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Produced by Holly Ingraham

A DISSERTATION on HORSES

Wherein it is demonstrated, by Matters of Fact, as well as from

the Principles of Philosophy, that INNATE QUALITIES do not exist,

and that the excellence of this Animal is altogether mechanical

and not in the Blood.

By William Osmer

London:

Printed for T. Waller, 1756

Summary: Osmer shows us, by what he argues against, the primitive

state of horse-breeding in England where a superstitious belief in

bloodline with no attention to conformation rules. This is

difficult for the modern reader to even visualize, after the late

19th century development of conformation norms for all breeds of

animal. Notable for a description of horse raising and use among

the nomad Arabs, evidence of the survival of the ancient Nisaean

breed in Turkey, and stories of the Godolphin Arabian.

Transcriber's Note: I have retained most of the original

spellings, as it may be valuable to see how such things have

changed over the centuries. These odd spellings are marked with a

double asterisk (\*\*) not referencing any sort of note. The use of

capitalization or all-caps is as in the original.

A DISSERTATION ON HORSES

Whoever supposes that Mess. Heber and Pond, or even Mr. John

Cheney, were the first who published accounts of Horse-racing,

will find himself much mistaken, for there lived others above a

hundred years before them, who not only published accounts of

Horse-racing, but acquainted us with the history of the wrestling,

backsword-playing, boxing, and even foot-racing, that happened in

their days; and from them we learn also who were the victors, and

how the racers came in.

Amongst these, lived a man whose name was Homer, a blind or

obscure man (for they are synonimous\*\* terms) who occasionally

published his book of sports, and to him we are obliged also for

the pedigree of many Horses that were esteemed the best in his

time. This man was said to be poor, in little esteem, and to

travel about the country to sell his books; but though his

circumstances were very low, his understanding, it seems, was not,

for he always took care to pay his court to the great personages

wherever he came, and to flatter them in the blood of their

Horses. But though he was little esteemed in his life-time, yet

his book of pedigrees and genealogy of Horses was thought so

useful, that he was greatly honoured for it after his death. And

what is more strange, though the place of his nativity was

unknown, and no country would receive him as a member of their

community when living, yet when dead, many nations contended for

the honour of it; but whatever arguments each country may produce

for the support of its claim, nothing is more evident than that he

was an Englishman; and there is great reason to believe he was

born somewhere in the North, though I do not take upon me to say

it absolutely was so. His partiality however, to that part of the

kingdom, is manifest enough, for he pretended to say, that a good

racer could be bred in no place but the North; whereas, late

experience has proved that to be a very idle notion. But as the

northern gentlemen were the first breeders of racing Horses, so it

is very probably they were also the first subscribers to his book,

and then we shall find his partiality might arise, either from his

gratitude to these gentlemen, or from its being the place of his

nativity, or perhaps from both.

There was in the North in his time, a very famous Stallion called

Boreas: Whether the present breeders have any of that blood left,

I do not certainly know; but Homer, to flatter the owner, who was

a subscriber to his book, and always gave him two half guineas

instead of one, fabled that this same Boreas begot his colts as

fleet as the wind. This to be sure will be looked upon as nothing

more than a matter of polite partiality to his benefactor: But it

is much to be feared, this partiality has not been confined to

persons alone; for there is reason to believe, that in many cases,

he has varied the true pedigree of his Horses, and (not unlike our

modern breeders) has left out one cross that has been thought not

good, and substituted another in its room held more fashionable.

We have an account in one of his books, (I forget the year when it

was published) of a very famous chariot-race, that was run over

Newmarket between five noblemen; and though it was the custom at

that time to run with a two-wheeled chaise and pair only, instead

of four, we find all other customs nearly the same. The names of

the Horses are given us, their pedigrees, and the names of the

drivers; the course is marked out, judges appointed, betts\*\*

offered, but no crossing or jostling allowed; a plain proof they

depended on winning from the excellence of their Horses alone. But

though a curricle and pair was then the fashion, there lived at

that time a strange mad kind of fellow, haughty and overbearing,

determined that no body should do anything like himself, who

always drove three; and though the recital of this circumstance

may be considered as trivial, or little to the purpose, we shall

find something in the story worth our attention, and with respect

to Horses, a case very singular, such a one as no history, no

tradition, nor our own experience has ever furnished us with a

similar instance of.

It seems these three Horses were so good that no Horses in the

kingdom would match them. Homer, after having been very lavish in

their praise, has given us their names, and the pedigree of two of

them, which it seems were full brothers. He tells us, they were as

swift as the wind, and in his bombast\*\* way of writing, says they

were immortal; which expression is exactly of the same style and

meaning with our modern phrase high-bred, and could mean nothing

else, because in the recital of the pedigree, he tells us, they

were got by this same North-country Horse before mentioned, called

Boreas, and out of a flying Mare called Podarge. But the

singularity of this case is, that the third Horse, whom he calls

Pedasus\*\*, was absolutely a common Horse, and of no blood. Here I

beg leave to make use of Mr. Pope's words, who, in his

translation, speaking of those Horse, says thus:

"Who like in strength, in swiftness, and in grace,

"A mortal courser match'd th'immortal race."

