

On Horsemanship

Xenophon



ON HORSEMANSHIP

Inasmuch as we have had a long experience of cavalry, and consequently claim familiarity with the art of horsemanship, we wish to explain to our younger friends what we believe to be the correct method of dealing with horses. True there is already a treatise on horsemanship by Simon, who also dedicated the bronze horse in the Eleusinium at Athens and recorded his own feats in relief on the pedestal. Nevertheless, we shall not erase from our work the conclusions that happen to coincide with his, but shall offer them to our friends with far greater pleasure, in the belief that they are more worthy of acceptance because so expert a horseman held the same opinions as we ourselves: moreover, we shall try to explain all the points that he has omitted. First we will give directions how best to avoid being cheated in buying a horse. For judging an unbroken colt, the only criterion, obviously, is the body, for no clear signs of temper are to be detected in an animal that has not yet had a man on his back.

In examining his body, we say you must first look at his feet. For, just as a house is bound to be worthless less if the foundations are unsound, however well the upper parts may look, so a war-horse will be quite useless, even though all his other points are good, if he has bad feet; for in that case he will be unable to use any of his good points.

When testing the feet first look to the hoofs. For it makes a great difference in the quality of the feet if they are thick rather than thin. Next you must not fail to notice whether the hoofs are high both in front and behind, or low. For high hoofs have the frog, as it is called, well off the ground; but flat hoofs tread with the strongest and weakest part of the foot simultaneously, like a bow-legged man. Moreover, Simon says that the ring, too, is a clear test of good feet: and he is right; for a hollow hoof rings like a cymbal in striking the ground.

Having begun here, we will proceed upwards by successive steps to the rest of the body. The bones (of the pastern) above the hoofs and below the fetlocks should not be too upright, like a goat's: such legs give too hard a tread, jar the rider, and are more liable to inflammation. Nor yet should the bones be too low, else the fetlocks are likely to become bare and sore when the horse is

ridden over clods or stones.

The bones of the shanks should be thick, since these are the pillars of the body; but not thick with veins nor with flesh, else when the horse is ridden over hard ground, these parts are bound to become charged with blood and varicose; the legs will swell, and the skin will fall away, and when this gets loose the pin, too, is apt to give way and lame the horse.

If the colt's knees are supple when bending as he walks, you may guess that his legs will be supple when he is ridden too, for all horses acquire greater suppleness at the knee as time goes on. Supple knees are rightly approved, since they render the horse less likely to stumble and tire than stiff legs.

The arms below the shoulders, as in man, are stronger and better looking if they are thick. A chest of some width is better formed both for appearance and for strength, and for carrying the legs well apart without crossing.

His neck should not hang downwards from the chest like a boar's, but stand straight up to the crest, like a cock's; but it should be flexible at the bend; and the head should be bony, with a small cheek. Thus the neck will protect the rider, and the eye see what lies before the feet. Besides, a horse of such a mould will have least power of running away, be he never so high-spirited, for horses do not arch the neck and head, but stretch them out when they try to run away.

You should notice, too, whether both jaws are soft or hard, or only one; for horses with unequal jaws are generally unequally sensitive in the mouth. A prominent eye looks more alert than one that is hollow, and, apart from that, it gives the horse a greater range of vision.

And wide open nostrils afford room for freer breathing than close ones, and at the same time make the horse look fiercer, for whenever a horse is angry with another or gets excited under his rider, he dilates his nostrils.

A fairly large crest and fairly small ears give the more characteristic shape to a horse's head. High withers offer the rider a safer seat and a stronger grip on the shoulders. The double back is both softer to sit on than the single and more pleasing to the eye.

The deeper the flanks and the more swelling toward the belly, the firmer is the seat and the stronger, and as a rule, the better feeder is the horse. The

broad and shorter the loins, the more easily the horse lifts his fore quarters and the more easily he brings up his hind quarters. And, apart from that, the belly looks smallest so, and if it is big it disfigures the horse to some extent, and also makes him to some extent both weaker and clumsier.

The haunches must be broad and fleshy, that they may be in right proportion to the flanks and chest, and if they are firm all over, they will be lighter for running and will make the horse speedier.

If the gap that separates the hams under the tail is broad, he will also extend his hind legs well apart under his belly; and by doing that he will be more fiery and stronger when he throws himself on his haunches and when he is ridden, and will make the best of himself in all ways. One can infer this from the action of a man: for when he wants to lift anything from the ground, a man invariably tries to lift it with his legs apart rather than close together.

A horse's stones should not be big: but it is impossible to observe this in a colt. As for the parts below, the hocks, shin bones, fetlocks and hoofs, what we have said about the corresponding parts in the forelegs applies to these also.

