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FROM COLONEL
TO SUBALTERN

COUNTRY LIFE

TELEGRAMS: "COUNTRY LIFE LONDON"
TELEPHONE: GERRARD 2748.

20, TAVISTOCK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN, W.C.2.

To the Reader:

We feel that some explanation is needed for the particular manner in which this book is illustrated. Proofs of the letterpress were sent to a distinguished Artist with the suggestion that he should make some bright, snappy, drawings. When the proofs were returned we found, to our horror (not unmixed with amusement), that the Artist had interpreted the suggestion in an exaggerated manner. The sketches, delightful in their spontaneity and happy in their obvious familiarity with horses and horse-owners, possessed merits of quite a different character from those we had originally in mind.

What was to be done? Time was short. While a difficult situation was being debated, the Author came upon the scene and was so delighted with the sketches that he insisted on the inclusion of them all in the book.

"Some Keys for Horseowners" is our subtitle, and if one of them has unlocked the door of laughter both Author and Publishers feel unwilling to deny the reader a smile, especially as he may find in a jest some of that horse-sense which the Author has underlined, in another way, in his letters to his son.

The Publisher.



Some
Keys For
Horse
Owners



FROM COLONEL
TO SUBALTERN
SOME KEYS FOR
HORSEOWNERS

BY

LT.-COL. M. F. McTAGGART, D.S.O.

*Illustrated by
The Wag of the Regiment*

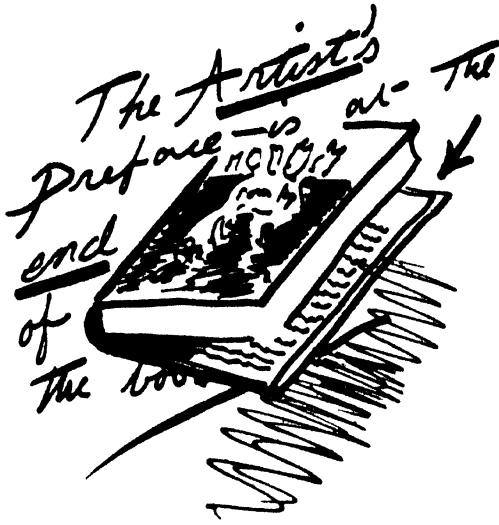
LONDON

COUNTRY LIFE LTD.

20, TAVISTOCK STREET, W.C. 2

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

First published in 1928



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

SEVERAL excellent books upon riding, on horses, and training have been published of late, but I am submitting these few letters for public perusal, in the hope that they will really be helpful to that large number—and I am very glad to note a growing number—of riders—not alone soldiers and not alone young—who require the sort of advice which they can never obtain from grooms.

It has often struck me that our equitation could advantageously assume a much more international character than it has done in the past. There is so much to learn from all countries that it cannot but be beneficial to study their methods, and to put into practice ourselves whatever seems suited to our climate, our customs, and our needs.

I have been privileged to travel a good deal, and I have always noted any point in horsemanship which has struck me as being of use to us in our schooling, and in these letters many of those ideas find a place. I hope they may prove of interest and advantage to all horse owners.

There is one thing which stands out most saliently, and which I cannot too strongly emphasise.

The most successful trainers use neither whip nor spur. The fact that there are still many schools both on the Continent and in this country who use both, and are also successful, makes this emphasis all the more important, because, although excellent results are apparently attained by methods which are harsh or unsympathetic, there is,

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I think, no doubt at all that far greater heights can be reached in less time by a schooling which has no other recourses than patience, sympathy, and determination.

M. F. McTAGGART,
Lieut.-Colonel.

Circumstances demand a postscript :

With much diffidence I submitted this book to my publishers with the suggestion that a capable artist might supply a few suitable drawings. I certainly never expected to see the feast of humour that has been provided.

Books on riding can hardly help being serious. My publishers, or the artist—I don't quite know which, because they kept me completely in the dark—have most successfully given character to my book. Even now I do not know the artist's name, and have been forbidden to try and discover it!

The artist has handled his task with so light a pen and so breezy a wit that it breathes into my drab advice a spice and a vigour I never contemplated. If my readers enjoy the fun as I have done, this horse-book will not be dull.

M. F. McT.

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I am glad to hear
you have settled
down so nicely!

ON BUYING HORSES—I

MY DEAR JOHN,

I am glad to hear you have settled down so nicely, and that you have been allotted a couple of fairly decent chargers. I don't suppose they are the pick of the regiment by any means, but with good stable management and good riding it is wonderful what can be done with the most unpromising material.

I remember in my day there was a scarecrow of a horse that was always passed on to the last joined second lieutenant. It was laughed at as the most misshapen brute that ever passed the eagle eye of the Director of Remounts.

It was sickle-hocked, herring-gutted, ewe-necked, flat-sided, long-legged, split up, narrow-chested, and calf-kneed. It was excitable, star-gazing, hot-headed, clumsy, pig-headed, iron-mouthed, and utterly impossible to ride. It was as thin as a rail, and had a tail like a piece of wet rope. The squadron leader loathed it, the Colonel hated the sight of it, the General jeered at it, the Inspector of Cavalry wrote bad reports about it, but the Inspector of Remounts flatly refused to cast it. After many vicissitudes and numerous owners, it got at last into the hands of a capable horsemaster. The horse grew fat; his bad points disappeared, his good ones displayed themselves, and he lived, not only to win the Regimental Point-to-Point, but to be the most sought after charger in the regiment.

FIFTY POUNDERS

So the moral of this story is: If your charger is thin, don't "fault" him but fatten him.

Now you tell me that you want an extra hunter, but that you cannot afford more than the promise of £50, and you ask my advice as to what you should do, and how you should set about it.

Well, I know exactly the sort of horse you have in your mind. He is to be one of great quality and substance, up to 14 stone, that can jump anything and go anywhere, win all the local races, and be sold afterwards for at least £250. You then pay the £50 you promised for him, place a small donation in the poor box, and bank the rest.

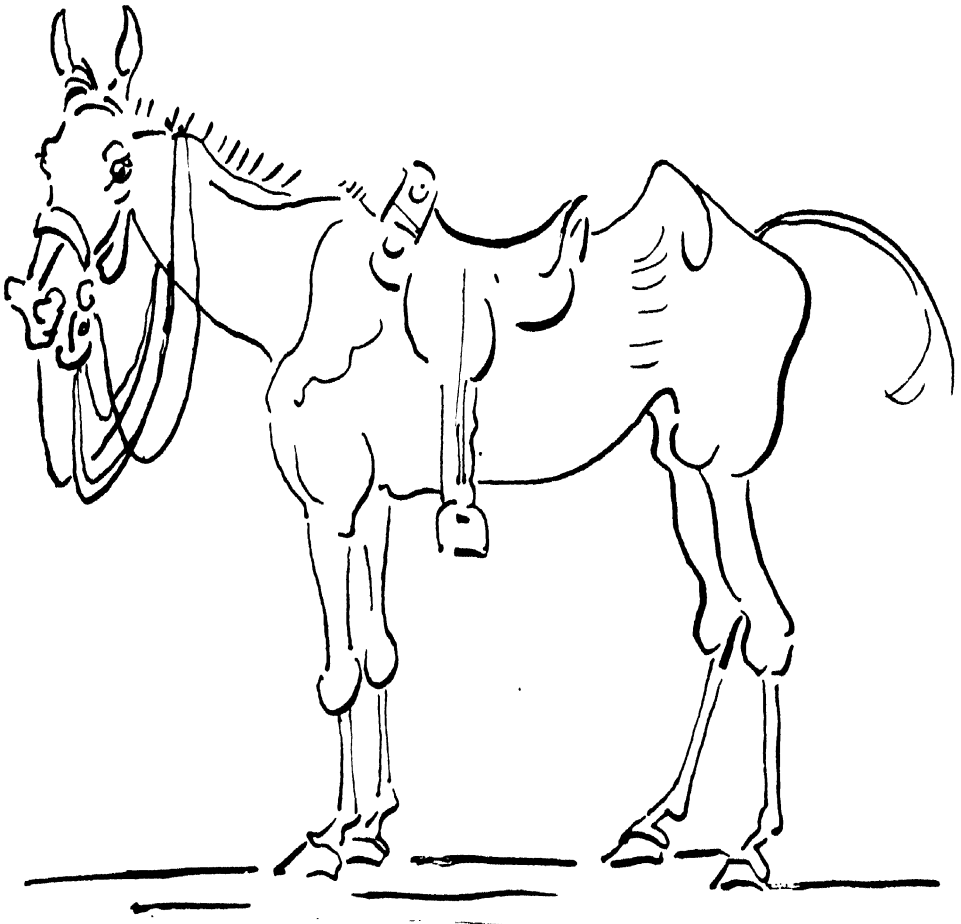
Quite so. I know the idea. I know it well—in theory. But when I think of facts I can hardly bear to dwell on them.

However, I don't say such opportunities never occur. They do. But before we can take advantage of them we want three things: courage to act, knowledge to decide, and cash to plank. You may possess the first of these three essentials, but as you certainly have not got the second or third, you are not likely to be very successful. But, of course, there is nothing like hoping.

I knew of a man who never went out hunting without a £10 note in his pocket, and whenever anyone took a heavy fall he would gallop up to him, wave the tenner in his face, and say to the unfortunate victim, who was probably half-dazed: "Here you are. I'll take the beastly horse off you. It is monstrous that so valuable a life should be risked on a dangerous brute like that."

Of course, he got a lot of disappointments, and he obtained a wide experience of the possibilities of the English language. But he hardly ever had a dull day, and sometimes did have a profitable one.

Most of us, however, can only buy cheap horses cheap, or good part-worns cheap. So beware when you find a fellow who comes along and tries to sell you something really "classy" very cheap. Have a good look for the nigger in the wood pile. *Caveat emptor*, which



If your charger
is thin, don't
"fault" him
but
fatten him,

A FIRST PURCHASE

means, "Don't be a mug if you can help it."

I remember when I was a squadron leader many years ago, a subaltern had just joined the regiment, and was posted to my squadron. After he had been with me for a few days I asked him very delicately if he was buying any hunters. I simply gasped when he told me that he had already bought one from the local dealer, and that he would be very pleased to show it to me.

Out it came, a weedy, fiery little hurdle-racer, which had won a few handicaps, but had been flung out of its training stable because it wasn't likely to win any more.

"Very nice," I said; "but what have you bought it for?"

"To hunt, of course," he replied.

"When?" said I.

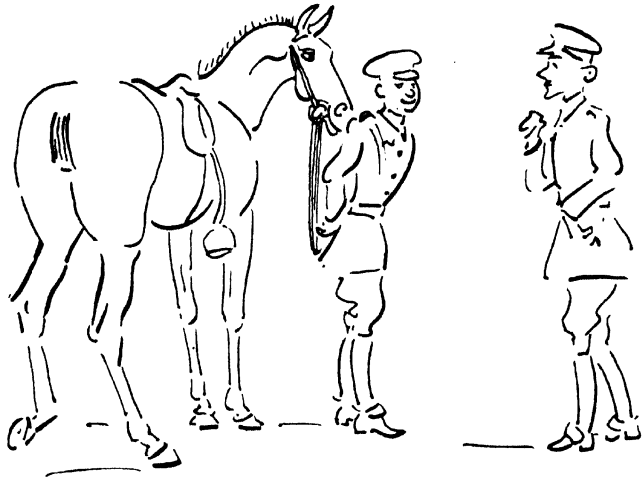
"To-morrow," said he. And he did.

He took three tosses in the first half-hour, was brought back in an ambulance, and the horse, for which he had given no less than £120, was sold by an anxious parent at the earliest auction sale for £31 10s. 6d.

Now, what was his mistake? The horse was perfectly sound, full of quality, quite good looking, and as showy as any horse you would wish to see. But it was a "dud," because it was a square peg which wouldn't fit into any hole. Its career as a race-horse was finished, as it was handicapped out of its class. As it had won races it was ineligible for any point-to-point.

For hunting it was utterly unschooled, intemperate, excitable, and dangerous. But even when it had been schooled, which would have taken many months' serious, quiet, and continuous work, it would still have been worth nothing, because it was much too lacking in substance and in bone. For a polo pony it was temperamentally unsuited, and it would have taken years of schooling to have made it fit to ride.

I asked
him
very
delicately
if he was
buying
any
Hunters



Now, what was his mistake?
The Horse was perfectly
Sound!

BUYING "WORTH THE MONEY"

So that my young subaltern, just because he was in such a beastly hurry, and asked nobody's advice, lost about £90 over his first deal, and had a sore head into the bargain.

Therefore, my advice to you is, Don't think you have been offered something so good that you simply must keep it to yourself. Don't imagine others try to put you off buying it for wrong motives, but go straight to someone in the regiment in whose opinion you have faith and ask him to help you. Don't forget that your brother officers are not only pleased to help you if they can, but that they are flattered at being asked. In this way you will certainly be saved from all egregious errors, and you won't be a laughing stock, whatever happens.

Now, if you are looking for a horse that you want to take away to hunt during your leave, you will find this quite a different proposition to picking up a young one cheap, and making it into a hunter at your leisure.

In this case you have little option. You will probably have to buy a horse that won't pass the vet.

To buy a good horse that has been "tubed" is one way. Under this category you can pick up really valuable big, strong horses, which are sound in every other particular, and which have been originally purchased for £200 or £300. As long as you don't distress them when galloping, and are very careful when jumping water, you can have many capital days' sport. They look well, carry you well, and if the noise doesn't deafen you, you can always hope to sell him when your leave is over for nearly as much as you gave for him.

Another way is to get a horse with a cataract, whose eyesight is deficient (officially). This is a capital way, because horses are never required to read the telephone book, and a little defective vision doesn't matter a bit (especially if he doesn't shy). The horse that was second in the Grand National of 1927 was completely blind in one eye, so we can easily afford to take risks of a little lack of clearness of vision

A good
horse
that
has
been
Tubed
©



If
the
noise
does n't
deafen
you

BUYING WITH A BLEMISH

in a hunter. So if the horse you bought had this defect (and was cheap on that account) and jumped his fences well, you can be reasonably certain he will continue to see well enough as long as you want him for.

Another kind of unsound horse is one which has been "nerved" for navicular. A horse under this disability isn't nearly so dangerous a ride as many people believe. It only means that his foot is numbed. It doesn't imply that he wouldn't know if he put his foot into a cart rut, or would wish to do it again if he did. Many horses which have been so treated have done many a good day's hunting, and they are well worth considering when price is of importance.

Then again there are perfectly effective horses who have other definite unsoundness, such as ringbones, spavins, sprained ligaments, side-bones, bowed sinews, curby hocks, etc. This class should not be bought without asking the opinion of a veterinary surgeon, but these are seldom fit for a hard day's work. They should be given short days, and jumped as little as possible. But these are old gentlemen's horses, not young men's. Whoever heard of a youngster who was worth his salt who would go quietly when hounds were running or who would go home at 2 p.m. in the middle of a hunt? Anyway, not you, my boy. I know you too well to recommend you the purchase of an actual "crock."

Then we come to blemished horses. Those with big knees, cut knees, windgalls, bog-spavins, thoroughpins, warts, stringhalt, enlarged fetlocks, capped hocks, or elbows, etc.

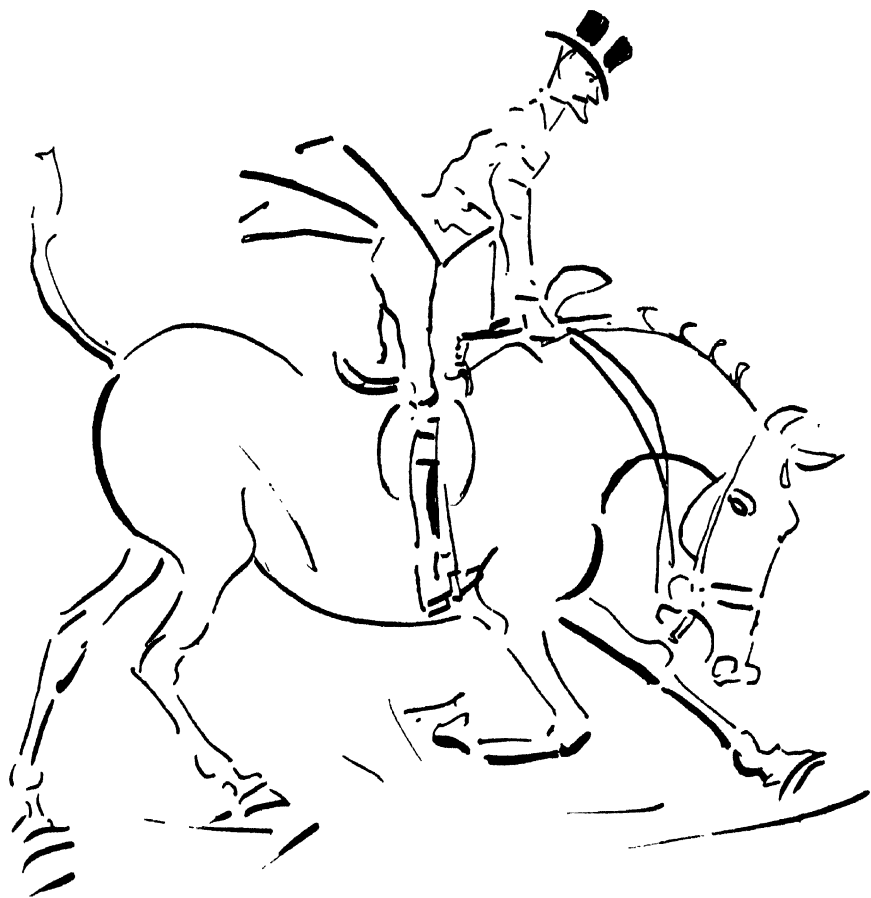
They can all be bought cheaper, and are often well worth considering on their respective merits.


A horse with both knees enlarged is one which has probably been jumped too much for the show-ring over stiff timber.

It is unsightly, but the horse is very likely a good jumper and a bold horse.



— it is unsightly



A horse under this
capability isn't nearly so
dangerous a ride as
many people ()
believe ↑

BUYING VICE

If a horse has the front of one knee scarred from a fall, it may not have been his fault, but it is very suspicious. If both are marked, then I recommend you to avoid him, as it will happen again sooner or later.

Windgalls, bog-spavins, and thoroughpins are no unsoundness, and if you can rest the horse, bandage, and rub them well, they may quite disappear for the time being, but they are sure to crop up again with work, as they are constitutional ailments. They are, however, only ugly, and don't affect the action in any way.

Stringhalt is a nervous complaint, about which little is really known. Sometimes it goes away, sometimes it doesn't. It often occurs only at the slow paces, and a cheap horse can be picked up in that way sometimes.

A horse with warts can occasionally be bought cheap. With careful treatment they can be got rid of in time, so that is another line the penurious purchaser can take with effect.

Then there is another kind of horse which can be got hold of at a price worth the money. It comes under the very wrong designation of "vice."

Horses that run away, that rear, jib, buck, etc. These often have a bad local reputation, and are sold cheap on that account.

When you get a little more experience, then by all means pick up any horse you hear of with a "vicious" disposition, because with good riding, quiet handling, and careful stable management the "vice" will disappear (except in circumstances so exceptional that I have never met them), and then you will have a valuable horse cheap.

But at present you haven't the experience, and you can't ride well enough, so you would probably only make bad worse, or get a heavy toss, be in hospital for weeks, and cost your poor father hundreds of pounds in doctor's bills.

Then we have the "age" heading. You can buy a horse cheap



Pick up
Any horse you hear of
with
A vicious disposition
(very good, Father! Wait-
till I sell you one)

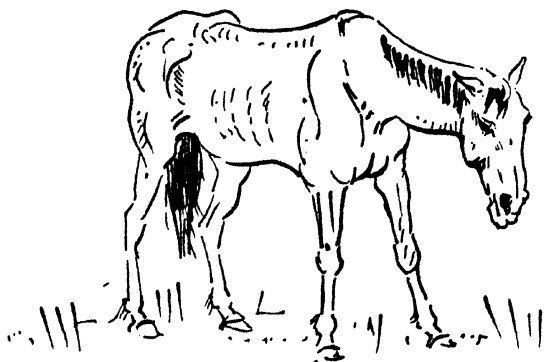
BUYING ON COLOUR

when he is too young or too old. Time cures the first and kills the second, and patience is wanted in either case.

The young horse that trips and shies, and pulls and frets, and bucks, refuses, and shows temper, throws out splints and goes unaccountably lame, who is sloppy and brushes, or forges, yaws at you, and has no mouth, looks half-starved, and so on, requires as much and more patience than I believe you possess.

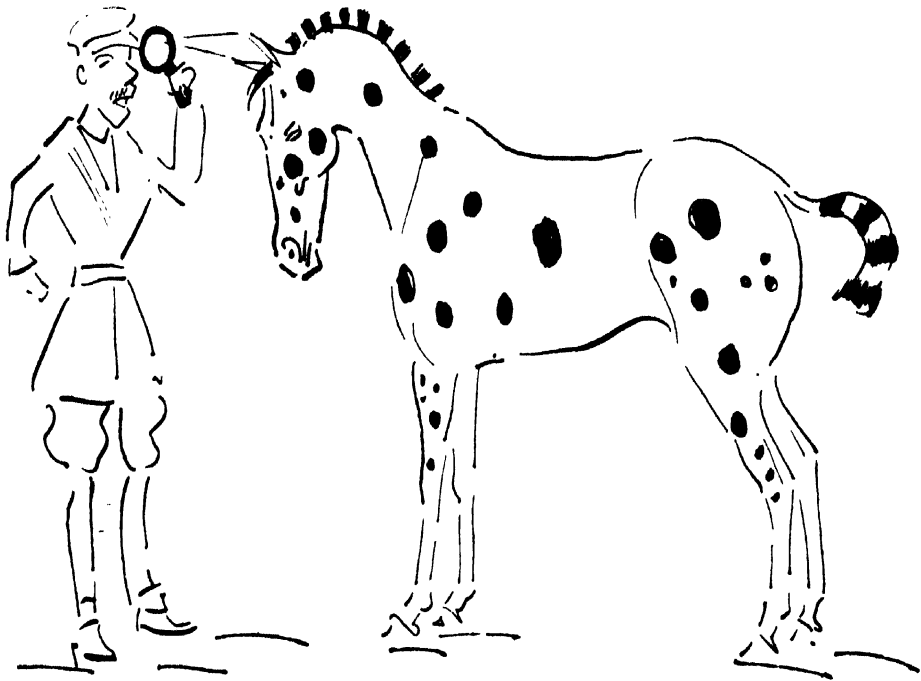
The old horse, who is sluggish and dull, who won't gallop faster than you can kick your hat, or rise an inch higher than he need over his fences, whose legs are gummy with suspicious tendons and knobby joints, who has only one idea, and that is to return to his stable as soon as possible, also requires patience. In fact, it requires more than patience; it demands a resignation unsuited to youth, and from your point of view I don't recommend the old horse, even though he may be as safe as a house. He would bore you stiff, as he is fit to be ridden only by someone four times his own age.


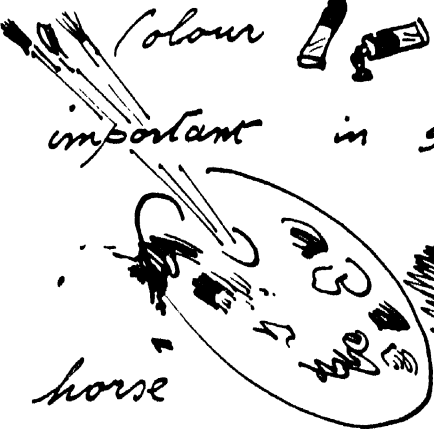
Again, a horse can sometimes be picked up cheap because he is a bad colour. Washy chestnuts with four white legs, circus-looking skewbalds, ugly wall eyes. These are the kind of things that don't affect a horse much, and if you can get him at your price you may well have got excellent value. It is often said: "A good horse is never a bad colour." What this means I have never been able to ascertain. If it means that it doesn't matter what colour a good horse is, it is simply silly. If it means that a bad-coloured horse can never be a good one, then it isn't true. But if it means that, as I think it does (but it doesn't say so), that colour is very important in selecting horses, then I agree. A good constituted horse is one whose colour is rich and whose points are dark. A horse that we don't like is one whose colour fades as it reaches the knees and fetlocks, and whose skin contains no depth of pigment.



*Time cures
the first*





Colour  is very
important in selecting

a horse

BUYING DEARLY

Sometimes a dealer, tired of trying to pass on an ugly horse, will let you have him really cheap. Horses that "speedy cut" are really dangerous, and when offered a suspiciously cheap horse it is as well to make inquiries on this point.

So far I have only discussed good horses which have become cheap. But what about the cheap horse himself? In this category there are many. Horses that are cheap bred always will be cheap and can only grow cheaper.

Here we have the undersized class, with narrow chests, short of bone, no shoulders, calf knees, cow hocks, long backs, weak pasterns, dishing and brushing action, bad paces, and ghastly movers. Generally speaking, the cheap horse is an undersized one without scope, which will never see you through a day's hunting, although he may be quite effective as a mount out cubbing, provided hounds don't run. But they aren't worth their corn, and seldom give satisfaction, except to beginners, who don't know a hack from a hackney, or a mule from a jennet.

I have, however, little doubt you will have plenty of people anxious to sell you a hunter directly they know you are a buyer, and I shall be interested to hear of the offers you get.

But don't be in a darned hurry. If they tell you that you must decide at once, otherwise the opportunity is lost, tell them that you don't want to stand in their way, but sell it to the other man quick, and see what they say then.

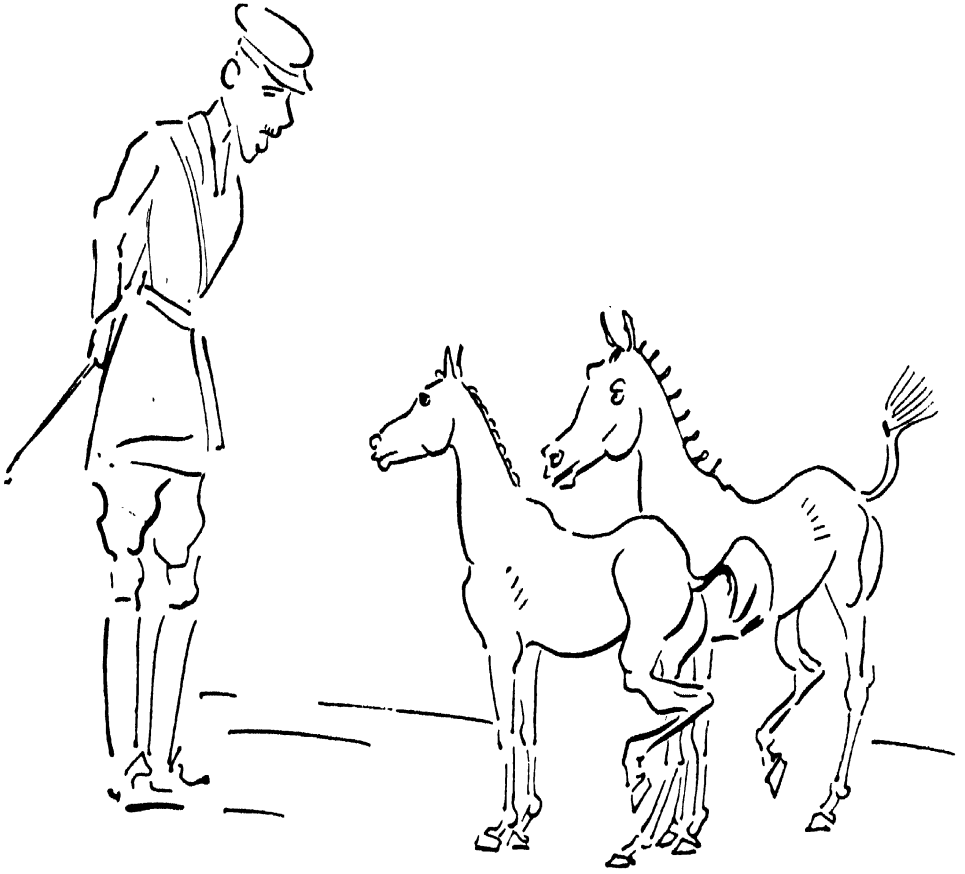
Anyway, take time enough to write to me, and perhaps I may be able to help you from doing anything outrageously silly.

Your affect. father,

M.

*- from doing
anything
outrageously
silly (?)*





Here
we have
the undersized class,



MORE ON BUYING HORSES—II

MY DEAR JOHN,

I am glad you liked my letter, and also that you are not a born ass, but wise enough to profit by other people's experience before launching out on your own.

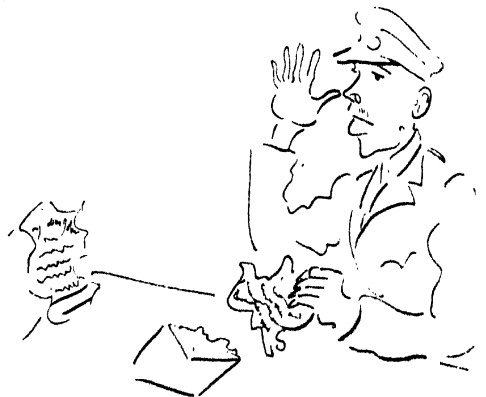
What we older people are here for is to give you younger ones, not advice, but knowledge. If you ask the advice of an old man he will always say, "Don't," because his experiences have nearly always been unhappy; but the world wouldn't have got very far if his advice had been followed. So, my boy, take the information I have to give you, but remember the decision must always rest upon yourself. To take risks is the privilege of youth. To avoid them the endeavour of age.

Anyway, you certainly won't buy a horse fit to ride for £50 unless you do take risks. I can only help you to see that they are good risks and not bad certainties.

You suggest that you should go to Tattersall's and see what you can do there, and you send me the catalogue marked with your selections. Don't forget you are not likely to pick up what you want at the first sale you attend. You are looking out for something good and cheap, quickly, but if you are not ready to come away empty for several sales running, that is not the spirit in which to tackle auction buying on the cheap. But still, you never know your luck, and if you don't try you can't take advantage of whatever good chances there are. So let's look at these selections of yours.

No. 10. "A Stud farm . . ." selling annually. Well, you won't pick up a cheap one there. They will all have reserves on, which will be well above your figure, and you can wash that one out—quick.

*I am glad
you liked my
letter!*





*His
experiences have nearly
always been
unhappy.*



BUYING AT "TATTS"

No. 25. "The property of a gentleman, going abroad. . . ." Oh yes. Very non-committal and elusive. He doesn't want anyone to know too much, does he? What else does he say?

"Bay gelding, 15'2, aged, good hunter, has carried a lady."

This looks like the cheap article all right, but it is probably dear at £10.

He certainly warrants it as a "good hunter," which means that it is sound in wind and eyes, has hunted, and is capable of being hunted. But he carefully avoids saying where it has been hunted, and presumably for excellent reasons. Of course, if it is a well-looking horse that takes your eye (I'll bet it isn't), then you can have it out and take a good look at it.

You will probably find he won't see eighteen again, and his legs, though, perhaps, clean and cool, will show signs of having been got up for sale. He will be as fat as butter, because those poor old legs, if they did any work, would come up like bolsters. There will be no groom to ask, and, beyond what you can see and find out by having him trotted out, you will get to learn nothing.

This sort of thing isn't a purchase, it's a marriage. When you have got him home you will find him a dud, and that there is no other fool big enough in the whole world to buy him off you. Eventually, after having spent pounds and pounds on keep and incidental expenses, you will be pleased to give a local tradesman £10 to take him away.

Then we come to No. 43. A bay gelding, eight years, splendid performer over any country. Well known with the Pytchley, the Cottesmore, and the Quorn. "Grunts under the stick."

You ask me what this expression means. Well, it's this way. A horse that is just beginning to go wrong in his wind will often not show it at all in the ordinary way of riding, but, when frightened, the gasp he gives will sound like a kind of grunt, and this is a sure



Capable of being
furnished

THE READY "LIE"

sign that his wind is not perfect and the horse is unsound.

You will sometimes see a man going up to a horse's stall in Tattersall's and brandish a stick as if he were going to hit him, in order to see if the horse will make this grunt.

No. 43 will certainly go fairly cheap for this reason, but it is certain that his wind will not improve, and you may be buying one that will develop into a bad roarer.

If you do buy this horse, I recommend you to buy him cheap and sell him soon.

If there is a groom with the horse you want to look at, by all means ask him all the questions you can; but if you believe all he says, you are just as big a mug as if you refuse to accept a single word. Invite his confidence, and verify his facts. If he sees you are not to be imposed upon he will often end by telling you the truth. I remember once looking at a horse—we will call him Tipperary Tim—that I wanted to buy for steeplechasing. He looked a bit leggy, and I asked the groom if he had ever fallen. "This horse fall?" he said in amazement. "I assure you this horse couldn't fall if he tried. In all the races he has been in he hasn't put a foot wrong. His last race was in the *big* open steeplechase at Rugby, and I never saw such a finish as he put up. He had all the rest beat to a frazzle, and won easily by three lengths."

"That is most interesting," I said; "come with me, and I will look it up in the calendar." He looked very thoughtful and followed me silently to the office. This is what I read:

"The Farmers' Open Steeplechase of £40. Three runners. Tipperary Tim fell. . . ."

I turned, took my hat off, and said: "I am privileged to meet the world's greatest liar. You will go far." And he did. He melted



*by all means
ask him
all the
questions
you
can*





Three runners.

THE LOCAL DEALER

away, and I never saw him again.

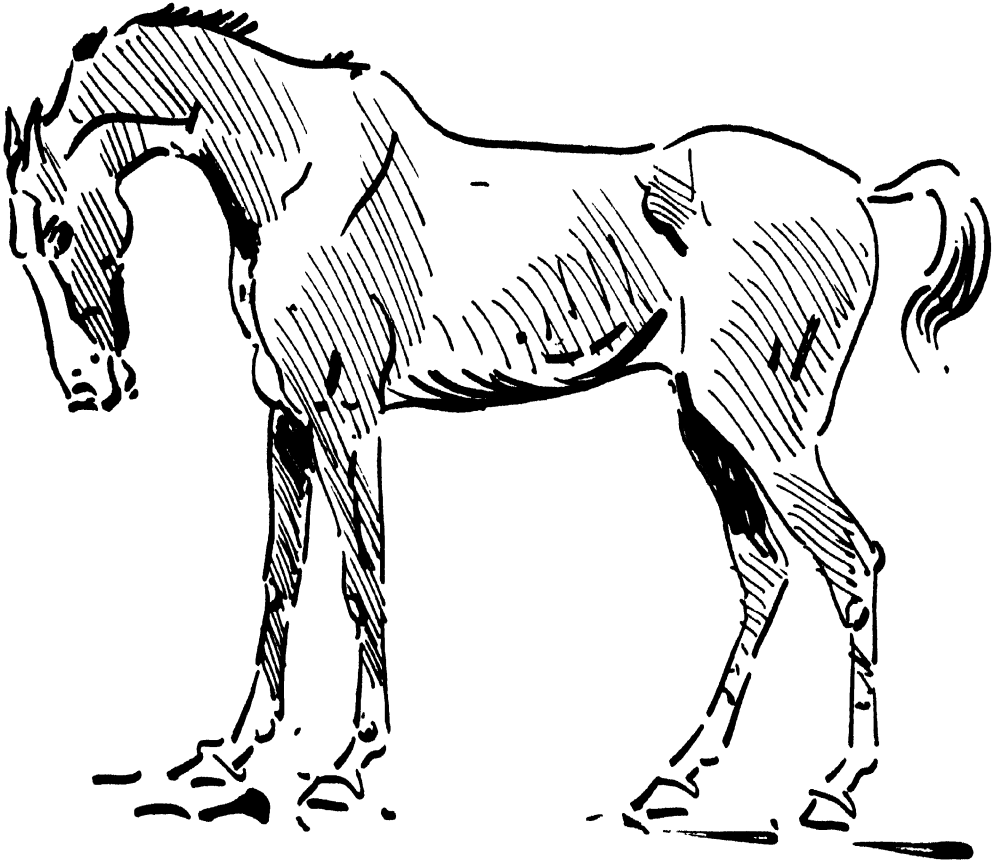
One of the greatest objections to buying at auction is that you can't get on their backs. To do so is worth a very great deal, and unless you have been able to have a ride you are buying in reality a lottery ticket. However, you can tell a great deal from make and shape, action and appearance, but you mustn't be disappointed if, after having taken a lot of trouble and worked up quite a fancy for the horse, you find he goes for something over your price. Don't get carried away by the bidding, but keep silent and wait for another chance.

I have just got your second letter, in which you tell me that a little local dealer has brought a really nice horse round for you to see, which he tells you is "just the finest little horse that ever looked through a bridle." Sound, seven years old, smart as paint, of great quality, and a magnificent performer, and he is only asking £50. You tell me the reason why he is selling him so cheap is because he has been suddenly called away on urgent business and that he is letting the horse go at a sacrifice in order to pay his rent. You ask me if there is a "snag" here, or whether it is an opportunity for a lucky pick up. Well, without even looking at the horse I can tell you that there are several "snags," and I wouldn't touch it without a trial and a veterinary examination. First of all, I am always suspicious of people who must sell in a hurry because they are just off to some either undisclosed or very distant address. Secondly, a dealer is a man who makes his living out of buying and selling horses, and no one knows the market better than he. If he offers you a horse cheap, it is quite certain he bought it cheaper and is asking as much as he dares. Now, this splendid horse he has brought round to you and offers at £50 he has probably bought at £30 or less. So it must be clear to you that no



*Don't get
carried
away
by
the bidding.*





*There are several
snags*

“ BISHOPING ”

horse answering to the description he gives could possibly be bought for £30 in a normal way. If he did happen to pick up a lucky one at that price, he wouldn't be offering it at £50, would he? He would, of course, try hard to get its full market value. So there is something wrong.

Have you ever heard of Bishoping? No, I dare say you haven't.

Well, Bishoping is a little adjustment to the teeth in order that old horses may look like young ones, and young ones are aged up.

I have a very strong suspicion from what you say that this is an old horse, perhaps eighteen years of age, that he has tried to represent as a seven-year-old. After you have been to your veterinary course you will know all about teeth, and, when you do, a very cursory glance at his mouth would detect the trick; but if purchasers are not very knowledgeable it is wonderful what some rascally dealers who have no established business can pass off.

The experienced eye can generally spot a young horse without looking at his mouth. That is to say, it is fairly simple to size up the approximate age of any horse. A glance will tell you usually whether he is a youngster or very old, so these tricks cannot be palmed off very easily on experienced people.

I remember once a dealer bought a really old horse, whose age was not less than seventeen. He was, however, a confirmed crib-biter, and his teeth were worn down almost to the gums. With a brilliancy almost amounting to genius, he managed to pass him off on a verdant customer as a four-year-old whose teeth were just coming through! Marvellous ingenuity, wondrous ignorance! Of course, you are not such a mug as that. But I don't trust you very far, and I will bet you a box of cigars at Xmas that you will have done something very nearly as stupid before you have purchased your first horse.

Your affect. father,

M.



*I don't
trust you
very far*



A little
adjustment
to the teeth



MY DEAR FATHER,

Your letter has been most awfully instructive and useful.

You have told me all sorts of things to avoid, but you haven't said what the points are one should go for in buying a horse.

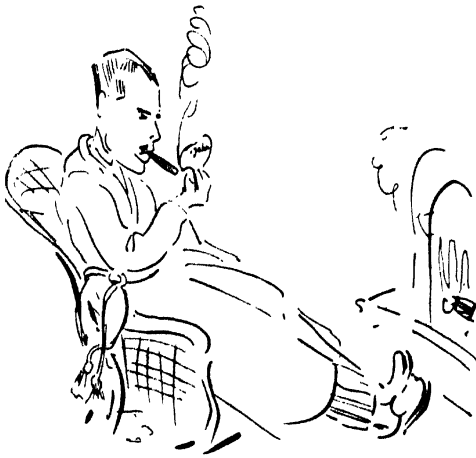
I take it that if you were going to purchase a horse, at no matter what price, you would always have a good "sort," while I would as likely as not go and buy something which all knowing people would sniff at.

Then, again, you speak of a horse with "good bone." I don't understand what that means, and it would be awfully nice of you if you would explain that as well.

There is another point in your letter I didn't quite understand. Why did you think that the horse you saw at Tattersall's would fall?

After all, you expect a steeplechase horse to have rather long legs, don't you?

Your affect. son,
JOHN.



*your letter
has been
most awfully
instructive
and useful*



You have told me
all sorts of things
to avoid

MY DEAR JOHN,

Your questions are very good ones, and I will do my best to answer them.

The two main considerations in horse purchase are strength and quality.

If we get the first without the second we buy a drudge; if we get the second without the first we buy disaster, but the two together spell safety and satisfaction.

So keep these main facts before you, and you will find many of your perplexities will fade.

The weak horse is one without good measurements. For example, those with thin necks, narrow chests, flat ribs, light and long behind the saddle, no breadth of quarter, small gaskins, or too split up. These are all signs of bodily weaknesses which you must avoid. In the legs we don't want to see long and sloping pasterns, or feet that turn out, with brushing marks. The hocks should be well apart, and not rubbing together like those of cows. In other words, we want to see signs of strength all over.

