

England

inlämnat år 1952

I var i LMF 85 rör hästhöft och hästslakt m. m.

(acc. nr. utg. av en br)

PRINTED PAPER



La Etnologia Arkivo
La Universitato de Lund

(60)

Finnigatan 8.
LUND Sweden.

FRASER.
2/1/52
LADY HELEN ST. KIRKCADY. FIFE. BRITAIN

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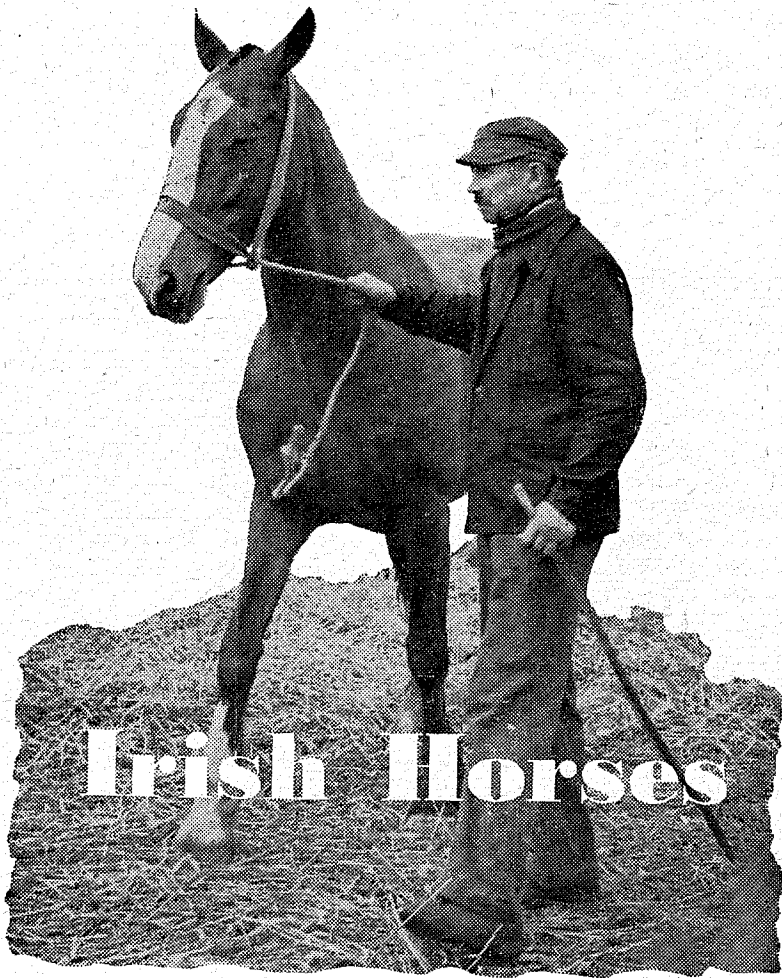
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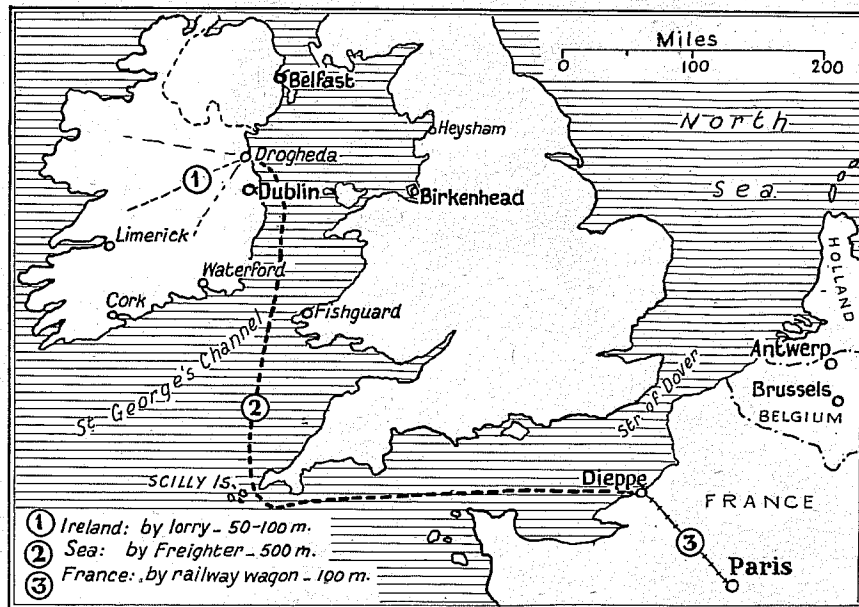
The Traffic in



Irish Horses

A series of articles by PATRICK KEATLEY, special correspondent of the "Manchester Guardian," giving a factual, first-hand account of a trade that has aroused protests in Ireland and Great Britain. The articles appeared in the "Manchester Guardian" in June, 1952.

Price 6d.



Route of Minstrel Girl's 700-mile journey to slaughter. Also shown are the other shipping and receiving ports in the Irish horse trade.

THE TRAFFIC IN IRISH HORSES

FROM GALWAY TO PARIS

A 700-Mile Journey to Slaughter

[Many people have been disturbed by the growing traffic in live horses and donkeys for slaughter on the Continent, and sometimes in this country. Animal slaughter is not pleasant to contemplate, but a meat-eating community must not be sentimental about it. There is evidence, however, that the Irish traffic, now between twenty thousand and thirty-five thousand horses a year, is accompanied by needless cruelty and avoidable suffering. A strong movement of protest has arisen in Eire, but the Government has refused to check the traffic.]

In this and succeeding articles a member of the staff of the "Manchester Guardian" gives the results of his investigations in Ireland and France.]

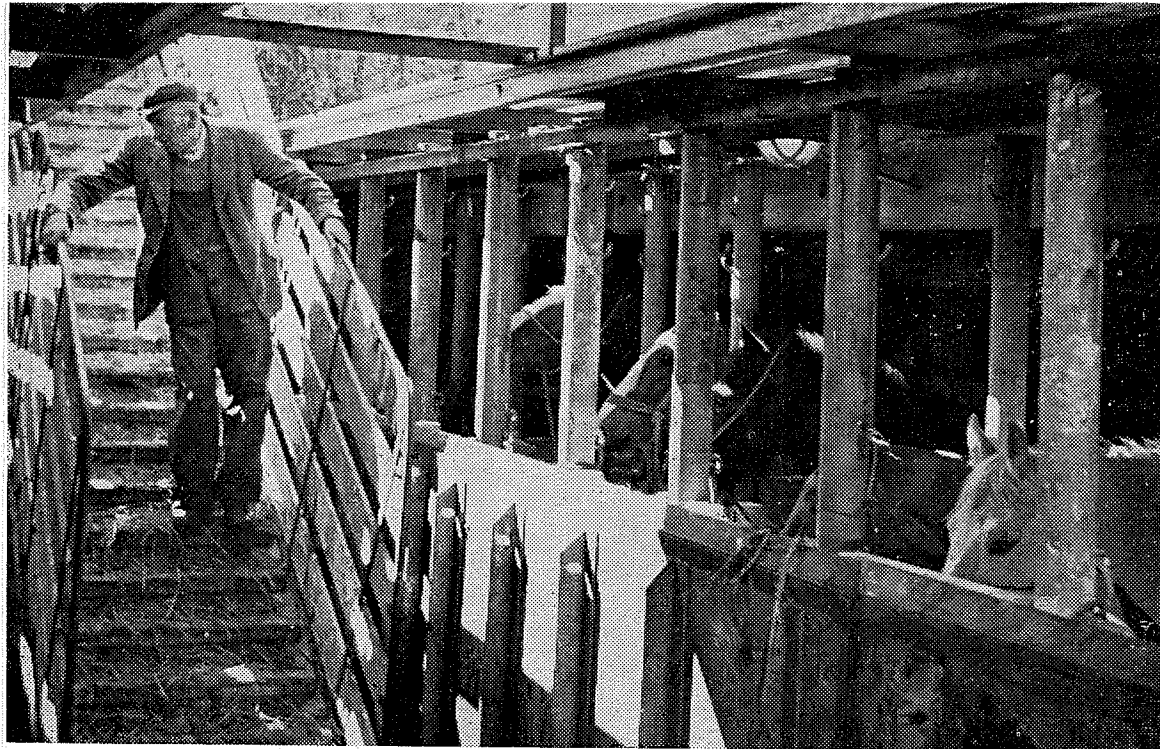
PARIS, JUNE.

