

# MORGAN HORSE IN VERMONT

## Present Representatives Have but a Fraction of the Blood of the Founder of the Line.

### FEW OF THE OLD TYPE REMAIN

Characteristics Most in Sight Those of Modern American Trotter—Ninety-two-Year-Old Man Driving in a Pacing Race.

For years I have been curious to see Morgan horses in their native country, to find out what there was of truth in the reports I had heard of Morgan horses in Vermont. It was for this reason that I spent my two months' vacation in that State. Knowing that Mr. Battell of the Bread Loaf Inn had got up a book upon the Morgan horse as big as Webster's Dictionary, upon which he had spent \$25,000, I passed two or three weeks at his hostelry with the intention of getting as near as possible to the best and purest sources of information on the subject.

Morgan horses, of course, long ago ceased to be peculiar to Vermont. Many years ago those horses had spread all over the West and South. As a boy I rode and drove one of them in Virginia, an animal which had almost every useful quality that a horse could have, and which seemed entirely without those drawbacks which experience teaches us all to regard as almost necessary to horseflesh. He was kind, willing, and enduring was equally good in the harness and under the saddle, could trot in what was called three minutes, and he was never ill and could always be used. He was a bay, fifteen hands, blocky, rather cut out in the back, and broad between the eyes. This type of animal was as familiar in the South and West as in his native New England. Uncle Remus speaks of Brer Rabbit as sitting "ez fat and ez sassy ez a Moggin hoss in a barley patch," and as an animal of this kind the Morgan horse was known all over the country.

I found the reports I had heard to be in the main correct. As to the attenuation of the blood of the original Morgan of which one hears, that of course is inevitable, owing to the lapse of time. The founder of the line, Justin Morgan, whom Mr. Battell proves to have had a great deal of thoroughbred blood, flourished a hundred years ago. The present representatives of his family are many generations removed from him, and can have but a small fraction of his blood in the direct male line. A beautiful three-year-old was shown to me, perhaps the most beautiful colt in the State, that was a Morgan; that is, he was descended from Justin Morgan. But it was through Motion, Daniel Lambert, Ethan Allen, Black Hawk, and Sherman Morgan, and he could have had in the male line only about one-sixty-fourth of the blood of Justin. No doubt he had much more than that, for he went back by various ramifications through the females to the original ancestor. In some horses this total foetus up to something considerable. For instance, Mr. Battell has a beautiful four-year-old black stallion, General Gates, which he claims to inherit through various lines one-eighth of Justin Morgan's blood. This horse, by the way, is also Morgan in his conformation and his general characteristics. I could not say so much for the three-year-old chestnut. He was a rare beauty, but upon lines somewhat different from those of the usual Morgan. Grace was his characteristic, rather than the solid vigor—joined often, however, with elegance—of the Morgan. His back was short, like a Morgan's; his barrel well-ribbed up, and his body substantial for his age; but he was very highly finished; his head and neck were fine and delicate, and were carried with an airy grace that was charming in the extreme. The attitude and outline of him, his ensemble, were distractingly pretty. He was very fast. His color, chestnut, is one of the common Morgan colors; it is now of a coltish tawny hue that will darken in a year or so.

The attenuation of blood is of course inevitable. A more important question is, Does the type remain? I cannot say that it does. Here and there you see the old lines. General Gates has them; the handsome trotting stallion, Homestead, has them, and, to a less degree, Homestead's more beautiful son, Col. Le Grand Cannon's Lord Shelburne. But the characteristics most in sight are those of the modern American trotter. Many years ago Vermonters left the old lines and began breeding for speed, as was done all over the country, every one hoping that he had in his colt a Black Hawk or an Ethan Allen. So it happens that what you see in Vermont is the American roadster. Thus the best pair of carriage horses I saw in the State were roadsters big enough to be carriage horses, very fine, of course, and Morgan, but of a type that is no way peculiar to Vermont. On the other hand, you are as likely to see horses of the Morgan type in many other parts as in Vermont.

I saw a year ago at the Illinois State Fair a family of them, the Western cousins of Black Hawk; somewhat small they seemed, but of substantial yet elegant conformation. I thought they looked more like the real thing than all but a very few of the animals that I saw in Vermont. There is scarcely any part of the country to which representatives of the family have not found their way. Numbers of them went to Michigan many years ago, and their blood is in most of the fine horses that come to us from that region. A number of mares went to Kentucky, and their blood mixed with the Denmark and certain trotting strains is in many of the best Kentucky horses of the present day. The family of the great trotting sire, Harrison Chief, are descendants. In Kentucky you will hear many excellent qualities described as Morgan. For instance, they speak of that most excellent trait, the width between the eyes, as Morgan. It should not be forgotten also that, so far as regards the Morgan qualities and conformation, the whole country is trying to produce an animal that possesses them; it is called a cob. Old Vermonters speak to you of Morgan action. Mr. E. J. Phelps showed me a horse of his which he said had the true Morgan action. Mr. Phelps is old enough to remember the horse in Vermont in his prime, and deploras the mistake his neighbors made when they abandoned that animal to devote themselves to the breeding of trotters. The action of this horse was fascinating. I do not remember to have seen anything quite like it. It had a beautiful continuity, a flowing quality, the paces running into one another, or, rather, being drawn out of one another like the notes of a musical instrument.