Now as nothing is more certain, than that no Horses but those of

blood can race in our days, I have long been endeavouring to find

the true reason of this singular instance, and cannot any way

account for it, but by supposing this equality of strength and

elegance might produce an equality of swiftness. This

consideration naturally produced another, which is, that the blood

of all Horses may be merely ideal; and if so, a word of no

meaning. But before I advance any thing more on this hypothesis,

and that I may not be guilty of treason against the received laws

of jockey-ship, I do here lay it down as a certain truth, that no

Horses but such as come from foreign countries, or which are of

extraction totally foreign, can race. In this opinion every man

will readily join me, and this opinion will be confirmed by every

man's experience and observation.

But in discussing this point, I shall beg leave, when speaking of

these Horses, to change the word HIGH-BRED, and in its room

substitute the word foreigner, or of foreign extraction. For

perhaps it may appear, that the excellence we find in these Horses

depends totally on the mechanism of their parts, and not in their

blood; and that all the particular distinctions and fashions

thereof, depend also on the whim and caprice of mankind.

If we take a Horse bred for the cart, and such a one as we call a

hunter, and a horse of foreign extraction, and set them together,

the meanest judge will easily point out the best racer, from the

texture, elegance, and symmetry of their parts, without making any

appeal to blood. Allow but a difference in the texture, elegance,

and symmetry of parts in different Horses, whose extraction is

foreign, this principle will be clearly proved, and the word

HIGH-BRED is of no use, but to puzzle and lead us astray: and every

man's daily observation would teach him, if he was not lost in

this imaginary error, particular blood, that, generally speaking,

such Horses who have the finest texture, elegance of shape, and

the most proportion, are the best racers, let their blood be of

what kind it will, always supposing it to be totally foreign. If I

was asked what beauty was, I should say proportion: if I was asked

what strength was, I should say proportion also: but I would not

be understood to mean, that this strength and beauty alone will

constitute a racer, for we shall find a proper length also will be

wanted for the sake of velocity; and that moreover the very

constituent parts of foreign Horses differ as much from all

others, as their performances. But this, however, will be found a

truth; that in all Horses of every kind, whether designed to draw

or ride, this principle of proportion will determine the principle

of goodness; at least to that part of it which we call bottom. On

the other hand, our daily observation will shew us, that no weak,

loose, disproportioned Horse, let his blood be what it will, ever

yet was a prime racer. If it be objected, that many a plain ugly

Horse has been a good racer; I answer that all goodness is

comparative; and that such Horses who have been winners of plates

about the country, may be improperly called good racers, when

compared to some others: but I can even allow a very plain Horse

to be a prime racer, without giving up the least part of this

system: for instance if we suppose a Horse (with a large head and

long ears, like the Godolphin Arabian) a low mean forehand, slat

sided, and goose rumped, this, I guess, will be allowed a plain

ugly Horse; but yet if such a Horse be strong, and justly made in

those parts which are immediately conducive to action; if his

shoulders incline well backwards, his legs and joints in

proportion, his carcase strong and deep, his thighs well let down,

we shall find he may be a very good racer, even when tried by the

principles of mechanics, without appealing to his blood for any

part of his goodness. We are taught by this doctrine of mechanics,

that the power applied to any body, must be adequate to the weight

of that body, otherwise, such power will be deficient for the

action we require; and there is no man but knows a cable or chord

of three inches diameter is not equal in strength to a chord of

four inches diameter. So that if it should be asked why a handsome

coach Horse, with as much beauty, length, and proportion as a

foreign Horse, will not act with the same velocity and

perseverance, nothing will be more easily answered, without

appealing to blood; because we shall find the powers of acting in

a foreign Horse much more prevalent, and more equal to the weight

of his body, than the powers of acting in a coach Horse: for

whoever has been curious enough to examine the mechanism of

different Horses by dissection, will find the tendon of the leg in

a foreign Hose is much larger than in any other Horse, whose leg

is of the same dimensions; and as the external texture of a

foreign Horse is much finer than of any other, so the foreign

Horse must necessarily have the greatest strength and perseverance

in acting, because the muscular power of two Horses (whose

dimensions are the same) will be the greatest in that Horse, whose

texture is the finest.

