

ELEMENTARY

*Riding
Lessons*



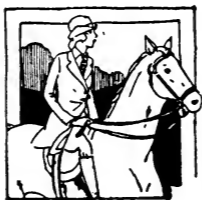
FOR BEGINNERS

By

Albert J. Rochette

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FOREWORD

THE purpose of this condensed manual is to convey to beginners as briefly as possible the fundamentals of horseback riding.

When a person first becomes interested in horseback riding, there are certain suggestions and principles that should be explained to the rider. Horses are creatures with minds of their own—consequently, they often decide to move when the rider least expects it. The rider must be prepared! Therefore, before the beginner even mounts a horse, he should be instructed in the fundamentals of posting, and correct handling.

Not only new riders but old as well should know the facts expressed in the following pages. Many people—considered experienced riders—know very little about correct riding.

Experienced riders—Check your riding with the fundamentals included in these pages. Are you a good rider? Do you ride gracefully and at ease so that your ride may be the most beneficial and enjoyable?

It would be impossible to go into detail on any one phase of riding and still limit the reading to manual form.

Therefore, the writer will consider his task accomplished if beginners and experienced riders alike—can gain a general summary of correct riding from these pages.

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THE DESIRE TO RIDE

When a person has a desire to ride, he should first be interested in riding gracefully so as to better enjoy this valuable form of exercising and recreation, for if a person does not acquire the proper posture, it will be very awkward and tiresome. Yet some riders are unaware of these facts and the result is that they ride round-shouldered and some even appear hunch-backed. It is impossible for them to ride with grace, or enjoy their ride as much as the person who rides correctly.

When a beginner wants to learn to ride, he should first be sure that he picks out a good stable where there are safe, well-mannered, and well-kept horses. Another important thing, when he rides the first few times, he must be sure to pick a quiet horse, and not be ashamed of an aged reliable horse for one of that type will give him more confidence in future lessons. I have seen many beginners want a horse, that was too excitable for them, with the results that they were either thrown off, or so frightened that they lost confidence and all desire to ride. It has been said that a person will not become a good rider until he is thrown three or four times. With this statement I strongly disagree, and the beginner need not prove the truth of it if he uses common sense.

Should the riding master, while giving instructions, yell or do anything to make the beginner nervous—the beginner should ask him not to do so—and if the instructor continues to do this, the beginner should dismount, for there are still many good instructors who have not forgotten that they, too, were once beginners.

APPROACHING A HORSE

Never approach a horse too quickly, as it may surprise him so that he will become excitable, thus a temperamental horse is apt to kick or jump unexpectedly. Even a trustworthy horse is apt to do something out of the way if too greatly surprised or frightened.

Always, when possible, approach a horse from the front, walking slowly toward him, talking. This will give him confidence in you. With an outstretched hand slowly take his bridle rein. By doing this the

rider will be able to handle the horse a great deal better.

A rider should always, before mounting, see that the horse's girths are tight enough. Then he should notice the bridle and bits, and see if the stirrups are properly arranged. After checking these things the rider is ready to mount.

MOUNTING

When mounting, the rider should face the left side of the horse just about opposite the left fore leg. He should hold the curb reins in his left hand while grasping the corner of the cantle of the saddle.

The right hand holds the left stirrup for the left foot. (If necessary, the rider can use his right hand in aiding the left foot into the stirrups.) He holds his reins snugly while being able to lengthen or shorten them by a twist of the hand.

The rider then bearing as little weight as possible on the stirrups, uses the spring of the other leg, the pull of the left hand, and the steadying pressure of the right on the cantle to mount. Any unnecessary twist upon the body of the horse should be avoided.

When the rider has risen from his right foot, he should get into a standing position in the stirrup on the left leg, then lean forward and throw the right leg as high as necessary over the croup, bring it gently across the saddle, and down into the right stirrup. As the right hand makes room for the swing of the right leg, take hold of the right reins.

When you are in the saddle try to practice the following:

1. Sit squarely in the saddle.
2. Keep the back erect.
3. Heels down, toes straight.
4. Keep the legs, from the knee down, as straight as the back.
5. Keep the elbows in close to the sides.
6. Hold the reins in both hands.
7. Hold the reins firmly. Do not allow them to slip through your hands.
8. Keep both hands about two or three inches above the cantle of the saddle.
9. Relax and coordinate with the movements of the horse. A tense rider has no muscular control and often causes his horse to be erratic and unevenly gaited.

“DISMOUNTING”

When dismounting the rider can use the reverse action of mounting. Beginners should use the following method of dismounting:

When ready to dismount the rider should grasp all the reins in his left hand—in exactly the same position as he did when mounting. With his left hand he should firmly grasp the corner of the pommel of the saddle. When doing this be sure that the horse has freedom of his mouth so that in case he should move while dismounting the rider would only have to twist his wrist in a downward forward motion to check the horse.

