
HORSE BREEDING
IN
CANADA.

Letter of Colonels Ravenhill and Phillips.

ALSO

AN ADDRESS BY COLONEL RAVENHILL TO HORSE BREEDERS.

OTTAWA, 16th MARCH, 1887.

The accompanying letter of Colonel RAVENHILL, R.A., Inspector and Purchaser of R.A. horses, signed also by Colonel PHILLIPS, and THOMAS MATTHEWS, B. 1st Class, Royal Horse Guards, on the subject of the conditions afforded by Canada for the supply of horses for the Cavalry service in England, and also an address by Colonel RAVENHILL to the Horse Breeders of Great Britian, are published by direction of the Minister of Agriculture, in view of the interest and importance of the information contained in them, in relation to horse breeding in Canada, and particularly with a view to building up an important export trade for the Dominion.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
OTTAWA, 16th March, 1887.

LETTER RESPECTING HORSES AND HORSE BREEDING IN CANADA.

~~~~~  
ROYAL ARTILLERY, REMOUNT ESTABLISHMENT,  
WOOLWICH, 27th December, 1886.

SIR,—In compliance with the request contained in your departmental letter of the 6th October last, I have the honour to forward the following remarks which have occurred to the officers of the British War Office Commission respecting the horses in Canada.

1. The result of the horse trade of the Dominion is not an easy matter to arrive at, for there are no advertised horse or cattle fairs, or other organized live stock markets, where collections of horses and animals are to be found on sale, as is the case in all other horse producing countries. Even just across the border in the United States, the horse rearing localities have their periodical court days, when, according to the season of the year, a considerable number, or smaller quantity of animals are offered on sale; and it would be much to the benefit of the Canadian breeders if some similar plan could be introduced by co-operation throughout districts, on fixed market or exhibition days, as a means of bringing the producer and purchaser together in greater numbers, with corresponding advantages for both sides, thus upsetting the existing monopoly. The whole horse and cattle trade of Canada is at present in the hands of Americans and a few other dealers, with some amateur horsemen in each district, who regulate the rates, rule the breeders in their respective districts and give whatever prices they choose, which are low, and in the case of the American dealers are so small that it repays them to take horses across the frontier to the extent of 11,000 last year, and yet be able to pay an import duty on their entering the States of 20 per cent. on the declared value of each animal.

2. The ignorance and innocence of the breeders and owners as to the comparative value of their animals may here be instanced. It is stated that in some places where local or other exhibitions of stock were being held, the agricultural authorities had most generously got together subscriptions to help our work and offered considerable

money prizes at the autumn shows for horses best fitted for British military purposes, when such indifferent animals were exhibited for these prizes that it was not possible for us to award any premiums or even purchase anything; in other parts of the same town where we had appointed, good and excellent horses were collected for us to see, many of which we purchased and in one or two cases had the greatest difficulty to induce the owners to enter their animals so that we might award them a prize and thus give what amounted to a higher price for their horses.

In this matter the people require education, and time to understand the system of dealing with their stock.

3. It may be desirable here to remark that if the opinions generally of those men in Canada who are, at present, interested in or connected with the horse trade, were asked, they might be found antagonistic to these proposals as upsetting their monopoly, and it is believed that the Canadian farmer is so slow to act or observe that he might not at first appreciate what, if once introduced and carried out, would prove to be for his material advantage.

4. In the present state of the horse trade of the Dominion, no English or European dealer (where after all the great market is to be looked for) could afford the time, or expense, of moving about the country along great distances, and only being able to purchase a very limited number of good, unblemished, sound animals.

5. The price of a horse all over the world is fictitious, uncertain, and dependent on what his manners are like, what he is fitted for, his size, breeding, action, colour, appearance and power, &c., whether he is for riding or draught, whether a good hunter or an indifferent hack, whether he is blemished or not, and to ensure a good price he must be sound and otherwise perfect, and any departure from these may depreciate his value, whereas the price of a bullock is not so regulated, it becomes a law of supply and demand, and is dependent on the amount of human sustenance required, whether meat or milk. Many of the horses of Canada are very good, and if a co-operating market could be introduced, buyers from Europe, giving good prices for good animals, would assemble, and the breeders would get higher prices.

6. We think it right you should be informed that during our visit to the Dominion, which occupied 167 days, we travelled 14,755 miles,

we examined 7,674 horses, of which we registered, to look at a second time, 1,025, with the result that we were only able to purchase for the Government 83 horses.

7. The prices of the whole of these were very reasonable and moderate, and it was no question of money in the majority of cases which prevented our purchasing in larger numbers.

We found that the great proportion of horses met with of the size and sort suitable for British military purposes were unsound or blemished, from the farmers overworking their stock when too young, thus breaking down the young ones before they have developed into horses.

The attention of breeders and farmers cannot be too strongly drawn to this serious deterioration, and when the mares come to be bred from, their ills are transmitted to their young stock.

