunt. Only a small proportion of them, of course, go straight from start to finish; but every one enjoys it, the interest in the sport is constantly spreading, and more people every year take to riding, with all the advantages which that best of manly exercises implies.

The Essex country is very different from that of Geneseo. It is a region of rolling hills with almost endless stretches of rough pasture, broken by wide swamps and large masses of pine forest. The galloping over these pastures is exceedingly fine and very attractive. The fences, if the bull will be pardoned, are for the most part loose stone walls. The ditches are few, the rails more numerous and of all heights, and the walls are everywhere. These stone walls tumble pretty easily, but they also throw a horse and cut him severely far too often to be pleasant. In height they range from three to four feet, averaging about three feet six inches, which is a good jump in stone. Now and then you will meet with a wall of more than four feet, and in at least one instance a member of the club jumped a heavy wall four feet eight inches high, which is better than five feet of rails. Such jumps as this, however, are luckily not common; most of the walls are very moderate in size and much lower than the fences of either Geneseo or Long Island, and therefore all the better for hunting. The difficulties in the Hamilton country arise from the roughness of the ground, which at times is rocky and broken, and from the bad take-offs and uncertain landings. One is obliged to jump constantly from a stand, out of all sorts of awkward corners, and very often with the chance of landing in a bog or on a heap of loose stones on the other side. A rider at Hamilton ought to have a horse with a good turn of speed, and not afraid of four feet and a half or five feet at a pinch; but above all, he needs a strong, handy, clever horse, with good sense and a cool head. If you are mounted on an excitable animal, however brilliant, the chances are that you will cut his knees, and perhaps get a bad fall in

the bargain. With a mount of the right kind, however, no safer and pleasanter country can be found to ride over, and this is a great advantage in every way. The land is not fertile, but the upland pastures, thickly sprinkled with goldenrod and heather, are full of color and beauty. The gray ledges and bowlders rise here and there, covered with lichens, and stand out boldly against the dark background of the pines; while every now and then, from the top of some hill, you catch a glimpse of the sea glittering in the sunlight or darkening beneath the cloud shadows.

There are few more delightful experiences in every way than to go out with the hounds early in the morning. The meet is at day-break; the field is, of course, small, and wholly made up of those who really love the sport. You ride away from the kennels in the gray dawn. Everything is still, there is a light hoar-frost on the earth, perhaps a thin mist hanging over the pastures. When the covert is reached, the hounds are thrown in, and there can be no prettier sight than to see them working over the damp ground, where the scent is sure to lie well. The air bites a little, the horses are at their best, and nothing can be more exhilarating or more full of healthy and honest pleasure.

The coverts at Hamilton and Wenham contain plenty of foxes, despite the local sportsmen, but they are also very extensive. The pack ought to be double its present size, and even then it would be extremely difficult to get a fox into the open for a run. Reynard knows very well what is best for him. He slips along the edges of the woods, plunges into a dense thicket, comes out on the other side, skirts the covert again, finally crosses a swamp, and very probably escapes. Now and then he will break from one covert to another; sometimes he takes boldly to the open, and then comes the best of all things — a sharp run on a burning scent. Although the Myopia hounds do not kill very often, there is almost always plenty of scent in the neighborhood of the coverts, and the field is sure to have one or two quick bursts at an early meet. When the hour is later, especially if the sun shines, the chances for any kind of a run are diminished. Yet, with all the drawbacks of waiting and blank days, the Essex hunts are as enjoyable as any man could wish. The fresh, keen air, and the brisk, quick gallop with plenty of jumping, start the blood and make one feel the "wild joy of living" more than anything in the world. The fox-hunt takes the edge off the drag, it must be confessed, but it is the genuine fox-hunt which gives a charm to the sport in Geneseo and Hamilton, and promises a long life to it in both places.

