

THE HORSE

Old Doc.

BY THE "HIRED MAN."

It was a dingy, old stable with uneven floor and patch-work stalls, decorated with festoons of cobwebs, that, answering to the influence of wandering air currents, swayed to and fro above the horses that munched as contentedly as though the most modern of stables were theirs. And you talk about horses! With one exception, great big, sleek fellows they were that called forth the pride-gleam in the owner's eyes, and also a little pardonable exaggeration as he extolled the numerous virtues of each horse in turn. "Yes sir! If I do say it myself take 'em all round, there ain't none better; an' that one in the end stall—though he ain't anything special to look at—there used to be a day when he hadn't an equal in these parts—eh, Doc, you old rascal, had 'em all skinned to a finish hadn't you? Get over here. Allus got your hay under your feet. Hold up will you!" Grumblingly he gathered up and shoved the hay down in the manger while the old horse, an ugly gray, snapped and cracked his teeth in apparent angry disapproval.

"Bit cranky isn't he?"
"Nothin' to hurt 'cept with strangers. When I first got him though, he was a terror an' no mistake—got him cheap on that account—talk about a wicked temper, he had it. But I'm a bit snappy myself, an' right here in this stall we settled on who'd be boss—by George! didn't he put up a fight! I carried the marks of his teeth for many a long day. Never came across anything in my life that could take so much punishment. Hammer him! I everlastingly hammered him, an' when he finally gave in I was ready to drop. He never knew how near he was to beating me. Never had no more trouble with him, an' a better horse never looked through a collar; true as steel always."

"Pretty old? Well yes; as horses go; he's getting on, twenty-seven or so, but good for a day's work yet."

"Suppose though, you don't work him much now?"

"No, that's one thing the boys are allus jawin' about; 'keepin' an' old skate like that around eatin' his head off—sell him, or knock him on the head.—That's the way they put it."

The old gentleman lapsed into silence and stared moodily at the floor.

"Guess that's the way of the world. When animal or man outlives his usefulness it's few that want him to stay."

"Maybe so, maybe so," came the gloomy reply.

"But they don't understand, the boys don't. You know I didn't allus farm. Used to be a time when I had a growin' family with nothin' between them and the road but these two hands o' mine and Doc. He made dollars for me, and dollars for them while they were growin' and sleepin'. But they're growed up now, an' in their eyes he's old and ugly, and cranky, and nothin' but a nuisance. They like somethin' fat and sleek that'll prance a bit when hitched. They don't know that there was a day when Doc's crooked old legs were as straight and supple as the best, an' they laugh, when I tell em' they never drew a line over a better horse. But it doesn't matter. So long as I've a home he'll have one too; an' if he passes out before I do, there's a spot up there in the bush I've picked out, where the spring sun allus shines warm, an' there I'll bury him."

Taking a Horse's Pulse.

There are a great many people who have worked with horses all their lives and yet cannot take a horse's pulse when occasion requires. Dr. Leonard Pearson, when describing "The Examination of a Sick Horse," writes the following regarding the pulse:

The pulses may be counted and its character may be determined at any point where a large artery occupies a situation close to the skin and above a hard tissue, such as a bone, cartilage, or tendon. The most convenient place for taking the pulse of the horse is at the jaw. The external maxillary artery runs from between the jaws, around the lower border of the jawbone and up on the outside of the jawbone to the face. It is located immediately in front of the heavy muscles of the cheek. Its throb can be felt most distinctly just before it turns around the lower border of the jawbone. The balls of the first and second or of the second and third fingers should be pressed lightly on the skin over this artery when its pulsations are to be studied.

The normal pulse of the healthy horse varies in frequency as follows:

Stallion, 28 to 32 beats per minute.

Gelding, 33 to 38 beats per minute.

Mare, 34 to 40 beats per minute.

Foal 2 to 3 years old, 40 to 50 beats per minute.

Foal 6 to 12 months old, 45 to 60 beats per minute.

Foal 2 to 4 weeks old, 70 to 90 beats per minute.

The pulse is accelerated by the digestion of rich feed, by hot weather, exercise, excitement and alarm. It is slightly more rapid in the evening than it is in the morning. Well-bred horses have a slightly more rapid pulse than sluggish-cold-blooded horses. The pulse should be regular; that is, the separate beats should follow each other after intervals of equal length, and the beats should be of equal fullness or volume.

