

# MR. TAFT'S LOVE For the OPEN AIR

An Energetic Pedestrian Does his Object To Backing Fence



(WOOD CUTTING 1908 BY R.L. DUNN)

## On Horseback, on Foot and at Golf He Can Set a Lively Pace

WHEN one thinks of Secretary Taft, one doesn't ordinarily associate him with ideas of outdoor activities.

His qualities of statesmanship, his capacity for hard work, his unfailing good nature and genial, winning personality are widely known—even in other lands. But of the merely physical man—well, one is apt to remember the "too solid" flesh that, with far less need, seemed to worry Hamlet.

Yet this big man, who is now looming

so large, other than physically, in the nation's eyes, loves outdoor life with the ardor of the summer maid, and his activity is remarkable for a man of his avoirdupois.

A devotee of and expert at golf, some of his happiest hours of relaxation from official toil are spent upon the links; he is at home on horseback; is an energetic pedestrian, an enthusiastic fisherman, and can even play a game of tennis, although this does not appeal to him with particular force.

"You know my brother Bill gets a lot of fun out of life," remarked Henry Taft, the New York member of the family, recently. And no one but his intimates knows how much genuine, boyish fun the ponderous-looking candidate for President derives from his outdoor diversions.

WHEN Secretary Taft was Governor Taft, of the Philippines, and was out in that sizzling part of Uncle Sam's big domain endeavoring to straighten certain and sundry kinks and tangles in America's new and unfamiliar colonial policy, he kept himself in good spirits and his little Igorrote caddies in a perspiration on the golf links.

Eight miles around, twice a day, between dictating correspondence, going over reports and holding conferences with his associates, seemed a mere pleasant pastime with him.

Mr. Taft plays golf at Washington, too, but not to the extent he would like—he is usually too busy for extensive recreation. But when he hies himself to his summer home at Murray Bay, Canada, it is always with delightful anticipation of happy hours on the links.

When Mr. Taft is seen at golf, he doesn't appear to be carrying a very heavy load of

flesh. He handles his 300 pounds almost as easily as if he were a football player in good trim.

As he makes his way over the Murray Bay links, on the shores of the St. Lawrence, he walks with a quick, powerful stride and laughs and chats as he moves along, always in good humor and evident enjoyment.

Morning after morning, with the regularity of a mail carrier, Mr. Taft works his way over the green uplands of the eighteen-hole course at Murray Bay.

There the air is clear and bracing, blowing in off the St. Lawrence and down from the mountains at the back. Health and happiness seem to hover over the peaceful little French-Canadian village in the valley, just as they appear to invigorate the big man who courses over the golf links.

"So invigorating is the air, you simply cannot loaf; you just have to go out and take



The Faithful Philippine Charger



On the Golf Links, Studying a Problem



Reviewing Troops with General Bell, Chief of Staff

exercise." Mr. Taft has been quoted as saying, "You feel that you must go out and bang the little white ball around."

"Then, when you have taken so much exercise, you sleep well at night, and when you sleep well, you are ready for another round the next day. Exercise is a great thing, even—with a twinkle in the eye—in a political campaign."

Mr. Taft often plays golf with his staunch friend, Justice John M. Harlan, of the United States Supreme Court. On the links these chums are much like grown-up boys—Justice Harlan confesses to 75 years. They keep up a running fire of jests and banter. At each thrust and each joke there is hearty laughter.

### NOTED MEN AT PLAY

Some one told recently of seeing these two distinguished men at play, Taft, with massive frame clad in a plain gray outing suit; Harlan, towering, rugged as an English squire, and wearing a scarlet coat, golf cap and heavy shoes, of the kind known as brogans.

"The end of the game was in sight, with Judge Harlan slightly ahead. He felt by no means confident of victory, however. 'You cannot tell about these martial personages,' he remarked with mock solemnity. 'They have a grim, dogged aggressiveness that wins things on the homestretch.'"

"There were four more holes to play. In less than half an hour the justice's words were appreciated. Mr. Taft had won the game in the homestretch, and the two distinguished lawyers parted company with a hearty handshake and a promise to meet again on the morrow."

Later that day, still buoyant and eager, Mr. Taft went out, with an old Frenchman as his companion, and whipped the streams in the locality for trout. He returned, after a hard day's exercise, with his ever-happy laugh.

