

My articles upon the training of the horse have been heretofore confined chiefly to the two and three year olds. In this chapter I propose to treat of the training of all ages, for all distances, and to relieve, if possible, the severe and almost savage treatment of the thoroughbred while undergoing preparation for racing. Most trainers, especially those inexperienced, or who are unacquainted with the conformation of the horse, are apt to think, and to treat the horse as if training consisted of heavy blanketing, profuse sweats, and many trial runs; and although the horse may come to the post and even win with this kind of treatment, still, being flesh and blood, he cannot stand its continuance, and must give way either in the legs or eyes; become feverish, lose appetite, and frequently turn entirely off, so that he is useless, the rest of the season, as a racehorse; whereas, if the milder form of treatment had been adopted, he would improve in his training, for a racehorse will stand a great amount of abuse and ignorant treatment, and still win; but, as we are seeking for the best mode of treatment for this valuable animal—the horse—it is our interest as well as our duty, to select the best manner of training. Any close observer (that is, any turfman who has attended the races during the last thirty or forty years), will, of course, have noted many excellent horses ruined, broken down, and retired from the turf without ever distinguishing themselves or making anything like a good character for a horse to retire to the stud upon, when by nature they were among the best formed horses of their day, and had they been properly and rationally treated, they would have shown qualities as racers, perhaps not excelled at that time. I could mention quite a number of horses which have been treated as I have described above, and which I know to have been excellent racehorses, but from a mistaken notion that a horse must be kept in training from his colthood to age, never allowed to become lusty or gross so as to fill up and develop his muscular form, but trained in the South in the winter, at the North in summer, kept constantly moving, his muscular powers sapped and drained until he becomes stale, and loses all his natural snap and vim, and his tendons, cords, and blood-vessels become contracted and dry as wood. Then the owner or trainer will say of him, as an excuse for the lack of speed which he shows in racing, "That he never was fast," or, "That he is not fast, but very game." The fact is, his muscles have become so dry and stale that he loses his speed, and the longer he is trained the slower he will get.

I have many instances in my mind of horses treated thus, a few of which I will mention by name. There was Privateer, who, when a two-year-old, ran a quarter of a mile, on the Centre-ville track, with Long Nine (the dam of the great mare Nettie Norton), the first quarter he ever ran, in 25 and a quarter seconds. Tim Robbins, who knows something about a horse, informed me, but a few days ago, that he was breeding the colt Privateer at the time. He was then just a little over two years old, and he was only galloped a few weeks, frequently turned out to the stable without any cooling off, and cleaned off when the other horses were got through with, and this was the first or second time that they ever breezed him through the stretch, certainly the first time they ever timed him. Now, this horse ran from one to four miles at various periods of time until he left the turf, always considered by his owner and trainer as a very game horse, but without speed. From some misfortune, which was something of a drawback in regard to his training, perhaps, he ran a snag, unknown to his owner, into his fore foot; it worked in the course of time almost through the hoof, and was not discovered until some two years after the occurrence (showing lameness most of the time during the period), when his owner had it cut out. Of course it took some time for the hoof to grow out to its natural shape, perhaps somewhat deforming the foot, and although good judges looked upon him as a remarkably fine-formed horse, with good bone, plenty of substance, kind disposition, coloring after his grandsire, Lexington, Privateer being by Lightning, and although winning several races, yet he left the turf without making a reputation for more than a game stick. If, however, he had been properly treated, there is no doubt he would have shown as one of the fastest horses in America at all distances, for a colt untrained as you may say, which runs early in the season in which he is a two-year-old, a quarter in about twenty five seconds, gives evidence of speed that ought to insure him to run a mile, as a three-year-old, over a fast track, in 1:42 or 1:43, which I believe Privateer could have done if he had been kept, while in training, in robust, vigorous form. But his owner and trainer used at that time very heavy clothing, both in the stable and on the track, and kept him in

