TRAINING HORSES.

Is Overtraining or Undertraining the Greater Danger?

HON. FRANCIS LAWLEY has been giving his views in *Baily's Magazine* of Sports and Pastimes, and the *Australian* (Melbourne) has been discussing Mr. Lawley's contention that "few persons of long experience upon the turf will deny that of the two extremes to which racehorses in training are exposed—either too much or too little work—the former is by far the graver danger." Mr. Lawley's knowledge of racing, says the *Australian*, extends over a great many years. He can remember the time when long, sweating gallops were considered indispensable to getting a horse fit for a severe race. Priam, who won the Derby in 1830, and is believed by those who can still remember him, to have been the best horse they ever saw, "was forced by his inexorable trainer, William Chifney, to take three sweating gallops a week, each of them over six miles or more, when the horse was four or five years old." In this case it cannot be said that the severe treatment to which he was subjected affected the horse's racing prospects, as Priam won the cups of his day. Mr. Lawley, however, explains this by assuming that Priam was a horse with an iron constitution. As usual with persons who believe most in what they saw in the heyday of youth, he thinks Priam stood the sweating gallops because he was made of sterner stuff than the racehorse of to-day. We, who have no sympathy with the old methods, may be excused for wondering whether Priam would not have done just as well under a more humane system of training. In those days there was very little variation in the mode of preparing a horse. All his opponents had to go through the same trying ordeal, and may not Priam's superiority have been simply due to the fact that he could stand the strain put upon his limbs and constitution better than his equine contemporaries?

There is no doubt that the modern trainer acts less upon set rules, and pays more attention to the nature of his horse than did the old-time trainers who flourished at the beginning of the century. That some horses thrive on hard work, whereas others race best when let off lightly, is now thoroughly admitted, and sweating is almost out of date. William Day, it is true, holds to the doctrine that a horse is all the better for being worked until loss of appetite testifies to hard tasks disagreeing with him, and he laughs at the idea of a horse carrying any superfluous flesh being fit to race, but other trainers equally successful believe in the efficacy of running some horses "big and above themselves." If Mr. Savill, who trained The Assyrian when he won the Melbourne cup, were asked his opinion about racehorses being overtrained in England, he would say at once that no such thing exists. His opinion, as expressed in a contemporary soon after his return to England, was that in long distance races the horses are seldom given enough work to prepare them for a severe contest. What Mr. Lawley objects to in the present day system seems to be not so much the modus operandi of the trainer as the pernicious plan of racing in vogue. He is pleased that sweating has gone out of fashion, but claims that with so much sprint racing the necessity of teaching horses "to jump in tip toes so that they may go out of slips like greyhounds" is even more injurious to the animal than was the old plan of long gallops and heats. The result of this constant racing over short courses has made the modern racehorse a much more nervous animal than his old-time predecessor. Colts or fillies which run fifteen or twenty times as two-year olds seldom last more than a couple of seasons, and the majority of them are ruined before they reach the end of their second year on the turf. If this is true as regards England, how much worse must the state of affairs be in America, where the babies of the turf are worked a great deal harder than in England. Our correspondent "Hidalgo" has often called attention to this grievance in America, and congratulated us on the different state of affairs existing in Australia, but as long as we allow two-year-olds to race over three furlongs we cannot take any credit to ourselves on this head. Fond as they are of sprinting in England, the Jockey Club takes care that two-year olds do not run less than half a mile, and it is hoped that the newly-formed Jockey club will effect reforms which will check the ruin of youngsters in America.

Mr. Lawley quotes from John Kent to show that horses trained for long distances are often galloped until they come to lose all their pace. No one will deny that this occurs. We have seen instance of it here and with horses being trained for cups. Their mentors feel that they will not stay out the distance unless they are given a real old-time preparation, and in some cases—rare, perhaps—the treatment is overdone, and although the horse may be as hard as a prize-fighter or a sculler he is bereft of all dash. Mr. Lawley gives some instances to show how often within his memory "the voice of nature has cried out against over-training by the victories of horses after they had been absent from exercise for a week or more." We need not give all Mr. Lawley's illustrations back to 1833, but Hermit's Derby win in 1867, after having broken a blood-vessel ten days before the race, is familiar to most of our readers. Custance, who was on Mr. Chaplin's colt when the accident happened, has recently described this incident fully, and put it on record that in his opinion Hermit won the Derby through breaking that blood-vessel and getting a much-wanted holiday. The cases of Memoir and Amiable are more recent. The former started at a long price for the Leger, because she had been stopped in her work, and could not in her trainer's opinion have any chance. Amiable was idle for some days before the Oaks, yet she out stayed her opponents with decisively. Gangway's case cropped up after Mr. Lawley's article appeared, and was more noticeable than any of the illustrations he gives. This horse put his stifle out a fortnight before the Steward's Cup at Goodwood. It was not put in again for three days, yet the horse started and beat a large field, carrying the fair weight of 8 stone 7 lb.

In Australia it is just as easy to find examples of horses winning severe races after an interruption in their preparation had seemingly disposed of their chance. Zulu, who won the Melbourne Cup, is one instance, and the Czar, who ran second, was in much the same plight. Bravo was so bad ten days before the race that 1000 to 1 was actually laid against him, but once his trainer patched his foot up the real trouble was gone, and horse won despite his being minus a few gallops he would have done but for an accident putting him on the shelf for some days. Carnage was idle for some time during a critical part of his Derby preparation, yet he won his race and showed better form all through than meeting than he did in Sydney, when supposed to be much fitter. Le Grand's victory in the Ch. V. race afforded clear proof that a horse may stay a journey without having been trained over the distance. He was worked over short courses with a view to the Newmarket handicap, and the first long gallop he did was in the Australian cup, yet a week after running second to Malua in a sprint he stayed to the end of one of the truest-run three-mile races we have had. We do not believe half the stories we hear about races "being left on the track," and for a Melbourne cup we would rather back a horse that has done his work regularly than one that has not, but the history of the turf discovers many cases which can be quoted in support of Mr. Lawley's assertion that overtraining racehorses is by no means an uncommon thing.

