

**CONVERSATIONS ON CONDITIONING. THE
GROOMS' ORACLE, AND POCKET STABLE-
DIRECTORY; IN WHICH THE MANAGEMENT
OF HORSES GENERALLY, AS TO HEATH,
DIETING, AND EXERCISE, ARE CONSIDERED,
IN A SERIES OF FAMILIAR DIALOGUES**

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Conversations on Conditioning, The Grooms' Oracle, and Pocket Stable-Directory; In Which the Management of Horses Generally, as to Heath, Dieting, and Exercise, Are Considered, in a Series of Familiar Dialogues by John Badcock

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J. H. W. H. H. H.
Amey, Esq.

CONVERSATIONS ON CONDITIONING.

THE

GROOMS' ORACLE,

AND

POCKET STABLE-DIRECTORY;

IN WHICH THE

MANAGEMENT OF HORSES GENERALLY, AS TO HEALTH,
DIETING, AND EXERCISE, ARE CONSIDERED,
IN A SERIES OF FAMILIAR DIALOGUES,

BETWEEN

TWO GROOMS

ENGAGED IN

Training Horses to their Work.

WITH

NOTES, AND AN APPENDIX,

INCLUDING

EXTRACTS FROM THE RECEIPT BOOK

OF

JOHN HINDS, V. S.

AUTHOR OF "THE VETERINARY SURGEON."

LONDON:

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1829.

W. H.

PREFACE.

"THE *Grooms' Oracle*" was an epithet bestowed, about twenty years ago, in derision, upon one of the *best books* that had hitherto appeared, in this or any other country, on the *Veterinary Art*. *The best*, because the easiest to be comprehended by the generality of persons engaged in that pursuit; and, therefore, likely to become more extensively useful than any of its cotemporaries, notwithstanding its *extra-learned* detractor meant thereby to abash its author, since he discovered that his attempts to smother both author and book in the bud had signally failed. The same particle of information was alluded to, in the *Preface* to "The *Veterinary Surgeon*," published eighteen months ago, and is now again adduced principally as an apology for the present *title*, as well as to cast a triumphant rebuke in the teeth of those who would smug the curative art within a circumscribed space. What they have done in the like spirit, regarding the book just cited, as it was equally unjust, so has it proved quite as unavailing with the public: inapplicable criticisms, that are founded on misrepresentations, grounded on garbled quotations, can do no service to the falsifying parties, only in the same manner as the rod which truants at school are compelled to gather for their own backs.

Yet the bare *appearance* of assuming *oracular*

4 NEW PURCHASES : TREATMENT.

and young ones, obliterates such a pressure instantly. Yes, yes, at all events, give to newly-purchased horses plenty of bran-mashes or dilute water-gruel in the first instance, to neutralise the offensive contents of the stomach, &c. and procure the three evacuations. Should these not come on regularly, or the urine and dunging be of a bad kind, hide-bound, and other diseases of the skin, follow; as they do the disuse of habitual diaphoretics, as *sweating powders* and the linseed decoction you just now mentioned. We should study the defects of our new acquaintance, however ungracious the task, especially if it be one we would make free use of, as we do of the horse.

Q. He may have been originally ill-formed, and so the inheritor and possessor of some family disease, as narrow-chested (bad lungs), hollow-backed (injured kidneys), and the like.

A. True; but I would also desire to discover his acquired disorders, that lie concealed from the sight and the touch, that are brought on by accident or by misapplication of his powers.

Q. Of what nature is the principal of the less evident disorders of horses?

A. *Heat.** Inordinate heat, occasioned by the

* A very grave gentleman suggested, that *physic* was the principal ailment of the horse, not so much on account of ignorance in the compounders, as of the motives to prescribing; which would superinduce giving too soon and continuing too long, the very best remedies,—or what the interested party would call “regular treatment.”

great exertions the animal is compelled to make; and, when excessive, the bad effects thereof descending to the feet and legs, we invariably find these affected with some defect or other, which every act of progression does but exacerbate, especially if the pace be quick: the pain then endured at the extremities re-acts upon the carcass, or some vital part within it, and though it may produce no marked disease, irritates the stomach and intestines, and prevents the food from doing good, or 'tis rejected altogether, whereby the horse goes out of condition.

