

COMING FROM THE FAIR.

Pen drawing by E. H. Saunders, after the painting by Rosa Bonheur.

## V. HORSES.

It happened to me one night during the Franco-Prussian war to ride into the court-yard of an inn which was full of French artillerymen. In the bustle and hurry of the time it was useless to call for the services of an ostler, so I set about seeking for stable-room myself. In the French country inns there are no stalls, and the only division between the horses, when there is any separation at all, is a board suspended at one end by an iron hook to the manger, and at the other hanging from the roof by a knotted cord. In this inn, however, even the hanging-board was wanting, and about fifty artillery horses were huddled together so closely as almost to touch each other, so that it was difficult to find an open space for my mare. At last I found an opening near a magnificent black animal, which I supposed to be an officer's saddle-horse.

A fine horse is always an attraction for me, so as soon as I had finished such arrangements as were possible for the comfort of my own beast, I began to examine her neighbour rather minutely. He seemed in perfect health,

but at last I discovered a fresh wound on the near foreleg, evidently caused by a fragment of a shell. (There had been a battle at the place the day before.) Turning to an artilleryman who was standing by, I asked if the veterinary surgeon thought he could save the horse. "No, sir, he is to be shot to-morrow morning." This decision seemed hard, for the horse stood well, and was eating his hay tranquilly. I felt strongly tempted to beg him, and see what rest and care could accomplish.

At midnight I came back for my own mare. There was a great and terrible change in her neighbour's condition. He lay in the straw, half under her, the place was so crowded. I shall never forget his piteous cries and moans. He could not rise, and the shattered limb was causing him cruel pain. His noble head lay at my feet, and I stooped to caress it.

"So this is the reward," I thought, "that man gives to the best and bravest servant that he has! A long night of intolerable anguish, unrelieved by any attempt whatever to soothe or ease his pain; in the morning, the delayed charity of a rifle-bullet!" This single instance, which moved me because I had seen it, perhaps a little also because the animal was beautiful and gentle, what was it, after all, in comparison with the incalculable quantity of animal suffering which the war was causing in half the provinces of France? These reflections filled me with pain and sadness as I rode over the battle-ground in the frosty moonlight. The *dead* horses lay there still, just as they fell, and for them I felt no pity. Swift death, sudden oblivion, rest absolute, unconscious, eternal, these are not evils; but the pain of the torn flesh and the shattered bone, the long agony in hunger and cold, the anguish of the poor maimed brutes, who struggle through the last

dark passages of existence, without either the pride of the soldier, the reason of the philosopher, or the hope of the Christian — that is Evil, pure and unmixed!

Like all who love animals much, I know and remember them as I know and remember men. During the war I had acquaintances amongst the officers and soldiers, and acquaintances amongst their horses likewise; and when they rode forth to battle I was pretty nearly as anxious about the animals as about the brave men who mounted them. I remember a Garibaldian sergeant, whose red shirt was frequently visible in my court-yard, a youth overflowing with life, to whom the excitement of a battle from time to time was as necessary as that of a ball is to a lively young lady. His way of riding was the nearest approach to that of an enraptured bard on Pegasus that I ever witnessed amongst the realities of the earth. My house is situated something like a tower, with views in every direction, and I used to amuse myself with watching him from the upper windows when the fit of equestrian inspiration was upon him. The red shirt flew first along the high-road, then dashed suddenly down a lane; a little later you could see it flashing scarlet along the outskirts of a distant wood; then, after a brief eclipse, it reappeared in the most unexpected places. The lad careered in this way simply for his amusement, — for the pulsation of that wild delight that his fiery nature needed. It is a fact that he did not even hold the reins. When these mad fits of equestrianism seized him, he flung the bridle on his charger's neck, threw his arms high in the air, and then made them revolve like the paddle-wheels of a steamer. He accompanied these gestures with wild Italian cries, and a double stroke of the spurs. No wonder if his horse galloped! And he *did* gallop. When the rider wanted to

turn a lane he simply gave his steed a hearty slap on the off-side of the neck, — a hint which never seemed to be misunderstood. I have witnessed a good deal of remarkable equestrianism, but never anything like that. His horse was one of the ugliest, and one of the best, that soldier ever bestrode. I have a faint recollection of seeing a child's wooden horse which so closely resembled it, that the artist must have had some such model in his mind. A great round barrel, that seemed as if it had been turned in a lathe, a broad chest, straight strong legs very short proportionally, shoulders far forward relatively to the neck, high withers, large ugly head, with a good-tempered expression, a stump for a tail, and a rough coat of a bay quite closely resembling red hair in the human species: such were the various beauties of this war-horse. His ugliness and his honest looks gave me a sort of attachment to him; and his rider loved him dearly, and was loud in his praise. At length the regiment was ordered to Dijon, and severely engaged there in the Battle of Pâques. Afterwards I saw the sergeant's red shirt, but he rode no longer that good animal. The poor thing had had three of its four legs carried away by a cannon-ball; and its master, though in the heat of the battle, humanely ended its misery with his revolver.

