

THE HORSE.

Can the Hackney Come Back?

BY OUR ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT.

It is a pity the Hackney is a back number in Canada. I am afraid that, except for the show-ring lovers and devotees of the breed in America and the Argentine, the Hackney is also a decaying force in those countries. It is only in France, Italy and Spain, and even in far-off Japan, where the Hackney is used as part and parcel of the governmental schemes of army-horse raising, that the breed is flourishing. In England—the true home of the breed—the Hackney went well nigh out of fashion, as a horse of any proved usefulness, except that of running once a year at the end of a rein in a dim and dismal London hall, and generally doing "stunts" in harness at the annual International Horse Show. The war came and killed the hippodrome game, and I think helped to prove to thinking Hackney men in England that the breed had only one chance to "come back," and that was on the army ticket and as a potential part of the equine machine for turning out military horses, be they actual remounts or light draft horses.

The fact that the Italian Government keeps on coming to Yorkshire for Hackney stallions with which to manufacture war horses, and the accepted fact that the French Government built up one, if not two, distinct races of utility horses by the aid of the Hackney, made Englishmen realize that if they were to prevent the breed from short-circuiting, or fusing, and going into thin air, something must be done to encourage the raising of big, strong, robust, flat-boned, well-set-up horses, not too extravagant in their paces, but the stamp to get remount or light drafters for army purposes. At the two last shows of the English Hackney Society there have been classes for stallions of this character, and that there are still more of the stamp in the country I feel assured. Now these classes have so far produced strong, up-standing horses, with short backs, well-coupled body pieces, shoulders that denoted riding abilities (as well as the breed's undeniable driving qualities) flat, hard bone (not the round, gun-barrel sort); indeed, a horse of size, substance and quality, with an undoubted ride-and-drive look about him. The Council of the English Hackney Society have realized at last that the breed can come back on the stamp of horse I've attempted to describe herein—a general-purpose horse that may be useful in producing officers' chargers and even getting stock for light draft purposes, and a breed or a type that we are very short of in Britain. Gradually men in the game over here are being convinced that the pretty-as-a-picture Hackney, i. e., the show-ring Hackney, which did nothing else but potter round pot hunting at our agricultural shows, "has had its day and ceased to be," as Tennyson puts it.

In the British army to-day doing good work of all kinds (even since the days of 1914) are many hundreds of Hackneys. They are performing all sorts of duties—some even are winning prizes as jumpers in the soldiers' sports which take place behind the lines. But their chief work lies with the guns, and they have never turned it up but gone on about their work with a lion's heart. Some British breeds of haulage horses have had their "soft" spots discovered in this Armageddon, but not so with the Hackney. The whole history of the breed proves undeniably its hard wearing qualities. Put it on to blood that is responsive—that has some fire and pluck in it and that is not cold—and the Hackney will get any type of utility horse a nation may require. I have great faith in it as a potential raiser of army horses. The late Sir Walter Gilbey swore by the breed for that reason, and he sold the foreigners many stallions which were to go to Governmental HARAS and to be used in the interests of utility horse raising.

We have not yet finished in England with our experimental attempts to discover more Hackney stallions bearing the stamp of ride-and-drive appearances. There are still many horses of the stamp in the Kingdom but they require finding. H. R. H. the Prince of Wales has perhaps the best stallion of this stamp in Britain, to wit, Findon Grey Shales. He is getting some wonderful sons.

The spectacular Hackney will be bred, of course, in the hope entertained by some that the days of the hippodrome will return, when the war is over. But if I am any judge of the temper of the English nation, I read the future this way, that there will be no more garlanded olympian festooned equine stunts, suited only for the frolics of the idle rich. The horse shows of the future must be practical and to encourage the raising of utility stock, not unsexed males and barren females, fit only to meander round the tan bark with an action that was dangerously like string-halt, but always reminiscent of a monkey on a stick. There are some, however, who say that if we have a league of nations we shall not have to breed any more war horses. But don't you believe it. As long as Germany's war spirit remains unbroken the danger of another conflict will always be with us, and horse raising (i. e., growing stocks suitable for war purposes, at a push) will always have to be carried on.

The Hackney can come back as a ride-and-drive horse. It was that before it was spoiled in the showing, and before its constitution was ruined for the sake of quality. It can come back on its hard-wearing proclivities, on its strong shoulders; on its muscular, well-coupled bodypiece; on its hard, flat, steely limbs and its free action. The strong Hackney is the type that will stay with us—the pretty-as-a-picture, verva-quality-like, and only fit to run about at the end of a bit of rope line, that is the sort of Hackney which must go into the limbo of things forgotten. We are moving

in this matter in quite the right way over here. It is passing strange, however, that it has taken us forty years to realize the possibilities of a breed we have sold liberally and with open hands to the foreigners. But John Bull is always learning—even if it is a slow "learn."

