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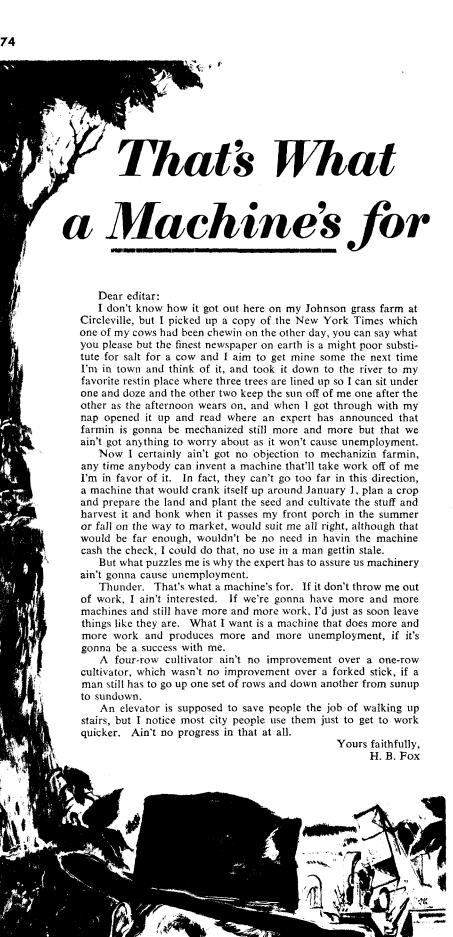
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Listen to the Music of the Hounds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

in Hankin's Store, and the matter of hound supremacy had finally reached the "shut up or show" stage. So five eager foxhounds and four proud owners were gathered on the margin of Tobey's swamp.

Roy the plumber was present with his two Walkers, Howie the odd-job-man clutched the lead of his bluetick, Ebb the carpenter carried worn, dog-eared papers to prove his entry was a "gen-you-wine" Trigg, and George the farmer had a heavy chain on his big black-and-tan. Even at the last minute, the latter was required to justify his status in foxhoundom.

"Coonhound hell!" George exploded. "Sure he'll run coons, and rabbits too. But when he's fox huntin', he'll run nothing but foxes. And while your poor fleabags are babbling, cutting and backtracking, Preacher'll be sticking to the line and pushing the fox."

The tirade was brought to an end by a wave of Roy's mittened hand.

wave of Roy's mittened hand.

"Let's stop the fussing and get down to hunting," he suggested. "There's a big gray been using the swamp. I figured we could meet here and cast the hounds over there back of those firs. There's a crossing there leading up to Palmer's place, and he says he's been losing chickens. They ought to be able to pick up at least a cold trail there. Turn 'em loose."

The Preacher in Action

For several minutes after the hounds had been cast no word was spoken. Then George broke the silence. "Coonhound, huh?" he snapped. "Take a look at my Preacher."

The big black-and-tan, nose to the powdery snow, was apparently trying to gyrate his entire body by the movement of his tail. While we watched, he disappeared into a clump of gaunt sumac brush that fringed the swamp. A few seconds later there was a tentative "bluurrp" from that point, then a series of gulping, basso roars that lured the scattered hounds like iron filings converging on a magnet.

Bedlam broke out immediately as the pack struck the hot scent. The high soprano of the two Walkers was lauded by their owner, although the Trigg advocate glared sharply and pointed out that his hound was "right in there too."

Perhaps you have noted the expressions

of a crowd listening to a choir on some solemn occasion. If so, you can picture the rapt faces of the fox hunters. Individual animosities were swept away on the fading and swelling music of the hounds. Occasionally, during a brief lull in the concert, the faint, mournful bellow of the Preacher, faithful to the line, told his hearers that the fox was still being driven. George nodded in quiet satisfaction.

Distant Voices of the Pack

Almost an hour passed with hardly a word being spoken. The only movement in the little group was the intermittent stamping of feet to restore circulation. Several times the voices of the pack faded into the distance, only to swell a few moments later. Once, the hounds seemed to be approaching the very rim of the swamp, then for several minutes they were quiet. The sudden cessation of sound seemed unnatural. Then, on signal from that old maestro the Preacher, the chorus soared to even greater heights.

"That fox doesn't act like any gray to me," George announced. "And he's not going to keep swinging around that swamp forever. Chances are he'll break out of there and head either for Carter's woods or Palmer's bog. We'd better spread out and cover some of the likely crossings. Roy, why don't you and Ebb and Howie cover Palmer's, and we'll watch the ledges by Carter's?"

