

Be Above-board.

Correspondents who do not send in their full name and P. O. address with communications and questions must not be disappointed when they do not appear in the paper. Our rules, published plainly in every issue, make it clear that we cannot answer anonymous enquiries. We do not want them for publication, but as a guarantee of genuineness. In several cases incorrect addresses have been given, also. We ask all to deal fairly with us in this matter, and also to bear in mind that many questions involve a great deal of time and research to answer properly.

Proud of Canada.

The Wm. Weld Co., Ltd.:

Gentlemen,—Enclosed please find \$2.50, as per your favor of Dec. 14th, for my own subscription and also for my son's, G. W. Slade, New Liskeard P. O., Ontario. I have just received the Christmas number of the "Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine." Canada's progress seems to have got into many channels, yours among others, for I feel sure that you have never turned out a better edition than the one now before me. I am proud of Canada and her foremost agricultural journal. Wishing you a prosperous year for 1906, I am,

Yours truly,

GEORGE SLADE.

New York State, Dec. 11, 1905.

HORSES.**Bitting Horses.**

The value of a horse, and the comfort and safety with which he can be driven or ridden, depends greatly upon his "mouth"; or, in other words, the manner in which he responds to the tension of the lines or reins upon the bit. In order that both horse and driver may be comfortable, he (the horse) should not be afraid of the bit, but should bear gently upon it, at the same time must not pull hard or fight it. A horse's "mouth" depends largely upon his early education, or the manner in which he has been taught to respond to pressure upon the bit. The too common practice of allowing a colt to run unbitted until he has reached the age at which he is to be put to work, and then, without any previous preparation, putting a bit into his mouth, putting him to work or to drive, is responsible for the large percentage of poor-mouthed horses, some of which have apparently such tender mouths that they cannot bear any reasonable pressure upon the bit, but are continuously "letting go" of it, salivating, throwing their heads up in the air, and distributing the saliva over the driver or rider, and acting generally in an irritated manner if pressure be put upon the reins. Others, again, pay little attention to reasonable pressure on the bit, but appear to want absolutely no pressure or extreme pressure. They will probably walk fairly well with a loose rein, but so soon as asked to trot will lug or pull upon the bit to such an extent as to make the application of the necessary restraint both uncomfortable and tiresome for the driver. There are many other undesirable habits which horses acquire from want of reasonable and rational attention to "bitting." Horses should be "educated," not "broken" to the bit. In fact, the distinction between the two words should always be borne in mind by those handling young horses. The angles of a horse's mouth are very sensitive, being highly supplied with nerves and clothed with very fine, delicate tissue. The object in "bitting" should be to retain the sensibility to touch, and teach the animal to respond readily and promptly to moderate, or, we might say, slight pressure.

There are a great many patterns of bits, many of which are so severe that they should not be used under any circumstances. The average horse, if properly bitted, does not require a severe bit, but is safe and pleasant to drive with an ordinary jointed or straight one. The use of severe bits irritates the mouth to such an extent that he becomes excited, and will pull harder than on an easy one. This more or less constant irritation excites inflammation, with a consequent effusion which has a tendency to become organized, the parts become thickened and indurated, or calloused, and lose their sensibility to the touch on account of the abnormal coverings formed over the nerves, and the horse becomes a confirmed puller, and is often unsafe to drive unless with a very severe bit. Of course there are some horses so utterly void of brains, or so full of congenital cussedness, that, notwithstanding all care, will never have good mouths, but, fortunately, they are comparatively few.

There are many methods of "bitting" horses, but I think any reasonable man will admit that the process should be somewhat gradual. The writer approves of the following plan. It requires

time and some trouble, but we think it is time and trouble well spent, as things done in a hurry are seldom well done. The bitting process may be begun at an early age—the first winter of a colt's life is a good time—but be it delayed or neglected until he has reached a greater age the process should be the same. A light bridle—say a common riding bridle—with an ordinary snaffle bit (Fig. 1) should be put on, and left on while

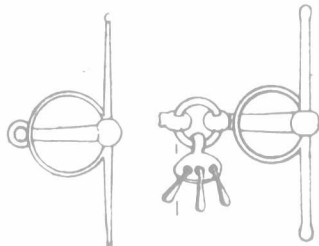


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

the colt is in a box stall, paddock or yard, once or twice daily, until he becomes accustomed to the bit in his mouth, and ceases fighting it. A bit called a "breaking snaffle" (Fig. 2), with a tag in the center, which hangs down over the tongue, is sometimes used for this purpose, but I have found that it irritates the colt more than the plain snaffle, hence I prefer the latter.

When the colt has become accustomed to the bit, as he will soon do, and will drink and even eat with it in his mouth, slight tension should be applied, in order to teach him to yield to the



Fig. 3.

restraint of the bit. This tension can be best applied by the use of a "dumb jockey" (Fig. 3), which should be put on for a few hours once or twice daily in stall or paddock. The bearing reins should be gradually shortened as increased tension is required, until he holds his head in the position we desire. A portion at each end of each rein is elastic, and when the colt stretches out his head the elasticity allows the reins to lengthen, but when he ceases pressing it will fetch the nose back to the desired position.

