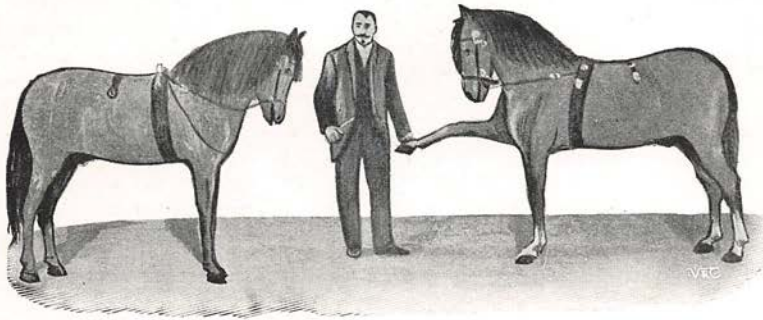


# BOXING HORSES.

BY H. J. HOLMES.

THE high school of equestrian training has achieved many triumphs during the past decade or two, but it is questionable whether anything more remarkable has happened than the success which attended the recent efforts of Mr. A.



ENTERING THE RING, THE PAIR OF EQUINE PUGILISTS SHAKE "HANDS."

B. Powell, the well-known veteran tutor of the noblest of our four-footed friends. This gentleman has actually taught a pair of beautiful horses the noble art of self-defence, an art in which the intelligent animals appear to take the greatest pleasure. With gloved fore-feet, the two accomplished creatures now give a couple of performances daily in the circus which for so many years has borne the name of their trainer.

What Mr. Powell does not know about horses is not worth knowing. He was born amidst circus life, and has been brought up amongst the animals to the training and education of which his life has been devoted almost as long as he can remember. As a daring circus-rider he became famous years ago, and as such he has bitten the sawdust many times; bare-back riding of ultra-sensational character is not exactly the kind of life conducive to soundness of limb and smoothness of feature. Mr. Powell bears the hall-marks, in the shape of healed injuries to head and limbs, of a long career in the ring. Now he devotes his time to the management of the huge organisation known all over the United Kingdom and the Continent as Powell's Travelling Circus; and in the intervals, when a little leisure comes his way, he is always to be found carefully and masterfully coaching some beautiful,

glossy-hided creature into the arts and mysteries of public performances of various descriptions which delight the lover of the horse—and where does not such a lover exist?

With such a lengthy experience of training horses, there was no man more likely to succeed in what he tells me was the most difficult task he has ever attempted—that is, the proper tuition of a pair of young and spirited horses in the art of boxing. With a patience such as only a trainer of animals possesses, he kept on at the work, never once fearing

defeat. He knew it was possible to succeed—and in the end he succeeded. Every day for two years he regularly tutored the two animals. Many and many a time he was almost in despair, but his faith in the efficacy of training held him steadfast in his purpose.

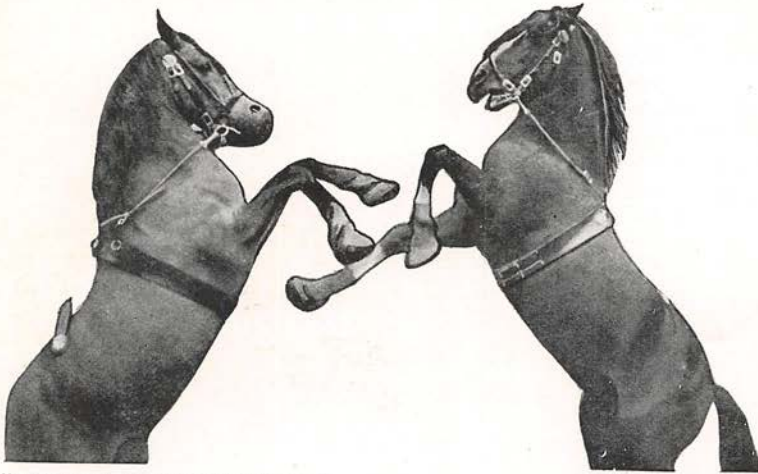


"CIGARETTE" GETS HIS GLOVES ON.