The farmers of Hamilton and Wenham have not yet begun to follow the hounds or to breed hunters, but this will come before very long. They have received the club with the greatest good-nature and with much kindly interest. The welcome has been so hospitable that the club has adopted the custom of annual field sports. Small prizes are offered for running and jumping and for farmers' horses; there is a lunch spread under the trees in front of the club-house, and in the evening there is a dance at the town hall. Nothing could show the need of such simple and wholesome amusements more than their popularity and success at Hamilton. These annual sports bring together two or three thousand people from all the country round, and there is always a great deal of fun and enjoyment. The club management in this, as in other respects, has been wise and simple, and there is every reason to believe that the sport which it fosters is now a permanent thing.

The object of this, as well as of the preceding article, I suppose, is something more than merely to give a description of certain hunt-clubs. They have been written, indeed, to little purpose if they do not serve in some slight manner, at least, to dissipate certain prejudices which have been felt against riding to hounds in this country, and which have been disseminated if not bred by the press merely through lack of information, and not at all from any real ill-will. These prejudices or misapprehensions usually find expression in slurs on the sport and on those who engage in it, and in much fun and laughing at the expense of the members of the clubs.

The first objection made is that fox-hunting here is merely for the sake of imitating something English. No one can have a more hearty and thoroughgoing contempt for the Anglo-mania so prevalent in certain portions of the society of some of our great cities than the writer of these lines. Such a vicious habit of feeble imitation is sure to die, and it cannot be too strongly condemned by all decent and honest Americans.

It is well, however, not to fall into the opposite mistake of avoiding and abusing a thing good in itself, simply because the English engage in it. Yachting was a peculiarly English amusement until we beat them at it. The bicycles now in such universal use, and which give pleasure to so many people, are of English invention. Yet no one would think of calling yachtsmen and bicyclists Anglo-maniacs, simply on account of the yacht and the bicycle. There is, in reality, even less cause to stigmatize fox-hunting in this way. In the first place, following the hounds on horseback and riding across country have been practiced

in the Southern and to a certain extent in the Middle States ever since white men lived here. In the colonial days, in fact, the sport was more or less common everywhere on the Atlantic seaboard. It died out in the North and East, and has now been revived. That in a few words is the whole case historically. But the injustice of decrying and abusing it rests on far broader and better grounds than any history can furnish. Riding across country requires nerve, courage, and skill, and no sport demanding those qualities can be foreign to an American or an exotic in the United States. The American is by nature a lover and trainer of horses. His whole attention thus far has been devoted to breeding, developing, and driving the trotting horse, and the result is an animal driven with a skill and at a rate of speed perfectly unequaled. Cross-country riding opens a new field, but we have already produced two American horses which have beaten the record of the world at the high jump; and although we have still something to do in the way of weight-carriers, our hunters in their class cannot be surpassed in courage, in jumping power, or in staying qualities. Fox-hunting, in reality, is a sport peculiarly adapted to this country, because it is in its nature thoroughly popular. No decently behaved person who has a horse and can ride can be excluded. It must of necessity be open to all, and, moreover, it is comparatively inexpensive. The cost of the finest hunter is a trifle compared to that of a really good trotter, and a shrewd man with good judgment can often pick up for a moderate price a horse which under training will become an admirable jumper. Good shooting and fishing of all kinds have become so very expensive and so distant that only the rich practically can enjoy them; whereas any man who can manage to keep a horse can come to any meet and follow the hounds, and his subscription may be proportionate to his means without affecting his welcome or his pleasure. In one word, nothing can be more false than the idea that cross-country riding is the amusement of the very rich and the very exclusive. It is the most democratic, as it is the best field sport in the world. The question of riding over the land of other people is wholly with the owners. If they do not wish it, they can stop it in an instant; but I have yet to hear of anything but a very slight and exceptional objection, the rule being a hearty and generous welcome to the riders.

