

ality goes to make up such an apparently simple formula. Again and again broad effects of green and bitumen recall Dunoyer, until a nearer approach shows

that the picture does not reveal the power of light and shade that he can command. If they increase our regret at the absence of the originals, these

imitations are not mentioned in a spirit of criticism. On the contrary, in an artistic movement they are a sign of vitality.

Reynard the Fox in Albemarle

When Old Virginia Rides to Hounds

By GEORGE MARVIN

INTO the borderland of sleep one by one come significant sounds:

"Hi, Henry, who gwine fetch Misto Julian's saddle?"

"Ambrose, yoh done call Miss Ca'line?"

A familiar shuffling foot on the steep stairs; two pieces of dropped firewood retracing their downward steps, with muttered obligato; registration as of a pail of water set down with invariable splash. Then the creak of an opening door, and over the rampart of bedclothes gray squares of dawn through uncurtained window-panes appear, lighting a burglarious figure bending over the stove.

"Six o'clock, suh, an' a fine moanin'."

Now, like a jig-saw puzzle suddenly solved, all the ingredients fall into their appointed places and reviving anticipations overcome the hardship of rising and dressing in a temperature of near outdoors. The heroic little stove begins to blush and sing its cheerful madrigal. The same shadowy hands that started it now light the lamp, pick up yesterday's scattered clothes, and make tidy the attic room.

"Yo' wateh plenty hot, suh, and Rivers say he have de mare wid de saddle on at seven o'clock—yes, *suh!*"

Time to jump. Breakfast at six-thirty, and three miles to ride to the meet at Turner's Gate before half-past seven. A squint over shaving lather at the printed card of announcements confirms this idea. "Hounds will meet at 7:30 A.M.," and, running down the list of dates, "Thursday, November 27th—Turner's Gate" sure enough.

By breakfast time it is light enough to eat, but there are candles throwing their warm and friendly glow on bare mahogany as the household straggles down dressed to ride. Boiler test of personality, breakfast at an unaccustomed early hour. How good the coffee tastes, two steaming cups! And on the sideboard there's fruit appealing, and eggs under cover keeping warm, and hot batter-bread that only Aunt Lou knows how to make, with Wellford in a white coat standing by to help folks help themselves. Not much after seven o'clock, pulling on gloves, crops under arms, lighting a cigarette, powdering a nose, down the steps of the white-columned porch, with a clumpety-clump of boots and clicket-clack of talk, the hospitable Colonel's contingent go to horse.

What a morning! A breath is a drink! Why ever lie abed late? And why live anywhere else than in Vir-

ginia, or, in Virginia, why in any other county?

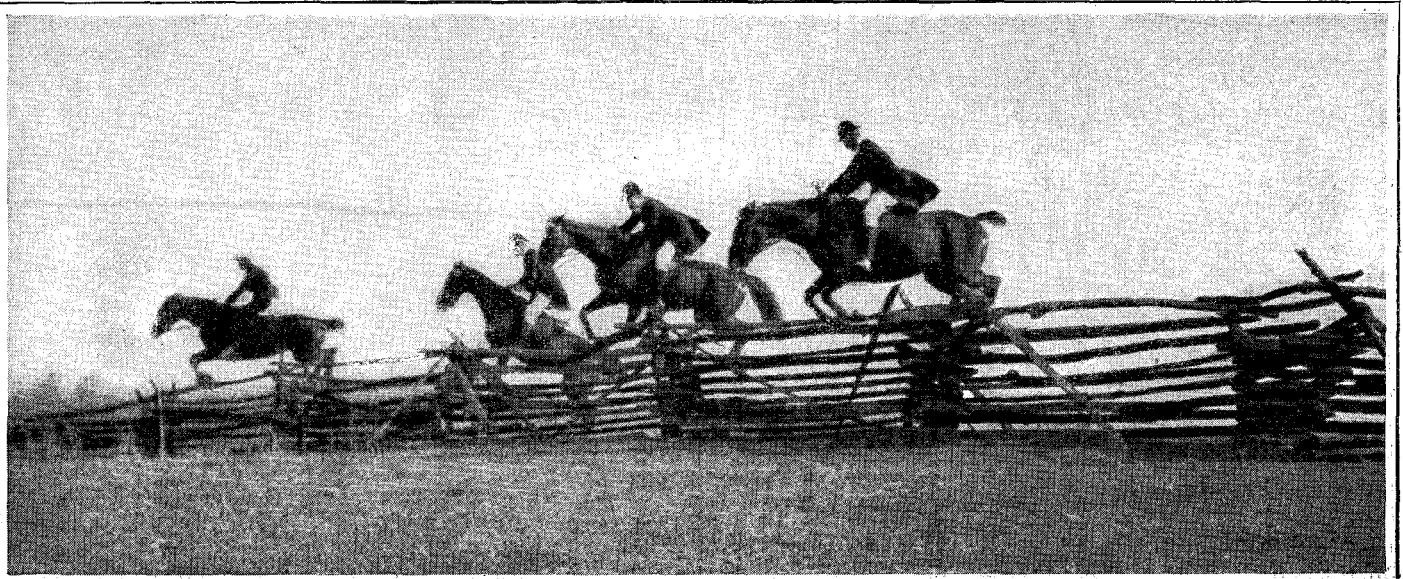
"Albemarle at its best," says the Professor.