I want also to explain how one is least likely to be disappointed in the matter of size. The colt that is longest in the shanks at the time he is foaled makes the biggest horse. For in all quadrupeds the shanks increase but little in size as time goes on, whereas the rest of the body grows to them, so as to be in the right proportion.

He who applies these tests to a colt's shape is sure, in my opinion, to get a beast with good feet, strong, muscular, of the right look and the right size. If some change as they grow, still we may confidently rely on these tests, for it is far commoner for an ugly colt to make a useful horse than for a colt like this to turn out ugly.

We do not think it necessary to give directions for breaking a colt. For in our states the cavalry are recruited from those who have ample means and take a considerable part in the government. And it is far better for a young man to get himself into condition and when he understands the art of horsemanship to practise riding than to be a horse-breaker; and an older man had far better devote himself to his estate and his friends and affairs of state and of war than spend his time in horse-breaking.

So he who shares my opinion about horse-breaking will, of course, send his colt out. Still he should put in writing what the horse is to know when he is returned, just as when he apprentices his son to a profession. For these articles will serve as notes to remind the horse-breaker of what he must attend to if he is to get his money.

Still, care must be taken that the colt is gentle, tractable, and fond of man when he is sent to the horse-breaker. That sort of business is generally done at home through the groom, if he knows how to contrive that hunger and thirst and horseflies are associated by the colt with solitude, while eating and drinking and delivery from irritation come through man's agency. For in these circumstances a foal is bound not only to like men, but to hanker after them.

One should also handle those parts in which the horse likes most to be cherished, that is to say the hairiest parts and those where the horse has least power of helping himself, if anything worries him.

Let the groom be under orders also to lead him through crowds, and accustom him to all sorts of sights and all sorts of noises. If the colt shies at any of them, he must teach him, by quieting him and without impatience, that there is nothing to be afraid of. I think that the directions I have given on the subject of horse-breaking are sufficient for the private person.

In case the intention is to buy a horse already ridden, we will write out some notes that the buyer must thoroughly master if he is not to be cheated over his purchase. First, then, he must not fail to ascertain the age. A horse that has shed all his milk teeth does not afford much ground for pleasing expectations, and is not so easily got rid of.

If he is clearly a youngster, one must notice further how he receives the bit in his mouth and the headstall about his ears. This may best be noticed if the buyer sees the bridle put on and taken off again.

Next, attention must be paid to his behaviour when he receives the rider on his back. For many horses will not readily accept a thing if they know beforehand that, if they accept it, they will be forced to work.

Another thing to be observed is whether when mounted he is willing to leave his companions, or whether in passing standing horses he does not bolt towards them. Some too, in consequence of bad training run away from the riding ground to the paths that lead home.

A horse with jaws unequally sensitive is detected by the exercise called the “ring,” but much more by changing the exercise. For many do not attempt to bolt unless they have a bad mouth, and the road along which they can bolt home gives them their chance. It is likewise necessary to know whether, when going at full speed he can be pulled up sharp, and whether he turns readily.

And it is well to make sure whether he is equally willing to obey when roused by a blow. For a disobedient servant and a disobedient army are of course useless; and a disobedient horse is not only useless, but often behaves just like a traitor.

As we have assumed that the horse to be bought is designed for war, he must be tested in all the particulars in which he is tested by war. These include springing across ditches, leaping over walls, rushing up banks, jumping down from banks. One must also try him by riding up and down hill and on a slope. All these experiments prove whether his spirit is strong and his body sound.

Nevertheless, it is not necessary to reject a horse that is not perfect in these trials. For many break down in these not from want of ability, but from lack of experience. With teaching, use and discipline they will perform all these exercises well, provided they are otherwise sound and not faulty.

But one should beware of horses that are naturally shy. For timid horses give one no chance of using them to harm the enemy, and often throw their rider and put him in a very awkward situation.

It is necessary also to find out whether the horse has any vice towards horses or towards men, and whether he will not stand tickling: for all these things prove troublesome to the owner.

As regards objection to being bridled or mounted, and the other reactions, there is a much better way still of detecting these, namely, by trying to do over again, after the horse has finished his work, just what one did before starting on the ride. All horses that are willing after their work to do another spell thereby give sufficient proofs of a patient temper.

To sum up: the horse that is sound in his feet, gentle and fairly speedy, has the will and the strength to stand work, and, above all, is obedient, is the horse that will, as a matter of course, give least trouble and the greatest measure of safety to his rider in warfare. But those that want a lot of driving on account of their laziness, or a lot of coaxing and attention on account of their high spirit,

make constant demands on the rider's hands and rob him of confidence in moments of danger.

When a man has found a horse to his mind, bought him and taken him home, it is well to have the stable so situated with respect to the house that his master can see him very often; and it is a good plan to have the stall so contrived that it will be as difficult to steal the horse's fodder out of the manger as the master's victuals from the larder. He who neglects this seems to me to neglect himself; for it is plain that in danger the master entrusts his life to his horse.

