

Training a Saddle Horse.

The approach of the annual spring horse show in Toronto revives interest in the training of horses. It is not generally known what an important factor it is to "supple" a horse before and during his training as a saddle horse. Many people suppose that a horse is simply taken from the field, broken to endure saddle, bridle, girthing and weight of rider, and that the walk, trot and canter come naturally, as a child learns to walk. If a moment's observation is given to the "how" the majority of grown-up children walk, this view will steadily become more and more pertinent.

The "suppled" or exercised horse carries itself like an athlete; there is no slouching. Like the athlete, he can be "exercised in his bedroom" by those who know the latter-day alphabet, and it is only by "suppling" that grace in its highest degree can be obtained. "Suppling" gives necessary exercise in bad weather, and is the foundation of all grace and "school" accomplishments. The prime necessities are patience, a kindly, enforced discipline in which resentment is never aroused, and under such circumstances the horse is only too willing to obey when he understands. The artificial command of "balance" is acquired to produce easy and united paces, merging the man and the horse into the modern Centaur.

HOW THE HORSE CAN BE IMPROVED.

There is no horse, says a writer in the New York Evening Post, which cannot be improved by what is known as "suppling," and "collecting," the latter being the equal distribution of weight between fore and hind legs, at rest or in action, and the greater any malconformation, the greater the artificial balance required to collect, this gradually growing less and less, as exercise in the human slowly "collects" or "corrects" a dropped shoulder or a "pigeon" breast. Today, no sharp bits are used, no heavy bits, no rough, strong hands, nor hard loud words or voice; there are no suspicions to be allayed, no fears to be combated; all is done by kindly impressing the animal with the sense of power in its master and tutor, and the one principle during exercise is to keep it busy on the master's orders. If the animal takes the initiative by an involuntary step, bring it back to execute an order. Avoid a pitched battle by changing quickly to something else, coming back to the disputed point later, and, when punishment is necessary, it must be done by "hoppling," not by whip.

The first exercise is on the Cavesson rein, a head collar, having a metal front nose-band and metal sides for the reins which go to the surcingle, like check reins, but at the side. The horse is led to a "longe-line" or hand rein, attached to a frontal ring. No bit is used. In some quiet spot, stand in the center, and send the animal to left and to right, circling about, halting, moving, and changing direction at order from driver. At intervals bring the horse to hand and pet him. If done reasonably, the exercise sends the blood coursing through the animal's veins; he likes it, and soon regards it as great fun, shown by improved "dash" and action, as he gains confidence in understanding what the man wishes. Use the rein lightly at a walk or very slow trot, and remember, the greatest power is in pulling down, bending the head to the chest. This exercise may be given twice daily, twenty minutes each division. Always pet at the end.

AWKWARDNESS DUE TO RIGID MUSCLES.

Practically all human and equine awkwardness comes from rigid muscles in the neck and head. When these yield to rein and bit, the hind quarters will yield to heel and pressure. Then the rider can "collect" forces from either extremity, and control the mass. The first exercise to follow the "longe-rein" is on the snaffle bit, with saddle on back. "Standing at ease" is to have the front line of the face vertical to the position moved towards, this giving the correct poise to the neck. Mount in a single sustained movement, rising, throwing the leg over without "dwelling," dropping lightly to saddle, and at once gripping with knees, as reins are gathered automatically, one in each hand. Lightly "feel" the mouth, holding hands low and steady, and, as he plays with the bit, gently rein in until the head front is vertical to the ground, nose nearly touching chest, as the movement, later, approaches perfection. Release tension gently, pet for obedience, and walk a few steps. By and by he will carry the nose clear between the knees, far beyond the rein tension.

Next extend the arms forward, drawing gently upwards on the reins, bringing the head up. Then lower to front vertical, and pet again, walking a few steps to distract attention. Now draw the right rein gently, bringing the head round to the right, keeping the front vertical position. Do not try to turn too far at first, but slowly increase day by day, until the horse is practically looking behind him. Bring back to front vertical, pet and walk. These movements supple and flex all muscles in front of the shoulders, and, when learned, should be done once at each schooling, every care being taken not to weary or annoy the animal, which soon regards it as a pleasure.

A regularly groomed dog will generally be eager to fetch his brush at grooming time.

SUPPLING THE HAUNCHES NOT EASY.

This has been easy. To supple the haunches is more difficult. Dismount and stand opposite left (i.e., near) girth, gathering both reins in left hand, under the chin, with slight tension on both reins to the bit. With the right hand hold the whip, and give light and gentle taps to the croup until the hind legs move a step under the body, the left-hand tension preventing the horse moving his fore feet. When the hind legs move, recover poise by relaxing the left hand, permitting the horse to move fore legs forward. Pet again, and walk.