"Ah," he said, his great frame shaking playfully, "this is the only way to live."

An enthusiastic fisherman is Mr. Taft, and he delights in the sport that trout streams furnish. Those who have been with him on such expeditions have wondered at his agility and expertness, just as they generally become infected by his enthusiasm.

One can imagine what a pleasure it must be to this man of great tasks and many responsibilities to slip off into the silent forests and give himself up to the alluring pastime of his boyhood.

Mr. Taft is an excellent horseman and presents a fine appearance in the saddle, as has been remarked more than once as he has reviewed maneuvers of troops at Fort Meyer, Va., in company with General Bell, chief of staff.

Many overly stout army officers have been groaning in spirit and shuddering in flesh recently over orders requiring them to take practice rides such as might fall to their lot in actual service. Mr. Taft is able at any time to set them an example in saddle endurance.

When Mr. Taft goes riding he wears a costume even more wonderful than that of his chief, but he has escaped, so far, having had much printed about it.

A Washington writer once stated that the spectacle of his immense legs athwart a heroically resigned horse is really more worthy of preservation than the black slouch hat and combination of statesman's coat and riding breeches which distinguish the President.

One day, when the subject of riding was being discussed by a party of newspaper men in the presence of Secretary Taft, a reporter asked:

"Mr. Secretary, how much do you weigh?" "I won't tell you," boomed back the secretary's jovial voice. "But, you know, when somebody asked Speaker Thomas B. Reed that question, he replied that no true gentleman would weigh more than 200 pounds. I have amended that to 300 pounds."

"You expect to see his horse sag in the middle when Taft mounts for a gallop into the country or across the river to Fort Meyer," remarked an observant Washingtonian lately.

"But nothing of the sort happens. The horse may wince a little, and probably groans in spirit as his master's substantial form settles in the saddle, but that is all."

"The secretary sits as erect as an arrow and gallops away like a West Point graduate, accompanied by his slender, lath-like companion, Brigadier General Edwards. And he rides as if he were thoroughly enjoying it, too."

When Mr. Taft was Governor of the Phil-



(PHOTO COURTESY 1908 BY R.L. DUNN)

After a Morning Drive

ippines he rode a great deal, usually astride a big, patient-looking mule. Once some one asked him why he chose a mule, when the others of the party rode horses.

"Well," the jolly Governor is quoted as responding, "when a horse sees me coming, he looks at my 300 pounds and files a peremptory protest with his commanding officer. A mule doesn't kick, usually, till after I've been aboard two or three days."

It is related that, while on one of his inspecting trips in the Philippines, Mr. Taft was riding a mule as usual. After a very hard ride one morning, the party was about to sit down to an excellent lunch prepared by the officials at a certain village.

Just then Mr. Taft was seen going off down the hill to the place where the horses were tied, and some one called to him: "Lunch is just ready, you know."

"Yes, I know," replied Mr. Taft, "but I am going to see that my mule has his lunch, all right. He has had some hard work this morning, and I propose to see him on a fair way to being filled up before I take my turn."

The pedestrianism of Mr. Taft is a source of much jesting on the part of his intimates, not because he does little walking, but because he is fond of it and seeks opportunities for such exercise whenever possible.

### ERECT AND STURDY

He walks erectly and sturdily, as little booted, apparently, as if he were a high school girl in a gymnasium. And it is his delight to inveigle a friend into a jaunt into the suburbs or fields.

Persons who have seen Mr. Taft walking from the War Department to the White House have commented upon his springy step. While not as famous as President Roosevelt as a cross-country pedestrian, he is capable of surprising those who know little of his energy and powers of endurance.

They are such as remain long with the ardent lover of outdoor life.

Some time ago Mr. Taft underwent a course of treatment to reduce his weight, and was much gratified when his waist line came down to fifty inches and his pounds almost down to 250. In about six months he had pulled his weight down from 326 pounds.

While in training his diet was limited to food containing no starchy matter, and he was permitted to eat only small quantities of meat. He took a special course in exercising and massage under an expert, and was overjoyed when able to escape from the domination of that persistent and uncomfortable individual.

This will be a busy summer, undoubtedly, with Mr. Taft, but he is in better physical condition to enjoy the many pleasures of vacation time—such vacation as he will take—than for a number of years.