"No," the Colonel quietly corrects him, "average Albemarle."

No wind is stirring, but the air is palpably alive, laden with uncatalogued, invigorating scents that, taken together, spell autumn in the Piedmont. The November sun, only a half-hour out of his own bed, throws misty lights slanting-wise across fields and woods and hills that are made this morning of copper, bronze, and gold, discriminated here and there with silver incrustations of frosty dew.

It's all in key—weather, landscape, people. Somewhere, just as "the hill-side's dew-pearled," Mr. Browning's lark must be on the wing, his snail on its thorn, for very certainly "all's right with the world."

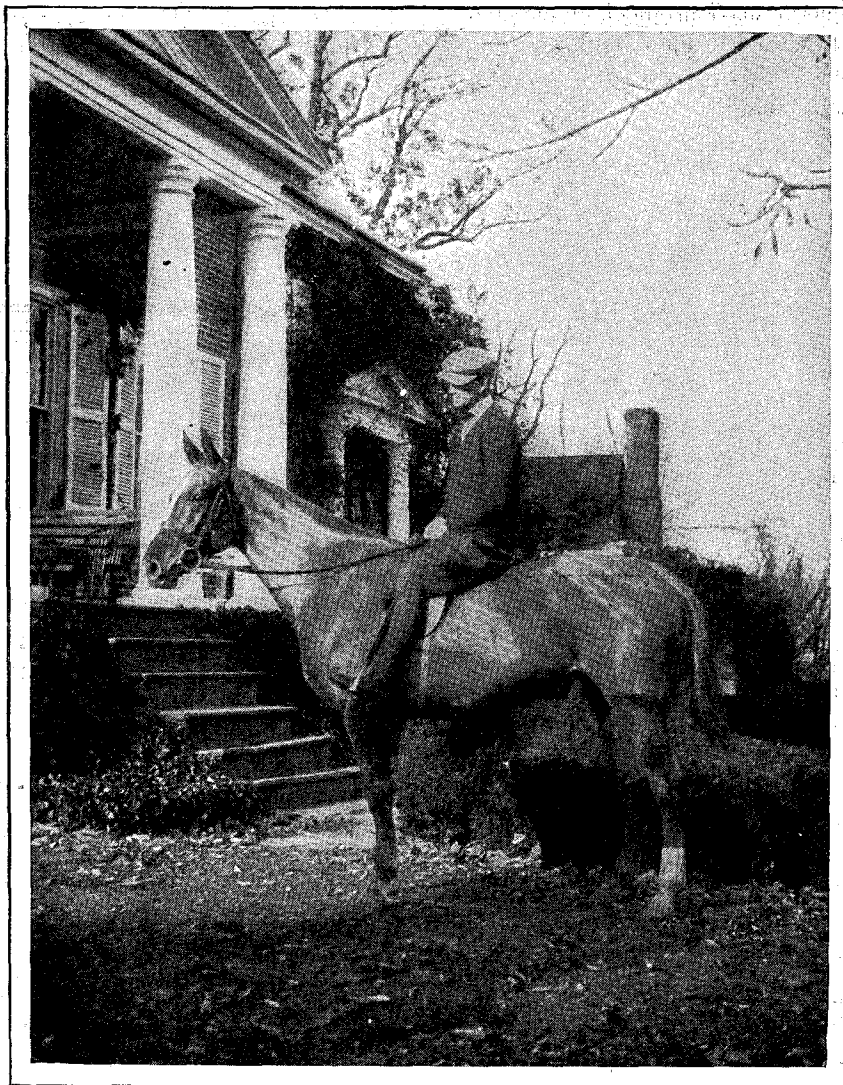
And now here are the horses. Old Burnside stands stock still for the Colonel to mount, but arches a veined neck and rolls a tempestuous eye. The Professor has his troubles with Virginia, who skitters and swerves so that he has to hop along with one foot in the stirrup while the groom, on her off side, whistles and speaks consolingly to her, pushing