The rider then takes his right foot out of the stirrup and swings his right leg up, while passing it horizontally over the horse's rump, and then down to a perpendicularly parallel line with his left leg. When swinging the right leg over the horse's back, the right hand should simultaneously be brought down on top of the saddle cantle.

The rider then raises himself upward enough in the saddle (by putting the entire weight on the arms) so that he can take his left foot out of the stirrup. In doing this he must keep his legs closely together. Then, after getting the left foot free, the rider lowers himself slowly to the ground. He should be as close to the side of the horse as possible—at the same time make sure to keep his torso erect.

CORRECT POSITION ON THE SEAT

The rider must sit in the middle of the saddle with his weight squarely equalized so that the line of his spinal column will form an acute angle to the line of the horse's spinal column.

Next, the rider should at all times and under all circumstances keep his shoulders on a parallel line with that of the horse's shoulders. The rider's shoulders should be thrown slightly backward, with his shoulder blades flattened and his chest expanded. This seat is maintained with the greatest possible suppleness and muscular flexibility.

The rider's thighs will have a slightly oblique line from the hips to the knees.

The lower part of his legs, from the knees to the soles of the feet, should be thrust slightly forward.

The heels, under all circumstances, should be carried lower than the toes. If this rule is carried out it will help the rider to obtain an easy firmness of the seat.

The arms must hang perpendicularly along the rider's sides, but as flexibly as possible.

The elbows must, without the least effort, be in practically constant and easy touch with the hip bones.

The hands should be carried naturally without affectation or constraint close to each other, within a few inches in front of the waistline, and about four inches above the corner of the pommel of the saddle.

The forearms and arms, consequently, form a rather obtuse angle.

The rider should use both hands, each turned toward the other in such a position that the two thumbs and second knuckles easily touch. The hands are held, as if one were carrying a lighted candle, with the thumb uppermost and the little finger lowered.

The wrist must have the greatest suppleness and pliancy, for without this the rider cannot have a good position of the hands, which is one of the most essential conditions for correct riding.

The ball of each foot must rest firmly in the stirrups. The one exception to this rule is when the novice is cantering, galloping or jumping, and in such cases allows his feet to go away into the stirrups, (or home as it is called).

There is an old saying, which goes something like the following:

*"Your head and your heart keep up,
Your hands and your heels keep down,
Your knees keep close to your horse's sides,
Your elbows close to your own."*

This is a good rule to follow.

THE HANDS AND REINS

The hands and reins play a very important part in safe riding—for with coordination of both one can keep the horse in proper control, turning him at will and starting and stopping him with ease.

There are several methods of holding the reins, but I shall explain only two in this elementary book.

Horses are co-operative, and the majority of them

will do what the rider wants immediately the instructions are given. Sometimes quick decision on the rider's part is essential. However, it is of little value unless the rider learns to possess quick action.

Indecision tends toward misunderstanding between the horse and rider, and is a frequent cause of trouble, due to the fact that a horse is so sensitively nerved that when these things occur he is very liable to become confused.

If the rider learns to control his horse correctly, the horse will, naturally, have faith in his rider's ability, and will generally give himself to his work quietly and confidently.

In addition to quick decision, the rider must know something about quick recovery. By recovery I mean the act of retiring, which should immediately follow an action. A rider may be quick in deciding what is to be done, and quick to act upon it, but he must also realize the moment for cessation of his action when it is no longer required. He must know when to replace one order with another, or when to release sufficiently for both the horse and rider to return to the normal feeling of the mouth. All horses dislike the rider, who has the irritating habit of pulling indiscriminately on the mouth, or of any constant meddling, which has no meaning. Many good horses are spoiled by this habit. Some horses, when discomfort is felt from the bit, will repeatedly stretch their heads down in order to get relief, and then it is difficult for the rider to prevent the reins from pulling through his fingers, or to prevent his head and shoulders from being jerked forward.

If the reins are allowed to sag, the horse is left to his own desire, and he and the rider are entirely out of touch in regard to communication from brain to brain, or from hands to mouth.

To beginners I would advise obtaining a horse with what is called a seasoned mouth. In riding a horse with a tender mouth one should be sure that a light hand is used—for if one pulls and rides a heavy hand he not only causes the horse to become a puller and excitable, but retards his progress toward becoming a good rider.

Many pages could be written on the proper handling of the hands and reins and what we should and should not do on different types of horses, but

to beginners I believe that the topic has been fairly well covered.

A beginner should first ride a quiet horse, in a walk, and slow trot only, also learn to ride with a light hand. He should not advance himself until he has mastered this situation, otherwise he will not become an expert rider.

The novice rider should first begin by holding one snaffle rein in each hand, with the rein coming up to the little finger of each hand and out between the forefinger and the thumb, with the extra excess of reins left on the horse's withers.

For beginners the curb rein should be knotted, and it should be allowed to rest on the neck of the horse, where—if necessary—it can easily be brought into use.