The Scottish Stallion Hiring System.

BY ARCHIBALD MACNEILAGE.

The Scottish system of hiring Clydesdale stallions is of very long standing. In 1759 the Society of Improvers awarded a prize of fifteen guineas at a show held in Edinburgh to William Whyte, tenant in Bows, Polmont, for a bay stallion called "Red Robin." In 1785 a horse named "Blaze", owned by Mr. Scott, Brownhill, Carstairs, Lanark, won first prize at a show held in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh. As early as 1830 or thereby premiums were paid by horse-breeding societies in Kirkcudbright, to members of the Muir family in Lanarkshire, for horses of theirs to travel in the Kirkcudbright and other districts in Galloway. Notices of these hirings and of horses which won these premiums are to be found in the introductory volumes of the Clydesdale Stud Book, published in the close of 1878 and in the beginning of 1880. The terms usually paid in those far-off days were a premium of £30 to £40, with an agreement on the part of the Society hiring to find so many mares—usually seventy or eighty for a horse four years old or upwards, or about sixty for a horse rising three years old. Judging by old stallion cards or bills or advertisements that have come down to us, the service fees were moderate, about 30 shillings altogether plus 2s. 6d. to the groom. The 30s. might be paid in full for a foal, or divided into two payments of 10s. at service and 20s. when a foal was assured, or in some other fashion. At no time so far as we can find did the system prevail in Scotland which holds generally in Canada of payment absolutely by results. The meaning of that is that Clydesdale breeders in this country have generally recognized that the sole responsibility for barrenness should not be laid to the charge of the stallion. Horses with well established reputations have frequently been offered to the public at a fee payable wholly at service, but in forty years' experience I cannot recall a single case in which an owner has offered his horse to the public at a fee payable wholly when a foal was assured. The nearest approach to this has been seen when the owner of a horse which began his career with an indifferent reputation as a stock getter desired to re-assure the public that the horse had become quite fruitful. Under such conditions I have known a horse being offered for public service at some such terms as these: £2 payable at service, and £8 additional when the mare was proved to be in foal. There is an element of fairness in this division of the service fees. It is, however, a mistake to put the major portion of the charge on the service fee and the minor on the foal money. The reverse order is certainly fairer for all parties, and the owner of any horse with an honest reputation would never hesitate to accept terms on that basis.

The organization of horse-breeding societies varies greatly. Since, however, the institution of a Government Department of Agriculture in each of the three Kingdoms, and the institution of the system of Government premiums for horses passed sound by Government examiners and placed on the Government Register, there has been developed a greater uniformity of organization. Of course, the Government premiums are only paid for horses to serve mares belonging to tenant farmers paying the smaller rents, that is farmers or smallholders occupying not more than 100 acres, or paying not more than £100 of annual rent. The object of the Government scheme is to encourage such men to make use of a superior class of horses, and not to rest content, as in the past was too often the case, with any kind of horse, provided his terms were low enough. To this end the Government not only makes a grant of from £20 to £30 towards the premium paid to the owner of the stallion, but it also pays part of the service fees for mares, when these mares are adjudged by the recognized officials good enough to merit such recognition.

In order to the working of this scheme the first step is for the farmers or smallholders occupying land on the terms above indicated within a given area—it may be a parish, if large enough, or a group of parishes, or a defined area with natural boundaries easily determined—to hold a public meeting. That meeting will be called by the Head of the Live Stock Department of the Board of Agriculture, and may be held in a school or village hall, or the room of an inn or hotel, as the case may be. The object of the meeting is to stimulate an interest in the improvement of the ordinary farm stock of the smaller tenantry, not horses only, but also cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry. After hearing what is to be said on the subject the meeting passes a resolution that a Stock Improvement Society for the district be formed to be called the—District Stock Improvement Society. A model constitution for such societies has been drafted by the Board of Agriculture and that constitution is by resolution, duly moved and seconded, adopted. The chief officials are a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, and Executive Committee. All present and concurring in the resolution to form such a society are enrolled as original members, and the annual subscription is fixed at 5s., or some such figure, per member. Almost everything depends on the Executive Committee and especially on the calibre and energy of the President, Vice-President and Secretary and Treasurer. The Executive Committee determines what sires it may be best to introduce into the district

