

PHOTOGRAPHING RACE-HORSES :

AN AFTERNOON WITH MR. CLARENCE HAILEY.

BY OUR SPECIAL COMMISSIONER.

Illustrated by Mr. Hailey's Photographs.



HORSES and babies are proverbially difficult to photograph. With the latter, happily, the present writer has nothing to do. As to the former, he has had an interesting chat with

Mr. Clarence Hailey, of St. John's Wood and Newmarket, the famous photographer of race-horses.

The WINDSOR representative journeyed down to Newmarket through crisp and clear spring weather, glad to be free for a moment of the London turmoil, dear and fascinating though it be, and to taste the bracing air of the heath. Something else too was breezy and bracing, to wit, Mr. Clarence Hailey's personality and talk.

When I entered the studio two distinguished visitors were just leaving. It is no breach of confidence to state that one was an ex-Premier and the other the premier judge of the realm, who had run down to Newmarket for the day. From Legislature and the Law Mr. Hailey turned affably to welcome the Press, and in two minutes we were on the best of terms.

"I must just place myself unreservedly in your hands, Mr. Hailey, for I am a novice in your art. But I suppose all the world is a novice there, seeing that you practically hold the field?"

"I think I may fairly claim to be a specialist," the artist replied, "for during the last eleven years—barely a third of my

life—I've made this branch of photography almost my exclusive study. Come upstairs, won't you? We shall be free from interruption and can chat at ease."

In a moment or two we were cosily seated for our talk, with a pile of Mr. Hailey's best pictures at our side for reference and illustration.

"What led you to take up this line, may I inquire?"

"I really can't say. You know more about it than I do," Mr. Hailey returned jocularly.

"Then it must remain a mystery. Perhaps, however, there are one or two interesting personal facts about your start in life?"

"Well, I was born within sixteen miles of Newmarket. I'm a Suffolk fool, you know!"

"A Suffolk—ahem! Do I understand you to say —?" I checked my pencil on the page.

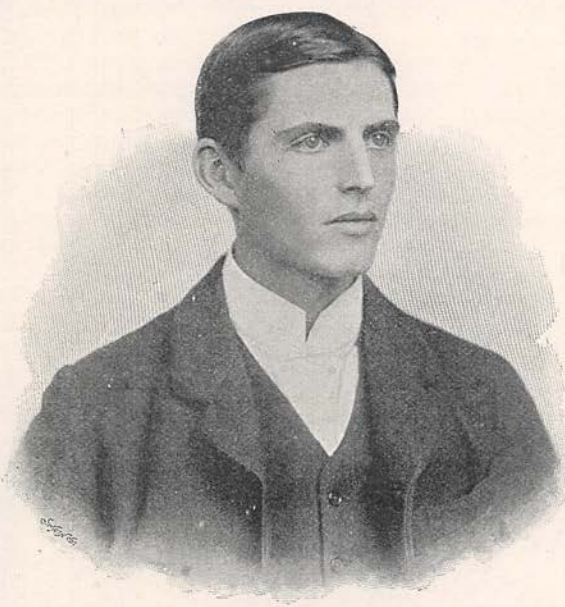
"Oh, you know the country saying," said my host laughing, "Essex

calves, Norfolk lambs, Suffolk —"

"Wiseacres! Of course, of course. Pray go on."

"Well, funnily enough, although born so close at hand, I never came near Newmarket until I had found a profession. In 1880 I went to London to learn photography with my excellent uncle Mr. Fall, of Baker Street. After my apprenticeship was over I started business on my own account in St. John's Wood."

"As a general practitioner?"



MR. CLARENCE HAILEY.

"At first, yes. But I found that lacking in variety and individuality. I'd always had an interest in horse-flesh, however; and once,

began to know me and my work, and bit by bit my business developed."

"Owners of horses too would recognise you as a useful ally."