"The charging citizenry" of the hunt

against her quarters and holding the loose stirrup until the rider's right leg comes swinging a high arc over and the red-faced pedagogue, with a fist full of reins and his hat over one ear, goes sidling rakishly away to leeward. By contrast, the clean spring of Julian Smith from Upperville, who gains his saddle like the breech-block on a Springfield slipping into place. Click! and there he is, a proper figure of a man, the thoroughbred mare collected under him, though in spirit "rarin' to go," acknowledging her master with perfect manners. And now here's Dr. Shurman from over Staunton way, who rides a black warhorse that must weigh close to fifteen hundred. If he let his animal's fetlocks grow he would fit into an Albrecht Dürer engraving, and if he weighed fifty pounds more he couldn't gallop. But no average fence in the county can throw him. The low ones he manages somehow to clear, the high ones he jumps through. Dignified Torrence, the Louisville broker, helps the arch Mrs. James to mount her polo pony. Red lips, harmonics in her voice, courage in her abundant hair, she adds perceptibly to the dynamics of the morning. She once up, the broker, who has seen some cavalry service, makes a running mount of his green hunter, thus acquiring merit in her dark eyes. Meanwhile down the lane from the stables, where they have mounted from the stile, come the Botolph sisters, Miss Charlotte and Miss Carrie, dressed exactly alike—black habits, white stocks, and bowler hats—and becomingly riding side-saddle. Mothers of children and pillars of the rural church, not so willowy as once they were but "bohn an' raised" in the saddle, still they sit straight-backed, swaying easily to their horses' motion, light hands on loosened curb and snaffle, crisp as the morning.

By courtesy of neighbors McHenry and Phillips, whose wide acres adjoin, it is possible to avoid the macadam highway most of the three miles to Turner's. Four intervening gates to open with a crop without dismounting, but the last, a low and decrepit one, is fastened by an unreachable hook. The Colonel starts to get down, but, "Way there a minute," sings out young Julian, and puts the mare over it as clean as a bird. The others follow soberly after the Colonel through the opened gate, and, avoiding fields of new-sown winter wheat and jumping a couple of "branches," almost dry after this rainless weather, all eight in a group ride up to the crossroads at Turner's just as Mr. Judson, the huntsman, and Mr. Mason, the whip—Virginians and horsemen to the marrow—come into view with hounds, a clump of waving tails, trotting before them. Be-



George Marvin, mounted on Blue-Belle, ready for a run with the Keswick hounds

hind them ride a group of those who live nearer by: Henry Morton and lovely "Lady" Morton, who hunt in England every winter, convoying their three house guests, also evidently to the hunting born; "Squire" Gosling comfortably set on a young farm horse bred by a jumping sire; huge Arthur Holcomb in a sombrero and a Mexican stock saddle harvested from two years on the border; and rosy Mrs. Holcomb, in golf stockings, just not too plump to ride astride, talking to Mrs. Henderson, very prim and precise and piquant, as though to ride in the Bois de Boulogne. Promptly on time, the M. F. H. appears on the trot out of his own avenue across the way—"pink" coat, white "cords," velvet visored cap, and legs poured into his riding boots. Apropos of his Gothic shanks, Miss Charlotte once wisely observed that "the pride of the riding boot is the despair of the knickerbocker."

