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IS GREAT GIFT OF NATURE

Writer Extolls Part Faithful Animal Has Played in History; Cherished by Man in All Ages

(By Hanley G. Smith)

"In passing, let us give a moment of adulation to the horse. How vitally has been a part of the history, wars and romance of nations. With what intrepid courage has he stormed over the most sanguinary battlefields! What wise, stupid, noble, or tyrannical rulers has he served with equal patience, endurance and steadfastness! What great lovers has he borne swiftly to their trysts! But a few years gone we were told that the day approached that marked his banishment from those realms wherein he has reigned supreme for thousands of years, and lo, he is now even more securely enthroned. Nature smiled and opened a generous hand when she gave to man the horse.

"Should we not cherish him, nourish his fiery strength, lead him to sweet water, and when his eyes has dimmed and only his great heart leaps with undying ardor, humbly care for him until he reaches that pasture of eternal green that God has reserved for man's noblest friend."—Major James A. Watson, U.S.A.

Friendship and Devotion

Appreciative mankind does cherish the friendship and devotion, mutual between our race and our nearest kin, the animal that "excels in strength, speed, skill, courage and nobility of character." To worship at the shrine of the horse is a privilege and a pleasure. It is like unto a religion. Where can mankind better express his adoration for that super species than at the arena wherein the noblest animal displays his prowess to the greatest advantage?

Where the kings and queens of the equine realm, developed to the very pinnacle of perfection through countless generations of lineal chastity, skillful schooling and scrupulous conditioning, compete for honors, the highest that mankind can bestow—there, in all his grandeur, the horse accepts the homage justly due him. They show for money—yes. Did Abraham Lincoln per the Gettysburg address to earn his salary? Did Washington winter at Valley Forge for a pay check?

Have the Heart to Win

They strive toward perfection because it is in the blood. They have the heart to win. Cruelty? Yes—to deprive them of their chance to gratify an inbred ambition. The laborer is worthy of his hire, hence, purses. But, let us not look upon horsemanship as a commercialized industry. It is rather, a sport and an art. As such, it develops in man the best that is in him, as it does in the object of his attention. In the glorification of the horse, in all the branches and gradations of that great family, no country excels America. In America, no section has surpassed the middle west, in the heart of which lies Illinois. In Illinois, is Springfield, the mecca of the prime favorites in the horsemanship of a continent. Here, annually, is held the world's greatest agricultural exposition. Greatest in extent, quality and diversity of the attractions that edify, inspire and entertain. Among these features, the presentation of the horse, in his countless classifications, stands preeminent.

Let us turn forward the calendar to that glorious week in August, the 21 to 28, and in fancy foresee the events wherein the horse is placed upon a pedestal for our admiration. On the Turf Let us sit in the grandstand, viewing that perfect oval of resilient clay, pinkled, dragged and lightning fast. The 2:05 pace, we will say, is called. Twenty-three starters now are eligible for this, the fastest feature of the card. Here come the favorites, easing down toward the head of the stretch, eager for the fray. The drivers, sporting glistering silks are alert, expectant, confident. They score down. Every steed spurts forward, each stride a symphony of grace. Reinsmen, trained and experienced, manipulate lines and whips with the precision and technique of a famed surgeon, probing a vital organ. Every inch invites an effort to grasp an opportunity, but only such advantage as is fair, square and sportsmanlike. A few false starts and the polite raillery between horsemen and official heightens the excitement.

