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Fifty Years of Fair-going.

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When in 1852, just fifty years ago last September, a twelve-year-old boy, with my father and other members of the family, I started at three o'clock in the morning, in a lumber wagon, on a thirty-mile drive to the Upper Canada Provincial Fair, held that year in Toronto, I little thought that that was the commencement of a record of attendance of provincial, national and international exhibitions equalled by that of few men living in this country half a century later. It was the first time in my life that I had seen a city, and as Toronto then boasted a population of 32,000, and some buildings of considerable size, it was to me a greater wonder and revelation than was old London when, on a visit to the Royal Show some twenty years later, I spent a few days in the Metropolis of the Empire.

If asked what feature in the city most impressed my youthful mind, on this my first visit to Toronto, to be honest, though I have since discerned that "all is not gold that glitters," I should have to confess that it was the golden lion that then, and for many years after, served as the sign over the door of Robert Walker's store on King street. If asked what in the exhibition made the greatest impression on my mind, I should answer promptly,

OLD GREY CLYDE,
the first of his kind brought to Canada, shown by Joe Thompson, of Whitby, then a young man, and who passed away only last month, in his 85th

year, as announced in the "Advocate." As shown in the parade, the groom riding on a Shetland pony, his feet nearly touching the ground, Grey Clyde, followed by 17 young grey stallions, all his sturdy sons, presented a spectacle long to be remembered, and the old horse appeared to me then like a moving mountain. I have probably seen many bigger horses since, but none that seemed to me more than about half as large as he. Another horse that made a lasting impression on my mind by his beauty, style and action, was Yorkshire Lad, an English Coach horse, imported, owned and shown by Thomas Blanshard, then of Malton, who showed him with a skill only equalled by that of our own Tom Graham, of Claremont, in handling a Hackney in the showing in these later days.

The impress of the blood of Yorkshire Lad and Old Clyde was distinctly noticeable in the horse stock of the Toronto district for many years after their demise, and was only excelled by that of that prince of prepotent horses, the old grey Messenger, whose life and influence was well-nigh immortal, of whom it has been said, he embodied all the blood of all the Howards, and was "the noblest Roman of them all." Many of his descendants were on exhibition and at work in the country at that time, models of the carriage class, big enough for any farm work, and of wonderful endurance. I often wonder at, and regret, the existing prejudice against grey horses, for it seems to me, in looking back over my life, that nearly all the best work horses I have known, and those that lived the longest were greys.

The equipment of fairs in those days was not on as grand a scale as now, the fair buildings being of temporary character, built of rough boards and scantling. Stabling for stock was very limited, and was provided, I believe, only



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considerably older men than the writer. It was here I first made the acquaintance of these substantial men, who for many years were prominent figures in Canadian show-yards, and certainly did more towards the introduction of pure-bred

stock into this new country than any other family of its adoption. And the blood breeds on, as the sons of the sires are yet well known throughout two continents as prominent breeders of pure-bred stock in different lines. Uncle Geordie was a unique character, speaking with a broad Scotch accent. Gruff and blunt in his manner betimes, he was yet kind at heart, capable of giving and taking a joke in good part, and always willing to lend a helping hand, if need be; but he planted his feet firmly on the ground, left big broad tracks on the sands of time, and struck hard with his heavy cane at weeds, whether in the form of plants, or dogs, or men. I have a vivid recollection of an exciting incident in which he played a prominent part at a New York State fair some years later, where he and we were showing sheep. A highly-dressed dude, from the city, with silk hat, slender cane and long, flowing beard, pulled a sample of wool from one of Uncle Geordie's sheep, and promptly found the old farmer's fingers vigorously

TUGGING AT HIS LOVELY WHISKERS

as a reminder that wool, as well as hair, has its roots in the skin, and that quadrupeds as well as bipeds have feelings. The dandy called a policeman, who, on hearing the exhibitor's explanation, decided that the account was squared, and advised the first offender to move on. It



AN OLD ENGLISH COUNTRY HOME.

for horses, the cattle being mostly tied to trees on the grounds, the fair that year being held in what is now known as Queen's Park, in which the Provincial Parliament buildings and University stand.

GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS.

But there were grand men, with liberal views, on the directorate, who laid broad and deep, and with a high purpose, the foundations of the fairs system in Canada. On the board that year were such sterling men as Hon. Adam Ferguson, Hon. David Christie, Col. E. W. Thomson, Sheriff Rutan, and T. C. Street, of St. Catharines, who was president. It may surprise some readers to learn that the prizes offered for stock at that time were much higher in amount than at the most pretentious shows in the Dominion in the present day. Among the prizes then offered were £10 (\$50) for the best stallion and £17 10s. (\$70) for the best bull in different classes. On one day the number of visitors was estimated at nearly 25,000. One exhibit which created a sensation was a 700-pound cheese from Oxford county, the banner county of the Province for dairy products, where, in later days, Mr. Ruddick, now chief of the Dominion Dairy Division, made for the Columbian Exhibition, the 7,000-pound "mite."

It was here I first saw Shorthorn cattle, or Durhams, as they were then called, and in my eyes they appeared proportionate in size to Old Clyde. The principal exhibitors of cattle were Ralph Wade, of Cobourg, father of the present Henry Wade, editor of the Dominion Herdbooks, and the Millers: George, of Markham, or "Uncle Geordie," as he was familiarly called in after years, and his brother William, of Pickering, with his stalwart sons, three of whom yet live, being



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