Q. But you would not extend this observation to mere accidents, and the wear and waste of *going*?

A. Yes, I would, in great measure; the aggravation we sometimes find to attend the most trivial prick of the foot, or touch of one leg by the foot of another in training, being wholly attributable to the bad state of his blood at the time of its occurring; for, do we not know that such injuries sometimes happen and go away again without any medical treatment whatever, or any imaginable reason than comparative rest and good bodily health prevailing at the time?

Q. How would you come at a knowledge of this *bodily health*, as you call it?

A. By the practice of feeling the pulse frequently, whereby we ascertain the degree of heat, and other interesting information of what is passing

6 THE PULSE INDICATIVE OF HEALTH,

withinside. I can go through this part of my duty with our stables full of horses, in half an hour daily, including the time necessary for making my remarks upon such as require it. Owing to the thickness of the skin, however, I find you must regulate the pressure of your finger point, so as neither to stop the pulsation entirely, by pressing too hard, nor by the direct contrary allow yourself to be deceived on the score of indistinctness in the beats.

Q. On what artery is the thinnest skin found?

A. Near the *eye*, at about an inch and a half from its corner; but a *larger artery* may be consulted more instructively, underneath the edge of the jawbone. The heat and dryness of the mouth is also a sure indication of fever.

Q. Well; and if the pulse beat *quicker* than ordinary, what opinion should you form upon it? What if *slower* than common?

A. In the first case, I should conclude the patient had an access of fever, which is always the case, temporarily, when the animal has been put on his mettle, and the more so, when he goes in pain; so, on the contrary, if he feed badly, or has some languishing disorder of the liver, as obstruction thereof, jaundice, or low fever, his pulse would be slower than usual.

Q. What, then, do you consider the common medium of pulsation, or healthy state?

A. It varies a little, according to circumstances, and the breed of the animal, from thirty-six to forty beats in a minute, the pulsation of large heavy horses

being slower than that of the smaller breeds, and that of young horses quicker than old ones of their own kinds respectively.*

Q. Are there no other indications given by the pulse of the animal's health?

A. Undoubtedly: *unsteadiness* of beating is a sure sign of something being amiss with the nervous part of the system: fluctuation in the beating of the pulse tells us, as plainly as words can, when the animal has been flurried in any manner; if by ill-usage, the beats increase in quickness, a few strokes hard, followed by a fewer still very low; if the agitation has been caused by pleasurable sensations, as the sound of horn or hounds, or the near approach to home, then the number of low indistinct beats exceed the hard ones. Animals of bad temper, those with defective eyes, or skittish ones, that are apt to shy, and mares in heat, all evince this irregularity of pulsation; whereby I first learned to come at a knowledge of each individual's disposition, and I take care to treat him accordingly.

Q. That is an excellent distinction of yours; I have an idea it may be pushed much farther, to the benefit of the noble animal we are now discussing.

A. Undoubtedly, the placid horse which is kindly and docile in his nature, will be found with an equal

* So is the blood of all young thinner, paler, and quicker in the circulation than that of old animals; age increasing its colour, its thickness or viscosity; and its resistance to the contraction of the containing vessels is consequently greater, therefore slower in motion.

moderate pulse; whilst that of the voracious, tear-away, craving horse, which is never still, never satisfied even when foremost, and his *pulse* shall be from four to six beats a minute quicker than the first-mentioned, and not regular.

Q. We will enter more fully into the distinctive attributes of the several classes of prime horses at some future opportunity. [*Conversation ix.*] Meantime, have you aught further to say concerning *the pulse*?

A. Not at present. I shall reserve somewhat I have further to observe, until we come to talk of inflammatory fever and of bleeding; in both which respects, my plan of daily ascertaining the state of my horses' pulse in health has been found of critical benefit by the *actual doctor*, when he is called in, as sometimes happens, to consult over a patient. [See APPENDIX, *Pulse.*]

Q. Do you, then, keep a register of the state of your horses' pulse?

A. Yes; of valuable ones, regularly, throughout the year, along with my Stud-book, Racing Calendar, Trial-book, and accounts. You form a library of the same materials, do you mind me, with a couple of books on Farriery, and read them with attention; you'll ride none the heavier for it. As to ordinary or working cattle, they are not so readily affected, nor so dangerously, as horses with some breeding in them, and require less care.

Q. Neither do they require routine *physicking*, like the thorough-bred horse, *flesh* being no incum-