

Sir,—For years I have been getting the "Tribune" through the kindness of a friend and enjoyed much of the matter therein, although I regretted to read of the turmoil into which our dear people were cast.

There is one matter that I would like to call your attention to, and through you the attention of the sportsmen of Ireland, namely, the Connemara pony. I have been reading of that wonderful horse, "Cannon Ball," at Oughterard and elsewhere, and think what a pity it would be to let the breed die out that is so valuable. I was on a station in Western New South Wales that was up for sale, and as a gentleman came to inspect the property he and I drove round a great part of the run which took some days, and he being a great sport and horseman our conversation turned on the horse. During the inspection we drove several teams. (I may say that the area was as wide as it is from Clare to Lough Corrib and as long as from Galway to Clifden). My companion was one of the finest polo players over Europe, England and Ireland; so he naturally spoke of the Connemara pony or the Connemara half-bred as the finest, most sure footed, and the gamest animal he ever rode (and this from a recognised horseman and judge of horse flesh).

I can assure you that he spoke to me on a matter I knew a little about, being a Connemara man myself, and having ridden, driven and raced over stone walls and over courses that had a numbr of stones protruding, and in others where a horse had to pull himself through bog, then up and down hill, and I never knew a Connemara or a half-bred to fall yet. I see that "Cannon Ball's" owner is a man named Mr. Toole. Well, I rode a dark pony stallion for a Mr. Toole, of Annaghvane (I do not know if the spelling is right), many years ago, in a race he won, too. I rode a creamy horse (stallion) with the blood of the Annaghvane strain with dark stripe down back, black mane and black legs, owned by a Mr. Wallace, of Inverin, and I say now that those ponies were the best I ever rode with the exception of a half-bred of my own (an Irishman must blow sometimes). I have since those days, now gone, ridden scores of horses, some ponies, too, but never anything to equal the Connemara. I have seen and ridden some Welsh ponies in this country, and they in my estimation come next to the Connemara, although not so light in the bone; they are sure-footed and very game. I saw one Welsh pony stallion out here that few would ride although fairly quite with others. He knew those who were frightened of him and worked on it. I once gave him a doing for the groom, and he never forgot it. After that I knew a boy of fifteen years to hack him for twelve months, and never had any bother with him, although before he came he mauled several grooms, tearing their clothes off, and treating them very rough; so the Welsh has a bit of temper with some people still. I think the Welsh pony would cross well with the Connemara. I am now hoping that the Connemara will be preserved.

I write the above for a good cause, and trust that the people of Ireland will forget the past and write, and study to bring what they can produce before the people of the world such as their horses, tweed, Poplin, clay pipes, tobacco, frieze, flannell (red and white). I once gave a piece of red Irish flannel to a lady here, and she had it made into a cape that was admired by everyone who spoke of the beautiful dye in it, and wondered where she got it. They were surprised when they heard that it came from Ireland. She has that cape yet, but I hear she has now dyed it green, although she is not Irish, but I suppose she has given it that colour in compliment to me, knowing that I am so green. Connemara men write for God and country.

I cannot understand how those race-horse programmes only include flat races. Why an Irishman was noted for his love of the "leppers," but now he has gone flat. In the old days it was always jumping races, and when they wanted a flat race the stones of the jumps were scattered everywhere. Evidently they are frightened of a jumper now. No game was ever worth a rap for a rational man to play into which no accident or mishap could possibly find its way. Excuse this.

P. J. LYONS

New South Wales,
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