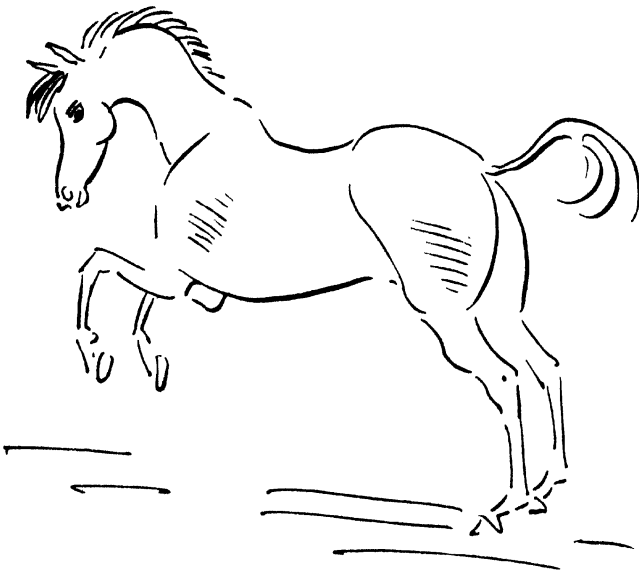
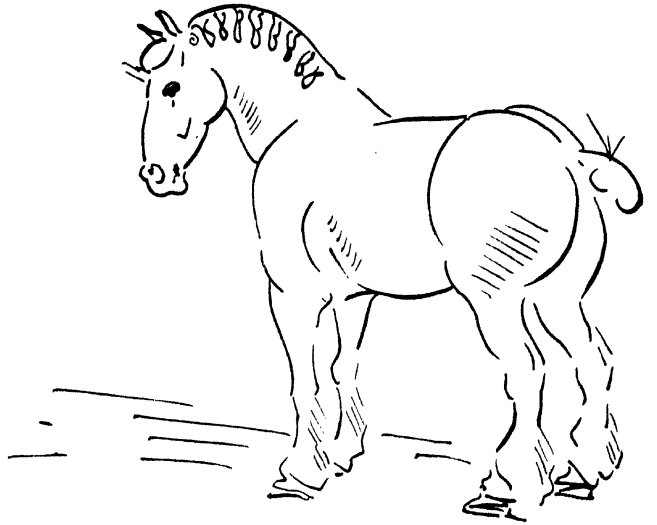
Then we come to the question of bone. When we say "a horse has a lot of bone," we don't mean that his bones are either thicker or more numerous than those of other horses. We mean only that he has a good measurement below the knee, which is a sure guide to the strength of a horse's sinews. Eight inches is fair, nine inches is good. You must see that your purchase is something between the two, unless he is a polo pony. In that case he may be allowed to have a little less.

But we do want to see the horse we buy having clean forelegs, and with what is called good flat bone, which means a strong back sinew.

The shoulder of a horse doesn't matter so very much. Many people say that good shoulders are a luxury, because many horses whose shoulders are not their best quality use them so well that they can do

*The two main considerations
in horse purchase are*

Strength



and

Quality

BUYING SUBSTANCE

everything that is required. So that, if the price is attractive, here is one point you might overlook, provided the horse is well put together in other respects.

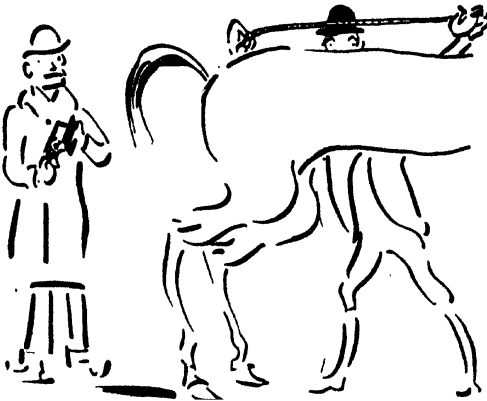
Now about the leggy horse. When we are getting a chaser we are buying an athlete. Now, athletes don't usually have very long legs. The best (except in sprinting) are the shorter, stockier kind, who make up in strength and staying power what they lack in inches.

So it is with horses. Your great, tall, slashing thoroughbreds are usually clumsy horses when it comes to jumping fast. They are more easily knocked down, and when blown a bit are much more likely to fall.

It is the same story. We want to buy strength, not length. We don't buy our horses by the yard, like haberdashery, but by substance. The strong horse without quality can be bought cheap. The quality horse without substance can be purchased cheaper still, and is dear at any price. So aim at strength and soundness first, and add as much quality as your purse can buy, and that is the best tip I can give you.

Your affect. father,

M.



*We don't
buy
our horses
by the
yard.*



more
easily
knocked
down

MY DEAR FATHER,

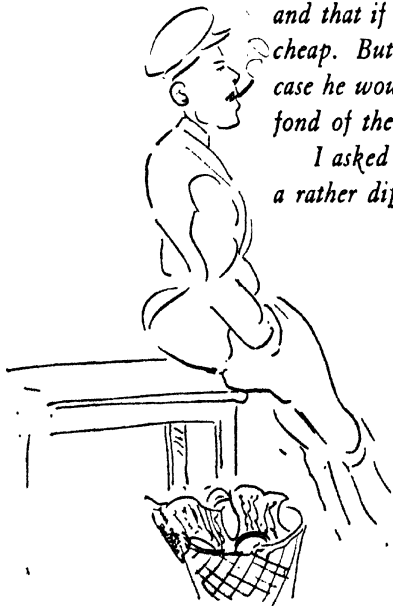
I am awfully obliged to you for all the trouble you have taken, and I feel sure you will be pleased to hear I didn't buy any of those horses.

Yesterday, however, what I think was a real good opportunity came my way, and I "clicked." It was one of those few chances that may never occur again. I had to decide on the spot, or lose it, and so I bought the horse, and I am awfully pleased I did. I have got him in my stable now, and he looks like £250 of the very best. He is a topper, and I feel even you would be awfully pleased with him if you saw him. He is a slashing big chestnut gelding, 15'3, of great quality, and looks all over like galloping. He is only ten, and reasonably sound, although, of course, his legs are not quite as clean as a two-year-old. But, naturally, one can't expect that with a horse that has been worked as he has.

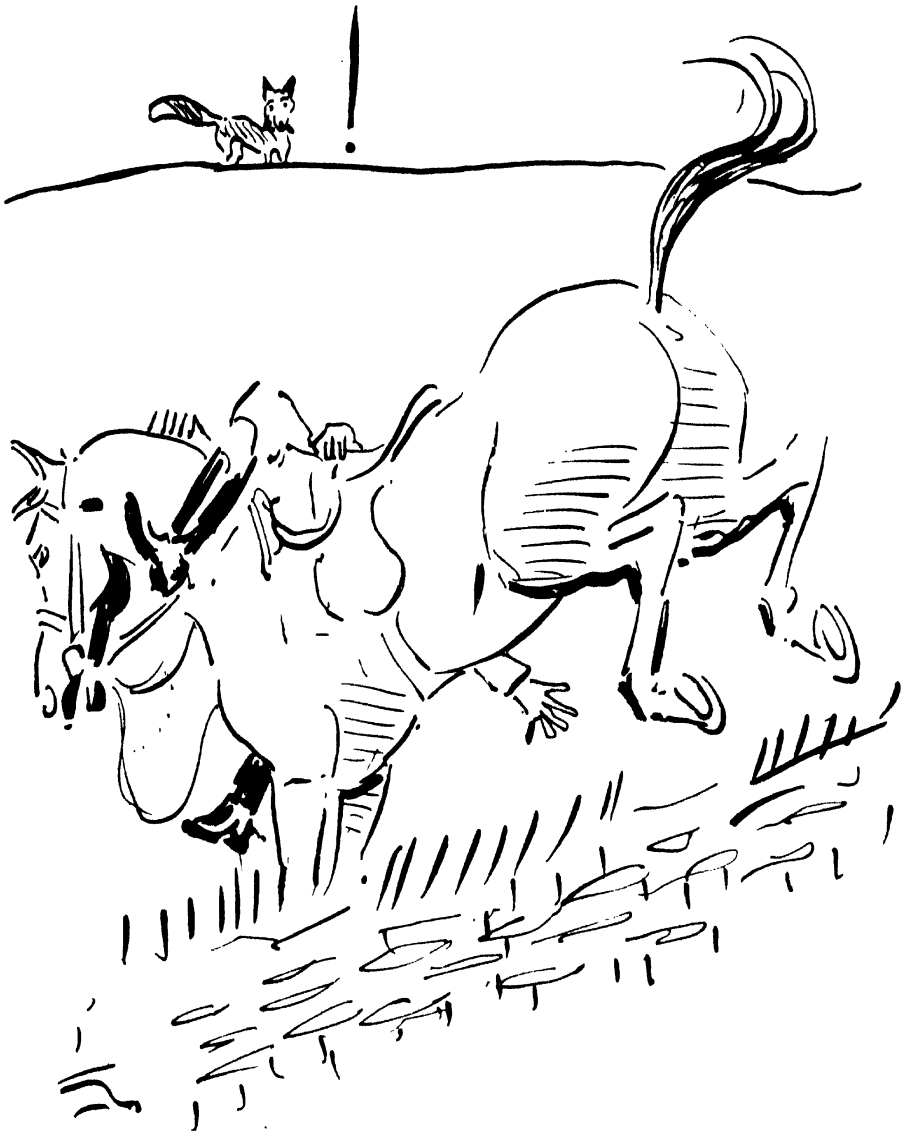
He is well up to 13'7, and is as quiet as a lamb in the stable.

I came about him in this way. There is a major in the infantry in the next barracks to us, who comes out hunting a good deal. He keeps two or three fairly good horses, and, I believe, he gave quite a lot for this one only the other day. It had a tremendous reputation, he told me, but that it wanted a good rider. As he was an infantryman he had very little opportunity of doing much riding, but he had noticed me out with hounds, and he felt that I was one of the very few fellows he thought this horse would be in safe hands with (Wasn't that nice?), and that if I would like to buy him he would let me have him really cheap. But he wouldn't dream of letting anyone else have him, in case he wouldn't ride him or treat him properly, as he was really very fond of the horse.

I asked him what he wanted for him, and he said that he was in a rather difficult position. There was a captain in his battalion who



I am
awfully
obliged to
you —



He had
noticed me
out with pounds

JOHN BUYS

had offered him 75 guineas, but he was such a bad rider he didn't want to let him have it. But if I liked to give him 50 guineas down, and never let on to a soul what I had given, he would let me have it right away. It must be spot cash there and then, so that he could tell the captain the horse was definitely sold, that very evening when he met him at Mess.

So, father, what could I do? It was the very thing I was looking for, so I wrote him out the cheque, and the horse is mine.

I am very pleased about it, and I am sure you will be pleased too.

Your affect. son,

JOHN.

MY DEAR JOHN,

As you have bought the horse, I can only hope for the best, and I will come and see him one of these days, if he hasn't broken your neck in the meanwhile.

I don't want to discourage you, but, in my opinion, you have been flattered, flustered, and flattened. If you haven't brains to think with, *nous* to help you, or wits to guide you, your safest abode is in an asylum for congenital idiots. No one who is fond of his horse and wants to give it a good home would ever dream of offering it to the latest joined subaltern of a cavalry regiment.

He is the *last* person to select, and if the major says he thinks you are one of the very few his horse would be in safe hands with, I can only say I am amazed at the major's opinion, which must be unique.

No, my boy, the hook has been skilfully baited with flattery to cajole you, a price to tempt you, and a yarn to feather it, in order that you should swallow it whole without examination, question, or parley. And you have. I hope it won't prove too indigestible.

Your affect. father,

M.



If he hasn't
broken your
neck.

STABLE MANAGEMENT

MY DEAR JOHN,

So your chargers are in rotten condition, and your Colonel has told you so. Well, I am not surprised. Last joined second lieutenants don't get the best grooms; they also have a modicum of experience and a mountain of energy, and the two don't mix.

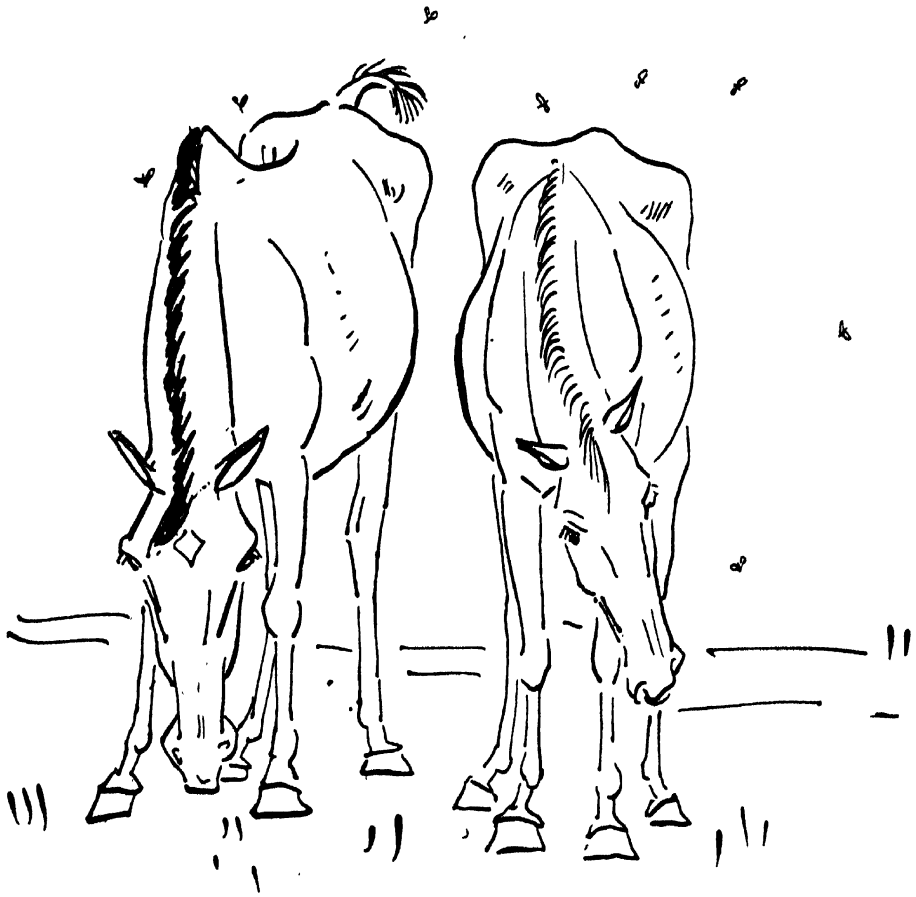
Your horses are probably over-ridden; at least, I know mine were when I was your age. Don't forget, six hours under the saddle is plenty for any day's hunting, and that only twice a week. More than that, you are over-working your horse. Anyway, don't ride one animal more than eighteen hours in the week all told, exercise included. In the hunting season work it out for yourself, and you will find it is a good rule, if you want to keep your horses fit and fat, and even eighteen hours a week is a good deal, and it applies only to *reasonable* riding, too. If you shove and push and bucket your horse over a country without judgment or thought, even eighteen hours a week are too many. If you have a horse that frets or fights you at every stride, then again you must remember you are giving him exercise in concentrated form, and a little goes a long way.

But let us suppose you haven't been over-working these unfortunate horses of yours . . . then there is all that much less reason for their being thin, and I recommend you to visit your stable at least six times every twenty-four hours. It has a wonderful effect, particularly at five o'clock in the morning.

See what sort of a night your horses have had. Have they been lying down? If not, why not? What is the atmosphere like? Can you cut it with a knife? or is the stable fresh and sweet smelling? Or, on the other hand, in winter time, is the stable too cold? Are your horses



*see what sort
of a night
your horses
have had!*



so your chargers
are in
rotten condition

GROOM'S ERRORS

properly rugged up at that hour, or are they shivering with their night rugs half under their feet? Is your groom one of those idiots who blanket horses up in the hottest weather, perfectly regardless whether they want it or not?

"Oh no," you say, "my groom is a perfect marvel; he would never do anything like that."

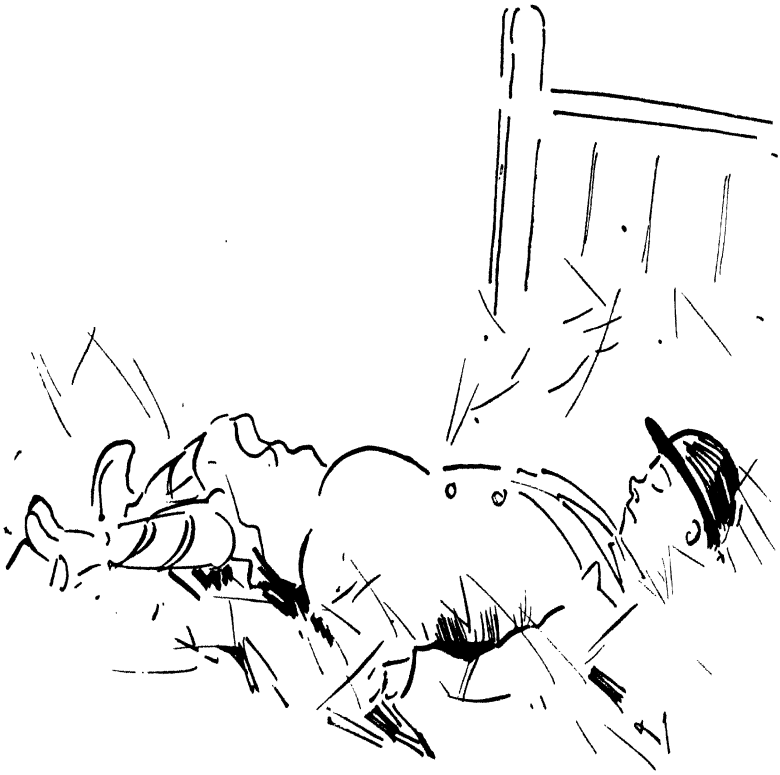
Well, is he? I'll bet he is rather worse than most grooms in that respect, and that is saying a great deal.

I was at a horse show in New York a little while ago, and although it was November the weather was abnormally warm. The horses were all stabled in the basement, where the furnaces were, and even at the best of times it was a hot and badly ventilated stable, but on this occasion it was foetid. The thermometer down there stood at nearer 90° than 80°, I should imagine, and yet *every* horse there had his full winter rugs on!

One horse I was asked to go and see, because it had a touch of fever, and I found it with not only all its rugs and bandages on all four legs, bandages on his tail, but also a flannel scarf round its neck! I suggested that some of these unnecessary garments might be removed, but neither the groom nor the owner would hear of it! If I had been the horse I would have eaten the blankets and kicked the groom out of the stable.

No. It is rare, indeed, to find a groom who is sensible, while many owners are worse still. They usually have all kinds of weird ideas, which seem to be ineradicable. The most usual of these are their rules in reference to water.

Horses mustn't drink when they are hot. They mustn't drink if the water is too cold. They mustn't drink much, and so on. All sorts of rules are manufactured to make things more difficult for themselves and their horses. When, after all, the simple rule is the best. Let a horse have water permanently in his box, and let him drink



It is rare indeed
to find a groom
who is
sensible

when he likes. But see that it is fresh water! The great simple rule in horse-management is, "treat a horse as you would yourself."

For instance, let us suppose you have just finished a very strenuous game of polo, and you are dying for a drink. How would you like it if your aunt suddenly appeared with a huge ulster, which she insisted on your wearing, and then told you you couldn't have a drink until you were thoroughly cooled! Silly, wouldn't it be? But that's the sort of thing people do with their horses daily and are quite proud of it.

Of course, when a horse has watered he must go quietly for some while afterwards, and if he is very thirsty it is perhaps advisable not to let him drink too much all at once. But that is a different matter altogether.

Some grooms hate opening windows lest the horses' coats should stare, and they keep them hermetically sealed up in dark and stuffy boxes. Their charges are often tied up on the short rack in case they should eat their bedding.

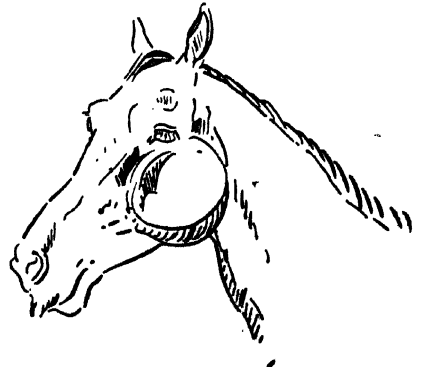
The ignorance of grooms is occasionally terrifying. I was going round a private stable not long ago, where the stud-groom was earning a princely income. I saw one horse running badly at the nose, and so I said that I was sorry to see he had a cold.

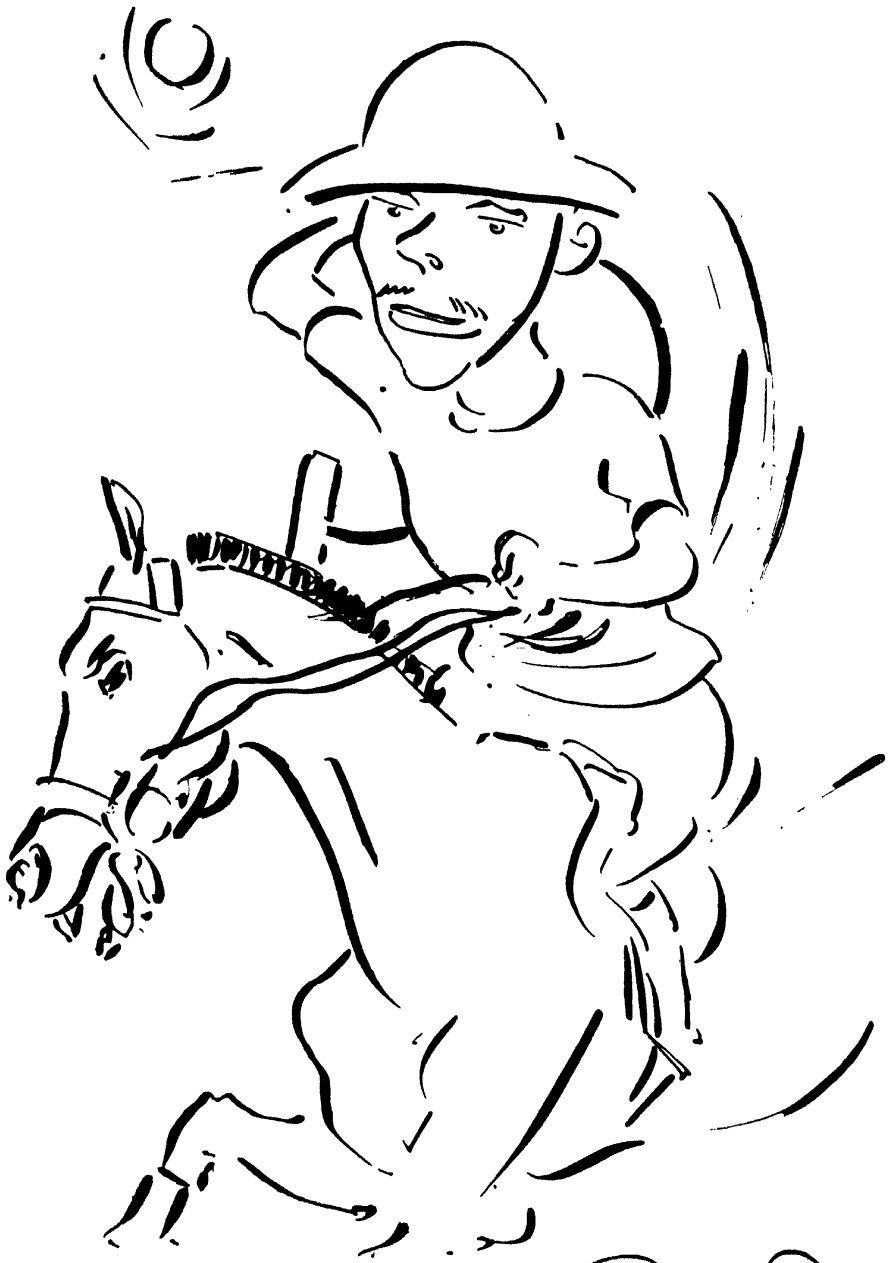
"That's no cold," said he; "you see, that horse is a bit touched in the wind, and it's chronic with him, and that's how it is!"

There was another groom I knew of whose sole remedy for his horses was to file their teeth. Whenever a horse looked a little tucked up after a day's hunting, off he would go to the farrier to have his teeth rasped. Eventually, the lack of condition was due more to toothache than to any other cause.

Don't forget, contentment and grooming make a horse fat. In the Austrian army there is a saying: "Putzen is der halbe futter" ("Grooming is worth half a ration"). Also, so many of those thinning ailments, such as crib-biting, wind sucking, and weaving, are, I firmly

*— due more to
toothache than to
any other cause.*





A very
strenuous game
of polo

ESSENTIAL QUIETNESS

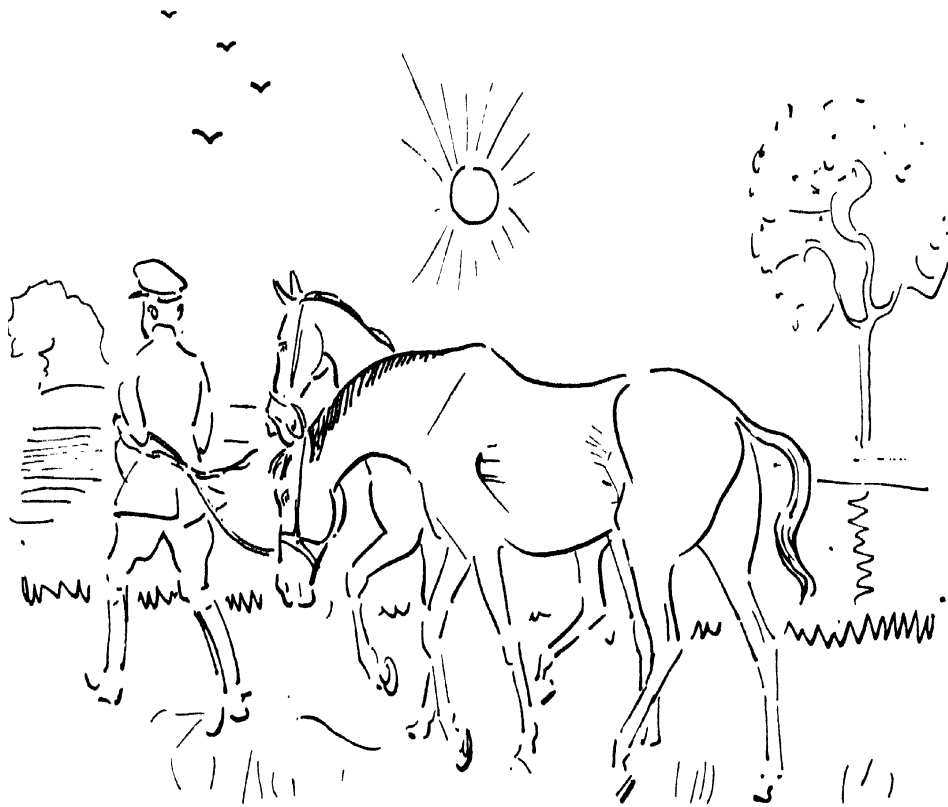
believe, due to boredom and isolation.

If your horses don't lie down, there is some very good reason for it, and it is your business to find out what it is. The completely contented horse will lie down most of the night, and often a part of the day, when all is quiet. And a horse that has been really well handled will allow you to sit upon his back while he still remains lying down in his box. Try to achieve this standard.


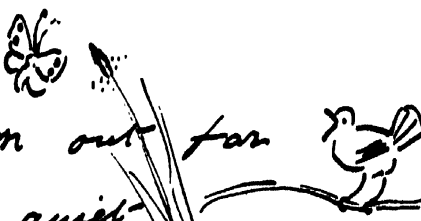
Horses dislike noise and shouting, and boisterous grooms, and appreciate, much more than most people imagine, anyone who handles them in a quiet and friendly way. Then, again, how do your horses behave when they are out? There are lots of high-couraged horses that fret themselves to skin and bone, and when they get back to their manger are too restive to eat properly.

With horses such as these, a good rule is to take them out for the most quiet exercise possible, and let them get slowly accustomed to their work. Perhaps as chargers you may not be able to do this, but still you can always ride a troop horse "in lieu" until you have got them quiet. But, anyway, there is nothing better than just gentle hacking for most of these and many other troubles. If only people had the time to hack their hunters regularly, and while doing so tried to make them as handy as polo ponies, so many of their difficulties during the hunting season would vanish.

In discussing the reasons why your horses are thin, I haven't touched upon the obvious, such as bad or insufficient forage or water, because I presume you have enough sense to think of those sort of things for yourself; but sometimes you get a greedy horse that eats his food so fast he can't digest it. The reason for this is, maybe, that he fears the troop-horse next door may bag it; but it doesn't occur very much in private stables. Some people, mixing up cause and effect, put stones in the manger, so that the horse cannot pick up a very large mouthful at once, but, of course, the first plan to try is to see that he eats



Take them out for
the most-quiet-
exercise possible



GO SLOW

somewhere in peace, and then, if it continues, it is time to try other expedients (such as feeding out of a shallow tray), because the habit may be a bad one.

I think every aged horse can be fattened in a few weeks provided he gets plenty to eat and is well groomed and wisped, has sufficient exercise, and lives in a thoroughly peaceful state, assuming, of course, he is otherwise in normal condition.

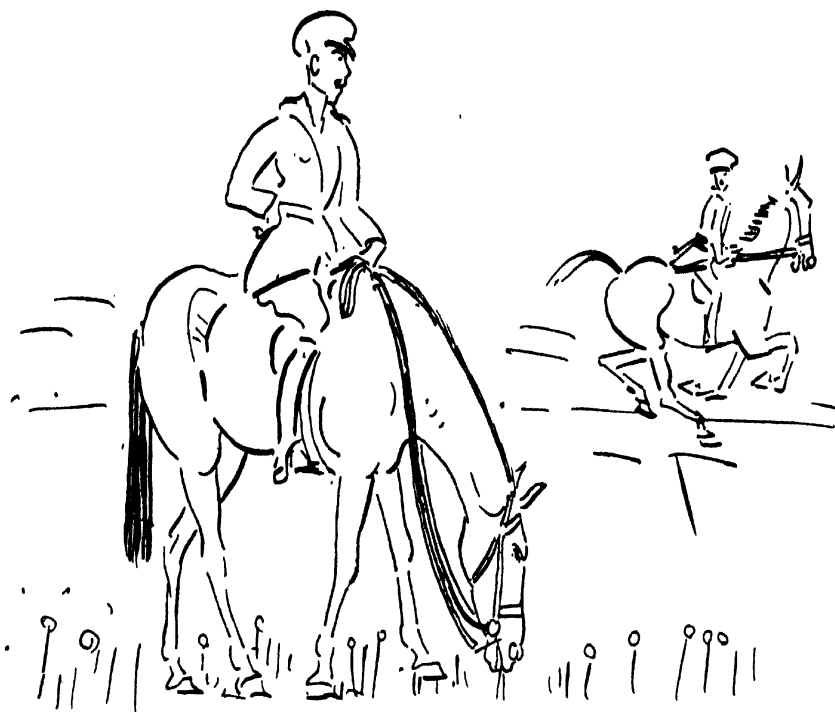
There is another class of groom who believes in physic.

Whenever a horse has a cold, or nettle rash, or filled legs, or a staring coat, they give it a ball. It thoroughly upsets the unfortunate horse for a couple of days (so he doesn't have to go to exercise), and that is about all that happens. Most troubles can be overcome with a touch of Epsom salts and a linseed mash on Saturday night. When things are so bad that this rule doesn't apply, then it is time to ask a vet.'s opinion. But for Heaven's sake don't go messing your horses about with all sorts of nostrums on the advice of some unqualified man.

Don't forget an overworked horse has filled legs, and when you see them so, cut down the work at once. A well-exercised, properly ridden horse, should have his legs perfectly clean and cool before exercise in the morning. If this is not so (and there are few that are), study the reason, and go gently in your riding until things are perfectly all right. Then you can go on again as usual, but not before. That is the way to keep your horses always sound and saleable.

When you ride, remember that any fool can go fast; it requires an expert to go slow.

Here is another point. Don't go bandaging your horse's legs, except when there is some real necessity. In a great many stables you see every horse with all his legs bandaged up all day long and every day. They are even bandaged when they go out for exercise. What the good of it can be I have never been able to fathom; in fact, I see in it nothing but harm. So before you copy other people in this, and,



Remember that
any fool can go fast;
it requires an expert
to go slow.

BANDAGES

indeed, in many other instances in the management of horses, **THINK**.

So for a few earnest moments we will **THINK** about bandages.

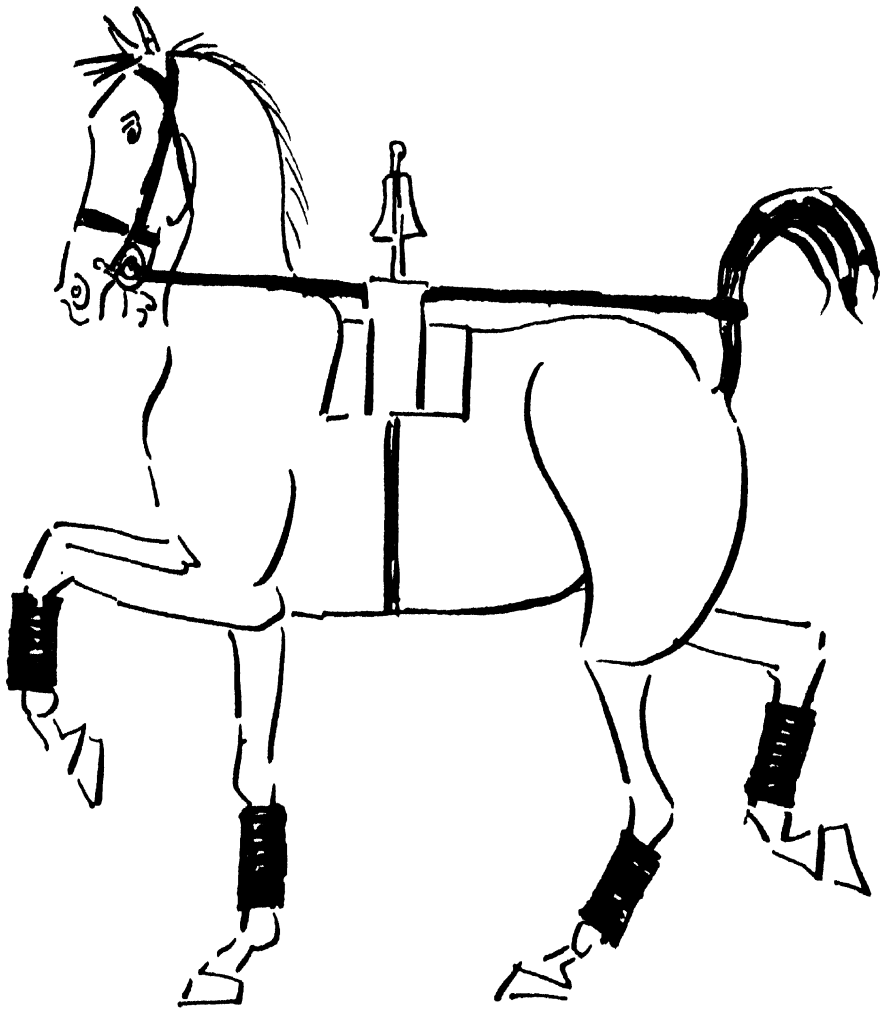
I believe most doctors will tell you that bandages are weakening things if worn continually, and certainly it is very unusual to see tennis players, for example, playing with wrist-straps on. When I see every tennis player at Wimbledon playing in them, then I shall believe there is something in it, but until I do I shall continue to think that bandages do not strengthen the sinews. I feel from my own experience that a wrist-strap soon seems to weaken my wrist, and I wouldn't wear one if I could help it. So it seems to me the same line of reasoning can apply to horses. It is, therefore, doubtful if bandages at exercise or work do much good, but there is no doubt that they often do a great deal of harm. I will give you some instances.

Sometimes a piece of grit or small stones get inside, and do much damage before they are discovered. Sometimes they are put on too tight and stop the circulation. I remember seeing one disconsolate owner at a horse show one day. He had brought his horse many miles to compete in a hunter class, but tight bandages had proved too much for his exhibit, and its legs were so swollen it could hardly move. Of course, in racing, when some protection is required, that is another thing, because then they are usually put on with cotton wool, and are taken off again immediately after the race. I do not speak of those instances, but only of the owners who exercise their horses daily in these unnatural appliances.

Then we come to the owner who has bandages put on in the stable. What they are there for Heaven only knows, especially in warm weather, when cold can offer no explanation. If a horse has filled legs, the best remedy is judicious exercise, but, of course, that can't always be done, and so it is thought that wet bandages will reduce the swelling. The old rule was: if there is heat in the leg, put on a hot-water bandage, but if it is cool, then apply cold-water ones.



*— we will think
about bandages*



who exercise
their horses daily
in these unnatural
appliances

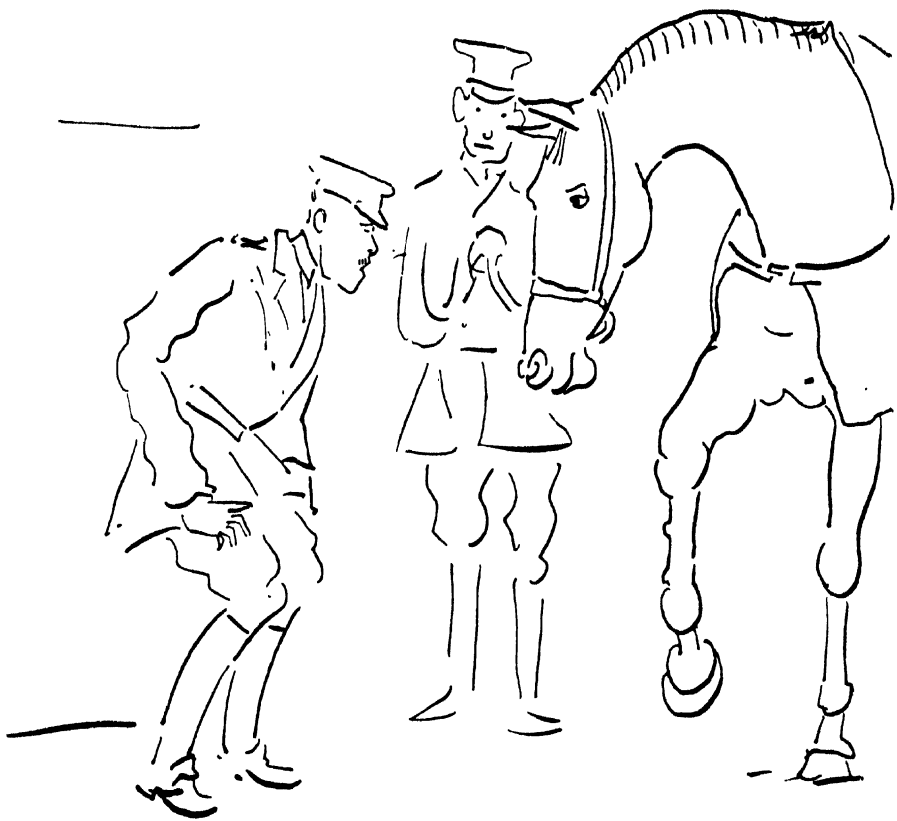
FILLED LEGS

But, oh! what a quaint rule this is! Think again! If a hot-water bandage is put on, within ten minutes or so it is merely damp. If a cold-water one is used, within ten minutes it is as warm as the heat of the horse's leg. So that, to be effective, the groom would have to spend the whole day in putting on and taking off bandages. The heat is sometimes kept in by placing other bandages over the top of the first one. Sometimes they are waterproof ones, sometimes they are only wetted; but when all is said and done, they act only as warm, wet swabs, and the good they do is negligible.

Why do you suppose a wet bandage is going to help? Do you keep one on yourself if you have got a sprain? No, of course not. The plain, straightforward rule is so simple and so obvious. Do exactly what you would do to yourself. When the leg is inflamed and hot-water fomentation is necessary, foment with hot water, and, when finished, dry and allow to rest. If the leg is only filled and cold water is required, then put the leg under the tap for as long as necessary. This is work grooms can and will do readily, because it appeals to their sense, but to keep on changing bandages all day long is a thing they don't do, however much you think they do.

So the conclusion you cannot help coming to is merely this: Keep some bandages in your stables ready for emergencies, such as for cuts, or for travel, or for racing, but otherwise leave them off altogether. Horses don't wear bandages in the prairies, so why in your stables?

But talking of "gummy" legs, as I have just said, it is only Nature crying out against over or under work. Those legs which have had proper exercise do not fill. The horse that comes up from grass has legs as clean as a two-year-old. But just as you require patience in your schooling, so also do you want patience in your stable management. Watch your horse's legs with care, and if you see they are filled in the morning, then don't take him hunting, but go for a quiet hack instead. It is difficult and sometimes impracticable, but it is wise.