of the Society's operations—in respect to horses, whether a Clydesdale, a Highland stallion, a Hackney, a Shetland pony, or a Thoroughbred, etc.; in respect to cattle, whether it be Shorthorn, Aberdeen-Angus, Galloway, Ayrshire, Highland, British Friesian, or what; in respect to sheep, whether it be Border Leicester, Blackface, Cheviot, Oxford Down, Suffolk, or what, and how many rams, and so on in respect to pigs and poultry. The Board which grants the premiums retains a hold on the selection made in this way. In respect to horses, the Executive Committee appoints a selecting committee, but the horse chosen must be on the Board's Register of horses approved for soundness and fitness, and the bulls chosen must be taken from those on which the officials of the Board place their imprimatur at certain of the spring bull sales. These bulls when being sold are announced by the auctioneers as "selected by the Board for a premium." As it is only with the horses we are here concerned, enough has been said to show the *modus operandi* of hiring Clydesdales by the Stock Improvement Societies. These are of comparatively recent origin—the Act under which they have been instituted having only been passed in 1911. The terms for horses hired under this arrangement and by these Stock Improvement Societies vary somewhat but may be put down as £30 premium, with 25s. payable at service and £2 additional when the mare proves in foal. A horse with a good reputation as a stock getter, and serving eighty mares, under this agreement should yield to his owner an annual revenue of about £250. Lethen Chief 19177, at the Montgomery dispersion in March last, with an engagement on the above terms, was sold by public auction for £504, that is for two years' purchase. He was only rising three years old, and has obviously given satisfaction as he has during the past few weeks been re-engaged for season 1919 on somewhat enhanced terms by the Society to which he was hired for this season.

But as has been indicated these conditions apply to societies organized as a result of the passing of the Smallholder's Act, 1911, and in order to secure the benefits of Government subsidies which that Act confers upon smallholders as already defined.

The stallion hiring system was in existence for at least a century before the passing of that Act. The societies engaged in hiring stallions are organized in a variety of ways, although in a general way they all seek to conform to the general ideal of voluntary organizations which abound in Scotland. Sometimes the district or county agricultural societies which organize shows of stock and take a general survey of the interests of agriculture within their area, include the hiring of travelling stallions as part of their program. This is the case with the Glasgow Agricultural Society, which for at least sixty years has hired a stallion or a couple of stallions annually to travel what is somewhat vaguely defined as the Glasgow district, i. e., the district around the City of Glasgow. In most cases, however, the district horse breeding society is an *ad hoc* body, which exists for the purpose of hiring one or more Clydesdale stallions to travel within a prescribed area for the service of the mares of the members of that Society, or to stand at certain centres within the area on certain days of the week for the same purpose. As a rule the horse travels by road from station to station, but in some few cases he is sent by rail from the one station to the other. This latter course is adopted in the case of the Northern Counties' Horse Breeding Society and the Scottish Central Horse Breeding Society. These are societies having members scattered over a wide area, who are united for the purpose of securing a horse of the highest class to serve selected pedigree mares. The first named Society has members in the Counties of Inverness, Ross, Sutherland and Caithness, and the horse stands at centres so far apart that only by rail can he be found at each on the appointed day. The second-named has its centre in Stirling and its members in that County and in Clackmannan, Kinross, Fife, and Perth Shires. It is an interesting fact and worthy of consideration that horses when sent by rail from one place to another have not proved so prolific as when they have travelled by road in the ordinary way. Regarding the latter it is generally agreed that a journey of ten miles per day for six days a week, with rest on the seventh, is as much as is good for a horse.

The ordinary district horse breeding societies obtain their revenue in this way: Each member pays an annual subscription—usually 10s.; he is also under obligation to put at least one mare to the horse hired by the Selection Committee for any given season, or should he fail to do that he must pay into the funds of the Society the amount of the service fee for one mare. The stallion owner is also sometimes under obligation to subscribe to the funds of the Society a royalty of it may be 5s. or 10s. for each foal left by the stallion. Consequently it becomes the interest of everybody to see that the stallion is a prolific stock getter. A horse like Everlasting 11331, which recently died, makes money for everybody who has anything to do with him. He was a magnificent horse of himself—an unbeaten champion as a yearling and two-year-old. Consequently he was hired speculatively on high terms for his first two seasons—that is, as a three-year-old and a four-year-old. In these two seasons he proved himself to be a prolific sire, and his foals were of great promise. This ensured his being hired for the two seasons following. During these two seasons a selection of the produce of his first two seasons made their appearance in the show-yard, and took good positions, the results placing him high on the list of breeding horses as tested by show-yard results. A year or two later it became clear that his daughters were breeding well, and his male produce which were castrated were found to be sound, weighty cart horses, in high favor with dealers. Henceforward for many years until

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