Among the most important characteristics of the Morgans were their intelligence and kindness. Have these qualities been preserved? The Lamberts of the present day, the chief representatives of the Morgans, have the reputation of being excitable. I saw a number of this family, most of them perfectly kind and sensible. But there were others that seemed to deserve the family name for excitability. I drove one little chestnut mare, evidently Lambert, whose frantic terror at the sight of a trolley car indicated an inherent flightiness and want of sense. She was as rattleheaded as the most foolish thoroughbred. Still, you would expect to find now and then such an exceptional case anywhere, even among trotters. Such flightiness, however, is very uncommon in the trotting-bred horse. The colts of Axtell, that animal whose beautiful countenance it is a pity we in the East do not have a chance to see sometimes, when they are led into Terre Haute, Ind., for the first time and see the trolley car coming at them, will stand, their ears pointed forward and their whole minds taken up with the aspect of the unfamiliar monster, but without any flinching or sign of fear. Such behavior shows a courage, a sense, and sweet intelligence, "a character," as I have heard Axtell's owner say, which I should expect from the colts of a horse with such a face as Axtell's.

It was chiefly at the county fairs that I saw the Vermont horses. I was at the fairs at Rutland, Middlebury, Burlington, and the one at Plattsburgh, which is just across Lake Champlain. These fairs are chiefly trotting and pacing events. The races are the main attraction, although a certain amount of stock is shown for premiums. Some good harness horses appear in the competitions, but not many. But the fairs are pleasant and amusing, nevertheless. They are casual and free and easy, which is pleasant, and they are very country-fied. One of their characteristic features is a peg-race. The horses, sulkies, and harness are at the starting point, the harness hung on a peg or a paling of a fence. When the word is given the contestants have to harness, hitch, and drive a mile. The greatest plug often wins because he is the easiest to harness and hitch, the band playing and other sights and sounds of the fair being rather hard upon nervous horses. The people are also interesting to see. Vermonters have certain characteristics to be seen in scarcely any other American population. They seem very English. As a matter of fact, I believe they are of pure British stock, the country having been

settled from Massachusetts and Connecticut before there had been much admixture in the New England population of blood other than English. They have the peculiar style of good looks of purely British populations. The mental traits of the people are also pure British. They show a slowness of mind not to be met with in more Americanized communities, and I could see here and there indications of that helplessness in the presence of a joke to be observed among the Scotch. The people have the British facial characteristics to a marked degree, the aquiline nose and the blue eye, particularly the latter. At one of the fairs on the large stand that contained perhaps 1,000 people I was astonished by the universality of the light blue eye, the eye in many cases having an unusually large iris.

These fairs have a setting of beautiful scenery. Vermont is well named, for it is very verdant and fruitful looking. All through the afternoon there is the soft Autumn haze on the mountains. I scarcely ever saw a more graceful collection of hills than that to the east of the fair grounds at Middlebury. The Burlington fair is in the midst of a beautiful scene. On rather cold September afternoons the sky above the mountains to the west of Lake Champlain is apt to be clear and without a cloud. As sunset comes on the sides of the mountains wear hues that the sunset fires have purified, clear and distinct, hard, you may say, but of infinite delicacy. In mentioning these colors lately to one of the most celebrated and gifted of our artists, I said: "If one could only paint!" "But then one can't," said the painter. The genius who could seize such colors and transfer them to canvas, it would seem, indeed, must have some portion of the power of the Supreme Artificer that conceived and sketched the originals. A car conductor in Burlington told me that the scenery was as fine as in Italy. Why not? Why should the scenery of any one part of our rolling ball be better than another? The air and the water have the same chemical constituents, and as to the mountains, geologists say they are much older.

I saw one thing in Vermont, perhaps more interesting than the horses. That was a man ninety-two years old, driving in a pacing race and coming in second. There were some half-dozen sulkies in the race and the pace was, I think, in the twenties. Did you ever try driving a three-minute gait in a wagon? If so, you have probably found the pace somewhat terrifying, notwithstanding the fact that you were securely boxed in and had something to hold on to. But to go at 2.20, to be seated on a gossamer machine which one touches only at three points, to be part of a flying caravan which, if one should veer a very little to the right or left, one might quickly reduce to a heap of jackstraws, is to do what most young men would be shy of attempting. It was interesting, therefore, to see such a thing done successfully by a man of ninety-two. He was perfectly up to the business, however, including the tricks of the game. It was amusing to see him coquetting and finessing for a good start, holding the stormy animal in leash the meanwhile. He had drawn an outside place and they were a long time getting away. I waited over a train in the hope of making his acquaintance. Going into a shed into which I had seen him drive after the race, and asking for him, I was directed to a corner of the stable, where he was sitting on an inverted bucket. He got up and came to meet me in a very friendly manner—a thin man of middle height. I saw that he might easily be ninety-two. His teeth were gone so that his nose and chin had approached one another, but upon both cheeks there was the bright red glow of a Winter apple, and it was evident that this glow was always there; he was very slightly bent; his eye, a bright blue, was perfectly clear and young, and there was not a bit of the languor or the feebleness of age in his countenance and figure, or in his address.