Watch your
horse's legs with
care.



BANDAGED TAILS

When speaking of filled legs, of course, I do not refer to legs which are swollen from debility, fevers, etc. That is another thing altogether. Here the swelling will go down as the cause disappears and gentle exercise can start, so that the rule of quiet work applies equally in both cases. Then, to go back to bandages, do you bandage your horse's tail? If so, why?

Think again. Does it, can it, do any good? I *know* it can do harm. Much harm. I have seen every hair fall out on account of it. But does it do any *good*? What you really want, and want only, is a clean, well-brushed, well-trimmed tail, and then no bandages whatever are needed. But grooms *do* like to bandage up dirty tails and gummy legs so that the horse looks well cared for when anyone comes into the stable.

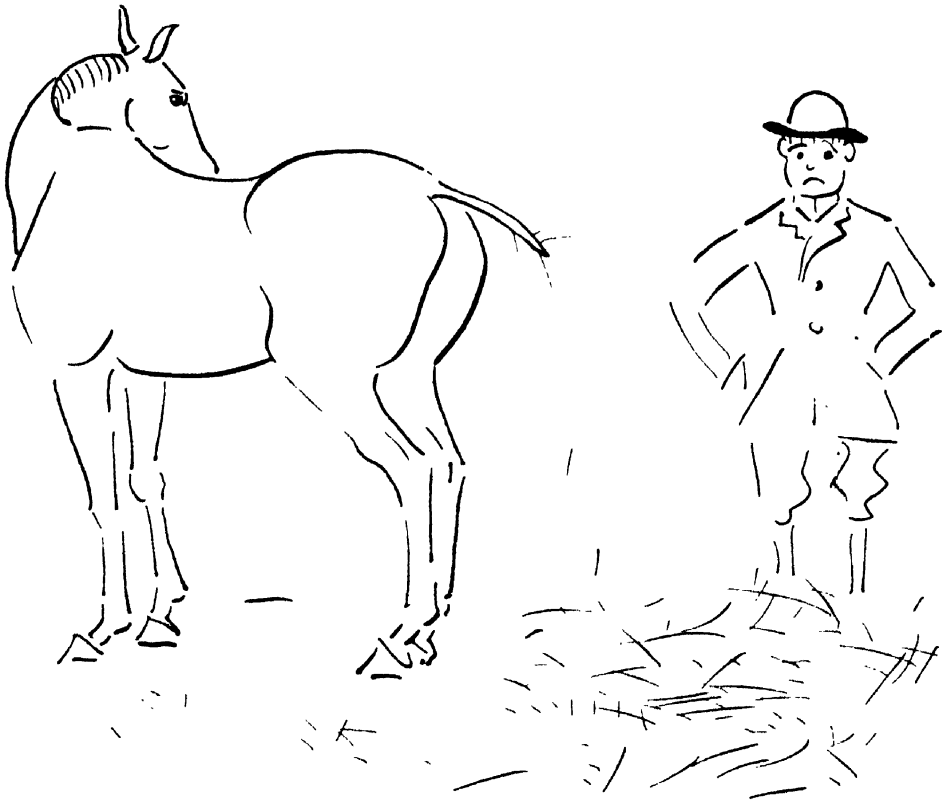
Personally I like to see my horse's legs and tail, and I recommend you to do so, too.

Here's another point which is often overlooked. When your groom turns your horse out for you to mount he usually brings out a brush and rubs hoof-oil on your horse's feet. This makes him look nice and smart, and he hopes you will think what an attentive groom you have. But after the first half-dozen strides the dust is all over the beautiful polish, and it might just as well not have been done.

The best time to rub oil on your horse's feet is at night-time, to prevent the ammonia affecting the horn. But then the owner doesn't see that as a rule, and so the groom gets no credit.

And now, when next you write you can tell me what your horses are like, not only at 5 a.m., but also at 8 p.m., and then I shall know you have taken my advice to heart.

Your affect. father,
M.



I have seen
every hair
fall out on account
of it!

MY DEAR FATHER,

I like your advice on stable management very much, except the 5 a.m. part, which seems a little extreme to me. But I will certainly see what I can do, and I am ever so much obliged.

I have just begun to take Paleface (that's my new horse's name) in hand, and was riding him quietly about the schooling field yesterday when Captain Matheson, our Riding-Master, came up. He is an awfully good, strong rider, and can make a horse do anything. He asked me to get on his horse and see if I could get it to jump one of the fences. So on I got, feeling rather blue, and tried to ride him at the fence. I simply couldn't get near it! The horse played up and refused and ran out each time, and I felt quite helpless.

So then Matheson said: "Oh, never mind; I didn't think you would get him over. The horse is full of temper and wants a bit of sobering." So he got on then and started riding him as hard at that fence as any man possibly could. As he got near he gave the horse a real hard one with his stick, jammed the spurs in, and lo and behold! over he went. "There," he said. "That's the way to ride 'em when they show temper. Make 'em understand that you are master and that there is to be no nonsense about it, and then they'll go."

It was splendid, and I think there can be no finer rider in the army than Matheson. Don't you think it was a wonderful piece of horsemanship?

Your affect. son,
JOHN.



Don't you
think it
was a
wonderful
piece of
horsemanship?



He is an awfully
good, strong
rider.



RIDING

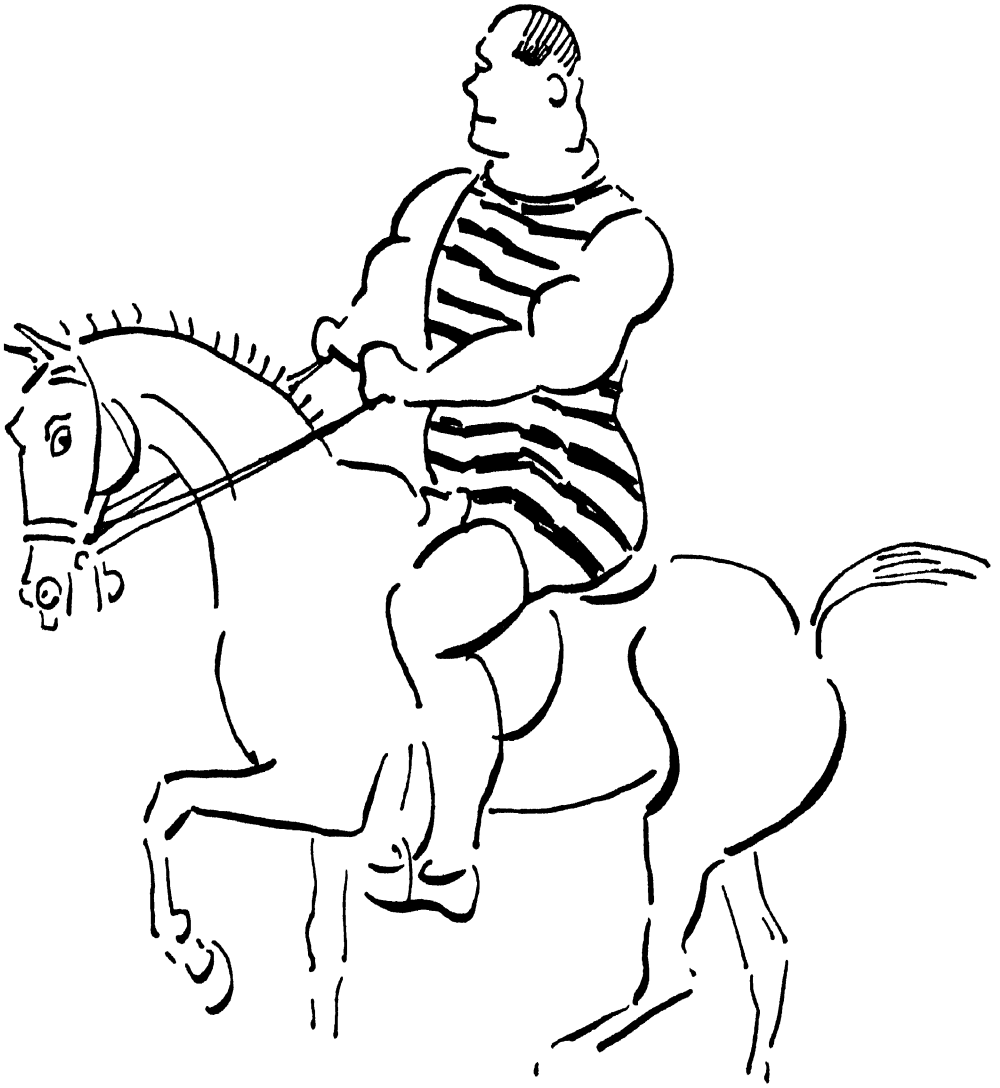
MY DEAR JOHN,

I am not the least impressed with Captain Matheson's fine riding. His legs are obviously too strong for his head, and he thinks he can do by strength what wiser people have to do by skill. Pigs are driven easier to meadow than to market, and force, though temporarily effective, has never produced good results at any time. To train any animal we must first gain its confidence, and then, by making the lessons easy, induce it to enjoy them. Without a generous co-operation we can effect nothing worth having, and such results as we do attain will have disappointment and dissatisfaction cropping up at every turn.

That is one reason why ladies are often better trainers than men, because they frequently supply by patience what they lack in strength. Muscle is a sort of spare part in a trainer's equipment, which should be seldom wanted. Your Samsons and your Sandows, your fine "bold and strong" horsemen, want to do in a day that which should take at least a month, or perhaps even a year. They attain the sort of result which would horrify a good trainer, but with which they are quite satisfied, especially when they can get a little cheap admiration from idiots who know less than themselves. So let us look into this little business and see where the trouble lies.

The horse obviously did not like the fence, and there are two reasons for this. He was frightened of either the jump or the rider.

If he was frightened of the jump, then to force him over it under punishment would not build up his confidence; if it was the rider,



*Your Samsons
and your
Sandovars*



REFUSING

then the forcible application of both whip and spur would not help to endear him.

There are many writers who tell you how it is necessary to fight things out with a horse, how you must proclaim yourself master by force and severity. This is the Bolshevik school. It has never paid with men, and it will never pay with horses. If a man proclaims himself emperor over a nation, it would hardly be wisdom to send flogging parties round to prove his power and his greatness.

Just as a man can take over the reins of government, with control and authority, without bloodshed or even opposition, so can we prove ourselves master of our horses if we handle them the right way. The schoolroom birch can well hang visibly on the wall of the classroom, but he is a bad teacher that ever should find need to use it. So let's get back to your friend Captain Matheson.

His horse much disapproved of jumping this particular fence. Very well. Instead of forcing the horse over, he should have tried to use his brains. The questions he should ask himself are these: Does this horse dislike all fences, or only this one? Does he always dislike this fence, or is it something new?

If the horse is an habitual refuser, then he wants systematic schooling, spread over many weeks. If he dislikes that particular fence only, then he must previously have had some unhappy experiences at it, and the rider should do everything in his power to see that those impressions should be removed and others of an agreeable nature substituted.

This end could be attained only by the quietest and most gentle "mothering" imaginable—by lowering the fence or by making it in every way as easy as possible. If his horse is usually a good and free jumper and has suddenly taken to refusing, then the sooner he gets him home, gets his shoes off and his legs in hot water, the better, as



This
is
The Bolshhevik School.

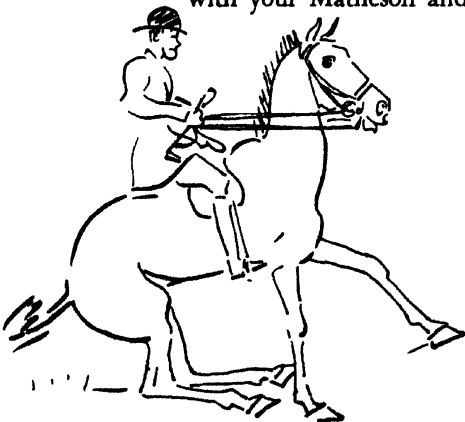
JUMPING YOUNGSTERS

he has in all probability something hurting him. The trouble with Matheson is that he is, like so many other ignorant horse trainers, in too much of a hurry. He thought he ought to get that horse over that fence that very morning instead of spending, perhaps, a month over it. When schooling horses we must take a long view. Never bother about daily improvements, but just go steadily on, and when we look back several months and think what we were doing then, we will be surprised at our progress. Patience all the time. Patience when you get up, patience when you go to bed. Write "Patience" over your stable door and repeat it until it has gripped you.

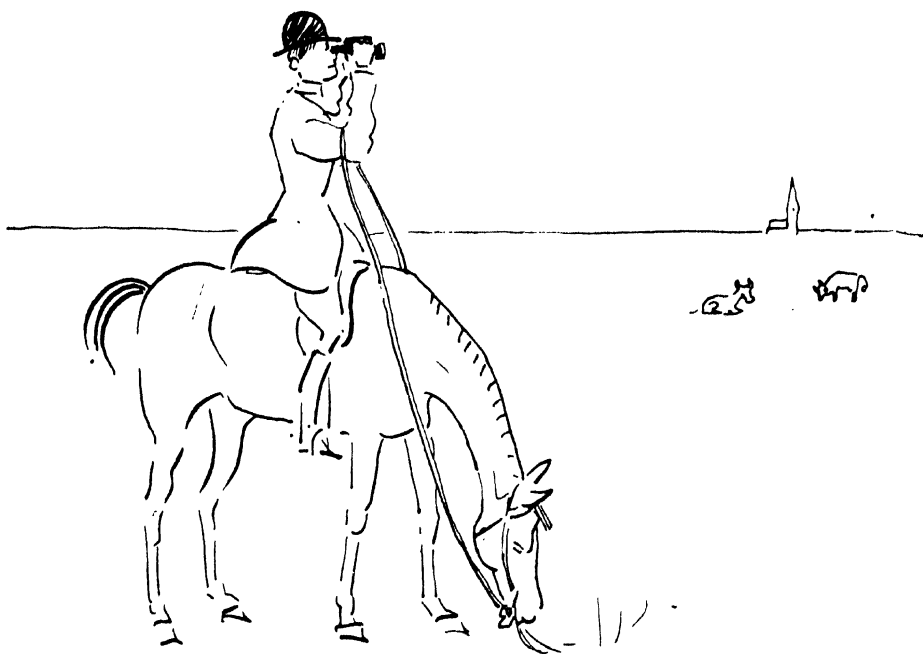
No horse is fit to ride or to train until he regards the whip as a friend, and yet we have your ridiculous Captain thinking he is training his horse by flogging him, and then there is ignorant you admiring him for his fine exhibition of horsemanship!


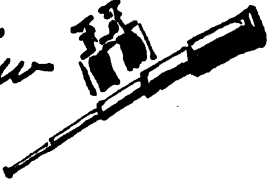
It is all folly, my boy, utterly stupid, and horny-handed. Why be in such a hurry? I was taken round a private stable the other day, and the owner showed me, with pride, a three-year-old being ridden over a series of jumps quite 4 feet 6 inches high. He asked what I thought of it. Well, I didn't tell him exactly what I did think, because we are still friends, but I will tell you. I think it was the most ill-advised, ridiculous scheme for schooling horses I have ever seen. He was proud of it because the horse got over, but I hated it because it wasn't a jump, it was a sprawl. The horse was unmuscled, unbalanced, and unflexed, and he should never have been allowed to see a fence of over 2 feet high for at least two years or even more. Why, the horse didn't know how to walk even, and there it was being forced over obstacles an old horse would be proud to have jumped! That sort of thing isn't breaking a horse in; it is breaking him down. It is not education; it is destruction.

However, I am telling you this, not because it has anything to do with your Matheson and his efforts, but because I want to show you



*Why. The horse
didn't know
how to walk
even!*



When schooling
horses 
we must take
A long view 

TEMPER

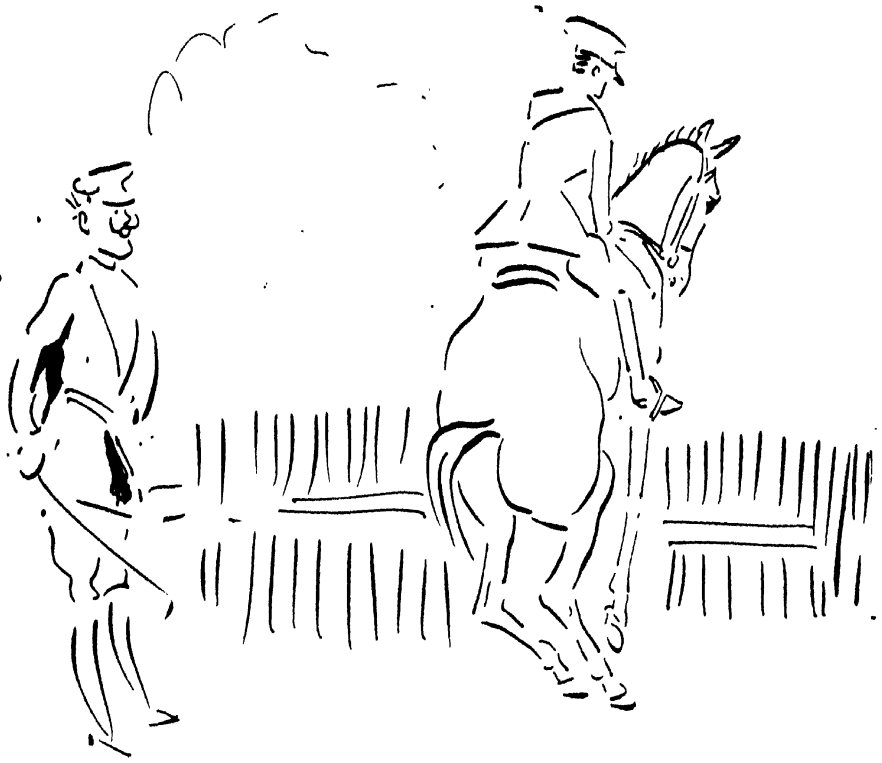
how much many people have to learn before they understand how to train horses. But, of course, it doesn't actually apply in this case.

Here we have what is, I suppose, an experienced hunter, who knows how to jump, and who has jumped all sorts of fences out hunting. Now, if that horse had been properly ridden, instead of disliking jumping, he would enjoy it very much indeed, and he would go for any sort of fence without ever turning his head. But he hasn't been properly ridden; he has had some very unpleasant experiences of what a fence means to him, and he is beginning to show a very natural resentment. Consequently, the very last thing your riding-master should have done was to show off his "strong, determined" horsemanship. He should have either lowered the fence or have taken the horse to some easier place, and with patience and tact endeavoured to show his horse that nothing unpleasant was going to happen; but then it might take a month or more to get that horse right, and that is what these "bold" horsemen cannot tolerate.

"Temper," did I hear you say? "It was only a damned piece of temper on the part of the horse," and that it was absolutely necessary to show him that he must go wherever he was put. He could jump, knew how to jump, and had jumped that fence, and therefore it was a fight of wills, in which the rider must win!

If that is what you are saying, you are only repeating the folly of the ages. Temper? What is it in a horse? In good hands, temper should not exist, and all training should be conducted on such lines that it need never be aroused. But when temper is displayed, remember that it is the only means a horse has of showing you are handling him incorrectly. Don't fight the horse, but change your methods.

The last time I hit a horse was sixteen years ago. He was a magnificent jumper, but the habit of refusing was growing on him. I had tried patience and coaxing and all the rest of it, and they had failed, so I was determined to give him a real lesson. I took him into



"Temper", did I hear
you say?

UNNECESSARY PUNISHMENT

the riding school, I had some jumps put up, and then the fight began. I hit him hard and often, and I got him round somehow, but what was the result? He hated jumping more than before, and ever more refused with considerably greater persistency. Since then I have dropped the idea of punishment entirely for training horses. There is only one sure road, and that is, the attainment of a cordial and hearty co-operation between yourself and your horse, and this can be achieved only by making every step in your training as easy to understand and to accomplish as it is possible.

So, now, having said what I think of your riding-master's methods, I shall be interested to hear how you are getting on with your new horse.

Your affect. father,
M.



← your
affect.
Father



I have dropped
the idea of
punishment.
(so have I, Father!)

MY DEAR FATHER,

After my last letter I can hardly bear to tell you what happened to-day. I took Paleface out hunting, and all went well until we got to the meet. Directly he saw hounds he began to get terribly excited. He kept on turning round and round, and kicked at any horse or hound he could reach. I had the devil of a time I can tell you, but it was nothing to what came after. Directly the hounds had gone away, he just caught hold of the bit in his teeth, and I don't think there is a man living who could have held him. Off we went. I jumped on a hound, I nearly knocked down the Master, and nothing would have stopped us breaking both our necks had it not been for a friendly haystack. Having brought him to a standstill, I jumped off and led Paleface home, utterly dejected and worn out. Nearly everybody came up to me and said: "Whatever could possibly have induced you to buy that vicious brute? Everybody knows him here, and he is a positive danger to the hunt. If he doesn't break his own neck, he will certainly break yours."

What do you recommend me to do?

Your affect. son,
JOHN.



A yarn to
stuff
Father
with this
time!



*I jumped
on a hound!*

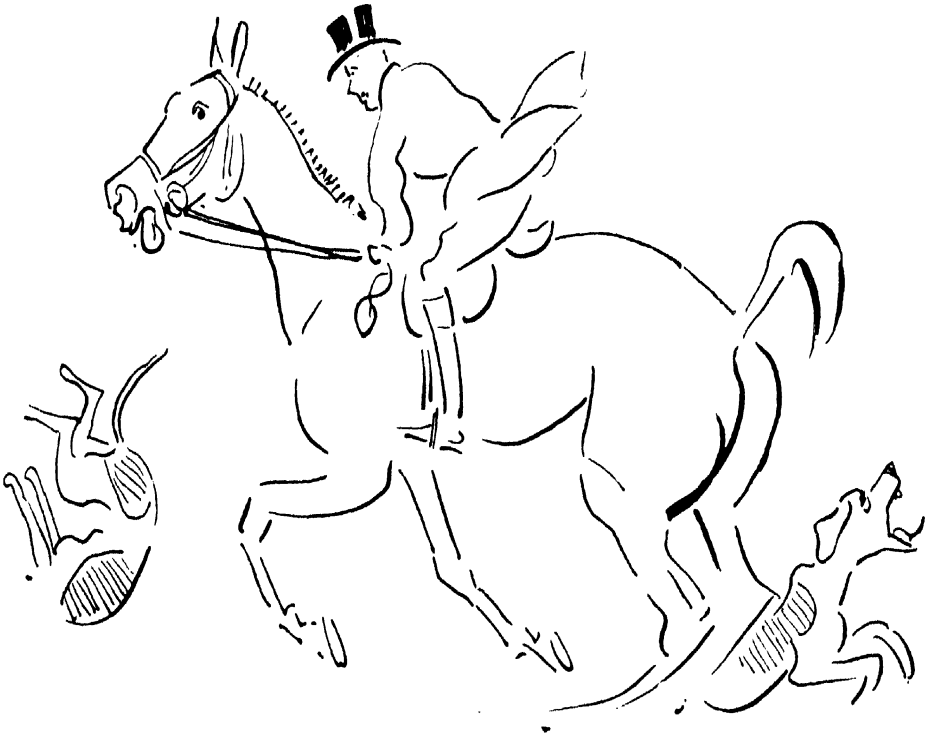
SCHOOLING

MY DEAR JOHN,

You ask me what you should do with Paleface. My advice is: Keep him. He is not a vicious horse at all, but probably a very high couraged one that has been badly handled. But before you can ride him with understanding, you must not only study, but think.

I want you, first of all, to work out reasons for the horse's behaviour. He is quiet in the stable, you tell me, and also, I gather, he was quite quiet with you when hacking to the meet. Therefore, the horse you have bought is temperamentally placid, and quite ready to do whatever you ask of him, provided always he is asked in the right way. In other words, a perfectly sane, normal horse.

Now when he got to the meet he began to play up; this shows that he has learned to associate hounds and hunting with something distasteful, very likely the whip. As a young horse he was, in all probability, a little nervous when first he saw hounds, and crowds, and red coats, and heard the horn. His rider, instead of giving him a little time to settle down, started, no doubt, to hit him, and a battle royal took place. This hitting, the horse associated with hounds, and when next he saw them he played up again, and there was another battle. In course of time he learnt that whenever he went near hounds he got a hiding, hence his manner with you. This fear of a flogging will take a long while to eliminate from his mind—many months, in fact. He is, you tell me, a ten-year-old horse, so he has probably had this kind of experience for about five seasons. If this



In other words,
a perfectly sane, normal
horse.

WHIP AND SPUR

is so you can hardly expect to eradicate it quickly. But, still, with patience and perseverance much can be done. Leave your crop and spurs behind, and take him quietly to every meet you can; never lose your temper, but stroke him and pat him and encourage him with your legs and voice until you can get him to go wherever you wish, quietly. Every day you will find some slight improvement, but you must remember, though it is a long job, it will be well worth it. I don't care whether you never get a day's hunting on him this season, he will do very well for the next, and the experience you will gain in making and moulding him will be of more use to you than that which you can get in any other way.

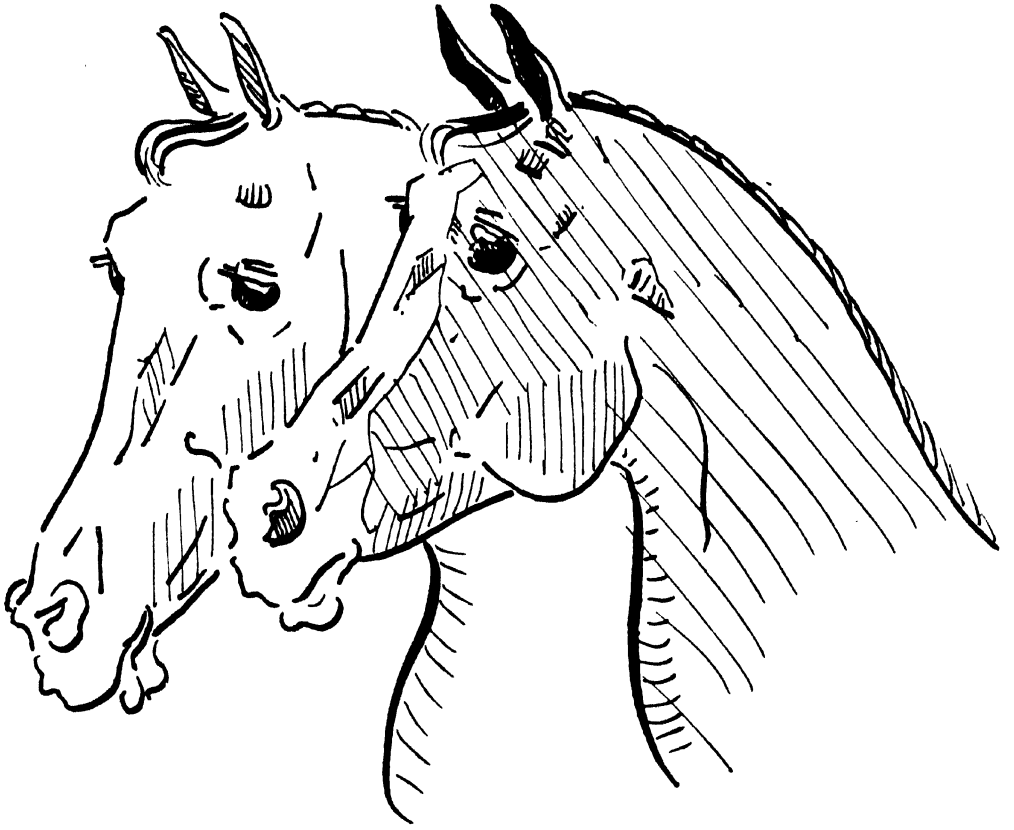
Horses hate the whip and spurs beyond anything, and more harm is done by the misuse of these two things than many people imagine.

One horse I was asked to school the other day simply wouldn't let me mount if I had a cane in my hand, and another I remember, who was normally quite quiet, used to watch his rider buckling on his spurs, and then he was the devil to mount, I can tell you. Don't say horses have no intelligence. The more you have to do with them the more their intelligence strikes you, but unless you understand their special lines of thought, you will join the mob chorus of those who call the horse a stupid animal. So your first place is to get Paleface to disassociate hounds and the meet from discomfort, and to implant in his mind feelings of, if not actual pleasure, at least something akin to it. Sugar or carrots or biscuits will help. But at first he will probably be too distressed to touch them.

I will now talk about his running away. First of all, in Heaven's name don't think of putting in a stronger bit. Pay no attention to any of your friends who suggest such a measure. This is not the way to tackle the problem, and those who recommend it do *not understand horses*.



Don't
say -



horses have no
intelligence.

Let us try to imagine why the horse runs away. What would he do in a state of nature? If he were very fresh he might have a bit of a canter across a couple of fields or so, but within a very short time you would find him quietly eating grass.

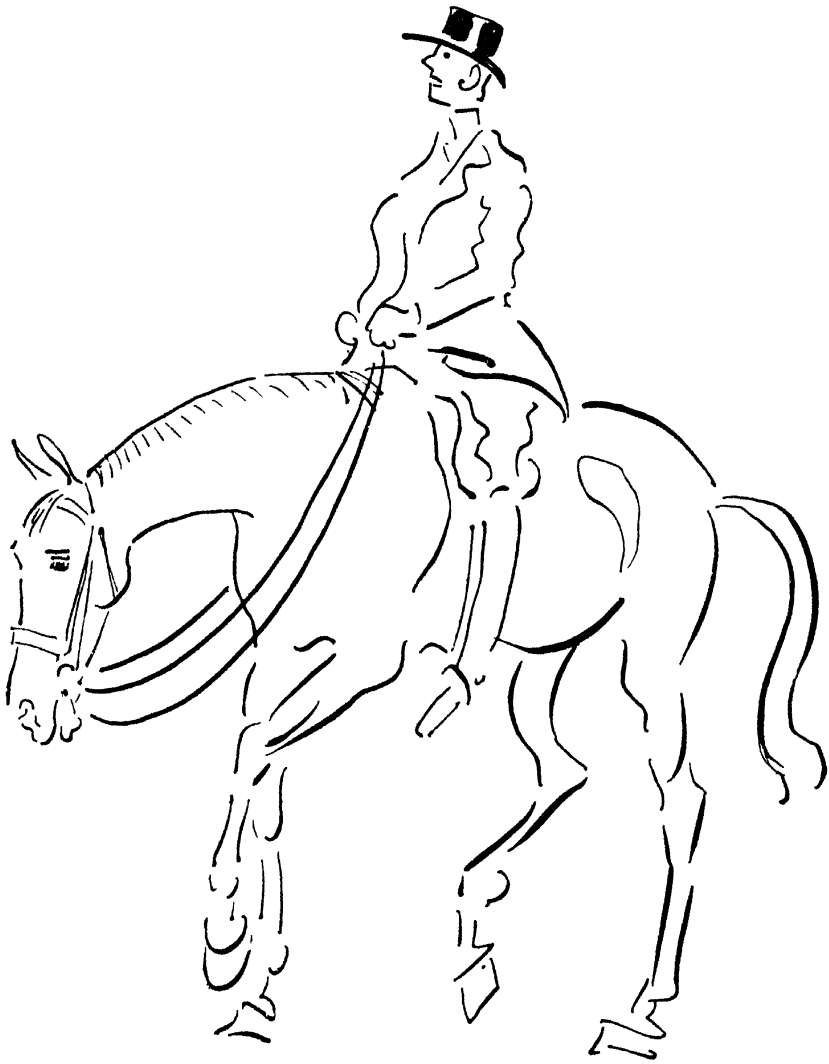
Now I very much want you to think over this simple fact deeply. The natural horse does not want to gallop all out and charge any obstacle he sees, or break his neck against a stone wall. If, therefore, the horse you ride apparently wants to run away, he is doing something which is unnatural to him. This may be caused by the excitement of discomfort, or by being driven frantic by pain or, maybe, the conflicting "aids" of the rider, but it is not the fault of the horse.

The normal horse will certainly like to gallop along with other horses. Where they go he will want to go, too; our boldest and best like to be in front, and the courage and keenness a good horse displays is what so endears him to us. But the well-trained horse will not only gallop when desired, but will also stop when asked, and that not by hauling on to the reins, but by giving him the "office" that stopping is required. Normally speaking, in the hunting field you will certainly find few horses so well trained, but the fact remains that "pulling" should be totally unknown to the schooled horse that is being correctly ridden. In saying this I want you to realise that when a horse pulls at you, or won't stop or yaws, etc., that it is not because that horse has a bad mouth, or is a nasty stupid brute, but it is solely because he has been badly broken, badly schooled, and badly ridden.

So let us now take the case of Paleface. He goes quietly enough upon the road, but directly hounds start running he becomes unmanageable. This is not because he loves or hates hunting, but because he hates the way he has been ridden on such occasions and he fears the worst. He sets his jaw, and with rigid neck hurls himself forward in the vain hope that by galloping he can in some way or another rid himself of the extreme discomfort of having his jaw slowly broken.

*- 10 Think over
this simple
fact
deeply*





pulling should be
totally unknown in
a horse . . .

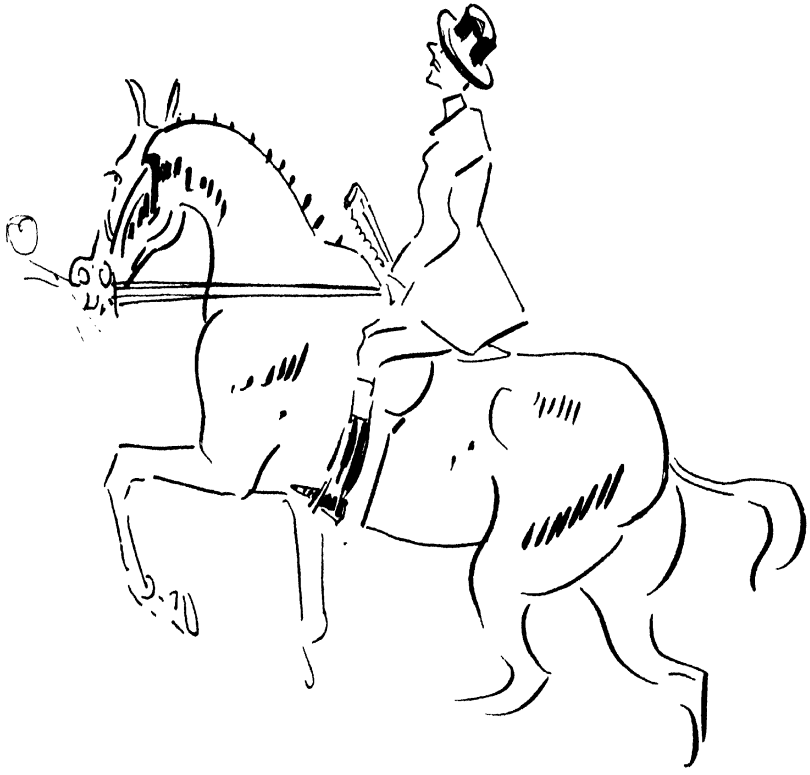
HACKING

Of course, you say, "This is all very well. But I didn't school the horse, and what you say may be very interesting, but it isn't to the point. I happen to possess a horse that I can't hold with hounds, what am I to do?"

The reply to so excellent a question is not to be expressed in a few words.

Your first job is to start hacking him. Ride him in the school. (Oh, you boys in the cavalry! Do you realise what a wonderful advantage it is to have an enclosed riding school at your door? Civilians would give anything for one.) Keep on hacking him at the slow paces, make him bridle-wise and leg-wise. Never allow him to pull at you at all. But get him balanced by working his hocks under him. If he attempts to go the least bit quicker than you intend, pull him up to a walk and start again. Get him, in fact, thoroughly in hand. Then get other horses to gallop past him, and let him learn that there is nothing exciting in that. When you buy "aged" horses it is, of course, impossible to know how they have been handled by past owners. But we can guess sometimes. I had a mare not long ago that, whenever another horse came near, would break out into a sweat and begin to jib. It was obvious that she had had some silly ass of a rider, who, himself nervous, would start hitting her on the approach of anyone else, because he was "frightened at what he was frightened" she would do. Not what she *did*, mind you, but what he was frightened she *would* do.

Horses that have been well treated do not get excited at the sight of other horses; on the contrary, they are glad to see companions. But when they have learnt to associate any kind of meeting with punishment and discomfort, then, and *then alone*, do they start "playing up." Paleface should also hack about with a rough-rider when parades are on, and so to unlearn that the association of other horses and other riders means anything out of the normal.



It was obvious she
had had some
Silly ass
of a rider



FIRST JUMPS

With a horse ten years old, however, all this will take time. Don't be discouraged with slow beginnings, but just keep steadily on, not thinking of from day to day, but rather of from month to month. By taking the long view I have mentioned before, your progress will surprise you, but with a short one you will be discouraged.

After you have got him quite quiet at all paces, so that he will walk, trot, canter, or gallop on a loose rein, then tackle the jumping.

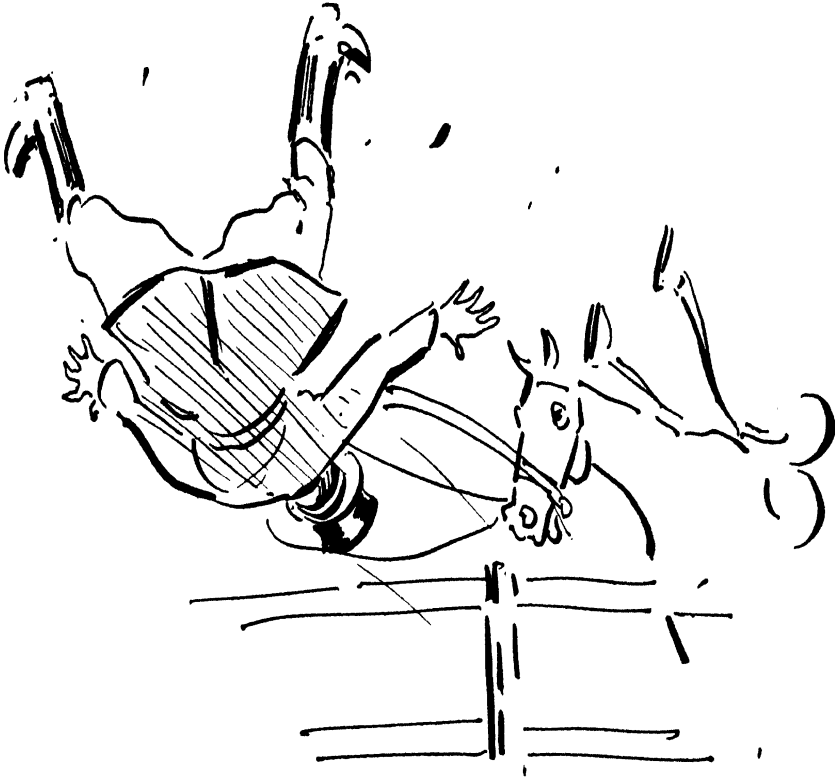
In order to do this, pick out the smallest fence you can find, preferably one in the centre of the ground and without wings.

Stand forty yards away, motionless, facing the jump and exactly square with it. Break into a gentle canter, jump your fence, and pull up not more than forty yards the other side. Halt and remain motionless. Turn on the hock. Remain motionless, shorten your reins, and jump the fence again, and proceed thus backwards and forwards. You must not be satisfied until Paleface will stop without any strain upon the reins at all. In fact, throughout this exercise you should try to imagine your reins are made of brown paper. If you continue this for about three months, you will have attained a perfection you (and your friends) will never have dreamed of.

When you have got your horse to do this simple exercise, you will find you have laid a splendid foundation, which will stand you in good stead, whatever you require of him in the future, whether it be the hunting-field, the show-ring, or the race-course.

Don't let any of your friends laugh at you for jumping so small a fence. I assure you that no horse is fit to jump a big fence until he has jumped for at least two months daily over a small one. We must teach both our horses and ourselves to jump perfectly over easy stuff, quietly and gently, before we should even dream of taking on more formidable obstacles.

The normal horse, however, that we meet in the hunting-field has had as little time as possible spent upon his schooling, and it is rare



Your progress
will surprise you!

THE HORSE'S EYE

indeed to meet a thoroughly schooled hunter, although it is common enough to find those who will carry you safely and who are fine performers.

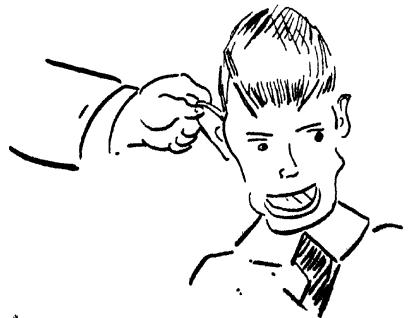
You have the chance now, by exercising patience and perseverance, to turn what is an impossible hunter into a highly trained horse. You must never be satisfied until you see Paleface come out of his stable with a placid eye. If we all would study the eyes of our horses, we should quickly learn to understand their thoughts. Next time you go out hunting look at all the horses' eyes, and you will see few that look happy. Some horses under the saddle look apprehensive, some look resigned. It is rare to see one with the tranquil eye that denotes quiet riding and gentle schooling.