These things, of course, are the every-day accidents of war, in which horses are killed by thousands; but when particular instances come under your observation, they pain you, if you really love animals. I heartily wish that horses could be dispensed with in war, and some sort of steam-engine used instead, if it were possible. In the orders given by Louis-Napoleon at the opening of the campaign of 1870, one detail seemed to me unnecessarily cruel. Orderlies were told not to hesitate to ride their

horses to death (*de crever leurs montures*). It is certainly necessary on occasion, when the fate of thousands depends upon the speed of an animal, to avail ourselves of that noble quality by which it will give its last breath in devoted obedience; but soldiers are not generally so tender that they need to be encouraged in indiscriminate mercilessness. That glorious poem of Browning's would be intolerable to our humanity, were it not for the sweet touches of mercy at the end:—

“By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, ‘Stay spur!  
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
We'll remember at Aix'—*for one heard the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck, and staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.*

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble, like chaff;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And ‘Gallop,’ said Joris, ‘for Aix is in sight!’

‘How they'll greet us!’—*and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;*  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
*With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.”*

All this is very terrible, and would be almost in the spirit of the Imperial command to the orderlies to *crever leurs montures*; were it not that the very strength of the

For intense power of literary workmanship I know nothing in any language, that goes beyond those four lines. The poem is entitled, “How They brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix.”

*crever leurs montures.* “Ride their horses to death.”

description shows how much the poet felt for the suffering animals, though he expresses no sympathy directly. But the tenderness of the man capable of loving a good horse is reserved entirely for the last two stanzas, where it is expressed in the manliest way, yet in a way so affecting that no noble-minded person who read the poem aloud could get through those last stanzas, when he came to them, without some huskiness of emotion in the voice, and, perhaps, just a little mistiness in the eyes.

*"Then I cast loose my buff coat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without a peer ;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.*

And all I remember is, friends flocking round,  
And I sat with his head 'twixt my knees, on the ground ;  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent."

This is the ideal of the relation between man and horse, — the horse serving man to his utmost, lending him his swiftness with a perfect good will, — the man accepting the service for a noble purpose, doing all he can to make the work lighter for his servant, and at last, when the great effort is over, caring for him as tenderly and anxiously as if he were a brother or a son. This is the ideal, but the reality too often falls short of it on both sides. There does not exist in the minds of owners of horses generally that touch of romantic sentiment which translates itself in affectionate companionship and tender care. The horse is a valuable animal, and is, on the whole, looked

after fairly well, his health is cared for, he is usually well fed, and horses used for private purposes are seldom overworked. But there is a remarkable absence of sentiment in all this, which is proved by the facility with which, in most European countries, men sell their horses, often for bodily infirmities or imperfections, in which there is no question of temper, and especially by the custom of selling a horse which has done faithful service, merely because he is getting old and weaker than when in his prime. This last custom proves the absence of sentiment, the more completely that every one knows when selling an old horse that he is dooming him to harder work and worse keep, and that the certain fate of a horse which we part with because he is old, is a descent to harder and harder conditions, till finally he is worked to death in a cab, or in a cart belonging to some master little less miserable than himself.

The whole subject of the relation between the horse and his master depends upon the customs which regulate our life, and which have regulated the lives of our forefathers, in all sorts of other ways. We are not enough with our horses to educate either their intelligence or their affections; and as there has been the same separation in preceding centuries, the horse has inherited a way of regarding men which scarcely tends to make their relation more intimate. There are a few exceptional cases in which traces of affection are distinctly perceptible in horses, but by far the greater number of them are either indifferent, or decidedly hostile to humanity. Man loves the horse, at least some men love him, from feelings of gratitude and pride. When your horse has carried you well in battle, or on the hunting-field, you are grateful to him for the exercise of his strength and courage in your

service; when he has borne you majestically on some occasion of state, or enabled you to display the grace, and skill, and the manly beauty of your person, before the admiring eyes of ladies, you are proud of him as a statue, if it could feel, would be proud of the magnificence of its pedestal. The saddle is a sort of throne for man: when seated there, he has under him the noblest of all the brutes, so that he may be said to sit enthroned above the whole animal creation. It is from a feeling of the royalty of that position, that kings, if they are good riders, always prefer to enter a city on horseback, when a great effect is to be produced upon the minds of the people, well knowing that a leathern saddle, simple and hard as it is, has more of royal dignity than the silken cushions of the gilded coach of state. An incident occurred lately on the entry of King Amadeus into Lerida, which showed him, as by an acted simile, in the character of a sovereign whose throne is not stable, yet whose hand is firm. A shower of flowers rained from a triumphal arch as the Savoyard king rode under it, and his charger plunged so violently that no one but a thorough horseman could have kept his place. All the peoples of the earth like their kings to be fine horsemen, and the crowd thought that in his tossing saddle Amadeus came royally into Lerida!