ISINGLASS.

when the Two Thousand Guineas race was to be run, I came to Newmarket and photographed the start. It struck me that here was a promising 'line.' There's a curious sanctity and mystery about a race-horse, and people are apt to consider that anyone who photographs that noble animal must be no common man. On that occasion I was lucky enough to obtain one or two very nice results, and so things began to grow. Reproductive process was at that time getting very cheap. The illustrated papers

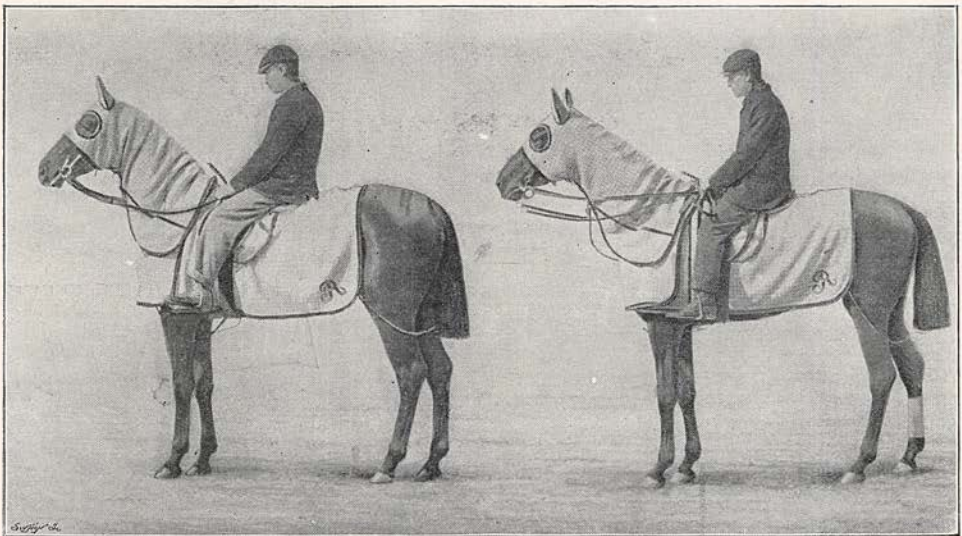
"By all racing people, I may say without vanity, I am regarded more as a friend than as a business acquaintance. My earliest friend was old Tom Jennings, the trainer, who has trained nearly every important winner in England and France. He's eighty, the grand old fellow! and has stuck to me all along."

"A sure testimony to your work; for who can know its requirements and difficulties better—except, of course, yourself?"

"You speak of difficulties. They are enormous. Horses, you see, are very much like children. No two are alike in temperament. Very seldom will a horse adapt himself to photography. When the animal is photographed in cold blood, the lightening of the muscles is lost. I generally am allowed to operate after the horse has done its morning's work. Then it's apt to be sluggish—a great drawback, for the resulting picture sometimes looks like that of quite another animal."

"What is the ideal moment for taking a racer?"

"When it has pulled up after a gallop. Then you get the quality of the coat to perfection. But in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he won't display his tail to advan-



WHITTIER.

SLOW STEP.

tage. There are very few exceptions to this. Isinglass was a case in point. Although one of the handsomest horses, Isinglass, photographed when in training, appeared a mean, insignificant looking beast."

"Then there are difficulties about securing the 'sitting,' or rather 'standing,' I should imagine."

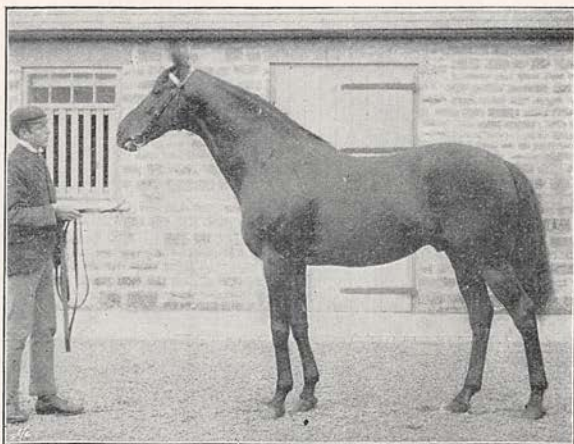
"Endless worry. Rightly enough, of course, trainers will not have you pull about a valuable animal, entered for a big event, and worth perhaps £20,000, as if it were a £50 hunter. Trainers and owners dare not risk a chill for their delicate charges. So you must look sharp. Often a man will give me three minutes, watch in hand. Some people have an idea that there's no taking a photograph unless the operator gets his head under a cloth and goes through a mysterious ceremonial. There's none of that with me. I get focussed before the animal appears, and its clothing is removed only the moment before exposure. The brief time allowed is a great drawback. You must risk your good character as an artist on the result of the picture."

"Of course, position is everything?"