Let us next inquire what information we can gather from the

science of Anatomy, concerning the laws of motion: it teaches us,

that the force and power of a muscle consists in the number of

fibres of which it is composed; and that the velocity and motion

of a muscle consists in the length and extent of its fibres. Let

us compare this doctrine with the language of the jockey: he tells

us, if a Horse has not length, he will be slow; and if made to

slender, he will not be able to bring his weight through. Does

not the observation of the jockey exactly correspond with this

doctrine? If we now inquire into the motion of Horses, we shall

find the bones are the levers of the body, and the tendons and

muscles (which are one and the same thing) are the powers of

acting applied to these levers. Now when we consider a half-bred

Horse running one mile or more, with the same velocity as a Horse

of foreign extraction, we do not impute that equality of velocity

to any innate quality in the half-bred Horse, because we can

account for it by external causes: that is by an equality of the

length, and extent of his levers and tendons. And when we consider

a half-bred Horse running one mile, or more, with the same

velocity as the other, and then giving it up, what shall we do?

shall we say the foreigner beats him by his blood, or by the force

and power of his tendons? or can we, without reproaching our own

reason and understanding, impute that to be the effect of occult

and hidden causes in the one of these instances and not in the

other? both of which are demonstrated with certainty, and reduced

to facts by the knowledge of anatomy and the principles of

mechanics.

How many instances have we of different Horses beating each other

alternately over different sorts of ground! how often do we see

short, close, compact Horses beating others of a more lengthened

shape, over high and hilly coursed, as well as deep and slippery

ground; in the latter of which, the blood is esteemed much better,

and whose performances in general are much better!

And how comes it to pass that Horses of a more lengthened shape,

have a superiority over Horses of a shorter make, upon level and

flat courses? Is this effected by the difference of their

mechanical powers, or is it affected by the blood? if, by the

latter, then this blood is not general, but partial only, which no

reasoning man will be absurd enough to allow. But I much fear our

distinctions of good and bad blood are determined with much

partiality; for every jockey has his particular favourite blood,

of which he judges from events, success, or prejudice: else, how

comes it to pass, that we see the different opinions and fashions

of blood varying daily! nay, we see the very same blood undergoing

the very same fate; this year rejected, the next in the highest

esteem; or this year in high repute, the next held at nothing. How

many changes has the blood of Childers undergone! once the best,

then the worst, now good again! Where are the descendants of Bay

Bolton, that once were the terror of their antagonists! Did these

prevail by the superiority of their blood, or because their power

and their fabric was superior to the Horses of their time? If any

one ask why Danby Cade was not as good a racer as any in the

kingdom, the jockey could not impute this defect to his blood; but

if it should be imputed to his want of proportion, surely it might

be held for a true and satisfactory reason. How many revolutions

of fame and credit, have all sportsmen observed in these HIGH-BRED

families.

Numberless are the examples of this kind which might be quoted,

but to account for this, one says, The blood is wore out for want

of a proper cross; another tells us, That after having been long

in this climate, the blood degenerates; but these reasons cannot

be true, because we see the off-spring of all crosses, and of the

most antient\*\* families, occasionally triumphant over the sons of

the very latest comers, the error then will not be found in the

blood, or in the proper crossing; but the defect will be produced

by the erroneous judgment of mankind, in putting together the male

and female with improper shapes; and while we are lost and blinded

by an imaginary good, the laws of nature stand revealed; and we by

paying a proper attention thereto, and employing our judgment

therein, might wipe this ignis fatuus from the mind, and fix the

truth on a sure foundation. Our observation shews us, that on the

one hand, we may breed Horses of foreign extraction too delicate,

and too slight for any labour; and on the other hand, so coarse

and clumsy, as to be fitter for the cart than the race. Shall we

then wonder these cannot race, or shall we doubt that degrees of

imperfection in the mechanism, will produce degrees of

imperfection in racing! and when we find such deficient, shall we

ridiculously impute it to a degeneracy of that blood, which once

was in the highest esteem, or to the want of judgment in him who

did not properly adapt the shapes of their progenitors!

Shall we confess this, or is the fault in nature? For though most

philosophers agree, that innate principles do not exist, yet we

know for certain, that in the brute creation, whose food is plain

and simple, (unlike luxurious man) the laws of nature are,

generally speaking, invariable and determined. If it should be

asked why the sons of the Godolphin Arabian were superior to most

Horses of their time; I answer, because he had a great power and

symmetry of parts, (head excepted) and a propriety of length

greatly superior to all other Horses of the same diameter, that

have been lately seen in this kingdom; which I do not assert on my

own judgment, but on the opinion of those who, I believe,

understand Horses much better than I pretend to do: and 'tis very

probable, this Horse, if he had not been confined to particular

Mares, might have begot better racers than any he did. On the

contrary, I have heard it urged in behalf of his blood, that he

was a very mean Horse in figure, and that he was kept as a

teizer\*\* some years before he covered. What does this prove? I

think nothing more, than that his first owner did not rightly

understand this kind of Horse, and that different men differed in

their opinions of this Horse's fabric.