At 10 43 on a sunny morning here a few days ago the crumpled form of a little black Irish mare twitched in the swelling pool of her own blood on an abattoir floor. Then, abruptly, there was a final shudder and she lay still. For Minstrel Girl it was the end of the trail, an agonising trail that had begun in County Galway five days and 700 miles ago. Or was it quite the end? They had said that the captive-bolt killer was almost instantaneous, but her eyes were still bright and wide open as a lanky French butcher in a spattered smock that had once been white reached for the long knife that swung from his belt. There was the bright flash of steel in the sunlight; then a sudden cascade of rich crimson spouting from the jagged slash in the little mare's throat.

The laconic Frenchman in Stall 16 went swiftly about his business. He reached for a flat, circular pan and flicked it into place, catching the cataract from the horse's jugular vein. It filled in less than a minute. As he transferred the crimson contents to a waiting wooden churn he used the toe of his clog to nudge a second pan into place on the slippery concrete floor. That was the moment when Minstrel Girl made her final, shuddering movement. Her forelegs stiffened and trembled; for an instant her head lifted into the air, and then it was down and twitching in the brimming pan of her own blood. And then suddenly it stopped moving; one eye sank from view into the liquid; the other gazed skyward sightless as it clouded over gradually.

THE LAST DAYS

It is the reporter's job to write about what he sees as factually and with as little emotion as possible, and



The 60-hour voyage from Drogheda to Dieppe—no exercise, little sleep, and sea-sickness, which with horses takes the form of blinding headaches.

this I have tried to do. To the best of my ability I have traced the five final days of this little black Irish mare and 106 of her companions as they journeyed from their native western heath by lorry, boat, and railway wagon to death on the unfamiliar cobbles of a great slaughterhouse in a strange land. Minstrel Girl was still a high-spirited horse with many good years of service ahead of her when she clomped up the unfamiliar wooden gangplank of a Dutch motorship at Drogheda and was led to a stall on the deck below. The faint saddle-mark on her glossy black coat showed that she was used to a certain amount of care and affection. There was intelligence in her dark, wide-set eyes, and when one of the deckhands gave her an affectionate pat on the neck she responded by thrusting a soft, inquiring nose towards the breast pocket where she was used to finding a lump of sugar.

What Minstrel Girl and her 106 companions aboard ship could not know was that already, even now, they had lost their individual identity, just as they had lost touch with the familiar green farmland many miles to the west where they had spent the past ten, twelve, or fifteen years. Last

year this boat and others like it had carried 10,397 Minstrel Girls from Eire to France. Another 9,000 had gone to Belgium. It was to observe the conditions of this trade that I had managed to get myself on board one of the animal-carrying freight ships.

There was not much opportunity for Minstrel Girl to exercise on the day of going aboard. The big lorry had come in the morning and then there had been the 85-mile ride from County Galway to the sea. Now the little mare found herself in a stall about seven feet long and seven feet high, with breast boards and haunch boards to help in case of rough weather. Before coming on board she and her companions had been inspected—impartially and thoroughly—by a veterinary surgeon of the Eire Department of Agriculture, who was himself a kindly man and fond of horses. Her stall in the hold of the Dutch motorship conformed to the highest international standards laid down for such things, and conditions were excellent. There had been a moment of confusion on the dock after the vet had passed her as being healthy and someone had reached up to stamp her on the forehead with an indelible mark, but the drovers who

led her on board were kind, and now there were seven cattle hands—Irishmen—on the ship who spoke to her softly in accents she understood and brought her food and water.

Just after nine-thirty the little freighter slipped her spring line and glided quietly down the estuary of the Boyne, with only the slightest ripple on the water. The weather next morning was a violent contrast. From my makeshift bed on the starboard settee in the saloon I peered for'rd through the spray-flecked glass of a porthole. It was a wild, grey day with spume flying from the crests of the combers that came driving up St George's Channel. The 190-foot vessel shuddered and rolled, and before I had finished dressing I was seasick. It was as if the Irish Sea was out to prove that it had nothing to learn from the English Channel, and it was four hours and five seasick tablets later before I was able to drag myself out on deck.

The hatches had been left off the opening of the holds to provide fresh air for the animals below, and the mixed odours of hay and manure now blended with the sea breeze. I asked an officer if he would come below with me but he refused. "No thanks," he said with a wry smile. "I never go down there on these trips. We know they are there, but we prefer not to think about it." He pointed out, however, that our speed had been reduced from the normal 13 knots to less than five.

A KINDLY SKIPPER

"This ship is built to take about a thousand tons of cargo," he went on. "With that we would ride much better in this heavy sea; but the horses, and the cattle on the deck below them, only make some two hundred tons altogether. So we reduce speed. Mind you, we could still go faster than this, but the captain does not wish to injure the animals."

As I was not regarded by anyone aboard as anything but a casual traveller looking for a cheap way to get to France I took these and other remarks at face value. I learned that the captain, a young jolly Dutchman, who sketches for a hobby and enjoys the genuine affection of his crew, is

a humane man who does what he can to mitigate the conditions of the trip for his live cargo. In case of extremely heavy weather he shelters in the lee of an island or peninsula. To-day was just a "normal" piece of heavy weather, and much less severe than what is encountered in winter. I was told of one trip last winter when two horses succumbed to the chief hazard of the 500-mile voyage, colic. It was almost with tears in his eyes that the captain took pistol in hand and went below to put them out of their misery.

