

The Vermont Morgan.

BY SPENCER BORDEN.

"The Morgan Horse is one thing. Every other kind of horse is something else."

ONE of the most hopeful signs of the times, is the present awakening of people all over the country,—before it is too late,—to the fact that America possessed a family of horses peculiar to the soil, distinct, typical, every way desirable. These horses had their origin and development in Vermont. The old Morgans were among the most valuable assets of the Green Mountain State. They will be so again. Men came to Vermont to buy Morgans as they sought her hillside pastures for Merino sheep. Vermonters migrating westward to the great Middle states, almost all of them took Morgan horses with them. The superior quality of these animals was immediately recognized; and, in the fifteen years preceding the outbreak of the Civil War, a constant stream of these horses went west. This was especially true in the years between 1850 and 1855, after the triumphal tour of Hale's Green Mountain Morgan through the west, where he swept everything before him at the State Fairs of Kentucky, Ohio and Michigan in 1853. The result was the coming of breeders from that section to Vermont for the purpose of securing Morgan blood. The great family of Dorsey's Golddust, was a single instance of the benefits accruing from such action.

Linsley, writing in 1864, says: "Fifteen years ago the *best* stallions could be procured for from five to fifteen hundred dollars, the best geldings for from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars, and the best mares from one to two hundred. Now the best stallions cannot be procured for less than one to three thousand dollars; the best geldings sell readily at from two to four hundred dollars, and the best mares at from three to six hundred.

"We know that some will say our prices are too low, and point us to very many sales at much higher prices, of animals having no reputation for great speed, but we think that although there may be many such instances, they are the exceptions to the general rule, rather than the rule itself."

It occurs to the writer that those prices would look pretty good to the farmers of Vermont at the present day, for horses on which no money had been spent for trainers' expenses, and all the paraphernalia that accompanies the "development" of horses in our time.



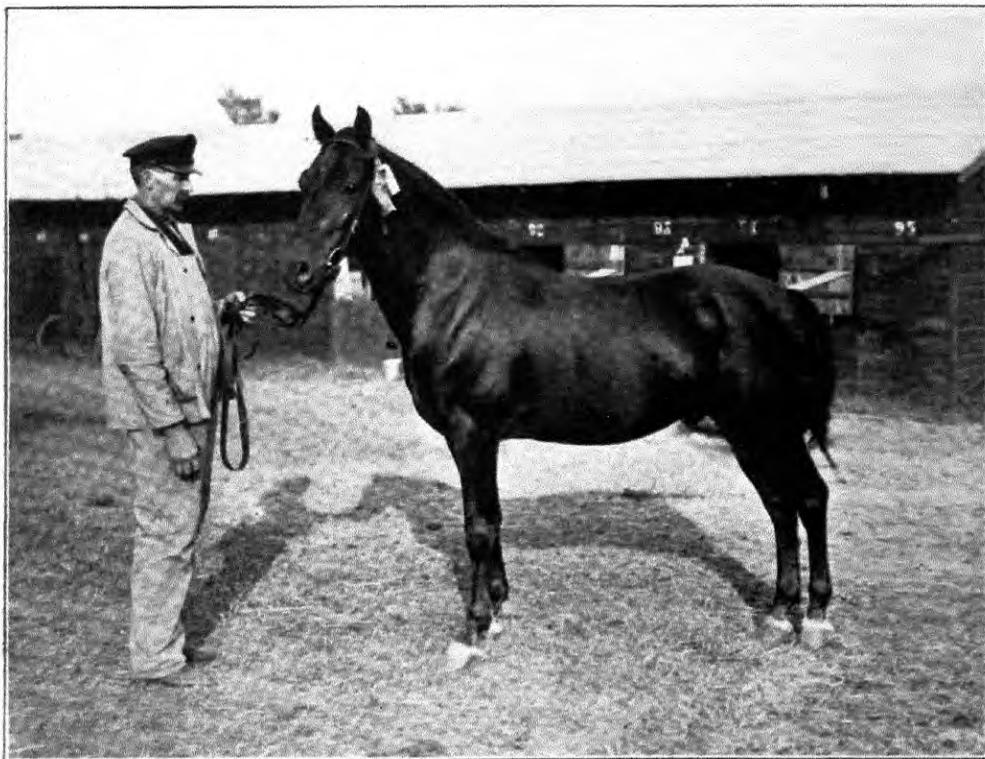
Old Green Mountain Morgan. (Hale's)

Foaled 1832. Died 1862. A genuine, handsome Morgan, of elegant form, proud, lofty bearing, fine style and nervous action. Showed, at 25 years, all the qualities of a colt.

