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STUMBLING HORSES.

Some horses are so sure-footed in their action that they never stumble under any circumstances—or practically never. But the majority of horses are liable to stumble on occasion, through some cause or other, while in some cases horses are, to a greater or less extent, in the habit of stumbling. When a horse is habitually apt or inclined to stumble, the stumbling constitutes a fault of action, and a bad fault, too, as there is always connected with it the possibility, if not the probability, of its entailing serious consequences, sooner or later, through the animal coming down.

The action of some horses is so low at the walk and trot that they are prone to stumble whenever the ground is at all rough or uneven. In some cases horses are by nature very slipshod in their action, failing to lift their feet sufficiently high off the ground, and this may give rise to stumbling, whilst sometimes sheer laziness, which causes the horse to move in a slovenly manner, is the cause of this evil. A propensity to stumble is pretty commonly found in horses whose conformation makes them heavy in front, and in those that go much on their forehead, whilst the failing is very liable to occur in the case of horses whose fore legs are weak or groggy or actually unsound.

A line of distinction must be drawn

between the special and habitual propensity to stumble, which is due to one of the causes mentioned above—and which, as has been said, constitutes a fault of action—and that liability to stumble owing to some accidental cause to which horses generally—barring the most sure-footed—are subject. Fatigue and weakness, or want of condition, are common causes of a horse accidentally stumbling, as, often when a horse is tired or not fit, it fails to lift its feet sufficiently clear of the ground. Very frequently the carelessness of the rider or driver is entirely to blame when the horse stumbles owing to failure to keep the horse properly in hand and sufficiently collected. In some cases horses are caused to stumble easily on account of their feet growing unduly long at the toes, as usually occurs when the horse is allowed to go too long without being re-shod. Sometimes one finds that a horse is unusually liable to stumble for a short time after being provided with new shoes, the evil ceasing as soon as the shoes have become worn a bit. Young, raw horses, which have not as yet learned to move in a properly balanced manner, being apt to sprawl, and lying heavy on the bit from sheer awkwardness and greenness are frequently given to stumbling occasionally, but matters soon improve in this respect, as a rule, as their education becomes more complete. Finally, stumbling is often caused by a pure accident, the horse somehow or other missing his foothold.

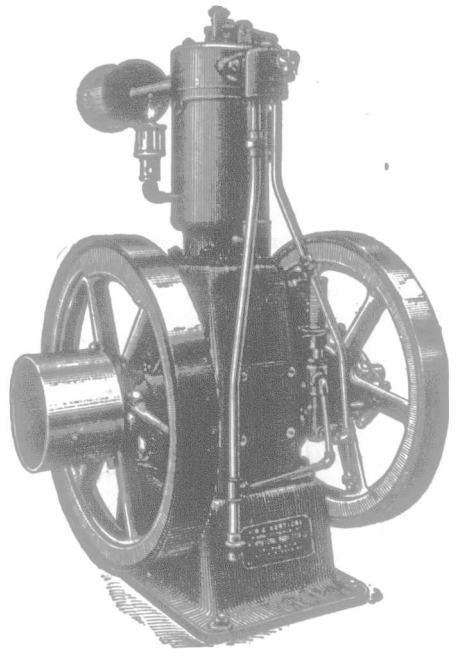
The prevention of stumbling in all cases, of course, rests with the rider or driver, who it need hardly be said, must always exercise the necessary care to avoid the risk of stumbling as far as possible by keeping his horse—or horses—well in hand and properly collected. The chances of a stumble occur in reduced to a minimum when the horse is kept collected and is moving in a well-balanced manner. There are some horses that may safely be ridden with a slack rein, but, as a general rule, the rider or driver simply invites a stumble by a slack rein, and to ride or drive a horse without keeping a sufficient feeling on the bit, is a risk that a good horseman will not incur, excepting perhaps, when he is quite sure of his horse, though even then it ought not to be done, and certainly is careless.

Seeing that fatigue often gives rise to stumbling, special care must be exercised to keep the horse well in hand and up to the bit when it is tired. The more liable a horse is to stumble, the more carefully should the animal be ridden or driven. As regards the curing of an habitual and special propensity to stumble, it depends much upon the cause of the evil whether or not it can be remedied. When it is due to low action, it may be possible to improve the latter by careful training. Thus, it is often found that horses whose action is of the "daisy-cutting" style, gradually learn to lift their feet up a bit higher when they are continually taken over rough and uneven ground. Similarly, when a horse's action is so slovenly as to cause frequent stumbling, it may, under favorable conditions, be improved by subjecting the horse to a course of training with this object in view. When the fault is due to the horse being heavy in front, or going too much on its forehead, it may be feasible to remedy this by teaching the animal to balance itself better and to bring its hind legs more underneath its body when moving, thus lightening the forehead. In frequent cases an habitual tendency to stumble admits of no cure.—H. F., in *Livestock Journal*.

MR. HILL ON INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION.

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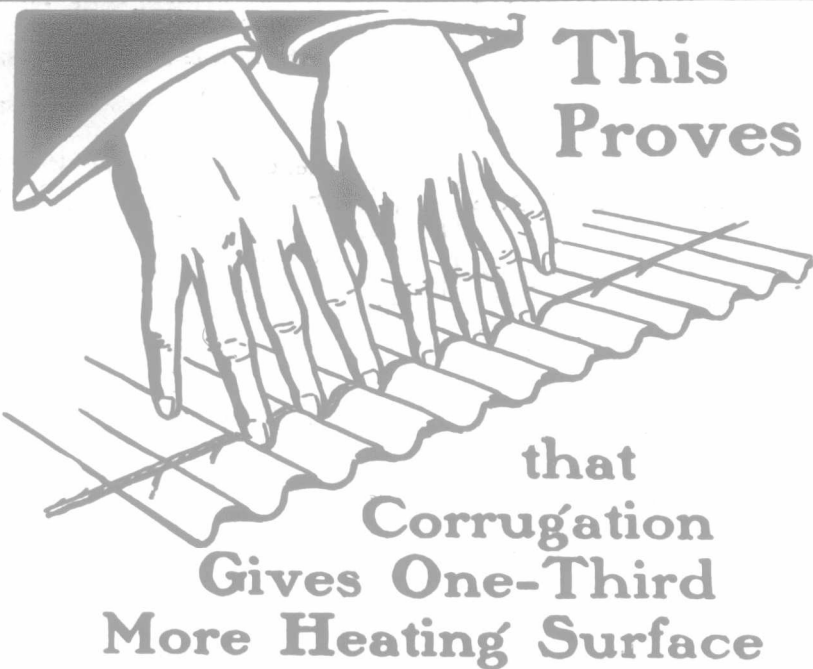
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