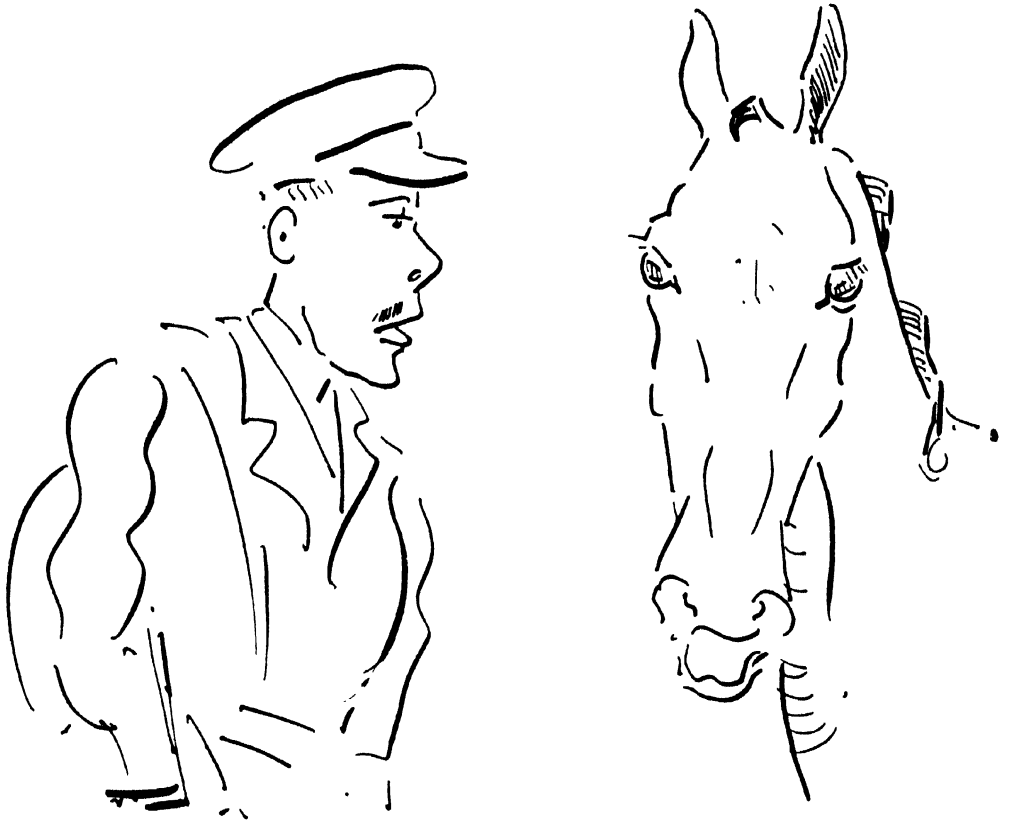
When you were at school, if the master was always brandishing a cane, I'll bet you didn't learn much from him. But if you had a master who took you gently in hand and helped you over every difficulty, I am equally sure you learnt quickly and well. So it is with horses. Horses can best understand what is expected of them when they have a placid confidence in their rider.

Personally I never ask a horse to do anything new until he does his previous work with perfect calmness, confidence, and obvious enjoyment. Always make your lessons as easy as possible. For instance, do your exercises in the same place; start teaching so that you turn towards home instead of away from it; never go on to an advanced lesson until the easier one has been done correctly. If your horse opposes you, do not fight him, but make the lesson easier at once. You can return to your original plan later on. How often we see horses that flinch when you raise your hand! How can we possibly expect to get good results if we have our pupils in a highly strung, nervous condition. Their minds are not on the task you wish to teach, but on whether and when they are going to be hit or spurred.

Take a horse kindly, and he will answer generously. But don't

*a master who
took you gently
in hand.*





— until you see
Paleface come out of his
stable with a plaid
eye.



EARS

expect him to understand a new method right away. It is like starting a new language. Take your own case. For years you have learnt what to do when someone says, "Shut the door." Suddenly a stranger says, "Fermez la porte," and he would indeed be a silly ass if he thought you were a darned stupid for not understanding him. This is only an exact counterpart of what we do with horses, and then accuse them of being unintelligent. Don't forget the horse is just as ready to obey you as any dog. He is ready heartily to co-operate and even to anticipate what he thinks is required of him. This anticipation is sometimes, during schooling, evasion, because the horse is like a school-boy, and will get out of an unpleasant task if he can. But when the lesson has been learnt we find him a wholehearted playmate. Let me give you an example.

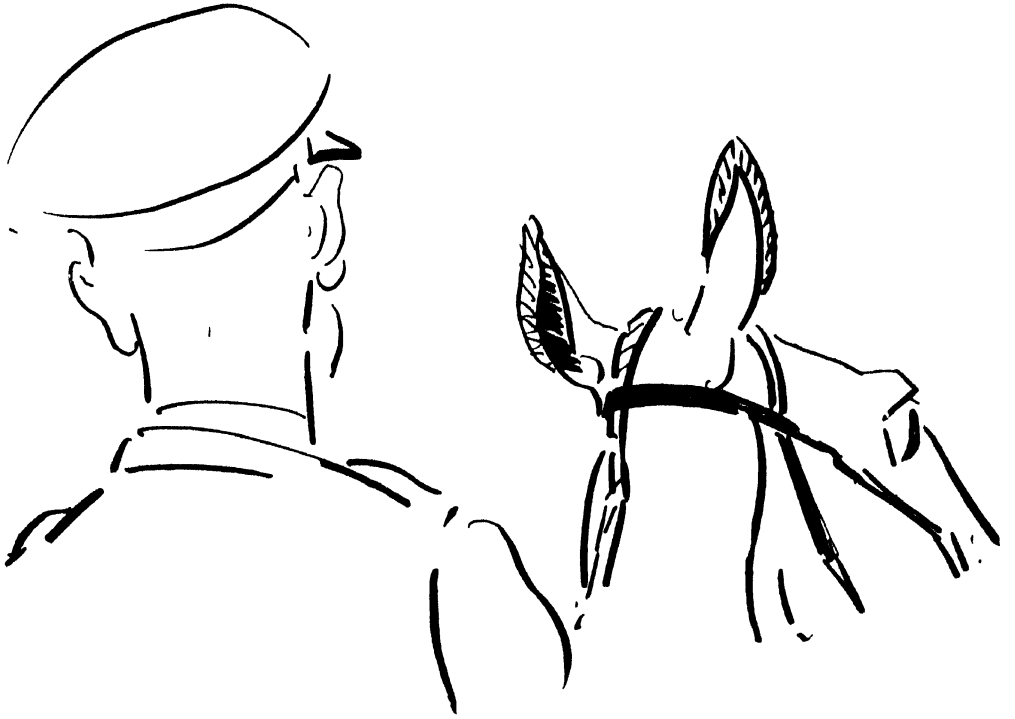
You are teaching a young horse to jump a ditch. Oh, what trouble at first! Perhaps rearing, determined refusal, etc., but once over the early stage of fear, and he realises there is no difficulty in it at all, then see how ready he will be to jump it. As you put him over backwards and forwards, he turns in anticipation, without waiting for the aid, in order to race at it again. Of course, we mustn't let him turn before we ask him. This anticipation can in no way be classed as evasion, but its very opposite. This is what happens when horses have been quietly ridden, but woe betide you if he has associated that ditch with "hammering." So make your horse your "junior partner," and you will find him the best subordinate imaginable, ready to carry out your wishes all day long, until he drops if necessary, and no one could want more.

Let me give you one good tip: watch your horse's ears. A contented horse is constantly flexing them, but an unhappy one keeps them fixed and set.

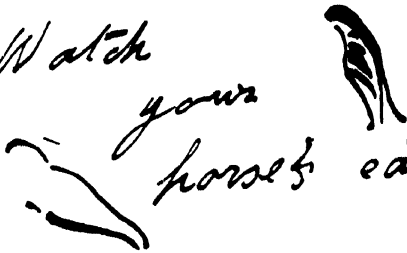
The well-trained horse flexes his poll, his jaw, and his ears; badly schooled ones keep all these rigid. So I now wish you the best of luck, and I shall watch the progress of Paleface with interest.

Your affect. father,

M.



Watch
your
horse's ears



MOUthing

MY DEAR JOHN,

So you find Paleface has such an awful mouth you can do nothing with him, and, after all I've said, you ask me if you should get a much severer bit for him.

Do you realise what your question is? What you ask is this: "I find my horse resents a light bit. Do you think he will resent a more severe one less?"

It seems a silly question put that way, doesn't it? If you resent six strokes of the cane, are you likely to show pleasure at twelve? The idea is absurd, and yet not too absurd for many to believe in it.

So let us tackle this question from the beginning.

First of all, we must realise that there is no such thing as a horse born with a bad mouth. All horses have light mouths if they are properly trained. All horses' mouths are equally sensitive, although they naturally all differ. If, therefore, your horse has a bad mouth, it is because he is badly balanced or ridden.

The hard-mouthed horse is merely one which opposes the rider's hand, and horses that have the lightest possible mouths are those which most easily become the hardest pullers. It is therefore quite obvious that, in this question of pulling, hard mouths have nothing to do with the mouth itself or what is put into it. It is nothing more or less than the opposition the horse makes to the rider's hand. The severer the bit, the greater is this opposition likely to be. So the first thing to do with your horse is to find out by studying him why he makes this opposition.

Opposition is due to malconformation, or stiffness of the neck



*If you
resent
six strokes
of the cane*



so you find
Palface
has such an awful mouth
you can do nothing
with him

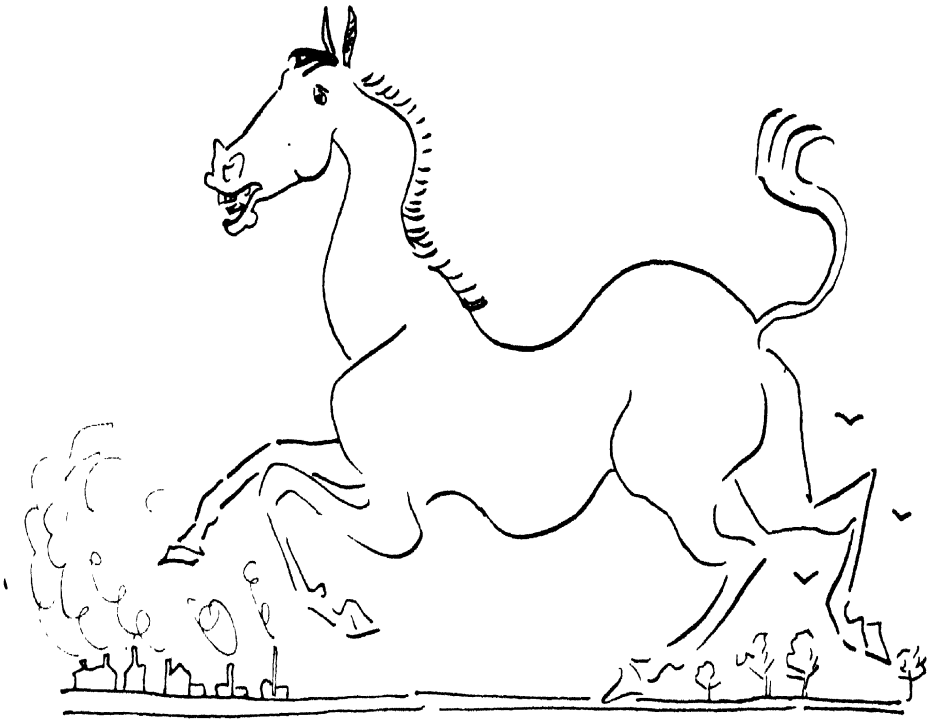
SUPPLING

or loins, and this stiffness must be removed before the horse can possibly become fit to ride. If the bad mouth is due to malconformation, then you are up against a much more serious difficulty. You must study the horse's action and see how far you can overcome this defect. Horses with long backs and hocks "right out in the country" are very difficult to balance, and it is the lack of balance that causes them to hang on to your hand. You may be able to lessen the evil by plenty of riding-school work and by developing the muscles of the back and loins.

Your horse must be supple everywhere. Many a horse that is supple in the neck and bridles lightly at the walk becomes heavy on the hand at the trot and gallop. This is because he is stiff somewhere, probably in his hindquarters, so that, no matter how much he would like to yield to the bridle, he cannot, because he is running on his fore-hand instead of balancing himself from his loins. So the answer to your question is simple. Don't gag him, but supple him.

If his mouth is sore, use a plain snaffle and start lunging him. Supple his neck, supple his ribs and his quarters by a variety of exercises, such as the half-passage, the circle, the rein-back, the turns on the fore-hand and on the hock. You should have him on the lunge for at least one hour every day until he is able to trot on either rein with easy pace and lengthened neck. When you ride him you must keep him at the walk until you overcome his opposition to your hands. Then you can start trotting, but very slowly, and if you observe any opposition whatever, then you must return to the walk and more suppling exercises. A month will work wonders, and two months will vastly improve even really bad cases. But you must carry out the task with patience, zeal, and determination.

If Paleface is whip-shy, as he probably is, you must get over this as soon as you possibly can. You cannot lunge properly without a whip, but your horse must regard its use with perfect calmness. You



Horses
with long backs
and hocks right-out
in the
country



GOOD MOUTHS

should be able to crack it in his face without his blinking an eye.

Don't forget: *All* horses can have good mouths. It is up to you to train them.

Of course, all this work need not necessarily be in the riding-school field or paddock. You can do much while hacking along the road. If the traffic permits (which it seldom does these days), you can make your horse half-passage across the road and back again. In this way you will help to supple him, even though you are only by way of hacking. In other words, whatever you are doing, try to take all advantage of what those opportunities offer, so that no time is wasted. Your lessons must, of course, be continuous. It is not a bit of good doing a little one day and nothing the next. That only makes your horse needlessly stiff.

Think of it in this way. Let us suppose you are getting yourself into training for some athletic event. Then, naturally, you carry out a morning programme of gymnastic exercises to make you and keep you supple. How silly it would be to do a lot one morning and then forget all about them for two or three days!

We all, both men and horses, easily become stiff, and it must be the object of all trainers to overcome that stiffness by constant application.

Now, be off with you. Do what I say, and in a few months you will find Paleface, instead of being a tearing, wild, uncomfortable, uneducated brute, will grow into a charming, gentle, docile creature that is a pleasure to ride and to look at.

Your affect. father,

M.

Ha!
another
letter
from Father.





If the traffic
permits—

THE POINT-TO-POINT

MY DEAR JOHN,

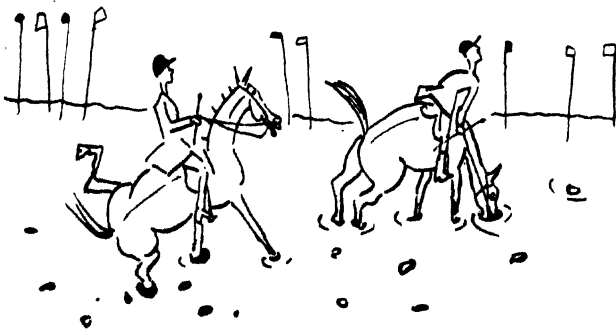
So you are going to ride in your first hunt steeplechase, and the best tip I can give you is to walk the course. Walk it carefully, and, if possible, walk it twice. For this you must allow a long time. Much longer than you would think, because it isn't easy always to get over or round the fences on foot.

Look very carefully for the flags; they are often easily missed. I remember one race that I had won, but found I had lost, because, even though I had walked the course, there was a white flag stuck on the top of a hill against the skyline I had overlooked, and as I was leading during the race, to the joy of my opponents, I left it on the wrong side. So don't think flags are easily seen, especially white ones, against the sky.

Flagging a course is quite an art in a small way, and it can be overdone. I have a recollection of one course where there was, at one corner, some boggy ground, and the stewards were very anxious to prevent any rider galloping into it. The rule of that course was, white flags on the right and red flags on the left, and along this boggy part they laid them out like masts in a harbour, zigzagging the course in and out in a most serpentine way.

To gallop through them correctly was impossible; it was worse than a bending race in a gymkhana, because with flags on each side it was utterly bewildering. I did happen to go the wrong side of one of them, but luckily nobody noticed it. Another time, I remember, the flags were so badly placed the whole field got lost and we all had to pull up and restart ourselves.

*They
laid
them
out
like
masts
in
a
harbour
✓*





The best tip I can
is give you
is To Walk The Course.

THE FLAGS

So don't despise studying the flags. They are more difficult than you may imagine.

When you come to the fences, don't feel the least alarmed at their size. When you are galloping it is wonderful how even the biggest fence seems quite small, and, in fact, the bigger and stiffer they are, the safer they become to ride over as a rule. So when you are selecting your spot to jump, don't pick out necessarily the smallest place, but chose the best take-off and land, even though it isn't "nearest the rails." A horse will gain more by taking off and landing on good sound ground than by jumping on the inside of the course if the going is not good there. Every peck costs you at least five lengths, so avoid them if you possibly can.

Then we come to the turns, and this is where you will gain most if you have your horse well under control. If he is galloping upon the inward leg, you are lucky, because it is then easy enough to swing him round at almost any angle, provided he has been schooled to the use of the leg and the correct way to bring his body round with his hocks well under him. If he isn't on the correct leg it is not practicable to attempt to change him when he is galloping, but what you can do is this: at the fence before the turn, just as he jumps, you can often put him on to the correct leg as he lands by turning his head slightly outwards and by throwing your own body well forward and inwards and by pressing hard with your outward leg. This will usually get him to strike off on the inward leg, and then when you get to the flag you can whisk round it and gain lengths and lengths upon the rest of the field.

It is very surprising how much ground is lost in point-to-points by the riders being unable to get their horses quickly round the turns, and if you can do this well, as I am sure you can, because you have been schooling Paleface hard, then it is worth seven pounds to you.

I remember one race in which I had a good chance of winning.

50
don't
despise
studying
Flags





It is very surprising
how much ground
is lost
in Point-18-Points!

THE TURNS

I found my match in one horse who had a slight lead of me and on whom I couldn't gain at all. I felt my only chance was at the turns. In this race there was a hairpin turn in the middle of a field, and here it was I decided to make up my lost ground if possible. I came up behind him on the inside, and if he had been "cute" he could have frozen me out by riding so as to touch the flag, but instead of this he eased off, gave me the opening I wanted, and I was round that flag like a jack-snipe, and gained quite eight lengths on him. At the time I thought what a "greenhorn" he was and how lucky I had been to get such a good opportunity.

When the race was over and I had just won by the skin of my teeth, he came up to me and said: "I say, old chap, I do hope I gave you enough room at the turn!"

I felt quite guilty! But, still, it isn't often one meets anyone quite so innocent in racing, not even in point-to-points.

When you are going to ride a race there is nothing more tedious than the owner or trainer who gives you riding instructions in detail. All that is necessary to know is whether your horse can stay well or not, and leave all the rest to the circumstances of the moment.

For instance, supposing a horse is very keen at the start and wants to get ahead. How often does one see jockeys pulling their heads off, exhausting themselves and their horses in needless effort to keep behind?

If they would only let them stride along for a field or two and then steady them, how many more races they would win! Of course, if the horse is so tricky a jumper that he won't jump any fence without a lead, that is another matter. But horses of that kind are best left to others to enjoy.

If you find your horse is exhausted and that you have no chance of winning, don't start flogging him home, as you too often see at these meetings. First of all it is useless, secondly it is cruelty, and



How often
does one see jockeys
pulling their heads off!



A BIT IN HAND

thirdly it ruins horses quicker than in any other way. If they find they are punished, and punished severely, for doing their best, they will very soon give up trying. Even if you are having a tight finish your legs are of far greater use to you than your hands; and the whip, as an incentive, can be used only once, and just on the last stride at the winning-post, to be in any way effective. At any other time it will probably stop a horse.

Try and ride so that you have a little bit of "puff" left at the finish, and if your horse is very blown, take a good steady at your last fence, and be more sure of getting over it well, than fast, for it is at this last obstacle many a bad fall occurs.

That reminds me of another race which I was lucky enough to win. I was leading over the last fence but one. After that came a steep bit of rising ground, which was also very boggy; on the top of this was the final fence, followed by a nice run in on the flat. Well, I pulled up to a walk, and let my horse, who was, of course, rather blown, take it easy on this very punishing piece of ground. The crowd who had backed my mount rather heavily were shouting at me to go on, and it really was quite difficult to restrain myself. However, I stuck to my policy, and jumped the last fence last, but then my horse had the "little bit of puff" in him which is so necessary and which the other horses had not, and I was able to shove him along, and I won quite easily by a nice five lengths.

Before you start off for the races, do get yourself weighed in the kit and saddle you will ride in, and arrange your weight-cloth so that it doesn't take half an hour to find enough lead borrowed from friends and then be so hustled you have to cram it into your boots to get to the post in time. Have your weight-cloth right before you start, and then you will find things quite easy in the weighing tent.

There is only one final word, and that is, about your whip. Don't forget, you neither weigh out or in with your whip. And at all



Try and ride so that
you have
a little bit of "puff"
left on the finish

THE WHIP

meetings whips have a most curious way of disappearing. In fact, the second-hand whip trade seems to be a wonderful business.

So give your whip to your groom to hold, both before and after the race, and then you can be freed of that responsibility at least. I think these are all the tips I can give you, and I now wish you the best of luck.

Your affect. father,
M.

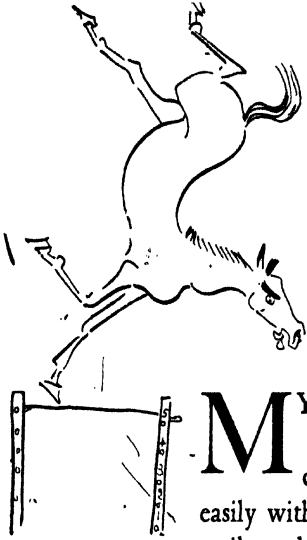


*so give your whip to
your groom
to hold.*



Whips

have a most curious way
of disappearing



SHOW JUMPING

MY DEAR JOHN,

You now say you would like to train one of your chargers for show jumping because he can clear five feet easily without any training whatever, and therefore he must be very easily and quickly turned into something out of the ordinary.

Well, the fact that he has jumped something big doesn't interest me at all. All decent horses can jump; it doesn't matter what he jumps, but how he jumps. That is the whole crux. Any old horse can bungle over a big fence now and then, but we don't want any "perhaps" jumping at all; for the show ring we want "certainties."

In show jumping, we need to take much more time and much more trouble than we ever do for hunting jumps. If you want patience for the latter, you want patience "cubed" for this business. You can make a hunter pretty well perfect in a year, but a show jumper often requires three and perhaps more.

The method must vary with locality, opportunity, and temperament, and to lay down exact rules would be waste of time; but there are one or two outstanding points which are fundamental and from which you must never budge.

A horse cannot jump well until he is supple. You must spend a great deal of time throughout the whole of your training to making and keeping him supple and all his muscles well-oiled. Supple in the lower jaw and supple in the neck. Supple in the loins and supple in the back. You must work him so that he uses his hocks always in preference to his fore-hand, and can do all his turns, etc., with perfect balance and delicacy by using your legs. While all this is

*He
can
clear
five
feet-
easily
without-
any
training whatever.*



All his muscles



Well-oiled



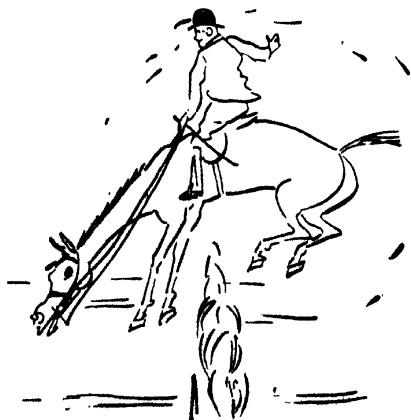
JUMPING LESSONS

going on, he must never be allowed to see a big fence: you can hop him over quite small obstacles to exercise his muscles. When schooling, watch his eye all the time. It should be round and full and soft, and your horse should show his happiness and contentment at every stride. If you see signs of worry, temper, or alarm, stop your lesson and try something easier. When you start jumping, you must patiently work until he jumps his little rail without the smallest sign of excitement, and he must jump it in his stride, without putting in "a short one."

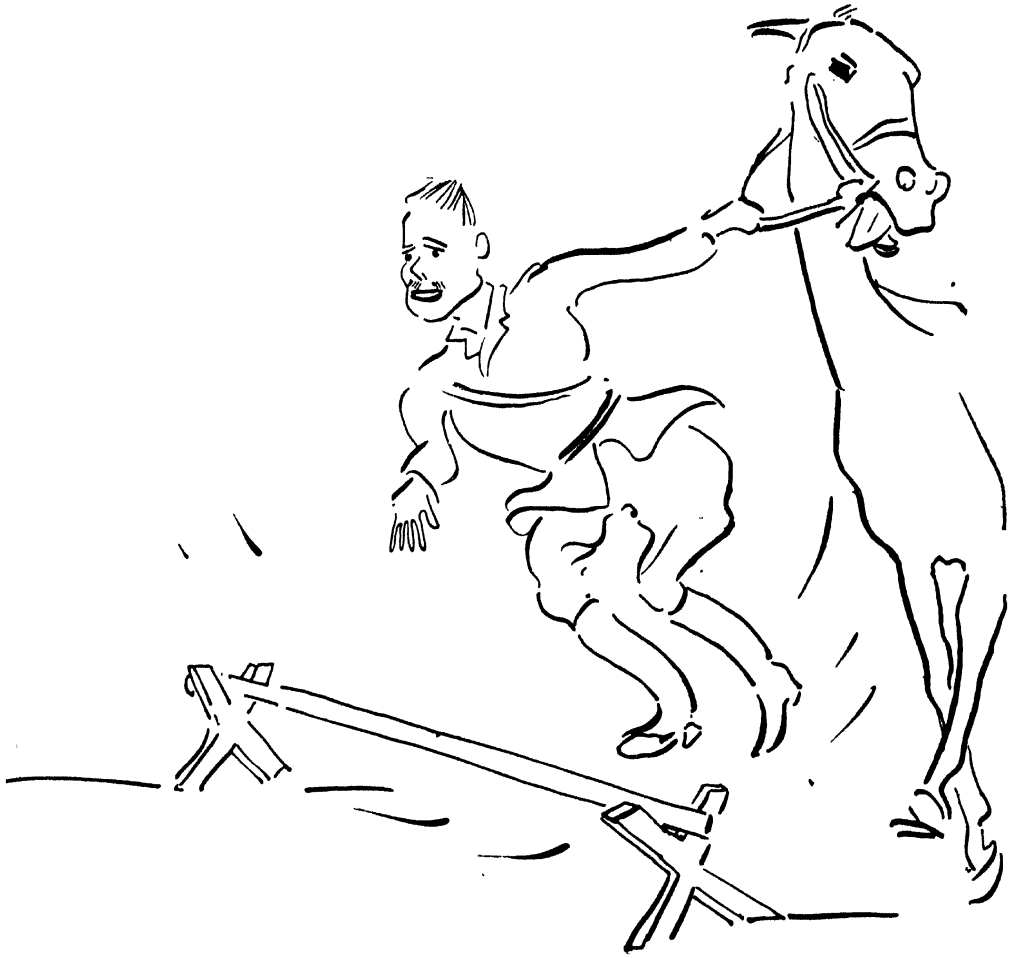
When you have got to this stage, you must then see that he jumps with a lowered head and lengthened neck and a rounded back. This position is attained quickest, some say, by allowing him to jump from a trot; and it is by this means also you can insure his approaching his fence without rushing or excitement. Have a little fence, a tripod trestle is very useful, in the middle of your paddock, and never let him know when you are going to jump, and if he quickens his stride, turn him away, and keep on doing so until his approach is just as calm and as quiet as if there were no fence at all. Do not think that turning a horse away from a fence will teach him to refuse. It is obedience that is necessary, and it is for you to determine whether he is to jump or not.

As his muscles improve, and his confidence grows, so you can broaden the jump, and teach him scope. He should never jump any fence closer than 5 feet away, and if his stride should come at 10 feet away, he must learn to jump from there. You will only succeed in getting a horse to jump with confidence in this manner by patiently building it up, not by over-facing him before he is ready, or by giving him falls.

Now, just as a man cannot possibly hope to succeed in any branch of athletics without constant practice, so also the horse must have any



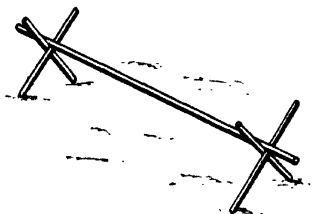
*with a lowered
head and lengthened
neck.*



never let him know
when you are going -
to jump!

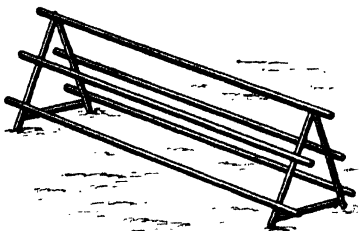
SOME NOVEL JUMPS

amount of jumping. Certainly not less than twenty small fences a day, but more than that is even better. Now, unless you have the use of the riding school, this rule becomes quite difficult to carry out, because the ground becomes so cut up. Not only that, but it isn't always easy or convenient to have a man standing by ready to put up the rail every time the horse knocks it down. Both these difficulties can be overcome by having a jump made like a carving-knife rest, as sketched here. This has many advantages. It can



never fall. If a horse raps it hard it merely turns over. It is very light, and can be picked up and put down again in a fresh place with great ease. Of course, you don't want wings; wings, in good training, are quite unnecessary. Place this simple obstacle in any convenient

place in your field and canter over it, sometimes on the right rein on the off fore, and sometimes on the left rein on the near fore, and work your horse until he jumps it without any excitement and without changing his legs. When you want to jump something bigger, then you can build some trestle jumps, which can be made of quite light poles, suitable for carrying about by yourself without any assistant. They can be shaped as shown in the sketch. The slope is very useful, because it makes it easy for a horse to learn to take off well away from the obstacle.



But if you find he is always trying to put in a short stride before jumping, and you cannot prevent him doing so, then put up a low "knife-rest" about 17 feet away from the trestle. Then, after he has jumped the knife-rest he will only have room for one stride between before he takes off. The distance must



*suitable for carrying
about by yourself
without any assistant.*

“ RAPPING ”

be regulated according to the size and capacity of your horse, as you can see from the sketch. By pushing the knife-rest farther back and by riding your horse a little faster you can lengthen his take-off quite easily.



When you come to higher jumps and you want rails that fall if touched, you will come across

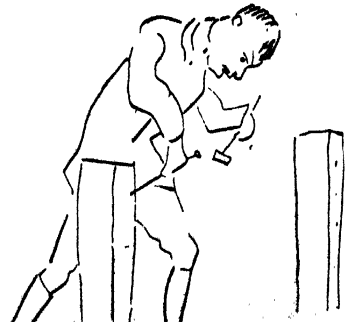
another little difficulty. If you have a rail on pins in the usual way, then you can only approach the fence from the one side. To overcome this, here is another good tip. Instead of making holes with pins in your uprights, you need only cut narrow slices on the outside, from which a block is suspended by a wire, as shown here.

By this device it is very easy to get your rail so that you can increase or decrease it very slightly, much more nicely than with the ordinary holes. The top of the block is, of course, hollowed out so as to form a bed for the pole to rest on and so that it will not fall too easily. (This excellent idea was given to me by my friend Herr R. Knaur, of Vienna. I believe it is his invention.)



When you begin to jump larger fences you will certainly find that your horse will keep on touching the top rail and that he will very often knock it down. Some of your friends will say that he is careless and wants “ rapping ” over his fences, others that he is stale and wants less jumping. I am not sure which of the two is the worst advice. Anyway, both are horrible. Pay no attention to either. A horse touches a fence, not because he is careless or stale, but because he is wrongly balanced. Let me put it to you in this way: “ Supposing you were asked to jump over a chair or a low hurdle, I am quite sure you would clear it with at least an inch or two to spare. You wouldn't want to touch it lest it would hurt you or cause you to stumble or fall. This is the elementary law of self-preservation. Now, horses possess this fear of hurting themselves in a much greater degree than we do ourselves. Consequently you can take it from me that horses don't touch their

— making holes with pins in your uprights.





Supposing you were
asked to jump a chair



THE MONEY SPINNER

fences for fun. There is always a reason for it. What that reason may be is for you to discover by careful observation. It may be due to going too fast or too slow at a fence, or a bad take-off; but very often it is none of these things, but due to a wrong carriage of the head. In jumping, the head should be low and the neck extended.

Therefore, my boy, don't start "rapping" a horse because he touches his fences, but think. Think what is wrong by studying his action and approach, and put that right. It may be, if he is not jumping off his hocks correctly, you will have to put him back to the elementary fences again. But never mind; unless you have patience and are prepared for setbacks, you mustn't try to train horses. Your horse will jump all right if he has confidence, balance, and scope, and the rider helps him in each of these.

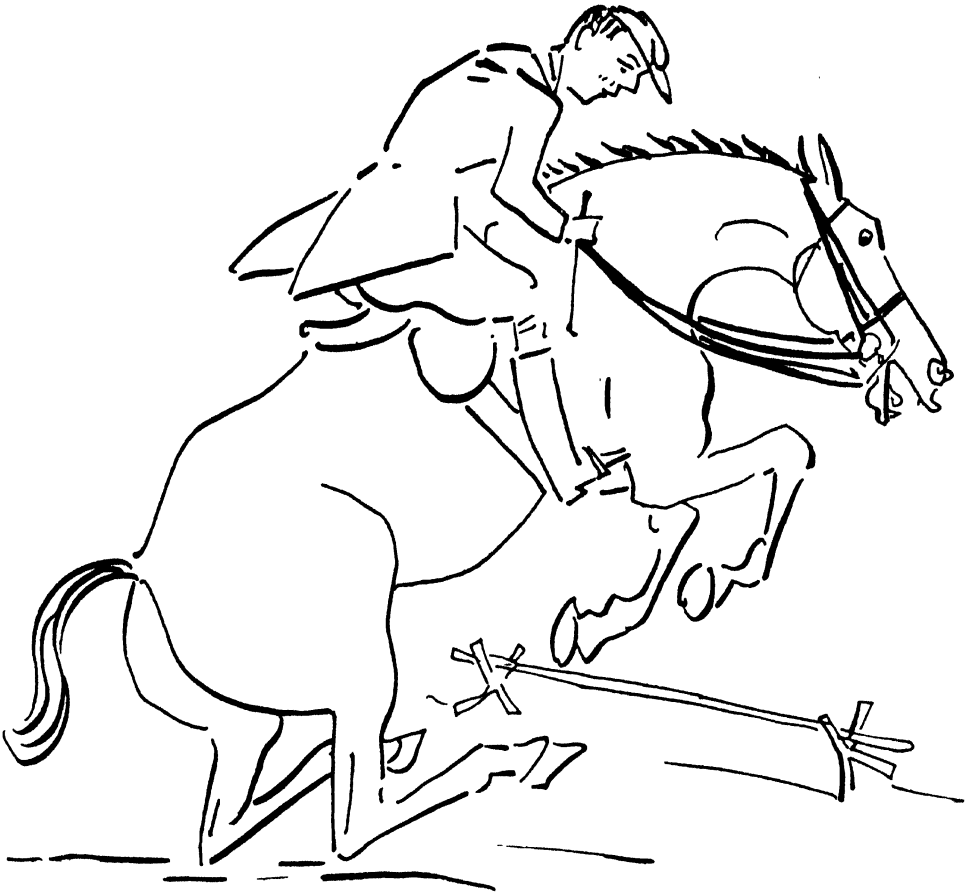
In your schooling, whatever you do, do not allow your horse to get into that terrible fault of starting off quickly and with diminishing stride, reaching the jump at almost a standstill and then bucking over.

It is a very common fault in this country, and takes all the pleasure, the delicacy, and skill out of the jump, besides being very much more effort for the horse.

But if you succeed in getting him to increase his speed as he approaches the jump, and to jump with freedom and confidence, then you have attained a money-spinner which is a pleasure to ride and a joy to see.

The man who tells you your horse is touching his fences because he is stale is also giving you bad advice; you must jump frequently to jump well, as I have told you before. But if he is neither spurred nor hit nor jabbed in the mouth and his feet and legs keep sound and well, he will soon get to enjoy his jumps just as much as a gallop.

Now, for exercising a horse's muscles there are one or two sound principles which can be adopted if circumstances permit, apart, of course, from the usual riding-school work.



if he is not jumping
off his hocks
correctly

THE LANE

Put up a series of about three low rails about 10 feet apart so that the horse must take off immediately he lands, without putting in any stride between.

This is excellent exercise for the muscles of the back, neck, and loins. These exercises, which should be done about three times every morning, are better done without a rider on the horse's back, and that can best be managed by jumping in a "lane."

Now, to erect a lane is a very expensive thing, and it is only you fellows in the army who can get access to such things as a rule. But even when you can you usually find your lane is made up of all sorts of fences, banks, and such, which cannot be removed. Now, a lane with any fence in it that is not movable is an absurdity, because, to begin with, each horse is in a different standard of schooling. Secondly, with unmovable fences, horses have to jump them the first time they are put in. This can only be effected by the use of the whip and shouting and so forth. All of which is thoroughly unsound.

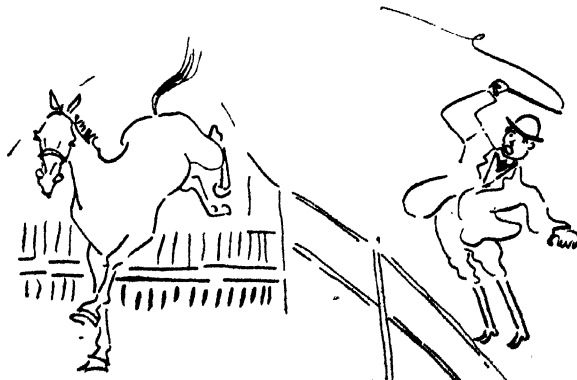
If you have a lane, it should be entirely free of any obstacle, and the horse should get accustomed first to cantering round on word of command. This stage may occupy several days. Then, when the horse is thoroughly at home in the lane, you can start putting up small obstacles. But all this takes time and money and is beyond the scope of most owners, and after all we can get excellent results without a lane.

But one thing you must avoid at all costs is to put a horse into a lane (which may be the entrance to the shambles, as far as the horse can tell) and try and get him to jump over fences the first time. It is undoubtedly the wrong way to do it, and takes much longer to produce good results than by taking it by the steadier method.

So now go off and start training your horse, and put this motto up on your looking-glass to read to yourself every day:

GO SLOW. BE PATIENT. DON'T HIT HIM—THINK INSTEAD.

Your affect. father,
M.





Put this motto up
on your looking-glass

WHAT IS A GOOD SEAT ?

MY DEAR JOHN,


You write to say you are puzzled. You are puzzled at noticing the great variety of ways people sit upon their horses. All riders seem to differ, even the first-rate ones. That you often hear it said of someone that he has an awfully good seat on a horse and that you cannot discover any rule to guide you; you would like very much to have a good seat yourself, but you don't know whom to copy.

Well, my boy, I quite sympathise with you. The rules to guide are vague, and few writers seem to have tackled the point at all.

You are usually told to sit down in your saddle, keep the lower part of your leg back and sink your heel. The cavalry instruction in my day used to tell us that as we sat upright in the saddle we should be able to see one inch of our toe projecting in front of the line from the eye over the point of the knee. Well, even though I don't agree with the rule, it *was* a rule and a good guide, anyway. Then we used to be told to sit in the centre of the saddle.

This is an excellent rule, but it wants explaining. I always used to think it meant sitting horizontally central, as it was obviously wrong to be sitting on one side or the other of the horse, and I believe, from what I see, this is the usual interpretation adopted in the army to-day. But it doesn't mean that at all. At least, not to my thinking. It means that you should sit in the centre of the saddle vertically. That is to say, your seat bones should rest in the dip of the saddle so that if you were to put your hand behind you you would find a full hand's breadth between you and the cantle of the saddle.

Our toe projecting in front
of the line from the eye over
the point of the knee





THE "FORK" SEAT

That is what I mean by sitting in the centre of the saddle, and it was to avoid this ambiguity that in my book, *Mount and Man*, I said that the rule should be to sit as far forward in the saddle as possible, which comes to the same thing.

This is my interpretation of the correct seat, and the practice of many years has confirmed me in its correctness, and I most strongly recommend it for every rider.

In my opinion it is that position which develops the best balance and the greatest control over one's horse, no matter what you may be doing.

But this opinion is not universally adopted, by any means. We find immense variety of opinion and practice not only in England but also on the Continent. I have listened to their arguments, I have studied their views, but I find no reason to alter the simple rule I advocate.

There are two schools of thought. There are the protagonists of the "fork" seat, and those of the "backward" seat. When speaking of this "backward" seat you mustn't misunderstand me. I do not mean that they do not sit forward over their fences. That is universal (except in England and Ireland). I am only referring to the position of the body in the saddle at the standstill.

The "backward" riders say that they can drive a horse better into his bridle by its adoption, while the "fork" seat reply that as they can ride with a longer stirrup they have greater control.

Personally I do not believe by sitting back you can possibly have greater control, and I am certain that it is this position that causes one to be in such difficulty directly anything unusual or unexpected occurs.