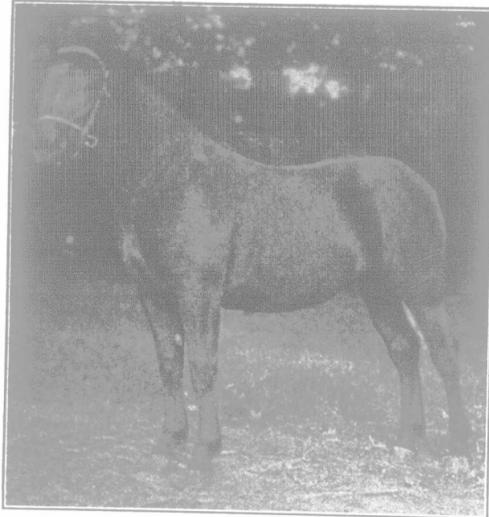
In disease, the pulse may become slower or more rapid than in health. Slowing of the pulse may be caused by old age, great exhaustion, or excessive cold. It may be due to depression of the central nervous system, as in dunniness, or be the result of the administration of drugs, such as digitalis or strophanthus.

A rapid pulse is almost always found in fever, and the more severe the infection and the weaker the heart, the more rapid is the pulse. Under these conditions, the beats may rise to 80, 90 or even 120 per minute. When the pulse is above 100 per minute the outlook for recovery is not promising, and especially if this symptom accompanies high temperature or occurs late in an infectious disease. In nearly all of the diseases of the heart and in anæmia the pulse becomes rapid.

The pulse is irregular in diseases of the heart, and especially where the valves are affected. The irregularity may consist in varying intervals between the beats or the dropping of one or more beats at regular or irregular intervals. The latter condition sometimes occurs in chronic diseases of the brain. The pulse is said to be weak, or soft, when the beats are indistinct, because little blood is forced through the artery by each contraction of the heart. This condition occurs when there is a constriction of the vessels leading from the heart, and it occurs in certain infectious and febrile diseases, and is an indication of heart weakness.

Care of the Stallion During the Breeding Season.

During May, June and July stallions are called upon for very heavy service and if they are not in proper fit their season's work is likely to be disappointing to the owners of both stallion and mares. Many grooms labor under an erroneous conception of what really constitutes fitness in a stallion. A super abundance of flesh when associated with soft, flabby muscles and a low degree of vigor is not conducive to success as measured by the number of foals left and the size, strength and vitality of the offspring. Entire horses of the draft breeds naturally carry a good percentage of flesh when in health but this is not an unailing sign of constitution and vigor which are of paramount importance to the owners of the mares with which the horses are mated. The popularity of the heavy horse also induces many grooms to add to the weight and sub-



A Canadian-bred Two-year-old Belgian Stallion.

stance of the stallions in their charge for by so doing they can improve the appearance of their horses and increase their business. They, too frequently think over much of the advertising value of flesh and forget the evil consequences which sometimes result from it. Plenty of feed is necessary but so are regular exercise in the open air and a great deal of grooming.

The stallions that are worked between seasons or allowed to run in large out-door paddocks are most easily fitted for the breeding season in the spring. Their muscles are hard and the body functions are performed in a regular and normal manner. Horses that have been housed in box stalls through the winter and spring months are likely to lack vigor, stamina and virility. It is this class that require very careful and thorough fitting for the breeding season and expert management during the months of May, June and July. Now that the preparation period is over and active service is begun particular attention in this article will be given to the horse at his stand or on the route.

FEEDING.—Tone and vigor are the chief essentials in a stallion at this season of the year and they are obtained by a proper balance of feed, exercise, grooming and a regulation of the service. It is not the number of mares a horse will cover that determines his success, but rather the number of mares he stops. One successful veterinarian in the United States gives a rather severe prescription for a horse not working right and it is: "Halve the ration and double the exercise when the stallion is not giving a vigorous, sure service."

In some of the best Ontario studs alfalfa is fed as a roughage and where it is not available bran is mixed with the grain ration to take its place. Protein and ash are prime requisites in any muscle-building, vigor-giving ration and alfalfa contains these. However, good clean mixed hay cannot be spurned this year and if properly fed will give good satisfaction. It is easier to regulate the time for when the horse remains at one stand all the time for when on the route different grades and quality of hay are found at practically all the stops.