If any man who doubts this excellence to be in the blood, should

ask how it came to pass that we often see two full brothers, one

of which is a good racer, the other indifferent, or perhaps bad, I

know of but two answers that can be given; we must either allow

this excellence of the blood to be partial, or else we must say,

that by putting together a Horse and a Mare, different in their

shapes, a foetus may be produced of a happy form at one time, and

at another the foetus partaking more or less of the shape of

either, may not be so happily formed. Which shall we do? shall we

impute this difference of goodness in the two brothers, to the

difference of their mechanism? or shall we say this perfection of

the blood is partial? If the latter, then we must own that blood

is not to be relied on, but that the system of it, and whatever is

built on that foundation, is precarious and uncertain, and

therefore falls to the ground of its own accord. Whilst this

continues to be the rule of breeding, I mean of putting male and

female together, with no consideration but that of blood and a

proper cross, it is no wonder so few good racers are produced, no

wonder mankind are disappointed in their pleasures and

expectations; for this prejudice does not only extend to blood,

but even to the very names of the breeders, and the country where

the Horses are bred, though it is beyond all doubt, that the North

claims the preference of all other places in this kingdom; but

that preference is allowed only from the multiplicity of Mares and

Stallions in those parts, and from the number of racers there

bred.

I would not be thought in this to prefer my own opinion of shape

and make to the known goodness of any Stallion, but would prefer

the latter before the opinion of all mankind. What then? It is not

every Horse that has been a good racer will get good colts; some

have suffered too much in their constitution by hard and continual

labour, whilst others have some natural infirmity that may

probably be entailed on their generation.

But the most material thing in breeding all animals, and to which

we pay the least regard, either in the race of men or Horses, is

the choice of the female, who not only joins in the production of

the foetus, but in the formation of it also. And that the female

has even the greatest share in the production of the foetus, will

be proved by this instance: if you take a dunghill cock and put to

a game hen, and also put a brother of that game hen to a sister of

the dunghill cock, those chickens bred from the game hen will be

found much superior to those chickens bred from the dunghill hen.

And here I beg leave to be allowed (without the imputation of

pedantry) one quotation from Virgil, who is supposed to have well

understood the laws of nature. In his description of the choice of

animals for procreation, in the third chapter of his Georgic's,

and the 49th verse, you will find it thus written:

"Seu quis Olympiacea mieratus praemia palme,

"Pascit Equos, feu quis fortes ad aratra Juvencos,

"Corpora praecipue matrum legat."

But I should not escape the censure of the critics on this

occasion, I expect the thanks of all the handsome well-made women

in the kingdom, for this hint, who understand Latin; and where

they do not, I hope their paramours will instill the meaning of

it, as deeply as they can into them. But to return to the breeding

of Horses.

We pay little regard to the mechanism of the female, or of the

Horse to which we put her, but generally choose some particular

Horse for the sake of the cross, or because he is called an

Arabian; whereas, in fact, every Stallion will not be suited to

every Mare, but he who has a fine female, and judgment enough to

adapt her shapes with propriety to a fine male, will always breed

the best racer, let the sort of blood be what it will, always

supposing it to be totally foreign. The truth of this will be

confirmed by our observation, which shews us, that Horses do race,

and do not race, of all families and all crosses.

We find also, that affinity of blood in the brute creation, if not

continued too long in the same channel, is no impediment to the

perfection of the animal, for experience teaches us, it will hold

good many years in the breed of game cocks. Besides, we know that

Childers, which was perhaps the best racer ever bred in this

kingdom, had in his veins a consanguinity of blood; his pedigree

informing us, that his great grandam was got by Spanker, the dam

of which Mare was also the dam of the said Spanker.

If we inquire a little farther into the different species of the

creation, we shall find this principle concerning perfection of

shape still more verified. Amongst game cocks we shall find, that

wheresoever power and propriety of shape prevails most, that side

(condition alike) will generally prevail. We shall find also, that

one cock perfectly made, will beat two or three of his own

brothers imperfectly made. If any man should boast of the blood of

his cocks, and say that the uncommon virtue of this animal, which

we call game, is innate, I answer no, for that all principles, and

all ideas arise from sensation and reflection, and are therefore

acquired.

We perceive this spirit of fighting in game chicken, which they

exert occasionally from their infancy; even so it is amongst

dunghill chickens, though not carried to that degree of

perseverance.

When arrived at maturity, we see these different birds will still

continue to fight if they meet; if I should be asked why the

perseverance of fighting in one does not continue to death, as in

the other, I answer, that from a different texture of the organs

of the body, different sensations will arise, and consequently

different effects be produced; and this will be proved by

instances from the best of those very cocks which are called game,

who (it is well know) when they suffer a variation in their

texture, or as cockers term it, become rotten, run away

themselves, and their descendants also; which sensation of fear

could not be produced by any alteration in the body, if this

principle of game was innate.