8. The number of faulty and unsound stallions in districts is also great, and creating much harm.

9. A malformation in the Canadian horses which might advantageously be brought to the notice of breeders is that their quarters are short and very drooping, a serious defect in a military horse. Indeed we had to reject as unsuitable a considerable proportion on this account; this is not only a great dissight, but where a mounted soldier has to carry a kit on his horse's back it amounts to an insuperable objection; it has arisen from the too extensive use of the American trotter for stud purposes, this defect being very apparent in that horse. This is an additional reason for the more continuous introduction of the English T. B. or such horses which are very straight in their backs and quarters, with tail set on high.

10. Then, of course, the American dealers do not take away the worst of the horses, and purchase many very valuable mares, leaving in the Dominion the unsound malformed stock to be bred from, which, put to unsuitable and in many instances unsound stallions, transmit to their progeny their various parental ills, for unsoundness in the horse is as surely hereditary as consumption, cancer, scrofula, general weakness or unsoundness is among the human race.

11. It thus becomes a question whether the Canadian Government cannot afford some direct help to this very valuable industry, so needful and remunerative in time of peace, so requisite and indispensable in time of war; and it is suggested, on somewhat similar

grounds as has been successfully established in Australia, there should be an inspector of horse breeding operations in Canada.

12. It is not desirable to interfere with free trade in horses or in any way to place a prohibition or prohibitive duty on the sale or export of mares, but on the other hand a considerable number of remunerative premiums might be offered by the Government in districts (for the next ten years) for brood mares of a certain size, weight and standard, which must be laid down, with foals at foot, say \$20 per head for the ten best, \$12 per head for the 2nd ten mares, at each district show, with still larger premiums for stallions, which would have also to be of a fixed weight, standard and quality, thus inducing farmers to keep their best stock in the country.

13. Owing to the extended rail communication in the Dominion, farmers have not now so far to travel with their light, quick going horses along roads as they had twenty years ago, and the large cities and towns springing up have created a demand for heavier horses; thus breeders have been turning their attention more to the class of Clydesdale, Shire and larger horses, and have ceased to breed so many as formerly of the lighter, better bred, general purpose horse which is that required for army purposes. Again, the people of Canada are not a riding race; you never see a boy riding a horse to plough, nor a man on the back of an animal going to the village forge. All travel on wheels in summer or hitch their horses to sleighs in the winter time. The only riding horses made use of are purely those for pleasure with the limited number of hunt clubs and the still smaller quantities of people who, independent of those who hunt, take horse exercise in and about the larger towns, together with such horses as may be used in the yeomany and other mounted corps.

14. The consequence is that it is quite the exception when a horse with lengthy rein and quarters, good withers and lengthy sloping shoulders, suitable for riding, is met with, this strain being only procurable by a judicious admixture of the T. B. horse which should be liberally subsidized by Government with extensive premiums for all that are sound, of good size, bone, colour and action such as will provide the requirements of the Western market.

(The importation into England alone is over 17,000 horses annually, all from foreign sources, so that this trade is worthy of consideration.)

15. What has been said respecting the horses in Canada West is also applicable to those bred on the ranches, where excellent mares of size, colour and quality are to be met with which require judicious weeding out and then mating to T. B. horses with bone, power and action.

16. In conclusion we must beg to express our gratitude for the able and cordial advice and assistance rendered us throughout our visit from yourself and the whole Department of Agriculture under your administration. Our thanks are also due to Mr. Fred White, the Comptroller, to Colonel Herchmer, the Commissioner, together with the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the North-West Police, and the many gentlemen throughout Canada who have afforded us so much help.

17. We have postponed replying to your letter in order that we might refer the matter to the War Office with a view to obtaining some instructions for the future. We are now directed to inform you that, "so far as can be seen the horses which have been already bought would appear to justify the purchase of additional numbers annually in the future."

We have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servants,

F. G. RAVENHILL, Colonel R.A.,  
*Inspector and Purchaser R. A. Horses.*

G. PHILLIPS, Colonel.  
THOS. MATTHEWS, B 1st Class,  
*Royal Horse Guards.*

To the Hon. JOHN CARLING,  
Minister of Agriculture,  
Ottawa.

P.S.—Three hundred horses may be bought in Canada next year if they can be obtained within the prices and of the stamp required.

F. G. RAVENHILL, Colonel R.A.,

The following report has been communicated to the Minister of Agriculture :—

### ADDRESS TO HORSE BREEDERS.

Delivered in the Committee-room of the Agricultural Hall at Islington, at the request of the Council of the Institute for Agriculture, on Wednesday, 2nd March, 1887, by Colonel F. G. Ravenhill, R.A., Inspector and Purchaser of R. A. horses, on the occasion of the stallion shows of the Hunters' Improvement and Hackney Stud-Book Societies.

THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER, K.G., in the chair.