Another slur constantly thrown out is that the whole thing is a bit of luxurious effeminacy. To this there can be but one reply. Let any one who believes cross-country riding to be a weak and effeminate amusement, get him a



MYOPIA PACK.

horse, go out with any pack in the country, and ride well up through one hard run. If after that he still thinks fox-hunting weak and effeminate, he has a perfect right to say so, but not before. Much sarcasm is also expended on pink coats and the anise-seed bag. The former is a mere fashion, a harmless frill, which has no more real connection with the sport than a man's shirt-collar has with his politics or his religion. The pink coats look bright and picturesque on a gray morning, or against the dark background of wood or hillside, but they are a mere detail, and the sensible thing, of course, is for every one to dress as he pleases. The anise-seed bag, which has given rise to so much fun, is treated as if it were a native invention intended to supply in a wholly ridiculous way the lack of foxes. As a matter of fact drags are well known and are sufficiently common in England. It is an easy way of assuring a quick and certain run after hounds, and involves just as much jumping as any other form of cross-country riding. It is perfectly legitimate sport, and in this country, where the riders are largely men of business, whose time is very limited, it is really essential.

The faults of our hunting, in fact, are not at

all those commonly alleged in the newspapers. The great error here is in the disposition to make hunting a mere competition in jumping, which is all wrong. Those who merely want to get dangerous jumping at high speed can put up obstacles of any size and race round a steeplechase course to their hearts' content. The true doctrine is that men jump in order to hunt, or in other words to ride across country, and they should not hunt in order to jump. The latter theory, to which the prevalence of drags gives some countenance, can have but one result in practice. It will steadily diminish the field until only a few reckless youngsters are left, who, spurred by jealousy of each other, will take any foolish risk that comes along. The upshot would be the extinction of fox-hunting and cross-country riding, on account of the unpopularity which would thus be excited. Hunting in this country under the best conditions has all the danger that is necessary, or that any one can want. Falls are not so numerous here as in England, because the ground as a rule is hard and the take-offs and landings fair and clean. But on the other hand falling in England is usually in tolerably soft earth, while here the reverse is apt to be the case, so that the

tumbles, though less frequent, are much more severe. The lovers of cross-country riding ought to make it their first maxim that the sport should be as popular as possible. Wisdom and skill in management will, however, come everywhere in time, and there is no sport which needs more of both qualities.

Cross-country riding, in a word, is one of the best and most manly of sports. It requires courage, good temper, and discretion, as well as the exercise of some of the best qualities of man, both physical and mental. At the same time it tends to breed up good horses. The strict utilitarian may urge that after all is said it is nothing but a pastime; but pastimes are just as important as work to the well-being and sound health of any people. The proverb tells us the result of all work and no play, and no one can question that in this great country of ours one of our dangers comes from the excessive application to business which makes life here fevered, restless, and too often

brief. There is no danger of Americans as a race becoming indolent. There is real danger of their becoming sadly overworked and making existence joyless. Vigorous physical exercise and wholesome sports are as needful to nations as to individuals, and render them all the more effective and efficient in the end. Cross-country riding is among the best of sports. The dash and skill which it demands render it peculiarly fit for Americans, and sensibly managed it is sure to outlive the prejudices which have been excited against it, and which will die away if those who are truly fond of it will carry it on in the right spirit and make it as widely popular as they can. Under no other conditions can it thrive, and under proper conditions it will be open to more people and will give more health and more enjoyment, and develop more manly qualities when rightly practiced, than any other field sport which is known to the present generation.

*Henry Cabot Lodge.*



COLLECT FOR DOMINION DAY.

FATHER of nations! Help of the feeble hand!  
 Strength of the strong! to whom the nations kneel!  
 Stay and destroyer, at whose just command  
 Earth's kingdoms tremble and her empires reel!  
 Who dost the low uplift, the small make great,  
 And dost abase the ignorantly proud,  
 Of our scant people mold a mighty state,  
 To the strong, stern,— to Thee in meekness bowed!  
 Father of unity, make this people one!  
 Weld, interfuse them in the patriot's flame,—  
 Whose forging on Thine anvil was begun  
 In blood late shed to purge the common shame;  
 That so our hearts, the fever of faction done,  
 Banish old feud in our young nation's name.