BIG BUSINESS

The cattle hands talked freely of their job and what they thought of it. Several were sitting near the wooden gangway leading down to the horse deck through the open hatch. I was still shaky, but by grasping on to ropes and rails I forced my legs to carry me across the heaving deck to where they sat taking the air. A sweet, sickly stench rose from below. The men informed me that there were seven of them this trip, three more than the ratio of one man to 25 horses required by regulation. Further, all the horses had been given a "shot" before the ship sailed, to reduce the effects of the rough seas which had been expected. The effect would wear off in about another 12 to 24 hours. The men regarded this as a humane measure and said that not all the horse-exporting firms went to the expense of doing it. "It's because Teddy's a horse-breeder himself," said one man. "He's got a fine big place outside Dublin and many a fine hunter on it." I asked who "Teddy" was, and by way of answer one cattleman jerked a pipe in the direction of the ship's funnel. Three metal letters were fixed to it as an insignia, and I learned these were the initials of one of the big dealers in "the trade."

"Teddy's chartered this ship for three years," remarked a cattleman. "Gives you some idea of how big this business is getting to be nowadays. Brings a lot of money to Ireland."

"Yes, and the devil of a dribble of it to us, surely," put in a companion, tartly. "Here's ourselves getting only fifteen quid a week and the Frenchies and some of the others getting twenty." In the ensuing discussion I learned that £15 was standard pay for

a five-day week, but some foreign drovers were asking and getting an extra £5 as "deep sea bonus."

I was having a little trouble with my stomach during this conversation and interrupted to ask how the horses would be making out. The men pointed out that a horse's stomach and gullet are such that the animal cannot vomit, but it shows its sickness through such signs as drooping head, sagging tail, and profuse watering of the eyes. The dreaded

colic comes from the combination of motion, close quarters, and the upset in the normal routine of feeding. But the hands agreed that the most debilitating feature of the whole trip was the unnatural confinement. This started for Minstrel Girl and her companions on a Friday morning in Galway; it would be broken by a fifty-yard walk to the railway wagon at Dieppe; and would not end until the big lorries rumbled into the abattoir in a Paris suburb the following Tuesday.

96 HOURS WITHOUT SLEEP

The Journey's Last Cruel Stages

PARIS.

It was just over sixty hours since they had embarked at Drogheda when the first of the Irish horses started up the wooden ramp on Monday morning at 8 30 and trotted obediently on to the cobbled quay at Dieppe.

Most of the animals seemed exhausted after their virtually sleepless passage, and perhaps this and the general strangeness of their surroundings accounted for the slowness of their responses. French stevedores had taken over from the Irish cattle drovers, and their technique had more roughness and less patience. Hesitancy was treated as stupidity and each man carried a short stick that he used when he thought necessary. The line of horses passed singly before an inspection table and were examined by a French vet; then they were loaded in batches of thirteen and fourteen into a line of waiting railway wagons drawn up on a siding. There seemed to be no particular method in the way these batches were made up, with the result that huge draft horses, light racers, well-bred hacks, and tired old scrawny farm animals were all loaded holus-bolus into the same van.

In the course of travelling with the horses I had been keeping an eye on a little black mare named Minstrel Girl. The wagon she entered had been bolted and sealed, and there now came from inside it an odd sort of

scuffling sound which started quietly in one corner and then spread in whinnying, bangs, and thumps. Then there came two tremendous whacks from heavy hooves striking the walls of the van and little puffs of dust spurted between the wooden slats about three feet above the floor. Then silence; and five minutes later the whole performance began again.

A TERRIFIED STRUGGLE

By 9 30 the last of the wagons was loaded and the officials had finished sticking labels and seals on the doors and sides, so I was able to walk over to the track. The same scuffle-and-thump sounds were now coming from all eight wagons, so I take what I saw in one of them to be typical. Minstrel Girl was standing over in one corner, her black flanks trembling. At one end of the compartment a small grey horse was scuffling with its neighbour. Suddenly it turned and bolted blindly for the other end of the car, shouldering its way between the other jam-packed animals. At the far end it slammed recklessly into a great grey-and-white draft horse, which responded by rearing up, then viciously whacking two steel-shod hooves simultaneously against the wooden slats. This performance continued, accompanied by snorts and whinnies from the other horses.

which now tried to nip at one another. Then one horse made a bad mistake: it moved just as the big draft horse got ready to kick and it took the full force of the vicious hooves on its chest and side. For a moment it looked as if it were about to fall, but it rallied and then bolted to the other end of the car. Half an hour later when I climbed up the side of the van again there were two more casualties: a chestnut with an ugly streak of blood on its forehead and another with a fresh cut on its nose.

Another French Government official came by, and I was able to learn the approximate time-table and routing of the shipment. He was not unsympathetic—"Eight wagonloads of misery" he called it in his descriptive French phrase—and he estimated that the vans would sit on the Dieppe siding until the regular goods engine came at either 3 or 6 p.m. As it was at this time still an hour before noon and the heat waves were already shimmering off the roofs of the vans I hoped that for their sakes the horses had had a last drink aboard ship. There would be neither food nor water now until to-morrow morning.

But perhaps the cruellest thing of all had been the lack of sleep. A drover on the ship took me down to the stalls and pointed out how the fretful animals never ceased to nip at one another. Day and night this went on—nip, nip, nip—so that the individual horse could sleep only in brief intervals of one or two minutes each. Light bulbs burned all night overhead to prevent panic. But there would be no light in the railway cars, and when the horses reached the abattoir they would have been travelling for 96 hours, virtually without sleep.

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

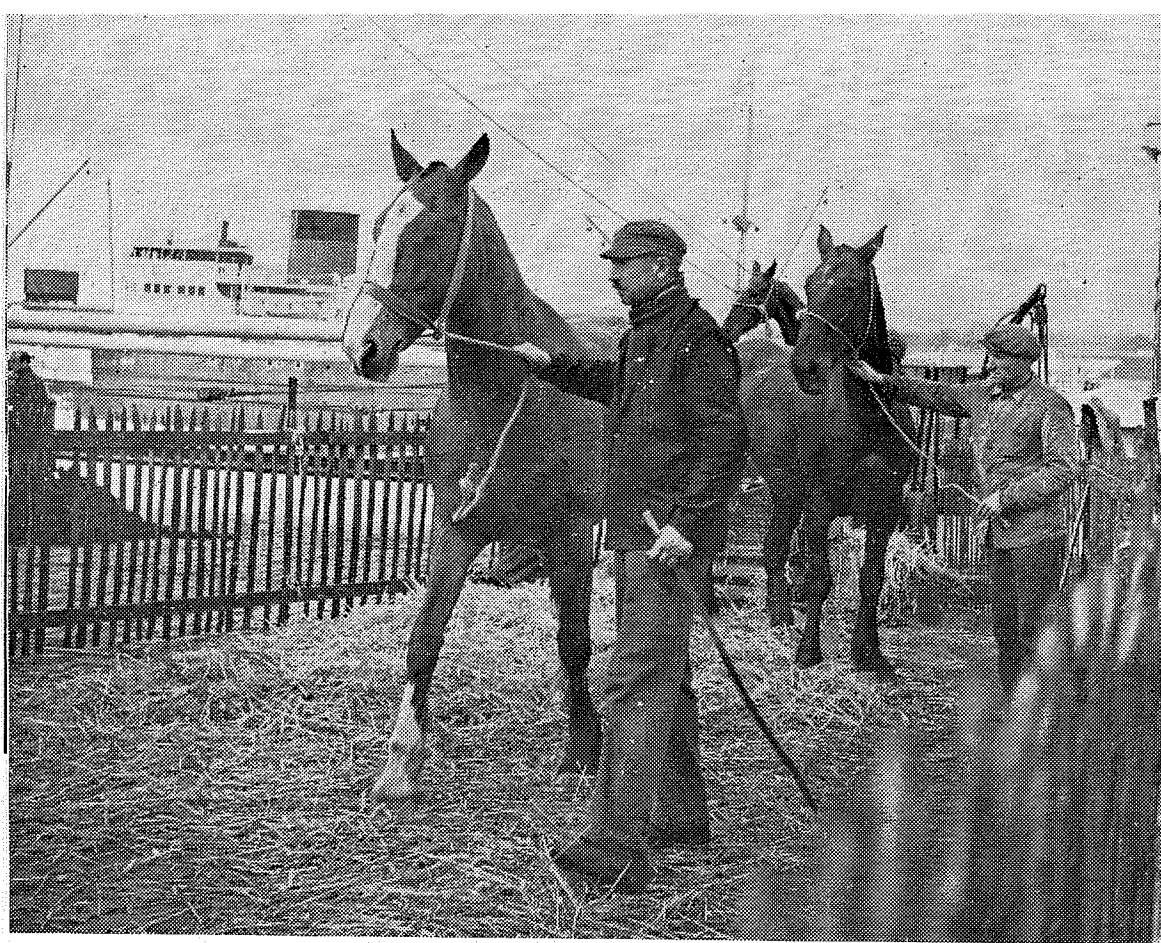
Reaching Paris I found that the vans would pass through Customs in the Batignolles goods yards at dawn. The animals were unloaded and herded along roughly into motor lorries, which now rumbled away into the city. I learned that Minstrel Girl and her companions had been dispatched to the huge slaughterhouses at Vaugirard, in a depressing suburb in the south-west part of Paris. I arrived there in mid-morning to be greeted by an enormous metal sign high on the fortress-like walls which