come again, yet he was out the next year fresh and vigorous, never doing better than last season. Still his owner brings him to Jerome Park, where thousands of cartloads of new soil had been placed upon the track, making it exceedingly heavy, runs him a trial with his shoes and overweight, in 1:49, when most of the horses that had been breezed previously over the same track, could make no better time than 1:51. He has often shown to his owner that, when in high robust health, after a reasonable amount of training, he could run faster and stay longer than in any other condition he had ever had him in, yet he permits him to be trained down to a skeleton, and then expects to win with him. Poor Carver! He will be another victim who will leave the turf without a character, and from nothing but cruel and over training. I mention these few examples as landmarks for the benefit of the truly intelligent trainer, who wishes to learn, at least for the sake of success, the best mode of treatment of the horses while in training. There are many other instances that could be cited where horses have been trained to a stand still, and left the turf without a chance to show their excellence as racehorses.

An aged horse, or a horse over four years old, of course, requires a great deal less training or less work to order him than a three year old, as his form is completed: that is, his bones, cartilages, and the harder ligaments of the body are in a measure matured, and, therefore, nature has supplied, by being allowed to complete her growth, what the trainer is compelled to do in ordering the two and three year olds. They, being immature, he is obliged to, and will, if he has the proper knowledge, keep them in the highest possible condition, even in advance of their age, in order to enable them to perform their great and arduous duties as colts in their sweepstakes. In fact, my experience has been that the older the horse the less training he requires. Of course there are exceptions where their form and glutinous disposition to eat may require a great deal more work, but that is only in some instances, which, according to the adage, "That the exception makes the rule," proves the rule in this case. Allowing an aged horse to be sound in his wind and his limbs, one half the work required to order a three-year-old will condition him. Therefore, the five-year-old and upwards properly trained never ought to be broken down in training. He may get into a long race or in the mud, which is so trying upon the tendons, and break down, but it never ought to occur in training, because no such exposure or trial runs are necessary to properly condition him when he has arrived at that age. His anatomical frame being settled and complete, all the vigor and strength you can give to his muscular form the better, as it enables him to retain his speed, where if dried up, sore, or inflamed from severe or over training, he is deprived of that muscular strength, which is so necessary to carry him along with ease. Without the proper use of his muscular development in a race he is sure to show deficiency in speed, and will seldom win under those circumstances.

Now my great desire in informing my friends, the trainers, how to treat the horse of that age, or how to bring him to the post in the perfection of health, is an excuse for reiterating here what I have often mentioned heretofore, that nine horses are overtrained, where one is undertrained; and the great lesson that I am desirous of teaching is that every trainer should learn the disposition, conformation, and locomotive action of his horse, and by attentive care in watching, through all the ramifications of training, such as feeding, grooming, riding, and so forth, to note carefully every peculiarity of each and every horse under his care, and if a person of good sense and fine feeling, he will discover that seldom, if ever, are there two horses that require the same treatment, or that will stand the same amount of work. Therefore, it is the duty of the trainer to watch carefully and note the various peculiarities of every animal under his charge. If he does, and combines knowledge and intelligence, he will seldom overtrain any of the horses confided to him. Almost any trainer, of even very slight intelligence, will discover his mistake after he has ruined his horse, as after he has thrown him off his balance, and made him sore, restive, and sulky, until he has become quite unfit to be continued in training. But the intelligent trainer who carries industry, patience, and watchfulness into his profession, will notice long before it reaches that point, that he has done too much for the good of that horse, and, therefore, will speedily discontinue the mode of treatment he has been pursuing, and by falling back upon nature, restore his animal to his appetite, his sprightliness, vigor, and vim, and which is to be accomplished by feeding him less, changing his food, giving him salt every day, and plenty of grass, with an abundance of water, several days' rest, and not too much stable confinement. He will then soon see his horse come bounding out of the stable, lively, sprightly, and restored, whereas a continuance of the bad and ignorant treatment would have placed him beyond the possibility of restoration to vigor and health.

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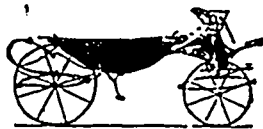
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