

SHOW RING STABLES OF CANADA

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horses; his show ring interest is centred in the hackney and in the past two years his horses have become widely known to show patrons in Canada and the United States.

Mr. Franceschini's estate, known as *Myrtle Villa*, stands to the south of the Toronto-Hamilton highway. The large stone house, screened by trees, is approached by a sweeping drive and not until one reaches the end of this drive does one realize the immensity of the grounds. As a matter of fact, they reach a full five hundred yards from the main entrance to where the waters of Lake Ontario lave the southernmost limit.

The stables lie south-east of the house. All around them, but more particularly to the west and south, the grounds are laid out with all the skill of the landscape gardener's art. A grotto here, and there a rose garden, and a little farther a winding walk, and beyond again a great expanse of mossy turf on which giant trees keep sentinel and shield the house from the rigors of a lake gale. Truly, a veritable fairyland. More so at night, for huge lights are installed in the trees. On the west side of the house is a macadamized track, rectangular in shape, which forms the exercise ground for the high-steppers in this establishment. This track is also lighted up by an ingenious system, so that the horses can be driven as well by night as in the glare of the noon sun. It is a fact worthy of record that these spacious and splendidly maintained grounds are open to the public daily to wander through and admire the beauties they contain. The only stipulation is that visitors must leave before nightfall, politely-worded signs to that effect being posted at various vantage points. The stables are well planned and commodious. The inevitable tack room is in the centre of the building and it was here that we met Mr. Charles Purvis, the stable manager, who on this occasion performed the role of cicerone. The first object that came into view inside the big harness-room was a huge showcase, in which the 'spoils' of many exhibitions are displayed. Among them were no less than twenty-seven grand championships and championships, a wonderful record to be achieved in the short space of two years.

From the tack room we passed through a convenient door to the stable proper in which nine harness kings are quartered, each in a roomy stall. Placid looking fellows, most of them, with silky coats polished to a mirror-like glossiness bespeaking much for the care that is bestowed on them. Some names to conjure with, here. *Temptation* and *Myrtle Fashion*; *Preston Mavis* and *Ceylon Duchess*—singly, paired, in tandems and in fours, these splendid steppers have gathered in ribbon after ribbon at all the major shows. Sometimes they have had to battle long and strenuously before victory came; sometimes they have been selected for honors after a few turns around the ring; sometimes, though rarely, they have tasted the bitters of defeat; but the extent of their prowess is best judged by that showcase in the tack-room and by the records of show ring officials. But more of this quartette later.

Let us visit a horse in a far stall, whose name is familiar to every lover of the oldtime roadster. *Zombro Clay*, it is. Champion of champions in his

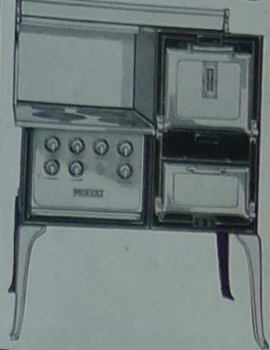
day, and though he is going on for sixteen years, his day is a long way from being over. Mark what he did at the recent show at the Canadian National Exhibition, where he won a grand premier ribbons and a couple of other bon he won for Mr. T. A. Crow, his former owner. Won them at Cobourg that show brought out the best harness types on the continent. Time and again, this handsome dark brown stallion has dazzled spectators with his speed and dynamic action. How he throws out his forelegs; how he propels himself on his swift way with his powerful hocks! Not many roadsters have the splendid action of this horse. None, that the writer knows of, has reaped such an abundant harvest of ribbons in its show-ring career. One of our great Canadian horses is this dark-coated standard-bred stallion, who stands a shade under 15.2, who carries himself with the gait of a Caesar, and, who, despite his age, never yet has been beaten when shown on the line.

Temptation, a handsome bay, has been a marked favorite with judges and spectators at our shows. He possesses a fine knee action and goes well from the hocks. A fast traveller, too, but fast as he may travel, seldom does he 'break,' even in the limited arenas of some show rings. *Temptation* performs equally well in company and singly. He is a leader in Mr. Franceschini's over 15.2 tandem, and acts as one of the leaders in the four-in-hands. *Myrtle Fashion* matches *Temptation* in size, color and points. Imported a year ago from England, he made his Canadian debut at the 1926 Royal Winter Fair. There he was pitted against the famous Lord *Brilliant*, owned by Miss *Viau*, the Montreal show ring enthusiast. The conditions of the contest called for horses to be shown singly in a phaeton, with a lady to act as reinswoman. There were some withdrawals, so that the contest resolved itself into a duel between Lord *Brilliant* and Mr. Franceschini's stepper. Duel, it was, indeed! Round and around the Coliseum went the two premier actors, and the crowd sensing that the judges were at a temporary loss to decide which was the better, roared themselves hoarse. Eventually, after a prolonged deliberation between the three officials, the honors went to the Montreal entry.

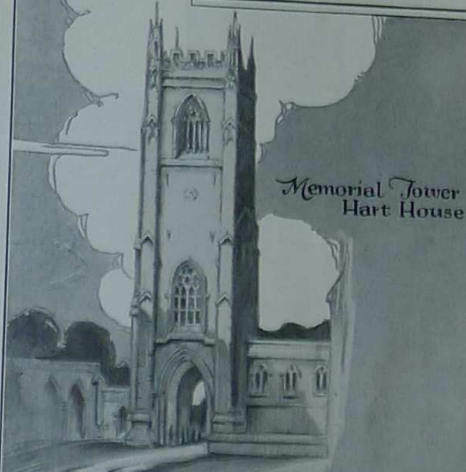
But this summer came a reversal of this decision. It came at the Ottawa Show where *Myrtle Fashion* once again met his doughty rival, and this time beat him. It was the first occasion in some years on which Miss *Viau*'s splendid harness performer had been relegated to secondary honors, and the news created considerable stir in the world where the horse rules as king. Opinions always differ when some equine champion is displaced by a lesser known rival. They always will differ, but the writer has been assured that, on this occasion, the official arbiter made no mistake. Time will show whether his verdict will stand. In fact, within a day or so after this issue of *Mayfair* is being read, this pair will again meet in the tanbark arena at the Royal Coliseum, Toronto. Whatever the result, nothing can take away the fact, that *Myrtle Fashion* is as horsemen say, 'all horse.' [See also page 50]

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