But a well-secured stall is not only good for preventing theft of the fodder but also because one can see when the horse does not spill his food. And on noticing this one may be sure that either his body is overfull of blood and needs treatment or the horse is overworked and wants rest, or that laminitis or some other ailment is coming on. It is the same with horses as with men: all distempers in the early stage are more easily cured than when they have become chronic and have been wrongly treated.

Just as the food and exercise of the horse must be attended to in order that he may keep sound, so his feet must be cared for. Now damp and slippery floors ruin even well-formed hoofs. In order that they may not be damp, the floors should have a slope to carry off the wet, and, that they may not be slippery, they should be paved all over with stones, each one about the size of the hoof. Such floors, indeed, have another advantage because they harden the feet of the horses standing on them.

To take the next point: the groom must lead out the horse to clean him, and must loose him from the stall after the morning feed, that he may return to his evening feed with more appetite. Now the stableyard will be of the best form and will strengthen the feet if he throws down and spreads over it four or five loads of round stones, the size of a fist, about a pound in weight, and surrounds them with a border of iron so that they may not be scattered. Standing on these will have the same effect as if the horse walked on a stone road for some time every day.

When he is being rubbed down and teased with flies he is bound to use his hoofs in the same way as when he walks. The frogs also are hardened by stones scattered in this way. The same care must be taken to make his mouth tender

as to harden his hoofs. This is done by the same methods as are employed to soften human flesh.

It is a mark of a good horseman, in our opinion, to see that his groom, like himself, is instructed in the way in which he should treat the horse. First then the man ought to know that he should never make the knot in the halter at the point where the headstall is put on. For if the halter is not easy about the ears, the horse will often rub his head against the manger and may often get sores in consequence. Now if there are sore places thereabouts the horse is bound to be restive both when he is bridled and when he is rubbed down.

It is well also for the groom to have orders to remove the dung and litter daily to one and the same place. For by doing this he will get rid of it most easily and at the same time relieve the horse.

The groom must also know about putting the muzzle on the horse when he takes him out to be groomed or to the rolling-place. In fact he must always put the muzzle on when he leads him anywhere without a bridle. For the muzzle prevents him from biting without hampering his breathing; and moreover, when it is put on, it goes far towards preventing any propensity to mischief.

He should tie up the horse at a place above the head, because when anything irritates his face, the horse instinctively tries to get rid of it by tossing his head upwards; and if he is tied thus he loosens the halter instead of breaking it by tossing up his head.

In rubbing the horse down, the man should start at the head and mane; for if the upper parts are not clean, it is idle to clean his lower parts. Next, going over the rest of his body, he should make the hair stand up with all the dressing instruments, and get the dust out by rubbing him the way the hair lies. But he should not touch the hair on the backbone with any instrument; he should rub and smooth it down with the hands the way it naturally grows; for so he will be least likely to injure the rider's seat.

He must wash the head well with water, for, as it is bony, to clean it with iron or wood would hurt the horse. He must also wet the forelock, for this tuft of hair, even if pretty long, does not obstruct his sight, but drives from his eyes anything that worries them; and we must presume that the gods have given the horse this hair in lieu of the long ears that they have given to asses and mules as

a protection to their eyes.

He should also wash the tail and mane, for growth of the tail is to be encouraged in order that the horse may be able to reach as far as possible and drive away anything that worries him, and growth of the mane in order to give the rider as good a hold as possible.

Besides, the mane, forelock and tail have been given to the horse by the gods as an ornament. A proof of this is that brood mares herding together, so long as they have fine manes, are reluctant to be covered by asses; for which reason all breeders of mules cut off the manes of the mares for covering.

Washing down of the legs we disapprove of; it does no good, and the hoofs are injured by being wetted every day. Excessive cleaning under the belly also should be diminished; for this worries the horse very much, and the cleaner these parts are, the more they collect under the belly things offensive to it;

and notwithstanding all the pains that may be taken with these parts, the horse is no sooner led out than he looks much the same as an unwashed animal. So these operations should be omitted; and as for the rubbing of the legs, it is enough to do it with the bare hands.

We will now show how one may rub down a horse with least danger to oneself and most advantage to the horse. If in cleaning him the man faces in the same direction as the horse, he runs the risk of getting a blow in the face from his knee and his hoof.

But if he faces in the opposite direction to the horse and sits by the shoulder out of reach of his leg when he cleans him, and rubs him down so, then he will come to no harm, and can also attend to the horse's frog by lifting up the hoof. Let him do exactly the same in cleaning the hind-legs.