And why are prices lower today than in 1864, more than forty years ago? There can be but one answer. The craze for speed has not only involved the horse breeder in expenses leading straight to bankruptcy, it has come near to destroying the old breed of horses. The "standard bred" trotting horse is a mongrel, composed of trotting, running, pacing blood, the "standard" being the ability to cover a mile in 2½ minutes,—either the animal himself or enough of his kin to admit him to the registry—no matter how he does it so he does not run. It has therefore come about that no man who breeds within the lines of "the standard" has any assurance what he will get. He may either find he has bred a pacer or a trotter, or one that trots in front and runs behind. After spending a few hundred dollars on his colt

he may find the animal cannot go fast enough at either gait to have any value for speed, even though covered with boots, toe-weights, hobbles, a pole to make him go straight behind, another at his head to make him drive straight, a visor over his nose, a machine to control his mouth connected with a check to pull up his head. All these appliances, and more, were seen on the track at the late Vermont State Fair; and the pacing races outnumber the trotting classes in the proportion of about three to two. Probably all these animals

"they will lose some of their compactness, "become more leggy and 'rangy,' and lack "the stamina of the true Morgan. The "general business qualities of the Morgan "are what give him his great value. His "admirable traveling gait, and his stout- "ness, courage, and endurance, are what is "wanted for the road. It is not wise, "therefore, to attempt to make him the "fastest horse in the world, for in doing "this we shall be very likely to lose sight "of qualities far more important than the "ability to trot a mile in 2m. 30s."



Willoughby Morgan, one of the best horses on the grounds.

Owned by H. D. Beebe, Westmore, Barton, Vt.

were "standard bred" trotters. If they cannot, after years of money spent on them, go better than 2:20, they are worth less than \$100 a piece, for they are useless for any purpose.

Again to quote Linsley, note this prophecy written forty-four years ago: "If animals are selected for breeding which can "make best time for a mile, we think the "tendency will be to depreciate the value "of the breed. Bred for that one purpose,

It is a pity that the limits of a magazine article make it impossible to quote the whole of page 207, *et. seq.*, of Linsley's Premium essay on Morgan Horses. Had he been able to look into the future he could not more perfectly have foretold the result of the *craze for speed* on this most valuable horse ever owned by man, outside the horses of the desert.

The writer was bitten by the speed microbe some years since, but made an early



MORGAN HERD. YOUNG GEN. GIFFORD AND FAMILY.

Young Gen. Gifford took first prize as a Morgan stallion with get. Willoughby Morgan, the second in line, is an old-time Morgan and took first prize on 4-years-old and over, without stock, shown to bridle.

recovery. So long ago as 1890 he printed the following statistics in advertising a little Morgan horse for public service. Since that time the matter has not had sufficient interest to invite his investigation, though some other person may care to compare results with those I then found.

"There were about 8,000 animals in training during the season of 1889, to compete for the purses offered for trotting horses in this country. The list of their names alone, occupied over 48 pages of closely printed matter in Wallace's Monthly for February 1890. Of this number 800 new ones got records of 2:30 or better. Less than a dozen won \$5,000 and above; and it is safe to say that 5,000 horses were in training during the season of 1889, who won nothing at all, their training expenses and entrance fees were a dead loss to their owners."

This unholy waste of money has gone on for nearly thirty years since that time, increasing from year to year. Add to this the constant depreciation in value—selling value—of the horses produced, and the millions spent by rich fanciers in extensive breeding establishments that have resulted in disappointment and been closed out at a loss, and one hundred millions of dollars will not begin to represent the cost to the American people of the "2:30 Standard," and the *crave for speed*. This was foreseen by Linsley, though even he could

not have appreciated the full measure of expense involved in the folly.