The stallion on a route usually gets sufficient exercise and will stand fairly heavy feeding, especially of grain, but only a limited quantity of hay should be fed except at the evening meal. Most grooms prefer rolled oats and if the horse is accustomed to them at home arrangements should be made ahead at the different stands to have a supply on hand. Very few places have a supply of alfalfa hay, and bran may be fed to take its place. Both hay and grain should be of first-class quality. Grass can usually be obtained and it is considered good practice to allow the horse to pick a little each day. Water should be given before and after meals and even between meals if the horse appears thirsty. Any change in feed, travelling on a hot day after a heavy meal, together with sexual excitement tend to weaken the digestive organs and predispose them to disease. Stallions on a route are more subject to digestive troubles than those standing in their own stables.

It is a common practice and not a bad one to give a steamed feed or a bran mash on Saturday nights. A little sulphur, as a blood purifier, and a little salt petre, to keep the kidneys right, are often given but when a horse is in good health he requires no drugs to keep him so. Good feed with regular and sufficient exercise should keep the body organs functioning properly. Drugs do more harm than good to a healthy horse. Neither should drugs be used to stimulate the generative organs for while they may increase the sexual appetite they impair the powers of the horse to reproduce himself and leave foals. The reputation of a sire is never built up on the number of mares he covers; it is the number of mares he stops and the quality of his foals that decide his value.

EXERCISE AND GROOMING.—The travelling stallion usually gets about all the exercise that is good for him but heavy horses standing at their home stables should have at least five miles per day at the walk. In Scotland it is generally agreed that ten miles per day on the route and rest on Sundays is about all that is good for the stallion but much better results have been obtained when the horse travelled from stand to stand in the ordinary way than when shipped on the train. Stallion owners in this country consider that 25 to 30 miles a week is ample. In the matter of exercise as in feeding, regularity is very important.

Grooming does more than make a horse appear slick and smooth. It keeps the skin clean and the pores open which has a stimulating effect on the entire animal system. Grooming will save feed and thus relieve the digestive organs of much useless work. A lack of exercise and neglect in grooming are responsible in many cases for draft horses showing very bad around the feet and legs. The feet require attention and if the roads are dry and hot it is a good plan to poultice the feet occasionally.

Some grooms wash the stallion after every service in order to run no risk of the horse contracting any disease from a mare. Other stallion men do not take this precaution unless a mare should show signs of disorder. It is wise to examine the stallion at least once a week and wash the sheath with a weak antiseptic solution, then apply lard or vaseline.

REGULATION OF SERVICE.—The number of mares to which a stallion may be bred in a day with satisfactory results and without injury to his constitution is a moot question. It is difficult for a groom to refuse the horse on a mare that has come a distance, consequently some grooms will breed their horses to mares almost any hour of the day or night, allowing only about an hour between services. While the popularity of the horse may be indicated by the number of mares he breeds, it does not prove that a large number of mares get in foal. If stallion owners and grooms would limit the number of mares to two or three a day, and have at least three hours between services, there would be a much larger percentage of foals. Of course, the groom should use judgment. If the stallion is "stopping" the mares the number might be increased, but every horse has his limitation. It must be remembered, however, the reputation of a sire depends on the number of strong, vigorous foals he leaves, rather than on the number of mares he covers. Sometimes two and even three covers are made in one day but it is only a strong, virile horse that will stand it and such heavy service should not be long continued. A mature stallion may be safely used on 100 to 130 mares during the season; a three-year-old about sixty mares. If sixty per cent. of the mares bred get in foal, it is considered very good, although some horses get as high as eighty per cent.

The weather is often cold the fore part of the season and the mares do not conceive. If, during this time, the groom accepts a large number of mares, and they return later in the season when the milk mares are coming around it over-taxes the stallion and results in a low percentage of foals. It is often wise not to breed too many new mares the first few trips over the route.

Before turning the colts on grass it is advisable to look over their feet and trim them to the proper shape. In order to preserve the correct position of the leg the natural form of the foot must be guarded. Allowing a colt to go for any length of time with long toes may tend to unsoundness of the legs.

While steady work will not harm in-foal mares it should be remembered that there is a considerable drain on the system which entitles them extra consideration.

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