proclaimed: "Les Abattoirs Hippophagiques. L'Entrée de l'Abattoir est Rigoureusement Interdite au Public."

Vaugirard is a vast sweep of cobbles and concrete in the middle of which are grouped the stables and slaughterhouses proper. The area, which is the size of half a dozen soccer fields, is protected by stone walls and iron spikes; a bastion affair at one corner accommodates a Préfecture de Police, and another police station is set up near the actual slaughter floor with windows looking in two directions. I contrived to gain admission, and eventually found my way to the stables, taking care to keep my camera out of sight by suspending it on a leather strap and buttoning it under my raincoat. I discovered that Minstrel Girl was near by, getting her first hay and water in almost twenty-four hours. She and her companions had been led in from the trucks, passing the following sequence of scenes as I saw them: a loading platform stacked with neatly folded moist hides, steaming in the sunshine; fresh hides just peeled from their owners with fat and blood still clinging and the face and snout formations still recognisable—these just six feet from where the Irish horses had to walk; and an open court where a large bay gelding was shuddering in its last agonies, a rush of crimson welling from its throat and its forelegs twitching in spasms.

The Irish horses were stabled in a long concrete building about thirty yards from the slaughter floor. On the breeze came to them the crack of the bolt-guns and the thud of falling bodies, the rasp of saws biting into bone, the crack of whips and the whinnying of frightened horses as their hooves scabbled to grip the blood-coated cobbles; and over it all hung the sweet, heavy odour of green manure and fresh blood. The unfortunate animals in the two end stalls were not only able to hear and smell these things; through the gaping doorway they could see it all as well, for they were a scant five yards away. I learned that Minstrel Girl and her companions were to be "put down" the following morning, and I did not envy them their last 24 hours on earth.

They say that one of the most ingenious inventions of the Nazi S.S. was the "double death"—the technique by which the victim was led to



Dieppe : Minstrel Girl is led to the railway wagon for the 20-hour trip, without food or water, to the Paris slaughter-yards.

the slaughter block, reprieved, and then led out again. At Vaugirard it may occur through botching, not intent, but the effect is the same. They brought Minstrel Girl out into the sunshine on a rope halter and led her towards Stall 16, where a burly fellow in blood-caked clogs was swilling down the concrete floor with a hose. The peeled corpse of a big draft horse was being worked on in a stall a few feet to her right as she passed by, and at that moment a French butcher raised a heavy cleaver and brought it down with practised skill on the animal's skull. There was a sort of hollow thwack and the skull split neatly in two. Minstrel Girl shied; instantly there was the stinging crack of a whip and she was back in place

THE LAST MOMENTS

In the gutter was the pathetic little corpse of a pony. It had been skinned,

but for some reason it now lay abandoned and partially crushed under the wheel of a big meat truck. The little Irish mare stepped around its bloody outstretched forelegs, then stopped as a French workman swung a pail and shouted, "Gare l'eau!" The slops—which proved to be the intestines of the previous occupant of the death floor—sailed through the gateway and fell with a splash into a great tub. The spray caught Minstrel Girl as well as myself, and on her black coat I saw the same yellowish drops that were now trickling down my macintosh.

The mare was whipped through the gateway and then turned about roughly to be backed into place. Five feet from her trembling nose and dilating eyes lay a frightful sight: a chestnut filly with its throat slit was pouring its life's blood into the Paris sunshine; one butcher was collecting

its blood in shallow pans, the other sat on the animal's inert hindquarters laconically sharpening his long steel knife. The two men were discussing next year's chances for France's Rugby team. In Stall 16 they raised the captive bolt killer to Minstrel Girl's forehead, but at that instant another man with a sheet of paper rushed in and started shouting angrily in rapid French. There was more cracking of the whip and the prospective victim was led back to the stable. It was half an hour later when she

reappeared, and it would be no exaggeration to describe her trembling as mortal terror, for that was precisely what it was. Again there was the procession past the dead and dying of her own kind, but this time with a variation: in the stall opposite the corpse was now skinned and lay upside down while two men with a saw were hacking open its chest. Minstrel Girl whinnied; then there was the crack of the captive bolt killer and she crumpled in a merciful heap on the wet floor.

THE ECONOMICS OF THE TRADE

Easy Money: Short-Sighted Policy

DUBLIN.

"The horse trade is a good thing for me and a good thing for Ireland, too. Anyhow, I'm making a thousand a week clear without turning a hand, and I'll not be taking too kindly to them that are trying to stop it." The speaker was the man they call "Mr Big" in the live horsemeat trade from Eire to the Continent. Down on the docks they call him "The Boss of the Pony Express." I did not have the privilege of hearing "Mr Big" in person, but his words were relayed to me by one who had, as we stood chatting at the North Wall dock on the Dublin waterfront and watched a consignment of 288 horses being loaded on a steamer for Antwerp.

