

HOW TO PUT HORSES IN CONDITION.

From the North British Agriculturist.

By proper feeding, exercise, and grooming, is this important end to be attained. There is and can be no patent or rapid process. Time and good management are equally requisite. The plan pursued must be identical with that followed in the training of those athletes who are to perform feats of strength or agility. He who would enter the ring with a Tom Sayers, or try a few miles with Deerfoot, must live for months on light and digestible but concentrated and nutritive fare; by constant and appropriate exertion must keep his body and limbs firm, light, and active; by friction and baths preserve in all their integrity the important purifying functions of the skin, and by reasonable sleep and rest recruit the powers of life. Under such training, with avoidance alike of stimulants and depressing agencies, great activity and vigour are obtained; and it is also noteworthy that such a system of self-denial is favourable to the development of the mental as well as the physical powers. Dr. John Brown, the author of the inimitable "Rab and his Friends," aptly says in his excellent papers upon "Health" that "there is a religion of the body as well as, and greatly helpful of, the religion of the soul." And in the busy pushing population, especially of large towns, this is too often lost sight of. The denizen of the city cannot spare the time or exercise the self-denial necessary to attain such condition as would enable him to thrash a professional boxer, ride for the Liverpool Steeplechase, or bend the stroke oar at a crack Oxford boating match; but by walking, drill, cricket, or any other rational exercise he may invigorate his limbs, expand his chest, enjoy a sound digestion, avoid "attacks of the stomach, liver or nerves," and render his life not only longer, but happier and more useful.

But our province is with the health of animals, and not of their masters, and our horse waits our attention. The groom is anxious to know what physic he is to have and stares with a half-contemptuous smile if you attempt to insinuate the possibility of dispensing with it. But one dose by no means satisfies the ideas of such functionaries. There is the approved and orthodox number, the first to stir up the humors, the second to set them afloat, and the third to clear them off, which it sometimes does, and the horse as well, as Professor Dick in his lectures was wont facetiously to remark. But seriously speaking, we cannot discover any advantage in giving physic to any healthy horse. It only evacuates the bowels, and purges the system of a quantity of useless fluid matters, which might be more naturally and safely got rid of through the skin. It may nauseate and weaken, but it cannot strengthen and invigorate. No sensible trainer, whose man is healthy and living under a sound regi-

men, drugs with salts and senna, rhubarb, colocynth; and with the horse which is every respect so much more under control and is, moreover, a total abstainer, the dosing is still less necessary.

But whilst physic is useless, and even harmful for a healthy horse, there are certain circumstances in which it becomes serviceable. Young animals fresh from a dealer's stable from grass, sometimes thrive too well, fed permitted too greedily, and thus disorder the stomach and bowels. The skin sympathizes as it ever does, with the irritable state of intestinal mucous membrane, is dry, red, and itchy, and in such cases a simple laxative followed up by an occasional dose of saltpetre will prove useful. Sometimes the change from soft laxative fare to dry heating fare made too suddenly or rapidly, and an unhealthy state of the skin and consumption of the bowels are the result. In such cases, besides a laxative diet, a small dose of aloes will be useful. Again, if a horse in fair condition becomes lame, accident, or any such thing, is unable to take his usual exercise, and is confined for several days to his box or stall, it is usually advisable to give him, with mashes, a small dose of medicine which will prevent his legs swelling, and counteract any febrile or inflammatory tendency.

In spring and autumn, whilst the weather is being shed, horses are notoriously weak and difficult to keep in condition; and at such times the old-fashioned remedy is the favourite, often repeated at intervals, for several days. This obviously can only make matters worse. The horse wants something put into him instead of taken out of him; and the sensible man, instead, at such times pay special attention to the stable comforts, will lighten the work especially for young growing horses—will, by the goodness and soundness of the oats and hay, introduce besides a little variety into the dietary. In these and many other cases, when horses are weak and wanting in life and vigour, instead of flying absurdly to the use of alterative balls, give daily a quart of white peas. They are palatable, digestible, and nutritive. Linseed cake is another of much value, especially for young horses. No other food produces so smooth, silky, glossy a coat. A pound every second day will suffice, appearing to act both on the bowels and skin, and helping to counteract any constipative effect of the dry oats and hay. A little well-boiled flax seed or boiled linseed acts much in the same way. In various cases, some of the patent and medicated foodstuffs largely advertised are employed, and although not devoid of utility, their useful results are usually more economically obtained by a sensible selection and judicious varying of ordinary articles of food already mentioned. Many horses between the ages of four and five fail to do their work satisfactorily owing