To hold both snaffle and curb reins, the rider should hold the snaffle reins as before. The curb reins come up to, and between, the little finger and the ring finger of each hand, through the inside of the hand and out between the forefinger and the thumb. Both snaffle and curb reins are held together between the forefinger and thumb.

At first the novice should hold the curb rein very loosely until he becomes accustomed to holding the reins in both hands.

The rider should learn to use the snaffle reins with a "give and take" motion. As the horse's head goes forward, let the wrist move forward, and when the horse's head comes back bring the wrist back. By so doing the rider keeps the same even sympathetic touch at all times.

The beginner should use the snaffle reins most of the time. The curb rein is used only when the horse becomes too spirited or unruly. When a rider has to use the curb reins, he should do so with great care. After getting his horse under control, he should ease up on the curb reins, thus saving the horse any confusion or possible pain. It also helps to keep the horse from becoming too excited.

Even before a rider mounts, his reins should be arranged at the proper length so that he has complete control of his horse the moment he gains the saddle.

The following quotation is taken from a recent writer on this subject of hands:

“Like musical instruments, a gentle, skilled, light touch, and we produce harmony; a clumsy, bullying touch and we get discord.”

THE START AND STOP

A rider, presuming he is a novice, carries no riding whip, wears no spurs and holds the snaffle reins as already described. Therefore, he should have an instructor with him who will actually control his horse often by a lead rein.

Some beginners have a bad habit, when they want a horse to start, of taking a tight hold of the reins and, if the horse starts to back up, kicking him—the result being that the horse receives two confusing commands. As they are giving him the order to “Go Forward” with the kick, they are at the same time ordering him to “Stop” by tightening the reins.

When the rider is ready to make the horse walk, he must give him more freedom of the reins at the same time urging him forward. It should be so exactly measured that the slightest move of the wrist, and even of the fingers (in some cases) will be sufficient to act effectively on the horse’s mouth so as to control the horse if he should do something out of the way.

When a rider wants to stop he must lean slightly backward, thus increasing the weight of the horse’s back, and at the same time with a gentle tension of the reins simultaneously turn both thumbs down with a forward motion. At the stop, the rider must instantly modify the backward flexion of the shoulders to a straight position, and at the same time release the tension of the reins. The rider never moves in his seat during this process.

In stopping a horse, the rider should first use the fingers on the reins, then if necessary the hands and wrists, and if necessary the forearm.

THE WALK AND TURN

The walk is the simplest of all gaits and, of course, is the first that the beginner learns. Even an experienced rider should start at a walk as this gives him confidence in his horse and also allows him time to study the horse’s temperament.

When a rider mounts a strange horse he should walk him for a few minutes at least, turning him in

different directions and making him stop and start at will. When he is satisfied that his mount is under control, he is then ready to try a slow gait through to the fast trot and canter. He must be sure that he can control the horse at all times, and it is well to remember that anyone can make a horse go fast, sometimes much faster than intended, much to the rider's dismay. This is the mark of the rank amateur.

A true horseman never races his mount (unless hunting or steeple chasing) nor does he provoke the animal to a dangerous state of nerves by continuous kicking, checking and pulling of the reins in the mistaken delusion that one and all are admiring his expert horsemanship.

When walking a horse the beginner should keep checking himself to see that he is using correct positions for reins, hands, knees, and so forth. He should use the direct rein action in turning a horse until he has had more experience in riding.

DIRECT REIN ACTION—If one wishes to make a right turn he should exert a gentle tension on the right rein; at the same time allowing the left hand to move slightly forward so that there will be no tension on the left side of the mouth. As soon as the horse changes direction as desired, the rider relaxes the rein tension on the right side and brings the left hand back to normal position. Sometimes when making a turn it becomes necessary to repeat the action immediately and in a much firmer manner.

When turning never make any movement of the back, nor should one twist in the saddle. Sit squarely and lean slightly in the desired direction, while lightly laying the rein on the opposite side of the neck and pulling toward the desired direction. This makes for better balance and a more graceful posture.

When turning a horse with the use of the legs; say for example a sharp left turn, we use a slight tension on the left rein and at the same time move the left leg behind the saddle girth, using a gentle pressure on the horse's left side. The right leg should be moved slightly forward. In this manner we give three commands in one as follows:

1. By the tension of the left rein we are turning the horse's head in the desired direction.
2. By the gentle pressure on the horse's left side we are guiding his hind quarters.

3. By moving the right leg forward it helps to guide the forepart.

THE TROT AND POST

The trot is, without doubt, the most popular gait in horseback riding. It is one of the hardest gaits for a beginner to learn and the rider will require a good deal of practice before he will master it gracefully.

To make a horse change from a walk to a trot we use the same method as in making him change from a start to a walk. A very slow trot should be sat to the first few times by novice riders.