The two pugilistic horses are both of foreign breed. One is a dun, the other a jet black. They are perfect pictures to look at. The dun hails from Malta. Mr. Powell bought the black in Tunis some

years ago. Although a magnificent animal, the latter had a fiery temper, and for a whole year, during which time he accompanied the

occasion that it was found necessary to remove this saddle from the back of the Turkish-bred animal and place it upon the jet black "Cigarette." This was done in the view of the outraged dun, which at the time displayed a specimen of his bad temper.



"CHARLEY" AND "CIGARETTE" INDULGE IN A LITTLE PRELIMINARY SPARRING.

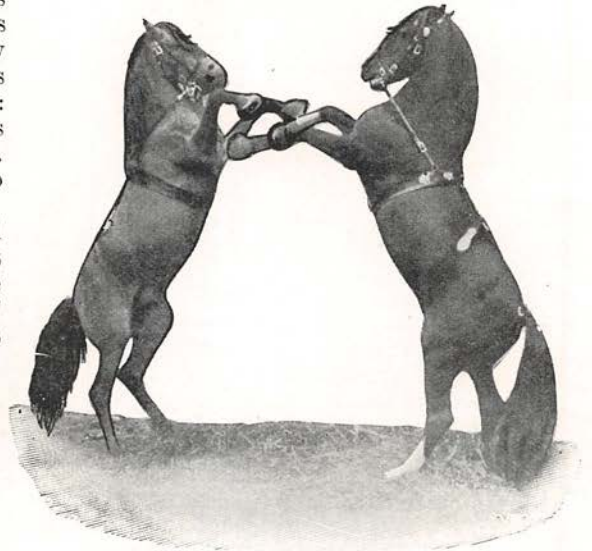
circus in its travels over the Continent, nothing could be done with him. "Cigarette," as he was christened, is a thoroughbred Arab, whilst his fighting friend "Charley," the dun, is of Turkish breed. The Arab is now as gentle and docile as a little child, and follows Mr. Powell about as a lamb follows its ewe. Master "Charley," on the contrary, is sly and not to be trusted. It appears that before he was selected by his owner as an exponent of the manly art, he was used for ring tricks; his character in consequence degenerated: he became roguish and disposed towards flippancy in the presence of the public. Mr. Powell finds it is necessary to keep a sharp eye on him.

Are horses jealous? This would prove a nice subject for discussion at a friendly meeting of trainers. In the case of "Charley" and "Cigarette," Mr. Powell assures me there almost seems to be an instance of a display, on both sides, of the feelings which the green-eyed monster is reputed to inspire in the bosom of the higher animal. The incident illustrative of this view is worth describing, because it was the outcome of it that led Mr. Powell to believe that he had found at last his long-looked-for boxing horses.

In the earlier days of "Charley's" connection with circus life, he was presented with a very handsome saddle for use in a certain act. Now, it happened on one

day that "Charley" had broken loose and were practically "in grips"—kicking, plunging, and stamping upon each other!

When Mr. Powell arrived on the scene, the two animals were standing on their hind-legs in the regular pugilistic attitude, and endeavouring to exchange terrific blows on head and body. They were quickly separated,



SETTING TO IN REAL EARNEST.

but the astute trainer had taken his cue, and next day he began to give the horses their first real lessons in boxing. Since then



"Cigarette" and "Charley" have become very good friends, in spite of the fact that they have a couple of friendly bouts every day "with the gloves on."

In teaching the two horses to box, Mr. Powell adhered to the principles on which he trains every animal that passes through his hands—*viz.*, much patience, mingled with kindness and gentle persuasion. He is proud of the fact that in all his experience he has never found it necessary to be cruel.

