

THE LADY'S SEAT.

To be a good horsewoman a lady must sit correctly in the saddle, and this is the first, and not by any means the least important, consideration to be attended to by all who would acquire the art of easy and graceful riding. No amount of practice will compensate for the neglect of this elementary, but indispensable requisite. It is true, a lady may be able to trot, canter, and gallop, with comparative ease to herself, who has never acquired this first lesson of learning to sit in the saddle, but she will never appear otherwise than very awkward

to beholders, to whom she will at all times present the appearance of a novice, or one who is just beginning to ride. She will never elicit the remark: "How well that lady rides!" or, "What a graceful rider!" On the contrary, her riding will create a feeling of uneasiness that she may possibly come to grief, by being thrown from the saddle she sits on so awkwardly. I say she may ride with "comparative" ease to herself, but it will be an ease, if I may so speak, that will be acquired by the expenditure of much unnecessary muscular effort, and will result in great fatigue to the whole body, if the riding be continued long. Moreover, the grace of the figure is entirely destroyed, for the time, by an awkward seat.

A lady may possess a perfect figure, graceful and pleasing in every movement,

but every charm will vanish the moment she mounts her horse, if the A B C—as I may call a correct seat—of good riding has not been studiously and carefully acquired. On the other hand, a naturally indifferent, and even very ungraceful figure, when well seated and poised in the saddle, presents a pleasing and graceful sight ; for it manifests the possession of a great and valuable accomplishment. Ladies of unprepossessing figures—if there be any such—have here a powerful weapon within their power, with which to turn the tables upon their other wise more highly favoured sisters. An easy, natural seat in the saddle will give charm to a figure destitute of natural endowments. Ladies should, therefore, spare no pains to make themselves thorough masters of this first lesson in riding.

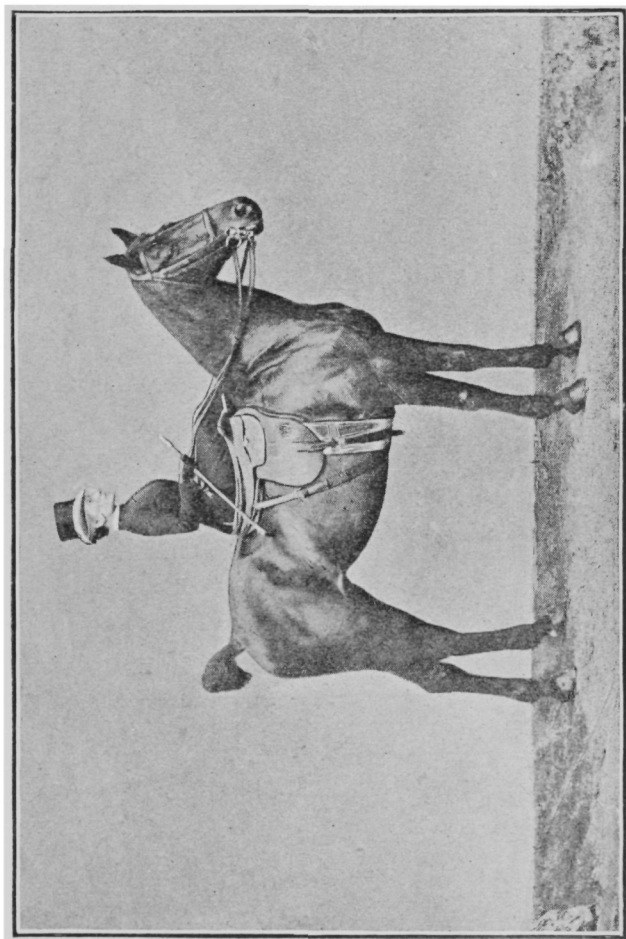
When a lady mounts a horse for the first time the tendency is to sit *back* in the saddle, bend the back and thrust the head forward. Apart from the ungainly appearance such a position or posture presents, it is impossible for the movements of the body to harmonise with those of the horse, which is the great secret in riding well. With such a seat almost every movement of the rider will be antagonistic to the movements of the horse; and both horse and rider will, in consequence, use far more energy than is necessary, resulting, of course, in a corresponding amount of unpleasantness and fatigue. The rider should sit well on and *into* the saddle, so to speak, and not on the back part of it. The weight of the body should rest firmly on the horse's back, head and shoulders erect, or slightly inclined backward. There should be no leaning,

hanging, dragging or straining of the body at all, but a perfect sense of rest in all the muscles.