The rider should allow his horse to trot just a few steps at a time, thus enabling him to study the new motion.

A very good rule for beginners to follow is to try to sit to the trot as closely and as flexibly as possible, all the while checking himself to see that his hands and arms are properly placed, legs firm but flexible, the back straight, and elbows close to the sides.

This should be done just a short distance at a time under the direction of your instructor. This practice will gradually enable the rider to keep a correct balance on the horse's back and will also help him gain more confidence.

As the novice becomes more advanced and accustomed to the various gaits he should rise from the knees instead of using the stirrups, which is necessary at first in order to get the correct idea of posting. The majority of people—many of them otherwise good riders—commit the glaring error of depending almost entirely upon their stirrups for support and balance. This bad habit should be corrected at the beginning for I need scarcely mention that without a firm knee grip one will never acquire a "good seat" nor have instant control of his mount should the occasion demand.

A rider with more experience should ride without stirrups as much as possible even when a horse is going at a fairly fast gait. This eventually will enable him (according to his natural ability) to perform more difficult feats—such as jumping. It will, at the same time, give him more confidence in the saddle which will easily place him above the average

good rider even though the "Average" rider may have had considerably more experience.

Another important thing to remember is to change horses as often as possible. As soon as a rider learns and likes the gaits of one particular horse he should change to one whose gaits and manners he dislikes. It is not advisable for a rider to insist on a horse he cannot control properly. He should do more riding and when he feels confident and capable of handling that horse should then try to ride him.

POSTING—A beginner should try to rise in the saddle by pressing the feet in the stirrups and at the same time keeping his knees close to the side of the saddle. A good rule for beginners to remember is to rise from the saddle when the horse's right foreleg goes forward and come down on the saddle when the left foreleg goes forward, counting up on one and down on two. Posting requires a great deal of practice before it becomes natural.

A beginner should not have an early desire to do too much trotting for if he does he will become fatigued and at times too fatigued to do his daily work. I have seen people get so fatigued that they gave up riding in discouragement for an indefinite period which, in most cases, means forever.

As a rider becomes more competent he should rise from the knees instead of using the stirrups, which he has to do in order to get the correct idea. The rider should make sure that his legs do not move back and forth uncontrollably. He should also make sure not to clutch the reins on each rise.

Thus, when something happens to scare the horse, causing him to jump sideways and run away, if the rider loses his stirrups it would be impossible to get the horse under control as he cannot sit close to his saddle without the stirrups. Consequently, this is one of the most frequent causes of riders falling from their horses.

THE CANTER

The canter is a slow, rhythmical, "rocking-chair" gait, the horse usually accenting this motion by putting more weight on his forelegs. It has been truly called the "contour pace"—for when ridden correctly it is grace and symmetry personified. However, do not labor under the delusion that because it looks so simple it can be mastered at once, for in reality

it requires far more technique and poise than does a fast rocking gallop.

Beginners, who are ready to canter, should first try a fairly steep hill, starting to canter at the bottom of the hill. The rider, when ready to canter, should first put his mount into a fast walk so that the horse may be alert and responsive to orders.

First—and this is a most important point—a horse should always be put into a canter from a walk, never from a trot. If he breaks the canter after walking go back to a walk and begin anew. Next, the rider should tighten up slightly on the reins, lean obliquely to the foreleg, upon which he should start, and touch his heels to the horse's flanks. (In the ring riding should always start on the inside foot.)

In sitting to a canter, the legs and arms are to be kept in approximately the same position as in any other gait. However, the torso is held in a slightly less rigid and more concave position, thereby allowing the rider to better "feel" the subtle sway of his horse. Generally, one rides with a longer lower rein, head closer to the waist with less play of the wrists, as undue flexion encourages a horse to break.

A rider should hold the reins in a snug position and touch his heels to the horse's flanks. When the horse has started to canter, a rider must instantly release any rein tension, so that the horse may have complete freedom of his mouth—and using the reins only to stop the horse's canter.

A rider must keep his legs continuously close enough to use them in case the horse breaks, or threatens to break out of the canter. The legs play an important part in cantering for some horses will pull more than others at the start of the canter, thus causing the rider to use more hand checking. If the rider is not ready instantly to counteract their action with the leg action, the horse will stop cantering. This causes a waste of energy for both rider and horse.

When regulating the canter, especially if the horse is the least bit bent on going faster than the rider desires, the rider should elevate his hands in order to obtain flexion, thus obtaining the elevation of the horse's head and neck, which will cause the horse to slow down. In a canter the rider must learn to

obtain a greater harmony between hands and leg action than they would in a walk or trot.

If a horse becomes excited when cantering and wants to gallop, it is advisable to stop, and try trotting until the horse calms down before starting to canter again.

In cantering the rider sits close to the saddle (he does not post as in trotting), and he takes a shorter hold of the reins than when trotting. The rider must remember that in cantering there is a much stronger forward and backward motion in the horse's head than there is in a trot; consequently, the rider must increase the pliability of the muscles in arms and hands to give the horse more freedom for cantering.