These Continental schools, who adopt this seat, overcome the difficulty of being left behind by riding with very short reins. But the position is unattractive and unsuited to long hours in the saddle.



— to be in such difficulties
when anything unusual or
unexpected occurs!



STIRRUP LEATHERS

You can see their position in the sketch here. Because they are sitting in the stirrups must be shortened, the knee comes higher, and



decreases. Many Continental authorities, on the other hand, support the "fork" seat, and this is the one I recommend: The knee low down, the stirrup leather vertical (I think both schools believe in this), the back slightly hollowed so as to drive the knee forward, and the stirrup considerably longer. The sketch shows you the position.



In England we often see steeplechase jockeys, and those who copy them, riding in the position absurdly short stirrup, with is so bad a seat for ordinary



gauge of mine to discuss its happy mean. We must ride with the length of stirrup necessary for what we are going to do. We must ride short for steeplechasing or show jumping, but we can ride longer for hunting, and longer still for hacking. It is absurd to go for a hack at steeplechasing length.

Now there is one very certain rule, which few will attempt to gainsay. A horse can carry weight best when it is forward, so that whenever we are sitting in our saddle we should do all in our power to keep our weight as far forward as possible, and anything that tends to push it back should be avoided.

Now here is another point in the seat. Some schools tell you that you must turn the toe well in. This is certainly sound for riding in the ranks, when your foot may be caught in the stirrup of the man next to you, but for ordinary riding I think that the foot should be allowed to be at the natural angle, otherwise you lose the freedom which is so essential in good riding. I feel sure that any seat that restricts the natural attitude of the body, or prevents the perfect supple-



Anything that tends
to push it back should
be avoided

THE BALANCED SEAT

ness necessary, cannot be the correct one. If you look at the seats of most of the prominent riders on the Continent you will find a great similarity, but if you take the portraits of many of our own well-known riders in the past you will see a great divergence.

Although the correct seat in the saddle must be a matter of pure science, yet we find opinions vary so much that it becomes largely a matter of fashion. When I joined the army the idea was to ride as long as possible, but a few years after that we had to ride so much shorter that it was really too short.

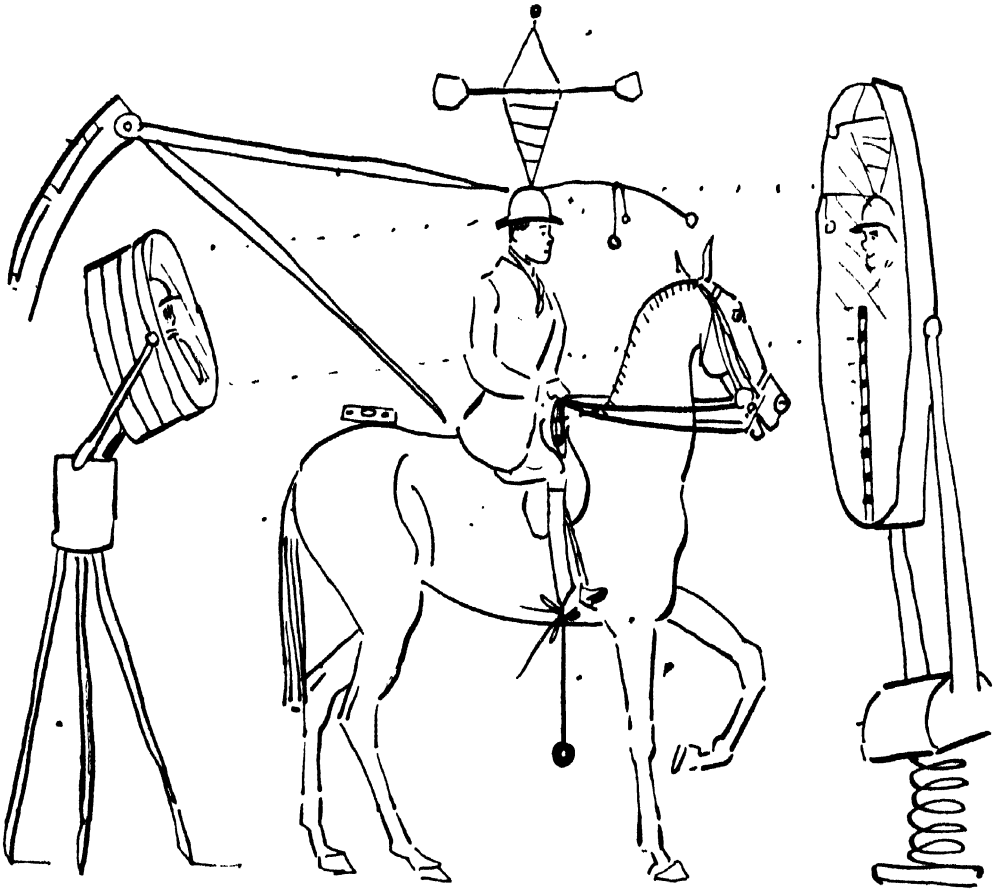
If we look at the seats of our grandfathers, riding over Leicestershire, they sat in a very different way to the seat of our modern riders. So that we soon become bewildered when we start inquiring into this apparently abstruse subject. And yet the answer is not far to seek. "The best seat is the best balanced seat."

Keep that always in your mind and you can't go very far wrong. And then remember you can't be perfectly balanced unless you have your feet pressing on a stirrup-iron, which hangs from a vertical leather. Let your head be slightly forward of your "work," and then you will find you slip into what must be a good seat because it is a workable one, based upon sound principles.

Your affect. father,
M.



*This apparently
abstruse subject*



The correct seat
in the saddle must be
a matter of pure science.



THE APPROACH

MY DEAR JOHN,

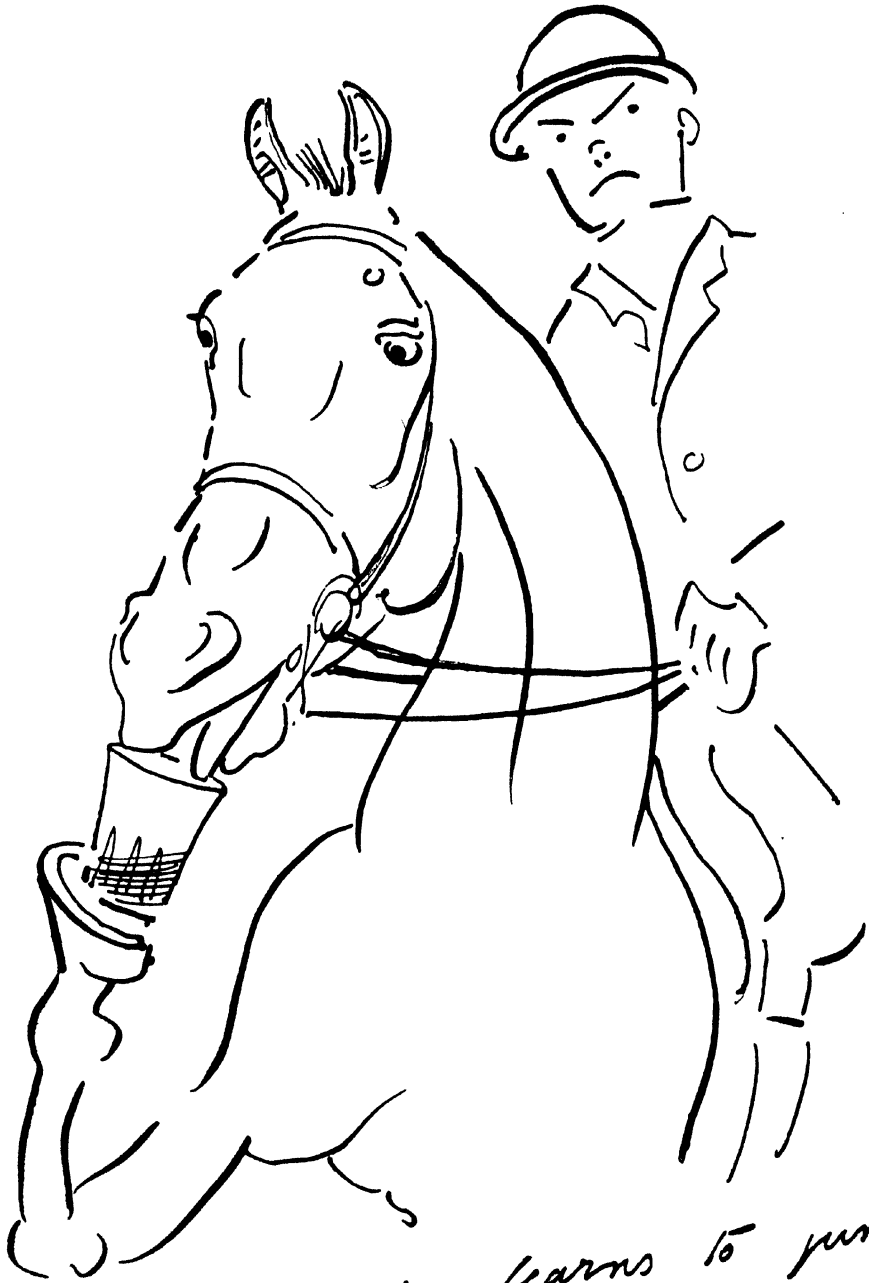
You tell me that you have much difficulty in coming up to your fence the right way, that you so often seem to have the stride all wrong, that, although the horse jumps, it seems very hazardous and unsatisfactory.

Well, I am not surprised. That is a difficulty we are all up against. I think it is, perhaps, the most difficult thing there is.

The question is so complicated that it has not been definitely solved, and the various schools teach upon their own lines. Most of them say that it is too difficult to attempt either to guide or control the horse's stride on the approach, and prefer to leave it entirely to him to take off exactly as he wishes.

Now, although I do not agree entirely with this point of view, I do know that it does produce very excellent results, which are achieved in the following way:

The horse should have plenty of "free" jumping in a lane and in the school, so that he learns to jump with confidence and freedom. He is taught to stand well away from his fences by the methods I have shown you in my letter on Show Jumping, and in course of time he learns to jump without putting in a "short one" at all. After this has been attained, then the horse has to do the same thing with a rider on his back. The rider is instructed only to hold the horse at his fence and to present him to it at a correct speed. But that is all. The horse must decide when to jump, and the rider must be so prepared that he "goes with" him, no matter how soon the horse may spring. In order to be ready for all and every movement of the horse, the riders have to ride



He learns to jump
without putting in a
"short-one" at all

FREEDOM AND CONTROL

with quite short stirrups and very short reins.

The seat is effective but not attractive; the results are good, but not superlatively so. I think these rules are very sound as plain, broad rules for riders in general, because we should not set too high a standard when we are legislating for the multitude. But when we are discussing these things as between experts, then I think the only standard that should be considered is that of perfection.

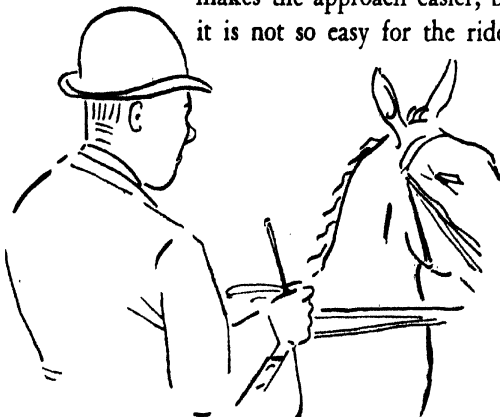
I do not think that this method of riding is perfection, for the following reasons:

First, it seems to me that the first law of equitation is that the rider must control and the horse obey. This principle is undoubtedly carried out in every riding school on the Continent, when the horse must not wink an eye without the consent of the rider. In fact, so far do they carry out this principle that I think it is overdone sometimes. They train all the individuality out of their horses, and they are inclined to become just dull automatons.

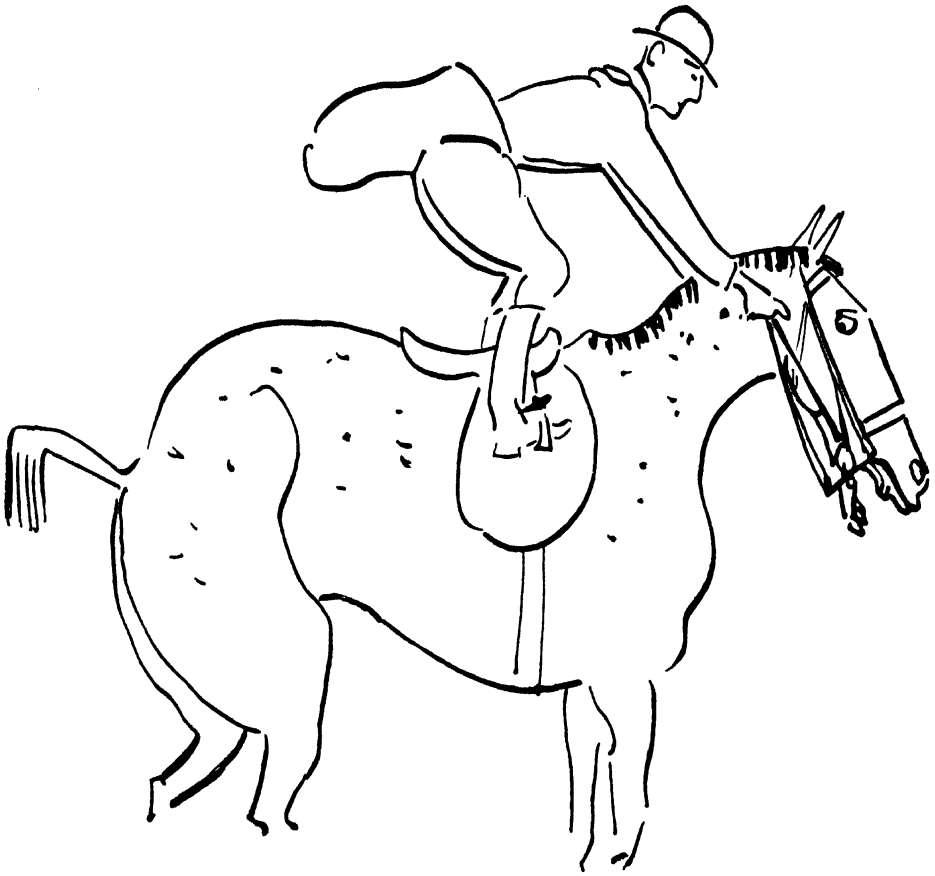
So we see that the principle is adopted in its fulness in all "dressage," but is dropped in approaching a fence. This seems to me to be a distinct flaw in their argument.

Now, if we are riding at a fence at a normal jumping length of stirrup, and with a normally short rein, we shall find ourselves "left behind"—and badly, too—if the horse takes off a stride too soon. So that when riding in this Continental style it is necessary to shorten the stirrup and the rein to an extent which makes the seat an impractical one for natural cross-country work. I am a firm believer in our making our show-ring jumping a practical example of cross-country riding, and any rule which goes against that principle must, I think, be an unsound one.

Then, again, this style does not quite solve the difficulty. It certainly makes the approach easier, but when the horse is allowed to control it is not so easy for the rider to be in that perfect harmony which



*must - not - wink
an eye —*



It is necessary to shorten the stirrup and the rein to an extent which makes the seat an impractical one.



“SCOPE”

can be attained when the rider decides when the horse should jump.

But, on the other hand, it is stated that if the rider attempts to control the stride of his horse, it is not possible at the last moment for the horse to extend his neck sufficiently to clear the obstacle properly. So you see there are two very definite lines of thought: one says “freedom” and the other “control.” But it is only fair to say that the “free” school admit that the “controlled” method is best, if it can be done.

It is therefore difficult for me to advise you, and your best plan is to keep on jumping and worry out the method that best suits you.

My own views are that we should get the horse so well flexed that even on the approach to the fence he will yield to the slightest touch of the rein. The rider then decides upon the pace, the stride, and the “take-off,” and in that way perfect harmony between horse and rider is attained.

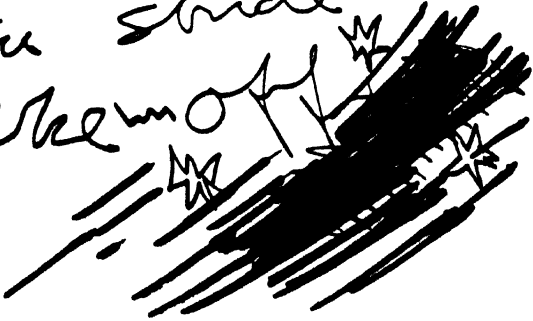
“Difficult,” you say? Yes, of course it is difficult, but it is very delightful when it is being done; it is most attractive to watch. The other way is undoubtedly effective, but the horse is more likely to bungle his take-off when doing it on his own than when he is directed by an accomplished rider. But if the rider isn’t accomplished, then, of course, the first way is the best.

But no matter which way you try, you must get “scope” into both your head and the horse’s. Of the two, it is easier to get it into the horse’s head than into yours, because the horse knows what he can do, and you don’t.

For instance, you come up to your fence, and the stride comes 10 feet away. Either the horse must be ready to jump from this spot or you must be ready to ask him. All this requires practice, a great deal of practice on both sides. If you favour the first principle, then you must give your horse lots of free jumping; if you favour the other way, then you must jump yourself a great deal.



The rider then
decides upon the
pace, the stride and
the take-off and

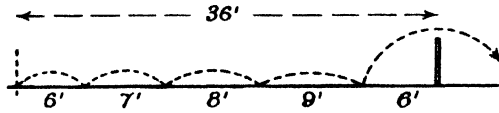


TIME AND PACE

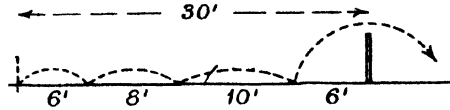
To do it well you must work at it, whichever way you decide, and don't forget that you are tackling what is, perhaps, the most difficult art there is.

Here are some diagrams which show you how to approach, and I must ask you to notice that we never allow a horse to take off less than 5 feet away from a fence, but 6 is preferable.

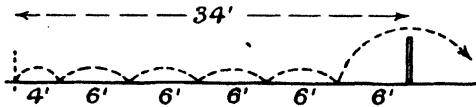
This is excellent for nearly every fence.



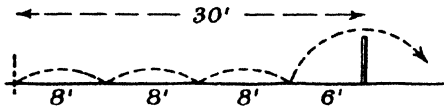
But if the stride comes a little wrong, then he can do this:



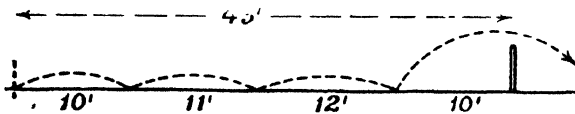
Or this:



Or this:



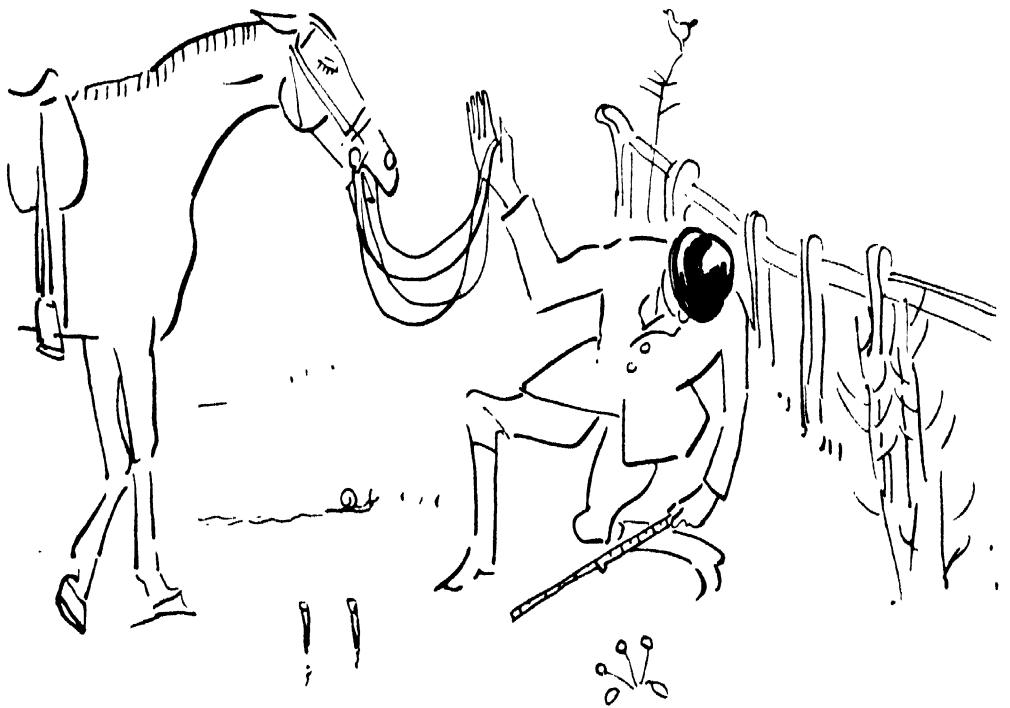
Of course, if you are racing at your fence, you must try and get it like this, but it is very difficult:



Your affect. father,
M.



He can do this — — or this.



We never allow the
horse to take-off less
than five feet away from
any fence.

SPURS

MY DEAR JOHN,

You ask me to tell you what I think of spurs and their use, and I am very glad you have, because there is a great deal to talk about on this subject.

As you very rightly remark, you joined the Army with sharp spurs, but you hadn't been in the riding school more than a few days before you were advised to have the rowels ground down. You also were told to see that every man in your troop had blunted spurs as well.

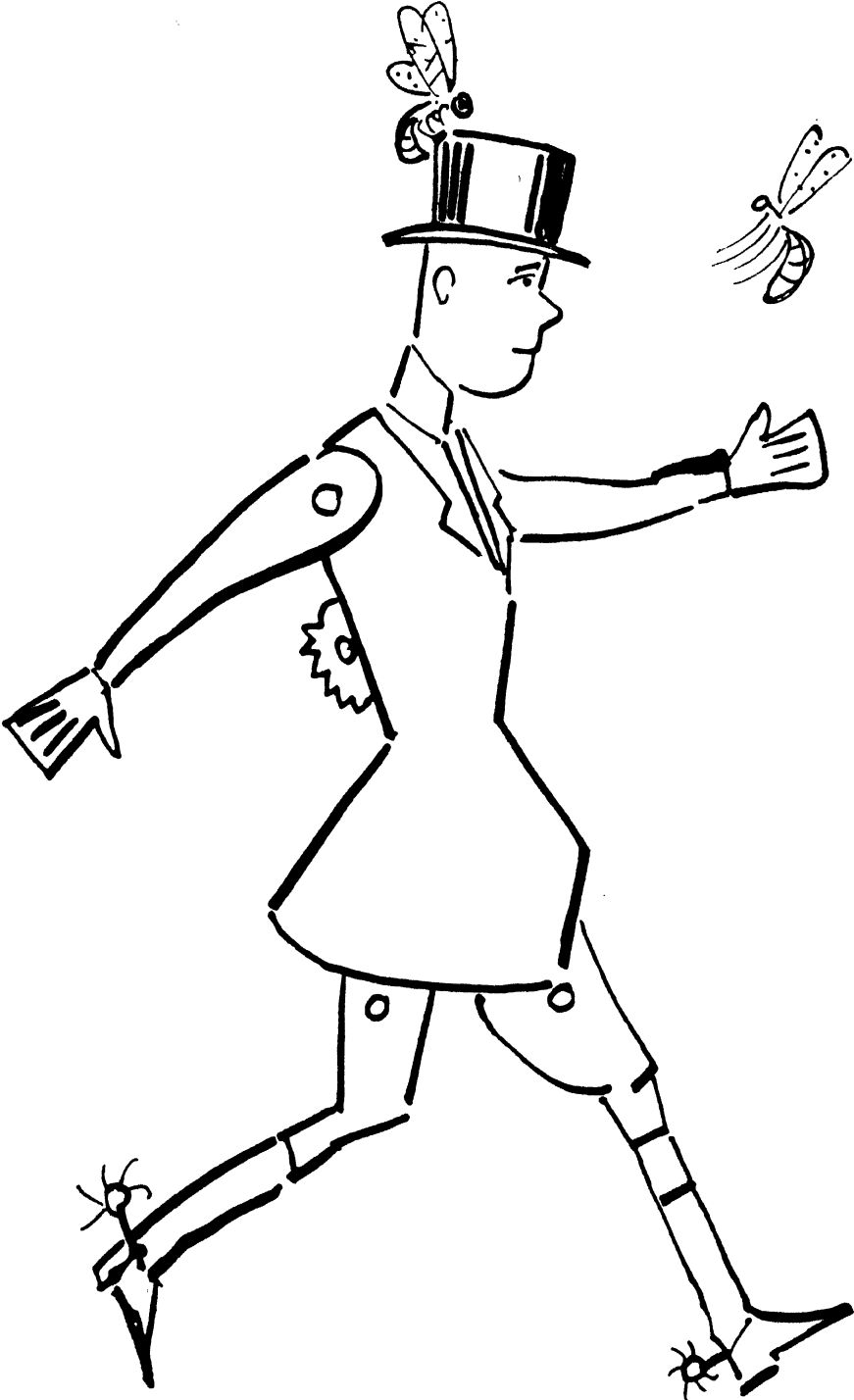
This has, most justifiably, led you to wonder why sharp spurs should be issued at all, if all this has to be done before they are fit for wear.

Well, it certainly does seem rather silly, but there are reasons for everything, and it is always interesting and enlightening to find out what they are, because, once we understand things, we can use our judgment more effectively; but if we don't we become mere automatons, executing our orders without intelligence.

So let us first of all find out why the spur is of such apparent importance in the Army, so important that even the quartermaster's batman wears them on every parade.

In war, when riding an exhausted or a starving horse, it may be necessary to spur him to the charge or speed his faltering footsteps in a retreat, and such eventualities are regarded as so important that it has long been an Army order that any man whose office connects him with a horse, however remotely, shall be improperly dressed unless he wears them. Consequently everyone, from field-m Marshals to infantry

*we become
automatons → mere*



THE SHARP SPUR

adjutants, buckle on these appendages on all occasions in uniform, whatever they may be doing.

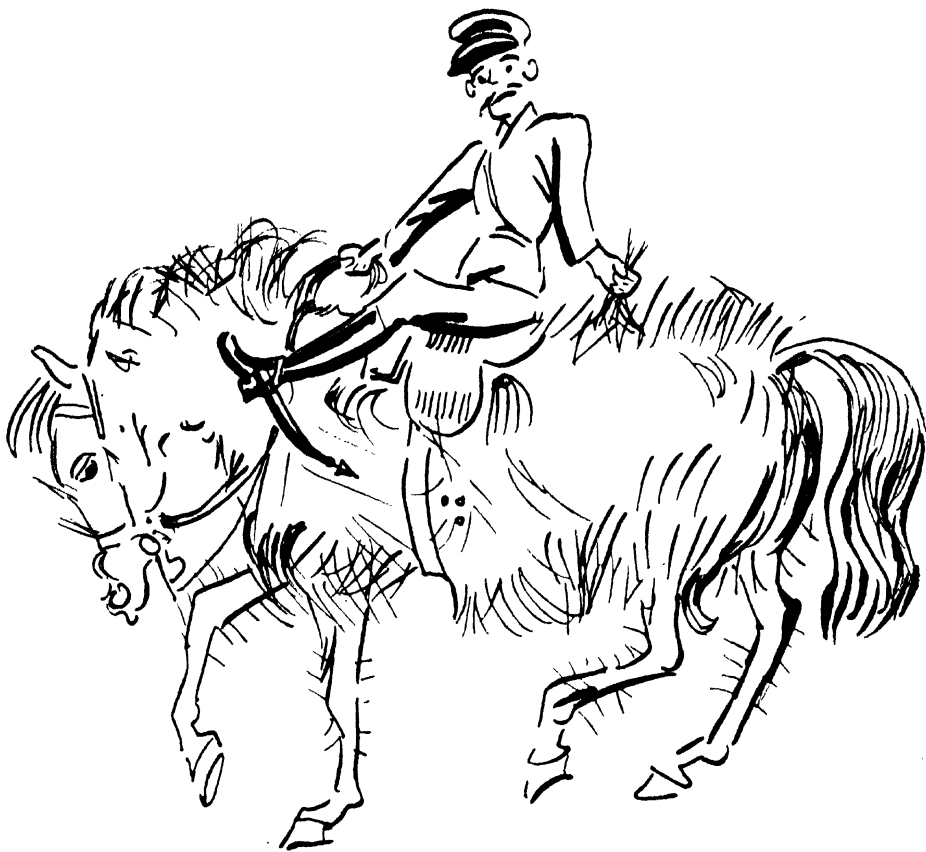
Again, it used to be necessary for soldiers to wear spurs with long rowels, because in campaigning horses cannot always be clipped, and it requires something rather extreme to get through a long and heavy winter coat.

How far these reasons apply to soldiering to-day I must leave modern soldiers to decide, but it is very certain they don't have any bearing upon riding in peace conditions generally. It seems to me it would be sounder to issue blunt spurs in peace-time and have sharp rowels made for war than to issue sharp ones and have them ground down in peace-time, so that when war does start they haven't any to wear on any occasion, whether they are wanted or not.

However, as I have said, these things are no affair of mine, but one does like to see common sense practised, whether it is our business or not.

Now, how far is the sharp spur of use in the ordinary way of riding? On the Continent, where very high-class schooling is carried out, nearly every rider wears sharp spurs. I have often asked them why, and the reply has always been: "Oh, I always wear them, but I never use them under any circumstances." The obvious retort, "Why wear them, then?" was always left unanswered.

I was once taken to task by one of these school experts for saying that the only time, in my opinion, the sharp spur might be required was in some advanced exercises in *haute école*. For example, Baucher strongly advocates their use in the *manège*. My friend told me that the sharp spur was never used in the school for any exercise whatever, and that it was quite the last place where it would be used. I was much interested to hear this, because it only confirmed my opinion more strongly than ever that there are practically no occasions in ordinary riding where the sharp spur is of any use. If it is of no use



91. requires something
rather extreme to get through
a long and heavy winter
coal - -

THE BLUNT SPUR

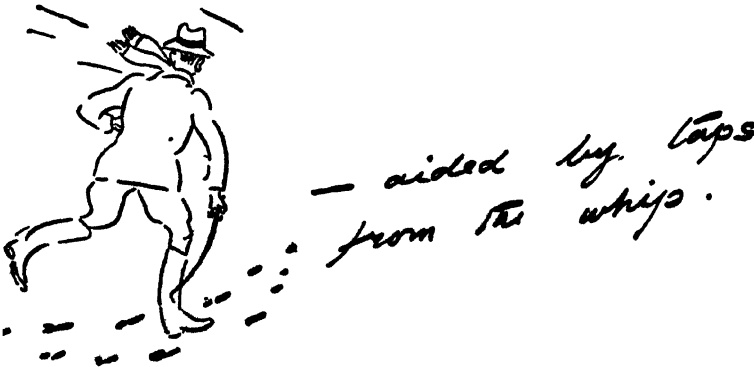
in the riding school, it is certainly of no use in the hunting-field, the race-course, or the polo ground, so that its advantages are hard to discover. But not so are the disadvantages. They are obvious enough. They cause the horse much pain and discomfort, they mark his flanks, they make him fret, and they have never kept a refusing horse straight or won a race; of that I am convinced.

Blunt spurs are, of course, much better. But, after all, they only substitute bruises for cuts, and are really not very effective. They are, in fact, an apology for weak legs. If you can't put your legs on to your horse and get him to obey you, then perhaps a pair of blunt spurs may help you; but in my own experience of schooling I find a good strong pair of legs, aided by taps from the whip, are quite good enough for any exercise, and I recommend you, as strongly as I can, to give up using even blunt spurs at all, because you will find your horses go much more kindly without, and are easier to train in every way.

Unfortunately, out hunting it is a convention to wear spurs. One is not supposed to be "properly dressed" without them, and you will often hear it said that they "show off a boot" so well.

This is, of course, bunkum. The eye can be trained to anything, and when you get accustomed to seeing boots without spurs, then it looks equally wrong to wear them. It is also very ridiculous to talk about being "badly turned out" if one appears at a meet without them. The question of turn out should depend only upon cleanliness and efficiency, and as I submit that most riders are more efficient without spurs than with them, the question of "correctness" should not arise.

However, I know the power of convention, especially with you young fellows. You would rather die than have a wrong-shaped tie or an unfashionable hat, and I am equally sure you would blush for very shame did you forget your spurs when going out hunting.





The question of turn out
should depend only upon
cleanliness -

THE "SLUG"

All this I understand very well, and the path of the reformer is so hard I do not ask you to tread it. But what I do ask you to do is this: never ride in sharp spurs, but only blunt ones, when hunting or on parade; on *all* other occasions leave them off entirely.

Learn to use your legs, and you will find that the very best possible advice.

"Oh yes, father, but some horses are such slugs they simply have to be driven up into their bridle," I can hear you say.

Well, I don't deny that there are slugs, but some common horses are so sticky and slow and lazy they nearly drive one mad. But those kind are, after all, pretty rare, and they are not the sort of horse you would own, are they?

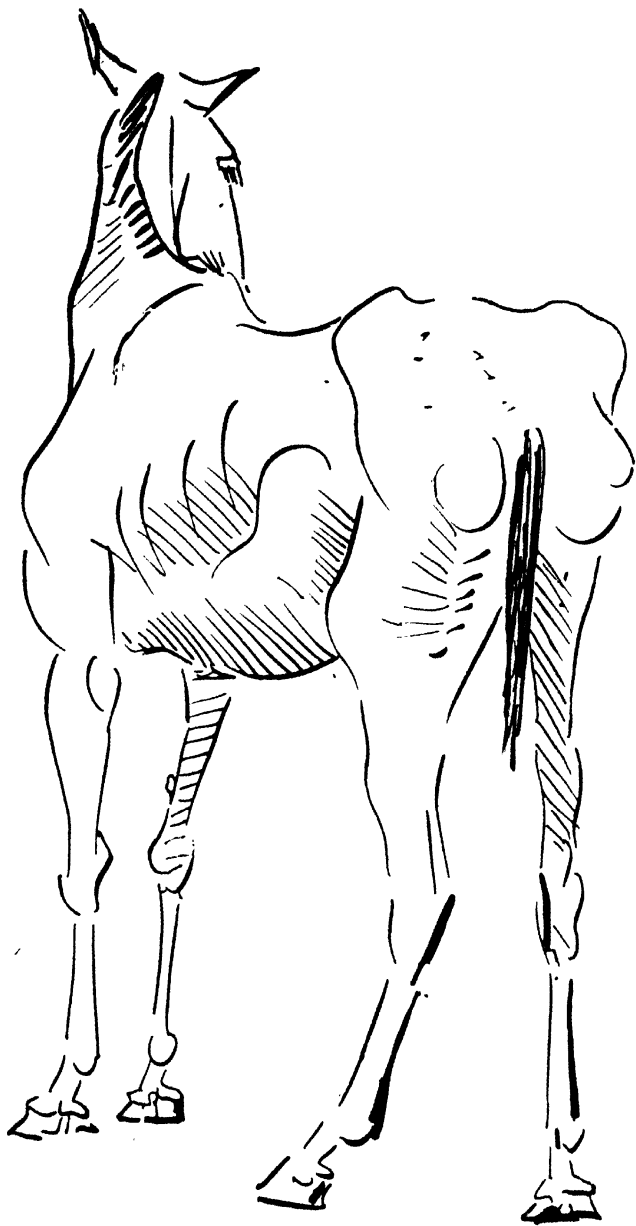
Then there is another kind of sluggish horse, which is only so because he is debilitated.

I remember riding one only the other day. He was the biggest brute to ride imaginable. You simply couldn't get him along, except under the stick. I was told that here, at least, was a case where a sharp pair of spurs was essential. But I made inquiries, and I discovered that the horse had only recently recovered from a very bad cold. I gave him a couple of weeks to recover, and when I rode him again I think, if I had touched him with spurs, he would have jumped the moon.

Then there is another kind of sluggish horse—a young one. Sometimes they have been fed on weeds and potatoes on a farm during all their early years, and although they look fat, perhaps, they are in reality as weak as cats. Give these sort of horses time and see whether they are slugs by nature.

Other slugs are merely poor creatures who are utterly overworked. Such are to be found in some riding establishments, jaded and worn and old. These horses undoubtedly seem to go better when ridden with spurs. But are you justified in using them?

So, you see, the occasions for their use dwindle the more we



— because he is
debilitated

NO SPUR

examine the matter. If you carry this rule out you will find your horses will go much more quietly and better with you and to the mutual advantage of both.

Let us think of it in this way: The intelligence of a horse is limited, and, like ourselves, can only think of one thing at a time. The schoolboy will never learn his lessons if he is thinking of the next football match, and the horse will never learn if he is wondering when the next prick on his sides is coming.

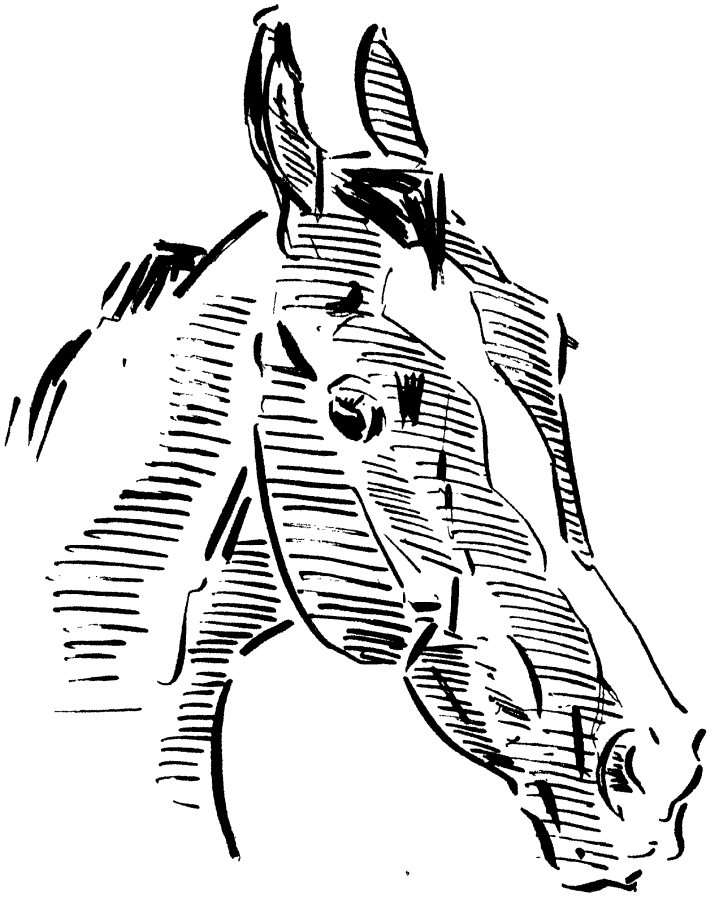
So get out of the habit of thinking a horse will learn only through fear of punishment. He will learn far better when he finds that there is no pain or discomfort in carrying out your wishes.

So never mind what your brother subalterns say or think. Wear your spurs only when you must.

Your affect. father,
M.

*Let us think
of it in
this way —*





The intelligence
of a horse
is limited

MY DEAR FATHER,

I am most awfully obliged to you for your letter about spurs. I think what you say must be jolly sound, although so many people do say that spurs are necessary on lots of occasions.

But now I want to ask you another question.

What is right, the snaffle or the double bridle for hacking or hunting in? I hear such differences of opinion. Some say the snaffle is only fit for racing, and others that it should be used at all times.

After all, there should be one definite rule. There can't be all this variety of opinion among the real experts, can there?

Next time the question crops up in the Mess I want to have some real good, hard facts from you I can produce as if they were my own. As it is, I don't think I know enough to say much, and so I sit very quiet and listen all I can. But now and then I feel as if I really would like to say something, and I will, too, when I have your knowledge behind me.

Your affect. son,
JOHN.

*I really
would like to
say something*





There can't be
all ~~this~~ variety of
opinion among the real
experts

THE SNAFFLE

MY DEAR JOHN,
For Heaven's sake don't go arguing with the senior officers. Young subalterns should be like

A wise old owl who sat in an oak,
The more he saw the less he spoke;
The less he spoke the more he heard,
Now wasn't he a wise old bird?

I am delighted to give you information, but, whatever you do, keep it to yourself until you are asked for it. In this particular instance the point you raise is far from easy to answer.

There are many advocates of the snaffle, and the reasons for their point of view are well worthy of consideration. Some, knowing they are indifferent riders, say that their hands are not good enough for a double bridle. They are perfectly right in saying that much less harm can be done in a snaffle, and that it is certainly the simplest method of biting a horse, provided he is temperate enough to be controlled in one.

This is a sound argument, because a double bridle badly used is a source of great discomfort to a horse, and produces more "pulling" than any snaffle would do.

