



A MEET AT THE CLUB-HOUSE.

## THE HURLINGHAM CLUB OF BUENOS AYRES.

BY H. PIERCY DOUGLAS.

SOME twenty miles out from the city of Buenos Ayres, in the Argentine Republic, where the world sends its people from every part, and where you hear a very bedlam of tongues, the Anglo-Saxon has made for himself a home that serves as his club and his rendezvous. This club—the Hurlingham—named after the famous polo club of England, is unsurpassed for the beauty of its surroundings and for the free, ample, whole-souled hospitality of its members. It was my good fortune to live there during the winter of 1898.

The club was founded about twenty years ago by a few enthusiastic polo players for the avowed purpose of promoting the interests of the game and encouraging all amateur athletics. From a modest beginning it has grown to be the most prominent club in South America, where a devotee of polo, racquets, cricket, tennis or golf, finds ample opportunity for the practice of his favorite game, and where the race meetings, the most popular social events of the season, bring together the crack ponies and gentlemen riders from far and near. Far removed from the touch of the mother country, the "younger sons" have brought her traditions with them and given them full sway.

Hurlingham, during the summer

months, from November to April, devotes all its energies to cricket; but from May to September (when the good people of New York are doing their best to keep cool) the Argentine Republic dons its winter dress, and it takes all one's heavy clothes to keep from freezing. Then it is that the cricket bat is changed for the polo stick, and the summer flannels give way to the breeches and boots.

To me the most interesting sport at Hurlingham was the hunting. The club supports a pack of English foxhounds, and a faster, gamier little pack would be hard to find; and, hunted as they are by men old at the game in England, they furnish some rare, good gallops. The country around Hurlingham is perfectly flat, and is fenced with wire into large fields. Big wooden and wicker hurdles are put up against this fencing, making jumps about four feet high and twenty feet broad. Ditches and water make the jumping very tricky and varied, and to be in at the worry after a fifteen-mile run takes a fast and clever pony.

The hunting and polo playing are all done on native ponies, which in size and conformation bear a marked resemblance to the better-class broncos of our Western country. As polo ponies they are, I believe, ranked very high,

while their strength and speed make them ideal hunters. They take to their work kindly with little schooling, and a bad-tempered or bucking animal is rare.

The hunt days are the great days at Hurlingham. The drag-hounds meet in the morning, and the afternoon is given up to polo, golf, or pigeon shooting. The grounds present a very lively and picturesque sight. Since early morning a steady stream of people have been arriving in carriages and on horseback, while the trains bring out the contingent from town. The well-shaded lawn in front of the pretty club-house is filled with a jolly confusion, riding clothes and pinks predominating, with here and there a red-coated golfer, and conspicuous above all the ruddy-cheeked, athletic English girl, as "sporty" and trim as her well-fitting habit can make her. The master and huntsmen are in full regalia, grooms are leading up ponies from the stables, and out in the steeplechase course the jumps are being tried.

When everyone is most excited and you find your curb chain is twisted or your leathers too long, and that some one has appropriated your pet hunting crop, you hear a chorus of yelps from the kennels as the pack burst out, and the sharp crack of the huntsmen's whips getting them together. Your chain is straight, your leathers comfortable, your crop is found where you left it, and you are at last mounted, your pony rearing and jumping, knowing as well as his rider what is on. The pack are larking together in front of the stables, and as you canter down to join them you cannot help shaking hands with yourself and being glad you are alive.

The stablemen hold open the big gates and the pack trot through, jumping and playing around the master's horse, who puts back his ears when the "young uns" nip his heels, but knows too much to kick them. The field follow at a safe distance, and by this time you have found the particular señorita you always ride with, and the two ponies have their wise little heads together, telling each other what a fine gallop they are going to have.

As we trot along we gradually move up in front, for away own the dusty white road your eye catches sight of a hurdle, and you know they will cast in a minute. The hounds are getting a

bit nervous and the whips are having a busy time of it; a few short yelps from the leader, a burst of music from the rest, a blast on the master's horn, a loud "tally ho" from the field, and they are off.

At the first fence the master pulls up, "Keep back, give them a start; there will be galloping enough in a minute." Now they are down to their work, and the music coming back to you on the cold morning breeze makes you sit up and grip your pony tightly. A cheery "tally ho" from the master, who gives the lead on his chestnut, and before you realize it the first fence is behind. You jam your hat down, get well into your saddle, steady back a minute for your companion, and off you go.

The ponies settle into their long, easy stride, dodging here and there to clear the big thistles that cover the camp. A wicked brush hurdle looms up in front, the man ahead refuses, you feel your mount hesitate; a touch of the spur, a steady hold of his head, and we are over safely. Looking back you see one man off and his pony bound for home. Up a little hill with a double at the top; a nasty piece of water at the bottom stops a few, but the ponies have their heart in their work, and are jumping beautifully, taking the fences side by side. Yours gets a bit careless, or perhaps you rush him in your excitement, for he hits hard a wooden hurdle and almost comes a cropper; but almost in hunting is nothing, and on we go again, a big field ahead, carpeted with short, dry turf, an ideal place to get up with the pack, now running well together away in the lead. The duffers are behind and a clear field in front; a word and touch of the rein, and we are flying madly along. You feel like yelling with pure excitement and joy. Never have you had such a run, never have you felt so good. Steady, not too close! The master looks back and holds up his hand warningly, so we pull to one side, but keep it up. A ditch and a double, with a drop on the far side, take a lot of doing, and you are just wondering how long we can last when the master's horn and the whips of the huntsmen call off the pack, and we are at the check. You look around and note with secret satisfaction that there are only five of you up. Jump off, loosen up girths, and take a much-needed breather yourself.