Our pride in horses, our admiration of their beauty and their strength, produce in us a certain feeling of attachment to them, but rarely a deep affection. The trouble of attending to the wants of horses, of grooming and feeding them at stated times, can rarely be undertaken by the owner himself, and would be a perpetual annoyance to him unless he had a most exceptional liking for the animal, so as to be always happy when about the stable. . . . It is a trouble to most men to be even obliged to exercise



a horse quite regularly, a rich man likes to have horses at his door when he wants them, but to have no trouble about them at other times, using them as living velocipedes, and thinking no more about them in the intervals than if they were made of well-painted iron. Hence, there comes a personage between the horse and his master, who feeds, cleans, gently exercises the animal, and is seen and heard more frequently by him in the course of one week than his owner is in a month. There are the long absences of the owner also, when he is staying in other people's houses, or travelling, or at another residence of his where he has other horses, or in his yacht where all horses whatever would be much out of place. The owner, then, from the horse's point of view, is a man who makes his appearance from time to time armed with a whip and a pair of spurs, gets upon the horse's back, compels him to trot, and gallop, and jump hedges, and then suddenly disappears, it may be for several weeks. The two lives are so widely separated that there hardly can be any warm affection. If the horse loves any one it is more likely to be the groom than the master, but the groom has often disagreeable manners (to which horses are extremely sensitive), and in some houses he is changed as frequently as a French minister. On the whole, the horse very seldom enjoys fair opportunities for attaching himself to any human being. . . .

It would be highly interesting to watch the effect of a continual association between the horse and his master, and still more interesting if it could be kept up during several generations. The powers of affection in the horse are for the most part latent. We see faint signs of them, and there is a general belief that the horse has such powers, which is founded partly on some exceptional examples,

and partly on a subtle satisfaction in believing that we are beloved by our slaves. But the plain truth is, that horses, as they live usually in our service, have little to love us for, and most commonly regard us either with indifference or dislike. The slightest demonstration of attachment wins us in a moment, and we exaggerate it because it flatters our *amour propre*. When a horse neighs at our coming, it is most commonly a request for corn, and some of his other demonstrations are very equivocal. Some men tell you when horses set their ears back, and show the white of their eye, and try to bite, and kick at them in the stable, that all these are merely signs of playful affection. In short, there is a distinct passion in man's heart for which the Greeks had a name, but which in England we call the love of horses, and this has its illusions like every other passion. . . .

When we come to the active vices, the hatred and rebellion of the horse against his master express themselves very plainly, much more plainly than equine affection expresses itself ever. Many of these vices are hereditary in the equine blood, are a tradition of ill-usage. The way in which they burst forth in horses, apparently of the most tranquil character, is one of the mysteries of nature. Three instances have occurred in my own stable, of animals becoming suddenly and irremediably vicious, passing in the course of three or four days from a state like that of Paris under the Empire to the rage and rebellion of Paris under the Commune, and neither in these cases, nor in any other that has come under my observation, has a *real vice* ever been permanently eradicated. Horses become vicious from many causes; the most frequent, I think, is idleness in combination with confinement and good

*Amour propre*, self esteem.

keep. Out at grass a horse becomes wild rather than vicious, and mere wildness is easily curable by gentleness and patience. Tied up in a stable, with plenty of hay and corn, his system accumulates the electricity of irritability which ought to have been regularly expended in work, and it explodes in dangerous violence. Four days' idleness in



HORSES IN FREEDOM.

Pen drawing by D. Munro, after the etching by J. Veyrassat.

an inn-stable, during wet weather, cost me the most valuable horse I ever possessed. On the fifth day no man could ride him, and no man was ever able to ride him afterwards. A black Irish horse, who served me well during a year, and was an excellent leaper, was suddenly lost to me in the same way, and the same thing occurred with a powerful Scotch Galloway. Most men who have

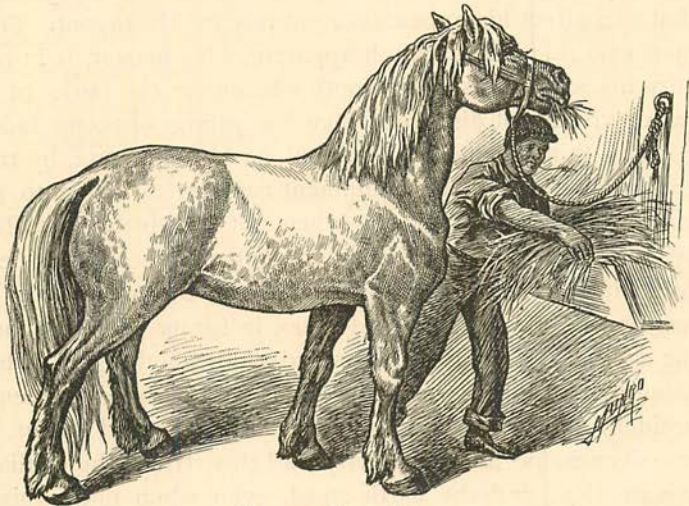
I begged the late Lord Hawke, who was the best rider, or one of the three best, I ever knew, to make a trial of him, but the results were the same as with myself and the rough-riders, and the verdict, "Nothing to be made of him."

had some experience of horses will have known such cases. No form of disappointment is more provoking. The animal, after vice has declared itself, seems exactly the same creature that he did before. Has he not the same limbs, shape, colour? Is not the spot of white upon his forehead precisely in the same place? Is not his tail of the same length? Nothing is altered that the eye may detect, but there is the same change that there is in a wine-bottle, when somebody has poured the wine out and replaced it with deadly poison. In the animal's brain there dwelt a spirit that was your most faithful servant—your most humble and dutiful friend; that spirit is gone, and instead of it there is a demon who is determined to kill you whenever an opportunity offers. The Teutonic legends of black steeds with fiery eyes that were possessed by evil spirits, are no more than the poetical form that clothes an indubitable truth. The nature of the horse is such that he is capable of endless irreconcilable rage, against his master, and against humanity,—a temper of chronic hate and rebellion like that of Milton's fallen angels, keeping the fierce resolve—

“To wage by force or guile eternal war  
Irreconcilable.”