They're Off Go! Sleek ears, cocked keenly for that thrilling word, lay, lay back, and the race is on. Supremacy will be established and a record made by the outcome. They are rounding the first turn. Skimming bike wheels barely avert collision. No space is lost. Seconds click by. They're at the quarter in 31—and the long back stretch lies

ahead. Hoof beats resound in harmonious rhythm. Voices of the drivers, cheering, urging, exhorting the horses to their best efforts, rise above the pounding of the hoofs like five notes reverberate above the drum-roll. The half in a minute flat, and they're still going strong. Another turn to round. More ground to gain or lose, as chance and skill teeter in the balance. Some begin to weaken. The step sags. The heart is willing, but the pace is too fast and the route too long. The field comes on as the tell-tale watch clicks off the seconds. They head into the stretch, four abreast. Every length brings changes in their chances. The stands rise in one wild roar of excitement, each one's throat voices an appeal for the entry of his choice. They thunder down the course, neck and neck, in a gruelling, lashing sprint that tries the wind and limb and heart of the best of them. The coveted line is reached. Only the keen eyes of the judges, from their vantage point, can with accuracy, name the winner. Tense muscles relax. The results are announced. A new track record is established—a mile in 1:59% and the crowd goes wild again. The roar of applause rings sweetly in the ears of drooping contestants, enroute to the stables for a rubdown, and rest.

Thoroughbreds in Action

Now comes the mile run for a field of famous thoroughbreds. The bugle calls, and they parade before the stands. Lithe youngsters, with toes and knees and knuckles in, sit "chilly" on their mounts, watchful lest they bolt. They return, in Indian formation, wheel, and ease into their position. With warnings from the starter and a lashing for some bad actor at the post, they toe up to the rubber. The barrier swishes upward and in one mad rush, the mass of crowding horseflesh surges away. Jocks crouch low over slipper, sweaty necks, rating the mounts against the long going ahead. At the turn, one boy takes a lead of a length, handriding cleverly through the bunch. Hot breath blows against his knee, and he lets out a rap, but the challenger overtakes him. Pounding down the long route they go, each rider petting, pleasing, punneling, as is his manner. They head into the stretch, and the crowd goes wild. Rank strangers beat each other over the back in delirious excitement. With a roar of thundering hoofs, they finish. A blanket would cover the ones that are in the money. They pull up, return, and salute the judges. Panting victors and vanquished tremble with emotion at the cheers of the multitude, and bowing, speak their appreciation.

On the Tan Bark

Night falls, and the hour for the society horse show in the coliseum arrives. Let us view, we will say, the class for five-gaited saddlers. An overture from the band, in the center of the arena, forms a fitting opening for such ceremonies. In come the contestants, groomed to perfection, prancing and quivering in the sheer joy of living. With a score of them to select from, the judges look them over, and start the performance. Watching them pass, round after round, changing pace as directed, our fancy passes from one contestant to another. The winners remain highly problematical. They pause, and pose for review. Some are eliminated, and the others repeat the performance. Time after time they display their training, until the final award is made. Cheers ring out. The winning steeds bow low before the audience, and the rider, a blue ribbon floating from his smiling lips, canters proudly from the field. The others, in order of the honors bestowed, follow. Another tribute to the noble animal.

Here, they are judging draft teams—great, ponderous, sagacious specimens, moving in perfect unison—perfect pictures of power and endurance. A word from the driver, or a flick of a line, and they obey. They walk, trot, stop, back, wheel, or perform whatever maneuvers the driver wills.

Under their velvety dappled skins, is seen the play of powerful muscles. From their broad foreheads, great, thoughtful eyes survey the surroundings, and appraise the performance of competing teams. Judges study well the merits, and place the ribbons as their knowledge directs. With a proud toss of her ribboned forelocks, the winners stride out. Their great ears tilted forward welcome the applause that arises from the enthusiasts. Truly these specimens, not our playmates and pets, but every-day revenue producers, merit our admiration, and like all branches of the noble family, they appreciate it.

Since Brookhart received only 203,000 votes out of an electorate of 1,000,000, we don't think Iowa was revolting nearly so hard as she was playing checkers or sleeping.—Houston Post-Dispatch.

According to historic research the girls in the kingdom of Israel wore their hair bobbed too, which again goes to show that there is nothing as new as it looks.

The tourists who want to call on the president, might be introduced to the woodpile that supplies the fire for White Pine camp.


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