I remember with one well-known pack of hounds there used to be a wealthy subscriber, whose purse was long and whose hands were hard. He used to get the best horses money could buy, but no matter what they were like when he got them, he soon had them pulling like fiends. His recipe was always a stronger bit. I used to see these unfortunate horses with their eyes blazing with pain, fighting against

*provided he is
temperate enough*



ONE BIT OR TWO?

these inhuman contraptions he used to put into their mouths. I do not know how many jaws he broke, but the stud groom told me that every horse used to burst out into a sweat whenever he came near. He was a terrible example of the misuse of the bit, and there is no doubt whatever that every one of his horses would have gone better in a snaffle.

Then, again, most people advocate using a snaffle on young horses during the early period of their training, and start putting on a bit only after they have been schooled for some months, and on the Continent many of the high-school experts school entirely on the snaffle.

They say that it is much easier for the horse to have one bit in his mouth instead of two. That they go all the more freely in consequence. They declare that as a horse's mouth is a delicate organism it must be treated with the greatest gentleness, and they flex their horse's mouth and bend them entirely in snaffles.

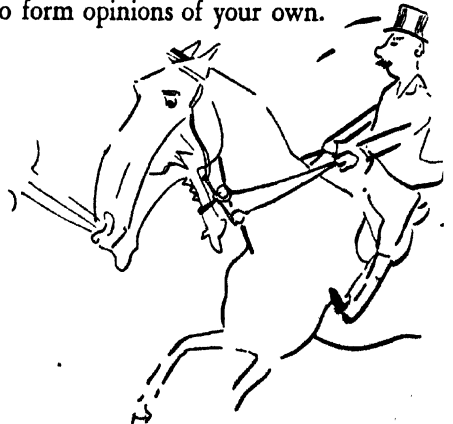
Then again for jumping. Snaffles are largely used because it is said a horse jumps with greater freedom in this way than if he has a bit in his mouth.

All these arguments are based upon the desire in all schooling to give horses a long neck. As you know, when jumping, the horse must have learnt to extend his neck to the full, and the "snaffle" advocates believe that the bit seriously affects this.

These are the opinions of well-known experts, so that whether we agree with them or not, they must be taken very seriously. Those who ride and train in snaffles do produce most excellent results. It is up to the "bit" advocates to see if their method is better.

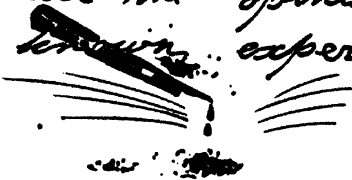
Speaking personally, I am not a snaffle man at all, and I will give you a variety of reasons for my opinion. When you have read them through carefully, thought them over a great deal, and tested them thoroughly, you will be in a position to form opinions of your own.

*— how many
jaws he
broke.*





*These are the opinions
of well-known experts.*



THE DOUBLE BRIDLE

First, we must eliminate the point of bad hands and indifferent horsemanship from the argument, because if you are a bad rider you may have recourse to expedients which are not necessary to more qualified exponents. A lame man must use a stick, but that is no argument for the procedure of an athlete.

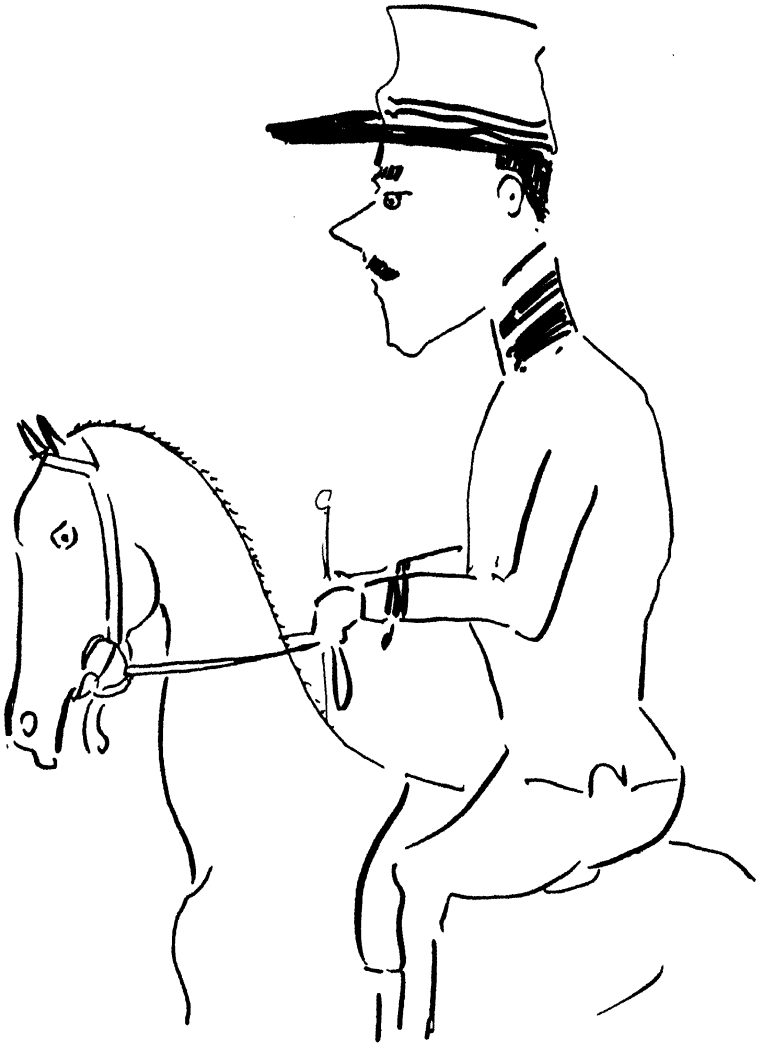
Let us take the young horse first. If you are expecting a "rough passage," then by all means use the snaffle until he is quite quiet to ride, but directly that period is over, what are the especial advantages of the snaffle? Personally, I think it teaches the horse to lay on your hand. I do not believe we can begin our flexions too soon, and every day spent with a tight rein is, in my opinion, a day of discomfort.

Of course, every horse varies, and we cannot treat every one in the same way, and we can vary the use of the double bridle to suit the temperament of each horse. For instance, we needn't use the bit rein at all, if we think it inadvisable, but it is always there for use if it is wanted, or again, we could leave the curb chain off, if only to get the horse accustomed to two bits in his mouth.

But if we ride our young horses with light hands and strong legs, I do not find they fight at all against the bit, but, in fact, rather the contrary. I find they usually go in double bridles perfectly happily almost from the outset.

Now, in all schooling, what we want to do is to lighten the forehead and to get the horse to use his hocks effectively and well. This result seems to me to be more quickly attained by the judicious use of the double bridle than of the snaffle.

I was asking one of these Continental snaffle experts the other day how long it would take to attain a good flexion. He said six months at least. This, anyway, is not a good advertisement for the snaffle, because in the double bridle I expect to attain good results *very* much more quickly than that.



*One of these Continental
snaffle experts.*

And, furthermore, when their horses are schooled I found they required always a good firm hold of their mouths. They yielded and flexed perfectly correctly, but it was like pulling at a cushion instead of at a lively and sensitive organ.

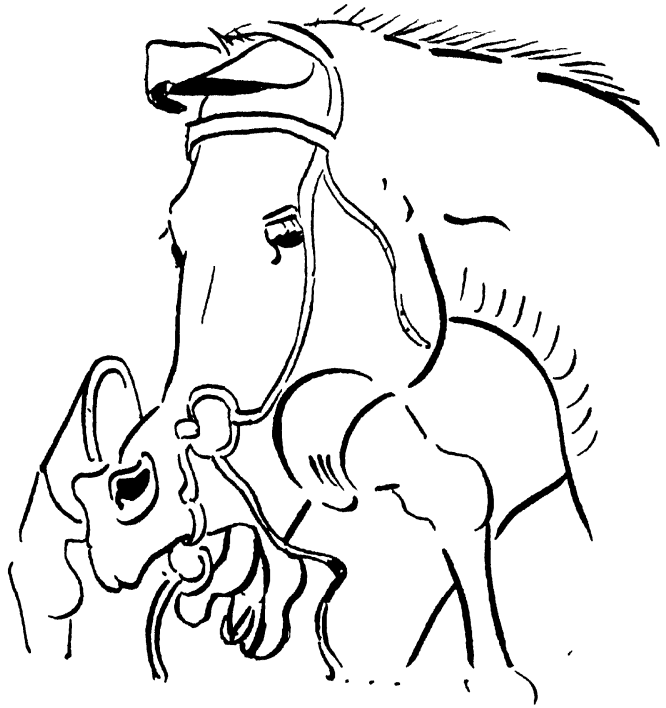
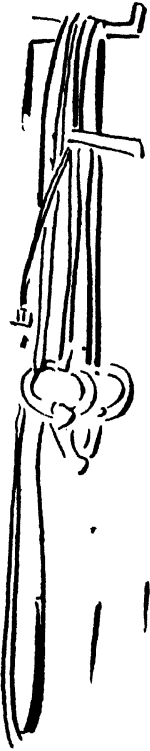
For instance, if any of these horses were put into a fast gallop and then were called upon to stop quickly, it required a very firm pressure upon the reins to bring them to a standstill. But, personally, I am not contented until a horse's mouth is so good that he will not only jump any fence, but will also pull up dead from a gallop on a given spot in reins made of brown paper. This standard is quite beyond the range of "snaffle merchants."

Finally, we come to jumping. Once a horse is obedient to the rein, he can be perfectly controlled on the approach to the obstacle, until he is a suitable distance away, and then he can be put at it in such a way as to give him plenty of momentum and scope. During this period there is time enough to allow him to lower his head in just as effective a manner as those who are jumped in snaffles.

Personally, I am of opinion that those who ride in snaffles have never experienced the pleasure that there is in the delicate handling of a horse in a double bridle, for then a horse can be got to bridle himself and flex his neck and lower jaw to the pressure on the rein not amounting to more than the weight of the reins themselves.

To ride a horse upon one finger is a delight the snaffle man can never know.

So you see, there are two very distinct schools of thought. Both are perfectly right, and I have tried both; as a result I am wholeheartedly a "bit man," because I find through its use a pleasure, a control, and a delicacy denied the snaffle advocates, whose results, excellent though they are, do not surpass those attained by the use of the bit.



*- Learn to
bridle himself*

THE MOUTH KEY

If, however, you think your hands are hard and heavy or your temper hasty, then stick to the snaffle, and you will have many supporters in your decision.

You often hear it said, "There is a key to every horse's mouth."

Yes, there is a key, but it is not to be found in the bit.

It is to be searched for in the balance and the flexions, the suppleness of the neck, the loins, and the lower jaw, so that the horse moves balanced on his hocks and not in his fore-hand.

Here, therefore, is the key—in balance, flexion, and obedience—so that the horse yields to the rein instead of opposing it.

But even the best trained horse will oppose the hand if he is off his balance, while a badly broken one will yield sometimes when his carriage happens to be correct.

Your affect. father,
M.



*If, however, you
think your
hands are hard
and heavy.*



Here, therefore, is the key!

MY DEAR FATHER,

There is one thing I particularly want to ask you about. The argument that goes on about the forward seat as opposed to the backward seat for hunting in the regiment seems interminable.

Some say one thing and others are just as firm on the opposite side.

Of course, I haven't enough experience to express any opinions, especially to those who say they have hunted all their lives. But it seems to me that hunting men are far less ready to discuss anything new than fellows like me, who are all out to find out what is really best, quite regardless of what Grandfather did, or Bay-Middleton, or Tom Furr, whose names are always quoted whenever the subject crops up.

Anyway, I feel very puzzled because I find fellows who really ought to know have by no means similar opinions.

Your affect. son,

JOHN.

*fellows who
really ought
to know*





The argument
that goes on about
the forward seat in the
regiment seems
interminable

THE FORWARD SEAT

MY DEAR JOHN,

I have got your letter about the forward seat question, and you have raised a regular bogey of a controversy, on which I have made more friends and enemies than most men. Anyway, I will do my best to put the matter before you as clearly as I can.

In the old days of your grandfather the backward seat was prevalent everywhere. By this expression "backward seat" I mean that the rider leant his body back as the horse landed over a fence, and I shall use that expression with that meaning throughout this letter. In those days they not only landed with their bodies back, but they actually approached the fence in this position. In fact, we do not have to go so far back as your grandfather; your own father, when he joined his regiment in 1895, was taught to sit back all the time when either approaching or landing over a fence, and this practice was in vogue in the British Army up to about the year 1910. But after that there came a change. Now, it takes something pretty big to create any change in horsey matters in this country, I can assure you, and two big things had previously occurred which had set people thinking. The first was the arrival of Tod Sloan from America. He rode in most of our big races and carried all before him. Opinions differ very much as to which particular reason his success can be ascribed. But one fact was that he sat well forward the whole time. Our jockeys were not long in copying him, and the forward seat very soon became generally adopted as the most efficient mode for flat racing. This, of course, affected only flat-race jockeys; it had no



We do not have to
go so far back as
your grandfather



THE "DROP" FENCE

bearing upon hunting or steeplechasing circles, and they carried on serenely as if nothing had happened.

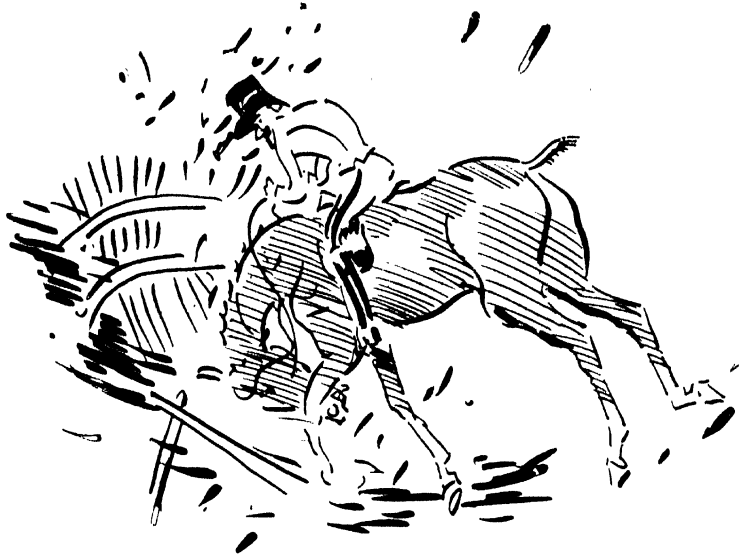
In 1907 the International Horse Show was started in London, and for the first time English people saw foreigners performing over fences. The result was positively alarming. They carried all before them. They jumped the fences with ease and grace, while our best riders flattened their fences and gave a most sorry exhibition all round. The English public did not accept these defeats gracefully. They said: "Oh yes, it is all very well for these foreigners to come over and give an exhibition of 'trick' jumps, but where would they be across a natural country?" This view was generally accepted, and no hunting man dreamt of altering his seat or his methods. But soon the British began to improve. They adopted the forward seat at Olympia and in all horse shows generally, and the result was most marked.

The schooling of horses also improved very considerably, and now the British team can always hold its own against all competitors. But still the English hunting man is not convinced. He says this forward seat is, no doubt, perfectly effective and workable over straightforward fences, where the take-off and land are known quantities, but it will never work over an English country, where fences have constantly to be jumped with a landing entirely hidden. They also say that it would be impossible over a "drop" fence, because the rider would then be unable to remain on the horse's back. They do now admit that the body should be forward when approaching a fence, but that is as far as they will go.

In spite of multitudes of photographs to the contrary, many people still state that the truly correct jump is when the rider's body remains vertical with the ground throughout the parabola of the leap. In fact, I am not sure whether this isn't still being taught in the Army; anyway, it certainly was a short while ago.

Such a view is quite mystifying because, although it sounds fairly

They
carried
all
before
them



When
the
rider's
body
remains
vertical

THE FORWARD SEAT

reasonable, it is stultified immediately by every photograph taken of accomplished riders jumping.

Nevertheless, there are still many advocates of this principle, which means that the rider's body should be forward as the horse rises at the jump, and back as he lands, so preserving the verticality of the body throughout.

In the steeplechasing world conservatism reigns supreme, and it is most widely accepted that no one could land over Becher's Brook in the National with the forward seat and remain on. This fence is always quoted in these discussions. It is regarded as the most formidable and difficult fence in the world, but before I have finished this letter I hope I may be able to prove to you that it is not quite so big as all that.

Some few jockeys have tried sitting forward when landing, but have given it up. The reason for this is not because the forward seat is faulty, but because these jockeys have not practised or understood it sufficiently. However, I believe there are a few now who have taken it up, although I am not quite sure on this point.

Now, in all the world we are the only people who stick to this view. All nations on the Continent and in America sit forward, and they jump bigger fences than we do. For instance, the average height of the fences in the National is about 4 feet 10 inches, of which at least 6 inches can be gone through. In the race-course at Hanover they have fences there of over 6 feet in height and 2 feet thick, with a ditch and guard-rail in front as well. These fences are far larger than anything Liverpool can produce, and yet every jockey adopts the forward seat. In America, although the fences never reach such dimensions as this, no one thinks for a moment of sitting back over any fence if they can help it.

Then, again, on the Continent fox-hunting is unknown, and riding



Some few jockeys
have tried sitting
forward when
landing!

D R O P F E N C E S

over natural fences such as we have in England is impossible. To make up for this deficiency they erect cross-country rides over artificial fences, and I can assure you that these obstacles, which have to be taken at a good speed, are far more formidable than those ever tackled in our hunting countries.

Our hunting people talk of "drop" fences when the land is seldom more than a few inches lower than the take-off. Becher's Brook has certainly not more than an 18 inches fall, but in these cross-country rides they have drop fences of 3 feet and more, perched upon the top of steep precipices, down which the horses have to go immediately after landing. Performing these feats every rider sits forward. In fact, they go so far as to say that it would be impossible to do it if they did not do so.

In spite of the whole riding world outside this country having adopted the forward seat for all classes of jumps, whether it be in the steeplechase, the cross-country ride, or the show-ground, the English public still stick to the old method of steeplechasing and in the hunting-field, because they say it would be impossible to sit their horses if the body leans forward when racing or over a drop fence or boggy landing-places where a horse would peck. To those who speak in this way I feel inclined to say—the words of a well-known advertisement—"My dear, try it." It is sometimes said that it requires more skill and more nerve to sit forward than back over a fence. I believe this is actually so. I think it does require more assurance and more practice, but this is hardly a satisfying reason why it should not be adopted in our hunting circles.

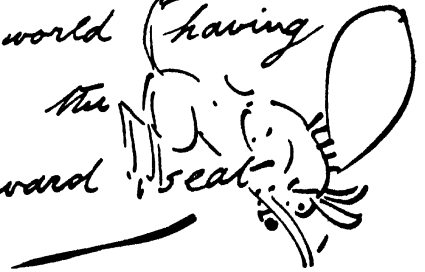
Another argument is used by those who support the old method. They say that if the body leans forward on landing it produces a much greater strain upon the horse's fore-legs. This is an argument which can be easily demolished. The horse's fore-foot on landing

*If the body
leans forward*





In spite of the whole
riding world (having
adopted the
forward seat)



RETARDED IMPACT

must always have to bear the strain of his own weight and that of the rider and saddle, no matter where the weight may be. But there is such a thing as retarded impact, and if the rider keeps his weight on the stirrup iron and absorbs the shock of landing in the muscles of his ankles, knees, and loins, the force of impact is much lessened. But as this position can be acquired best by adopting the forward seat, it is surely not the strongest argument in favour of the back seat that can be produced.

As I told you in the early part of this letter, I was brought up to the old-fashioned seat, and rode in this way until 1901, when I was shown its errors by a Belgian. I have hunted with no less than fifty-seven different packs of hounds, and I have studied and observed the riding of many countries and continents, and I can only tell you that the longer I live, the more I see, the more I am convinced that we English people will never ride as well as other nations until we whole-heartedly adopt this style.

In the hunting field it doesn't so much matter. The pace is slow and the fences are on the average pretty small, but in steeplechasing it matters a great deal. Look at the photographs which appear in the illustrated papers daily during the steeplechase season and you will see how horses' heads are being interfered with, and how their balance is upset by those jockeys who, badly off their balance, have to hang on to the reins to maintain themselves in the saddle. Accidents, of course, also occur amongst those jockeys who sit forward, but I can assure you that the percentage of falls is less, and that a horse whose rider is properly balanced will gain quite two lengths over any other horse whose rider interferes with him as he jumps. So, I hope I have now convinced you that it is not necessary to sit back over a drop fence, or a blind one, and that if you want to get the best results out of your horse, you must SIT FORWARD as much as you can.

Your affect. father,

M.



— badly off
their balance.

MY DEAR FATHER,

I know quite well what you think of horses and how they ought to be trained, but I am awfully bad at expressing myself, so that I never seem to be able to hold my own in any discussion, especially when I am talking with fellows who have much more experience than I.

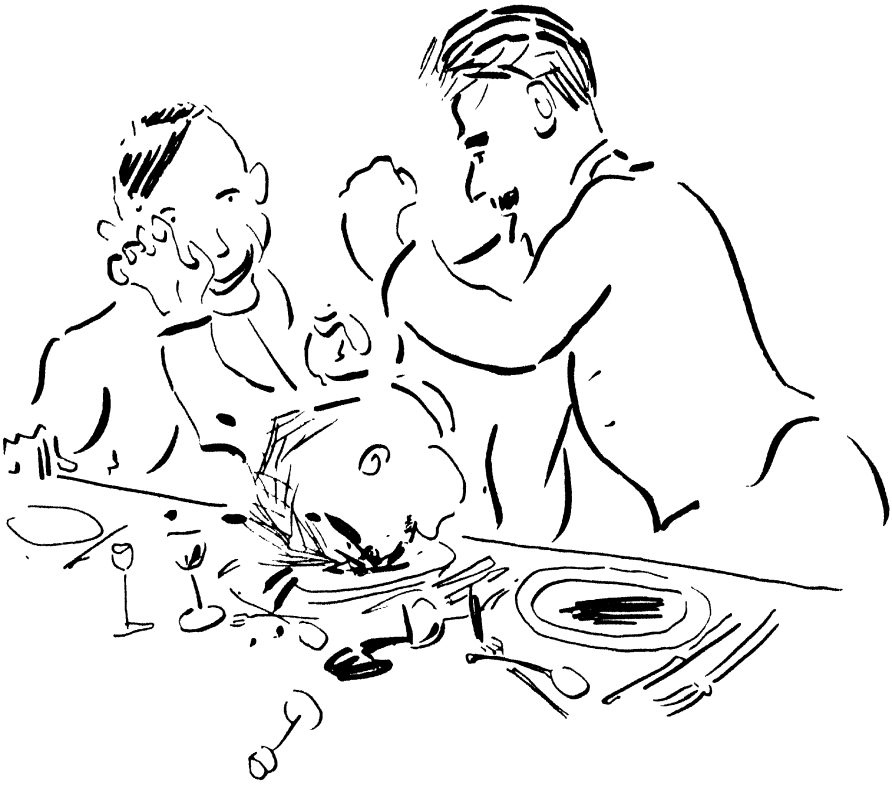
Here is an instance. Last night we were talking about whether a horse obeyed his rider only from motives of fear or self-preservation or whether he did what he was asked because he wanted to please or because he liked it. I heard what one fellow had to say and then I tried to butt in, but I was soon silenced by the arguments of another chap, so that I feel now I don't know where I am.

Anyway, I have an open mind, and don't know what to think. I should so much like to hear your views, so that next time I shall have something really hot to reply with.

Your affect. son,
JOHN.



— whether a
horse obeyed his
rider.



I was soon silenced
by the arguments of
another chap.

CO-OPERATION VERSUS FEAR

MY DEAR JOHN,

They may have taught you the art of war at Sandhurst, but apparently spelling isn't part of the curriculum. Next time I should spell experience with four e's, if I were you.

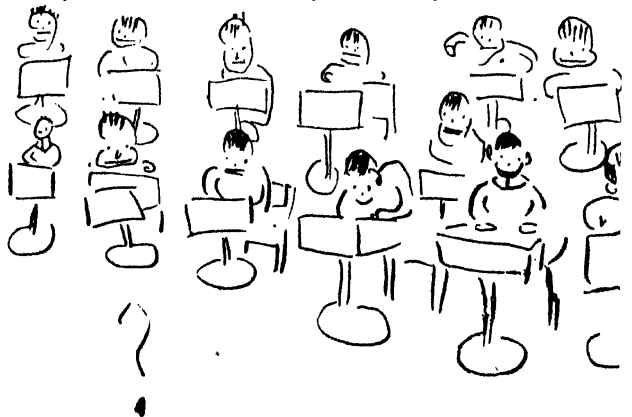
Well, I am glad you have an open mind. It is a splendid thing, as long as you have brains to put into it. What many people suffer from is a mind so open it's like a vacuum into which no particle of knowledge can ever penetrate without an explosion.

But let us see if your "open mind" can focus itself upon the following lines of thought. A child can be brought up to fear its parents or to love them; in either case it will behave with reasonable propriety. For instance, you can say to your child: "Look here, if you don't shut the door at once father will smack you and send you to bed," and the probability is that the child will shut the door. On the other hand, you can say: "Father will be so very sad if little Percy doesn't shut the door when he asks him so nicely," and once more the probability is that the child will shut the door.

From this you can see how easy it is for people to have firm convictions, based upon long experience, in total disagreement with each other. Some people believe in and practise the Martinet school, where discipline is inspired by the fear of the cane, and punishment alone enforces it.

These views are certainly much less prevalent than they were. We find few Do-the-boy's Hall amongst our schools and colleges to-day, because we have learnt that greater discipline can be maintained by trusting a boy's honour than in any other way.

*Do the
boy's
Hall?*





I should spell
experience with four e's,
if I were you —
(you've got me muddled,
Father!)

THE MARTINET SCHOOL

Consequently, most people to-day believe that children can be trained most effectively in those schools where the cane is unknown and punishment is moral rather than physical.

As we advance in the training of our children, so should we also advance in the schooling of our horses. We must learn that methods of severity are not effective, and that the best and surest way to school a horse is by patience and firmness.

Now in regard to these virtues I find *all* writers are agreed. *All* say we must be patient and firm, but they don't mean the same thing. Not by any means. We find as we read on their ideas of patience and firmness are very different. Some of them go on to tell us that a horse's mentality works only under the law of self-preservation, and that the one way to train a horse is to teach him to avoid pain.

I do not disagree with these writers except in one respect. They seem to tell us that this method is the *only* one, and that there is no alternative.

We are sometimes told "the horse works *only* under the instincts of self-preservation," but that is where I disagree completely. The horse can undoubtedly be trained by these methods just exactly in the same way the child can be trained. But although it is a way, I deny it to be the better of the two.

To emphasise this point, I will quote from one recent writer, who advocates the "Martinet" system of training. He says: "Horses are not willing co-operators, and that the best we can say of their instincts is that their instinct of self-preservation prompts them to *fear their rider more* than the dangers and difficulties which beset them on all sides" (the italics are mine). Yes, quite so! This is the natural corollary to this method of training. How easily we can transpose this sentence into the mouth of the Martinet father. "Oh yes, my boy does do what he is told, because he knows damned well what he would get if he didn't. But I don't find him willing at all. He has



The Martinet father →



THE CO-OPERATION SCHOOL

got to be forced before he will do anything."

Of *course*, we can train by fear, but those methods are out of date with children and should be so with horses. Personally, I find that the horse is quite the most willing co-operator it is possible to conceive. He enters wholeheartedly into the spirit of the game; once he understands what is wanted, his confidence is gained, and his muscles are in such a condition that he can do it with comfort.

I can give you several instances of this. Let us take the simple example of facing a young horse at a simple drain. To start with he won't go near it. To get him over may be a matter of hours, no matter how small the ditch may be. But once over, and his confidence has been gained, see how he begins to co-operate. As you approach it he starts to show his eagerness to tackle it, and directly you allow him he is at it and over it like a shot. This cannot be interpreted in any way as evasion or fear, or self-preservation. It is nothing more or less than hearty co-operation. It *cannot* be due to fear, because there has never been anything to frighten him. He has never known a spur, the whip has only been a friend, and he has never been over-faced at a fence or had a fall. It cannot be due to the desire for food, because he will turn as readily from his stable as towards it, and so the law of self-preservation cannot apply.

Let me give you another example. Let us suppose you are doing ordinary riding school work. Your horse will often anticipate the exercise before you have given him the aid. This is not evasion as some people believe, because your horse has nothing to evade. He neither fears the whip nor feels the spur. So why should he want to turn too soon unless he thinks you want him to? If he were wanting to evade he wouldn't do the exercise at all. Personally, I find horses enter wholeheartedly into their schooling directly they understand what is wanted, but you must drop the use of the spur and of punishment with the whip.

H^o enters

Wholeheartedly

into the
spirit of the
game.



I find horses
enter
Wholeheartedly
into their
Schooling

THE PARTNER

Let us give you another example of obvious co-operation on the part of the horse. Let us suppose you take a horse out hacking every day, and that at a certain spot it is your habit to break into a gallop. As you approach, your horse begins to get excited, and when you reach the spot he is away like lightning.

It is no use the critics saying that the horse knows that if he doesn't gallop he will get a hiding, because, in the first place, he may never have had one, and, secondly, it doesn't apply to the argument.

Let us suppose that the horse changes owners, and that now when he comes to this spot he is not expected to gallop at all, but only to walk. What happens? At first, the memory of his past experience is foremost in his mind; he starts jumping about ready to carry out what he believes to be the wishes of his rider. But, after a short while, he begins to understand what is wanted, and will walk past the spot perfectly quietly.

How can we possibly explain these things except that the horse is a most willing partner, ready to fall in with whatever his rider wants, provided he quite understands what is actually required.

In simpler matters we find the horse will walk, trot, canter, gallop, or jump, as required, when neither fear of punishment or fall comes into the question. He is our partner, then, so why not allow him the same characteristic when doing more difficult feats?

Before concluding this letter I may as well take this opportunity of discussing the problem of "fighting it out with a horse." Some writers and many people think that the time must arise with most horses when it is necessary to fight it out—that is to say, give your horse a good hammering so as to show you are master.

For instance, I am told that when a horse rears persistently it is a good plan to break a bottle filled with bullock's blood over his ears. This is mixing up cause and effect terribly. We don't want to cure the rearing *itself*, but to remove the apprehension which *causes* the



As you approach
your horse begins to
get quite excited

have put sufficient

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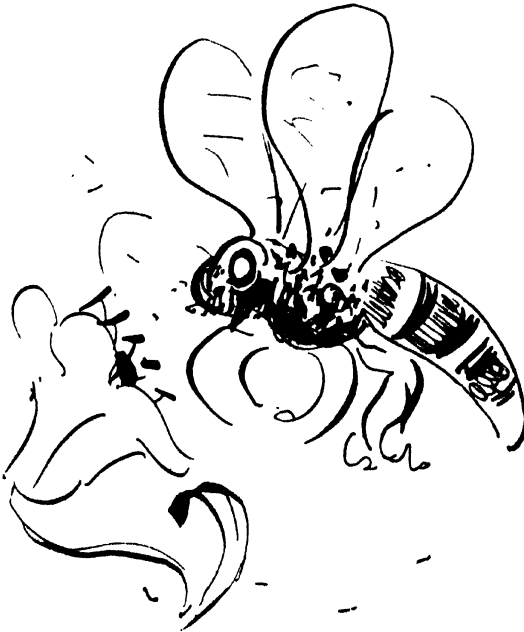
HITTING IS USELESS

rearing, and that is not done by breaking bottles over horses' heads, or by any other frightening method.

No, sonny, I have often heard of instances where I was told it was necessary, but I have never come across one yet. If your horse fights you it is because there is something wrong on *your* part, either in your system or yourself, and the answer to all these problems is to alter your system or improve your riding. Hitting them does *no* good, and it never will. I don't say it isn't effective sometimes, but the other way is *better*; so much better that there should be no two opinions about it.

So I hope now I have put sufficient ideas into that open mind of yours to keep it thoroughly occupied until next time you write.

Your affect. father,
M.



ideas

into that



open mind
of yours!

INTELLIGENCE

MY DEAR JOHN,

In your last letter you said that you had a long argument with a brother officer last night as to whether horses are intelligent or not. I am glad to hear you stood on the side of the horse, because it is my opinion that the less we know of and sympathise with his mentality, the more stupid we believe him to be, but as we progress in knowledge and understanding, the more we change our views. But no discussion on this very abstruse subject can be of any worth unless we decide beforehand what the word "intelligence" means.

Everyone has some different idea on this matter, but mine is that it denotes a power of reasoning and of marshalling facts and experience in a logical sequence. With that as our basis for discussion, let us take your opponent's view, to see what it is worth.

He says: "I am sure the horse is a stupid animal, that it has no intelligence. Its only mental attribute is that of memory." He points out many examples of stupidity. He says that a horse, when "shying," shows what "an ass" he is. He shies at the most ridiculous things, things which he has seen many times before, things which he should know well, things which can do him no harm.

He also says that a horse doesn't seem to know what is wanted or even to remember old lessons. For example, let us suppose a horse has jumped a fence every day for many weeks, and then doesn't see it for a few months. When you put him at the fence again he is very likely to refuse it.

These are examples I am sure your friend has quoted as those of



I am glad
to hear you stood
on the side of the
horse

MEMORY OR INTELLIGENCE?

lack of intelligence. Then with pulling and runaway horses. This seems to be madness. Why won't they stop? They know they should stop. They are given sufficient pain to tell them they are doing wrong, and yet they won't stop. This *must* be due to stupidity.

Then, again, when you come into the stable, they don't seem to know whether you have been away or not. They don't greet you like a dog, unless you carry sugar or carrots in your hand. They show no real signs of affection and don't seem to care one way or the other.

These are the sort of arguments that were used, were they not?

So let us dissect them to see what they are worth, and then we can start building up arguments on the other side.

First, they say the horse has no intelligence, only memory. What does this mean? Does it imply that memory is no attribute of the mind, or that memory can exist without intelligence? If this is what they mean, their case is untenable from the outset. Philosophers tell us that all knowledge is experience and experience is memory. Therefore, those who deny the horse intelligence, but grant him memory alone, are talking of what they do not understand.

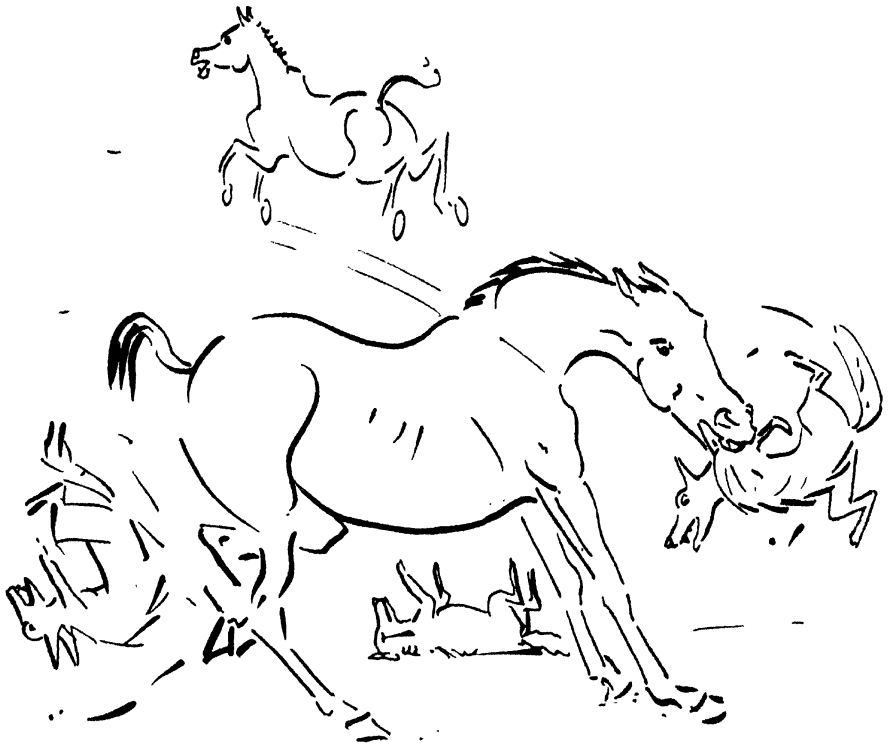
In reply your opponent will say that intelligence is not the right word. Reasoning power should be substituted. If a horse had any reason in him he couldn't shy at the ridiculous things he does.

So let me examine this question of shying. To my thinking, instead of proving the horse a stupid animal, it proclaims his acute powers of observation. Anything new, anything strange, a different colour, a puff of smoke, an unexplained sound, will cause horses to shy, and quite reasonably, too. Because the equine race, having no natural defence except that of speed, must always be suspicious of the unknown.

When they continually shy at objects they pass every day, this can often be put down to a little playfulness, which often turns into



*— greet you
like a dog*



The equine race
having no natural
defence except that
of speed!

HABITS

apprehension if the rider uses his stick or spur. So there seems here but little to discuss. The horse is naturally a nervous animal, and his acute powers of observation seem to belie the claim to stupidity.

There is another point about shying. An object is often used by a horse as an excuse. For instance, let us suppose a horse has been in the habit of exercising in company, and when so doing shies at practically nothing. Then take him out by himself; it is quite probable that he will start shying at any object he can think of. This is not because he is stupid and over-timid at all. It is because he is turning over in his mind some scheme to get back home to his friends, or some way of displaying his displeasure at being taken out alone. He is also somewhat naturally a little more timid without companions. Now let us take the instance of a horse refusing a fence he knows well, but which he hasn't jumped for some little time. We must remember that jumping is a definite effort and not necessarily attractive, as dumb-bell exercises are to ourselves. Horses are creatures of habit far more than ever we are. What they have done yesterday they would like to do to-day, and what they have not done to-day they won't want to do to-morrow. They are just like us. If we do Sandow exercises every morning, after a time we get to like them and quite enjoy the time so spent. But suppose we leave them off for a few months, it is quite an effort to start them again. We know these things ourselves, but if a horse objects to jumping where he has jumped in the past, we write him down as a stupid animal.

Then we have the instance of the horse who refuses for no apparent reason. Those who call him foolish for so doing have never studied the arts of jumping. If a horse does refuse a fence, there is always a reason, and so good a one, too, that it redounds to the credit of his intelligence rather than to the reverse.

Again, those who call the "pulling horse" a stupid beast have never understood the arts of riding. It must be obvious to anyone that we cannot blame a horse's intelligence because we ride him badly or

If we
do
Sandow
exercises
every
morning



— what an effort it is
to start them again.

RECOGNITION

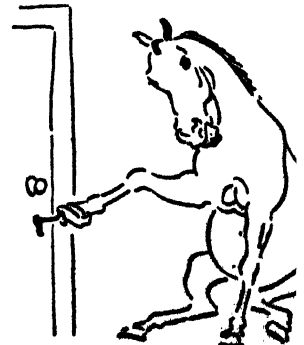
bit him wrongly. The reply to all these contentions is a very simple one. The well-trained, well-ridden horse does none of these things. He doesn't shy (except for some obvious reason), he doesn't pull, and he doesn't refuse. So if your opponent's horses do these things he must question his own intelligence rather than that of his stud. So far I have only attempted to demolish the arguments of the other side. I will now give you some definite examples of intelligence in horses, which I hope will be sufficiently cogent to convince any of your friends who may read this letter.

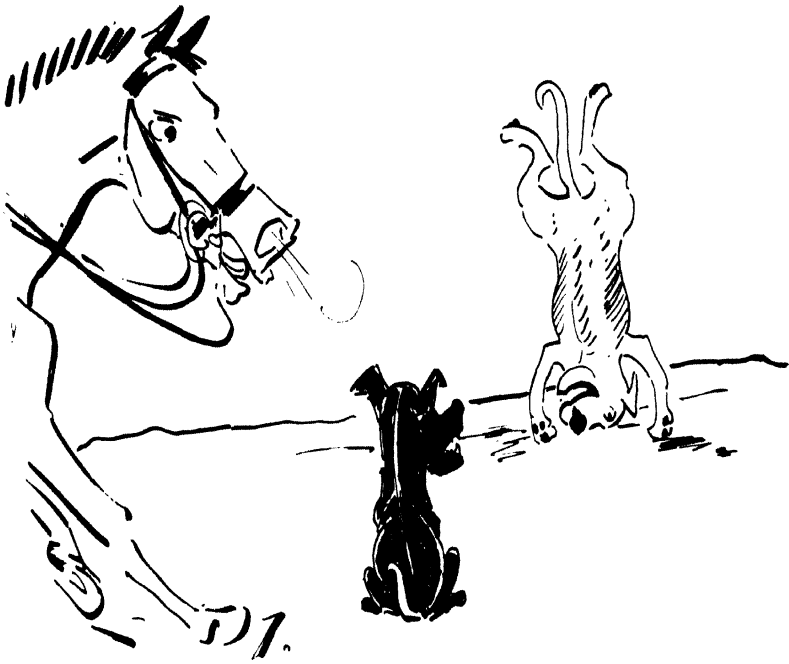
It is, of course, well known that horses have wonderful homing powers. They will find their way to, or recognise their stable under the most disadvantageous circumstances, such as in a thick fog. Some people call this instinct; personally I prefer to say that it shows a considerable intelligence.