I have been asked by the Council of the Institute of Agriculture to give a short address to-day on "The Breeding of Horses suitable for Her Majesty's Service." The present time would appear to be not altogether inappropriate for this purpose, when it is remembered that great efforts are being made in various directions to rouse breeders and agriculturists to the desirability of their recovering for their own pockets a great portion of the third of a million of money going out of the country annually in the purchase of an average of some 17,000 foreign horses imported here for work; all of which we could doubtless rear far better in England. In support of this revival, let me refer you to that show of thoroughbreds at Newcastle, on the 25th of January last, and also to those shows opened in London by the Shire Horse, the Hunters' Improvement, and Hackney Stud Societies, with many other associations formed or forming all over the country, at Lytham in Lancashire, and at Sherborne in Dorsetshire, &c. This matter is of great public and undoubted military importance, and if anything I can say to-day will enable the British farmer in his present distress to think of anything to improve his position and brighten his prospects, or further any scheme for benefiting the breed of horses, more especially those required for military purposes, then my object will have been gained, and I trust your valuable time may not altogether have been wasted.

The subject of our British Horse supply has been continuously brought to the notice of the public of late years, through the com-



mittee called for by Lord Rosebery in the House of Lords, in 1873; by that splendid proposal of Lord Calthorpe's in 1875; again by Mr. Chaplin, in the House of Commons, in 1875; subsequently by Sir Fred. Fitzgram, Bart., M.P.; since then General Sir Fred. Roberts, Bart., at the Mansion House dinner; Colonel Keith Fraser, in the pages of the *Fortnightly Review*; Major-General C. C. Fraser, V.C., M.P.; Colonel Russell, Royal Dragoons, with many other officers and civilians have urged the necessity of some action being taken, and within the last few days questions in both Houses of Parliament have again been asked. In this country the horse question is everyone's business in general, and nobody's in particular; every Englishman considers he knows more on this subject than his neighbours; he holds his own views, and pretty strong ones they are, whether it be financially, when staking on his favourite for the Derby, or his choice of a sire for stud purposes. Unfortunately, the Government have no department or official to represent the horse interest in this country as they have for recruiting; all is left to chance, and when a crisis arises, then irresponsible committees have to be organized, and action has to be hurriedly and expensively taken.

Before proceeding further, the question naturally arises as to "what constitutes a military horse." They are distinctly of two different kinds, though not more "warlike" than any other good general purpose horse between 15 hands 2 inches and 16 hands high, in general use all over the country. The first, the most important and most difficult now to procure in any quantity, is that required for riding purposes, with lengthy rein, good shoulders and forehead, good back and loins, as well bred as we can get them; they must walk freely and well, and at 5 years old should stand not less than 15 hands 2 inches high; of these we should have at least three-quarters of the whole supply of 1,800 to 2,000 required in peace time annually for the army, or about 1,500 riding horses. The necessity, therefore, will be understood for our getting as much T. B. blood for this purpose as we can procure. The second, or draught horse, is a compact, short-legged, quick-walking, good going van horse, between 15 hands 2 inches up to 16 hands high, for Royal Artillery draught, Royal Engineers and transport purposes. These are more easily procurable all over the world, though in looking for them we prefer a tight, short-legged, active horse, and before all things we look to

and, together with the tendons, distinctly defined; the arms and thighs long and muscular, and the joints not small, but clean and well developed.

#### KNEES, ELBOWS, HIND LEGS, HOCKS, PASTERNS, FETLOCKS.

The knees should not be back like those of a calf, nor too much bent over like those of an old cab horse—though of the two evils it is preferable that a horse should stand a little over at the knee rather than back; the elbows should be free; the hind legs must be well placed under the body; the hocks not too straight, yet not sickled or bent; they should be clean, well cut, and free from any enlargement inside or out, or from any tendency to curb or thoroughpin; the pasterns must neither be too short or upright, nor too long and sloping; the fetlocks should not show signs of work, too much play either in these joints or in the pasterns produces overshooting, which is a decided weakness. There are occasional swellings on these parts, especially in young stock, arising from sickness, debility, or contusions, which are sometimes mistaken for unsoundness.

#### FEET.

The feet should be of the same size, round in shape at the soles, with good open heels, not small, contracted or flat; the hoofs should stand as nearly as possible at an angle of  $50^{\circ}$ , and they must not be brittle, blocky, or ring.

#### HEAD.

In considering the shape of the head, it is important to note the position of the eye, which should not be too low down, too far forward, or too small; the last named defect is called "pig-eyed." The forehead should be broad and the countenance kind. Long big ears, provided they are not lopped or drooping, are preferable to such as are small, curved, or pointed, though these latter are no doubt prettier. The head should be well set on to the neck at an angle not too oblique or acute, and there should be sufficient room under the jawl. The nostrils should be large and open. The lips not drooping or relaxed. The jaws and teeth evenly placed above one another.

#### NECK—SHOULDERS.

The neck should be convex and not concave, which latter is a structural defect indicating weakness and is called "ewe-neck." It should be well set into the shoulders, and these should be clearly defined, sloping well back from the points to the withers. The points of the shoulders ought not to be heavy. Fine high withers are a

great attraction, and enable the saddle to retain its proper position. It is true that horses with thick or flat withers, or short, upright shoulders, may be suitable for draught, provided they have good action.