On his arrival he gives the signal to the huntsman, who at once moves off down the road with the hounds, turns them through some open bars into a grass wood road, and leads them away up Blue Mountain, a low ridge, wooded near the top, where are the coverts to be

drawn this morning. The gathering "field," some horses restive, others quiet as sheep, waits on the master's word before taking up position. Stragglers gain these few minutes of start for hounds to join those who have turned out on time. Henderson, who has had to motor to Charlottesville to meet a guest coming down from New York by the night train, now hits the crossroads in an aura of dust, and both men hop out and mount Henderson's two big hunters, held in readiness by his groom. The friend is an unknown quantity in the hunting field, and Henderson, a stickler for form, appraises him apprehensively as they ride up. About the same time young Peggy Johnson, fearless daughter of the Keswick country store, canters in on a high black fencer of her father's. Four or five farmers have been conservatively on hand all the time, and several darkies, mounted on every kind of nondescript equine, one of them wearing a huge pair of patent-leather Congress gaiters, make up the rest of the field as the M. F. H. raises his whip and moves off up the wood road at the head of a long column.

Fox-hunting in Albemarle County is

more fun than formality. On horseback or on foot, a large proportion of its citizens hunt the fox from September to March. Elsewhere in the State well-organized hunts flourish, where the technique of the sport is more punctiliously observed, where "fields" are larger and much more smartly turned out, where imported packs are perfectly kenneled, and where the thoroughbred horseflesh which follows them across well-paneled country represents some of the income from Northern and Western millions. In Albemarle there is very little technique either in word or deed, but people ride hard and, barring wire, straight. In the field of thirty or so here, larger than the local average, you only see five "pinks," and the horses represent a catholicity of means on the part of their riders as wide as the disparity of their riding clothes.

In the domestic collection of thirty hounds now drawing covert are contributions from three separate owners made to pack well by the art of the dog-wise Judson. But it may well be doubted if anywhere there is more clear joy in following hounds than over the fields and hills and through the gold autumn weather of the old Cavalier county.

Some technique is observed, however, even in Albemarle. And so the field remains quietly back outside the covert instead of riding up the back of the huntsman's neck and all over hounds. Silently sitting there, they regard each other and the landscape with favor or a critical eye, as the case may be, while listening to the occasional crackling of underbrush, the huntsman's urging voice, or the whimpering of hounds. Smoke ascending in tenuous lines from farmers' chimneys in the valley, curving white ribbon of distant highway, a plowman and his team like a black bug crawling on the gray edge of a red-furrowed square; smell of horse and saddle leather and morning woods; faint derisive hoot of the north-bound train on the C. and O. carrying unlucky people out of Virginia—

"Gone away!" yells Mason, the whip, his veteran ear a wink quicker than the rest, and away he goes, coat-skirts in the air. Yes, there's the horn from unseen Judson—often he forgets entirely to blow it—backing him up with the two long notes of "Gone away," and, most thrilling of all hunting sounds, the chorus of the pack in full cry. Here is where Dick Mason is assets. He knows the country, he knows hounds, and he knows as much as man can know of the devious ways of foxes gray and red. And already he knows that this is most probably a red fox "gone" because the line he takes is towards the Southwest Range, foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and

full of friendly "earths." Without a moment's hesitation he has turned right and is galloping just outside the second-growth pine over the shoulder of the hill with the whole field helter-skelter after him. In one minute it is as though some Titanic sower, picking up all these horses and people together, had sowed them with a lavish hand.