Happily the American people are not all fools. Sometimes it requires hard knocks to make us learn, but we learn in the end. So, today, we see men of means turning their attention to breeding horses for quality, not for speed. The proprietor of the Mountain View Farm at East Burke, Vt. is of this number, and it was a pleasure to see the animals he sent to the Vermont State Fair of 1908.

Others show a disposition to follow his example. Let us hope that within another decade we may see a healthful rivalry of these gentlemen, bringing together at the annual exhibitions a collection of Morgan horses that will attract visitors from the ends of the earth. That this outcome is more than probable is indicated in a letter from a New York gentleman of means, dated October 2, 1908, in which he says—
"In order to encourage the breeding of the old time Morgan horses in Vermont, I should like to give some cup or money prize. To accomplish this result, for what breeder's class would you advise my giving this inducement, and is there any better fair than the State Fair in Vermont?"

As I give no name, my quotation is no violation of confidence. He is, however, sufficiently interested to have bought a fine, young stallion, more than sixty times inbred to Justin Morgan, through the old

lines, Hale's Green Mountain Morgan, Billy Root, Comet, Billy Boudette, etc., and with no trace of Hambletonian, Abdallah, pacing or other accursed blood to stain his pedigree, a pure Morgan, more nearly thoroughbred in Morgan lines than O'Kelley's Eclipse was as a horse of eastern antecedents. This horse, and three or four good Morgan mares of the old type, he is leaving in Vermont as the nucleus of a stud, and he is not the only one acting on similiar lines.

Just here it may be proper to consider what contributed to the establishment of this valuable breed of horses. Two influences were certainly operative.

First, of course, was blood. Secondly, and closely following blood in importance, was environment.

The origin of Justin Morgan has been the occasion for long discussion and controversy. It is purely an Academic question, and has no importance at the present time. We should remember that when he was foaled, in 1798 there was no stud book of any kind in existence, the first ever compiled, that issued by the English Jockey Club, was not published till another ten years had passed, in 1808. So, whatever his blood, for all practical purposes, Justin Morgan was ADAM for the Morgan breed. It was the superlative worth of the Morgan horse, that has caused as full records of the pedigrees of the family as exist to have been preserved. And it is a tribute to his character that we have so much as now exists, in view of the fact

that the Morgan horse never was used as a gambling instrument, never gained his reputation in public contests for money. It was the *quality* of the Morgan horse that caused the Vermont State Agricultural Society to offer a premium for the best account of the breed, and award that premium to D. C. Linsley of Middlebury in January 1856. In that essay are preserved the pedigrees of about 230 Morgan horses. When we consider the difficulty of communication in those days, we realize the amount of labor, purely a labor of love that Linsley must have put into his investigations, and should suitably appreciate the value of his work.

Hardly less important than blood influences, must be considered the environment that produced the Morgan horse. If he started with good blood, he also was developed by the conditions by which he was surrounded. Clear and bracing air, good water, well charged with lime, pasturage on steep hillsides, all these gave him big lungs, sound legs, well developed muscles. Constant association with men of hardy constitution, who had to gain their living from a soil that yielded returns only to the industrious, men who were not enervated by luxurious living, gave the Morgan horse courage, intelligence, willingness to do his share of work, since animals are undoubtedly partakers of the characteristics of men with whom they associate. It was a case of survival of the fittest both with the men and the horses,



Shetland Ponies. Stallion, mares and foal. Muckcross Park, Springfield, Vt.

When Messrs. Brown & Woolson get their plans completed you can buy your ponies in Vermont.

where lazy or unsound men or horses must go to the wall.

