

The Horse Show Habit

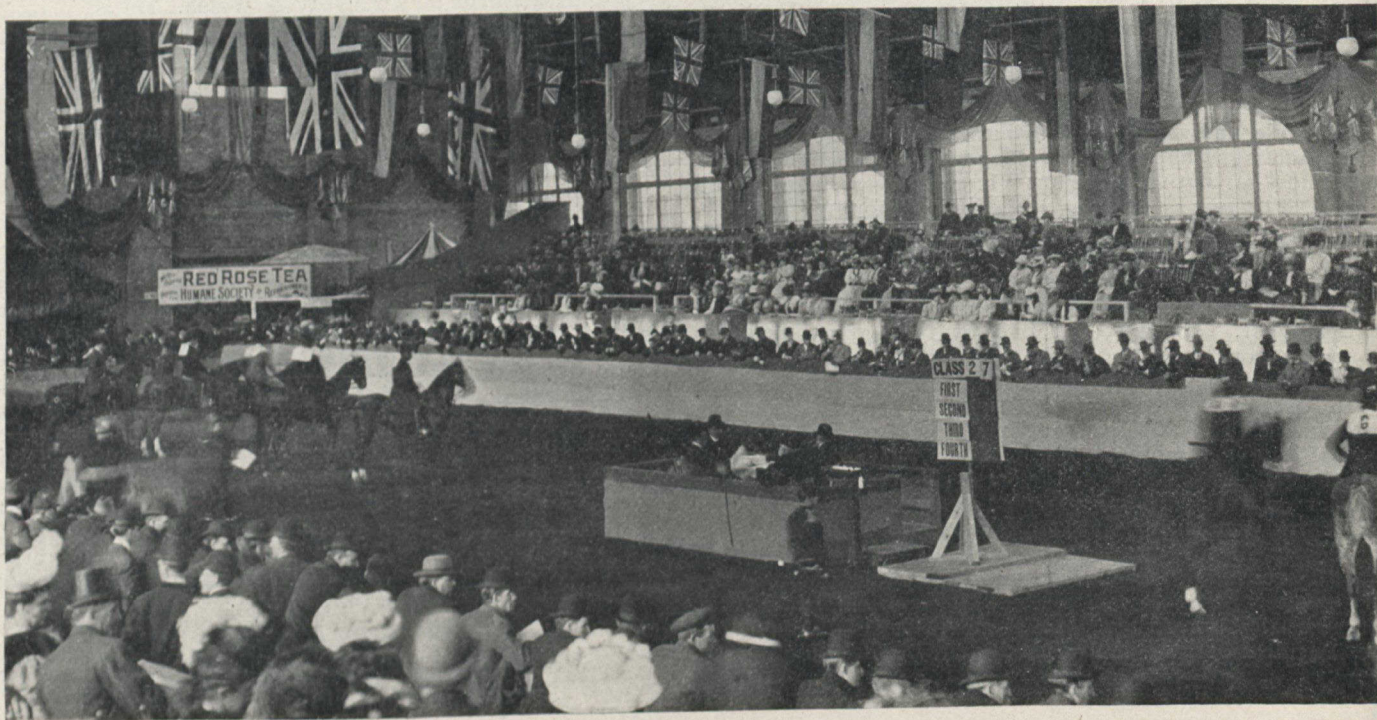
CANADA has the horse show habit. But that is only another evidence that despite the influx of foreign immigrants the Anglo-Saxon still dominates. For where is the man of British birth who will not own to an admiration of man's best friend! Whether that admiration takes the form of putting a dollar on a probable starter at New York with the handbook man around the corner or buying a box at the big annual shows at Toronto and Montreal.

Toronto's 13th annual horse show passed into history a week ago. It was bigger, better, grander than before. The prizes of course in the open classes largely went to the dealers and breeders who have a habit of collecting ribbons all around the circuit which is made up of Toronto, Montreal, Syracuse, Kansas City and Chicago, while the "amateur" prizes were divided among those lovers of horseflesh who go over the country with a fine tooth comb trying to gather in something to beat the big fellows.