The rider should feel that her weight is pressing naturally and perpendicularly upon the back of the horse. The hips should be slightly inclined inward, and the right knee pressed firmly, but gently, down betwixt the crutch and the saddle. The crutch is merely the support for the leg, and is not intended to assist the rider in any other way. On no account must it be used to keep the body in the right position; the balance must be maintained without regard to the crutch. Many ladies look to the crutch as a kind of safety-peg intended to prop them up, or prevent their falling off. The habit of thus regarding the crutch begets a false and injurious reliance, which is very prejudicial

to good riding ; and no rider, while it lasts, will ever become a horsewoman.

Many other bad results follow from this pernicious practice : the arm and leg become sore and bruised, and the horse's back, by the constant shifting of the saddle and the rubbing caused thereby, is liable to break out into sores, which may incapacitate him for work for a long time, and, in some cases, do him a permanent injury. From the knee to the ankle let the leg rest on the side of the saddle, the toes should be depressed, and the heel drawn back to the left knee. This action, by bracing the muscles of the calf of the leg and causing natural pressure on the saddle, creates a feeling of security. The thigh of the left leg should be pressed close to the saddle, with the knee well up under the crutch, and the foot resting



naturally on the stirrup, to give the necessary assistance in trotting. Also in cantering, galloping and leaping the right heel should be drawn back firmly and strongly to the left knee, with the toes of the right foot depressed, the left knee being brought well up under the crutch, and the left hip well forward, so as to keep the hips in the same plane as the shoulders, or what is generally called, square with the shoulders. The arms, from shoulder to elbow, should rest naturally near the sides, and be kept in that position at all times. They should not be raised or moved about, as, in addition to rendering less secure the seat, such actions are extremely ungraceful and displeasing. By keeping the arms pressed down to the sides the balance of the body is more easily maintained. The hands should be carried in the centre of, and about three inches from, the body, with the

nails turned towards the rider.

When mounted on a fresh or spirited horse be careful to keep the hands low down, and the body well erect, or slightly inclined backward. With an inexperienced rider it is so natural to bend forward the moment the horse begins to be a little restive. The movement is an unconscious one, and quite natural; but it must be strenuously fought against and overcome, for the moment the body loses the correct position all power over the horse is lost; and the rider becomes the sport of his movements. Whenever the horse shows signs of impatience, or begins to caper about, sit firmly into the saddle with the head erect, so as to be ready to preserve the balance, should he turn quickly to the right or left, or otherwise misbehave himself.

It requires some experience in riding to sit a horse well when he is fresh or restive ; but a little reflection will convince us of the absolute necessity of keeping the right position, if we are to maintain proper control over the horse. It is only by being able to balance the body well that control can be kept over the reins, the handling of which is of the very *utmost importance* in riding. Few, indeed, even among accomplished horsewomen, ever learn to handle the bridle reins to perfection ; and the majority do not attain to even moderate skill in this respect. The more or less hard, rigid hand is the rule, and the light, delicate elastic hand the great exception. Only long and constant practice will give one what is called "good hands." Let ladies bear in mind that a high-bred, spirited horse will chafe and fret more under bad handling of the bridle reins than under

any other manifestation of bad riding. I have seen some horses driven almost frantic by the rider's stiff, unyielding hold over the reins, and the sudden jerks on the mouth which follow.

To handle the reins well is a great art, and should be acquired, no matter how much trouble it may occasion; for this is the last and crowning accomplishment of the thorough horsewoman. Not *strength* is required, but *art*. The *slightest* strain on the horse's mouth is sufficient, in the case of high-spirited animals, to control all his movements, and make him subservient to your wishes; whereas the "iron hand" will make him quite unmanageable, and not only render the exercise of riding extremely difficult, but jeopardise and endanger the life of the rider.

Ladies, in learning to ride, have not the

advantage of gentlemen. The latter get the best practice in acquiring the balance by riding bare-backed, or on the rug and roller. Of course ladies are excluded from this excellent practice. They must, from the first, observe the correct seat, and carefully avoid any negligence in this respect.

It is not a difficult matter to learn to ride well, and when once acquired it becomes habitual. It is merely a matter of skill, and not at all dependent upon the formation of the figure, as many ladies seem to think.

No lady should venture into the hunting field until she has secured a fairly firm seat, and feels herself master of her horse. Riding to Meets is good practice ; the horses go much better in company, which they enjoy

as much as the rider. The most valuable and effective lessons, however, are those obtained in the hunting field, when riding hard to hounds. For thoroughly shaking one into the seat there is nothing like it, whether for man or woman. The excitement of the Chase sends the blood coursing through the body, subdues every feeling of nervousness and timidity, and fills the mind with exciting and pleasurable sensations, to the exclusion of all thoughts and feelings of danger or fear. It is astonishing to see the way ladies, who are by no means good riders, will sometimes take the roughest country, and go with break-neck speed, under the excitement of the moment, where they would not otherwise venture even to walk their horses. Nevertheless, I strongly advise ladies not to venture to follow the hounds until they can ride with ease and leap