The man employed about the horse is to know that in these operations and in all that he has to do he must be very chary of approaching from the head or tail to do his work. For if the horse attempts to show mischief he has the man in his power in both these directions; but if he approaches from the side he can manage the horse with least danger to himself and in the best manner.

When it is necessary to lead the horse, we do not approve of leading him behind one for this reason, that the man leading him is then least able to take care of himself while the horse has the utmost freedom to do whatever he

chooses.

On the other hand we also disapprove of training the horse to go in front on a long lead for the following reasons: the horse has the power of misbehaving on either side as he chooses, and has also the power of turning round and facing his driver.

And if several horses together are driven in this fashion, how can they possibly be kept from interfering with one another? But a horse that is accustomed to being led from the side will have least power of doing harm either to horses or to men, and will be in the handiest position for the rider should he want to mount quickly.

In order to put the bit in properly, first let the groom approach on the near side of the horse. Then let him throw the reins over the head and drop them on the withers, and next lift the headstall with the right hand and offer the bit with the left.

If he takes the bit, of course the bridle should be put on. But if he refuses to open his mouth, the man must hold the bit to his teeth and put the thumb of the left hand in the horse's jaw. Most horses open the mouth when this is done. If he still resists, the man should squeeze his lip against the tusk; and very few resist when they are treated in this way.

The groom should also be instructed in the following points: first, never to lead the horse on the rein — that gives the horse a hard mouth on one side — and secondly, what is the correct distance from the bit to the jaws. For if it is too high up, it hardens the mouth so that it loses its sensitiveness; and if it lies too low in the mouth, it gives the horse power to take it between his teeth and refuse to obey.

The groom must also pay some attention to such points as the following: whether the horse will not easily take the bit when he knows that he has work to do. Willingness to receive the bit is, in fact, so important that a horse that refuses it is quite useless.

But if he is bridled not only when he is going to be ridden, but also when he is taken to his food and when he is led home from exercise, it would not be at all surprising if he seized the bit of his own accord when offered to him.

It is well for the groom to know how to give a legup in the Persian fashion, so that his master himself, in case he is indisposed or is getting old may have someone to put him up conveniently, and may, if he wishes, oblige his friend with a man to give him a lift-up.

The one best rule and practice in dealing with a horse is never to approach him in anger; for anger is a reckless thing, so that it often makes a man do what he must regret.

Moreover, when the horse is shy of anything and will not come near it, you should teach him that there is nothing to be afraid of, either with the help of a plucky horse — which is the surest way — or else by touching the object that looks alarming yourself, and gently leading the horse up to it.

To force him with blows only increases his terror; for when horses feel pain in such a predicament, they think that this too is caused by the thing at which they shy.

When the groom presents the horse to his rider, we take no exception to his understanding how to cause the horse to crouch, for convenience in mounting. We think, however, that the rider should get used to mounting even without his horse's help. For a rider gets a different sort of horse at different times, and the same one does not always serve him in the same way.

We will now describe what the rider should do when he has received his horse and is going to mount, if he is to make the best of himself and his horse in riding. First, then, he must hold the lead-rope fastened to the chin-strap or the nose-band ready in the left hand, and so loose as not to jerk the horse whether he means to mount by holding on to the mane near the ears or to spring up with the help of the spear. With his right hand let him take hold of the reins by the withers along with the mane, so that he may not jerk the horse's mouth with the bit in any way as he mounts.

When he has made his spring in order to mount, he should raise his body with his left hand, while at the same time he helps himself up by stretching out his right; for by mounting in this way he will not present an awkward appearance even from behind by bending his leg. Neither must he touch the horse's back with his knee, but throw the leg right over the off side. Having brought the foot over, he must then let his buttocks down on the horse's back.

In case the horseman happens to be leading the horse with the left hand and holding his spear in the right, it is well, we think, to practise mounting on the off side also. For this purpose all that he needs to learn is to do with the left parts of the body what in the other case he did with the right, and vice versa.

The reason why we recommend this method of mounting also is, that no sooner is the rider mounted than he is quite ready to fight with the enemy on a sudden, if occasion requires.

When he is seated, whether on the bare back or on the cloth, we would not have him sit as if he were on his chair, but as though he were standing upright with his legs astride. For thus he will get a better grip of his horse with his thighs, and the erect position will enable him, if need be, to throw his spear and deliver a blow on horseback with more force.

The lower leg including the foot must hang lax and easy from the knee down. For if he keeps his leg stiff and should strike it against anything, he may break it, whereas a loose leg will recoil, whatever it encounters, without disturbing the position of the thigh at all.

The rider must also accustom himself to keeping his body above the hips as loose as possible, for thus he will be able to stand more fatigue and will be less liable to come off when he is pulled or pushed.