A fox, when driven from its home coverts, normally follows definite trails, or crossings, and local hunters usually know the location of most of these runways. George led me, on the run, to a break in a stone wall on the edge of a rocky, sprucegrown slope. A faint, twisting line in the snow led from the break in the wall across a wide pasture and to the fringe of the swamp, indicating that a fox had been using the trail. The light snow of the previous night had eliminated signs of recent passage, but it seemed a good vantage point. I dropped a pair of shells, loaded with number two shot, into the chambers of my long duck gun, and took up a post in the lee of a big spruce. While this blocked out some of my view, it was out of the bitter wind. George moved on at a lope to another crossing.

The cry of the pack was fainter now and,





occasionally, the wind swept it to a mere whisper of sound. I did not see the fox until he paused in the gap in the wall to look back toward the swamp and his pursuers. George had been right; it was not a gray fox, but a big red. He did not appear at all winded from the run he had given the hounds. Ending the chase with a shot at this stage, with the hounds still working out the scent in the swamp, would have been sacrilege. I did not even raise my gun.

The fox trotted a few paces from the wall, paused, then made a large loop, returning to the gap for another glance at his back trail. He then leaped lightly to the top of the wall, ran along it for fifty yards, then leaped from the wall toward a clump of juniper, and disappeared.

Several minutes passed before the pack worked out the "check" (temporary loss of scent) and found the new line. A few seconds later they poured through the gap in the wall, one of the Walkers leading, and the Preacher a poor last but bellowing at every jump.

There was considerable milling around near the wall, and a lot of snuffling and whining, until the Preacher once more smelled out the fox's course and roared along the top of the wall. Ebb's Trigg could not countenance the slow pace, so he at-tempted to leap over the Preacher, but came to grief on the slippery stones and floundered from his high path. Two of the hounds overran the point where the fox had leaped from the wall, but not the Preacher. He scrambled down, made a wide cast, and picked up the fresh track.

Shot Signals End of Chase

A few minutes later the fox passed within 10 feet of my post on his return trip to the swamp, but this time the pack was only a half minute behind him. Another quarter hour passed while the fox led the pack on a wide swing through the swamp, then a hollow boom echoed from the edge of Palmer's bog, signaling the end of the chase.

George was grumbling in his mustache when he picked me up to rejoin the others.

"Glad you didn't shoot," he growled. "That fox was fresh as a daisy. He had a good two hours of run left in him. You can lay your last dollar that was Howie that shot. He's not passing up a fox, even with pelts down to three dollars.

At the firs, where the hunt had begun, a spiral of smoke was rising through the dense

COLLIER'S

branches, and we found Roy and Ebb, tears coursing down their cheeks, regarding the fox-killing member of the trio. Howie's outer garments were hanging from nearby limbs, close to the fire, and Howie himself, clad from neck to ankles in bright red flannel, was hugging the blaze as close as safety permitted.

'He got the fox all right," Roy gasped, "but he crossed Palmer's brook at the wrong spot. Fell right in up to his ears."

George glanced at the dead fox, then at the wet, shivering Howie, and merely grunted. But there was something of sat-

isfaction in the grunt.

"George," Ebb admitted, "I take back
whatever I said about that black-and-tan. If you could scare up a bit to boot, I might even consider a swap. Of course, you realize a gen-you-wine Trigg is a more . .

One long, level glance from the Preacher's owner curbed the overture.

Fox-Hunt Customs Down South

If, in the North, fox hunting is something of an intermezzo, in the South it is the whole opera. In many of the rural communities from Virginia to the Gulf there is hardly a farmhouse without a hound. Some of them are of the "potlicker" variety (a conglomerate mixture of hound breeds), employed on coons, rabbits and possums; but the great majority are fox-hounds, and it is amazing how many of them are bred in the purple.

Through the years, the ritual of fox hunting has undergone little change in the South. Supper over, a half-dozen hunters with at least as many hounds will gather at an appointed place and the hounds will be cast. While they are "drawing" (searching) nearby coverts, a fire will be started, likely a jug of mountain dew, minus revenue stamps, will appear and the hunters will relax to await the opening movement of the chorus. The man whose hound runs a cold trail into a hot scent ahead of the others enjoys at least a momentary glory.

There goes my Smoothbore," he will . "That hound's got a nose like a third Hear him tongue that line."