Stand in the same position, with reins under chin, and, when tapping brings hind legs forward, move the taps to left side, just behind girths, thus making the hind quarters move to the right, with the fore legs stationary. Pet at the first move, and then force another move, then pet again. Relax by touching whip lightly to under side of right forearm, playing the bit lightly to right side of mouth, inducing the horse to move its right foot to position. The felt fore foot must not move, and will not if done right. Reverse this action by standing on the opposite side of the horse, reversing hand action, and by and by the animal will go far round to left or right in the "pirouette."

Having made the horse understand this, at the next lesson mount, and try using the heels gently, instead of the whip. Hold the reins in left hand to prevent forward movement, and, reaching behind the back, gently tap the whip on the croup, pressing the right heel to the side, at the same time gently, but firmly, tapping left

the lady entering a carriage, although not often so grasped, it is due to lack of balance, intentional in the Hackney carriage horse.

A curb bit is now used. Mount, press legs to sides, then, and not before then, feel the mouth. The neck bends, the jaw yields; the horse is "in hand." If the hands move before the legs, control is lost. A light pull on the reins sends the horse forward on a walk, and the forehead comes up; a light touch of the heels prevents the croup hanging back, and the horse is "collected." Turning to the right, the right rein should order while the left rein governs, the left heel pressing a trifle—a very slight trifle—to keep the croup true. When the turn is thus completed, all pressure is equalized. Never make a turn without the reverse rein slightly governing, thus keeping the sense of balance plain to the horse. Reverse for a turn to the left. Stop the animal by gentle pressure of both heels at the moment of gently drawing the hands towards the body. This phase cannot be too highly perfected. Make all turns wide, slowly decreasing circuit, ride in "8's" and reverse, aiming always at great precision of movement at the walk.

THE TROT TO FOLLOW THE WALK.

Then trot. Start by walking, "collect" by heel pressure and slight rein tension, relaxing tension as the horse moves stronger to the trot. Make the pace moderate, governed by a gentle play of reins, and not by reining back, keeping the croup constantly up, by use of the heels. Aim at sustained collection, which means a perfect balance, and which cannot be mistaken once it is struck. Trot in wide circles, "8's," and reverse; and to stop, collect thoroughly, sustain heels steadily, and increase rein length slowly until the horse walks or halts, as desired.

All these movements carried out, makes a horse as near perfection as his conformation, etc., permits, and will improve any horse. They induce to graceful pose, collection and balance, which must be persisted in until these become a habit, similar to the squared shoulder of the soldier or the athlete. Then the horse is "made," and must be so sustained, for an inexperienced rider will ruin the animal in no time with careless hands and seat. It is interesting and noticeable that, while this system has been made more plain and more easily understood, the principles have

scarcely been changed or improved since 1733. The more complicated and difficult exercises of shoulder-in, traversing, demivolté, trot and gallop backwards, are beyond the amateur, and need not be dealt with here. It may, however, be interesting to note that one of our expert metropolitan handlers has recently accomplished the backward trotting of one of his horses.

Nearly every horse will do the first described exercises with a little persuasion, but some take longer than others to understand what is desired. The Kentucky bred and reared horses are generally regularly ridden, and take readily to suppling, making finer saddle material in the right hands. These are "bred to it," and there is more in this than is generally supposed. The principal trouble for many years has been that the Kentuckians have been "gait crazy," and could not be brought to the understanding that the metropolitan saddle demand was for the walk, trot and canter horse, of Kentucky stock preferred. The same stock, with the "gaits," is a dead letter in New York, which is not degrading its excellencies or ridiculing its demand elsewhere. That this is being at last understood, is shown in the coming saddler show, in which the great saddle horse association is offering a prize for register produce shown at the much-stigmatized "walk, trot, and canter."

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heel, as far back as possible, until the move is made. Then pet, force another step, and pet at each successive step, without allowing the animal to relax. In four lessons the horse should readily obey rein and heel without whip.

Then reverse to the other side under the same corresponding conditions, finally working both sides to perfection, the last move being to flex the horse's head in the direction of the moving croup, making the horse look something like an inverted "S," the upper turn being the head, the lower being the tail. These really simple movements, which any horseman can readily employ, supple every muscle, teach obedience to hand and heel, giving "balance" to forehead and croup, and, with graceful backing, (bringing the haunches to the ground), are the foundation for every movement, except the straight-line walk, trot and canter, all of which are improved a thousand per cent. by such suppling. Thus much for what corresponds to the "setting-up" drill of the human.

WHAT UNITED ACTION MEANS.

In what is known as "united action," the rider has every part of his suppled horse under command, the horse obeying certain signals, and, by expert handling, not only is action improved, but the very conformation may be changed. High forehands are lowered, weak, drooping quarters raised, and the balance of weight corrected. Many horses are seen to spread the hind legs at a mount, and so cannot move off with the fore legs until the hind legs are brought under. Witness the Hackney pose. A "safety pose" for