As soon as he is seated, he must teach his horse to stand quiet at first, until he has shifted anything that wants arranging underneath him, gathered the reins even in his hand and grasped his spear in the most convenient manner. Then let him keep his left arm close to his side, for thus the horseman's figure will look best, and his hand will have most power.

As for reins, we recommend that they be of equal strength, not weak nor slippery nor thick, in order that the spear may be held in the same hand when necessary.

When he directs his horse to go forward, let him begin at a walk, for this prevents any flurry. If the horse carries his head too low, let the rider hold the hands higher; if too high, lower; for in this way he will give him the most graceful carriage.

After this, if he breaks into his natural trot, he will relax his body in the easiest fashion and come to the gallop most readily. Since, too, the more

approved method is to begin with the left, one will best begin on this side, by giving the horse the signal to gallop while trotting, at the instant when he is treading with the right (fore) foot.

As he is then on the point of raising the left, he will begin with it, and, as soon as the rider turns him to the left, will immediately begin the stride. For it is natural for the horse to lead with the right when turned to the right and with the left when turned to the left.

The exercise that we recommend is the one called the ring, since it accustoms the horse to turn on both jaws. It is also well to change the exercise, in order that both jaws may be equally practised on each side of the exercise.

We recommend the manage rather than the complete ring, for thus the horse will turn more willingly when he has gone some distance in a straight course, and one can practise the career and the turn at the same time.

It is necessary to collect him at the turns; for it is neither easy for the horse nor safe to turn short when going fast, especially if the ground is uneven or slippery.

In collecting him the rider must slant the horse as little as possible with the bit, and slant his own body as little as possible; else he may be sure that a trifling cause will be enough to bring him and his horse down.

As soon as the horse faces the straight after turning, push him along at once. For of course, in war too, turns are made with a view to pursuit or retreat. It is well, therefore, to practise increasing the pace after turning.

So soon as the horse appears to have been exercised enough, it is well to let him rest a certain time, and then suddenly to put him to his top speed again, of course away from, not towards, other horses, and to pull him up again in the midst of his career as short as possible, and then to turn and start him again from the stand. For it is obvious that a time will come when it will be necessary to do one or the other.

When the time has come to dismount, the rider must never dismount among other horses or near a group of people or outside the riding-ground; but let the place where the horse is forced to work be the place where he also receives his reward of ease.

As the horse will frequently have to gallop down hill and up hill and along a slope, and as he will have to leap over, and to leap out, and to jump down at various times, the rider must teach and practise both himself and his horse in all these things. For thus they will be able to help each other, and will be thought altogether more efficient.

If anyone thinks that we are repeating ourselves, because we are referring to matters already dealt with, this is not repetition. For we recommended the purchaser to try whether the horse could do these things at the time of buying; but now we say that a man should teach his own horse; and we will show how to teach him.

When a man has a raw horse quite ignorant of leaping, he must get over the ditch himself first, holding him loosely by the leading-rein, and then give him a pull with the rein to make him leap over.

If he refuses, let someone strike him as hard as he can with a whip or a stick: whereupon he will leap, and not only the necessary distance, but much further than was required. In future there will be no need to beat him, for if he merely sees a man approaching behind him, he will leap.

As soon as he has grown accustomed to leap in this way, let him be mounted and tried first at narrow, and then at wider ditches. Just as he is on the point of springing touch him with the spur. Similarly he should be taught to leap up and to leap down by a touch of the spur. For if he does all these things with his body compactly gathered, it will be safer for the horse as well as the rider than if his hind-quarters lag in taking a leap over, or in springing upwards or jumping downwards.

Going down hill should first be taught on soft ground; and in the end, when the horse gets used to this, he will canter down more readily than up hill. If some fear that horses may put out their shoulders by being ridden down hill, they may take comfort when they understand that the Persians and Odrysians all ride races down hill, and yet keep their horses just as sound as the Greeks.

Nor will we omit to state how the rider is to assist in all these movements. If the horse springs suddenly, he should lean forward; for so the horse is less likely to slip away and throw the rider off. But in pulling him up short he should lean back; for so he himself will be less jolted.

When jumping a ditch or riding up hill it is well to take hold of the mane, that the horse may not be burdened by his bridle and the difficulty of the ground at the same time. When going down a steep incline, he should throw his body back and support the horse with the bridle, that neither rider nor horse may be tossed headlong down hill.

It is correct also to exercise the horse sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, and to make the exercises sometimes long and sometimes short; for this is less irksome to the horse than being exercised always in the same place and for the same length of time.

Since it is necessary that the rider should have a firm seat when riding at top speed over all sorts of country, and should be able to use his weapons properly on horseback, the practice of horsemanship by hunting is to be recommended where the country is suitable and big game is to be found. Where these conditions are lacking, it is a good method of training for two riders to work together thus: one flies on his horse over all kinds of ground and retreats, reversing his spear so that it points backwards, while the other pursues, having buttons on his javelins and holding his spear in the same position, and when he gets within javelin shot, tries to hit the fugitive with the blunted weapons, and if he gets near enough to use his spear, strikes his captive with it.