'That's my Pelter coming in now," another will announce, as a second cry merges with the first. "That fox'll know be's in a race now."

The chorus usually builds up rapidly after the opening, but every hunter seems to isolate the note of his own hound in the pack



with an ease that would be the envy of Toscanini. During the course of the first hour, the fire may attract additional hunters, and the pack new voices. The late arrival may find a place around the fire without comment, or he may explain his tardiness.

"Got a sick mule, and hadn't planned to run Striker this evenin'. But that music was too much to stand."

The run may last one hour or six. depending upon how things go. The hounds may run one or more foxes, but they will continue the chase until the fox they are running decides to seek the sanctuary of his den. The den cry of a hound differs from the trail cry, and when it is heard the hunters take up their horns and begin blowing in their hounds.

The unlineky mortal whose hound sneaks in to the fire before the chase is over suffers his disgrace in silence, for no man likes to admit that his prize has been bedded by the other hounds.

The man whose hound does not come in at the horn is worried. Traps and barbed wire are a real menace, and the hunter who gets no response to the horn usually is in for a long, exhausting search, and occasion ally a futile one.

Failure to return to the horn, however, does not always mean the hound has been caught in a trap or a fence, for en route to the fire he may strike a fresh scent and run the fox into the next county. There was an amusing example of this at a trial held in the Catskills in 1946. More than 90 foxhounds, each with a number painted on its side, were lined up on a high ridge, and were cast as one hound. A fox was jumped almost immediately, but at the tremendous cacophony of sound that arose he must have believed that every hound in the country was on his trail, for he holed up in the rocks without delay. For the next three days almost a hundred fox hunters tramped the ridges of the Catskills, blowing their horns desperately at hounds that were still running foxes on a dozen adjacent hills. Noncompetitors who attended reported afterward that they would not have missed it

praise must go for breeding the great strains of foxhounds. The Northern breeders seem to have spent most of their time developing superior beagles, coon hounds and spaniels; but the Southern sportsmen have given us the immortal Walkers, Triggs, Julys, Brookes and Birdsongs.

popularity, quality and long, interesting history to compete with the Walker. This strain is the result of careful, tedious and unrelenting selective breeding, and it has taken almost 100 years to produce it in its present state of near perfection. The Walker strain was originated by two gentlemen from Kentucky, John W. Walker and George Washington Maupin, around the middle of the nineteenth century-although the Walkers had hunted foxes and bred hounds as far back as 1742. For more than 50 years, Walker and Maupin bred from the same stock, relentlessly weeding out every hound with undesirable traits.

It is legend that when a Walker hound showed a tendency to "babble" (give tongue when not on scent), "cut" (leave the line of scent to course by sight) or quit, one of the Walkers, a shovel over his shoulder, would lead the hound to a nearby wood lot and return with only the shovel and a col-

It was the "outcross" (breeding to other strains), however, that led to the eventual supremacy of the strain, and strangely enough the hound that is said to have played the most important part in establishing Walker greatness was a stolen dog. Henry Davis, the sporting-dog authority, softens this harsh term by making it "liberated."

Sire of the Present Walkers

A friend of Maupin's, while driving cattle through the Tennessee mountains, saw a pack of hounds running a deer. He managed to capture one of these hounds, and upon returning to Kentucky presented it to Maupin. This hound, a dog proved to be one of the great foxhounds of his day, was christened Tennessee Lead. Crossed with the existing Walker strain, and later with other strains, the offspring eventually became the present Walker hounds, which have been in demand by fox hunters for nearly a century.

Some authorities-many foxhound enthusiasts define an authority as "an ordinary uy a hell of a ways from home"-insist that the improvement of the Southern foxhound really dates from the infiltration of the red fox from the North. It was not until about 1850 that the red appeared in any numbers south of the Mason and Dixon's line. This fox, smaller but faster and more cunning than the gray, stimulated the Southern fox hunters to resort to the outcross in order to compete with the extremes of speed and endurance of the red.

Biologists are convinced that the Eastern red fox was not a native of this continent at all, but was imported from Europe by colonial fox hunters in order to improve their hunting. The skull structure of the red is sufficiently different from that of the gray to be readily detected, and bones deposited in caves prior to the colonization of the

for a fortune. It is to the Southern fox hunter that the Of them all, probably no strain has the



intinent include many gray fox skulls but

The spread of the red fox to the South as slow, but that of the gray northward as still slower; it was not until 1900 that te gray appeared in any numbers in New ngland, and it did not sift into the Adironacks until about 25 years ago. The red is ow found in at least 45 states, and the ray in about 40.