Again, in the stable horses recognise even the footstep of the friend who comes with sugar or carrots, and they also know when to expect the titbit. For instance, he may walk by at other times, and no attention is paid. Does not this show signs of intelligence? Horses know and associate cause with effect. For instance, they know a red coat denotes a hunting day, they will pick out the soft spots on a road to trot on if their feet are tender, or they will select the hard places if the going is too deep elsewhere. They know quite well the difference between a race meeting and a hunt meet directly they have had the necessary experience. They know when they are going to be ridden by good riders or bad ones. I have actually known a badly treated horse who would throw himself down in the yard if you attempted to mount with a whip in your hand, but on other occasions would stand quite quietly. If a horse has no intelligence, how do you account for this?

The cuteness horses display in opening doors is quite amusing, and hence the variety of designs we see in stables to overcome this little trait. Does this show stupidity?

*The cuteness
horses display
in opening
doors*





He doesn't shy
(except for some obvious
reason)



You see, most horses are simply not allowed to use their brains. They are tied up to a wall for twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four, often quite alone and in the dark. How *can* anyone expect any development of the brain under such conditions? But when a horse is in a box with a half-door, facing the yard, then you will see his head looking out all day long. Horses treated like that don't shy much.

Then, again, I am confident that horses think over the day's work very carefully. For instance, we see a horse who has persistently refused some fence in his schooling one day will start off the next day and jump it without any trouble.

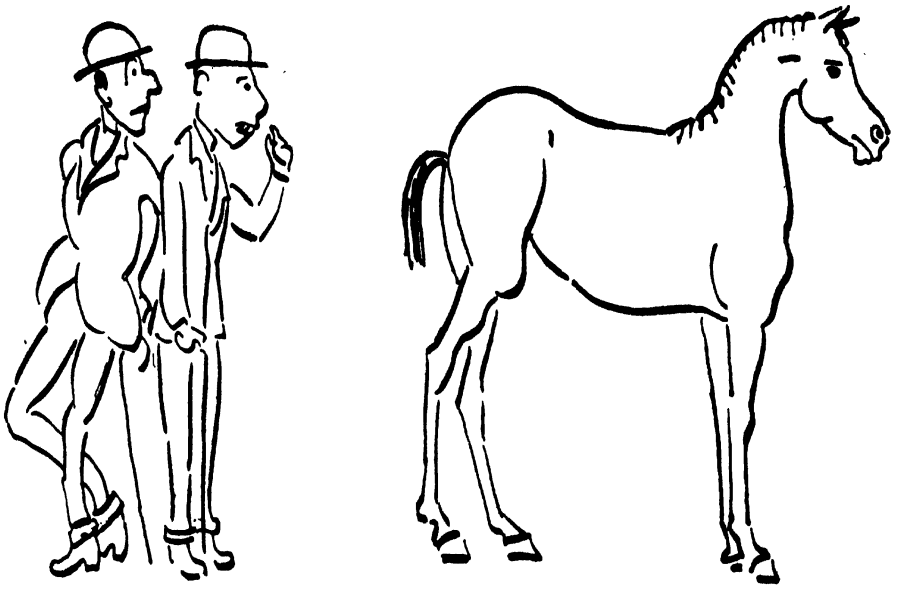
Horses know at once people who are sympathetic, and show their dislike of those who are harsh and rough in a moment.

Are not these also signs of intelligence?

I remember also once seeing a pony that had been very badly wounded lying in his box. So bad was he that the veterinary surgeon who was present decided to put him out of his misery and told the farrier-major to fetch the humane-killer. But the moment the farrier arrived, the pony, whose sense of self-preservation made him realise that something serious was about to happen, got up, and seemed so much better it was decided to give him another chance. He lived for many more years and played polo for several seasons after. Now, I am convinced that that pony felt what was about to happen to him, just as if he had understood every word.

It seems to me that those people who call the horse a stupid animal have never been in sympathy with him. Personally, the more I have to do with them the less stupid I think they are. In fact, I find they are always easy to teach and most tractable pupils. But you must *understand* them, and that takes a good many years of experience and knowledge.

Your affect. father,
M.



Those people who
call the horse a
stupid animal



DO HORSES LIKE FOX-HUNTING?

MY DEAR JOHN,

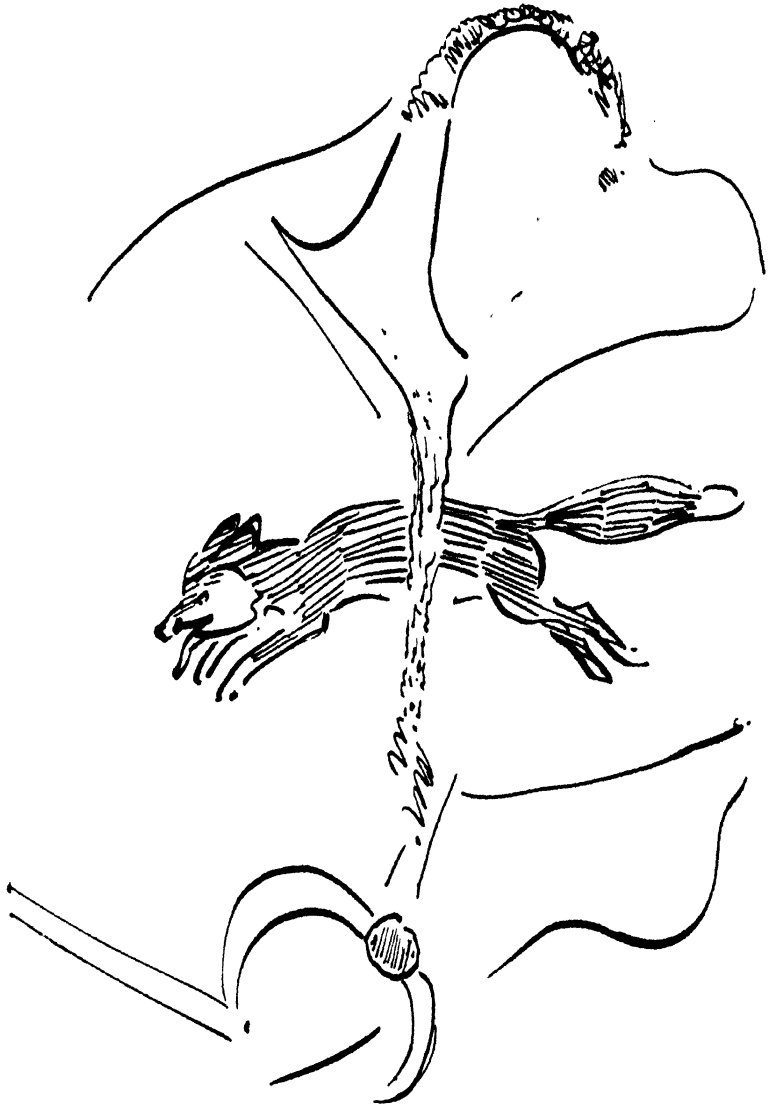
You tell me that you have read that although it is doubtful whether horses enjoy ordinary exercise and it is certain they dislike polo, yet it is a positive fact that they do enjoy hunting. So you raised the question with some of your sporting friends, and the answers you got were very conflicting.

Yes, I am quite sure they were. The divergency of view you get in all horsey matters from horsey people is one of the surprising things in life.

However, let us tackle the subject in a straightforward way, and see to what conclusion a logical sequence of ideas will bring us. First of all, we will take the question literally, and then we will discuss it in its broader aspects.

Do horses like fox-hunting? Well, my lad, what is fox-hunting? It is the science of killing a fox by pursuing him with hounds. Therefore, if horses like fox-hunting, they enjoy and appreciate this art. That is to say, at the meet they understand for what purpose the hounds are there, they enjoy hearing the hounds in cover, and understand what they are doing. At the "gone away" signal they understand what is happening, during the view they have a full knowledge of the hunt and of checks and of casts, and that when a kill takes place or the fox runs into a drain they appreciate the success or otherwise of the day's sport.

If you believe all this, then you must credit the horse with being the most intelligent of all animals, even more so than most of "the field," because I can assure you that it is only about one person in ten



We will take the
question literally (?)

HUNTING QUA HUNTING

can accurately describe the day's sport when he gets home, and only one in a hundred who understands the art of hunting thoroughly.

But, of *course*, you don't believe it. It is perfectly obvious that your horse does not understand these things at all. He certainly doesn't care *what* is being hunted, or what is killed, whether it's a fox, a badger, a hare, a deer, or a rabbit. It is very doubtful whether he understands that anything is being killed at all. He may certainly occasionally prick up his ears at the "break up" when the huntsman is sounding his horn and the hounds are fighting over the carcass, just in the same way he would look up at a menagerie or other strange object which happened to be passing, but it is not usual for him even to do this. If the hunt has been hot and exhausting, his chief occupation is to regain his wind and cool off, and I think the only pleasure he actually gets at the "kill" under such circumstances is at the pleasant rest from the arduous work of galloping through mud and plough.

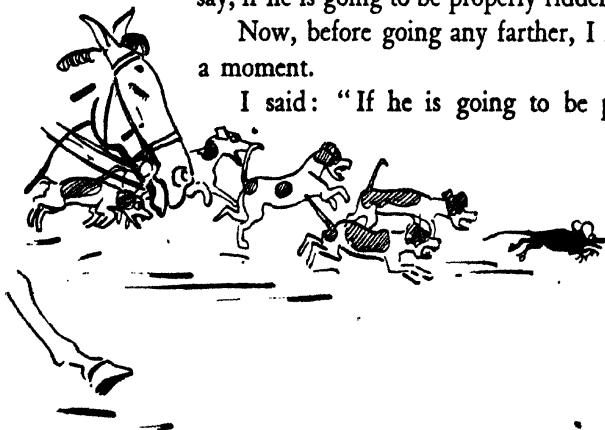
But I think I have said enough to show that the statement cannot be taken literally. No horse enjoys *hunting qua* hunting.

So let us see if we can come to any conclusion in the broader aspect.

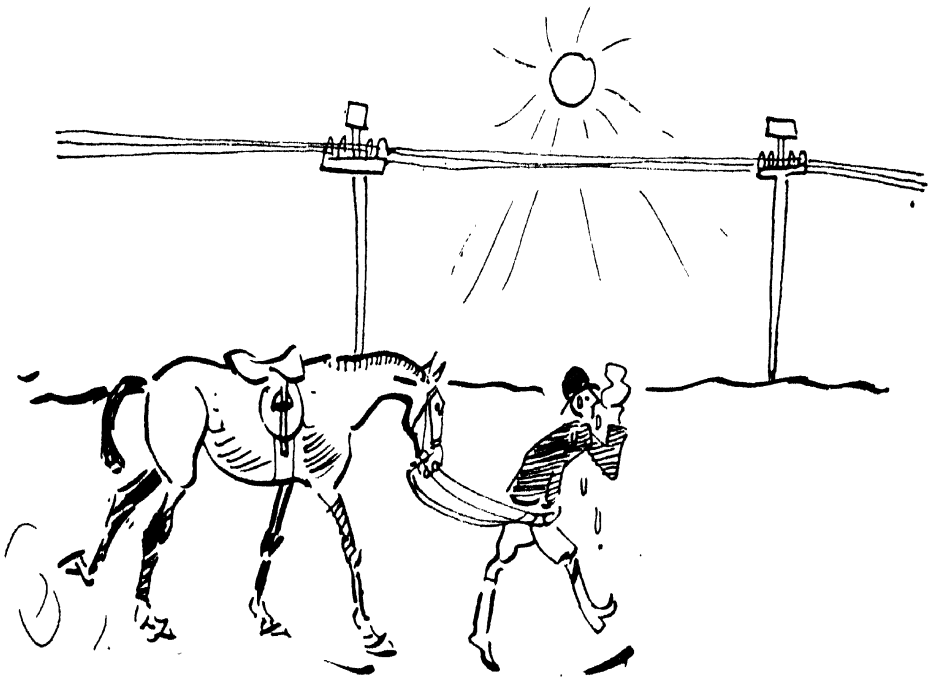
A day's hunting for the horse means, firstly, an extra good feed for breakfast. I am sure he likes that, but what else? Then he is saddled up and ridden or led to the meet, probably several miles along a road. As this is much the same as his daily exercise, only probably a little less interesting, he cannot care about this part particularly. As he approaches the meet he sees other horses on the road, which may or may not interest him. If they do, he shows no signs of it—that is to say, if he is going to be properly ridden.

Now, before going any farther, I must dwell upon this point for a moment.

I said: "If he is going to be properly ridden." What often



*He certainly
doesn't care
what is being
hunted!*



or led to
the meet

A circular arrangement of small line drawings. At the top, a horse is being led by a person. On the right, a person is leading a horse. At the bottom, a person is leading a horse. On the left, a person is leading a horse. In the center, a person is leading a horse. The drawings are simple and sketchy, showing different ways people interact with horses.

THE CATTLE-TRUCKING JOG

happens is this: Many horses know that during a day's hunting they are going to experience an immensity of discomfort. Their mouths are to suffer serious discomfort, or their sides to be pitted with the spur, or their riders are never going to allow them to jump any fence with freedom. Perhaps they know they will experience all of these things. Horses ridden so, when they see they are being taken to a meet, often begin to play up a bit. They show irritation, they break out into a sweat, they won't stand still, and so on. These signs are often taken by their owners as those of pleasure, but if they think so, they know the mentality of the horse as little as the arts of equitation.

So much for those unfortunate horses that are going to be badly ridden. They, at least, cannot possibly enjoy the day's sport.

We will now return to those horses who will be well and carefully ridden.

They have now reached the meet. They walk about in a field round and round, or wait about till their masters arrive. I do not know what particular pleasure this can be to a horse. Then hounds move off, and the horses do a "cattle-trucking" trot to cover. As this is not altogether pleasurable for the rider, I think it can be still less so for the horse, except that in so far as he is a gregarious animal, he is, at least, in the company of his kind. We then come to the cover side. Here he may walk up and down, or wait, crowded in a gateway. The sound of the horn may remind him that all is not going to be tranquil and easy, but, generally speaking, he pays little attention to whatever is going on.

When hounds come near, well brought up hunting people turn their horse's heads towards them, lest a hound should be kicked. As this is a fundamental rule, it does not speak well of the ordinary horse's natural love of hounds, does it? (Of course, those horses who are brought up amongst hounds never kick them, but that is entirely beside the point, because we are speaking of the inherent desires and enjoyment of the horse.)



A "cattle-trucking"
trot to cover
wiggly lines
and circles

“GALLOP” JOY

Then we come to the hunt. This is the occasion when a well-ridden horse may at last gain some pleasure, if the hunt happens to be a short and fast one. I think it is perfectly reasonable to believe that a horse does enjoy a good gallop in company with others, but only under certain somewhat rare conditions. He must have been thoroughly schooled, so that there is no undue pressure upon his mouth; he must be fit, and fresh, and, when well ridden, I feel sure he enjoys a good jump.

But these things have nothing to do with *hunting*. He would equally enjoy his gallop at a paper chase or a gymkhana meeting. The question of hounds and hunting simply does not arise.

But even under the most charming conditions let us see what would happen at the first check. Supposing we dropped the reins upon the horse's neck and allowed him to do exactly as he wished. I think we should find he would begin to eat grass for a short while, and then he would turn for home, and if no obstacles were in his way, he would soon be back there. So that you cannot be absolutely sure that your horse enjoys even this.

What we must avoid is believing that excitement means pleasure. Lots of horses get restless, not because they enjoy, but because they fear. I know of one master of hounds whose horses will never allow him to mount quietly when he is in a pink coat, but at all other times they will stand without difficulty. This interesting little fact denotes two things. Firstly, the intelligence of the horse, and, secondly, that horses do *not* like a day's hunting if they are not properly ridden.

Having now dispossessed your mind of a good many obvious fallacies, let us look at the question from a somewhat new, but highly logical, aspect.

A horse likes that which gives him pleasure, and he expresses his satisfaction in tranquillity. When he is happy he is quiet; when he



He expresses his satisfaction in tranquillity.



Supposing we dropped the
reins upon the horse's neck
and allowed him to do
exactly as he wished!

MUD HOCK-DEEP

is worried he is excited. There can be no pleasure in pain, so that if we are hanging on to our horse's mouth we must not think his eagerness is enjoyment, but rather a desire to get it over as quickly as possible.

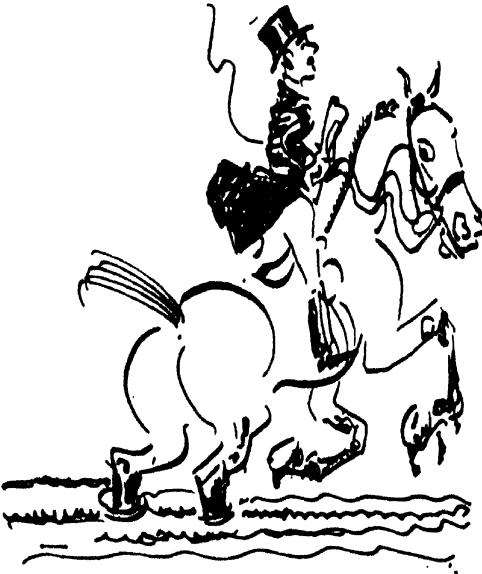
There can be little pleasure in galloping through mud hock-deep or in jumping continually in heavy ground. It cannot be a great pleasure to charge a thorn fence, but the fact that they do so for an asking should credit them with a place amongst the angels.

It cannot be an unqualified joy to be kept out from the stable for nine or ten hours or so without food and to return tired out.

But this is the experience of many hunters, is it not?—especially those of young subalterns, who never know when to come home or when their horse has had enough.

No, my boy, you can take it from me that no horse likes hunting for itself alone, but a sound, fit horse does like a good gallop in good company, over sound grass, with a nice clean fence or two which he can take in his stride. But he does like to come home when he has had enough.

Your affect. father,
M.



— through mud
hock-deep.



He does like to come
home when he has had
enough

BLINKERS

MY DEAR JOHN,

You now ask me a very straightforward question: "Why is it necessary for driving horses to wear blinkers, and for riding horses to do without them?"

The question is direct enough, but the answer is less so. Perhaps the best reply is that, as we always have put them on, we always shall. This is admittedly feeble, but conservatism is the refuge of the simple, and the stand-by of those who will not think.

Once an experiment has become a custom it must be venerated, and even though it ages into decay it must never be deposed from its shrine. Hence the way of the reformer is hard, his path is thorny, and his progress slow.

However, nothing daunted, I will tackle this much-overlooked question with whatever lucidity I can command.

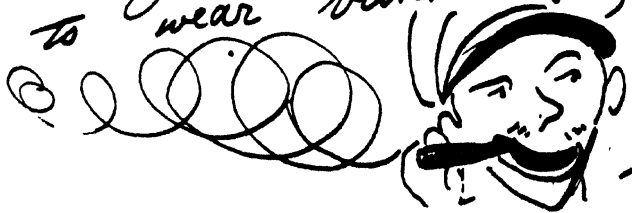
In the coaching days blinkers were found useful for the wheelers, because when it was necessary to touch up a leader with the whip it was important that the wheelers should not see the lash swishing over their heads or round their flanks, and as at any time it might be necessary to change a wheeler and a leader, and also generally for the sake of uniformity, it became the custom to put all your horses into blinkers.

Again, when breaking in a horse to harness, it was considered necessary to prevent his seeing the wheels following him, in case he should become frightened and bolt.

It was also considered necessary to prevent any horse from seeing the movement of the whip, because it was most inconvenient if



This'll get father all right
— Father, why is it
necessary for driving horses
to wear blinkers?



HOODED BLINKERS

the driver was merely saluting a lady, or tightening his hat on his head, for the horses to think they were going to be hit.

This, of course, shows that they used the whip much too freely in those days; but still, you ask me for the reasons, and there they are.

Shying never was a reason, but it was often an excuse, for blinkers, and, having said this much, I have given every possible reason there ever was for their use.

Riding horses, of course, never wanted them, because the rider is supposed to have much more control over his horse than the driver, who also may have more than one to look after.

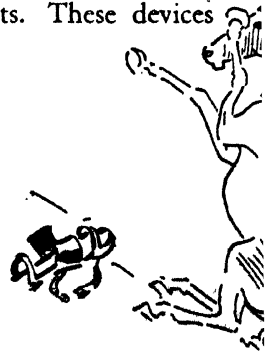
But let us forget it is an immemorial custom and ask ourselves if any of these reasons apply to-day.

First, coaches are no more, so that aspect can be removed, but we find instead quiet old cart-horses dragging loads in blinkers. Why? No one can say. We see every horse that pulls a vehicle, whether it be an ancient cab-horse, a coster's cart, a waggon, or a delivery van, in blinkers. Why? No one can say.

The power of custom is terrific. The eye accustoms itself to anything. So much so that the blinker, which is the most hideous thing imaginable, disfiguring the whole beauty of a horse's face, is by some people supposed to be *beautiful*, and that horses look so undressed without them! I wonder if they would also think their wives undressed because they had discarded the crinoline!

Some people think blinkers are necessary because of shying, quite forgetting that well-schooled horses seldom shy, to begin with, and blinkers don't stop them if they did. In fact, horses who get only a partial glimpse of an object are much more likely to shy than if they can use their eyes as Nature intended them. One of the most crying scandals of our streets to-day are those hooded blinkers, whereby horses are driven blindfold, merely because the unfortunate horse has displayed a natural nervousness at unfamiliar sights. These devices

*horses look so
undressed
without
them*





— quiet old cart
horses ?



BLINKERS FOR DONKEYS

are so inhuman they should never be allowed in a civilised country.

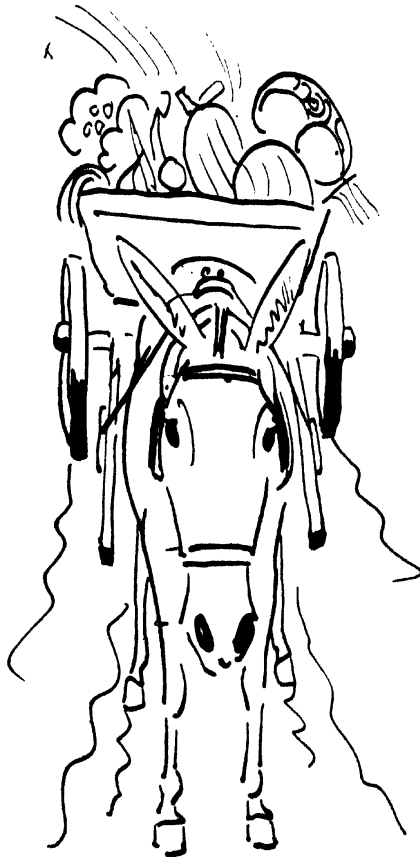
It is no use critics saying that blinkers must be necessary or else they would never have become so prevalent, because there are some countries where they are never used at all, and also in our own we have many examples of horses being driven without them, railway carts being an outstanding example.

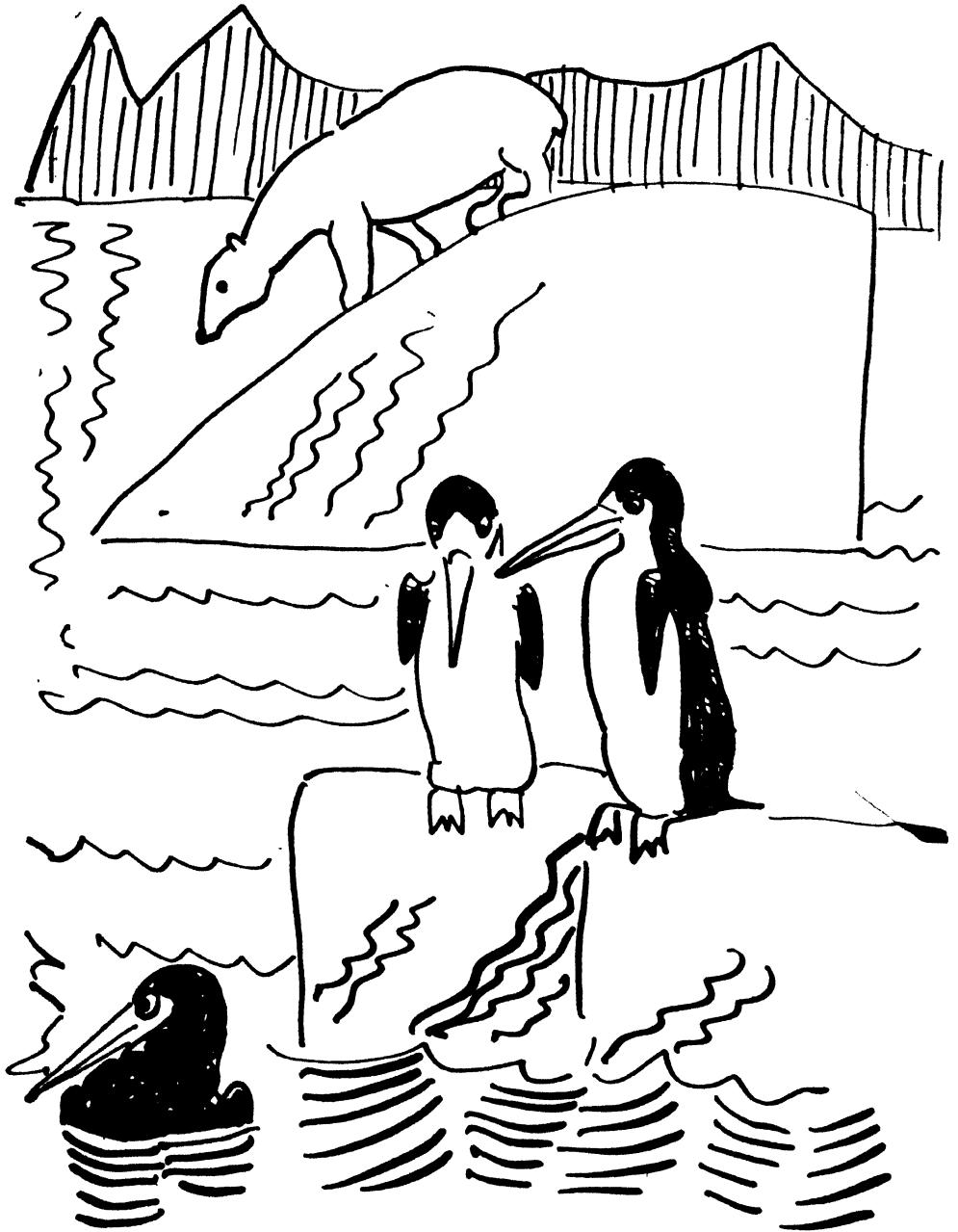
So that, as we know they are not necessary, can anyone produce any reason why we should continue to use them?

Perhaps we might start their abolition on the donkeys pulling vegetable carts. I feel sure there is no one who will dispute their inutility there.

Your affect. father,
M.

*Donkeys
pulling
vegetable
carts*





because there are some
countries where they are never
used at all



TAILS

MY DEAR JOHN,

When I saw your horses the other day I was horrified. Their tails looked as if the moth had been at them one end and the rats at the other. That comes of not knowing how to pull a tail yourself and of leaving it to your groom, who apparently knows less.

Tails are terribly important. It doesn't matter what price you have paid for your horse, how good looking he may otherwise be, if his tail is badly kept, he looks like something out of a Brighton "fly." On the other hand, if you have a cheap horse, and his tail is beautifully trimmed and clean, then it is wonderful the value it will give him.

The trouble is that when we ride we don't see the tail as a rule, and when we do it is hardly a moment to discuss niceties of this sort.

But the rules for looking after them are quite easy and should present no difficulty once you have got them into your head.

The first rule is to see that the tail is thoroughly clean. It must be carefully brushed out every day, and the comb must never be used. Don't forget that the main hairs of the tail are extremely long, and that what can be so easily pulled out or broken off takes months and months to grow again. In fact, it is a grave question, especially with old horses, whether they ever do come back.

The thickest part of a tail should be the end, and you must realise that those long hairs which reach the end start very high up—much higher up than you would suppose. So that no hair should be removed from any portion of the dock except those fairly short ones high up near the root of the tail.



— which end
Father ?



The trouble is that when we
ride we don't see the tail
as a rule!

(it depends on our mood and
whether we have lunched well)

BANG TAILS

Take a distance of only about 6 inches from the root, and the feathering portion of those hairs can be pulled, or frizzed, or even cut off at the roots, just as circumstances demand and fancy dictates. No hairs on the top outside should ever be touched, only those on the sides and underneath.

This will give the nice clean-cut appearance we want. It brings out the tail well from the buttocks, and the heavy end gives a delightful swing as the horse moves along.

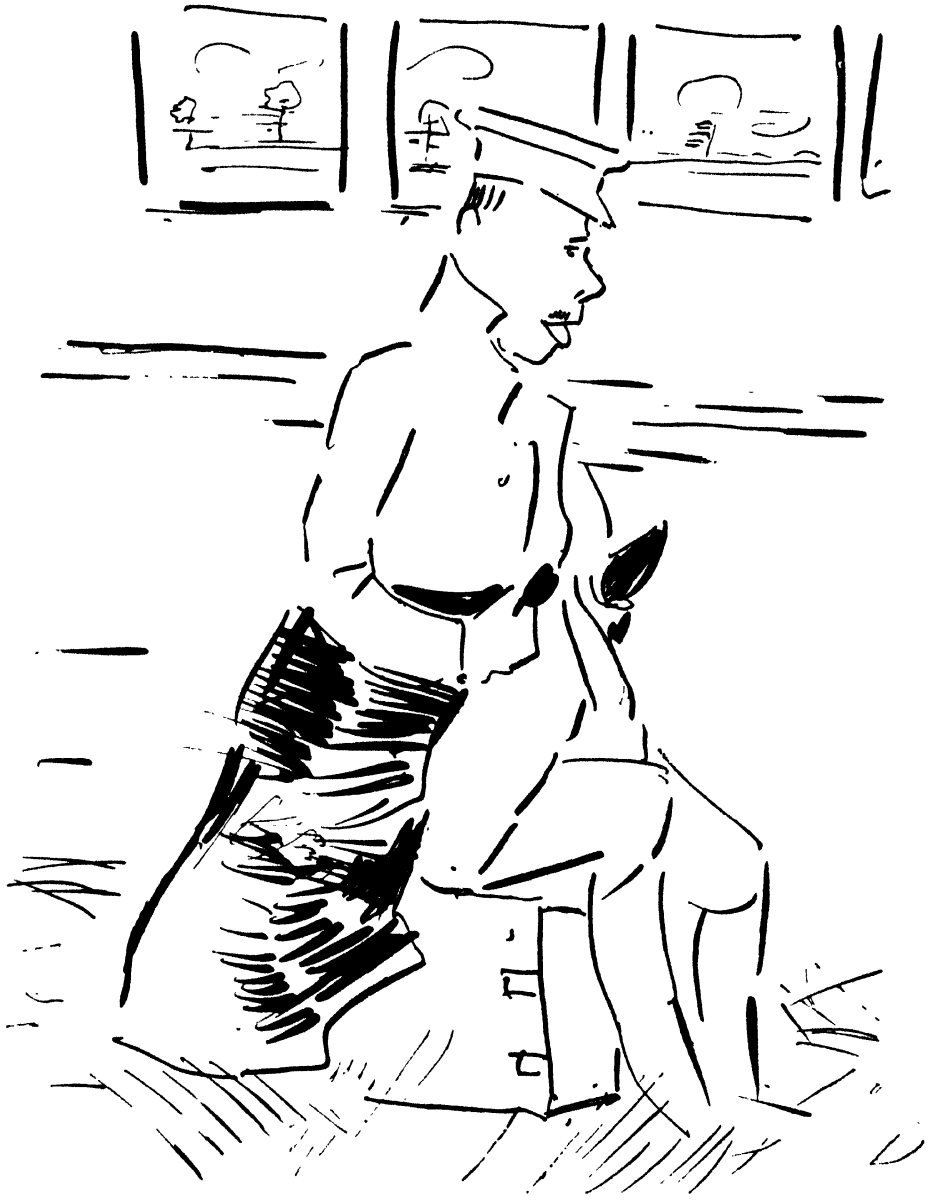
Then we come to the question of trimming the end. Except with Arabs and suchlike horses, whose tails should be left in the natural state, the end should be cut off square. The length should be fairly short in winter so as to keep it out of the mud, and it should be allowed to grow so that in the summer-time it is long enough to tackle the flies.

In the Army the old rule used to be a hand's breadth from the hock, but nowadays tails are usually longer than this, and quite rightly so, so that a good rule is to keep them about hock-high.

When you pull the tail down to measure it so as to cut it off with the tail-cutter, you must see that the cutter points well upwards, with the handles well depressed so that the snick is made with an upward cut. It will then be found that when the horse carries his tail naturally the trimming has become quite square, because, of course, when the horse extends his dock the outer hairs have much farther to go than the inner ones. So that as we cut we should see that the inside hairs are the shortest.

I have already told you of the folly of bandaging tails, but when travelling in a horse-box you must put on a tail cover because horses are so liable to rub themselves, and if they do, it may take weeks to rectify what has been done in a few minutes.

Don't attempt to pull or trim a tail until it is thoroughly clean and well brushed, and do only a very little at a time. Keep on



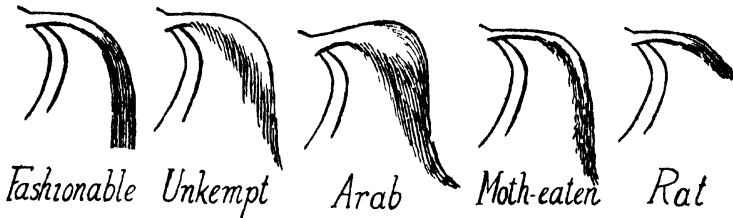
When travelling in a
horse-box you must put
on a tail cover.

DOCKED HORSES

walking the horse round and round you and just take out those hairs which offend, and be very careful to leave the others.

A good tail is the sign of a good groom and of careful stable management, just as a bad one is the hall-mark of carelessness and inefficiency.

Just to show you how important tails are, I give you a few examples which will make you think, even if they do nothing else—



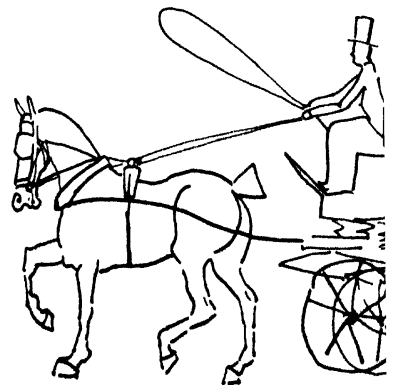
So next time I come along into your stable I hope to see a considerable improvement in this line, or else I shall mark you down as a bad stable manager.

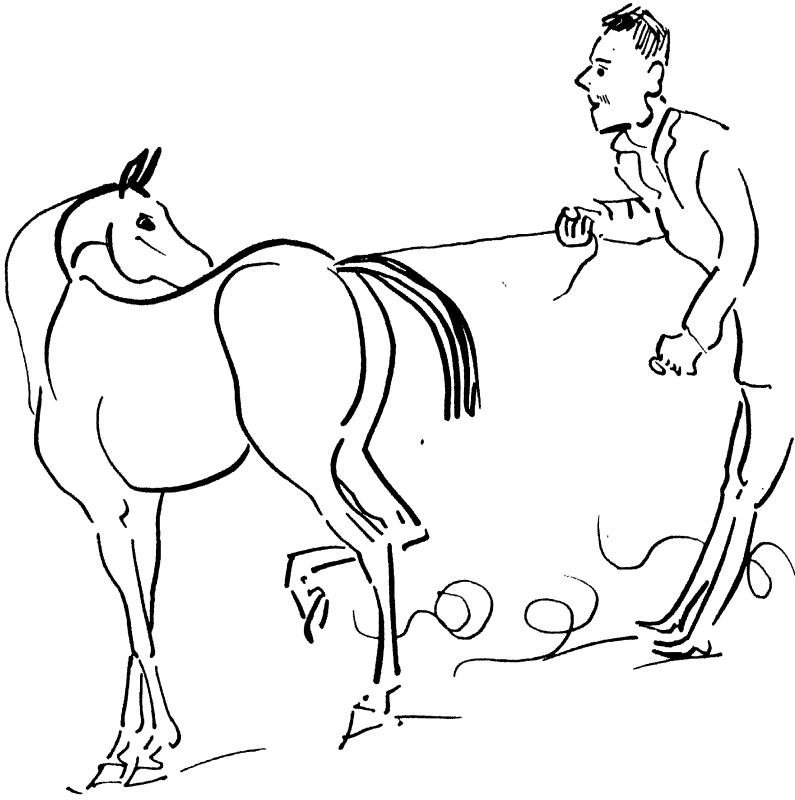
I have only one word to add.

Never buy a docked horse under any circumstances. It is the only way we can help to stop this monstrous practice, which is a disgrace to any civilised community.

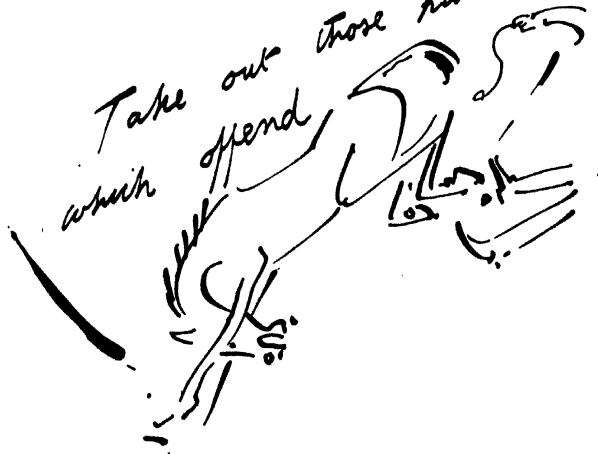
Your affect. father,
M.

*A disgrace to any
civilised community*





Take out those hairs
which offend



A COMPARISON

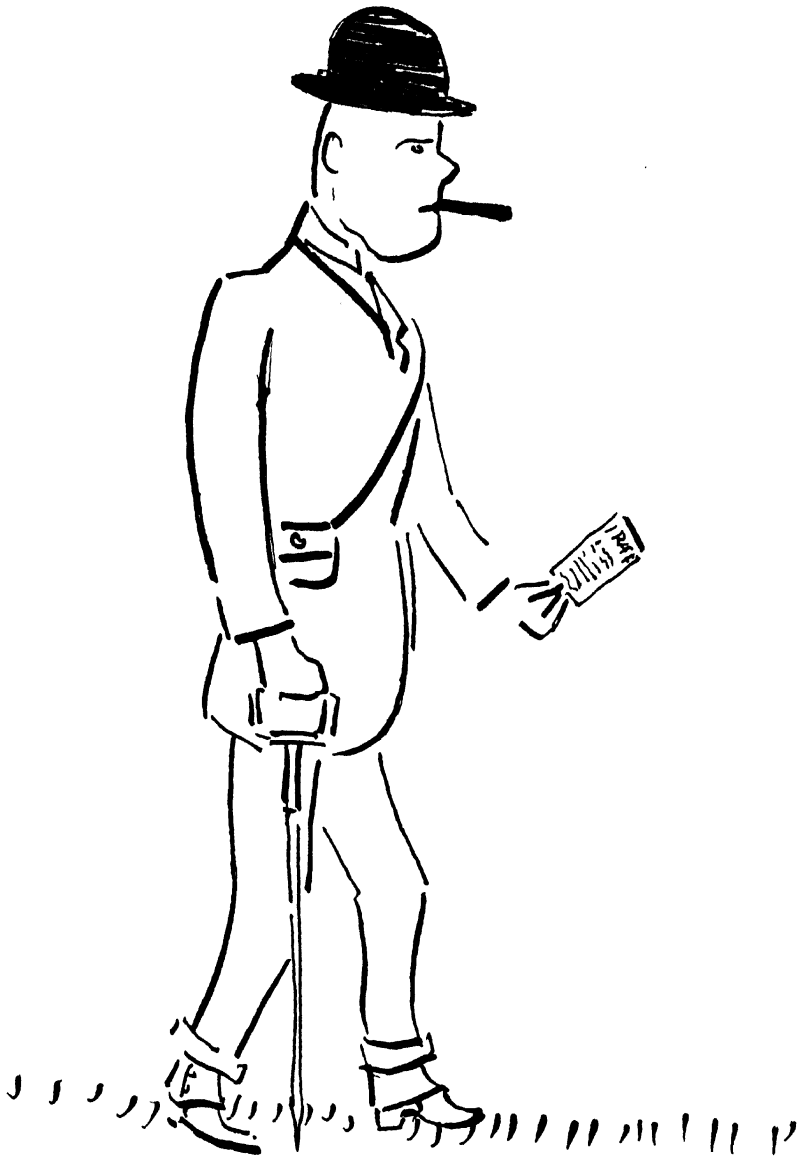
MY DEAR JOHN,

From your letter you seem to think that the English must be the best riders in the world because they have ridden for so long and are, generally speaking, such "horsey" people.

Well, you may be right, sonny, but I have travelled about a good deal, and I don't think a nation exists that doesn't fancy itself in horsemanship. Each one is delightfully satisfied with its own training and performances, and each runs down the other. The great similarity is that they all run down English riding, and England runs down them all. This is a pity.

The fact is, that we usually condemn what we do not understand, and few take the trouble to study the horsemanship of any country except their own. But when we think it over we find that each country has the equitation it requires. The standard is dependent upon climatic and local conditions to a much greater extent than you would at first suppose.