#### BARREL.

The barrel should be deep and arched behind the elbows, thus affording space for the development of all vital organs. Every troop horse should girth as much over 70 inches as may be procurable.

#### BACK AND LOINS.

A long hollow back should be avoided. A "roach back"—though ugly—is strong. The loins should be as broad and deep as possible.

#### TAIL.

The tail should be set on high enough to be symmetrical. Fine hair in the mane and tail shows breeding. The greater the length from nose to withers and from hip to croup the better. Care should be taken that the withers, shoulders, back and chin are free from material blemishes.

#### EXAMINATION OF CHEST AND FORELEGS, &c., FROM FRONT.

While the horse remains standing, the position of the purchasing officer may be changed from the near side to the front, so as to note how he looks from this point of view, and to see how he stands, whether he has sufficient breadth of chest. There should be no blemishes about the knees, no enlargements or scars from brushing inside the fetlocks, no marks from speedy-cutting under the knees, and the situation of splints, if there be any, should be particularly noticed.

#### SHANK BONE.

The shank bone should be straight and square under the body, not banded or twisted, but supporting properly the weight of the body. The toes should neither be in nor out. One foot turned out or in is unsatisfactory, because it indicates uneven action with an uneven bearing of weight of the body either at rest or in motion.

#### EXAMINATION OF OFF SIDE AND REAR.

The off side must be examined in detail in the manner already specified for the near side. The purchaser should then walk round to the rear of the horse, and notice if the hocks are very much in or bowed out—of the two the former is preferable. A horse ought to be broad across the hips, and these must be even and level, the fork should not be too much split up.

## WALKING.

The horse must now be led off at a walk; the purchaser should keep behind him and note as he goes from him if he turns his toes out or in, or whether there is too much play outwards or inwards in the hocks. If he crosses his hind or fore feet or legs he should be rejected. As the horse turns, he should be narrowly watched, and as he walks past it should be seen that he puts his feet down even and fair. The action of his fetlocks and pasterns must also be noted. If there be decided knuckling or overshooting here, he must not be taken. The walk should be free, the stride long and clear, the hocks not bent, no dragging or catching of the hind or fore toes along the ground, no "forging" from over reaching. When the toes are out, the elbows are in, and the latter being tied, the fore action is often cramped and contracted.

## TROTTING.

The animal can now be trotted, and as he goes from you it must be noted if he crosses his fore or hind legs, which is dangerous; if he dishes or turns one or both feet in or out, it is objectionable. Should he roll in his stride, this may denote damage in the loins or hocks, and the attention of the veterinary surgeon, who is responsible for soundness, would naturally be called to these points. If there is any catching in the action of the hind legs, he should be run sharply backwards to ascertain that there is no paralysis; as the horse passes it should be seen that he has good knee and hock action.

## SPEEDY-CUTTING.

Speedy-cutting arises from faulty conformation of the fore legs, and also from a peculiar kind of high action in front. It is the act of striking one fore leg just below the knee with the inner quarter of the other fore foot, a most acutely painful and dangerous thing, for which a horse should be at once rejected.

## REJECT FOR ANY ONE WEAK OR BAD POINT.

Although a horse is a good coloured, well topped, good going, taking animal, yet, if he have one decidedly weak or bad point he must be refused; but here the veterinary officer's opinion will be most valuable, as many horses may be quite serviceable, though not *absolutely sound* and may "in times of need" be fully equal to the requirements of a campaign, and do much hard work.

## RESTRICT PURCHASING TO 25 A DAY,

Purchasing horses is laborious work, and by the time that 25 or 30

have been examined, passed, and registered, the officers employed will have exhausted much power, both of eye and brain. When continued daily, purchasing should be restricted to 25 a day; when working for a special object, seventy a day have often been examined, but it is not practicable to do justice to such a number. Very good and very bad animals are soon disposed of; it is the middling and doubtful horses which take up the time: further it may be accepted as a general rule that the first impressions of a horse are the most correct and lasting.

**EXAMINATION ON BEING RECEIVED INTO DEPOT, AND  
RETURNED IF UNFIT.**

On remounts being received into depots they should be lunged at once—if fit for it—to try their wind, unless this has been done previously, and they should also be generally re-examined under the direction of the veterinary surgeon. Their shoes should be taken off and the feet examined for sand cracks, seedy toes, sunken soles, &c. They should be carefully re-measured and registered, and if, on being re-shod, they are found below the necessary height, or if any unsoundness is detected in eyes, feet, wind, or limbs, or if they are found vicious in or out of the stable, they should be returned. On the other hand, if fit, they should be branded on the hoof, in accordance with the regulations on that subject.

Horses in general fall naturally into two great divisions—riding and draught—according to the particular way in which their physical formation and breeding enables them most advantageously to apply their force. A man who has a knowledge and appreciation of horses can tell to which of these divisions any given animal belongs; but it may be laid down as a general rule that a riding horse should be better bred and should have a more sloping shoulder, a longer forehead, with more flexible and lighter action than a draught horse. Again, these two divisions are conveniently subdivided, the first into two, the second into six classes, making altogether eight classes, which would stand as follows:—

1. 1st class riding horses for officers, staff sergeants, trumpeters, and the riding establishment.