It is also a good plan, in case of a collision between them, for one to pull his adversary towards him and suddenly push him back again, since that is the way to dismount him. The right thing for the man who is being pulled is to urge his horse forward; by doing this the pulled is more likely to unhorse the puller than to be unhorsed himself.

If at any time when an enemy's camp lies in front there is a cavalry skirmish, and one side presses the pursuit right up to the enemy's line of battle, but then retreats hastily to its own main body, it is well to know in that case that so long as you are by your friends, it is proper and safe to be among the first to wheel and make for the enemy at full speed; but when you come near the enemy to keep your horse well in hand. For in this way you have the best chance of injuring the enemy without coming to harm yourself.

Now, whereas the gods have given to men the power of instructing one another in their duty by word of mouth, it is obvious that you can teach a

horse nothing by word of mouth. If, however, you reward him when he behaves as you wish, and punish him when he is disobedient, he will best learn to do his duty.

This rule can be stated in few words, but it applies to the whole art of horsemanship. He will receive the bit, for example, more willingly if something good happens to him as soon as he takes it. He will also leap over and jump out of anything, and perform all his actions duly if he can expect a rest as soon as he has done what is required of him.

So far we have described how to avoid being cheated in buying a colt or a horse, how to avoid spoiling him in usage and how to impart to a horse all the qualities required by a cavalryman for war. It is time perhaps to give directions, in case one has to deal with a horse that is too spirited or too sluggish, for the correct way of managing either.

First, then, it must be realised that spirit in a horse is precisely what anger is in a man. Therefore, just as you are least likely to make a man angry if you neither say nor do anything disagreeable to him, so he who abstains from annoying a spirited horse is least likely to rouse his anger.

Accordingly, at the moment of mounting, the rider should take care to worry him as little as possible; and when he is mounted, he should let him stand still longer than is otherwise usual, and then direct him to go by the most gentle aids. Then let him begin at a very slow pace and increase the speed with the same gentle help, so that the horse will not be aware of the transition to a quicker motion.

Any sudden sign disturbs a spirited horse, just as sudden sights and sounds and sensations disturb a man. It is important to realise that a horse too is flurried by anything sudden.

If you want to correct a spirited horse when he is going too fast, do not pull him suddenly, but quietly check him with the bit, soothing him, not forcing him, to a quiet pace.

Long rides rather than frequent turnings, calm horses; and quiet ones lasting long soothe and calm a spirited horse and do not excite him.

But if anyone supposes that he will calm a horse by frequent riding at a quick pace so as to tire him, his opinion is the opposite of the truth. For in

such cases a spirited horse does his utmost to get the upper hand by force, and in his excitement, like an angry man, he often causes many irreparable injuries both to himself and to his rider.

One must prevent a high-spirited horse from going at his top speed, and of course, entirely avoid letting him race with another horse; for as a rule the most highly spirited horses are also most eager for victory.

As for bits, the smooth are more suitable than the rough; but if a rough one is used, it should be made to resemble a smooth one by lightness of hand. It is also well to accustom oneself to sit still, especially on a spirited horse, and to touch him as little as possible with anything other than the parts that give us a safe seat by contact.

It should also be known that a horse can be taught to be calm by a chirp with the lips and to be roused by a cluck with the tongue. And if from the first you use with the cluck aids to calm him, and with the chirp aids to rouse him, the horse will learn to rouse himself at the chirp and to calm down at the cluck.

Accordingly, if a shout is heard or a trumpet sounds, you must not allow the horse to notice any sign of alarm in you, and must on no account do anything to him to cause him alarm, but as far as possible let him rest in such circumstances, and, if you have the opportunity, bring him his morning or evening meal.

But the best advice is not to get an over-spirited horse for war. As for a sluggish beast, I may be content with the remark that in everything you must do the opposite of what we advise for the treatment of a high-spirited one.

If a man wants to make a useful war-horse look more stately and showy when ridden, he must avoid pulling his mouth with the bit, and using the spur and whip, means by which most people imagine that they show off a horse. In point of fact the results they produce are the very opposite of what they intend.

For by dragging the mouth up they blind their horses instead of letting them see ahead, and by spurring and whipping, flurry them so that they are startled and get into danger. That is the behaviour of horses that strongly object to being ridden and that behave in an ugly and unseemly fashion.

But if you teach the horse to go with a slack bridle, to hold his neck up and to arch it towards the head, you will cause the horse to do the very things in which he himself delights and takes the greatest pleasure.