"Or nearly so. To get that right means a good picture. My apprentice will take photographs of six horses this afternoon, but

"What is the ideal position?"

"The horse must be standing truly; the legs must not cover, but should be as you see



ST. SIMON.

(Showing the hereditary peculiarity of knee.)

in the portrait of Vesuvian. A painter can 'fake,' but the photographer can't do that for the public."

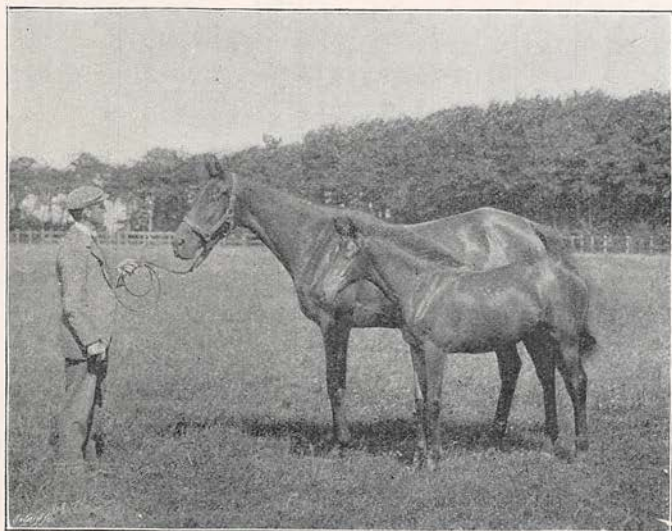
"Are some horses hopeless?"

"Quite. A case in point was the late Col. North's Philomel. Several horses have never a photo fit to show. Curiously enough, some hindrances to the photog-

rapher seem to run in the certain breeds of horses. For instance, all the stock of St. Simon, the greatest stallion of the century, have a tendency to stand a little over at the knee. Look at this photograph and you'll see. That tendency, mark you, is not against the animal, but in its favour, still it's a little unfortunate for the camera. St. Simon's daughter, La Flèche, is a little over at the knee as well, look"—Mr. Hailey handed me the picture as he spoke—"and St. Simon's sire, Galopin—here he is—had the same peculiarity. Galopin is still alive."

"Will you tell me something about your photographs of famous horses?"

"My first special trip was to Kingsclere, where the Duke of Westminster trains, and where the Prince of Wales trained at that



LA FLÈCHE AND FOAL.

of course his results cannot be expected to show the animals in perfect position. That takes some learning."

time. John Porter, the celebrated trainer, said to me: 'You're young to be in business. I'm always pleased to put £5



SAINFOIN.

of a young man who is trying hard.' John Porter has been my very good friend. By-the-bye, he trained Sainfoin and La Flèche, both bred by the Queen. There's a story about that. Her Majesty had promised to accept pictures of each from Mr. Porter, and he gave me the order. Sainfoin was just then with the stud. When I went to get an improved photograph, the animal seized me by the left arm, below the elbow, and

wrenched the muscle severely. I was off duty for some time in consequence."

"Is that your only accident?"

"The only one, bar a broken leg when I was a boy."

"You don't cherish pleasant memories of Sainfoin, then?"

"Perhaps not altogether. With La Flèche it's different. She has been my best friend in business. Next comes Orme, whose poisoning is a mystery still. I took him just after he had competed for the St. Leger. He had a queer habit of standing with his tongue out.

"It is a remarkable thing," Mr. Hailey went on, "when you allow yourself a day for any special work a satisfactory half hour can't be got, although a few minutes would suffice. If it's not the wind it may be the flies. Flies drive some horses half mad. Or the beast may be naturally difficult of temper."

"Your work is instantaneous, I imagine?"

"Yes; but I've never used a shutter. It's



ORME.

(Mysteriously poisoned.)

all hand exposure; and I imagine I can expose quicker than anybody. It's just a matter of experience."

"Have you any 'records'?"

"Well, let me see. This may perhaps stand for one. At Kingsclere I once photographed twelve horses in fifteen minutes; I used two cameras, and got good results in every case. If you want the reverse of that, I had once to spend three whole days at Cobham Stud Farm photographing twelve mares and foals, a job that might otherwise occupy only three hours! The drawbacks were of the usual sort, with extras, for in obtaining pictures of mares and foals—a speciality of my business, and a favourite study of mine by the way—you may have to wait ever so long until the foal comes up to the dam. In these cases—nor indeed in any case—I never hurry or fluster my subjects. People want the best, and I give it. I never do 'estimate work.' By such an arrangement you can't do justice either to yourself or your patron."