2. 2nd class riding horses for detachments of Horse Artillery and Non-Commissioned Officers of Field Artillery.
3. Horse Artillery lead and centre horses.
4. Horse Artillery wheelers.

5. Light Field Artillery lead and centre horses.
6. Light Field Artillery wheelers.
7. Heavy Field Artillery lead and centre horses.
8. Heavy Field Artillery wheelers.

The difference between 1st and 2nd class riding horses is one merely of breeding, appearance and degree; the same may be said in comparing classes 3 and 5, and classes 4 and 6 respectively. Heavy lead and wheel horses (classes 7 and 8) differ from light lead wheel horses (classes 5 and 6) in having more weight and power. As regards lead and wheel horses whether for Horse or Field Artillery, the low size, thick set horses should be selected for wheelers, those which are higher being told off as centre or lead horses, thus ensuring a regular and upward line of draught. Where practicable the hand horse of a pair should be higher than the near side one.

#### EXCESS OF RIDING HORSES NECESSARY.

From the days of Wellington onward (*vide* the "Wellington Despatches" 22-6-1809,—27-6-1809,—25-8-1809,—5-2-1811,—10-2-1813), there has always been a difficulty in obtaining sufficient riding horses, and when purchasing for the service, a surplus of Officers' and other riding horses may advantageously be taken, for if properly selected, it would be impossible to utilize them for draught purposes.

#### EXCESS OF WHEELERS.

Again, if every draught horse which is bought be powerful enough to be used, when necessary, as a wheeler, the service would be thoroughly efficient.

Having detailed the class of horse required for the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, I now submit directions drawn up for the guidance of Cavalry officers in the purchase of horses for their branch of the service.

Of course it is not as easy to judge of the future make and shape of a young horse as it is to judge of an aged one, whose conformation is fully developed. Still, there are certain defects which are as easily seen in young horses as older horses; and these faults, at least, may be avoided by a fair amount of care, practice, and judgment.

Especial care, indeed suspicion, is also needed, when a good-looking horse of 5 or 6 years old is offered at the troop price. The chances are that there is some fault, which others have already found out.

A horse should be rejected for any one really bad fault. The greatest strength of a horse is limited by his worst point. Horses

are often bought because they possess one or more very good points. This is a wrong principle in buying. The selection of horses should begin by rejection for bad points. Bad points are, of course, in a great measure, a question of degree. Discretion is needed in rejecting as well as in buying.

1. Size. Four-year-olds, *i.e.*, three off after October 1st, should not be less than 15 hands  $0\frac{1}{2}$  inch nor exceed  $15\cdot1\frac{1}{2}$  for light cavalry.

For medium they should not be less than  $15\cdot1$  nor over  $15\cdot2$ .

For heavy cavalry not less than  $15\cdot2$  nor over  $15\cdot3\frac{1}{2}$ .

N.B.—In measuring a horse or judging of his height and size by sight, take care that he stands on a level with yourself. Dealers generally stand a horse, if undersized, on higher ground, or if over size, on lower ground than the intending purchaser.

2. Want of a fair amount of breeding should be an absolute bar.

3. Reject a horse with a big coarse head.

4. Reject a horse with a small sunken eye. They are generally obstinate and sulky.

5. Reject a horse of a colour light of the sort.

6. Reject a horse with a long slack back. It will not carry weight.

7. Reject a horse with a hollow back. The formation is weak.

8. Reject a horse with flat sides. They will not do work or look well.

9. Reject a horse with a slack loin, *i.e.*, undue length between the last ribs and hind quarters (sacrum). They are often bad feeders, and will run up light with work.

10. Reject a horse with a light loin, *i.e.*, want of breadth over the loins. They run up light with work.

11. Reject a horse with scraggy hips. They never do credit to feeding, particularly if also slack in the loins.

12. Reject a horse with a bad girth, *i.e.*, "light through the heart." This formation will always cause trouble in saddling.

13. Reject a horse with a thick or short neck.

14. Reject a horse unless it has a good rein. With a clumsy neck the head is in consequence badly set on. Without a good rein a horse will never break well.

15. Reject a horse with very low withers. The saddle will be apt to work forwards, and the "rein" will probably be deficient, and the leverage for the muscles of the forehand is defective.

16. Reject a horse if very short. There is not room enough for the kit.

N.B.—To see the above points (1—16) stand on the side and form your opinion before the horse moves off.

17. Reject a horse with a narrow or shallow chest. There is not sufficient capacity for the lungs.

18. Reject a horse with fore legs very close together. This and the former defect generally go together. To see these points stand in front.

19. Reject a horse whose fore legs are not straight. They will not stand wear. Stand behind the horse as he walks away from you, and you will be able to notice these defects, if they exist.