On the far side of the grassy shoulder the land dips down to a winding branch, spring-fed and running full and grown up here and there with bushes; then a level stretch of bad land, marked by feathery-white "broom-saige," with a rail fence at its far side. With the rush of the air and the thrill of the drumming hoofs, almost you can feel the thinking going on among that charging citizenry as each rider in his separate way, over his horse's lunging ears, picks his place to take the branch and begins to scan the fence for a low panel and a sound take-off. In the first group over the water go sailing Mason and the M. F. H. with his seventeen-hand gray, the Colonel, Julian, and Henderson, their bunched scarlet coats making an old sporting print picture as their hunters rise almost together and fly the ditch in their strides. Clearing the branch and landing on the far side of the fence, Henderson's face is turned back over his shoulder in a wild surmise to watch the progress of his guest. After that, like the man in "The Ancient Mariner," "he turns no more his head," his entire expression changes, and he sits down to ride with the proud smile of an utterly reassured hunting host. On his right and not far back come Mrs. James, no longer arch, her pony running like a jack-rabbit and she like a part of him over the water; Miss Carrie, grimly sniffing a "tearin' run;" and "Squire" Gosling getting a lot of going out of the farm colt. Off to the left, with better judgment of country and sense of probable direction, the Mortons are laying their course, with Dr. Shurman pounding the ground on his black charger close behind. His wake is a galloping wedge of safety-first riders converging towards the panel he elects to take, well knowing that the debris of his charge will leave behind the easiest jump in every fence. The second division thus assisted, the entire field weathers the first two obstacles, and, turning left with a wide swing at the end of the woodland, come full in view of the pack and the red splash of Mason's coat three fields away and heading straight for the Southwest Hills, with four miles at least to run to the nearest earth. A red fox sure enough. Dick Judson, fencing like a steeple-chaser, slings his horn to his lips and lets go an uneven blare for which there

is absolutely no provision in the book. But it says what nearly every man and woman in that first flight is feeling.

By half-past one the last of the riders has straggled down from the "mountain" (generic name for any considerable excrescence in the landscape) to the hunt breakfast at Clover Farms, their numbers swelled by many others on foot, in old carriages, and in motor cars. A small regiment of Negro boys is on hand, nominally to hold horses and actually to iron in on the abundant provision for the feast. Before the fireplace in the living-room old George Munson, his boots splashed with red mud, is holding forth:

"No, suh, Ah neveh have seen such a fox since—Ah—wuz—bohn!" The last word is emphasized as though some one whacked a soft base drum. And he has wound up so many eloquent periods in the last half-hour with the same phrase that a group of equally muddy and dusty and thirsty men have fallen into the habit of getting vocally into step with him, repeating "since—Ah—wuz" in perfect concert, to fall altogether on "bohn" with a sound like a young explosion.