"Excepting the occasion when your subject actually assaulted you, Mr. Hailey, what has been your most trying professional experience?"

"Perhaps it was one day at Cobham. I was waiting to expose a plate for a picture of Sorcerer. It was a sultry July day; the flies were tremendously active and drove the poor beast nearly frantic. All at once he broke loose from his attendant, careered round the yard, and came within an ace of knocking me and my camera down. I had to show my own agility to save my apparatus; but a miss is as good as a mile, and eventually I got a splendid picture of the rascal!"

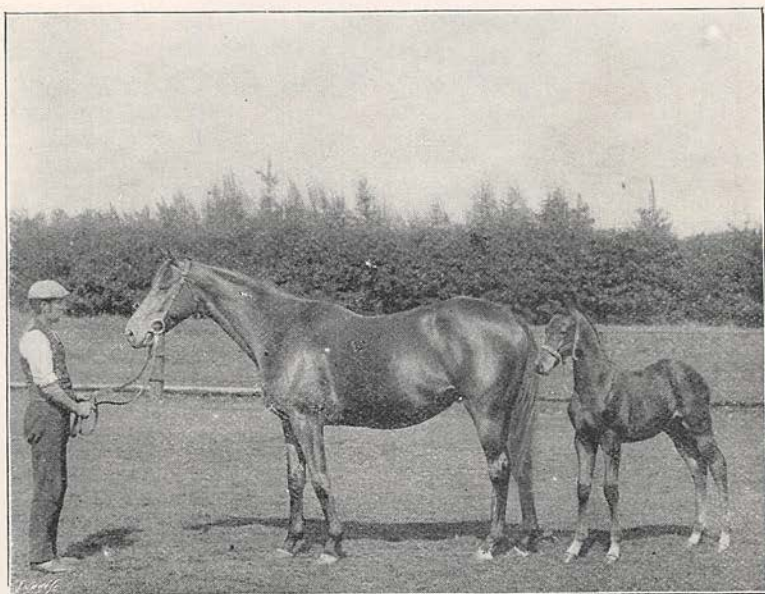
"In cases where you have not a direct commission, can you easily get leave to photograph the horses?"

"Well, generally—if I go the right way about it. Needless to say, I never make an

unreasonable demand, such as asking to photograph the favourite when he is being prepared for his big race."

"I should imagine with such ticklish subjects your loss of plates is very considerable?"

"Not so great as you might expect, and I'll tell you why. Where it is possible, and time is allowed, I never expose a plate simply because the horse is still; I make it a rule not to expose unless the animal's pose is fair and does him justice. Oftener than not the attendants who hold the horse's head are more trouble than the horse itself. They try to help the operator, and hinder him sadly by putting the horse backward or



LADY ROSEBERY AND FOAL.
(Ideal photo of mare and foal.)

forward according to their own private ideas of what is 'the correct thing.' Sometimes too they are impatient to be off to some other job."

"What is the secret of success, Mr. Hailey—if it is an open secret?"

"Enthusiasm! You must like your work or you'll accomplish nothing. I've a natural bent for this branch of photography, for I dislike indoor work."

"I think," I remarked, as I looked over the photographs ready to my hand, "you do a great deal in hunters also, do you not?"

"Last winter," my entertainer replied, "I exposed at least seven hundred plates on hunters alone, many of them for the Quorn.



VELASQUEZ.

The hunter has his own peculiarities and difficulties. His ideal position is after a

gallop when his tail is straight out. But before the camera he's generally cold, and has the tail far from properly displayed. So this is what I have to do—watch."

Taking up a photograph of a hunter, which showed the tail in the humble and dowdy position which is Mr. Hailey's abhorrence, the artist took his brush and skilfully drew in the tail as it should be. The effect was magical. A spiritless picture had become suddenly smart and spirited.

"This suggests my special line of enlargements," he went on. "But that is a big subject and would almost require an interview to itself. I enlarge all kinds of portraits—race-horses, hunters and equestrian studies. The last is another extensive branch of my work. There, for instance"—

Mr. Hailey pointed to an easel—"is old Matthew Dawson, the famous trainer—



VESUVIAN.