Amongst men, do we not perceive agility and strength stand forth

confessed in the fabric of their bodies? do not even the passions

and pleasures of mankind greatly depend on the organs of their

bodies? Amongst dogs, we shall find the foxhound prevailing over

all others in speed and in bottom; but if not in speed, in bottom

at least I hope it will be allowed. To what shall we impute this

perfection in him? Shall we impute it to his blood, or to that

elegance of form in which is found no unnecessary weight to

oppress the muscles, or detract from his ability of perseverance?

if to blood, from whence shall we deduce it? or from what origin

is it derived? Surely no man means more, when he talks of the

blood of foxhounds, than to intimate that they are descended from

such, whose ancestors have been eminent for their good

qualifications, and have shone conspicuous in the front of the

pack for many generations.

But allowing this system of blood to exist in hounds and Horses,

let us consider how inconsistently and differently we act with

respect to each; with respect to hounds, if when arrived at

maturity, we think them ill shaped and loosely made, we at once

dispose of them without any trial, well knowing they will not

answer our expectations: whereas, in Horses, let the shape be what

it will, we are persuaded to train, because the jockey says thay

are very HIGH-BRED. If we now compare the blood of Horses with

that of dogs, shall not we find the case to be similar? will not

the origin be as uncertain in Horses as in dogs? it is true, in

some foreign countries they have long pedigrees of their Horses as

well as we, but what proofs have they themselves of this

excellence of the blood in one Horse more than another of the same

country? I never heard they made any trial of their Horses in the

racing way, but if they did, their decision would be as uncertain

as ours with respect to the blood, because their decision must be

determined by events alone, and therefore, by no means a proper

foundation whereon to build a system, or establish a fact, which

can be accounted for by causes.

The jockeys have an expression which, if this system be true, is

the most senseless imaginable: I have heard it often said, Such a

Horse has speed enough if his heart do but lie in the right place.

In answer to this, let us consider a Horse as a piece of animated

machinery (for it is in reality no other); let us set this piece

of machinery going, and strain the works of it; if the works are

are\*\* not analogous to each other, will not the weakest give way?

and when that happens, will not the whole be out of tune? But if

we suppose a piece of machinery, whose works bear a true

proportion and analogy to each other, these will bear a greater

stress, will act with greater force, more regularity and

continuance of time. If it be objected, that foreign Horses seldom

race themselves, and therefore it must be in the blood, I think

nothing more easily answered; for we seldom see any of these

Horses sent us from abroad, especially from Arabia, but what are

more or less disproportioned, crooked, and deformed in some part

or other; and when we see this deformity of shape, can we any

longer wonder at their inability of racing: add to this, many of

them are perhaps full-aged before they arrive in this kingdom;

whereas, it is generally understood, that a proper training from

his youth is necessary to form a good racer.

But be this as it will, let us consider how it happens, that these

awkward, cross-shaped, disproportioned Horses, seemingly contrary

to the laws of nature, beget Horses of much finer shapes than

themselves, as we daily see produced in this Kingdom. And here I

acknowledge myself to have been long at a loss how to account for

this seeming difficulty.

I have been often conversant with travelers, concerning the nature

and breed of these Horses; few of whom could give any account of

the matter, from having had no taste therein, or any delight in

that animal: but, at length, I became acquainted with a gentleman

of undoubted veracity; whose word may be relied on, whose taste

and judgment in Horses inferior to no man's.

He says, that having spent a considerable part of his life at

Scanderoon and Alleppo\*\*, he frequently made excursions amongst

the Arabs; excited by curiosity, as well as to gratify his

pleasures. (The Arabs, here meant, are subjects of the grand

seignior\*\*, and receive a stipend from that court, to keep the

wild Arabs in awe, who are a fierce banditti\*\*, and live by

plunder.) He says also, that these stipendiary Arabs are a very

worthy set of people, exactly resembling another worthy set of

people we have in England called Lawyers; for that they receive

fees from both parties; and when they can do it with impunity,

occasionally rob themselves. These Arabs encamp on the deserts

together in large numbers, and with them moves all their

houshold\*\*; that these people keep numbers of greyhound, for the

sake of coursing the game and procuring their subsistance: and

that he has often been with parties for the sake of coursing

amongst those people, and continued with them occasionally for a

considerable space of time. That by them you are furnished with

dogs and horses; for the use of which you give them a reward. He

says they live all together; men, horses, dogs, colts, women, and

children. That these colts, having no green herbage to feed upon

when taken from the mare, are brought up by hand, and live as the

children do; and that the older Horses have no other food, than

straw and choped\*\* barley, which these Arabs procure from the

villages most adjacent to their encampments. The colts, he says,

run about with their dams on all expeditions, till weaned; for

that it is the custom of the Arabs to ride their mares, as

thinking them the fleetest, and not their horses; from whence we

may infer, that the mare colts are best fed and taken care of.