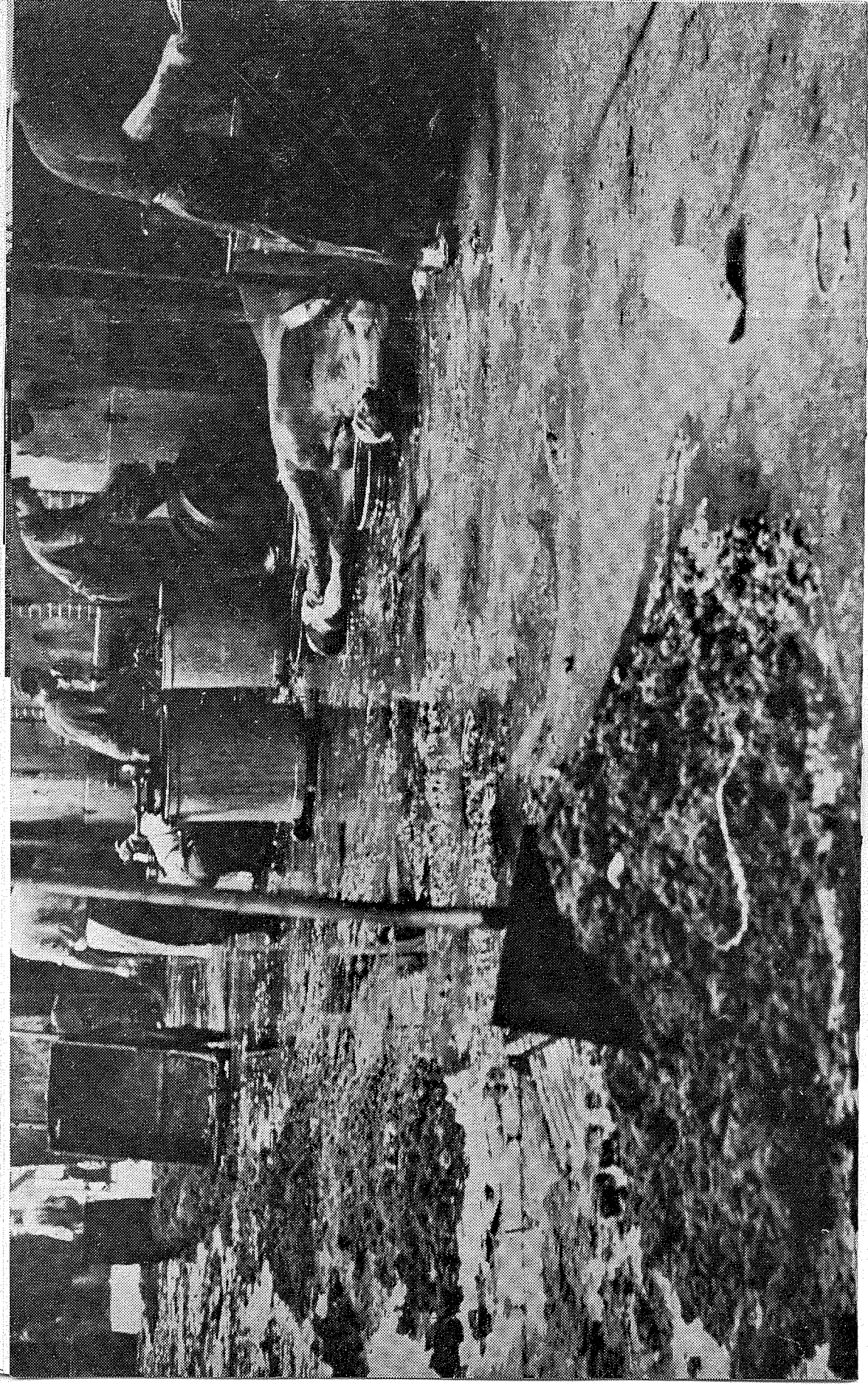
My informant was only one of some forty "middlemen" in the trade who round up horses by employing local agents to scour the country from Sligo to Cork on every highway and byway. A few yards away was parked the modest symbol of his success in the last two years of brisk trading—a shiny new English saloon. "Mr Big's" symbol, I learned, is a comfortable country estate outside the city and a healthy bank account. Before the war there used to be one or two boats a week from Ireland with about a

dozen horses on each. To-day the traffic is running at a weekly average of no fewer than 700 animals.

HORSE v. TRACTOR

Half a dozen sleek fat Clydesdale stallions clopped by in charge of a drover and went before the vet. at the ship's side, preparatory to mounting the loading ramp. They were broad-hipped animals in the prime of youth, fleshy and well groomed. The question in my mind must have been apparent in the expression on my face, for I felt my companion's hand on my arm.

"Here's your answer right now," he said, and I saw a sturdy, rubber-tyred tractor nudging a line of loaded railway wagons along a siding so that the horses could take their place on the cobbled dock. "Ireland is now the seventh largest tractor-owning nation in the world," he went on. "It's the little machines with the fork lift and auxiliary implements that have meant the death of the horse. Nowadays the young fellows won't take a job on a farm if it means handling horses; besides, a farmer can replace sixteen of them with one tractor and still do his work in half the time." The goods vans clattered past, revealing their load to be bar iron, sheet steel, sacked cement, and spare parts for cars and tractors—the goods Eire pays for with horses.



Not all Eire citizens are happy about what is going on. One of the most respected journalists in Dublin told me that he profoundly disagrees with what he calls the present short-sighted policy.

They're paying 250 and even 500 per cent over the pre-war price for animals (he said). The result is that the country is being cleaned out of horses, ponies, and donkeys at a reckless rate. If there's another war and petrol and oil are cut off we'll be crippled agriculturally. And take the farmers—especially those in the west, where some areas can never be tractor country—they used to buy a horse for £10, but now the "meat men" are paying £50, and they can't match that sort of price.

Several Dublin business men echoed something that this journalist told me. They said that, quite apart from any question of cruelty to animals, the present trade is a piece of short-sighted foolishness on two counts: (1) there is no conservation policy, so that the supply of horses may suddenly come to an abrupt end; and (2) a trade in carcass meat would provide employment in Ireland and net the country a tidy business in valuable by-products. The value of hides, bones, hooves, casings, and dried blood of the 35,000 horses now exported for slaughter abroad is in excess of £100,000 at present prices. Not one penny of this amount at present goes into Irish pockets. The French and Belgians skim it off. "Les Irlandais sont des imbeciles," said a French dealer recently, "ils ne comprennent pas la commerce."

UNECONOMIC

And it is surprising but true that the Irish horsemeat trade does not seem to be economically the most advantageous for the country. One Dublin "meat man"—a rough-and-ready fellow who showed no interest whatever in the cruelty issue—told me that if the Eire Government changed the law next week he would immediately embark on the business of chartering freighter aircraft to carry chilled and frozen horsemeat to Paris and Brussels. He reckons he could eliminate the costly ship charter, the seagoing drovers at £15 a trip, the rail haul, stabling, and feeding, and loss of weight sustained by live horses en route. In addition there would be the revenue from by-products; and he estimates that he

could increase his net profits by 25 per cent. He is not the only one who has considered this. In Dieppe I learned that an Antwerp group is prepared to lay out considerable capital to enter the air freight business in chilled Irish horsemeat.

In face of these baffling economics I sought to get what figures are available. The following were obtained from the offices of the Eire Ministry of Agriculture and the United Kingdom Department of Customs and Excise and check with a count kept by the International League for the Protection of Horses:

	HORSES.	VALUE.
1949	29,331	£2,949,394
1950	22,488	£3,128,486
1951	35,740	?