When you see, however, the thousands upon thousands of horses which do their duty, on the whole safely and well, in the large cities, in the country, in the army, about railway stations, breweries, and business places of all kinds, you will conclude that the horse-demons are rare in proportion; and, indeed, happily they are so. Most horses are fairly good, and in some races almost all of them are docile. In other races vices of different kinds are very

common. Take the Corsican ponies, for instance, a hardy little race of much speed and endurance, very useful to drive in pairs in small phaetons; they are nearly always vicious, though seldom vicious enough to interfere materially with their usefulness. A tiny pair were offered me with a pretty carriage, the whole equipage suspiciously cheap, but I discovered that one of the charming little



FLEMISH DRAY HORSE.

Drawn by D. Munro.

creatures would kick like the youthful Tommy Newcome in Doyle's sketch, and the other bit like a wolf. Afterwards I found that these accomplishments were common to the Corsican breed; in fact, that they were generally as energetic, but as wilful and difficult to deal with, as their little human compatriot, Napoleon. On the other hand, there are breeds where gentle tempers and amiable manners are hereditary. . . .

The peaceful inhabitants of London have ideas about cavalry horses which would be greatly modified by a week's experience of Continental warfare. The British army requires few horses in comparison with the vast numbers which are absorbed by the forces of Germany or France, so that there is wider latitude for selection, and no horse which has the honour of carrying a British soldier is ever publicly seen in his native land without having everything that can affect his appearance entirely in his favour. The man who rides him, though apparently his master, is in reality his servant, as every youth who enters the ranks of a cavalry regiment discovers when his young illusions fade. All the things which the animal has to carry are, by the craft and taste of the equipment-makers, turned into so many ornaments; and even when not positively beautiful in themselves, are so devised as to enhance the martial effect, and make you feel that you are in the presence of a war-horse. Bright steel and brass, in forms unused about the saddlery of civilians; furs and saddle-cloths, the latter decorated with lace round the edges, and perhaps even embroidery in the corners; a luxury of straps and chains, a massiveness peculiarly military; all this strikes the civilian imagination, and the battle-steed, even when not in himself a particularly perfect animal, has generally a noble and imposing air. All his belongings are kept so clean and bright that we respect him as a member of the aristocracy of horses. He is brushed and groomed as if he came from the stables of a prince. To these advantages may be added that of his superior education, which tells in every movement, and his pride, for he is proud of all his superiorities, and the consciousness of them gives grace to the curve of his neck, and fire to his eye, and dignity to his disdainful stepping.

These glories of the war-horse are to be seen in their highest perfection in that prosperous and peaceful capi-



QUEEN'S LIFE GUARDSMAN.

tal of England where the thunder of an enemy's cannon has never yet been heard. The English household troops are the ideal cavalry, good in service on the field of serious conflict, but especially and peculiarly admirable

as a spectacle. I had almost written that the poetry of warfare was to be best seen in a charge of the Life-guards at a review, but there is a yet deeper poetry in some of war's realities where the element of beauty is not so conspicuously present. The boy's ideal of the war-horse is that coal-black, silken coated charger that bears the helmeted cuirassier, and all those glittering arms and ornaments dazzle the imagination and fill the martial dreams of youth. Well, it is very fine, very beautiful, and we like to see the Royal Guards flashing past after the Court carriages; but during the war between France and Germany I saw another sight, and renounced the boy's ideal.

The armies of Chanzy had been defeated on the Loire, and their broken remnants passed as they could to join the desperate enterprise of Bourbaki for the relief of Belfort. In the depth of that terrible winter, the roads covered with snow, with a bitter wind sweeping across the country from the east, and every water-fall a pillar of massy ice, there came two or three thousand horsemen from those disastrous battle-fields. Slowly they passed over the hills that divide the eastern from the western rivers, an irregular procession broken by great intervals, so that we always thought no more were coming, yet others followed, straggling in melancholy groups. What a contrast to the brilliance of a review! How different from the marching-past when the Emperor sat in his embroidery on the Champ-de-Mars and the glittering hosts swept before him, saluting with polished swords! Ah, these horsemen came from another and a bloodier field of Mars; they had been doing the rough work of the war-god and bore the signs of it! The brass of their helmets shone no more than the dull leopard-skin beneath it, the lancers had poles without pennons, the bits and stirrups were rusty, and the horses were



encumbered with tins and pans for rude cookery, and bundles of hay, and coarse coverings for the bitter bivouac. Here and there a wearied brute was led slowly by a merciful master; a few were still suffering from wounds, all were meagre and overworked, not one had been groomed for weeks. Yet here, I said, as the weary troops passed by, and others like them loomed in gray masses as they approached through the falling snow, — here, and not on the brilliant parade-ground, now in this busy harvest-time of death, not then in the lightness of their leisure, are the battle-steeds most sublime! All the fopperies of soldiering had been rubbed away by the rough hand of implacable Necessity, but instead of them what a moving pathos! what grandeur of patient endurance! Grotesque they all were certainly, but it was a grotesqueness of that highest kind which is infinitely and irresistibly affecting. The women laughed at those sorry brutes, those meagre Rosinantes, and at the wonderful odd figures that sat upon them, like Quixotes in quilts, riding on the wildest of expeditions to meet starvation under the dark Jura pine-trees, — but whilst the women laughed the tears ran down their cheeks. . . .