That if you ask one of these banditti to sell his mare, his answer

is, that on her speed depends his own head. He says also, the

stone colts are so little regarded, that it is difficult to find a

Horse of any tolerable size and shape amongst them.

If this then is the case, shall we be any longer at a loss to

account for the deformity of an animal, who, from his infancy, is

neglected, starved, and dried up, for want of juices? or shall we

wonder that his offspring, produced in a land of plenty, of whom

the greatest care is taken, who is defended from the extremity of

heat and cold, whose food is never limited, and whose vessels are

filled with the juices of the sweetest herbage, shall we wonder, I

say, that his offspring, so brought up, should acquire a more

perfect shape and size than his progenitor? or if the Sire is not

able to race, shall we wonder that the Son, whose shape is more

perfect, should excel his Sire in all performances?

But there is another reason why many of the very finest of these

foreign Horses cannot race: our observations of them will shew us,

that though their shoulders in general exceedingly incline

backwards, yet their fore-legs stand very much under them; but in

different Horses this position is more or less observable. This,

(when I considered the laws of nature) appeared to me the greatest

imperfection a Stallion could possibly have: but when this

gentleman informed me it was the custom of the Turks always to

keep each fore-leg of the Horse chained to the hinder one, of each

side, when not in action, I no longer considered it as a natural,

but an acquired imperfection. Shall we now wonder that such an

one, though ever so well made in other respects, cannot race in

spite of all his blood? But the custom of the Arabs in this

respect, he says, his memory does not extend to. I well remember

this to be the case of the Godolphin Arabian when I saw him, who

stood bent at knees, and with his fore-legs trembling under him:

such is the case of Mosco's grey Horse in some degree. In our

country we frequently see Horses stand pawing their litter under

them with their fore-feet; our custom to prevent it is to put

hobbles on their fore-legs, and this will produce the same

position in a greater or less degree, though not so conspicuous as

in some of those foreign Horses, who have been habituated from

their youth to this confined method of standing. His royal

highness the duke of Cumberland has a very remarkable instance of

this, in a Horse called Muley Ishmael, which is otherwise, the

most elegant Horse I ever yet beheld. Whether this position is

natural or acquired, will be best determined by his produce.

Suppose now this Horse should be tried, and found no racer, shall

he be condemned as a Stallion, and the fault imputed to his

blood; or on the other hand, if his colts are strait\*\* upon their

legs, and found to be good racers, shall the perfection of such

colt be imputed to the blood of the father, when we can account

for speed in the one, and the want of it in the other, from the

different attitude of each Horse? We are further acquainted, that

the Horses we call Turks, are in reality Arabs; that the true

Turkish Horse, is a large, heavy, majestic animal, of no speed,

designed to ride on for state and grandeur; that it is the custom

of the bashaws in Arabia occasionally to choose, from their

provinces, such colts as they like, and send them to the grand

seignior's stables which they do at their own price, and which the

Arabs, who breed them, look upon as a very great hardship. These

colts are again picked and culled, after having been some time in

the grand seignior's stables, and the refuse disposed of at his

pleasure, so that the fine Horses found in the possession of the

Turks, are either some of these which are cast from the grand

seignior's stables, or which the Turks buy from the Arabs whilst

they are young. And he farther acquaints us with the reason why

the Turks choose these Arabian Horses when young, because, if

continued long in the hands of the Arabs, they are small, stunted,

and deformed in shape; whereas, when brought into Turkey, a land

of greater plenty than the deserts of Arabia, they acquire a

greater perfection both of size and shape. Now, whether these

Turks and Arabs are of the same or different extraction, may

perhaps be very little to our purpose; but it is absurd to

suppose that providence has bestowed a virtue on a part only of

this species produced in any one country, (which species was

undoubtedly designed for the use of man) and that mankind should

not be able, in any age, to determine with precision this virtue,

or fix any criterion, whereby to judge with any certainty.

Seeing then, this is the case, how shall we account for the

various perfection and imperfection in the breed of these foreign

Horses; for we perceive it not determined to those of Turkey,

Barbary, or Arabia, but from each of these countries some good,

some bad Stallions are sent us? What shall we do? Shall we

continue to impute it to the good old phrase of blood, the

particular virtue of which, no man ever yet could ascertain, in

any one particular instance, since Horses were first created? or

shall we say that nature has given these foreign Horses a finer

texture, a finer attitude, and more power than any other Horses we

know of; and that these very Horses, and their descendants always

did, and always will surpass each other in speed and bottom,

according to their different degrees of power, shape, elegance,

and proportion? But there is also a certain length determined to

some particular parts of this animal, absolutely necessary to

velocity, of the particularity and propriety of which length, all

jockeys appear to be intirely\*\* ignorant, from the latitude of

their expression, which is that a racer must have length

somewhere.

