

Horse-Shoeing.

NO. IV.

Resuming the immediate subject of these articles, let us ask the question "Why shoe horses at all?" I have seen some old-fashioned farmers, who did not travel much on hard roads, who never shod their horses. The more ambitious used to call them mean, and they in turn would laugh at foolish men for paying blacksmiths to lame their horses. Horse-trainers have learnt that all attempts to make a horse carry his head well are worse than useless. Taking as their model a young colt running with its mother, they find that this fine appearance is not obtained by checking the horse's head; but when we give him room and liberty, he assumes at once his natural and most beautiful position. So if we can get a horse to go without shoeing, it is the best and safest way. Our shoeing starves the foot of its necessary preservers. It makes the horse's action clumsy, and retards his movements. On the whole, it is doubtful whether shoeing is of so much value as we consider it. But our roads must be made hard, in order to stand the amount of traffic and be passable in the wet seasons of the year. Then we find, when putting the horse on this hard road, his feet wear too fast at the toe, and without some protection we cannot get him to do the amount of work that he is otherwise able to do. The growth of horn is insufficient for the wear; hence we resort to shoeing, and the result is we cannot see one horse out of twenty but bears some of its evil fruits. The wear at the toe is all that fails the horse, and to prevent this as easily as possible. I once saw a gentleman try gutta percha shoes on his horse; he then tried short plates around the toe, and next tried them on the top of the gutta percha; but in every case without satisfaction.

Now, the question comes to be—Can we get something to stand this wear, and that will at the same time allow the horse to have his natural footing, without retarding his lively action by its unnecessary weight, and at the same time secure the essential object of preserving sound feet? This something we can get in the shape of the French shoe already described. It is exceedingly light compared with the heavy plates usually put on. It preserves the wall of the foot from wear and breaking. The principle by which it is put on allows the sole to rest on the ground. With such a system the feet will never contract. It secures the use of the frog, which makes the horse travel with far greater ease by its elastic action. It acts also as a desirable stimulant to the frog itself, for by putting pressure on it it grows larger and stronger. A diseased frog, that is rotting away, if cleaned, and then dressed with a little calomel, will soon grow large enough, if by some means or other the horse's weight can be got to rest on it. By this system of

shoeing, broad thin flakes are spontaneously thrown off the sole without the aid of the knife.

Interfering, or cutting, will be found by this system to almost, if not entirely, disappear. The common way at present of stopping this evil is not a good one. It is generally attempted by keeping the shoe close on the inside of the foot—so close that nails cannot be put into it—and instead some are put in the toe. A much better way is to keep the shoe close and smooth on the inside, but not under the foot; then keep the outside as close as possible with safety. This throws the centre of the horse's weight nearer the inside of the foot, and in order to stand sure he steps wider, and this frees his legs. Making the inside of the shoe deep, will help some horses, while it makes others worse. One horse interferes with one part of the foot, and another with another part; so different plans must be adopted for different cases. But interfering is sometimes caused by checking the horse's head. In such cases it is useless to try to stop it by shoeing.

The nails used to hold on the French shoe are much lighter than those used for the ordinary kind; the shoe being let down in the foot, is easier kept on; the sole supporting the shoe in every direction, less strain is put on the wall of the foot by the nails. The shoe having this solid bed, makes the horse feel at perfect ease, while his foot retains all the natural advantages which were common to him in his primitive wildness. He is at the same time better adapted for a hard road than what he can be with any degree of paring, no matter how little. This shoe is admirably adapted for frost. A horse with bare feet can go tolerably well on ice. Then with the heels of this shoe turned up, and sharpened a little, it secures the double advantage of sharpened shoes and bare feet at the same time.

It is true this shoe will not answer some diseased feet; but many feet that are diseased to-day would never have been diseased had no other shoe but this ever been on them. When disease takes hold of the foot, from whatever cause it may, whether by overworking the horse, bad shoeing, or an accident, it must be dealt with according to the nature of the case. But that is no reason why we should treat sound horses in the same way. It is suitable, however, for all horses, at their first shoeing, and also for a large number who are now shod on the common principle. At first there may not be hoof enough to let the shoe down more than an eighth of an inch, for feet generally are low enough already, especially in the centre, but by practising it for a few shoeings the sole will soon fill up.

The sooner this system is adopted, the better it will be for the horse, and the more profitable for the owner.

In submitting this method of shoeing to the public, I am quite well prepared for the strong objections that will be raised against it. I have often had them to contend with before, but they only served to make me study the subject more thoroughly, and gather fresh proofs in support of the advantages of the system which I now advocate.

NO. V.

There is probably not a man who ever owned or used a horse for any length of time, who has not felt that there was something wrong with the shoeing. Dissatisfaction with the present system seems to be universal. This, no doubt, accounts for the strong and discrepant opinions entertained regarding it.

The art of shoeing is of great importance, not only to owners of horses, but indirectly to all. Even laying aside the individual services these useful animals occasionally render us all, it is on the labours of the horse, though perhaps indirectly, that every one depends for the staff of life. But to a farmer, in the busy season, the temporary lameness of a horse, on which he is depending for a share of the work, is very inconvenient; nor is it easy to estimate the full amount of the loss.

Mistakes will sometimes happen under the best care, especially with horse-shoeing; but the blame does not so much rest on mechanics as on the bad system on which they have to work. It is time to do something in the way of improving and making more useful the most valuable of animals.

I doubt not but some, into whose hands this may chance to fall, will look upon it as a suggestion in the right direction. Others may disregard it, but I feel confident that the system, the advocacy of which has been the principal object in the preceding articles, will, before many years, be largely adopted.

It is a pleasing sign of the times that a few men, possessed of master minds, are bestirring themselves to arouse the people from their dreams of fancied perfection, and are pressing upon them the necessity of technical education. It is a necessity, in order to keep pace with the moving world, as well as an advantage to all concerned, for a workman to be intelligently acquainted with the various properties of the materials with which he is employed, and thoroughly understand their relation to each other; also the place and power of every part of machinery. There is no standing still. Let us then be careful lest we go backwards. "To know the disease," in this case, as in many others, "is half the cure." The time, means and talent are in our hands: all that is left for us to do is to put ourselves in possession of the necessary knowledge.

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TO GET RID OF FLEAS.—Mr. Ely said, at the last meeting of the New York Farmers' Club, that there are two or three substances that are obnoxious to the flea—he does not like the smell of them, or they remind him of something he does not like to think about—these are carbolic acid and sulphur. If you want a barn thoroughly purged of weevil, or lice, or fleas, the best way is to fumigate it with sulphur. But if you whitewash all around the stables and posts of the yard with a wash made by adding carbolic acid to the lime, it will drive most of these pests away. Washing an animal thus infested with carbolic soap-suds will give relief.