The conspicuous merit of the horse, which has given him the dearly-paid honour of sharing in our wars, is his capacity for being disciplined, — and a very great capacity it is, a very noble gift indeed; nobler than much cleverness. Several animals are cleverer than the horse in the way of intelligence; not one is so amenable to discipline. He is not observant, except of places; not nearly so observant as half-a-dozen other animals we know. His eye never fixes itself long in a penetrating gaze, like the mild, wistful

*Rosinante*, Don Quixote's horse, "so lean, lank, meagre, drooping, sharp-backed, and raw-boned as to excite much curiosity and mirth."

watchfulness of the dog, or the steady flame of the lion's luminous orbs, but he can listen and obey, and his acts of obedience pass easily by repetition into fixed habits, so that you never have to teach him more than one thing at a time. The way to educate a horse is to do as Franklin did in the formation of his moral habits — that is, to aim at one perfection at once, and afterwards, when that has become easy from practice, and formed itself into a habit, to try for some other perfection. A good horse never forgets your lessons. There are unteachable brutes which ought to be handed over to rude masters and rough work, but every horse of average intelligence and gentle temper may be very highly educated indeed. Beyond this average degree of teachableness there are exceptional cases — the horses of genius; for genius (an exceptional vigour and intensity of the mental faculties with correspondingly large powers of acquisition) exists amongst the lower animals in due degree as it does in the human species. A few animals of this remarkable degree of endowment are picked up by the proprietors of circuses, and so become known to the public, but the probability is that a much larger proportion remain in the obscurity of ordinary equine life, and that their gifts escape attention.

Most of us have seen remarkable performances of trained horses. The most remarkable that I ever saw were those of that wonderful black gelding that Pablo Fanque used to ride. There can be no doubt that he had pride and delight in his own extraordinary intelligence and perfect education, just as some great poet or painter may delight in the richness of his gifts and the perfection of his work. But the circus performance is not the ideal aim of equine accomplishment. One would not care much to have a horse

*Franklin's moral habits*, see his autobiography, Chapter V.

that would dance or fire a pistol, or pick up a pocket-handkerchief, yet it would be pleasant to have in our horses the degree of docility and intelligence which circus-trainers direct to these vain objects. Many accomplishments might be attained that would be valuable everywhere. It would be extremely convenient if a horse would follow you without being pulled by halter or bridle, and wait for you in one place without being fastened. A man who had travelled amongst the Arabs told me that he had seen many horses that would stand where they were left, without any fastening, and some will follow you like a dog.

A great deal of accomplishment may go into the ordinary work of saddle and carriage-horses, and almost escape notice because we think it only natural. But how wide is the difference between a trained horse and a raw one! How slight are the indications by which the master conveys the expression of his will, how rapid and exact the apprehension! With horses of the finest organisation this apprehension rises into a sympathy above the necessity for any definite command; they know the master's will by a sense of faint pressures, of limb on saddle, of hand on rein. I used to ride a horse which would go on trotting so long as I was not tired, but when I began to feel fatigued he walked, knowing by my altered manner of rising in the saddle that rest would be a relief to me. By this accurate interpretation of our muscular action, even when it is so slight as to be imperceptible to the eye of a by-stander, the horse measures the skill, the strength, the resolution of his rider. He knows at once whether you are at home in the saddle or not, and if your movements do not correspond accurately to his own, he is aware that he can take liberties. A bad rider may sometimes deceive the people in the street, but it may be doubted whether he ever deceived the animal

under him. It is evident that a bad rider must be extremely disagreeable to a horse of refined feeling, disagreeable as an awkward partner in dancing is disagreeable.

The intelligence of horses is shown in nothing so much as in their different behaviour under different men. When a thorough horseman gets into the saddle the creature he mounts is aware that there are the strongest reasons for behaving himself properly, and it is only the mad rebels that resist. Not only can a good horseman overcome opposition better than a bad one, but he has much less opposition to overcome. The very best horsemen, amongst gentlemen, are often scarcely even aware of the real difficulties of riding, their horses obey them so well, and are so perfectly suited to their work. An English lady who rides admirably, told me that she did not deserve so much credit as she got, because the excellence of her horses made riding quite easy for her, and she declared that even in her boldest leaps the *secousse* was not very violent. There is a good deal of truth in this, which is often overlooked. The relation between horse and rider is mutual, and each shows the other to advantage.