GALLOPING

In a gallop the rider sits closely to the saddle. He shortens up on the reins more than when cantering and crouches his body, thus shifting his weight from his sitting position to his knees.

When the rider is galloping, he must never bring the horse to a quick stop for this is dangerous for both rider and horse.

When stopping a horse in a gallop, warning should be given first by speaking and then gradually bringing pressure equally on both sides of the mouth, keeping the hands low and throwing the weight of the torso slightly backward.

The gallop is a horse's fastest gait, but cannot be sustained for any length of time. Habitual and too hard galloping will break his wind, injure his leg muscles, and adversely affect his slower gaits. By the same token, too frequent galloping is fatiguing to the rider and invites carelessness in the niceties of horsemanship. A short brisk gallop invigorates both horse and rider but should be followed by a protracted walk, or until the horse has cooled off and regained his wind.

THE "STEP AND PACE" THE "SINGLE FOOT"

There are two gaits which are popular with riders. These are the 'step and pace' and the 'single foot.'

The 'step and pace' is a motion that is a little faster than a walk. The forelegs of the horse have the motion of a slow canter and the hind legs the

motion of a trot. This is not a natural gait for the average horse and when he does it we will find it hard to make him keep it up. When a horse is in a 'step and pace' motion we should sit close to the saddle.

In a 'single foot' motion the horse moves his feet in the same way as in the 'step and pace.' The only real difference is that the 'single foot' is faster.

Some 'single foot' horses will do very little trotting but will go from a walk to a 'single foot' gait and from that into a slow canter.

In such gaits horses seldom trot and are ridden to a "close seat." I do not advise their use by beginners. In time a rider can sit to a single foot or post to a trot with equal ease but the latter should be mastered first. I strongly recommend the single foot gait as a transition from the "post" to the tight seat on a trot.

HORSE PSYCHOLOGY

It is impossible to recommend any set rules in handling horses for they are as diverse in personality, intelligence, and disposition as people. Never make the mistake of understanding the capacities of your mount. Just as in human relationships accord him kindness, consideration, and a benefit of doubt—and you will be the gainer.

A rider should gain control of his horse by persuasion, rather than obedience by force, because by the latter he only receives a mutinous acquiescence instead of a willing and eager compliance. The rider, who demands obedience by force, shows lack of sympathy and imagination and these two help enormously for better understanding between rider and horse.

A rider on a strange horse should be a little patient in getting him to do as desired. I don't mean that one should be too lenient, for then the horse thinks the rider is afraid and he will try to have his own way. By this I mean that a rider should first start with easy methods of controlling his horse; such as with the direct rein action, and the proper use of leg action.

If punishment is merited and necessary, the rider should be more severe, and then the proper use of a whip can be brought into use. When a horse has gained confidence in his rider through gentleness

and kindness, he will do the rider's bidding willingly, and in the best manner he knows. This willingness will offset the little patience the rider might have had to use at the start.

Horses have a sense of justice, and when punishment is due, provided it is not too severe, they will meekly take it and then proceed to do as ordered. On the other hand, however, punishment undeserved because they did not understand what was required or the task asked was too great for them, will usually draw forth a strong resentment. A horse no more appreciates being yelled at, handled roughly, or imposed upon than does his master. When riders are on a strange horse they should first study the horse to find out his good and bad points, and then proceed to handle him in such a way to get best results.

THE "STUMBLER"

One of the most disagreeable sensations when riding is to be on a horse that stumbles.

Even the most sure-footed of horses will stumble occasionally, but this occurs only when the animal is fatigued or when it accidentally places a foot in a depression, or rides on a stone. Poor horsemanship, such as running horses down will also cause a good horse to stumble but none of these reasons prove that the horse is an habitual stumbler.

Some horses, through carelessness, will stumble frequently on a level road and will not take one false step where the ground is uneven or rocky. This proves that when some horses know the footing is secure they will become careless, but where they know it is hazardous they will become more alert and pick up their feet properly and place them with great care. This type of horse is not dangerous to ride if one has a good seat and the fault may easily be corrected by the rider if he will give the animal a sharp reminder, either by use of his legs or by the use of the whip. If disciplined at the first stumble the horse will guard against a second.

Often, when horses are walking slowly they will stumble carelessly but will never do this when they are traveling at other gaits.

A horse that stumbles habitually usually has weak legs or is improperly shod, and when he has a rider's weight to carry, he cannot lift his feet with the

spring and gracefulness of a sound horse. This type of horse is usually knee sprung or foundered and consequently is past use as a saddle horse. (A reliable riding stable will not use such a horse.)

