

At the age of three the Cossack learns to sit astride a horse in the courtyard of his father's house. Two years later he shows himself on horseback in the village street, and exercises with his young comrades. No wonder that at the age of twenty he seems almost to be one flesh with the sturdy beast that carries him. A common exploit is

These nomad hordes grew in power and number till they became a formidable force, and as the Cossacks, or "free men," were more friendly to their Russian kinsfolk than to the Tartars, they gradually formed as a convenient buffer state. They elected their own atamans (hetmans) or chiefs till the beginning of the present century; they owned



COSACK HORSEMANSHIP.

to charge at full speed standing on their horses, firing their long guns and stooping suddenly to pick up articles on the ground, as shown in our cut.

The Cossacks are said by some authorities to have originated from emigrants who could not stand the slavery of the Russian system, and preferred so far back as the tenth century to lead a nomadic robber life in the Steppes of the Tartars.

large herds of cattle, and many of them attained considerable wealth.

Under the present regime, there are no less than fifty-one regiments of Cossacks, under the eleven main tribal divisions. Chief of these are the Cossacks of the Don.

At Russian military reviews the Cossack always plays a notable part. Every member of the squadron is a rider who could put the cleverest circus acrobat to shame; and the