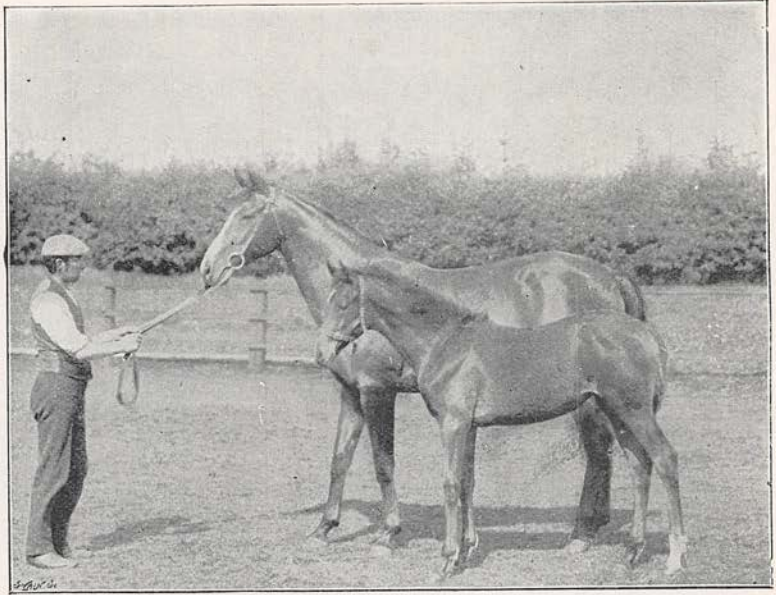
(An instance of a horse standing well.)

another grand old man. He does not go much in the saddle now, but he was so keen to give me this sitting that he mounted with steps. Talking of enlargements, it is an interesting fact that many animal painters are much indebted to these. They charcoal the backs and so transfer the correct proportions of the horse to their canvas."

Noticing the beautiful quality of Mr. Hailey's enlargements, I opined that much must be due to skilful brush work, and this the artist admitted to be a fact. The pictures had more the appearance of fine wash-drawing than of photography.

"You see, you either get a portrait of the horse or you do not. I never submit anything that is *not* a portrait. By-the-bye, the conventional gaudy

print of the race-horse with the fearful and wonderful tail, belongs to the latter class. It is *never* a portrait."

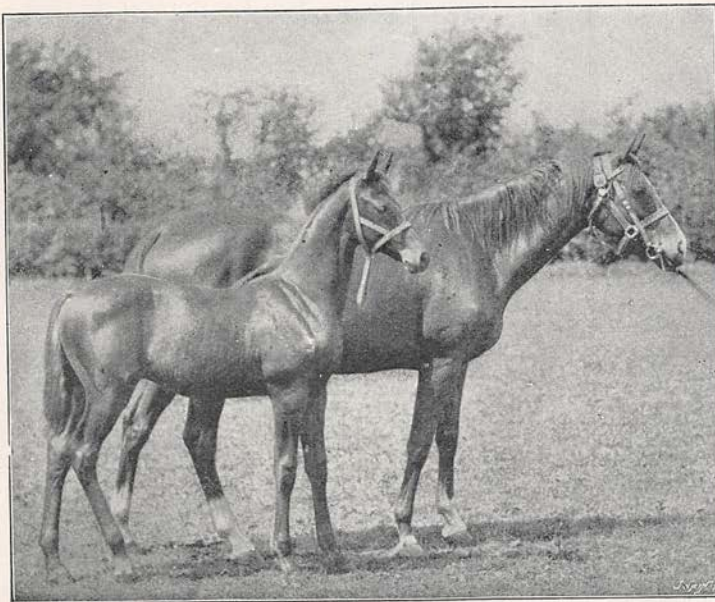


FLYAWAY AND FOAL.

(£15,000 was refused for the latter.)

"You must have had some funny experiences?"

"I have. You want a queer story for your readers. Well, once I was called in to photograph a pair of carriage horses which had been bought for a lady. The purchaser wished to have a picture of her bargain, which she had not herself seen. The animals were to be taken harnessed to the carriage. As I was making my preparations I may or may not have noticed that their tails were none of the finest. I soon had reason to remark the fact, however, for judge of my amusement when the vendor came up and, bidding me delay my exposure for a moment, solemnly affixed to the horses two splendid bogus tails!"



SUNDOWN AND FOAL.