

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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DOMINION.

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Prize House Plans.

In the last issue of the "Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine," we published the first-prize house plan in the recent competition for houses costing under \$1,500. The award went to Mr. Joel S. Webb, of Leeds Co., Ont. The second-prize plan was furnished by Mr. A. E. Richardson, Middlesex Co., Ont.

A Mark of Sanity.

I may say that I am interested, educated, delighted and entertained with the "Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine," and would not be without it for five times its present subscription. I cannot see how any sane farmer can get along without it.

JOHN EVANS.

Addington, Ont.

Neither too Dear Nor too Often.

Your paper is getting better than ever. Weekly is not a bit too often, and we are always waiting for it with pleasure.

WILLIAM WEBB.

Frontenac, Ont.

I think you greatly improved your paper when you changed it to a weekly. It was too long to wait for it, as it is the best paper printed for the farmer to take. It is second to none in any way you take it.

GEO. E. SLY.

Leeds, Ont.

HORSES.

Hackney Action.

The structural development of the Hackney having been considered in our last issue, a no less important property belonging to the breed must now be referred to, as a trotter, however speedy he may be, is certain to receive but very scant attention from judges in the show-ring if his action is defective. Any horse, in fact, loses more than half his value if he fails to "move," and there is just as great a difference in the action of animals as there is variety in the gait of men. The Hackney in one respect stands alone amongst light horses, as he is, so to speak, one movement short, for he rarely gallops, and relies entirely upon the trot and walk as methods of locomotion. The former of these gaits is so entirely characteristic of the breed, that one can readily believe the truth of the statement that many a Hackney can trot faster than he can gallop, but, be this as it may, it must clearly be understood that no pacing—by which expression the moving of both legs on the same side of the body simultaneously is implied—or ambling is permissible in the case of a Hackney, whose trot is a trot pure and simple, and unassociated with any eccentric exaggeration whatsoever. In fact, the one, two, three, four of a true-actioned Hackney as he pounds along is veritable music in the ears of an enthusiast, and no breeder of the horse will ever, it is certain, be prevailed upon to try to do without it.

Hackney action, however, like everything else in this world, varies in quality, and in this respect, as in all others, judges have been known to differ very materially in their views, though none of any position have ever been known to give a prize to a palpably shoulder-tied horse, and few possibly would ever dream of breeding from the same. As in the case of every other breed, the shoulders, knees and pasterns are all called upon to contribute to the front action, but in no variety do the shoulders exercise such important functions as in the Hackney, and hence the importance that has been bestowed in the description of his points given to the length of their bone, which ensures a good and elastic serratus magnus muscle. If a horse does not possess this he can never be free shouldered, the result being that when he bends his knees, as he should do, it becomes a case of all action and no go, which is absolutely useless for every practical purpose, for if a trotter does not get away in front all the beauty of his going is completely lost. Consequently, plenty of freedom and liberty about his shoulders is to be regarded as being a sine qua non in the selection of a Hackney, not only on the grounds of the additional grace which such a conformation imparts to his movements, but because, assuming that his pasterns are also good, he is far less likely to knock his feet to pieces against the ground when fairly let go, than he would be if he only lifts his knees up and smashes them down again in an almost perpendicular position.

A good knee action is, of course, essential to the success of any horse, and the higher they are raised—assuming always that they are straightened out again in time to effect that most peculiar poise which many of the best Hackneys show just before their fore feet reach the ground—the more general the action of the horse will be admired. Exaggerated knee-action is usually only obtained at the expense of freedom at the shoulder, and few things are more irritating to witness at a show than a good-looking horse lifting his knees nearly to his muzzle, and then putting his feet down in almost the identical place from which he raised them.

Regarding the use that a horse makes of his pasterns when he trots, it may be explained that a short upright joint promotes concussion, and, naturally, not being so flexible as a long springy one, is not so readily bent back and then straightened when the horse is trotting. The feet in the case of the animal which has good pasterns are, in the majority of cases, picked up and put down smoothly and levelly, without any of that dishing or throwing from side to side which simply spoils the action of an otherwise fine mover. The pastern joints are, therefore, it will be seen, valuable co-operators with the shoulders in providing the Hackney with the desired front action, and when properly moved by the animal will be found to assist in bringing the feet down with that comparative gentleness which contributes so largely to their remaining in good condition.