20. Reject a horse which is light below the knee, especially if immediately below the knee. The conformation is essentially weak.

21. Reject a horse with long, or with short, or with upright pasterns. Long pasterns are subject to strains. Short or upright pasterns make a horse unpleasant to ride, and, on account of extra concussion, are apt to cause ossific deposits.

22. Reject a horse with toes turned in or out. The twist generally occurs at the fetlock. Toes turned "out" are more objectionable than toes turned "in." When toes are turned out, the fetlocks are generally turned in, and animals so formed are very apt to cut or brush. Both, however, are weak formations.

23. Reject a horse whose hind legs are too far behind. Good propelling power will be wanting, and disease as a result may be expected in the hocks.

24. Reject a horse which goes either very wide or very close behind.

25. Reject a horse with very straight or very bent hocks. The former cause undue concussion, the latter are apt to give way.

26. Reject a horse which is "split up," *i.e.*, shows much daylight between his thighs. Propelling power comes from behind, and must be deficient in horses without due muscular development between the thighs.

27. Reject a horse with flat feet or over-large feet, also with very small feet. Medium size are the best.

28. Reject a horse with one foot smaller than another.

Action must be light, easy, free, and straight. Reject a horse that crosses his legs in walking or trotting. He will be unsafe. Freedom, power to move easily along, is the great point in a young horse. Knee-action is not essential; it will come with the bit and breaking.

A good walk is absolutely essential. Reject a horse that does not



walk well; he is never pleasant to ride. If a horse walks well, he will probably trot well; but a horse may trot well without walking well.

To ascertain whether the action is true and straight, stand behind the horse as he walks and trots away from you. You cannot ascertain this important point by standing on the side.

Never omit to stand behind a horse as he walks away.

A good sloping shoulder is an important item in a riding horse, but bad action may co-exist with a good; and *vice versâ*, good, free action may co-exist with a somewhat straight shoulder.

Reject a horse which is straight in the shoulder and long from the point of the shoulder to the upper part of the forearm. This formation places the fore legs too much under the horse, and makes him unsafe to ride.

You may have a plain horse, even if all the above very apparent defects are absent, but you will, at least, have a serviceable one.

Having first of all kept clear of all absolute defects such as the above, then select your horses for the presence of good, serviceable, and handsome points, and easy, free, graceful carriage.

But, I repeat, begin by rejection for any one positively bad defect. The greatest strength of a chain is limited by the strength of its weakest link.

In purchasing horses, it is a great point not to lose time. If you see any one radical defect, reject the horse at once. The dealer will, of course, try and persuade you to do otherwise, and will call your attention to some very good point or points in the really defective animal.

Don't lose time. If you do, you may get pressed for time, may be obliged to make only cursory inspection of animals presented late in the day, and may end by buying inferior horses, which you would have rejected in the morning.

It should be noticed that only a few greys are required (*viz.*, about 50 a year) for the 2nd Royal Dragoons.

Mares are purchased as well as geldings, but no stallions. Horses which are broken are preferred, but a troop horse purchased cheap, when young, is not necessarily a perfectly broken animal with manners and accomplishments, so long as they are halter broken and appear kind and temperate.

No horse is ever taken with a blemish of a material nature.

It has been represented to me on several occasions, and people

have been writing to the papers on the subject, that Government ought to pay more for their horses; indeed, there is a proposal in one of the weekly agricultural papers of the week before last suggesting that the price for horses should be increased to £50 per head. The whole question is one of supply and demand, and is dependent on the state of the market.

I have, therefore, drawn out the following table, giving some figures on the subject:—

RETURN showing the numbers of horses in Great Britain not employed in agriculture, &c., during the past few years, taken from the agricultural returns; also the number of horses imported into England, the number of horses in possession, and the prices paid per head, during a series of years, by the General Omnibus Company, also the prices paid by Government for their horses during the same period.

| NUMBER OF HORSES.              |                                   |                                         |                              |                     |                                        |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Years ending 31st<br>December. | Imported<br>into Great<br>Britain | In the<br>whole of<br>Great<br>Britain. | The General Omnibus Company. |                     | Paid by<br>Government<br>for troopers. |
|                                |                                   |                                         | In Possession.               | Prices<br>per head. |                                        |
|                                |                                   |                                         |                              | £ s d.              | £ £ s.                                 |
| 1876.....                      | 41,148                            | .....                                   | .....                        | .....               | .....                                  |
| 1877.....                      | 30,524                            | .....                                   | .....                        | .....               | .....                                  |
| 1878.....                      | 26,521                            | .....                                   | 7,674                        | 30 5 1              | 40 to 48 10                            |
| * 1879.....                    | 15,246                            | 1,080,000                               | 6,914                        | 39 8 10             | 30 " 48 10                             |
| 1880.....                      | 9,264                             | 1,002,272                               | 6,935                        | 35 1 4              | 40 " 48 10                             |
| 1881.....                      | 9,950                             | 1,231,000                               | 7,294                        | 35 7 2              | 40 " 45 0                              |
| 1882.....                      | 8,827                             | 1,413,578                               | 7,531                        | 35 6 3              | 40 " 45 0                              |
| 1883.....                      | 9,627                             | 1,410,596                               | 7,695                        | 35 1 0              | 40 " 45 0                              |
| 1884.....                      | 12,928                            | 1,414,377                               | 7,944                        | 34 14 9             | 40 " 45 0                              |
| 1885.....                      | 13,723                            | 1,405,739                               | 8,124                        | 34 5 8              | 40 " 45 0                              |
| 1886.....                      | 11,027                            | 1,425,359                               | 8,589                        | 33 17 5             | 40 " 45 0                              |

\* In this year the supply of English horses was noted as much improved.

