

A MUNICIPAL HORSE RACE.

A. WISELY BRAGG, Rome, Italy.

The ancient city of Siena, in Tuscany, carries its history back to the Roman days, when it was Sena Julia, or Sena, and like many of the Italian cities, is rich in antiquities. Its churches are famous, even in a land of splendid churches. The pavement of the Cathedral is unique in its wonderful engravings of Bible scenes. Its books of public accounts not only interesting because of their extended history, but specially for their elaborate and artistic covers.

But the most unique of all its attractions is the Palio.

The Palio is sometimes spoken of as a horse race, but it differs very essentially from the ordinary race. The name is derived from the Latin "pallium," a banner, because the prize is a handsome banner, ornamented with a picture of the Virgin. This leads up to the fact that the Palio is, to a certain extent, a religious ceremony.

The horses which are to compete in the race, are solemnly blessed in the various churches, as are the accoutrements of the men; and the principal race, (for there are two), takes place on the festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, when the tributary towns, and the nobles, brought offerings of candles, wax and palli to the cathedral. This dates from 1238, at least. The second is comparatively modern, having begun as late as the 17th century.

In the early days, mimic fights were added, which later became boxing matches. In 1260, the city was dedicated to the Virgin, and her aid was invoked against the Florentines, and the Sienese were victorious. But they often forgot their Lady Paramount, and re-dedications were frequent. In fact, every time the city was in danger from its enemies, the citizens had a new dedication ceremony, and evolved the Palio as a tribute to the Virgin's aid.

During all these years, the Palio was kept up, varying from time to time, even donkey races being a feature at one period.

The races were organized by the 17 contrade, or wards, each striving to excel. The horses are not trained beforehand, so the result is chance. But to offset this, each contrada invokes its own special saints, in its own church, where the horse is blessed. But if the patron saint does not bring success, he receives a warning from his worshippers; in one case, the saint's image was thrown down, as a warning, and the horse from that contrada and church won the next race!

About ten days before the race, each contrada which desires to compete must give notice, and deposit a sum of money for the hire of a horse. A week later, the judges meet and choose a sufficient number from the large crowd of horses brought in; they choose average animals, neither very fast nor too slow, and all about the same, as far as possible. The horses are then given out by lot.

The race takes place in the Piazza del Campo, in front of the Palazzo Pubblico, or City Hall, and has been held there since 1605.

A ring, several yards in width, is fenced in, and tiers of seats are erected all round it against the buildings, while spectators stand inside also.

There is serious rivalry between the Contrade, and the riders try, not only to win the race themselves, but also to prevent their opponents from winning, by heavy blows with the nerbo, or whip, which they grasp at the thin end, and use as a mace on the heads of their rivals, which have to be protected by small helmets, that are frequently indented by blows. This incidental fighting is not considered unfair, and the winner of the race sometimes presents his nerbo to the church that he represented.

On the grand day, the Piazza is filled by an enormous crowd, as many as 30,000 people having been present occasionally. Citizens, visitors, and peasants in the old Tuscan costume crowd in until the space is packed, the bright colours of the peasants' costumes making a very lively scene.

Even the track is full, but a few policemen and carabinieri walk quietly round, and the central space, already apparently tightly filled, is more congested than before.

The course having been cleared, the procession emerges from the great entrance of the Palazzo Pubblico. First comes the standard-bearer, mounted, and accompanied by trumpeters. Then follow the ten contending Contrade, each led by a Duca or Capitano, in complete armour, barbaresco, leading each horse. Then two alferi, or stand-

PREPAREDNESS AND PATRIOTISM.

As illustrating the patriotic spirit of Municipalities in the United States since our neighbours have entered the war, the following communication to the American City from the city of Knoxville, Tenn., makes interesting reading:

The business men of Knoxville have just completed a so-called tour of Applied Preparedness and Patriotism, covering 1,200 miles and visiting about forty cities in Eastern Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas. Although the tour was originally intended as a trade trip, when the war crisis developed, the trip was made to serve the immediate needs of the United States Government. The offer met with the sanction of the President, the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of War. Officials of both of these departments accompanied the men on the trip and made speeches in the interest of preparedness and for the purpose of stimulating the government's recruiting campaign at all the towns visited. There were one hundred and forty business and professional men in the party, which was headed by a brass band and a Boy Scout drum-and-bugle corps. National anthems were played and patriotic speeches were made, but not a word was said in the interest of trade. The business men of Knoxville take these trade pilgrimages annually, and are referred to in the towns as "Trade Trippers." This year they were styled "Pilgrims of Patriotism."

A court reporter and a motion picture machine operator were also in the party. An account of the proceedings, as well as motion picture films showing the crowds at the stations when the speaking was in progress, will be sent to the Secretary of the Navy. It is hoped that commercial organizations in other cities will follow their lead.

PREVALENCE OF VENERAL DISEASES IN CANADA.

A very important article by Dr. C. K. Clarke, Superintendent of the Toronto General Hospital, in which he states that more than 12 per cent of the patients admitted to the public wards of that institution have syphilis, is a feature of the eighth annual report of the Commission of Conservation, recently issued. These conditions, it is pointed out, are no doubt representative of those prevailing elsewhere in Canada where statistics are not yet available. The return of thousand of soldiers at the end of the war lends more than usual interest to this feature of the Commission's report. Other phases of the subject, including measures for controlling the menace, are discussed by Drs. J. J. Mackenzie, C. H. Hair, and Wm. Goldie of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto.

An address on The Production and Preservation of Food Supplies, by Dr. P. H. Bryce, gives tables showing the relative values of different foods. Results of experiments by the Commission at Port Dover, Ont., in utilizing fish waste in the manufacture of stock meal, oils and fertilizer, are set forth, while Drs. H. J. Wheeler and Frank T. Shutt make interesting contributions on the use of commercial fertilizers. In addition, a readable account of commercial fertilizing activities of the Commission including town-planning, game preservation, water-powers, agriculture, mining and general publicity work.

ard bearers, a drummer, and five or more pages, and a barbaresco, leading each horse. There are also several men-at-arms, with medieval weapons, some of which were used in battles in the olden times. By a regulation of 102, each contrada must have at least twenty men.

Next comes the carrocci, or war chariot, drawn by four horses, and bearing the oriflamme of the city, the banners of the Contrade, and the Palio which is to be contested for. By the time the last contrada has taken its place the city standard bearer has nearly completed the circuit, and for a short time, the 34 standard bearers and the 300 or 400 performers are all in sight at once, making a wonderful picture.

Then gradually, the procession melts into the entrance of the Palazzo, the principal performers taking seats in front. The course is again clear, a pistol is fired, and the fantini, or jockeys, now mounted, ride up to the starting point, about a third of the course from the Palazzo. As soon as they have taken their places, the signal to start is given, and away they go, urging their horses, but more eager to strike at their rivals, to prevent them from winning. Three times round the course, and the race is over.