When riding, one must be on guard against the possibilities of stumbling, especially if the path is uneven, rocky, etc. (The rider should allow his horse more head freedom so that he may lower his head and pick out his own way.) In such cases the horse's judgment and instinct are good but the rider should have the animal under careful control and should be alert to issue occasional orders and check him should he start to trip.

A rider should always walk his horse where the paths are obstructed with rocks, ditches, or macadam.

When a horse stumbles the rider should pull up on his reins to help the animal regain its footing. If the horse should stumble and develop a lameness it should be walked back to the stables. Occasionally a horse may step on a rolling stone and twist his pastern ankle. This usually does not cause serious injury and is not even painful to the touch. In such cases it is advisable to walk the horse so that the injury will not have any serious consequences.

THE "RUN-AWAY"

The real run-away horse is seldom to be found in riding stables. His type of horse not only gets out of the rider's control, but loses control of himself, with the result that in his frenzy he is liable to do something very dangerous; such as, run into a stone wall, or gallop until he drops from exhaustion. Such a horse has a mental ailment, or fright complex and is extremely rare.

The run-away horse, which may sometimes be found in riding stables, is in most cases actuated by the rider himself. One cause of this is when a rider is on a high-strung horse he inflicts extreme pain to the horse's mouth by the continuous pulling of the curb. Another reason is when a rider wears spurs who is unaccustomed to using them. When the spurs goad the horse's flanks it makes him excitable and also irritable. Thus, only an expert horseman should wear spurs and he should use them only on a certain type of horse and one that he knows well.

Another reason for a run-away horse is due to the fact that the equipment of the stable is very poor and unsafe, or that they are too careless in the proper adjustments; especially a curb chain. If the rider does not observe these things he is very apt to have a run-away horse on his hands.

Another case is when the rider tries to exhibit his horsemanship by galloping toward the stables. In reality they show lack of common sense and very poor horsemanship.

Sometimes a horse becomes restless if not allowed to have his way and makes a jump or two to emphasize his desire to run, and the rider—instead of calming him to get him into control—will make the wrong movement of his hands, in some cases even encourage the horse, thereby causing him to bolt.

When a rider is on a horse that begins galloping because of fright, or some other reason, the rider should remember above all else to keep a cool head, keep his torso as flexible as possible, sit low in the saddle with his heels pointed downward. The rider should then do his best to gain control of the horse's lower jaw, either by flexion if the horse is running with a high head, or by elevation of the hands, if the horse is running with his head low. If the horse takes the bit in his teeth and even "sawing" is of no avail, the rider can only try to guide him, if possible, up hill or into open country until he runs himself out. Speaking to the horse is a great help and as soon as the horse begins to slow down be ready to yield to the tightness of the reins.

THE "BUCKER"

One of the most vicious types of horses is the bucking horse. They will elevate their backs catwise on being ridden and indulge in quick jumps with their heads very low. These horses are unsafe to ride, and should be ridden only by experts.

Nevertheless, the best trained or best mannered horse, if allowed to stand too many days in his stall without sufficient work, may show his feeling by cutting up a bit on his first day out. Reliable stables will see that their horses have sufficient work to avoid this, for the safety of the rider and in consideration of the horses' general health.

When a rider feels the horse contracting his back and moving his legs out of time it is generally a

rule that the horse is getting ready to buck jump. The rider should then lift the horse's head and neck just as high as possible and simultaneously urge his forward movement by the use of the legs. Thus, by keeping the horse from lowering his head while he is convexing his back, the rider will be able to prevent the horse from buck jumping. Even the horse with a very strong back can buck but little if the rider is able to hold the horse's head high.

When checking a horse that wants to buck, the rider should not excite him by too quick a pull on the reins, or too vicious a kick on the flanks. He should use his hands with a gentle but firm pressure and keep the horse's head elevated. The rider must keep his elbows close to his sides. This is very important!

After the horse has calmed down exercise is indicated to use up some of that surplus energy and mischief.

THE "KICKER"

No one but a good equestrian should ride a horse which is liable to kick. Sometimes any horse will kick at another, but if the rider is alert and notices the first symptoms of a horse that wants to kick and attends to it promptly, it can usually be averted.

If one is riding in company, and the horse suddenly puts his ears back, or makes even the slightest sign of thrusting his nose toward the other horse's neck, as if to bite, this should also be corrected instantly, for it is the first warning of a kick. The first time a horse puts his ears back, and thrusts his nose threateningly toward another horse, the rider should speak to him.

When a horse kicks he is usually in an ugly or nervous mood and any tampering with his mouth; such as sharp rein checking, only intensifies his condition. Give him a light flick with the crop or a slight kick, and a gentle rein lead away from the other horse. This accomplishes the same purpose but has a calming effect rather than an irritating one.

Other signs to notice are the switching of the tail, followed sometimes by the elevation of the rump, or possibly the simultaneous lifting of the hind leg—the one nearest to the other horse.