From this it will be seen that between 1879 and 1886, although the number of horses estimated as in Great Britain has been steadily increasing, yet the average number imported during those years has been more or less decreasing, that whilst the numbers in possession of the largest employers of horses in the kingdom next to the Government, the General Omnibus Company, has been steadily rising owing to increased traffic, yet the prices that have been paid during this course of years has as steadily decreased from £39 8s. 10d. in June,

1879, to £33 17s. 5d. per head during the year ended December, 1886, whilst the prices paid by Government for a similar period have also decreased, but stand in a higher ratio than those purchased for private use.

It is overlooked that the 2,000 remounts annually required to keep up the present Government supply are but a very small proportion of the requirements of the public; the question of value then, and prices to be paid is one of public demand, and not one in which the Government would be expected to pay a larger price than the market value decides on.

We have to congratulate ourselves that we are producing more horses in this country, doubtless, owing to the increasing interest taken in the matter, the action of the different societies, and the deficiency which has become apparent; without doubt the population has increased and the public wants must be supplied, but the population cannot have increased in proportion to the extent that the number of horses have as gathered from this return.

The question now presents itself, are the numbers of horses we are producing of the right sort for general and military purposes? I think not.

What the army requires, what the public needs, and what every man uses who can afford it, whether for hunting or driving, is a large supply of the up-standing, three parts bred, general purpose horse, of good substance and colour, between 15.2 and 16 hands high, such as used to be bred in numbers by our fathers for general work in the stage coaches all over England, and which the railways have caused to disappear.

Such a horse can only be produced by the continuous and more general use of T.B. sires all over the country, and we must do something to produce these within reach of farmers in breeding districts, at as low a fee as can possibly be arranged for; the Royal Agricultural Society of England, also the Hunters' Improvement Society, is doing much in this direction, but the need for good is so widespread that it should go further, and the money now given in Queen's Plates annually for racing, which was originally given "to improve the Breed of Horses in England," should be diverted for this purpose, and as it comes out of the pockets of the ratepayers, it lies with you all to see that it is thus properly applied.

**My own idea is that the money now given for Queen's Plates would**

be more beneficially used in the shape of subsidies by apportioning it out to the Royal Agricultural, the Hibernian, Caledonian, the Hunter's Improvement, and other kindred societies, to be given away in premiums for good stallions, provided they come up to a certain standard of excellence, are sound and will be available in fixed districts in Great Britain, and Ireland during the ensuing season at small fees.

A regular list of these horses and the districts they will be in should be registered in the offices of the societies, where, on application by the owners of mares, there would be no difficulty in learning the nearest available sire.

In the choice of districts, select those near large railway junctions or stations to enable men with mares to send them in from surrounding villages, such as Aberdeen, Ballinasloe, Beverley, Bridgewater, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Chester, Clonmel, Cockermouth, Cornwall, Denbigh, Dumfries, Doncaster, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Howden, Kendal, Lincoln, Lytham, Limerick, Mey, Co. Tyrone, Mullingar, Northallerton, Northampton, Penrith, or Kirby, Stephen, Ripon, Sherborne, Warwick, Wigton, York.

If this money is not to be given for premiums through the large societies, as has been suggested, I feel sure, if a capable man were handed over that £5,000 now given for Queen's Plates each year, he would arrange to spend it more profitably for the country than it now is. Let him make a commencement by—

|                                                       |        |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Purchasing 4 thoroughbred stallions at £500 each..... | £2,000 |
| do 4 roadsters 300 do.....                            | 1,200  |
| Hire 4 thoroughbred stallions at £200 for each season | 800    |
| do 4 roadsters 100 do.....                            | 400    |
|                                                       | <hr/>  |
|                                                       | £4,400 |
| Expenses, say.....                                    | 600    |
|                                                       | <hr/>  |
|                                                       | £5,000 |

Any district that can guarantee 70 serviceable useful mares for the eight thoroughbreds at a fee of £2 each, and of 60 good mares for the eight roadsters at £1 10s. each, the manager would arrange to send the mares, realising on account of fees, £1,120 for thoroughbreds, and £720 for the roadsters; total, £1,840, which should well cover all expenses, as follows:—

|                                                         |               |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Groom and attendant at each station, £120 × 8.....      | £960          |
| Keep of 16 horses, contingents, rental £1 per week..... | 832           |
| Total.....                                              | <u>£1,792</u> |

These figures might possibly work out more favourably.