Fox hunters the country over have fought to introduction or continuation of bounty ayments on foxes, and in some instances ith success. The arguments, pro and con, re many and varied. Fox hunters insist that bounties tend to upset the balance sheel of Nature by eliminating the foxes and at the same time bringing about an bundance of less desirable predators. Also, hey point out, the system encourages the sidespread use of traps with a subsequent necesse in hound mortality. Normal fox unting, these advocates declare, will keep he fox population in almost any area down of a satisfactory level.

In Defense of Brer Fox

In this contention they have the support of some biologists, who are convinced that he fox is too severely condemned as a predator. Both the red and gray are omnivorous in their feeding habits, and their liet includes berries, apples, grapes, acorns, auts, insects, all forms of rodents, clams, hrimps and such birds as they can catch vithout too much trouble. Along with the ox hunter, they classify the common house cat as a more serious danger to game birds han the fox. Regardless of the fate of this argument or controls instituted, there is ittle chance that the fox will be exterminated or even reduced in numbers to a dangerous extent. There probably will be fox nunting in this country just as long as other forms of hunting exist.

You can hunt foxes without the aid of a hound, just as you can hunt quail or pheasants without a bird dog, but the success is seldom commensurate with the effort expended.

Two general houndless methods are practiced, with varying degrees of success; one is the "drive" and the other the "bell method." Both call for physical exertion far out of proportion to the usual results.

The drive method calls for the assembly of a large group of hunters—the larger the better. They are divided into "drivers" and "standers." The latter form a line—with the hunters a theoretical gunshot apart—on the downwind fringe of an area believed to harbor foxes. The drivers proceed to the upwind extreme of the area, spread out, and move toward the standers. The movement of the drivers is supposed to drive the foxes within range of the standers.

Drive Bags Three Victims

About five years ago an exercise of this type was carried out near Buffalo, New York, by one of the local sportsmen's groups, and no less than 1,000 persons turned out to participate. The event was spectacular, and with many incidents of interest, but it reduced the wild-life population of that area to the extent of two foxes and one sleepy woodchuck.

The "bell method" has never been what might be termed popular, and no one but a Yankee hill farmer with plenty of time on his hands and an abnormal desire for exercise would consider practicing it. When a fresh snow has fallen during the night, one hunter wends his way to the nearest woods believed to harbor a fox or two. In one hand he carries a large dinner bell. His function is to stroll through the woods until he strikes the fresh track of a fox. He then follows this track, ringing the bell with vigor. About 500 yards behind this bell ringer comes the man with the gun.

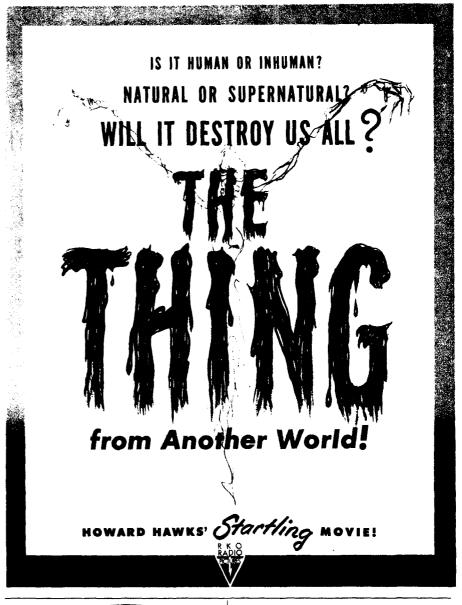
The theory is that a fox, after being pursued by the bell ringer for an indefinite period, will be overcome by curiosity and swing in a circle to come up on his back track in order to identify his pursuer. At this juncture the man with the gun can, theoretically, get in his deadly work. The writer neither recommends nor endorses this method.

Whether you do your fox hunting on the snow-covered hills of the North, around the fires on the fringe of a Southern swamp, or follow the formal pack on an expensive hunter, you will find you have nibbled of the lotus.

As a sport it is interesting, exciting and different. And opportunity lies almost anywhere just outside the city limits—if you want to hunt foxes.