After he has worn this a few times he may be taken out, with a long rein attached, and lounged. The cut shows a horse with lounging rein attached to the nose band. A dumb jockey can be improvised by placing a surcingle around the colt; a buckle should be attached to it on each side, about three or four inches from the center, and a strap extend from each buckle to the bit ring. It is much better if a portion of each rein be elastic. This elasticity can be supplied with a spiral wire spring or a foot or two of round rubber, or a small rubber hose. The reins, as with the jockey, are gradually shortened as required. This practice, in whatever way the tension is applied, has the effect of causing the patient to yield to restraint without altering the tissue of the mouth, and we find that horses that are "bitted" somewhat after this fashion usually have "good mouths." Of course it is quite possible to spoil a horse's mouth, even if he has had the desirable education. Care in the selection of bits should not cease when the animal is actually put to work either in harness or saddle.

We consider the ordinary jointed bit (Fig. 4), or the ordinary straight bit (Fig. 5), either of which may be covered with leather, or rubber if

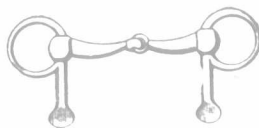


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

desired, is the proper kind of a bit to drive on the road or team horse.

When a horse has acquired the habit of pulling,

either from bad management or other causes, the idea then should be to use a bit with which the driver is able to control him, and one which at the same time will not irritate and worry him. That is, one that is not severe unless heavy pressure is put upon it. For this purpose we think the ordinary double-ringed bit (Fig. 6) the best.

The cheek pieces of the bridle are buckled into the inner rings, and the lines into the outer. In some cases it is necessary to have a noseband from one inner ring over the nose to the other, but this is seldom necessary. With this bit the horse will be perfectly comfortable, until he commences to pull, and then the bit slipping through the inner rings causes pressure upon the mouth, and unless he be a very bad one he will cease pulling.

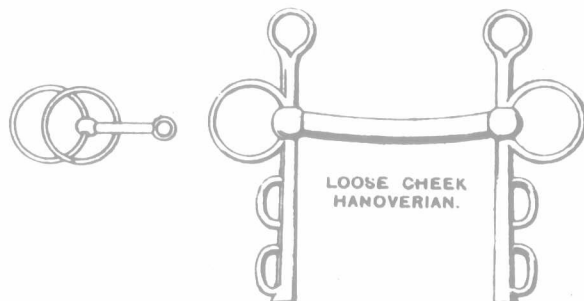


Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Another bit which is humane, and gives good satisfaction with pullers, is the Liverpool or the Hanoverian bit (Fig. 7). These bits are made in many styles, some with solid and some with loose cheeks, but they all work upon the same principle, and the different styles differ principally in degree and appearances.

The cheek pieces of the bridle are buckled into the holes on the upper end of the cheek pieces, and a curb chain runs from a hook in said hole on one side, under the lower jaw to a hook in the hole on the other side. The lines are buckled in the lower or second hole of the cheek pieces. The tension applied depends upon the tightness of the chain, and upon the leverage given to the lines, which is regulated by their point of attachment to the bit. If bits of this nature are worn simply for appearances, the chain can be left slack and the lines buckled into the bit rings, and then the action on the mouth is simply that of an ordinary straight or jointed bit, as these bits are made in both patterns. This form of bit with slight curb is often used on heavy-harness horses, especially on those that do not arch the neck nicely, as the curb has a tendency to cause the horse to hold his nose slightly towards the breast,

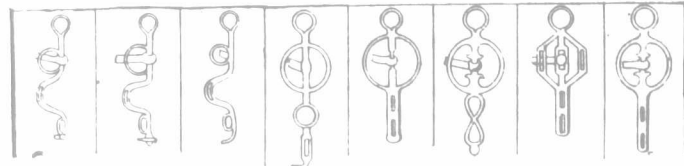


Fig. 8.

and thereby arch his neck, and at the same time the amount of curb used does not distress him.

For riding purposes, the common snaffle, such as we recommended for the first lesson in bitting, is the proper thing. It is good form to use two bits, the second one being a curb, on the same principle as the Liverpool bit, but there is no bit ring, and the cheek pieces may be long or short, as the rider desires. The good horseman usually applies little tension on this bit, but guides his horse principally by the snaffle, the curb being worn largely for appearance, but can be promptly used in case of necessity. The plain-ringed snaffle is sometimes used, but the rings should be large, in order to prevent a side-puller from pulling them into the mouth, which accident is prevented by the bars on the barred snaffle.



Fig. 9.

The principal idea to be borne in mind in the selection of a bit is to select one that will not irritate the mouth, and at the same time one with which the driver or rider will have control of his horse, should he be one that is liable to pull, but the ordinary horse that has been well "bitted" is safe with an ordinary straight or jointed bit. "WHIP."

A Splendid Knife.

I beg to acknowledge with thanks your premium farmer's knife. It is a splendid one. Beauharnois Co. D. McMILLAN.