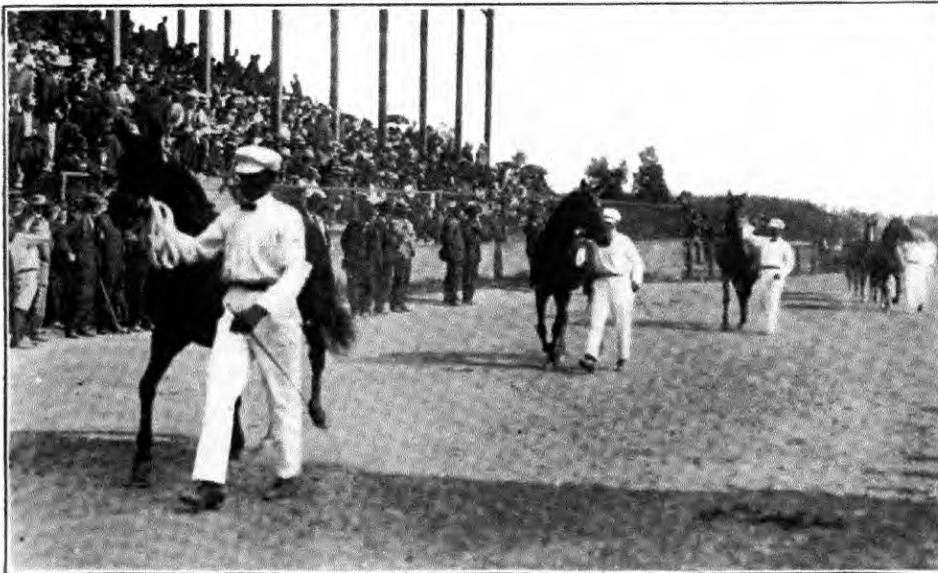
It is fitting, then, that when the undertaking is inaugurated for the regeneration of the Morgan horse, the effort should be made, not only to secure proper representatives of the old breed, but, also, the breeding venture should be made in the same environments of place and condition that produced that breed.

At this point it may be only fair to consider the action of the United States Department of Agriculture, taken at the suggestion of the late Senator Proctor, for the re-establishment of the Morgan breed. Many people,—the writer one of the number—while fully sympathizing with the movement, look upon the manner in which it has been carried out as most unfortunate. The only excuse for the appropriation of money raised by taxation, is that it should produce results of benefit to the whole people. The undertaking to create a new breed of horses at public expense is absolutely inexcusable. Such experiments are proper for individuals, not for governments. The desirability of a type once established, the problem of breeding generations enough to establish that type must cover not less than fifty years. Admitting that the horse being bred at the Government stud is something we need—and even that is a matter of opinion that

only time can test—does anyone believe that in the changes inseparable from our political system, the ideas of the organizers of the Government stud will be continued for twenty years or even ten years? The experiment is doomed to failure from its inception.

And it ought to fail. It is not doing what it started to do, namely, to breed Morgan horses. The head of the stud is General Gates, a horse that can make no pretense to being more than a half bred Morgan, as his dam was by a running horse, his grand dam a pacing mare. What would people think of a man who advertised that he was breeding Arabs, whose stallion was by an Arab, the dam by a Percheron, the grand dam a Hackney mare? Or, what would Guernsey breeders say to a man who pretended to breed Guernsey cattle, whose bull was son of a Guernsey, his dam by a Holstein, his grand dam a Short Horn?

No! Gen. Gates is a mongrel, and can never produce anything but mongrels. You may say he is a fine horse, but that is not the question; and people who want the kind of front legs on their colts that Gen. Gates has, may have them, the writer would avoid them if possible. The discussion of his merits as a horse, however, is quite aside from the issue. Booker T. Washington is one of the great men of our day,



The Much Vaunted "Government Morgans."

intellectually and morally. Yet, no one in his senses would seek to perpetuate a race of Mulattoes.

So, with the mares of the Government stud. The writer saw but one Morgan mare in the lot, she a late acquisition from the neighborhood of St. Johnsbury. If the United States Government can breed Morgans by using a half bred Morgan horse,—not of the best Morgan strains at that—on Kentucky saddle mares, Hackneys, and “standard bred trotters,” they possess a secret unknown to all other breeders. One trouble was in the advertisement by which they procured their mares at the beginning. When the specification demanded a height of 15.2 for the mares, it very nearly excluded all true Morgans.

The American Farmer's Encyclopedia, published in Philadelphia in 1844 says: “Perhaps the very finest breed of horses in the United States, when general usefulness is taken into consideration, is what is generally known in the Northern and Eastern States as the Morgan horse. This breed is distinguished by its activity, united with strength and hardiness. Its size is moderate, and though not often possessing the fleetness which recommends it to the sportsman, it has speed enough to entitle it to the appellation of a fast traveler. Their usual height is from fourteen to fifteen hands.” etc. etc.