The stifles and hocks, and, of course, the pasterns, to a small extent, are the joints which regulate the back action of a horse, the hocks bearing by far the most important share of the movement when the animal is on the trot. Naturally, the stifles must be moderately bent, else no pace will be secured, but the chief merit in a Hackney's hind action is the style in which he moves his hocks. When these are first well bent, and then brought nicely under his body, a great amount of extra ground will be covered, and if so be that his quarters are free from all

superfluous lumber, and his gaskins powerful, his propelling power will then be tremendous. No horse, Hackney or otherwise, can ever get over the ground at a reasonable pace if he leaves his back legs behind him, added to which, it deprives the action of a Hackney of the regularity which is its greatest charm, if all the four limbs do not move in unison. Many good Hackneys possess a tendency to go very wide behind between the hocks, which is unsightly, although the act is frequently accompanied by undoubted speed. It has been stated that a barrow might almost have been wheeled between the hocks of the Flying Dutchman when he was fully extended—but, then, it must be remembered that the great horse in question was not a trotter, neither does the maker of the observation appear to have remarked that his action was improved in appearance by the habit. The development of a propensity to go too wide behind, although an eyesore, need not necessarily prove that a Hackney is unsound, and, moreover, it is probably in many instances the result of a mistaken principle in schooling a young horse, by which he is encouraged to overexert himself before he is old enough to take any liberties with his action. Horses that turn in their hind feet ought never to be passed, whilst in cases when the latter are turned out, the animal will be found to be more or less cow-hocked, which, likewise, is a very serious fault in an animal who should stand square and move truly above all things.

The principal gait of a Hackney—the trot—having been discussed, a few observations may now be directed to the scarcely less important walk, which is so priceless a blessing when added to the other virtues of a good saddle horse. There is no compromise about the true Hackney walk, as the possessor of it steps out all round, throwing his front legs well before him, and his back ones right under his body in a style that makes his stride enormous. Many of the leading Hackney stallions of the present day are by no means good walkers, and more's the pity, as if they possessed the gift and transmitted it to their stock it would add most materially to their worth as sires, and to the value of the youngsters in the market.

Watch the Mare at Foaling Time.

There are several reasons why it is wise to watch a mare closely when the time for parturition is approaching. Some breeders claim that watchfulness is unnecessary, that it excites the mare, and that in ninety per cent. of cases no extraneous interference is necessary. We admit that in some cases, especially in primipera (a female bringing forth her first young), the presence of a man during or immediately preceding parturition has a tendency to increase excitement, while in others the presence of the groom who has attended to her, or the person who has habitually driven her, has a salutary effect. A young female under these conditions is experiencing sensations and pains with which she is totally unfamiliar, and if she be highly bred and of a nervous temperament, she will probably seek solitude, and if she be confined in a box stall, or a paddock, the presence of an attendant will probably increase excitement. In such cases, the attendant should keep out of her sight as much as possible, but, at the same time, be able to observe how things are going, and, if necessary, render assistance, or send promptly for an obstetricist. On the other hand, there are cases in which the mare becomes more excited when her master is out of sight. The presence of a man whom she knows well, and who has been kind to her, appears to give her confidence, and in such cases he certainly should remain. To the average mare, the presence or absence of man during this very important act has practically no effect so far as her actions are concerned. She is so interested in her own affairs that she treats man with indifference, and in a large majority of cases she will seek solitude if possible. We think that in all cases the mare should be carefully watched if possible. Parturition is eminently a physiological act, but it differs from other physiological acts in the fact that in the most favorable cases it is not performed without more or less pain and distress to the mare, and there are so many abnormal conditions liable to occur which may endanger the safety or the life of either dam or offspring, or both, many of which can be remedied or removed by a little prompt and skillful interference, that we consider it wise for the owner or his employe to be in a position to render such assistance when necessary. The duty of watching mares about to produce should be entrusted only to a person who is strictly reliable. He should have a reasonable knowledge of the manner in which normal parturition takes place, both as regards time and manner, as too hasty or precipitate interference is sometimes as disastrous as too tardy. He should have a comprehensive knowledge of the anatomy of the generative organs of the female, and, of course, of the anatomy of the foetus. He should know, and be able to detect, by manipulation, the normal presentation of the