The field slowly comes in, some with suspicious-looking mud stains on their backs, some without hats, but all happy. Into the saddle again, off we go, and in twenty minutes you are riding homewards with the happy feeling that the best run of the season found you in at the worry. And she? Oh, she was in at the finish, and that perhaps is the reason our ponies walk so slowly.

Back at the club, you walk down to the stables and into the big box-stall where the "little chap" is getting his rub down, and he *noses* in your pockets, looking for the sugar he knows he has won, and as he eats it you pet him, and tell him how proud you are of him.

The big comfortable sitting-room, its walls hung with pictures of polo and cricket teams, is filled with men, who crowd around, the cheery wood fire, all ordering their Scotch and sodas at once. Yours comes in due time, then a cigarette, a big chair, and you lazily lie back and listen to them discussing and riding over again the run of the morning.

The announcement, "Lunch is ready, gentlemen," is the signal for a rush to the dining-room, and what a jolly room it is! More open fires, and, let me tell you, in this country of frail houses and cold winds they are appreciated. Sporting prints, game trophies from all lands, decorate the walls, while on the piano, sideboards, tables, wherever there is room to put one, are cups—polo cups, hunting cups, golf cups, all proving the skill of the Hurlingham men. Ye gods! What a lunch and what an appetite! The tables groan under the weight of cold meats and salads of every description, and, as you sit back and wash it down with a bumper of the best, you come to the conclusion that South America has its advantages after all.

The big chairs in the sitting-room are very inviting, and you have your coffee in there, helped along by a long Havana. Through the windows you look out over the race-track and the golf course, where a belated foursome, too keen to bother about lunch, is just finishing. On beyond you see the polo fields, and the ponies are being led up and tied along the fence for the afternoon game. But you are too comfortably lazy to bother about anything, and the room begins to take on a decidedly hazy look, when your day dreams are rudely disturbed by a hearty slap on the back, and a "Come, wake up,

old chap; it's two o'clock, and you will have to play on the second to-day. Drabble hasn't turned up." So you pull yourself together and rush upstairs to get into your clothes, for to be asked to play on any team is an honor that doesn't often come your way.

Hurlingham takes especial pride in the polo teams, and one is sure to see an exciting match. The annual battle for the championship of the River Plata is fought there, and each summer a team goes to England and always finishes well up in front.

By the time you reach the field the pavilion is filled with a wildly enthusiastic crowd of men and girls, who applaud loudly every good hit and clever bit of riding. You, being a duffer, are played "Number one," that most trying position of all on a polo team, where you catch all the blame and none of the credit. However, you distinguish yourself by hitting a fluke goal, and ride down the field for the last period, conscious of much applause, which quickly turns to laughter as your fresh pony almost bucks you off. But all polo games are more or less alike, and in this particular one your side wins by a goal.

On the way back we stop in at the racquet court, join the audience in the gallery, and see the finish of a closely-contested double.

The short southern twilight is settling fast, the light of the day changing to the gray of the evening, and the cold wind coming in from the sea makes you turn up your collar and remember the cheery fire at the house. Some one puts his arm through yours, and his "Come in for a parting cigar and a chat, old man," is too inviting to be refused.

The people from town are leaving for the tram, the last equestrians are starting homewards, and we congratulate ourselves, as the last "Buenas noches" is said, that a jolly evening at the club is before us. A cold shower and a dinner coat, the best bracers in the world, and you jump downstairs, "fresh as a daisy, hungry as a bear."

There are some twenty of us staying the night. The dinner is excellent, the company the best, and the conversation touches on a bit of everything: At last the chairs are pushed back, cigars lighted, and the liquors are before us. "Gentlemen," says Clunie, rising to his



THE GRAND STAND AND RACQUET COURTS.

feet "I have a toast to propose. Let us drink to the union of England and the United States," which is drunk in the spirit it was given, "from the heart."

Later we gather around the piano and sing those rollicking English hunt-

ing choruses, "John Peel," "Hounds of the Meynell," and the rest of them; and as you wearily drag yourself to bed you can say truthfully that for one day in your life you have lived with the best of them.

## WHEN THE BROOK TROUT LEAPS.

THE slender, dew-tipped grasses are trembling  
in the breeze,  
The east is blushing rosy red beneath the Sun's  
caress,  
The wild rose bends to kiss the stream—but only  
Nature sees,  
And the reed-harps play weird music just above the  
water-cress.

The quail is calling loudly where the tangled bushes  
The <sup>grow</sup> startled frogs are diving, and the noisy black-  
bird scolds.  
The stealthy rat is hunting where the deeper waters  
flow,  
And the bees are sipping honey that the wild plum's  
blossom holds.

The air is overladen with the wild-flowers' fragrant scent.  
The morning star is fading, and the sharp-eyed night-owl sleeps;  
Myriad birds are singing to the stream's accompaniment  
And the world is full of gladness—when the brook trout leaps.

VAN.