THE END







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DORMAN H. SMITH

Reminder to Stalin and Mao

THE UNITED NATIONS RETREAT in North Korea, with its story of bitter fighting and heavy losses, must have turned the minds of many Americans back to Pearl Harbor and the dark days that followed. We have been wondering whether the men in the Kremlin have also been remembering Pearl Harbor. Does it occur to them that their ordering of the Chinese armies into the Korean war resembles the unwarranted, unprovoked attack of December 7, 1941? Do they realize that the Japanese war lords committed an eventually fatal error by their treacherous act? For that act not only infuriated the American people. It aroused and united them.

On the day before Pearl Harbor the country was bitterly divided by factional and political disputes. On the day after, it had closed ranks behind its weak and defeated military force, determined to work through the grim days ahead until Pearl Harbor was avenged and the powerful enemies were defeated.

The entry of the Chinese Communists into the present war was not quite as stunning as the Japanese attack, and the reaction at home was not as immediate and dramatic. Yet we can sense a new anger and a new determination since the Soviet string-pullers, with a cynical disregard

for their mouthings about peace, have dispatched the hordes of vassal "volunteers" to be slaughtered and frozen in an attempt to destroy the United Nations.

There are still differences of American opinion about what should be done next. That is as it should and must be. But the division of opinion is not now so deep. There are still factions, but they are not irreconcilable. The differences are of degree rather than of purpose. No responsible American is preaching appeasement, though there is still disagreement over the limits of the word's definition. And the tendency to underestimate ourselves is also lessening. We are hearing and reading fewer words of hopeless defeatism than when the UN retreat began.

We doubt that Stalin fully understands what is taking place over here, because we don't think any dictator can really understand the workings of the collective American mind. Certainly Hitler couldn't. Apparently he was sincerely convinced that this country was so disunited that its entry into the second World War would be quickly followed by revolution or internal collapse. It would be surprising if Stalin, with his insular and Marx-sodden mind, doesn't feel much the same way.

To a ruler who punishes all deviation from his own policies, to a despot who hates and suppresses free thought and individual opinion, our behavior must seem fantastic. The two parties in our government squabble, call names, and publicly kick around the most delicate matters of diplomacy and foreign policy. They make wild accusations and impolitic denials. The press and the public take sides and express themselves with as little inhibition as a baseball fan yelling at an umpire.

Yet the United States, like many quarrelsome families, can forget its bickerings and present a solid front to hostility from the outside. And when the big effort has to be made, the United States can buckle down to the job and do it.

The country's position now is vulnerable. But if Mr. Stalin has any thoughts of starting another world war, he should not disregard the historic danger that lies in getting the American people good and mad.

President or Politician?

HARRY FLOOD BYRD is a man who calls for government economy as persistently as Cato the Elder called for the destruction of Carthage. So far the senator from Virginia has had conspicuously less success than the senator from ancient Rome, but he keeps on trying. Only recently he sent President Truman a letter which not only suggested that nonmilitary spending be cut by at least \$7,600,000,000 in the new budget, but included a detailed plan of how the cuts could be made.

A few days later, at a press conference, someone asked the President whether he had read the letter. Mr. Truman replied that he had looked at it, but not in detail, because he didn't think the senator knew very much about the budget.

The President's reaction seems to be another example of what strikes us as his rather dismaying habit of letting personal and political prejudice cloud his judgment. Mr. Truman and his fellow Democrat from Virginia are not political friends. But the senator is an intelligent man, whatever one may think of his philosophy of government. And as chairman of the Joint Committee on Reduction of Nonessential Federal Expenditures, he might well have some constructive suggestions on a mighty important matter. Yet the President brushed aside the Byrd letter unread because of a personal, generalized and perhaps debatable opinion that its author didn't know very much about the budget.

It must surely be as apparent to Mr. Truman as it is to the man in the street that the country is facing two serious threats, one by an aggressor from without and the other from a severe strain upon our economy from within. As President of the United States, Mr. Truman has probably thought about the senator's recommendation that nonmilitary spending be "reduced to essentials." He may even have contemplated the possibility of "financial chaos and ultimate disaster" which Mr. Byrd predicted if such a reduction is not put through. But he has evidently decided in advance that the senator could have nothing worth while to offer on the subject.

We think that most of Mr. Truman's countrymen and fellow taxpayers might have some interest in the Byrd suggestions, even if he does not. And, as President rather than politician, we think he owes it to his countrymen to change his mind and give the letter an objective, statesmanlike look.

Collier's for February 3, 1951