These are the figures for all Irish horses sent to export markets—excluding racehorses. It can be assumed that 95 per cent of them went for slaughter, although the Eire authorities maintain on paper the fiction that they are exported "for work purposes." It is interesting that France and Belgium took a total of 8,078 in 1950 and no fewer than 19,552 in 1951.

There is one way in which the present state of the trade can be said to make sense, and that is from the point of view of the clique who control and operate the Pony Express. The thing they fear most is the possible entry into the trade of the business men in Dublin who want to set up factories for the canning, chilling, and freezing of horsemeat for export, and some observers say that the real drama in the present situation is the tug of war that is going on behind the scenes between the two groups. The "meat men" have a vested interest in keeping the trade in horseflesh on the hoof just as it is, and their ranks include not only the two or three big operators at the top but a whole host of smaller dealers right down to the scouts and agents out in the country.

FRIENDS AT COURT

They have strong allies in some of the beef interests who think that export of horsemeat would harm their reputation and their sales. On this point they have gained the ear of the Government. Not all Irishmen believe it to be true by any means, but the



beef lobby has powerful friends at court. Their influence can be computed from the export figures, which show that beef and veal were a most important form of foreign credit earnings last year. Chilled and frozen carcasses earned £964,403 in 1950, which jumped to £4,054,000 in 1951, while tinned beef in the same period increased from £1,540,000 to £2,270,000. The Government is determined that nothing shall prejudice this valuable trade.

The United Kingdom imported £534,000 worth of Irish horses for meat in 1950. This diminished to £391,000 in 1951, and at the present rate will run to less than £100,000 in 1952. The explanation for this is probably to be found in the current prices on the Dublin market. An Irish horse going for dog food in the local abattoirs brings only 18s a hundredweight. For the English trade it brings a maximum of £3 10s a hundredweight. But the agents for the Continental buyers will pay £5 a hundredweight on the dock in Eire. In Paris, posing as a dealer, I approached La Coopération Chevaline, one of the largest companies in the trade, and was offered 140 francs a kilo "on the hoof"—equivalent to about £6 a hundredweight—and higher rates for big horses.

In the "Boucheries Chevalines" which are to be found in every district of Paris where the housewife does her shopping I noted the prices of horsemeat, and compared them with those in the regular butcher's shops. (The two trades are kept strictly separate by law.) The woman buying bavette (pot roast) at 280 francs a kilo is making a saving of 36 per cent in the horse butcher's shop, and the rump steak at 630 francs represents a 27 per cent saving compared with a rump steak of beef. The result of the French and Belgian demand is to attract Irish horses to the export market in increasing numbers.

ULSTER SMUGGLING

Ulster farmers cannot participate in this lucrative business because of United Kingdom regulations designed to prevent the export of British horses for Continental slaughter, so an interesting trade has grown up. Knowing that officially they must

apply to London for a Board of Trade export permit (which would make the cost prohibitive for horses delivered in Dublin) they resort to smuggling them across the border. At the same time there are people in the South who are interested in sending to Ulster the tired nags and over-age animals which have been rejected at the docks in Dublin because of stiffer standards imposed by the Eire vets. Inspector George Crowe has seen horses presented for shipment at Belfast which had been rejected in the South because there the fiction is maintained that they are going to the Continent to work so they must be under 15 years.

I spent one evening patrolling part of the border but saw nothing. I learned the next day that the smugglers have their own efficient squad of "spotters"; further, two farmers, brothers, have conveniently acquired adjoining farms, one in Eire and one in Ulster, and the only formality required is to swing open a gate, preferably some time after midnight.

"WHITE" MEAT

To do the Ulster vets justice it should be stated that although the age-limit for horses is higher than in Eire they do not allow any that are ill to travel. On the Donegal dock at Belfast I watched the vet reject an old white stallion because he was lame and might fall in rough weather. Twenty out of forty donkeys for Blackpool were rejected for bad hooves and lack of teeth. Actually, on the short six-hour run to England, whether from Belfast or Dublin, the horses do not get into much trouble. If there is a gale warning the sailing is delayed or cancelled. In rough weather the number taken is limited to the capacity of the padded stalls aboard. And on big modern vessels like the m.v. Innisfallen and s.s. Slieve Bernagh, which I inspected, the animals are taken as quickly and humanely as possible across the short stretch of water to England, where they will either go to work or be slaughtered humanely.

But lest the people of England decide that their own record is spotless in the wretched Irish horsemeat trade I would recommend their attention to a devilish device known as the electric pump. I have not seen

this myself, but had it described for me by the dealer I met on the Dublin dock. He witnessed a killing when he accompanied one of his own shipments to an abattoir just outside London.

The pump is used just after the animal has been stunned and while it is alive. Tubes are inserted into the blood vessels when the throat is cut and the electric motor is switched on. The horse's forelegs are worked back

and forth as it dies, a process that takes some fifteen minutes altogether. The result of this horrible technique is pure white flesh, which can be sold as veal, or, after pickling, as pork. My Irish informant watched a consignment of pump-bled horsemeat being loaded into a van. The destination was a well-known West End hotel where delicacies of the menu are tender young veal and roast beef of old England.

SIX OTHER WITNESSES

Horrors of the Winter Passage

CORK.

The "Pony Express" they call it, down here on the loading quay in Cork and at the docks I had visited in Belfast, Drogheda, Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford. Perhaps it is understandable that the men engaged in the live horsemeat trade should want to use some rather more pleasant phrase when they talk about it. The Irish Pony Express, 1952 model, is a ruthless, bloody, inefficient, and highly profitable business venture.

For proof of the profits one need look no farther than the pleasant country estates which the two biggest men in the business have created for themselves just outside Dublin. For inefficiency, there are the coastal freighters whose holds could carry a thousand tons of canned or frozen horsemeat but can handle only two hundred tons on the hoof.

As for the ruthlessness and cruelty, I had seen enough on one trip to convince myself of that. But the Pony Express is a large and complex affair. To get a complete picture a man would have to travel in all four seasons, especially during the storms of January and February, when horses and donkeys are being shot and pitched overboard somewhere in the Irish Sea almost every week.

And one would have to travel many routes: Dublin-Antwerp, Cork-Fishguard, Waterford-Birkenhead, for example, and eight or ten more. The

Pony Express involves some dozen small ferries or cargo ships, scores of lorries and railway wagons in Eire, Britain, France, and Belgium, and some twenty thousand confused and suffering animals.

I had seen a good deal of the trade, but I thought it worth while to round up the experiences of other observers too. In particular I asked if they thought that horses are really as sensitive as some people say: do they suffer from sea-sickness and, in the slaughterhouse, do they recognise what is going on?

To a man the "meat men" on the docks scoffed at both these points. But from the drovers on the boats, from the ships' crewmen, and from the abattoir workers came a grudging admission, which was crisply confirmed for me by three vets: namely, that horses are the most sensitive and perceptive of any animal killed for its flesh; they can, indeed, recognise the dead or bleeding bodies of their fellows as they pass by them in the slaughterhouse, and their highly sensitive noses register the smell of horse blood in a way that human beings can scarcely appreciate. As for sea-sickness, their stomachs are such that they cannot vomit as we do, and the result is a blinding headache, the immediate evidence of which is tears in the eyes.