If a horse is not checked correctly when he first gives warning, invariably he will next time thrust a leg toward the other horse, and eventually kick in

reality. A horse must be checked instantly for if he is not he will soon learn to turn around and viciously kick with one or both legs. The horse will get in the habit of doing this without reason or without the slightest warning.

“SHYERS”

There are different types of shyers; such as the inveterate shyer that will shy at every little thing it encounters—for instance, a piece of paper, cloth, or any colored object. Usually this type of horse has defective eyesight and is not dangerous to ride, but of course, a lot depends upon the rider.

A horse, which shys because of defective eyesight should not be unjustly punished. With the reins in each hand the rider should urge the horse forward and, if needed, the leg action should be brought into play. A rider should be sure his torso is extremely flexible so that he will not be unseated by a sudden stop or side thrust. It helps considerably if the rider speaks to his horse coaxingly and reprovably, at the same time urging the animal forward.

Some horses are afraid of nothing except unfamiliar objects; such as a place where men are digging a ditch, or a boy on a bicycle. The rider should ignore the horse's fear and compel him to pass with the necessary movements—moving forward. The rider should never allow his horse to turn and run away from these objects as this would eventually lead the horse to absolutely refuse to pass the object the next time.

Even the quietest horse will shy if startled by something unexpected; such as, a dog running in front or in back of him, or by noises from behind a bush or stone wall.

At times a horse will merely thrust sidewise and return of his own free will back to his regular gait. In such instances no urging is necessary. However, the rider should be ready to give the correct orders if required.

If a horse shys at an object the rider should be sure not to clutch at the reins and stiffen up because by doing so it proves he is afraid and this tends to increase the horse's nervousness. When in a group a horse that is apt to shy will behave much better if following another horse. A beginner or a person who has done only a little riding should never ride a real shyer.

THE "REARER"

Horses that rear should be ridden only by the experienced for they are generally highly-strung, perverse animals. An inveterate "rearer" should be bridled with a martingale—and a horse who hasn't this bad habit may rear slightly on occasion if startled by some object, noise, or untoward action of his rider but seldom high enough to throw or unseat.

When a rider feels the horse rising he should immediately loosen up on the reins, throw his body forward in a crouching position with elbows out, and bring his legs back along the horse's flanks while retaining a firm knee grip. Lay hands on the horse's neck, speak to him softly and kick him sharply. If this does not have the desired effect, and the horse rears erect and becomes unmanageable, lean forward on his crest, shorten the reins to within a foot or so of his mouth and pull *downward*. It is sometimes necessary to use the crop on his neck, or between the ears. Give the horse his head but keep yours!

By moving the shoulders forward you should throw your weight in the best position to lower the horse's foreparts back to the ground. As soon as the horse's feet are back on the ground the rider should instantly bring his shoulders, arms, legs, and hands back to normal position.

If the horse rears high and the rider does not throw his weight forward he is liable to lose his balance and fall back off the horse; then there is the still greater danger in pulling the reins, which causes the horse to lose his balance also and fall on the rider.

When the rider throws his torso forward he must have his waist flexible so he can automatically regain his former position. The rider's thighs must not lose close contact with the saddle and the legs must be so balanced that when the horse's foreparts touch the ground he can use them on the animal's flanks to urge him immediately forward, and thus give the horse no chance to rear the second time.

BAD HABITS

One bad habit that many riders have is to make a "clucking" sound with the tongue. This habit is

very dangerous—especially in group riding. For example, if one of the riders should be adjusting his stirrups or otherwise occupied and was not paying close attention to his horse or to the rest of the group—and someone should make this sound—his horse may start up very quickly. When one person makes this sound—intending, of course, for his horse only to move more rapidly—all the other horses may start up too. Consequently, riders may easily be thrown from their horses if not prepared.

Another very bad habit that many beginners have is to shake the reins to make the horse move. The correct movement, when the reins are held properly, should consist of just a slight motion of the hands and wrists and the use of the legs on the horse's flanks. When a rider shakes the reins this noise may give the horse a bad scare and he is very apt to start up quickly—causing the rider to be thrown off balance. Shaking the reins may also cause the other horses close by to start quickly.

A rider should never run a horse down a hill. This is a very dangerous habit and shows lack of horsemanship.

When a rider is riding alone he may do as his best judgment commands—he may ride fast if he wishes, but when approaching a group of riders he should never come along at a fast gait for this excites the other horses, and they may all start to gallop. Neither should a rider go so close that he touches another horse, for riders have been quite badly bruised by other riders knocking against them.

A rider should consider the interests of those with whom he rides, perhaps many less fortunate than himself in ability and courage. He should help them by handling his horse so as to assure them of safety.

A rider should offer his assistance to others when needed. For example, if another rider's horse refuses to pass a certain object the first rider should take the lead—thus making it easier for the other horses to follow.

Some riders have no regard for their fellow riders, and pay no attention to the proper etiquette while on horseback. This is the type of rider that will gallop his horse from start to finish, and they should not be allowed to ride.