There is no doubt a great scarcity of fit mares for breeding from throughout the country, but there is also a greater scarcity of good reliable stallions; and regarding the deficiency of mares, I believe if good sound horses were forthcoming farmers would soon get and keep mares, provided they could get a sale for their young stock, which I will touch on presently.

Gentlemen have been in communication with me on the subject of helping farmers to procure mares. Frank Lovell, Esq., of Hinchleslea (a rare horseman), writes:—

“Individual breeding is hopeless, but associations might do much; no amount of prizes to stallions will increase the breed, which is what we want; what we ought to have is some tens of thousands of Horse Artillery mares, to add to the bone and power of our too often weedy half-mile T.B.’s, or before long we shall all have to walk. A county organization always ready to take good mares and always having at command the services of one or more approved stallions would be an invaluable resource; for all gentlemen having mares to part with, as well as for the breeding farmers who now are at their wits’ end to know where to look for good stallions; if well managed and supported the business ought to pay, but if only 2nd or 3rd class horses are provided, numbers of animals are produced; whilst every farmer, horse dealer, and tradesman in England is benefited.”

This gentleman submits for our consideration the following proposals:—

“(1.) Every county to support its own horse-breeding establishment (some more than one).

“(2.) Lord Lieutenants and principal gentlemen be asked to start and support it.

“(3.) All cast mares from the service suitable for stud to be offered to it; and artillery and other government mares purchased.

“(4.) Annual, biennial or triennial sales without reserve.

“(5.) Details and establishment of expenditure and system to be carefully prepared.

“(6.) Government to be invited to assist in all ways possible.

“(7.) The proposition, when placed before the public, to have all the best names attached to it.

“(8.) Annual subscriptions of county gentlemen £10 to £1 each.”

Then I have another suggestion from a gentleman who hunts in the shires, and who is getting together a local society to purchase in at a moderate rate, any sound, fit mares procurable, to retail to breeders in their hunting countries. He also suggests that some arrangement should be made by which the Government should permit troop mares, after a few years in the service, to be resold to farmers and breeders at a reduced rate; then other societies in some of our large horse-producing countries have been in correspondence with me, in their endeavour to get Government sanction that Local Agricultural Committees should be permitted to come, select and purchase the best of the troop mares annually for breeding purposes.

Gentlemen, in the interests of the service, seeing that a large proportion of troop animals are mares, I do not consider this could be done; but I have suggested somewhat the following—when troop mares are being cast for certain causes rendering them unfit for the service, but still no hereditary or other breeding defect about them, that such sale should be notified to any local societies who choose to be constituted in a responsible way, and every facility should be given for members to previously inspect them, on the day of public auction sale they could bid for the animals. After this has been done for a term of years, say five, such societies would be in a position, through the Royal Agricultural or other Societies, to go to Government and represent that during the past term of years, a certain number of horses have been purchased at an average price, and then ask what rates Government could permit mares a few years younger to be purchased. Possibly some arrangement could be arrived at in this way, as then Government and the public would have certain figures before them as valuation data to go on.

If any farmer or breeder requires a mare and will pay for it, will communicate with me at 64, The Common, Woolwich, telling what he requires, and the price he wants to give for it, I will see what can be done towards procuring the mare for him.

We must now consider what is to be done as to the disposal of the produce, my idea being you should only breed for the best; there will be plenty of misfits, it is no use trying to breed a good horse on soil and climate that is unsuitable, or on pasture that will not carry

a horse ; do not endeavor to breed a troop horse, try and produce an animal that will grow into the best hunter, if he misses that mark, and has not the appearance and action for a first-class harness horse, he will make a trooper, you have, therefore, two first-class markets to think of where high prices can be realized, before you hope to sell to the Government.

There is a proposal circulated by Mr. Gilbey in a letter to the papers a few days since, that Government should purchase two-year-olds, graze them themselves on their own grasslands until old enough to issue out to the troops ; another member of the House of Commons just lately asked if Government could not arrange that their purchasers should advertise their dates of purchasing in different districts ? I foresee no difficulty in carrying out these arrangements, provided the Government think it desirable to do so. and doubtless some such plan in the existing state of things would do much to help the farmer in his struggle for existence, without much, if any, additional cost to the country.

I should recommend breeders putting a three parts bred, or even half bred, strengthly, long, low wide, good coloured, good constitutioned, hereditary sound mare, of from 15.1 to 15.3 in height, not too old, with good limbs and lengthy forehead, to good coloured, good limbed sound T.B. stallions.

If any man has by him a lighter, better bred, active, good coloured, well dispositioned mare on short legs, put her to a pedigree roadster or hackney stallion of undoubted family, colour and soundness.

Should you not know where to find stallions in your particular district, apply for information to the secretaries of either the Hunter's Improvement or Hackney Horse Societies, who will, doubtless, be able to afford you the necessary directions of owners of horses who possess sires.