If we take many countries in Europe, such as Russia, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Austria, Hungary, etc., we find that they are ice-bound for many months in the winter, when outside riding is impossible. This drives them into riding schools, where they have to enjoy themselves as best they can. During all these months they work at the "dressage" and the schooling generally of their horses. When the spring comes and the countryside becomes fit to ride after all the snow has melted, they have no natural country to cross such as we have in England. There are no hedges, or ditches, and not a farmer would allow you to set foot on one piece



— are, generally speaking,
such "horsey" people.

CONTINENTAL RIDING

of land, unless he were duly compensated. So as there is no means easy to hand whereby they can enjoy cross-country riding, artificial courses have to be erected. The point-to-point as we know it is quite impossible, but they do have cross-country competitions, in which fences have to be negotiated which would alarm even the boldest thruster from our hunting shires. The show-ring is also another means of testing skill, and throughout the summer months this is the great source of interest for all horse-loving people. This, too, is developed into a far greater standard of excellence than obtains in this country. The fences are much larger and more varied, and the skill required to get a "clear" round is very great.

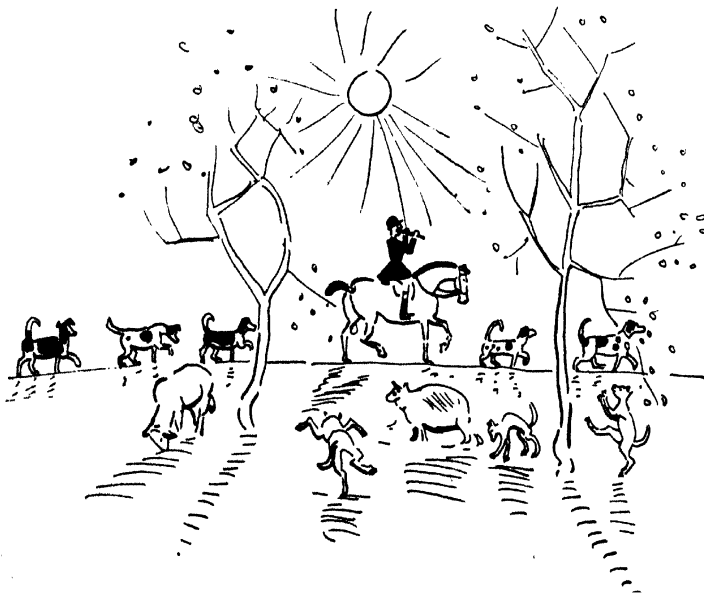
Thus you see that all these countries are intensely keen on riding, and do everything in their power according to local conditions to make themselves and their horses as efficient as possible. Although the snow question doesn't apply to countries like France, Italy, and Spain, yet, speaking, of course, generally, they have just the same difficulties of getting any natural cross-country work. So that throughout Europe the riding school is used far more than in this country, and, in consequence, they have brought the schooling of horses and the accuracy of equitation to an immensely high standard.

Let me give you an instance. Here in England the exact position of the rider's body in the saddle at the walk is not of much concern; as long as the rider sits reasonably well, that is all that matters. But this is not so where equitation is deeply studied.

The best teaching is supposed by some to be found in Budapest, and one of the most distinguished German riders, in order to make perfection more perfect, had taken a course there. The usual course lasts three years. After he had been there some months, he asked his teacher what he thought of his seat, expecting to get a compliment. He was sadly put in his place on being told: "Oh, now and then, for a stride or two, your seat is fair!"



Do everything in their power
according to local conditions to
make themselves and their
horses as fit as possible —



In England
the
situation
is
entirely
different

ENGLISH RIDING

You can see from this story that on the Continent equitation is raised to a standard quite unknown to anyone on this side of the Channel.

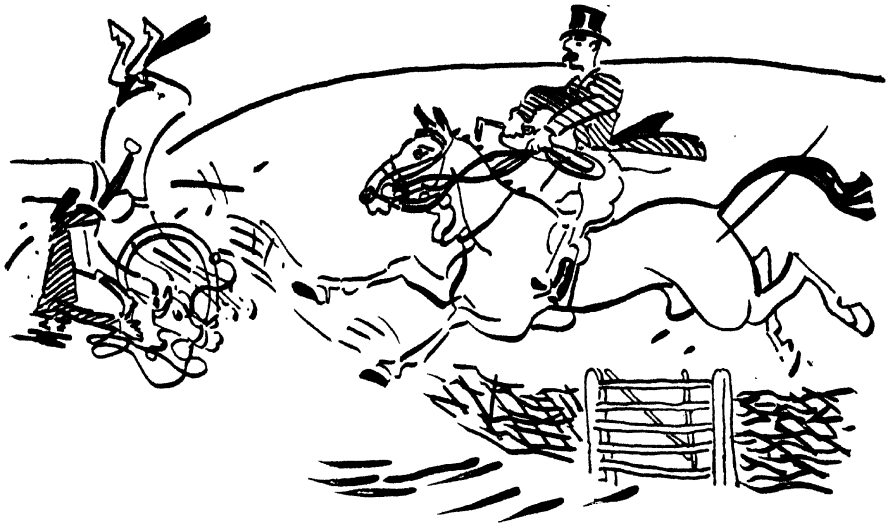
In England the situation is entirely different. Here we have an open winter season, and hunting is a national institution all over the country. Our countryside is interspersed with hedges and ditches; it is not too mountainous or too deep, and the farmers are amenable, so that the ambition of all young riders is to ride well enough to hunt, and that is all they think about. Consequently, the riding school is almost taboo; it is not regarded as a source of pleasure or interest, but rather a nursery training, which must be got through as quickly as possible.

Directly we can sit a fence with reasonable assurance, off we go hunting, and complete our training in the hard school of experience. Throughout the whole winter we can thus interest ourselves, not so much with the art of equitation as with the sport of hunting, and as the spring approaches we have innumerable hunt race-meetings, which are delightfully sporting and entertaining. When, therefore, the summer comes and the ground gets hard, our great English riding public turn their horses out to grass and take up some other amusement until the hunting season comes round again.

Jumping in the show ring is quite secondary, and does not hold their hearts or their interest. "A lot of trick jumping," is the usual comment of the hunting man if he sees a competitor jumping faultlessly in the ring.

But although we may not possess on this account very many "faultless horsemen," we do have a lot of "splendid men to hounds," who stand supreme in their own field, just as our Continental friends stand at the top of school work.

Then, again, in the Colonies, and in America, the situation is



AMERICAN RIDING

once more very different. Here the chief occupation is cattle ranching and how to cover enormous distances with as little inconvenience to both horse and rider as possible.

Although their methods may appear to us crude, yet they are as effective as the situation demands. Though they have nothing to jump, they have buck-jumpers to tame, and the principles of their saddles, bridles, stirrups, style, and system are all framed upon their immediate requirements.

In Eastern America, where fox-hunting exists, they have only post and rails and snake-fences to jump. Hence all their show-ring jumps and their hunt steeplechases have plain timber for the obstacles, and the negotiation of this fence is considered pretty well sufficient training for their needs.

The seat that these various countries adopt is that of necessity. The cowboy rides long, the hunting man rides medium, and the Continental expert, when giving an exhibition, rides short. The Englishman sits back over his fences in the hunting-field, because the land is unknown and he wishes to be prepared for eventualities. The foreigner, who, although jumping very much bigger obstacles, does know what the land is like, finds it necessary to ride forward. So he is much surprised that anyone can think differently. Do not suppose that because we do so much hunting here that we alone can ride.

I have often heard it said that "No doubt some of these foreigners can ride well enough over these made-up fences in the show-ring, where all is plain sailing, but that they would never hold a candle to our best men to hounds across a natural country." It is a great pity that people should talk like this. As far as pure equitation goes, the Continent is a long way ahead of us, but when it comes to "riding to hounds," then we are talking of something else.

Riding to hounds means a knowledge of that particular country, and the run of a fox. It means a knowledge of etiquette, manners, customs, habits, and hunting lore. It means the quick eye for a gate,



Pure equitation

HUNTING LORE

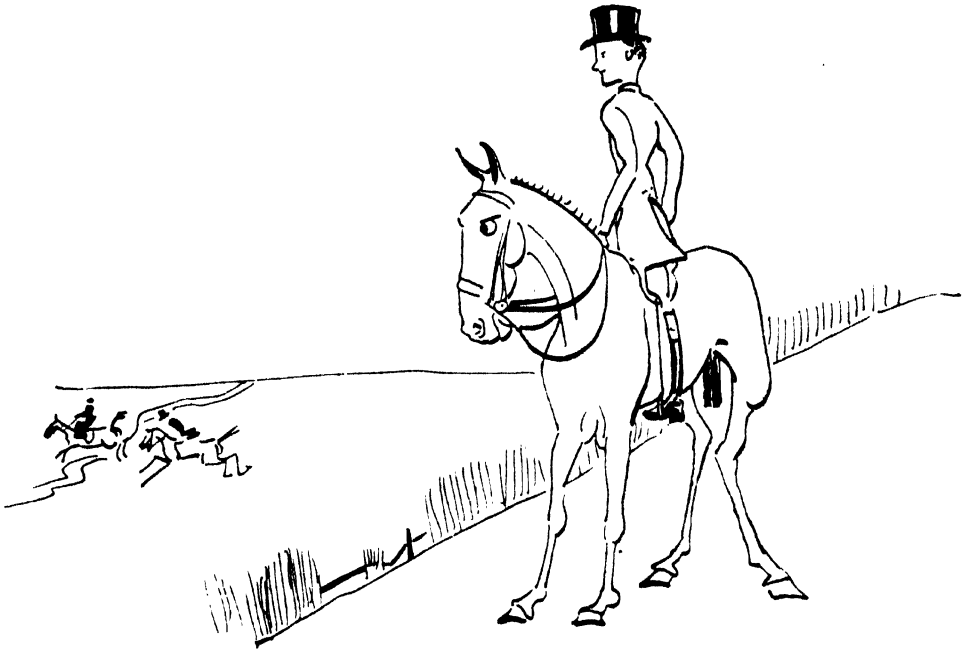
a gap, or a "bottom," and some rudiments of farming. It means a knowledge of what your horse can do, when to creep, and crawl, and when to fly a fence. All these things cannot be picked up in a day. So that when some distinguished foreigner appears in the hunting-field and loses hounds, or otherwise doesn't shine, don't go and say he can't ride, or that he is a funk. You would soon find out your mistake if you challenged him to any feat of horsemanship. He didn't shine because he was a little at sea in new surroundings, and was out to follow and to observe and not to lead the field.

But I think you would probably be very surprised if you knew what he was thinking of *your* riding.

Your affect. father,
M.



*He was a little
at-sea —*



— or that he
is a funk .



MARTINGALES

MY DEAR JOHN,


So you've had a jolly good bang on the nose from your horse's head, have you? You found it very painful, I have no doubt. It is all swelled up, you say, and looks like a good old strawberry. Well, well, I am very sorry and all that, but why *do* you ride in a running martingale? Damned silly, I call it. No doubt they look very pretty, and many of your friends have recommended them, but has it helped you in any way? It seems to me that the first, last, and only object of a martingale is to be effective. If it isn't that, it is meaningless. So let us see what light a little plain common sense will bring to bear on this problem.

What is the object of a martingale, anyway? First, to stop a horse throwing his head so high that you don't get these bangs on the nose. Well, you now know the running martingale does not prevent that. Second, to prevent star-gazing; but in this particular pattern a horse can carry his head as high as he likes when he wants to, so it is no good for that purpose. Third, when a horse chucks his head up suddenly, as when collecting himself after some bad blunder, it is to prevent the reins from getting all on the same side of his neck. Now, the running martingale under such circumstances does certainly keep one rein in its place, but it doesn't keep the other, so it isn't much good even in this case. Fourth, if the rider is in the habit of getting his hands very high as he jumps, and, when so doing, screwing his horse's head nearly off, then it does keep the strain in a better direction; but this is an expedient for tyros when being badly taught, and not for accomplished horsemen like yourself.



*So you've had a
jolly good bang on
the nose.*



- to prevent
star-gazing, 

RUNNING MARTINGALES

On the other hand, the weight of the rings upon the rein interferes with the play of your wrist and fingers upon the horse's mouth, and in this way is a definite handicap.

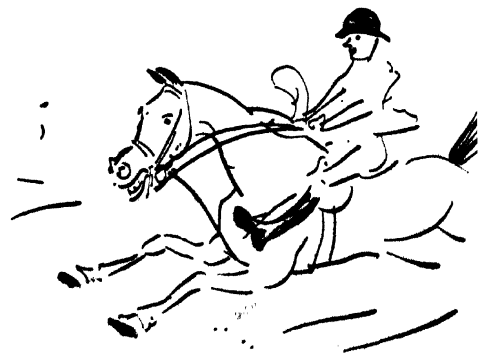
So that it seems to be sadly deficient in answering to the normal requirements of what a martingale should do, and added to this are its complications in sometimes getting tied up in the hasp of a gate, or of getting the rings mixed up with the D's of the bit, unless most unsightly "stops" are stuck on to the reins. So that, however much you like using a running martingale, you must admit it answers to no requirement, and can be described without much exaggeration as utterly useless.

If you must have a martingale, there are two kinds which do perform their functions: one is the "Irish," which is very useful for a horse that keeps on throwing his head about a lot. This is merely a loop going round all four reins, just underneath the horse's chin, which is a perfectly effective device for the purpose, and gives the rider complete freedom of rein on the horse's mouth. But this sort doesn't prevent broken noses and isn't much use in consequence. So we now come to the only martingale which is effective and does function. That is the "standing" one, which is a strap fixed on to the horse's nose-band, and of sufficient length to give him plenty of freedom when he jumps, but short enough to keep his head from pointing to the sky.

I think everybody admits that this method is the most effective because there is no weight on the reins, and there is less to catch in the gateway, and no rings to get into the bit; but some think it may interfere with a horse's jumping and perhaps cause him to fall.

This view was forgivable enough before the days of instantaneous photography, but now, when every movement of a horse has been scientifically examined over and over again, we should know that the action of a horse's head when he jumps is not up, but down and out,

*The method is
most effective —*





"Stops" are stuck
on the reins

THE STANDING MARTINGALE

or rather, perhaps, it is more accurate to say out and down. So that as long as the martingale is let out sufficiently far to give the horse all reasonable freedom, then it cannot possibly interfere with his action in any way. Once you admit this simple fact (and if you don't believe it you can test it out and see for yourself), the rest is easy.

It does prevent your getting a sore nose. It does help you to keep his head down when approaching a fence. It does prevent his throwing his head so high the reins all come over on one side, and it does not interfere with the play of the reins on the mouth, and therefore it seems to me that it is the only martingale worth talking about.

Mind you, the strap must be fixed to the nose-band, and not, as is sometimes seen, on to the snaffle rings. This is a detestable practice which may cause serious injury to the horse's mouth, and must not be considered for a moment. Some of our well-known trainers, especially on the Continent, are averse to martingales at all; with much justification they say that a well-trained horse should never require one. That is perfectly true, but we cannot and do not ride perfectly trained horses often, while most of us have to be content with making or breaking young ones or curing bad ones, so that view certainly doesn't apply to us.

But there is one very strong reason to me why we should always use a standing martingale, and that is because the neck strap is most valuable on many occasions, such as when going up a steep hill or when putting a horse at a fence, when we are not sure of either ourselves or the horse, and then we can put our fingers inside the strap, and the horse can jump how and when he pleases, with our knowledge that we shall never hang on to his mouth or interfere with him in any way. In schooling, the neck strap of the martingale is so useful its importance can hardly be overrated. If you ride a horse upon this alone, it is often quite remarkable what excellent results can be obtained. The confirmed puller may become quite temperate,



We cannot and
do not ride perfectly
trained horses.

BREASTPLATES

the fretting horse may give up his bad habits almost at once. So successful have I found it in schooling, I would never ride, school, or hunt without one.

So if you want to make your riding a little easier for your horse, and less painful for yourself, throw away all your martingales except a standing one, and remember the words of Fillis, the well-known horse-trainer, who says: "The standing martingale is the only one I would recommend."

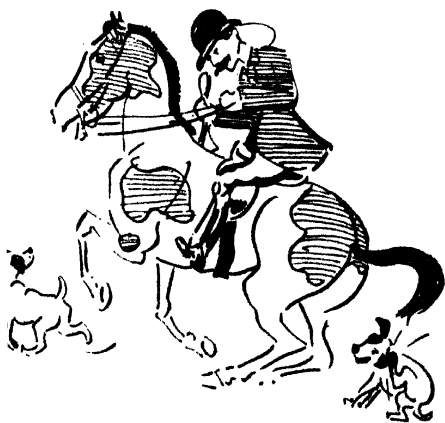
If you do happen to ride in a running martingale again, remember that the rings should be put on the bit reins and not on those of the snaffle. The reason for this is obvious if you think it out, and, as I give you credit for some powers of reasoning, I will leave you to worry out the reason for yourself.

BREASTPLATES.—Sometimes with young horses, before they have got muscled up, the saddle keeps on slipping back. If you have one like this, for Heaven's sake don't put a breastplate on. If you think it out, a device like this cannot do any good. So let's think for a change. I will put it to you in this way: If the girth slips back, say, 4 inches, the position is one which must be rectified at once. So this breastplate, to do any good, must prevent the girth from slipping back even only so far as that. In order to do this it would have to be put on very tight indeed. If you did so you would wear a sore in the horse's shoulder in no time, and very likely, when things got acute, it would break. But whatever it did, it would not stop the girth from slipping. If you put it on loose in the normal way it is obviously utterly useless.

There is only one tip that I know of to stop this very troublesome thing, and that is to use string girths. I have never known these not to solve the problem. So take this tip, and never, never ride a horse in a breastplate, but buy a string girth.

Your affect. father,
M.

*The position is one
which must be
rectified at once*





*Never, never ride a
horse in a breastplate*

MY DEAR FATHER,

I was dining out the other night, and my host was an elderly gentleman of the old school. He said that it was perfectly disgusting to see women riding astride. First of all, they were never intended to put their legs across a saddle, and even if they were they hadn't got the strength to do it; that nice, ladylike people rode side-saddle only, and that nothing looked so attractive as a well-turned-out lady sitting gracefully on one side of her horse.

He was most vehement about it all, so much so that it struck me there must be something weak about his case, or else he wouldn't have got so excited about it.

So, father, I wish you would give me your views about this, as I myself don't know quite what to think.

Your affect. son,
JOHN.



*He was most
Vehement about it all*



SIDE-SADDLE

MY DEAR JOHN,

You were a very small boy when the suffragettes were at their zenith. About 1913-1914 they were fighting policemen, instituting hunger-strikes, chaining themselves to railings, and performing many other feats of heroism in order that they should bring their cause up to a matter of such importance that Parliament would absolutely have to sit up and take notice.

Women did this, not because they wanted to, but because they found that mankind in general simply will not embrace any new notion until it is forced on them. They had found, through many long years of weary application by constitutional methods, that it was impossible to appeal to men's reason, that force was the only solution. They applied force, and they got the vote.

But during all those many months of strenuous fighting it was indeed rare to hear anyone praising their efforts. The word "suffragette" was one of contempt. No suffragette could be a perfect lady. They were laughed to scorn. Every paper held them in contempt. And why? Only because they wanted what was perfectly sensible and right, honest and obvious—votes for women.

And now they have got the vote every woman is a suffragette, and where are all the objections? They have vanished like mists before the rising sun. The country has *not* gone to the dogs. Parliament is still conducted by men, and instead of finding that woman's suffrage is a menace and a folly, it has worked so well that it has been extended to complete equality with men. "The perfect lady" walks to the poll with the pride and satisfaction her "unladylike" sisters



You were a very
small boy when the
suffragettes were at
their zenith



EMANCIPATION

have won for her. We hear no more that it is immodest to want a vote; we only wonder why it was not granted before. So bear these things in mind when you hear to-day of the objections to the cross-saddle. Although unconnected with Parliamentary matters, it is singularly like.

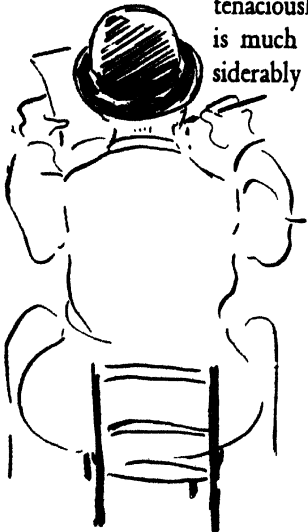
The arguments used by those who are against it are almost identical. They say that it is unladylike to ride cross-saddle, that Nature never intended it, that women are not strong enough, that they are shaped wrong, that it is dangerous, that the only graceful seat is the side-saddle, and so on. But if we take each of these objections one by one and think them over, we find they, too, evaporate. So let us examine them for a moment.

If a woman was physically incapable of riding astride, it would include the sex generally; but we see many riding in this way excellently, so it can't possibly apply to womankind as a whole.

The question of being ladylike or otherwise is, of course, absurd. In my young days it was indelicate to show an ankle, but now in all classes of society the very short skirt is worn as a matter of course, and knees are displayed with freedom and frequency.

The point of looking graceful when sitting side-saddle is entirely a matter of fashion and of what the eye is accustomed to. The crinoline and the bustle used to be considered most elegant, but now are only figures of fun for fancy dress. I feel sure that you will live to see the day when the side-saddle will be regarded as an amusing relic of a bygone folly.

It is difficult indeed to discover why some ladies stick to it so tenaciously in these days when they are free to do what they like. It is much more expensive. The saddle and the habit both cost considerably more. It is also so constant a source of sore backs that it





Who says it's unladylike
to ride cross-saddle?

JUMPING

requires restuffing and adjustment very often. Moreover, it weighs much more, and it is certain that every horse would benefit by its abolition.

As it is necessary for a lady's shoulders to be square to the front to ride well, the use of a side-saddle develops her muscles unevenly. So much so is this acknowledged that some people try to ride on a different side from day to day.

It is, of course, a stronger seat than the cross-saddle, and this is the best argument that can be urged in its favour. But even this is not very convincing. Its very strength makes a fall more dangerous, as a woman cannot get away so clearly as a man.

For indifferent riders who have not practised jumping cross-saddle, the side-saddle is, of course, a great help, but many ladies admit that they fear to jump cross-saddle because they have not had enough experience.

A good many ladies also believe that it requires too strong a grip for them to jump cross-saddle. This may be accurate in those cases where jumping has been taught upon wrong lines. But if they have had the good fortune to learn to sit well balanced over their fences, they will be the first to admit the invalidity of this argument against the cross-saddle.

As regards appearance, whenever I see a lady looking well on a horse side-saddle, I think how splendid she would look the other way, and how very elegant she must really be to look even passably well screwed round as she is on one side of the horse.

There is one other argument that is used. It is said that, as women have round thighs, they cannot ride astride properly. If this is so, why should those men who have round thighs be able to ride as well as they do? But are we sure what round thighs are, and do they, if they exist, affect the grip or balance in any way?





What about Museums
and side-saddles!

SLAVERY

No, my boy. Those arguments won't hold water for a moment. They are advanced only by the supporters of the side-saddle to bolster up a weak case.

As far as riding is concerned, I don't know what a round thigh is, and, when it comes to strength, give me every time the man with short, round legs in preference to one with long, skinny ones.

It may be said that some ladies' figures are of such proportions that cross-saddle riding is unsightly. This may be so, but then those figures look very uncomfortable riding side-saddle; and anyway, if the reason is a good one for women, I have never heard a fat man suggesting he should ride side-saddle so as to look more elegant.

Finally, 70 per cent. of the art of riding is in the use of the leg, and those ladies who have never ridden cross-saddle have never experienced a quarter of the pleasure they might do. They doubtless don't know what they miss, otherwise they wouldn't stand it for a minute. They come under the category of those who, having been offered freedom, hate to be free.

So now you can gather what my opinion is on the matter.

I think there is only one place for the side-saddle, and that is in a museum.

Your affect. father,
M.





so long!—

HINTS ON HUNTING

MY DEAR JOHN,

Now that you are going to start hunting more or less regularly, I intend to give you just a few little tips, which, if you remember not only when you are not hunting, but when you are, I think you will find of as much value to you as they have been to me.

The first golden rule is to ride your horse correctly all the time: no slopping about, but make him gallop collectedly from start to finish. The worst possible falls that occur in the hunting-field (and everybody will tell you this) are those totally unexpected ones (galloping into a rabbit hole, for example), when the horse comes down so quickly that the rider has had no time to save himself in any way.

Now, although such things may occur to any of us at any time, I do say that the chances of such a fall can be almost entirely eradicated if we are riding our horses with balance and with heed to what we are doing. The fact that we are paying attention makes the horse do so too, but if we go cantering or even galloping along with our legs flopping and our minds wandering, then danger lurks in every anthill and peril in every hole. No matter how easy the going may appear, be always prepared for the unexpected.

A business man told me the other day that he always conducted his business with an eye to possible legal proceedings, and he was wise. The rider is also wise who never regards any going so easy that he can afford to forget the possibility of misadventure. If people would remember this simple rule we should have far fewer falls on the flat with their occasional fatal results.

*A
few
little
tips*



*with an eye to
possible legal
proceedings*





Danger lurks in
every anthill.

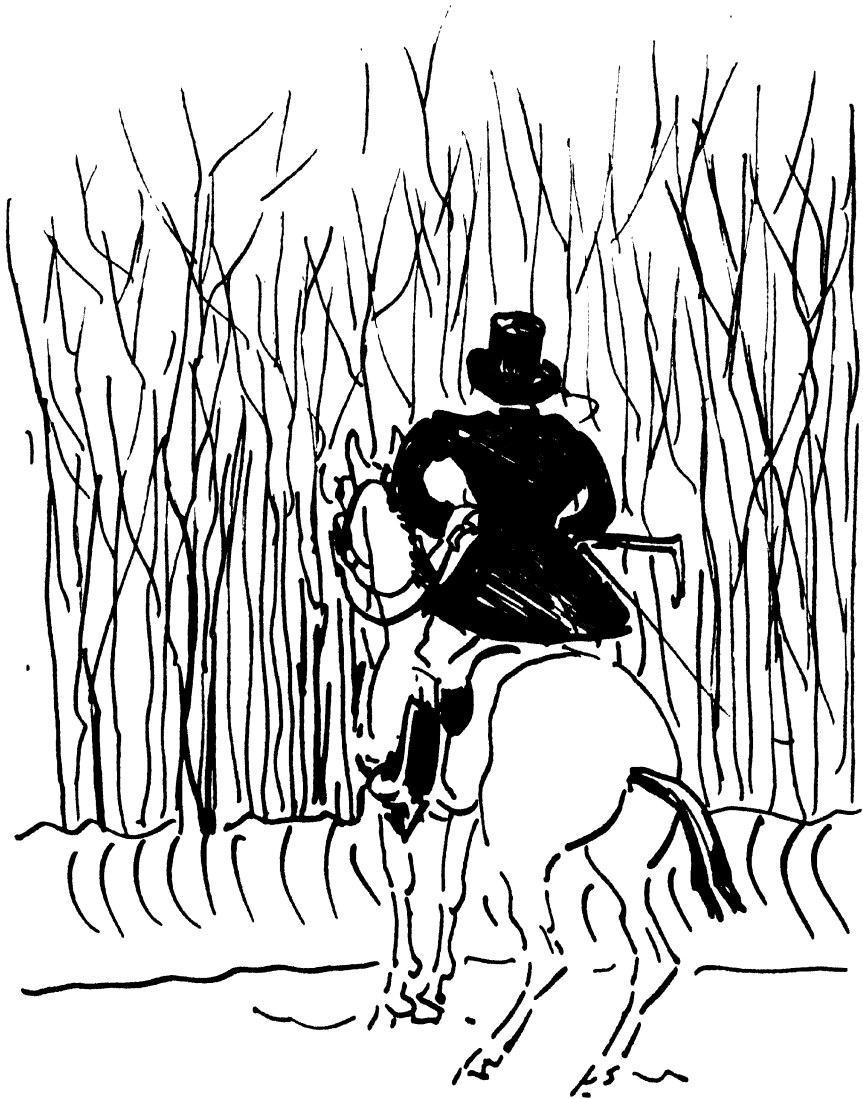


SAFETY FIRST

The next rule is to ride at every gap and every obstacle, no matter how small or insignificant it may be, as if it were a formidable fence. Pull your horse together and face him at it, just in the same way as you do at any ordinary jump; and, what is more, don't be ashamed to do so. Sometimes you may be apt to think: "Oh, this is so ridiculously easy, I should be making an ass of myself if I were to shorten up my reins, collect my horse, and ride him at it." And that is the pitfall I am asking you to avoid. I can assure you that nearly every bad fall out hunting takes place over these ridiculously small places. The rider, thinking there is no need to bother, gallops on, with his eyes, perhaps, on the huntsman and his attention set on the hounds. The horse, who misses the accustomed "aid," also gallops carelessly forward. The innocent little tree root, which shows up so inconspicuously, is unbreakable and without bend. The horse, uncollected and taken unawares, may easily fall, and the rider, whose mind was far away, finds his body is extremely adjacent to mother earth, and he is lucky if he gets off with a few bruises.

Ride every fence, every gap, every grip, every cart-rut, every ridge and furrow with attention. Collect your horse as he gallops and as he jumps, and you will find that your falls are few and your mishaps infrequent.

Then we come to the fences you jump. Don't forget the size of a jump depends upon the capacity of your horse. Because you see someone sailing over some stake and bind with perfect ease, do not suppose that you can necessarily do the same thing. I remember a good many years ago Admiral Craddock, who so gallantly met his death in the Coronel battle, used to hunt sometimes with the Quorn. He always was well mounted, and there was no straighter man to hounds in all England than he. One day I was on a hireling, and I espied his well-known figure gliding over what looked like a plain post and rails in the corner of a field. That's the place for me, thought I, as I



The size of a jump
depends upon the capacity
of your horse

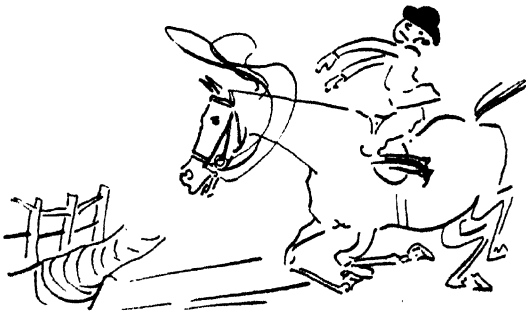
SAFETY LAST

crammed my old crock along. When I got close to it, and was going too fast to stop, I discovered it had in front of it a very broad and fairly deep ditch, which made the jump quite beyond the capacity of my poor little horse. As we couldn't stop, I just threw the reins at him and left the solution of the problem to him. He solved it very cleverly. He put his fore-feet in the bottom of the ditch (which put the rail to quite six feet) and then hoicked himself over with a lurch, a wriggle, and a rattle, and we were safely the other side! But that taught me not to go following the top-notchers on horses quite unfitted for the job.

So that's the first thing to get into your head. Only jump those fences which are within the capacity of your horse, and then only when you must. Normally you should take on the smallest place or the easiest place, and make for a gate whenever you can.

Although we all admire the courage of the young thruster, we laugh at his ingenuousness when we see him taking on big fences quite unnecessarily.

I remember one day, when out with the Bicester, a young undergraduate from Oxford, about to go through a gap just in front of me, suddenly espied one of his pals from another college jumping the fence higher up. This was too much for him, so he pulled away from the easy gap, galloped up the hedgerow, and jumped the fence at the same spot his rival had done! It was magnificent, but it wasn't hunting. Then there is another point. Nearly every day when you are out you will see horses falling about over quite simple fences, and you will see also horses being staked and otherwise hurt quite frequently. Although no one in his senses would suggest that mishap can be eliminated from the hunting-field, I do assure you that you can reduce the chances of misfortune to a very great extent if only you will take the trouble to school your horses well before you take them hunting.



*I just threw
the reins at
him*



*It was magnificent,
but it wasn't hunting.*

WHEN TO STOP

You will often hear it said, "The best place to school a horse is in the hunting-field," but never was worse advice given. It is the final place to do the schooling in. When you have spent many weeks in training your horse to jump properly, then you can take him out with hounds. By doing so you will avoid many of the usual mishaps which occur so often (and so avoidably) in the day's hunting.

If you are hunting in a bank country, such as Ireland, remember always to keep your body forward and give the horse his head. There are lots of backs which have been needlessly broken through riders not carrying out this vitally important rule. In fact, I will go so far as to say that if you ride in this way you will never break a back.

Never jump under a tree, and be very careful of low railway arches, because if the horse jumps higher than you think in the first instance, or makes any kind of spring in the second, your head will be caught and you will be lucky if you get off with a stiff neck.

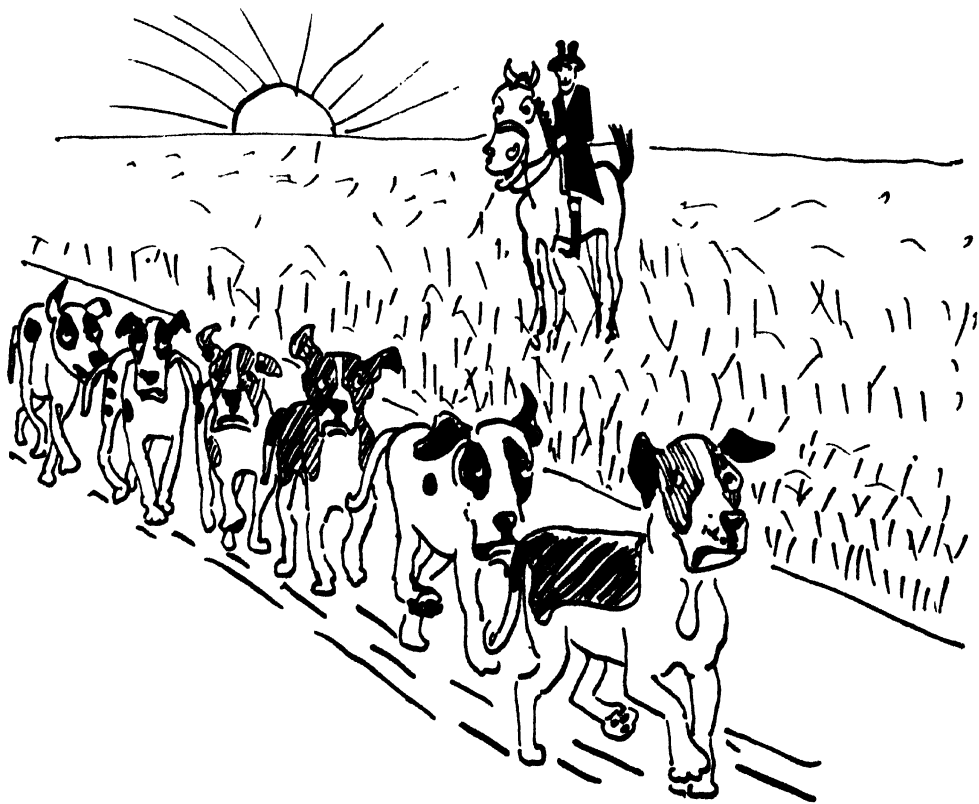
Never ride a tired horse. When your horse has had enough, so have you. It is not sporting to stop out till hounds go home; if your horse has had more than enough, it is selfish.

Most of your veterinary troubles occur when your horse is tired. Fresh horses do not sprain their ligaments, and the tired horse falls heavily.

Now, that is all I have to say to you. Other tips and knowledge you will find admirably presented in the many books that have been written on hunting, to which I have nothing to add.

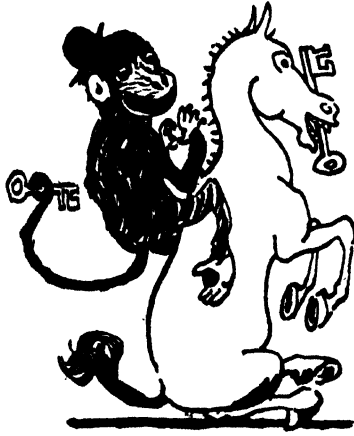
Let courage crown your caution, and do not think prudence is the comrade of cowardice.

Your affect. father,
M.



It is not sporting
to stop out till hounds
go home.





Artist's preface.

Among the junior subalterns there was much curiosity concerning certain bulky letters which came every week, addressed to their mess-mate, who was genially known as young Tac Maggot.



At first it was generally supposed that young MacMaggot was involved in some affair of a tender nature; but,



← curiosity having overcome politeness, it was discovered that the letters dealt entirely with equitation!

It was then a
subject of heated



in the mess whether
Tad Maggot fell off,
or was the victim of
other equine catastrophe,
more often before or

after reading the letters.
opinion " inclined to the
latter alternative



but the argument continued
to be repeated



Dissension, however,
gave way to concern, when
it was learnt that the
letters, and Tac Maggot's
replies to them, were to be
published!

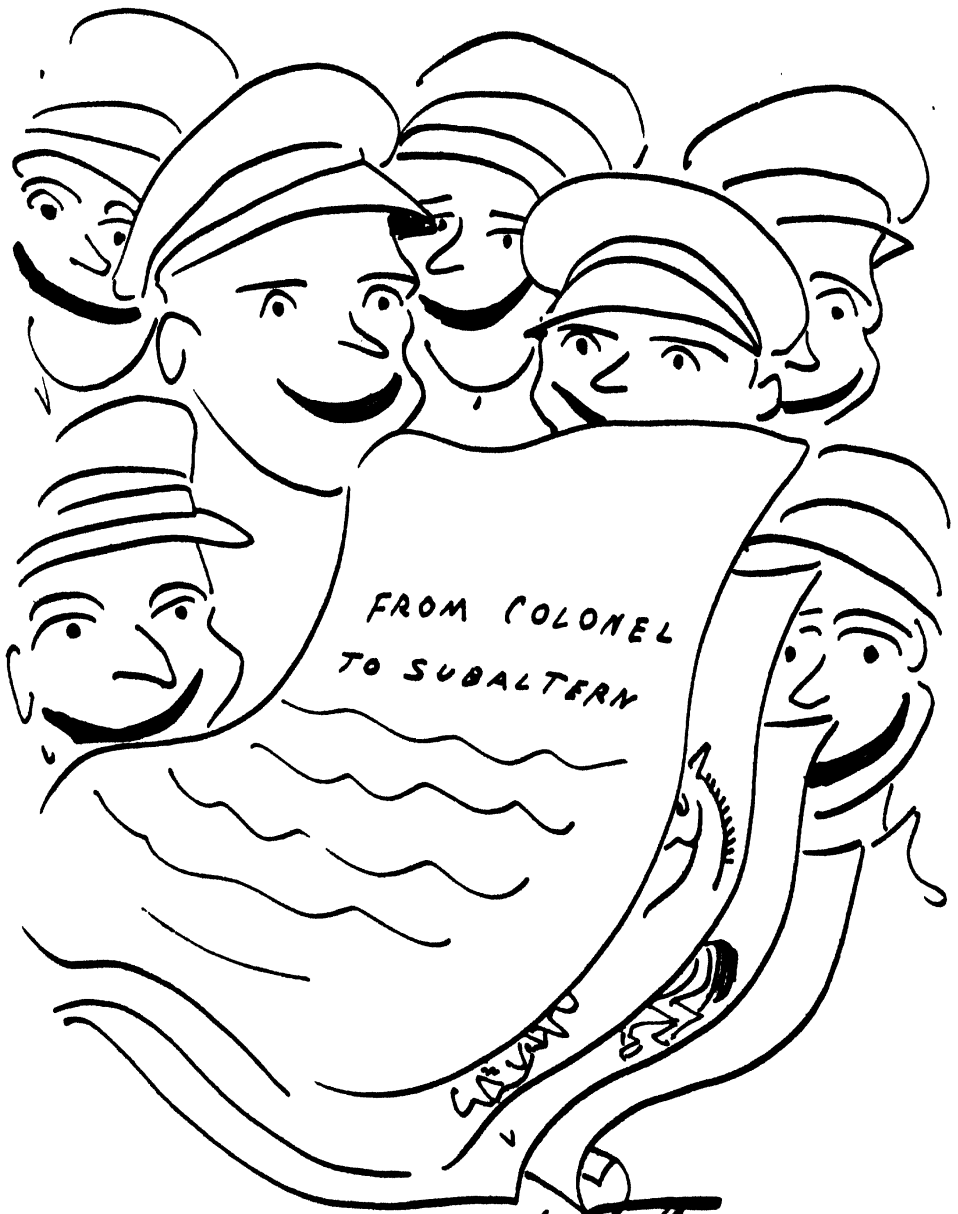
There was one in the
regiment who "drewed a
bit," who had, in fact,
been seen "drawin'" when
he might have been better
employed. It was
unanimously decided
that if Tac Maggot



was to be an Author,
someone else would be an
Artist.

In due course the
proofs arrived, in a
registered envelope. Here
was the chance. The
envelope was marked
urgent — it became an
urgent matter for the
artist to function at
once; and he did —





The Wag of The Regiment

from Colonel
to Subaltern



DATE OF ISSUE

This book must be returned within 8, 7, 14 days of its issue. A fine of ONE ANNA per day will be charged if the book is overdue.

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