Whilst on this subject of riding, let me express a regret that good horsemanship is becoming rarer and rarer in proportion to the numbers of the population. The excellence of modern roads, which has led to the universal employment of wheeled carriages, and the introduction of railways, which are now used by all classes for long or rapid journeys, have together reduced horsemanship, in the case of civilians, to the rank of a mere amusement, or an exercise for the benefit of health. In fact, it is coming to this, that nobody but rich men and their grooms will know how to ride on horseback; whereas in former generations,

*secousse*, shock.

when the bad roads reduced all travelling to an alternative between riding and pedestrianism, men of all degrees and conditions went on horseback for considerable distances, and became skilful, no doubt, in proportion to the frequency of their practice. What a great deal of riding there is in the Waverley novels! Not only the baron and the knight, but also the tradesman, the commercial traveller, the citizen of every rank, go on horseback from place to place. How much healthy and invigorating exercise the men of our generation miss which their forefathers frequently enjoyed!

Imagine the benefit to a manly youth of the last century, fastened in London behind a counter or a desk, when he was ordered to ride on business to Lincoln, or York, or Edinburgh! He had before him weeks of the manliest life a human being can lead, and plenty of leisure, as he sat in the saddle, for the observation of men and nature. There was danger enough to give exercise to his courage; and as the pistols in his holsters were loaded with powder and ball, so the heart in his breast had to be charged with the spirit of the brave. All men in those days lived from time to time a life giving them some brotherhood with the knights of the days of chivalry. A London tradesman riding over the dark heath, robber-haunted, thinking about the flints of his big pistols, had need of a portion of that manliness which in other times had clothed itself in knightly harness of complete steel. Consider the difference between passing a fortnight on horseback and a night in a railway train — the long breathing of fresh air, the healthy exercise, the delightful variety of scenery, the entertaining change and adventure; and then the seat in the railway carriage, with its poisonously impure atmosphere. . . .

Railway travelling is fatiguing, yet it is not exercise. It wears the nervous system, but does not help the circulation of the blood. Horse exercise produces effects of an exactly opposite nature, it stimulates and improves the circulation, and reposes the nervous system better than anything except swimming. Our forefathers found in travel a double corrective for the evils of a sedentary life, and they had the additional advantage of not being able to go far without spending a good deal of time upon the road — days and weeks — during which the system had full leisure to recruit itself. Too many of them were senselessly careless about health; they ate and drank a great deal more than can have been good for them, and the more robust had little notion of moderation in anything: yet they certainly knew less of nervous ailments than does our own more thoughtful and scientific generation. Their bad roads gave them exercise, as their badly-fitted doors and windows ensured them an efficient ventilation. We may still imitate them in equestrian tours; but it is not quite the same thing, because we only travel in this way for pleasure, that is, when we take a holiday, whereas they did it from necessity, at all seasons and in all weathers.

I read the other day, in a book written for students, that walking, and not riding, is the best exercise; and I knew a physician who said he only recommended horse exercise because his patients preferred it. On this point it may be observed, that no one is likely to get much good in the saddle unless he has the true equestrian instinct, which is as much a gift of nature as the love of aquatics. Without the natural instinct you cannot feel the peculiar exhilaration which gladdens the born horseman and relieves him from that burden of his cares.

There is an exulting sense of augmented power in the

breast of such a man when he feels that all the strength and swiftness of the noble animal that bears him have become his own swiftness and his own strength; that he, who but a moment before was the slowest of creatures, may now follow the wild fox and the antelope; that, if need were, he could traverse three horizons in a day. It is this pride and delight of horsemanship, and not the mere physical exertion, which gladden the heart of man and add to his health and courage. Can any sensation be finer than that of a good rider, well mounted, going across the country at full speed? Only one other sensation is comparable to it, that of steering a lively vessel when the mainsail is wet with spray, and the sheet is straining tight, and the topmast bends like whalebone, and the wind blows fair and free!

An American newspaper lamented not long ago that rich men in the United States had such a mania for driving that they had thrown the saddle aside. The same evil may be observed in France, and is even perceptible in England, the last stronghold of noble equestrianism. The excellence of modern roads, and the perfection of modern carriage-building, have brought about this result. Thousands of men own horses in these days who never bought such a thing as a saddle, and would not know what to do if hoisted into one; and their carriages are so very luxurious as to be beneficial to nobody but invalids. There are three classes of horse-owners — the men who can ride, the men who can drive, and lastly the men who can sit still and be driven about by a coachman. To the last the horse is purely and simply a locomotive, into which his owner puts fuel and water at stated times that it may make his wheels go round. The drivers take a real interest in horses, and often show great courage and attain quite a

surprising skill. Much may be said in favour of their amusement, which has a fine excitement of its own. A rider commands only one horse, a driver may hold four in his hand at once; a rider hears no sound but that of hoofs, the driver hears also the lively rumble of the wheels, and feels the pleasant springing and swinging of the well-built vehicle under him. The rider serves no one but himself, the driver has an agreeable sense of importance when the drag is crowded with fair passengers for whose safety he feels himself responsible. Our modern usages, which prohibit splendid saddlery to civilians and have made all ornamentation of it inconsistent with good taste, still allow some splendour in carriage-harness, silver crests and buckles, and other things not absolutely necessary, and in the carriages themselves there are displays of wealth and luxury which could never be concentrated in a saddle. When a rich man has a taste for ostentation, he gratifies it more easily in carriages than in saddle-horses. When a poor man has five children and one horse, the beast cannot carry the whole family on his back, but he can easily drag it behind him in a four-wheeled conveyance. Even a bachelor who keeps only one horse has cogent reasons for preferring harness. A saddle-horse can carry his own person, but his owner cannot take a servant with him nor offer a place to a friend. All the reasons of convenience (the most powerful of all reasons in the long run) are on the side of harness in every country where the roads are good. There are parts of France where it is already thought an eccentricity to ride on horseback, and where equestrians are so rare that if ever one makes his appearance the children stare and laugh, and the grown-up people smile, as they would at a man on stilts. In neigh-



