

**THE MANAGEMENT AND
TREATMENT OF THE
HORSE IN THE STABLE,
FIELD, AND ON THE ROAD**

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The management and treatment of the horse in the stable, field, and on the road by William Proctor

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WILLIAM PROCTOR

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BY A STUD-GROOM.

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THE MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT OF THE HORSE.

“Happy he who studies nature’s laws,
Through effects can trace the certain cause.”—VIRGIL.

I THINK I cannot do better to begin this short treatise than by pointing out some of the evils the horse has to suffer in consequence of the ignorance displayed by the architect who first draws the plan of the stable. I will endeavour to show in a few simple words the great faults in nearly every stable I have been in for the last twenty years, some of which have been the best in England.

The first defect to be noticed is the floor. In the first place the floor of the stable is always made high in front of the horse’s head, and slopes down low to his hind feet. This, I contend, is unnatural, and therefore wrong. The stable should always be made with the hind part at least one inch higher than the fore part. Some people may object to this on the ground that the water will all run under the horse and cause a great waste of litter.

This may be easily avoided by placing one grate in the centre of the stall near the horse's fore feet, about four feet from the wall at the manger, and another grate in the centre of the stall, in a line with the gutter at the end of the stall. The question will naturally be asked, why would you make this alteration which is in just contradistinction to the most approved plans, drawn in the present day? I refer the enquirers in quest of information, to the fields and open country. Let him study the horse there, and he will always see it when standing at its ease, (and it will not stand still at all if it is not comfortable) with its hind feet on the highest ground. I am speaking of sound horses, and this fact is quite in keeping with the structure of the horse. If we will but take the trouble to study its anatomy we shall then find, by placing the horse in that unnatural position with his fore feet on the highest ground, that we throw undue pressure constantly upon the muscles of the belly, causing the *colon* or large gut to fall upon the *cæcum*, thereby preventing to a great extent that freedom of action which is so necessary to that organ, to enable all the substances taken in to re-ascend into the *caput coli*, and to pass on to the *rectum*. Another great evil arising out of it is the pain it causes the animal by causing a great strain on the *flexor* tendon, and the back sinews of the legs, no doubt leading to many of the cases of lameness by windgall and rupture of the sheath of the tendons, commonly called broken down. I once had a very bad case of break-down, though the animal had not been out of the stable from the Saturday morning until I found it on Monday morning dead lame, and

I could not account for it being done in no other way than by slipping on the sloping pavement. I was called a short time ago to see a horse belonging to a carman, which in shaking itself in the stable slipped and fell, breaking both knees, one very severely; this was another victim to a false system of paving. If you go into any stable that is paved with the fore part the highest, you will find all the horses hang back to the extent of their rack chains, or stand crossways in their stalls, to try to raise their hind feet into a natural position. Go again into a stable of loose boxes that have a grate in the centre of the box, and what do we find? Every horse with his fore feet in the drain or lowest part of the box, while his haunches are on the highest ground. These facts should be enough to convince anyone that the present system is altogether wrong.

LIGHT.

“Stand on one side and let God’s light and sunshine fall upon me and my horse,” are the words I should like to impress upon every builder. Go through all the stables in town and country and see how few have had due attention for light bestowed upon them by the builder. We find small windows, and not one half of them will open, and where they are put they are placed in the very spot to give the smallest amount of light possible. Whereas the windows in every stable should be large, and open from top and bottom, and should be looking to the east if possible, and the horses’ heads to the west, so that the sun may shine into the stable as soon as it rises in the morning, spreading its light into

every corner of the stable. The front of the stall before the horse's head should never be white, but stone or dark colour, white having as bad an effect upon the eye as a dark stable. If anyone doubt this let him look upon a piece of white paper when the sun is shining, and judge for himself. Again, look upon any bright colour in a strong light for a few seconds, and then turn and look at the blue sky or any other object, and the eye will reflect in a different form the object first looked upon, and show it distinctly upon the second substance. If looking upon white or any bright colour in a strong light for a few seconds has such an effect upon the optic nerve of the human being, what effect has it upon the horse, that is compelled to look upon it for hours together day after day? I have no doubt that a great many of the horses suffering from "cloudy eye" and imperfect vision is caused by dark stables and also white walls before their heads. Horses kept in a dark stable, and brought suddenly to the light, will wink their eyes and look about with a startled expression, being unable to distinguish the surrounding objects. Dealers will keep horses dark to make them look spirited when brought out for sale, often sowing the germs of disease, which will end either in partial or total blindness.

VENTILATION.

Upon this subject reason and common sense teach us that without fresh air nothing in animal or vegetable life can be healthy. Place a plant in a hot room without plenty of fresh air, and see how soon the most robust plant becomes sickly and pale. Then what can we think

of those who keep such a valuable animal as the horse in a stable where the air is so bad that it would kill the vilest weed that grows upon mother earth? Yet such is the ignorance displayed by the builder, that little or no ventilation is found in nearly all stables, and where there is any ventilation the prejudice of the groom often neutralises their best intentions. No horse should have less than 10,000 cubic feet of air to consume every hour of his life; then how is it possible for them to keep healthy if they do not get 1000 feet of air, let alone 10,000 feet per hour? It is a well-known fact that after air has once passed through the lungs of man or beast, it is of no use to support life until it is again charged with oxygen from the surrounding atmosphere; yet some grooms are so short-sighted that they will even stop the keyhole to exclude the air. I have seen stables in Leicestershire and also in Newmarket, which when opened on a frosty morning, the hot impure air would rush out so that anyone might suppose the stable to be on fire. The true principle of ventilation is to obtain a constant supply of fresh air without causing draught. This should be accomplished by grates on the outside of the stable through the wall, and brought up under the floor into the stable, which should have a double grate, the under portion made to slide, so as entirely to stop the upper space through the bars of the grate; this would bring a supply of cold air upon the floor of the stable through the foundation of the walls. The hot air should be carried off through large grates up in the ceiling to allow the hot or consumed air to escape. These should be connected with air shafts, which should go