"How long have you been driving races?" I asked. "For over seventy years," he answered. When I told him that he had driven the race very well, he said: "I ought to; I'm old enough." And then he told me this story: Two boys of ten or twelve were set by two old men of eighty or ninety to wrestling. The elder boy threw the younger, who said: "He ought to throw me, he's older than I am." Then the boys said to the old men: "Grandpa, you've made us wrestle, now you two wrestle." The two old men of eighty to ninety then wrestled, with the result that the older of the two threw the younger, when the younger old man said: "Well, he ought to; he's older than I am."

This story, with its rustic, simple character, will give a notion of the old man. He seemed an ancient and innocent child, without, however, any touch of second childhood. I omitted to ask the usual questions about alcohol and tobacco. He was evidently one of the temperate kind. He said he had never been married, adding: "If I had, I probably shouldn't have been here."

The skeptic who reads this may retain a doubt whether the old man was really ninety-two. I made sufficient inquiry on this point to convince myself that he was. He had the best reputation throughout the State. Some of the persons of whom I inquired were old enough to corroborate his account from their own experience. One man told me that when a boy in 1859, he had driven in a race with him, and that he then looked nearly as old as he does now. So I think there is no doubt that I saw a man of ninety-two driving a pacing race. I was so much interested in the old man that I forgot to ask him anything about Morgan horses and their history, of which no doubt he could have told me a great deal.

E. S. NADAL.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA'S MUSEUMS.

### Remarkable Growth of Scientific Institutions in This Thinly Peopled Region.

Harlan I. Smith, connected with the Department of Archaeology in the American Museum of Natural History of this city, in a paper which appeared recently in Science, gives a description of the natural history museums of British Columbia.

Mr. Smith, in his researches for archaeological specimens, which have led him through all parts of the country, spent about six months in British Columbia, and noted with interest the growth of scientific institutions, which, he says, exist to an unusual number in proportion to the population and number of educational institutions. The museums, Mr. Smith explains, are exceptionally well administered, considering their isolation from other scientific institutions. The most important among them, the writer goes on to say, is the Provincial Museum at Victoria. It is located in the east wing of the Parliament Building, thus having the facilities of the Parliamentary Library. The staff comprises a curator, a taxidermist, and two floor attendants.

The curator, John Tannin, is now devoting special attention to preparing groups of birds and animals, represented in their natural environment. The general interest evinced in this work may be gauged from the fact that Mr. Tannin was recently sent to the great museums of the Eastern United States and England to investigate the methods of preparing such groups.

It is the general principle of the museum to represent the fauna of the province, and visitors from foreign countries may see at a glance the natural treasures of the region. A beautiful series of butterflies and other insects are on exhibition. Fish are represented by gelatine casts, and alcoholic preparations, and the value of this part of the collection will soon be in proportion to the importance of the fisheries of the coast. The article continues:

"This rich mining region is naturally productive of fine mineral specimens, which are well represented in the museum. Although the province is excessively rich in anthropological material, its representation in the museum has been somewhat curtailed from lack of funds. However, there is a fair collection of casts of faces of men; stone, bone, and antler implements from shell heaps and mounds. The museum is fairly well arranged, and the labeling will put to shame many of the great museums of the East, although, as with all such institutions, constant improvements are being made."

The City of Vancouver, says Mr. Smith, with a population of some 20,000, seems too young to show much interest in the museum as a natural adjunct to education, although it is the endeavor of the Art and Scientific Society to form a museum in its rooms. New Westminster, with a population of 8,000, made a splendid beginning toward establishing a museum in the upper portion of the City Library. Cases were built from plans furnished by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, and various specimens installed, but on the 11th day of last September the city was swept by a great conflagration, and the City Library, together with most of the city, was utterly destroyed.

In concluding his article, Mr. Smith says that the spirit of museum administration exhibited at these institutions is one to be commended. Every facility is given visitors to examine, illustrate, or publish papers on any of the material within the museums.

### Offers Ground for a School.

F. De Hass Simonson of Newtown, a member of the Queens Borough School Board, has offered to present to the school authorities of the borough a school site in Newtown. The property includes ten city lots on Columbia Avenue, fifty feet on Carroll Place, and 150 feet on Callamus Road. The land is clear of all incumbrance, and at the last meeting of the board the Building Committee recommended the purchase of this plot as a school site.