That the horse was there in all his various castes, breeds and conformations, from the aristocratic thoroughbred to the more humble sired but none the less necessary steed which hauls home your paper of pins from the big departmental store, goes without saying. It takes them all to make a horse show. And it takes something else

finned to Toronto and Montreal. Winnipeg has one; so has Brantford and Stratford and Galt and Guelph and other places. The big breeders and dealers send their strings to these too. But alas and alack! Some of these minor shows are developing symptoms of financial decay—the most fatal of all horse show diseases. And then why?—Well, to speak cordially, their social circles though select are necessarily small. And the consequence is inevitable. Robbed of its most necessary adjunct, the show fades slowly but surely to its finish.

Does the horse show do much towards improving the Canadian horse? Assuredly. If you don't think so, ask the first horse lover you meet and he will gladly spend an hour or more telling how the social condition of the equine has been improved by his brief annual association with the elite of Canada's leading cities. Still, it must be admitted that the standard Canadian farmer has not been led to take much of his time from his turnip crop and give it to the breeding of aristocratic horses. He knows that high stepping carriage horses and fashionably bred animals of other classes will bring high prices. But he knows that if there is the slightest blemish on them they are practically valueless. So he keeps right on farming and raising an occasional colt that can haul a plow or a reaper and that will always command a



The Toronto Horse Show Last Week—St. Lawrence Market Arena.

It is difficult to get a photograph of this scene as the people are restless and the horses continually stirring. The ring is covered with tanbark, and in the centre is a box for the judges and officials. Between the fence and the boxes is a promenade which runs around the entire ring. Hence the first row of spectators are seen leaning over the rail. The "boxes" with their fair and brilliant occupants show white beyond the promenade. Behind the boxes are the ordinary chairs for horse lovers who are not in the "four hundred." The riders of the horses have a white disc on their backs showing their number

besides to make a horse show a success. For much as the Anglo Saxon loves a horse he must have it properly set before he will give to it a whole afternoon or evening and the price of admission. But that something else was not lacking. Fashionable Toronto, or rather fashionable Ontario was there. It lined the boxes that surrounded the tanbarked arena—and the horse show was a success.

The social adjunct is just as necessary to the horse show as the betting ring is to a race meet. Without it the great unknown masses called the public lose interest, the gate receipts fall off and the show perishes miserably. But when the newspapers tell of the lovely women present and the ravishing costumes they wore, feminine interest is awakened. And though man may rule the world he goes to the horse show when his wife makes him take her. Some wag has named the great annual function the "clothes horse show." That is largely a libel. But, while the faithful steed has come triumphantly through his fights for popularity with the bicycle and the autocar and is prepared to vanquish the airship when it gets ready for the fray, he must easily divide the credit for his victories with woman, lovely woman, who is ever on his side. And as no one is disposed to take credit from where it is due, perhaps it might be admitted that if woman is the bookmaker of the horse show the dress-makers are her talented assistants.

Of course the horse show habit in Canada is not con-

certain figure even if it is not flawless enough to successfully pass the scrutiny of a fashionable horse show judge. He's not much of a gambler, our Canadian farmer, even if he does occasionally try to break the little nutshell game at the fall fair.

The prizes, too, offered for horses suited to the army do not attract him much. It would take a war to make a brisk market. And he can still remember that when horses were wanted for South Africa the horse show judge did not select them. Horses were enlisted for the service just as men would be in a similar emergency. From the plough, the cart and the prairie they come and constant drilling made them mounted infantry horses just as constant drill had to make soldiers of the clerks, mechanics and labourers who were to ride them.

Still, it must be admitted that the horse show habit is a power for good in the land. It provides for the keeping up of an aristocracy in the horse world, and an aristocracy in that sub-stratum of society is just as necessary as an aristocracy in this British Empire. It gives mankind a chance to admire the horse in all its perfection—and surely the world holds nothing more pleasing to the eye than the satin-skinned champions who battle for the blue ribbon in the horse ring.

The attendant at these brilliant shows of Beauty and the Beast will find it hard to believe in the horseless age which so many electric and gasoline enthusiasts prophesy.