In order not to tire the horse a rider should start in a walk, then a trot, and alternate back to a walk;

then a little cantering if desired. He should change the gaits of the horse, and let him walk at intervals. When this method of riding is used, the horse will always work with more interest and will not become fatigued.

The last part of a ride, especially in hot weather, should be in a walk, so that the horse will be cool when returning to the stables.

ANALYSIS

Analysis plays an important part in learning to ride properly. It is as much a science as geometry, one of whose basic laws reads "a straight line is the shortest distance between two points." It might well be said of riding that "the straightest and shortest route to horsemanship is the intelligent application of rules." If a novice will watch an experienced rider—one who rides correctly—and analyze his manner of riding—the beginner will pick up many good points on proper riding. Then if the beginner will compare his way of riding with that of the real horseman he can readily see where he may improve.

One great fault with amateurs when watching good riders perform is that they take an absolutely wrong attitude—believing that they will never be able to master it. Naturally, any beginner with this attitude cannot become an accomplished rider. Confidence helps immeasurably!

When analyzing the riding of an expert—check his manner of riding with the fundamental rules outlined in this book. Ascertain whether or not the posture of the rider under scrutiny is correct. Notice his method of handling the horse, and if the animal obeys the rider's commands implicitly. If the rider's posture on horseback does not conform to these rules the onlooker must see how it differs, also in what way this rider's faults are comparable with his own.

Of course, when even a good rider is on a green or vicious horse, these rules cannot always apply. The posture of his legs, hands, and torso may seem incorrect to the beginner, according to the suggestions in this book, but it may be perfectly correct under unusual circumstances.

A beginner must visualize how he looks on horseback. If he has been watching a good rider, he should try to emulate him; if he has been watching a poor rider, he should look to his own riding to

make sure he does not acquire the other's faults, thus prolonging his progress toward finished riding.

If a beginner becomes discouraged after riding once or twice, he should proceed immediately, with renewed energy, to overcome his faults. This is the only way to become a good rider.

In conclusion I wish to impress upon the mind of anyone who rides, that no matter how much one does ride there is always something new to learn—one of the great reasons why riding is so interesting and enjoyable.

DEFINITIONS OF WORDS AND TERMS

Aids—The guiding and controlling powers of a rider over his horse other than by the bit.

Bars of the mouth—Parts of a horse's gums where there are no teeth.

Blunts—Spurs which have no wheel or spikes.

Bucking—The action of a horse when he arches his back and jumps with all four feet off the ground.

Collect—To get a horse to pull itself together mentally and physically.

Feel of mouth—The method of communicating with the horse's understanding by way of its mouth.

Fresh—A term given to a horse that is lively and gay.

Frog—The V-shaped part in the hollow underneath the horse's hoof.

Girth—Saddle band which encircles belly of the horse.

Hacking—Going at an easy pace.

Hands—A measure equalling four inches. (Height of horse is always given in "hands.")

Head of a cross saddle—The arch in front.

Head-collar—The headgear that is used on a horse when in stable.

Horsemanship—The art of horse management.

Independent seat—The art of sitting close to the saddle without depending on legs, feet, or hands.

Knee-rolls—On some cross saddles the thickened parts of the side flaps are in front of the knees.

Knuckle over—A stumble with a hind foot.

Leg-of-rider—The lower leg only.

Manners of horse—The horse's easy and willing compliance with the wishes of the rider.

Martingale—Contrivance intended to prevent a horse from throwing his head up, stretching it out too far, or from rearing.

Near side—The left side of a horse.

Off side—The right side of a horse.

Pommel—The uppermost and fixed crutch of a cross saddle.

Port—The center part of a curb bit when it is in the form of an arch.

Puller—A horse on which the rider cannot obtain mouth control without forcible methods. Such a horse is not recommended for group riding unless in the lead.

Rearing—The action of a horse when he stands upon his hind legs.

Sitting tight—Simply to say the rider who does not post to a trot. This is the action of a rider when the horse is trotting, and which refuses to allow himself to be rocked into the rise and fall. This applies to riders who are able to remain in their saddle under any difficulties.

Slack reins—Those reins which sag instead of form a straight line between the horse's mouth and the rider's hands.

Stirrup bar—Metal contrivance from which a stirrup leather hangs.

Stretching—The action of a horse who repeatedly stretches out his head.

Take off—The action of a springing from the ground to clear a jump.

Tree of saddle—The frame on which a saddle is built.

Withers—Portion of a horse's back above the rear part of his shoulder blades.

Cantle—The corner piece; hindbow of a saddle.

Croup—The croup is the part of horse behind the saddle.

Snaffle bit—A bit consisting of a joint in the middle and rings at the ends.

Curb bit—A bit consisting of one mouth piece.

Curb chain—The chain that belongs to a curb bit bridle and is used in restraining a horse.

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