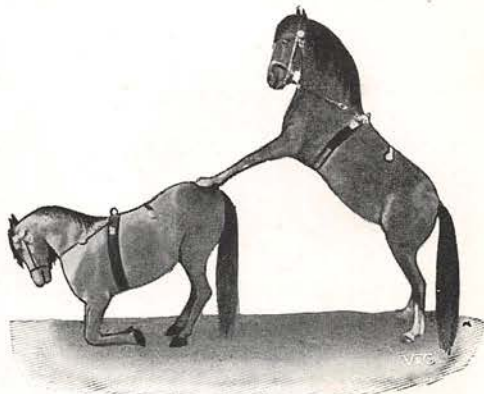
In this particular instance, although the course of training was long and laborious, he was not called upon to use the whip as a stimulating influence or as a corrector of faults. When it did happen that the whip had to be used, the lash was laid on but lightly; for so sensitive are highly bred animals, that the slightest touch is sufficient to prevent any refractory conduct.

The first difficulty was to make the horses accustomed to wearing, and the use of, the gloves. This was eventually overcome, and now the creatures actually hold out their "hands" for the gloves to be put on. Yet it was not until two years from the date of the first lesson that Mr. Powell felt justified in making his boxing horses part of the afternoon or evening performance.

The clever trainer considers himself for-

number capable of being trained for such a performance," he said to me.

One of the trials of a trainer is that some days a horse will do anything that is required



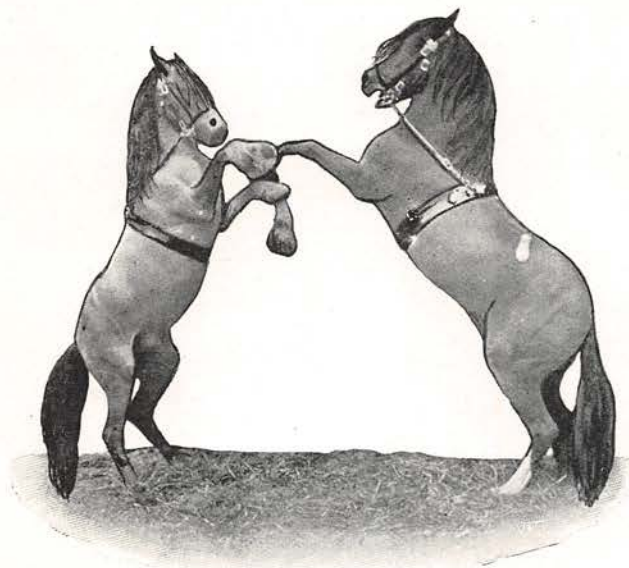
A FOUL!

of him; on other days he will do nothing, and upsets every calculation regarding his progress.

"Cigarette" and "Charley" made their *début* as equine pugilists before a London audience at the Royal Aquarium a little while since, and were a great success—in fact, they were the "star" item on the programme; and that, too, although the whole strength of Powell's Circus was augmenting the Westminster house of popular entertainment.

Only those who saw the boxing horses during the engagement there know how well Mr. Powell has done his work. From entrance to exit the conduct of "Cigarette" and "Charley" was pugilistically correct; they never strove to hit below the belt or indulge in any of those fancy but unsportsmanlike tricks that so many of the professional fighting fraternity indulge in when they get a chance of doing so.

Entering the ring accompanied by their seconds, the two opponents shake "hands" heartily and immediately proceed to business, umpired by their trainer. Assuming the recognised attitude of pugilists, they spar scientifically, getting a blow home now and then with telling effect. It may be said at once that the gloves are so well padded that a really hard knock is never administered to either of the combatants; the animals



A WELL-PARRIED LEFT-"HANDER."

tunate in succeeding even after so long and tedious a tuition.