A proof that he delights in them is that whenever he himself chooses to show off before horses, and especially before mares, he raises his neck highest and arches his head most, looking fierce; he lifts his legs freely off the ground and tosses his tail up.

Whenever, therefore, you induce him to carry himself in the attitudes he naturally assumes when he is most anxious to display his beauty, you make him look as though he took pleasure in being ridden, and give him a noble, fierce, and attractive appearance. How we think that these effects may be produced we will now try to explain.

To begin with, you should possess two bits at least. One of these should be smooth and have the discs of a good size; the other should have the discs heavy and low, and the teeth sharp, so that when the horse seizes it he may drop it because he objects to its roughness, and when he is bitted with the smooth one instead, may welcome its smoothness and may do on the smooth bit what he has been trained to do with the aid of the rough one.

In case, however, he takes no account of it because of its smoothness, and keeps bearing against it, we put large discs on the smooth bit to stop this, so that they may force him to open his mouth and drop the bit. It is possible also to make the rough bit adaptable by wrapping it up and tightening the reins.

But whatever be the pattern of the bits, they must all be flexible. For wherever a horse seizes a stiff one, he holds the whole of it against his jaws, just as you lift the whole of a spit wherever you take hold of it.

But the other kind of bit acts like a chain: for only the part that you hold remains unbent, while the rest of it hangs loose. As the horse continually tries to seize the part that eludes him in his mouth, he lets the bit drop from his jaws. This is why little rings are hung in the middle on the axles, in order that the horse may feel after them with his tongue and teeth and not think of taking the bit up against the jaws.

In case the meaning of the terms flexible and stiff as applied to a bit is not known, we will explain this too. "Flexible" means that the axles have broad and smooth links so that they bend easily; and if everything that goes round

the axles has large openings, and does not fit tight, it is more flexible.

“Stiff,” on the other hand, means that the pieces of the bit do not run over the axles and work in combination easily. Whatever the pattern may be, the same method of using it must be carried out in all the points that follow, assuming that you want your horse to have just the appearance I have described.

The mouth must neither be pulled so hard that he holds his nose in the air, nor so gently that he takes no notice. As soon as he raises his neck when you pull, give him the bit at once. Invariably, in fact, as we cannot too often repeat, you must humour your horse whenever he responds to your wishes.

And when you notice that high carriage of his neck and lightness of hand give him pleasure, you should not deal hardly with him as though you were forcing him to work, but coax him as when you want to stop; for thus he will break into a fast pace with most confidence.

There is plain proof that a horse takes pleasure in going fast: for when he breaks loose a horse never goes at a walking pace, but always runs. He instinctively takes pleasure in this, provided he is not compelled to run too far for his strength. Nothing in excess is ever pleasing either to horse or man.

When your horse has progressed so far as to bear himself proudly when ridden, he has, of course, already been accustomed in the early exercises to break into a quicker pace after turning. Now if after he has learnt this you pull him up with the bit and at the same time give him one of the signs to go forward, then being held back by the bit and yet roused by the signal to go forward, he throws his chest out and lifts his legs from the ground impatiently, but not with a supple motion; for when horses feel uncomfortable, the action of their legs is not at all supple.

But if, when he is thus excited, you give him the bit, then, mistaking the looseness of the bit for a deliverance from restraint, he bounds forward for very joy with a proud bearing and supple legs, exultant, imitating exactly in every way the graces that he displays before horses.

And those who watch the horse when he is like that call him well-bred, a willing worker, worth riding, mettlesome, magnificent, and declare his appearance to be at once pleasing and fiery. And here we conclude these explanations addressed to those who want this sort of thing.

But in case anyone wants to own a horse suitable for parade, with a high and showy action, such qualities are by no means to be found in every horse: but it is essential that he should have plenty of spirit and a strong body.

Many suppose that an animal that has supple legs will also be capable of rearing his body. That, however, is not the case: rather it is the horse with supple, short, strong loins that will be able to extend his hind-legs well under the forelegs. By “loins” we do not mean the parts about the tail, but those between the flanks and haunches about the belly.

Now, if when he is planting his hind-legs under him you pull him up with the bit, he bends the hind-legs on the hocks and raises the fore-part of his body, so that anyone facing him can see the belly and the sheath. When he does that you must give him the bit that he may appear to the onlookers to be doing willingly the finest things that a horse can do.

Some, however, teach these accomplishments by striking him under the hocks with a rod, others by telling a man to run alongside and hit him with a stick under the gaskins.

We, however, consider that the lesson is most satisfactory if, as we have repeatedly said, the rider invariably allows him relaxation when he has done something according to his wishes.

For what a horse does under constraint, as Simon says, he does without understanding, and with no more grace than a dancer would show if he was whipped and goaded. Under such treatment horse and man alike will do much more that is ugly than graceful. No, a horse must make the most graceful and brilliant appearance in all respects of his own will with the help of aids.