The fact of the matter is, that if the U. S. Department of Agriculture has ever had a man connected with the Bureau of Animal Industry, who could tell the difference between a horse and a mule excepting by examining the length of the animal's ears, the man so endowed has been kept in the background. This Government Morgan Stud, and that in Colorado, where it is being undertaken to breed “Heavy Harness Horses,” by crossing a “standard bred” stud horse from Tom. Lawson's four-in-hand team, on cow pony mares, are enterprises to make a patriot weep. “Heavy Harness Horses!” There is no such breed. The very name of the type originated with the Anglo-Maniacs of the Madison Square Garden Horse Show, where all kinds of animals are entered in the “heavy harness” classes, trotters that cannot trot fast enough to race, hackneys, undergrown French and German Coachers, anything that can trot up and down, though not much ahead. Cut off their tails, let their toes grow so long the horse

would break down on a good road, put two pounds of iron on each front foot, jerk up their heads, and they become “heavy harness horses.”

However, “let us return to our muttons!”

That the old Morgans are not all dead was apparent to any visitor to the Vermont State Fair of 1908, at White River Junction. There were seen true representatives of the old type, and full of the old blood, animals inbred many times to Hale's Green



Rex, by Denning Allen.

Morgan stallion owned by E. A. Darling, East Burke.
Won first prize at Pan American, Buffalo.
Second prize Vt. State Fair, 1906.

Mountain Morgan, Peter's Morgan, Ethan Allen, Billy Root, Ide's Black Morgan, Comet, Billy Boudette, Morgan Lion, The Batchelder Horse, and many others that stand for Morgan blood *and nothing else.*

The Black Hawk branch of the family was represented by a most beautiful horse, Rex, from Mountain View Farm. There can be no chance therefore of personal bias because of ownership having influenced the decision when it was Lyndon, from the same farm, that was preferred before him as the true old Morgan type. It was also a personal triumph, long time delayed, for E. H. Hoffman, of Lyndon, breeder of Lyndon, a man who for more than a quarter century has allowed nothing to turn his devotion from the *old Morgan horse*, a man who probably knows more about Morgans, their blood lines, characteristics, and the location of representative examples of the breed, than any man living.

May the time be near at hand when people may see such a sight as that described by Allen W. Thomson, in his *Horses of*

Windsor County, and the History of the Windsor County Fair, with which description this contribution to THE VERMONTER may well come to an end:

"The first State Fair was held this year (1851) at Middlebury. There were some seventy-five of the sons and daughters of old Black Hawk to follow him around the track. It was a magnificent sight. Yet the little horse Flying Morgan had the foot of them, as he easily beat their fastest one, Cleopatra, in two heats, to the great chagrin of the Black Hawk party.

"The second State Fair was held at Rutland in 1852. The great rivalry then existing between the owners of the Morgans and Black Hawks caused them to bring their horses out in full force. It was a grand and imposing sight, the finest, then, that had been seen in Vermont; and it is doubtful if there has been a finer one in the State since. Both sides called the Black Hawks, Morgans. Yet there

"was as plain a difference in the looks, shape, size, color, and travel of the two breeds as there is between the small Arabian horse and the large English racer. The Black Hawks were more rangy built than the Morgans, averaged much larger, as many of them were sixteen hands high, and weighed over 1100 pounds. They average much faster than the Morgans. They were genteel, handsome, showy carriage horses, and very nice drivers.

"To give the spectators a chance to see the characteristics of the two breeds of horses, they were shown on the track together. Old Black Hawk was at the head of the Black Hawks, and ridden by his owner, Mr. Hill; and old Green Mountain was at the head of the Morgans, and ridden by his owner, Mr. Hale, and the two cavalcades went around the track side by side. It was a grand sight. It was the greatest show of genuine Morgans that was ever seen."



"Dandy Lambert," owned by J. W. Davis, Fairlee, Vt.
Blue ribbon winner at the State Fair of 1907.



A GROUP OF PROMINENT VERMONTERS AT THE FAIR.

Frank L. Greene,
Editor St. Albans Messenger.

Fletcher D. Proctor,
Our retiring Governor.

George H. Prouty,
Our present Governor

Olin Merrill,
of Enosburg Falls.

Kittredge Haskins,
Ex-Congressman.