bourhoods of that kind it is dangerous to a man's reputation for gravity to be seen on horseback, and men of serious pretensions have the same objections to the saddle that a bishop has to a bicycle. Hunting and war keep up the art of riding; without them it would be in great danger of going out altogether, as falconry has gone out, to be revived, like falconry, at some future period by a few persons of wealth and leisure, as a curiosity of ancestral custom.

The influence of the turf on horses and on horsemanship deserves more thorough investigation than these brief chapters would permit. It does little or no good to riding, except by creating a special professional class with quite peculiar professional aims; and it does no good whatever to the breeding of horses, except by transmitting the capacity for great speed at a sudden "spurt," which is usually purchased at the cost of substantial qualities more valuable for common use. Practically, I believe, the most public benefit that the turf has given to England has been her rapid Hansom cabs. They are very commonly horsed, directly or indirectly, from the turf, and the swiftness which whirled you through the interminable streets of London has been first developed, either in the horse that drags you or in some ancestor of his, for the chance of a triumph at Epsom, or Newmarket, or Doncaster.

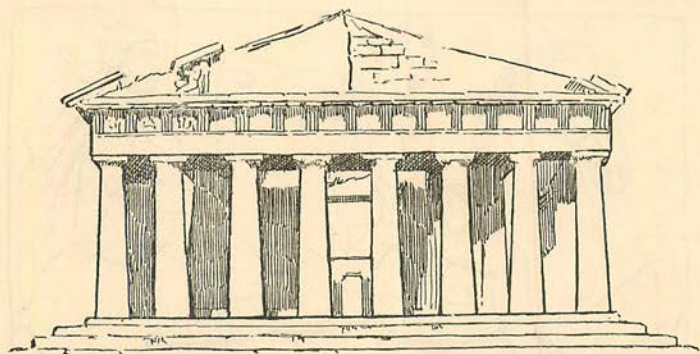
The turf, as it is followed, is not really an equestrian recreation, any more than the watching of hired gladiators was warfare. The swiftness of horses, being always various and always having elements of chance, was found to be a convenient subject for betting, and the excitement of being in a great crowd on a race course was found to be agreeable to everybody in search of a

*Epsom, Newmarket, Doncaster, three famous English race courses.*

stimulus. Races are a popular institution ; vacant minds like them ; and they are liked also as an amusement by some minds too distinguished in serious pursuits to be liable to any accusation of vacancy. Yet it seems probable that the truest lover of horses would be of all men the least likely to devote himself passionately to the turf. What, to him, could be the pleasure of keeping animals to be trained and ridden by paid agents, and never to know their master ?

The influence of the turf upon the physical perfection of the horse has not been favourable to his beauty. The race-horse has lost the beauty of nature in one direction, as the prize-pig has departed from it in another. That which his forms express is not beauty, but culture. You see at once that he is a highly artificial product, the creature of wealth and civilisation. Many people admire him for that, because there is an inextricable confusion in the popular mind between ideas of beauty and ideas of careful cultivation. The race-horse has the charms of a tail-coat, of a trained pear-tree, of all such superfine results of human ingenuity, but he has lost the glory of nature. Look at his straight neck, at the way he holds his head, at his eager, anxious eye, often irritable and vicious ! Breeders for the turf have succeeded in substituting the straight line for the curve, as the dominant expressional line, a sure and scientific manner of eradicating the elements of beauty. No real artist would ever paint race-horses from choice. Good artists have occasionally painted them for money. The meagre limbs, straight lines, and shiny coat, have slight charms for an artist, who generally chooses either what is beautiful or what is picturesque, and the race-horse is neither picturesque nor beautiful. Imagine what would become of the frieze of the

Parthenon if you substituted modern race-horses for those admirable little chargers the Athenians loved so well! They have the true hippic beauty; fine curves everywhere; if they are not servile copies of pure nature, it is only because they reach a still higher fidelity to the Divine idea. Yet there exists a type superior even to the noble horse of Phidias. In the heart of Nejed, where



FRONT OF THE PARTHENON.