Further, if you gallop him during a ride until he sweats freely, and as soon as he prances in fine style, quickly dismount and unbridle him, you may be sure that he will come willingly to the prance.

This is the attitude in which artists represent the horses on which gods and heroes ride, and men who manage such horses gracefully have a magnificent appearance.

Indeed a prancing horse is a thing so graceful, terrible and astonishing that it rivets the gaze of all beholders, young and old alike. At all events no one leaves him or is tired of gazing at him so long as he shows off his brilliance.

Should the owner of such a horse happen to be a colonel or a general, he must not make it his object to be the one brilliant figure, but must attach much more importance to making the whole troop behind him worth looking at.

Now if a horse is leading in the manner which wins most praise for such horses, prancing high and with his body closely gathered, so that he moves forward with very short steps, the rest of the horses must obviously follow also at a walking pace. Now what can there be really brilliant in such a sight?

But if you rouse your horse and lead neither too fast nor too slow, but at the pace at which the most spirited horses look most fiery and stately — if you lead your men in that way, there will be such a continual stamping, such a continual neighing and snorting of the horses going on behind you, that not only you yourself but all the troop behind you will be worth watching.

If a man buys his horses well, trains them so that they can stand work, and uses them properly in the training for war, in the exhibition rides and on the battle-fields, what is there then to hinder him from making horses more valuable than they are when he takes them over, and why should he not be the owner of famous horses, and also become famous himself for his horsemanship, provided no divine power prevents?

We want to explain also how a man who is to face danger on horseback should be armed. We say, then, that in the first place his breastplate must be made to fit his body. For the wellfitting breastplate is supported by the whole body, whereas one that is too loose is supported by the shoulders only, and one that is too tight is rather an encumbrance than a defence.

And, since the neck is one of the vital parts, we hold that a covering should be available for it also, standing up from the breastplate itself and shaped to the neck. For this will serve as an ornament, and at the same time, if properly made, will cover the rider's face, when he pleases, as high as the nose.

For the helmet we consider the Boeotian pattern the most satisfactory: for this, again, affords the best protection to all the parts that project above the breastplate without obstructing the sight. As for the pattern of the breastplate, it should be so shaped as not to prevent the wearer from sitting down or stooping.

About the abdomen and middle and round that region let the flaps be of such material and such a size that they will keep out missiles.

And as a wound in the left hand disables the rider, we also recommend the piece of armour invented for it called the "hand." For it protects the shoulder, the arm, the elbow, and the fingers that hold the reins; it will also extend and fold up; and in addition it covers the gap left by the breastplate under the armpit.

But the right hand must be raised when the man intends to fling his javelin or strike a blow. Consequently that portion of the breastplate that hinders him in doing that should be removed; and in place of it there should be detachable flaps at the joints, in order that, when the arm is elevated, they may open correspondingly, and may close when it is lowered.

For the fore-arm it seems to us that the piece put over it separately like a greave is better than one that is bound up together with a piece of armour. The part that is left exposed when the right arm is raised should be covered near the breastplate with calf-skin or metal; otherwise the most vital part will be unprotected.

Since the rider is seriously imperilled in the event of his horse being wounded, the horse also should be armed, having head, chest, and thigh pieces: the last also serve to cover the rider's thighs. But above all the horse's belly must be protected; for this, which is the most vital part, is also the weakest. It is possible to make the cloth serve partly as a protection to it.

The quilting of the cloth should be such as to give the rider a safer seat and not to gall the horse's back. Thus horse and man alike will be armed in most parts.

But the rider's shins and feet will of course be outside the thigh-pieces. These too can be guarded if boots made of shoe-leather are worn: there will thus be armour for the shins and covering for the feet at the same time.

These are the defensive arms which with the gracious assistance of heaven will afford protection from harm. For harming the enemy we recommend the sabre rather than the sword, because, owing to his lofty position, the rider will find the cut with the Persian sabre more efficacious than the thrust with the sword.

And, in place of the spear with a long shaft, seeing that it is both weak and awkward to manage, we recommend rather the two Persian javelins of cornel wood. For the skilful man may throw the one and can use the other in front or on either side or behind. They are also stronger than the spear and easier to manage.

We recommend throwing the javelin at the longest range possible. For this gives a man more time to turn his horse and to grasp the other javelin. We will also state in a few words the most effective way of throwing the javelin. If a man, in the act of advancing his left side, drawing back his right, and rising from his thighs, discharges the javelin with its point a little upwards, he will give his weapon the strongest impetus and the furthest carrying power; it will be most likely to hit the mark, however, if at the moment of discharge the point is always set on it.

These notes, instructions and exercises which we have here set down are intended only for the private person. What it belongs to a cavalry leader to know and to do has been set forth in another book.