If I might now be allowed to give my opinion of this propriety of

length, I should say it consisted in the depth and declivity of

the shoulders, and in the length of the quarters and thighs, and

the insertion of the muscles thereof. The effect of the different

position or attitude of the shoulders in all Horses, is very

demonstrable: if we consider the motion of a shoulder, we shall

find it limited to a certain degree by the ligamentous and the

tendinous parts, which confine it to its proper sphere of acting;

so that if the shoulder stand upright, the Horse will not be able

to put his toes far before him, but will acquire only such a

particular degree of space at each step or movement; but if the

shoulders have a declivity in them, he cannot only put his toes

farther before him, but a greater purchase of ground will be

obtained at every stroke.

The certainty of this effect in the declivity of the shoulders

will be known by every man's observation; and it is also easily

demonstrated by the principles of mechanics, by which we learn,

that if a weight is applied to a pulley, in order to shut a door,

and that weight be allowed to fall immediately and perpendicularly

from the door, it will not pull it too with that velocity as it

will do if an angle be acquired, and the weight pass over a wheel

removed to a very little distance from the door.

Nevertheless, there is no general rule without exception, for we

now and then find a Horse to be a good racer, who has not this

declivity in his shoulders, but from a length in his thighs and

quarters has a sufficient share of speed. Add to this, there is

another advantage obtained to the Horse besides velocity by this

declivity of the shoulders, for his weight is removed farther

back, and placed more in the center of his body, by which an

equilibrium is acquired, and every muscle bears a more equal share

of weight and action; so that the nearer the articulation of the

quarters approach to the superior part of the shoulders, so much

the shorter will the back be, and as much more expanded as the

chest is, so much stronger will the animal be, and will also have

a larger space for the organs of respiration to exert themselves.

But I would not be understood to mean, that the shortness of the

back, or capacity of the chest, will constitute a racer; far from

it: but that in any given and proportioned length, from the bosom

of the Horse to the setting on of the dock, the nearer the

superior points of the shoulders approach to the quarters, so much

better able will the carcase be to sustain and bring through the

weight; and as much as the shoulders themselves prevail in depth,

and the quarters and thighs in length, so much greater will be the

velocity of the Horse, because a greater purchase of ground is

hereby obtained at every stroke.

It is by this property of length, strength of carcase, and the

power of the muscles, that foreign Horse excel all others, and it

is by the same advantages they excel each other also, and not by

any innate virtue, or principle of the mind, which must be

understood by the word blood, if any thing at all is intended to

be understood by it; and this is a truth every man would be

convinced of, if he would divest himself of partiality to

particular blood, and confide in his own observation of Horses and

their performances.

Sedbury was an instance of this great power, in whom we find all

the muscles rising very luxuriant, and with a remarkable

prominence. The famous Childers was a like instance of it. These

two Horses were remarkably good, but we have been absurd enough to

condemn the blood of both at various times; in one, because he had

bad feet, and entailed that defect on the generality of his

offspring; in the other, because most people who bred from that

lineage, were running mad after a proper cross, when they should

have been employed in thinking only of propriety of shape.

I am very far from desiring to be thought a superior judge of

this animal, but I will be bold to say, that according to these

principles of length and power, there never was a Horse (at least

that I have seen) so well entitled to get racers as the Godolphin

Arabian; for whoever has seen this Horse, must remember that his

shoulders were deeper, and lay farther into his back, than any

Horse's ever yet seen; behind the shoulders, there was but a very

small space; before, the muscles of his loins rose excessively

high, broad, and expanded, which were inserted into his quarters

with greater strength and power than in any Horse I believe ever

yet seen of his dimensions. If we now consider the plainness of

his head and ears, the position of his fore-legs, and his stinted

growth, occasioned by the want of food in the country where he was

bred, it is not to be wondered at, that the excellence of this

Horse's shape, which we see only in miniature, and therefore

imperfectly, was not so manifest and apparent to the perception of

some men as of others.

It has been said, that the sons of the Godolphin Arabian had

better wind than other Horses, and that this perfection of the

wind was in the blood. But when we consider any Horse thus

mechanically made, whose leavers acquire more purchase, and whose

powers are stronger than his adversaries, such a Horse will be

enabled by this superiority of mechanism, to act with greater

facility, and therefore it is no wonder that the organs of

respiration (if not confined or straitened more than his

adversaries) should be less fatigued. Suppose now, we take ten

mares of the same, or different blood, all which is held equally

good, when the Mares are covered, and have been esteemed so long

before, and put to this Godolphin Arabian, let us suppose some of

the colts to be good racers, and others very inferior to them;

shall we condemn the blood of these mares which produced the

inferior Horses? If so, we shall never know what good blood is, or

where it is to be found, or ever act with any certainty in the

propagation of this species, and it is this ridiculous opinion

alone of blood, that deceives mankind so much in the breed of

racers. If we ask the jockey the cause of this difference in the

performance of these brothers, he (willing to account some how for

it) readily answers, that the blood did not nick; but will a wise

and reasoning man, who seriously endeavours to account for this

difference, be content with such a vague, unmeaning answer, when,

by applying his attention to matters of fact, and his observation

to the different mechanism of these brothers, the difference of

their performance is not only rationally, but demonstratively

accounted for?