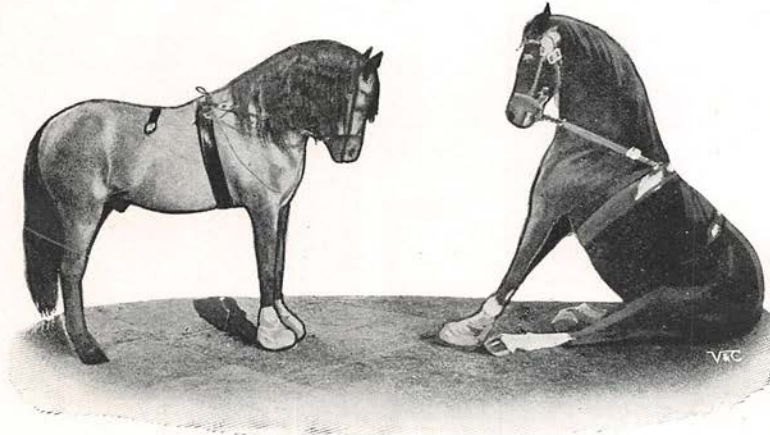
"A man might have two hundred horses, try them all, and fail to find two out of that

seem quite to enjoy their bouts. The "rounds" are arranged in such a way that the horses are not fatigued by maintaining an upright pose for a too prolonged period.

the energetic seconds. At the referee's signal, the boxers spring once more to their "feet" and, advancing to the centre of the ring, another "round" is set merrily going.

The completeness of Mr. Powell's training is observable towards the close of the contest, when the pair of pugilists pretend to be rather "groggy on their pins" and wobble a good bit, striking with lessened fury and generally behaving like rather exhausted heroes indeed.

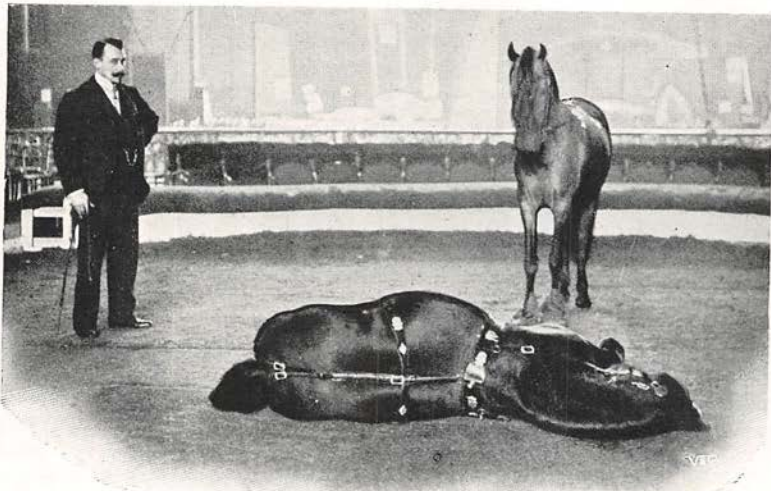
Finally, "a knock-out blow" is administered by "Charley," and "Cigarette" falls flat in the sawdust, only to rise again after the referee has pronounced that "Charley" is the victor. The winner, of course, receives the plaudits of the assembled multitude, bowing gracefully in acknowledgment as he retires; whilst the poor vanquished "Cigarette" limps slowly away, assisted out of the ring by his indefatigable second, who has "thrown up the sponge."



"CIGARETTE" FEELS TIRED.

An amusing part of the performance is that at the end of every "round" the principals retire *pro tem.* to their respective corners, where the seconds, prepared for every emergency, are ready to help the combatants to a speedy recovery of breath. "Cigarette's" muzzle is duly sponged, or the towel is flapped in "Charley's" face by

again after the referee has pronounced that "Charley" is the victor. The winner, of course, receives the plaudits of the assembled multitude, bowing gracefully in acknowledgment as he retires; whilst the poor vanquished "Cigarette" limps slowly away, assisted out of the ring by his indefatigable second, who has "thrown up the sponge."



"KNOCKED OUT."

The foregoing illustrations are reproduced from photographs by Messrs. Clarke and Hyde.