

THE HARNESS HORSE

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The Harness Horse by Sir Walter Gilbey

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SIR WALTER GILBEY

**THE
HARNESS HORSE**



THE DARLEY ARABIAN (Imported into England 1706.)

THIRD EDITION.

THE HARNESS HORSE

BY

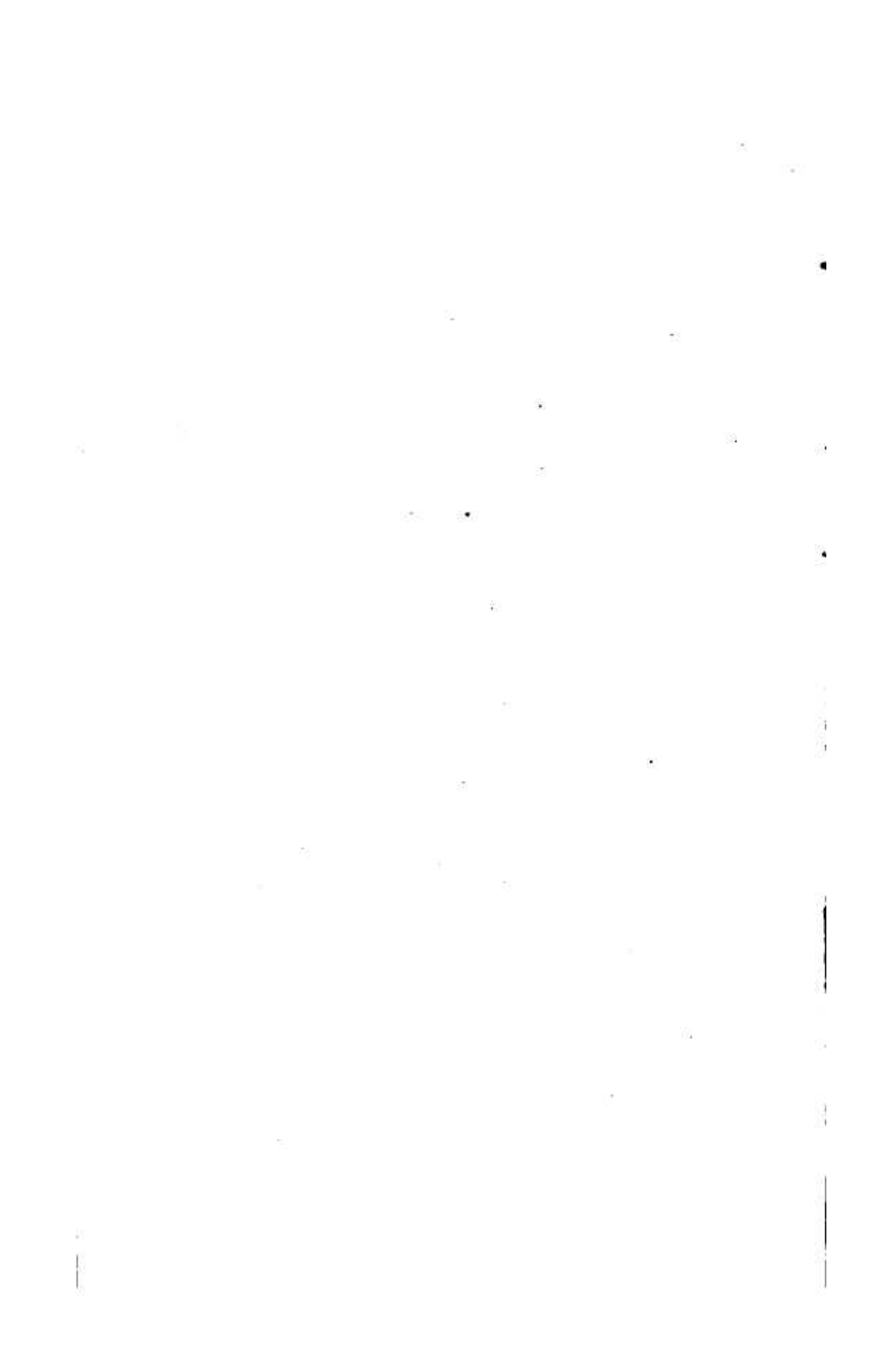
SIR WALTER GILBEY, BART.

ILLUSTRATED

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I take it for granted that the readers of these few pages are at one with the writer in regarding preservation of the character of our English horses as a matter of high national importance. I need therefore make no apology for calling attention to the desirability of breeding horses for harness, and releasing Britain from her present state of dependence for these upon the foreign breeder.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'W. H. H.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Elsenham Hall, Essex.

July, 1898.

THE HARNESS HORSE.

REASONS FOR BREEDING SADDLE-HORSES IN THE PAST.

It cannot be denied that we as a nation devote our attention almost exclusively to the breeding of saddle-horses, namely for racing, steeple-chasing and hunting; and in doing so we betray our inherent taste for sport. Time was when the saddle-horse held a position in our national economy which compelled exclusive attention to the breeding of such stock. In the days of Queen Elizabeth, when England was traversed by none but bridle-paths, when roads for wheeled traffic, in the absence of coaches, were unknown, travelling was accomplished and merchandise transported on horse-back; and of necessity the saddle-horse and pack-horse stood alone in their importance. With the introduction of roads, however, and their rapid spread all over the kingdom, the economic necessity for the

saddle and pack-horse disappeared; and the places of these animals were taken, in very large degree at all events, by the coach-horse and post-horse.

When railways became established and it was recognised that the coaching era was at its close, there prevailed a strong feeling that harness horses would no longer be required; and this belief, combined with the depression in agriculture at the period between 1835 and 1845, led the farmers to abandon horse-breeding and sell their mares to go abroad.

THE ROADSTERS OF THE COACHING PERIOD.

In the coaching and posting days the roadster was an absolute necessity, and universal and continuous demand naturally produced on the spot a supply of horses in which soundness of constitution and limb, speed and endurance were indispensable. The past history of the Norfolk and Yorkshire breeds is full of passages reflecting their merits. Mr. H. R. Phillips in his evidence before the Lords' Committee on Horses in 1873, says: "The Hackney is a class of itself. We date them back from Mr. Theobald's 'Old Champion,' which cost