I have been able to obtain the accounts of six other people who have personally seen some part of the traffic. Perhaps the most striking is



Tethered one to four days a few yards from this doorway, an Irish horse is led trembling through blood and offal past a dozen death stalls to his own.

that of a Dubliner, Mrs Eileen Swift, simply for the reason that she did not set out to look for the Pony Express at all but ran into it by accident. Three days was sufficient to surprise and shock her, and to make her very much of a partisan in the present dispute in Ireland. Mrs Swift had booked her car as freight on one of the small cargo ships for the Continent. At the last minute she decided to accompany it, and discovered that there were horses on board. She was very seasick herself the first day of the voyage, but eventually struggled down to the hold to see how the animals were getting on:

Some had cut and bruised themselves and still looked panicky (she said). Most of them had cut their noses on their metal drinking bowls and all were discharging from the eyes. They were not in the least what I expected, not old screws on their last legs but the majority of them well-kept animals, used to care and grooming. When they were unloaded at Dieppe

it was entirely without consideration, and they were driven on to the quay with blows from whips with metal thongs.

Another Irish woman, Mrs Merrion Edkins, travelled to Paris as an investigator for the International League for the Protection of Horses. She runs a stud-farm herself, and speaks from practical knowledge of what is cruel and what is not. She watched the unloading of the French railway wagons after the run from Dieppe: "In one a stallion had lost his footing and fallen to the floor en route. When I saw him the other eleven horses were milling about on top of him. When the truck was emptied he was beaten to his feet, although he appeared to have practically lost the use of his hind legs." Mrs Edkins watched horses being unloaded at the abattoir which were months in foal, and saw several struck across the eye and nose with heavy sticks.

Another Eire resident, Mr E. A. King, has managed to witness the slaughtering of horses in French and Belgian abattoirs. He confirms the reports of others on the thoughtlessness of Continental butchers, who tether the animals in sight or sound of the slaughter floor for anything up to four days, and then take them out to be killed through an avenue of dead and dying horses. One particular memory was the mare he saw whose ribs had been rubbed raw and naked as a result of being dragged over rough ground.

Not as graphic, perhaps, is the statement of Mr J. Jacobs, of Antwerp, secretary of the Royal Antwerp Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but one can read between the lines of his annual report:

The trade revived at the end of 1950, and in 1951 there were 48 shipments of live horses, sixteen shipments more than in the previous year. In all, 9,127 horses, four ponies, and 152 donkeys, all from Eire, were disembarked. During the crossing ten horses died and were thrown overboard, 29 were dead on arrival, and three had to be killed at the quayside.

The man with the longest personal experience in looking into the conditions in the Irish horse trade is Mr George Crowe (himself an Irishman), who is the resident inspector for Eire and Ulster of the International League for the Protection of Horses. Week in, week out, he is a familiar figure around the docks from Belfast to Cork. He has the lined, kindly face of a countryman, the tenacity of a crusader, and the accuracy of a scientist; and he has won the grudging respect of the meat men and Government inspectors alike. He told me that there are many instances of unnecessary cruelty in the trade to be cleared up in addition to the obvious ones. There is the long wait for the boats at the Irish end—in the winter this can mean days spent in quagmires of fields with so many horses in them that there is little or no grass to eat, and no shelter for most of the animals. He is most concerned also about the way gale warnings are ignored by the horse export ships.

Perhaps the most shocking example was that of the freighter *Clarina* on a winter voyage from Limerick to

Birkenhead a year ago. It sailed in spite of an imminent gale, and took four days and four nights to reach its destination. Of the 71 aged horses aboard no fewer than eighteen suffered so many injuries that they collapsed, died, and were put overboard. Three others were dead on arrival. Seven more had broken legs and other injuries and had to be shot, and another died on the quayside.

THE ABATTOIRS

Mr Crowe is very critical of Continental slaughterhouses, where standards of what constitutes cruelty to animals are very different from those in Britain and Ireland. Several abattoirs keep Irish horses stabled for as long as two and three days without hay or water. In Antwerp horses have holes roughly punched in their right ears and numbered metal tags inserted.

Then a red-hot branding iron is taken out of the forge fire and the letter "I" is burned on the left side of the neck so that the skin is severely scarred (he told me). The horses are loaded indiscriminately as to size in railway vans which take until the next day to reach Brussels. The slaughterhouses are full of hanging carcasses, and the horse has only enough room to fall to the floor when it is killed. Most are so terrified that they have to be backed into place, trembling with terror.

In quick succession they are struck hard on the nose, shot, and sliced open at the base of the throat—conscious or not. Then the forelegs are tied with rope and worked back and forth to assist bleeding. This produces whiter, more marketable meat.

On another trip, Mr Crowe traced a particular donkey from Belfast last year. He was told it was going to Blackpool for work on the sands. Two days later, in an abattoir in Rochdale, he was disgusted to see the little animal being skinned. It was about this time that a Blackpool café proprietor was fined in court for serving donkey meat illegally.

DONKEYS

The worst case of suffering in the traffic in donkeys was the shipment of 192 which arrived in Fishguard last February en route for Italy. Thirteen were already dead when the International League intervened and purchased the rest for £1,600. An English veterinary surgeon, Mr Peter

Hastie, found that seventy more had to be destroyed, for, as he reported, "many had broken feet, some had next to no teeth and could not graze; all had eczema, and many had lice." The post-mortem examinations showed that a great proportion were over twenty years of age and had diseased internal organs.

Even without the personal evidence of these six observers the external evidence in the Irish meat trade is a telling indictment, and by that I mean the secrecy which surrounds it at every stage along the way.

On the docks in six Irish ports I had met with guarded hostility and was twice ordered off a ship before I could snatch a shot with my camera. The sea trip itself is under a virtual black-out, and the slaughter in both Paris and Brussels is under an official one. At Vaugirard Abattoirs I had not only to make my way through huge iron-barred gates in the fortress-like walls

past the sign which states flatly "Entrée interdite." but I had also to run the gauntlet of two police stations which are set up within the abattoir proper. The first time I was caught I had time to slip my camera out of sight under my coat. The big gendarme let me off with a verbal pummelling in loud French and showed me to the exit. The second time came just after snatching a nervous shot of the slaughter floor as an Irish horse was led in.

The shutter click had been all too audible; a butcher shouted, "La photographie!" and pointed a bloody cleaver in my direction. I threw caution to the winds and fled into the stables, dodged behind hay bales, and raced out across the cobbles to the gate and safety. But it was all part of the same pattern. Silence is what the "meat men" want if the Pony Express is to run smoothly; publicity is the enemy they fear.

THE PROTEST MOVEMENT

The Obstinate Irish Government

Plastered across the rear windows of dozens of cars on the streets of Dublin are long paper banners bearing the words "Stop Exporting Horses for Slaughter." They are the work of four Irish humane societies acting in association—the International League for the Protection of Horses, Our Dumb Friends League, the Dublin Animals' Protection Association, and the Dublin S.P.C.A. These four organised a big street parade a couple of months ago, and followed it up recently with an impressive protest meeting in the old Mansion House. More than a thousand people turned out, and on the platform were members of the Dail of various political parties, including Alderman Alfred Byrne, T.D., Mr Maurice Dockrell, T.D., and Dr Michael French-O'Carroll, T.D.