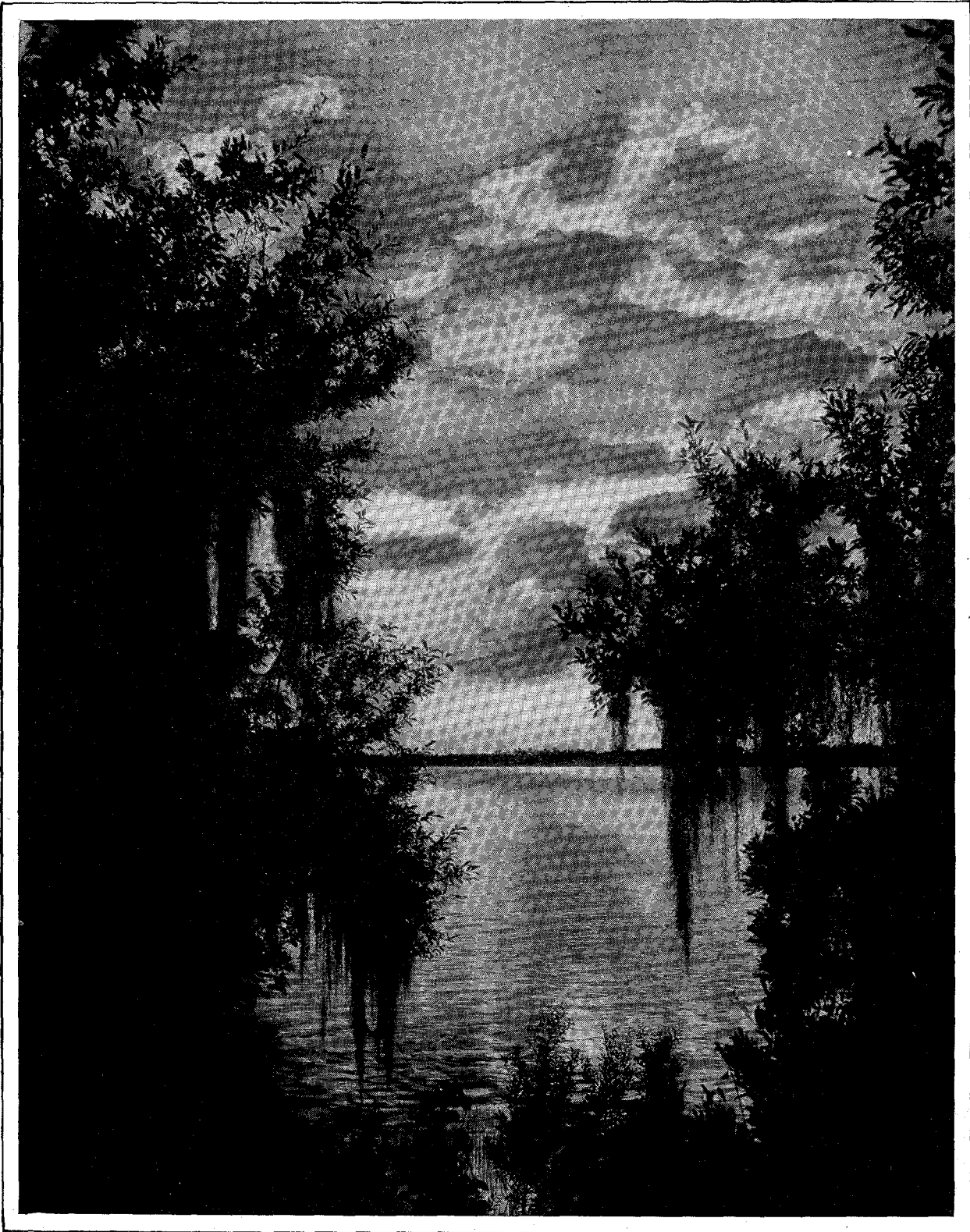
Out on the veranda in the sun young Julian is telling the Mortons and the "Squire" of how Miss Carrie finished without her skirt. "Her horse fell at that stiff fence by Macon's barn," he explained. "She paid no attention to the old skirt—it was one of those patent safety things—and actually scrambled back into the saddle by herself, before I could get there to help her, and came on in her riding-breeches the same as the rest of us."

"Five hours in the saddle with only three real checks—I should call that some fox chase!"—unacademically says the Professor, enormously pleased with himself for having survived the morning more or less closely associated with his mount.

"The astonishing thing," says one of the Morton guests to another, "is how many different riders, mounted on indifferent horses, somehow manage to negotiate difficult country and get over sizable fences without casualties. Which is continuing proof, I believe, that the average horse is a natural jumper and the average man goes with a horse."

With that enormous sense of *camaraderie* born of a good run and a Virginia hunt breakfast, the Colonel holds out his hand to Henderson's tall and quiet guest, who has held his place in the first flight all the way without a refusal. "I want to congratulate you, sir, on a very fine performance," says he. And just within earshot Henderson's weather-beaten face glows like sunlit brick.

Southern Outlooks



A vista, framed in Spanish moss, of Lake Hamilton, Winter Haven, Florida