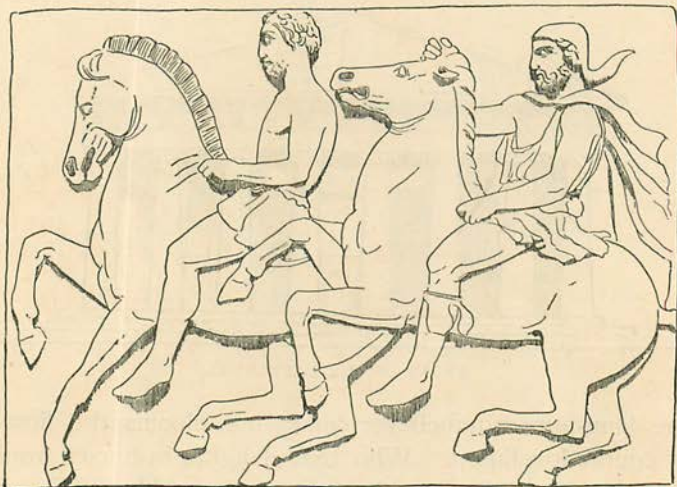
the long-pursed unbeliever comes not, blooms the flower of equine loveliness. Who that delights in horses would not envy Mr. Palgrave his sight of the stables of Feysul, the royal stables of Nejed? *Ut rosa flos florum*, so are those the stables of stables! The bold traveller, at his life's hazard, saw with his bodily eyes what our painters see only in their dreams!

*Parthenon Frieze.* The Parthenon a temple at Athens, the most perfect specimen of Greek Architecture. The frieze or flat space above the columns is covered with sculptures by Phidias the famous Greek Sculptor.

*Nejed or Nejd.* A province in Arabia where the famous breed of Arabian horses is reared. Mr. W. Gifford Palgrave an Englishman travelled much in the far East and especially in Arabia.

*Ut rosa flos florum*, as the rose is the flower of flowers.

“Never,” he wrote afterwards, “never had I seen or imagined so lovely a collection. Their stature was indeed somewhat low: I do not think that any came fully up to fifteen hands; fourteen appeared to me about their average; but they were so exquisitely well shaped, that want of greater size seemed hardly, if at all, a defect. Remarkably full in the haunches, with a shoulder of a slope so elegant



HORSES FROM THE PARTHENON FRIEZE.

as to make one, in the words of an Arab poet, go ‘raving mad about it;’ a little, a very little saddle-backed, just the curve which indicates springiness without any weakness; a head, broad above, and tapering down to a nose fine enough to verify the phrase of ‘drinking from a pint-pot’—did pint-pots exist in Nejed; a most intelligent and yet a singularly gentle look, full eye, sharp, thorn-like little ear; legs, fore and hind, that seemed as if made of hammered iron, so clean and yet so well twisted with sinew; a neat

round hoof, just the requisite for hard ground; the tail set on or rather thrown out at a perfect arch; coat smooth, shining, and light; the mane long, but not over-grown nor heavy; and an air and step that seemed to say, 'Look at



AN ARAB HORSE.

me, am I not pretty?'—their appearance justified all reputation, all value, all poetry. The prevailing colour was chestnut or gray, a light bay, an iron colour; white or black were less common; full bay, flea-bitten, or pie-bald, none. But if asked what are, after all, the specially distinctive points of the Nejdee horse, I should reply—the

slope of the shoulder, the extreme cleanness of the shank, and the full-rounded haunch, though every other part, too, has a perfection and a harmony unwitnessed (at least by my eyes) anywhere else."

Even the Arabs we see in Europe, however inferior to that purest breed of Nejed, are enough to make clear to us what the Arabian ideal is. That it is the central Divine conception of horse-beauty, I think no artist doubts, though artists often prefer other races from affection, or because their own art is more picturesque than beautiful. Veyrassat, for instance, who can etch cart-horses as nobody else can etch them, has never, I believe, cared to illustrate the more graceful breeds that excite the enthusiasm of poets. So it has been with Rosa Bonheur, and the whole picturesque school generally; they take naturally to the cart-horse, whose massive grandeur satisfies them. Preferences of this kind, in the practice of artists, do not, however, prove anything against the supreme beauty of the Arab. The best painters always work more from sympathy and affection than from admiration, and they take as models, not what even they themselves consider most beautiful, but what will take its place best in the class of pictures that they paint. The truth is, that the Arab is much *too* beautiful to be admissible in the pictures of the rustic schools; he would spoil everything around him, he would be as much out of place as a Greek statue in a cottage interior. Even the Greek horses of Phidias are too noble to be ridden by cavaliers not endowed with the full beauty of the human body, beautiful strong arms to hold the restraining bridle, beautiful strong legs to press the charger's sides! And how then shall you paint the daintily-exquisite Arab along with wooden-shod Normandy peasants, and fustian-breeched

*Rosa Bonheur.* The famous French animal painter, born, 1822.



ROSA BONHEUR.

Yorkshire grooms? Where shall we find a rider worthy of him? Not the mean-looking modern Sultan, going cloaked to the Mosque on a Friday; not even the white-robed Emir, ringed by a host of spears! Far in the dis-

tance of the past rises the one romantic figure worthy to mount the perfect Arab. Rich in jewelled caparison, the faultless horse awaits him! The saddle is empty as yet, and its diamonds flash in the torchlight, but the little sharp ears are listening, they have detected the step of the master! There is a movement in far corridors, the golden gates are open. Like a stream that glitters in the moonlight, the court descends the stair! The master sits in the saddle, the proud steed steps along the street; all men are prostrate before the Caliph.

“Sole star of all that place and time  
I see him—in his golden prime,  
The good Haroun Alraschid!”

From Tennyson's "Recollections of the Arabian Nights."