TALES OF THE HORSE.

An Interesting Letter from New Brunswick.

THE following letter from a New Brunswick correspondent *of the Turf, Field and Farm* contains much interesting matter:

Our rivers are frozen over, and already there are signs of an early setting in of the ice-racing craze, so prevalent last winter. This is as it should be. There is mighty little money in ice-racing, but there are "dead loads of fun." The significant figure, that money cuts in the arrangement, makes pure love of sport all the more prominent as a feature. Then, many horses and many men that are very busy in the summer have a season of comparative leisure in winter, and ice races enable men and horses to get out from home and enjoy a little fun and exercise that otherwise they would miss. The horsemen of Hampton, Kings County, the home of Arc Light, 2.18½, met a few days ago and arranged to give a big ice meeting as early in the winter as practicable Whatever the Hampton boys take hold of goes, and we may expect a good programme with liberal purses, and a well-managed meeting. Other places will be sure to fall in line.

We still see now and then a bit of choice horse-flesh changing hands. A.C. Taylor of St. Stephen, who drove the stallion Edgardo, in all his important races, after the death of J. H. Kehoe, has bought of Mr. Thomas Irwin a fine mare by Olympus, with a colt by her side, sired by Edgardo, 2.13½. This is the cross that "produced Tomah, 2.13½, and wide-awake horsemen are hastening to "get on." I don't know them. That's what I would be doing were I in their place. A case of the reverse of this, of a man making a sharp departure from blood lines that have given him good results, has recently been brought quite prominently to the notice of maritime province horsemen, by the arrival of Mr. Basil H. Bell, of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, from Independence, Iowa, accompanied by the great blood mare Jessica, by Bellwood, with a colt at foot by Allerton, 2.09¼. This mare is the dam of Israel 2.19¼, by Banpart, and Chyola 2.21¼, by Allie Clay, both sons of Almonte 33. Now you could not have kicked me, and a good many other conservative horsemen, away from that Almont cross. And it is "pesos to peanuts," that in spite of the 2.09¼ of Allerton, and the fact that he has already sired speed, that this youngster never will achieve the success as a performer that has attended his half-brothers mentioned above. And yet the man who has the courage to take a mare from Nova Scotia to Iowa to breed her certainly deserves well at the hands of the fickle goddess, who, I sincerely believe, does admire "grit." The writer, and all other horsemen free from envy, wish Mr. Bell every success, and we hope the youngster, whom I hear he calls Musgrave, may eclipse the record of his sire. A gratifying feature of the past season's racing, is the number of horses that have entered the list on Maritime Province tracks. There are Pilot, Jr., Rampart, Jr., Stranger, Nellie G., Lolando, Rose L., and Deceiver that I know of, and probably more. It is true that only Stranger and Pilot, Jr., have shown a marked degree of excellence, but it is only two years since Speculation, the first New Brunswick bred horse to trot below 2.30 on a home track, entered the list. By the way, Speculation, 2.25, and his owner, George Carvill, who trains and drove him, having been under the ban of disqualification since September. The horse was entered in the Bangor races, and the judges, considering Carvill a little unruly, sought to put up another driver in his place; whereupon George flatly refused to give up the horse. It was not so much antagonism to the judges as a matter of sentiment. He always trained, owned and drove the horse. He is fairly well-to-do, and does not need the revenue from his racing qualities. He never has allowed anyone else to drive him, and he never will while he owns him. It is charged by some that Carvill was not in a condition to drive. This we hope is untrue.

The note, in a recent issue of your paper to the effect that Jock Bowen thought the pacer, Blanche Louise, in condition, could beat any pacer living, reminds me that this same Jock Bowen once thought that the chestnut mare, Lady Foxie, by Daniel Lambert, could just wipe the earth with a little bay pacer called William C., owned by some man away up in New Hampshire, and driven by Marsh. He thought it just $5000 worth. On the 19th or 20th of July, 1881, the matter was tested at Beacon Park, near Boston, and a corporal's guard of trotting enthusiasts saw the test. But Jock and Foxie were conurners in the little procession, and hardly far enough in to hear the band play. The three heats averaged about 2.27, and it was the first harness work I ever saw below 2.30. The point of this is, that Jock's "dixit" on the Blanche Louise matter would probably turn out much the same way. After the William C. Foxie match John Trout brought out a little bay trotter called John H., hitched with a running mate and managed to lower the record at that way of going, which was then about 2.15. The runner, who had a record of 1.45, was about 16½ hands high, and the trotter about 14½, I should think. At every jump the big horse would almost lift the little fellow off the ground. The attempt was a failure on account of the refusal of the trotter to keep to his work, but they made the third quarter in thirty-two seconds. Two or three days later, at Mystic Park, Medford, my provincial soul was delighted by the victory of the New Brunswick bred gelding, J. P. Morris, by Robert R. Morris, 645, out of a thoroughbred daughter of the well-known running mare Lucy Long, in 2.20¼. In 1878 I had seen the same horse fourth in a four-year-old race in 3.04. It is a noteworthy fact and somewhat of a facer for the anti-thoroughbred men, that this 2.20¼ performance by the half-bred son of Robt. R. Morris is the most meritorious of any by that speedy family. L. I. F.

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