But if this excellence of the racer should really be in the blood,

or what is called the proper nicking of it, I must say, it is a

matter of great wonder to me, that the blood of the Godolphin

Arabian, who was a confined Stallion, and had but few Mares,

should nick so well as to produce so many excellent racers; and

that the blood of his son Cade, who has had such a number of

Mares, and those, perhaps, the very best in the kingdom, should

not nick any better than it seems to have done; for I do not

conceive the performances of the sons of Cade to have been equal

in any respect to the sons of the Godolphin Arabian; though I do

not pretend to determine this myself, but shall leave it to the

opinion of mankind.

The question then is, whether this excellence of Horses is in the

blood or the mechanism; whoever is for blood, let him take two

brothers of any sort or kind, and breed one up in plenty, the

other upon a barren heath; I fancy he will find, that a different

mechanism of the body will be acquired to the two brothers by the

difference of their living, and that the blood of him brought up

on the barren heath, will not be able to contend with the

mechanism of the other, brought up in a land of plenty. Now if

this difference of shape will make a difference in the performance

of the animal, it will be just the same thing in its consequences,

whether this imperfection of shape be produced by scarcity of

foot, or entailed by the laws of nature; if so, does it signify

whether the colt be got by Turk, Barb, or what kind of blood his

dam be of? or where shall we find one certain proof of the

efficacy of blood in any Horse produced in any age or any country,

independent of the laws of mechanics.

If it should be urged, that these foreign Horses get better colts

than their descendants, that therefore the blood of foreign ones

is best, I answer, no; for that according to the number of foreign

Stallions we have had in this kingdom, there have been more

reputed and really bad than good ones, which would not happen in

the case of Horses, who come from the same country, and are of the

same extraction, if this goodness was in the blood only. But the

true reason why foreign Horses get better colts than their

descendants, if they do get better, is that (mechanism alike)

their descendants from which we breed, are generally such Horses

as have been thoroughly tried, consequently much strained, and

gone through strong labour and fatigue; whereas the foreign Horse

has perhaps seldom or never known what labour was; for we find the

Turk a sober grave person, always riding a foot pace, except on

emergencies, and the Arab preferring his Mare to his Horse for use

and service. As a proof of this truth, let us take two sister

hound bitches, and ward them both with the same dog; let us

suppose one bitch to have run in the pack, and the other by some

accident not to have worked at all, it will be found that the

offspring of her who has never worked, will be much superior to

the offspring of her who has run in the pack.

All I have now to ask of my brother jockeys is, that for the

future, when speaking of these Horses, they will, instead of the

phrase HIGH-BRED, say only well-bred, and that they will not even

then be understood to mean any thing more by it, than that they

are descended from a race of Horses, whose actions have

established their goodness: and that I may have leave to prefer my

opinion of the mechanical powers of a Horse, to all their opinions

concerning blood, which is in reality no more than a vain chimera.

If these things are so, have not we and our fore-fathers been

hoodwinked all our days by the prevalence of a ridiculous custom,

and the mistaken system, when by consulting our own reason and

understanding, this mist of error had fled before it? If this

mechanical power was considered as it ought to be, it would excite

a proper emulation amongst all breeders: and when the excellence

in the breed of Horses was found to be the effect of judgment, and

not of chance, there would be more merit as well as more pleasure

in having bred a superior Horse. Add to this, mankind by applying

their attention to this mechanism of animals, would improve their

judgment in the laws of nature, and it would not only produce a

much better breed of racers than any we have yet seen, but the

good of it would extend to all sorts of Horses throughout the

kingdom of what kind soever. It is a cruel thing to say, but yet a

very true one, that amongst the present breed of Horses in this

nation, a man of any tolerable judgment can hardly find one in

fifty fit for his purpose, whether designed to draw or ride;

whereas if the purchasers would endeavour to make themselves

masters of this mechanism, the breeders of every kind of Horses

must consult it also, or keep their useless ones in their own

hands, which I conceive would be a proper punishment for their

ignorance.

And now the author appeals not to the illiterate and unlearned

(whose obstinacy is too great to receive instruction, and whose

prejudices are too strong to be obliterated by any reasons) but to

the candid and impartial inquiry of reasoning and unprejudiced men

into these principles, and hopes this may be a means of exciting

some more able pen, to vindicate a truth so many ages buried in

darkness. If aught conducive to the pleasure or use of mankind

shall accrue from these hints, he will think himself happy; on the

other hand, if the principles here advanced should prove

erroneous, and any man be kind enough to point out the fallacy of

them, he will kiss the rod with chearfulness\*\* and submission.

FINIS.

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