One speaker, a former Lord Mayor, remarked that never, even during the stirring days of the Rebellion, had he seen so many Dubliners packed

into the hall. This is worth bearing in mind because of the extraordinary "line" that was handed out by the meat men when I tackled them on the subject. This is simply that the whole trouble is being stirred up by frustrated Englishmen and Ulster farmers (a) because of their chronic blind hatred of everything (Southern) Irish; and (b) because they themselves have been cut out of the profitable Continental trade by the recent British regulations.

To the observer visiting Dublin to-day it appears that the neatest trick being used by the meat men is this appeal to Irish nationalism. The quickest way to belittle protest is to identify it with English interests, and they are using this guilt-by-association technique with fair success. Down on the docks as I watched horses going aboard s.s. City of Cork I was flatly informed by men in charge of the various consignments that the whole campaign of the reformers is something cooked up by Englishmen. For



Irish horses, on their way to die, passed this scene only a few feet away. Fresh wet hides in foreground. Some horses whinnied and shied.

substantiation I was referred to a leading article in a Dublin paper.

I looked this up, and under the heading "Misdirected Protests" read that the campaign is "organised by Irish branches of a number of English societies. . . . This fact may explain why none of the speakers concerned themselves about the fate of animals sent to Britain." In the letters column the next day was a note from Mrs Diana Buchanan, of the Dublin S.P.C.A., pointing out that the Society was incorporated in the city over a century ago and has no connection with any outside group. She adds a reminder that the world's first parlia-

mentary action for the protection of animals was introduced in the British House in 1822 by Richard Martin, M.P. for County Galway.

In fairness to the meat men, however, one must note that the International League for the Protection of Horses (Irish Branch) is working in the campaign, and this society does have its headquarters in London (4 Bloomsbury Square, W.C 1). It has also branches in six other countries, from France to Sweden.

I encountered a more ingenious complaint when I consulted the Eire Ministry of External Affairs. "Why don't these horse-lovers complain as

well about cows and sheep going abroad?" a spokesman suggested. "That would be more honest and less sentimental." He referred me to the Ministry of Agriculture. Here a spokesman stressed the high standard of inspection which applies to the horses and the ships in the Continental trade.

I was able quite honestly to agree, because the Eire vets at dockside are very strict, and the food and stalls on the ships are up to the best international standards. But these things cannot prevent the sea-sickness, confinement, and final brutal methods of slaughter which are inherent in the Pony Express as it is run at present.

Finally the Government official came to the heart of the business. The export trade in beef brought Eire £6,300,000 last year, twice what it had been in 1950, and the growing United States market will make the figure even greater in 1952. "Our view is that any trade in chilled, frozen, or canned horseflesh would be extremely harmful," he declared. "because it would not be possible to exercise segregation or control of it abroad."

THE MINISTER'S CASE

This policy has been consistently maintained by the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Walsh. Not long ago in the Dail he was asked by an Opposition deputy, Mr. Dockrell, if he would sanction the establishment of an Irish horsemeat canning industry. The latter was supported by five other deputies, one Labour and four Independents, who were ready to endorse his charges of cruelty to horses on the journey and in the French and Belgian abattoirs. The Minister took the stand that the charges of cruelty are not proven, and reiterated his view that home slaughter of horses would endanger the foreign market for Eire beef.

In this impasse the D.S.P.C.A., the Irish branch of the International League, and their various supporters have turned to a programme of action they call their "Five P's": parades, posters, protest meetings, publicity, and politics. The latest parade was a resounding success. Two pipe bands came without charge, and the long line of men and women on their

various mounts—there were farmers, jumpers, jockeys, and huntsmen—wound up O'Connell Street, through the heart of the city to St Stephen's Green, and back again. The citizens who lined the three-mile route saw the popular jockey Mr Aubrey Brabazon leading the parade, flanked by two famous jumpers, Captain Ian Dudgeon and the trainer of the Irish Army jumping team, Major Kulesza.

While this was the frankly sentimental approach, the sentimentalists are wise enough to perceive that in the campaign their best potential allies are the materialists—business men who deplore the inefficient export of live horses, which could be handled better at home, with £100,000 in by-products kept for Eire. So they are now working together.

One Dublin dealer told me: "I could export the meat of three horses by air for the cost of sending one on the hoof." He, in association with a Belgian business man, is prepared to set up a factory to-morrow for the processing of Irish horsemeat for export, if the Government would permit it. An Ulster firm is also prepared to build a plant in Eire.

Then there is a Tipperary firm which put up a canning factory in expectation of a change in the law which never came. It is now handling another food product, but could switch to horsemeat for export and handle two hundred animals a week with the latest humane methods. Another canning concern is prepared to take similar action. And finally, in Belfast, the leading dealer, Mr Miles Broadbent, told me that he has twice applied for permission to set up an abattoir with a view to sending refrigerated meat to Liverpool, but his applications have been rejected by the Ministry of Agriculture.

THE BRITISH ORDER

The stated objective of the horse protection groups is to have legislation passed in the Dail permitting slaughter in Eire and bringing in at the same time a regulation similar to Great Britain's Minimum Values Order of 1950. This order (put through after repeated efforts by British horse-lovers) prevents the export from the United Kingdom of animals of a value less than £80. Two figures illustrate

its immediate success in stopping the live horsemeat export trade. In the quarter ended March, 1949, Belgium alone took 1,636 British horses—possibly half of what went to all abattoirs abroad. In the quarter ended June, 1950, the whole trade to the Continent totalled only 150 horses.

Lacking such regulation in Eire at present, the energetic director of the Horse League in Ireland, Mrs E. C. Whitton, sent out letters last winter to hundreds of stud owners, farmers, and trainers. She suggested that they put a reserve price of £50 on their animals at the next bloodstock sales in Dublin. The scheme worked so well that only seven horses were in danger of being bought for the export trade. Then, before the meat men could get them, she jumped into the bidding and bought them herself. Last month at the latest bloodstock sales she was there again, but did not have to buy a single horse.

This, however, frustrates the meat men only from picking up thoroughbreds. The vast majority of the poor Irish horses are still utterly defenceless, and the economic pressure of

high prices ensures that they will fall into the waiting clutches of the meat men. Even while this series of articles has been appearing, another seven hundred frightened animals have boarded the Pony Express for the one-way trip of confinement, sea-sickness, and bloody death.

Is the thing, then, unbeatable? I thought about this as I sat at the sidewalk café on the Rue Brançon in Paris that looks across to the iron gates and stone battlements of the great Vaugirard Abattoirs. At the next table were three of the butchers I had chatted with, including moustachioed old Louis, the man who fires the captive bolt killer. They ordered Steak à la Chevaline, and the waiter turned inquiringly to me. Drogheda, the sleepless sixty hours to Dieppe, the hot, waterless run to Paris, the final terrifying fifteen minutes at Vaugirard—the whole wretched, cruel, inefficient, unnecessary odyssey came back to me. The menu dropped from my fingers: I picked up my camera and walked out into the Rue Brançon and the sunshine.

Sendita de :

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