

***GEORGE  
GREENWOOD***



***HINTS ON HORSEMANSHIP,  
TO A NEPHEW AND NIECE  
OR, COMMON SENSE AND  
COMMON ERRORS  
IN COMMON RIDING***

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# **Hints on Horsemanship, to a Nephew and Niece or, Common Sense and Common Errors in Common Riding**

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# CHAPTER I.

## MILITARY RIDING NOT FIT FOR COMMON RIDING.

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Throughout Europe there is only one style of riding *taught*; that is, the soldier's *one-handed* style.—*Two hands* should be used to the reins.—A soldier's horse must turn on the wrong rein.—Common riders generally turn their horses on the wrong rein. Result of this with colts or restive horses.—Indications are not *aids*.

When you wish to turn to the right pull the right rein stronger than the left. This is common sense. The common error is precisely the reverse. The common error is, when you wish to turn to the right to pass the hand to the right. By this the right rein is slackened, and the left rein is tightened, across the horse's neck, and the horse is required to turn to the right when the left rein is pulled. It is to correct this common error, this monstrous and perpetual source of bad riding and of bad usage to good animals, that these pages are written.

England is the only European country which admits of more than one style of riding. But in all Europe, even in England, there is but one style of riding *taught*, as a system; that style is the manége or military style. The

*Only one style of riding taught.*

military style is, and must ever be *That is, a one-*  
essentially *a one-handed style*, for the *handed style*.  
soldier must have his right hand at liberty  
for his weapons. The recruit is indeed made to ride with a  
single snaffle in two hands, but only as a preparatory step to  
the one-handed style. His left hand then becomes *his bridle*  
*hand*, and that hand must hold the reins in such a manner  
as will require the least possible aid from *the sword hand* to  
shorten them as occasion may require. This is with the  
fourth finger only between them ([Fig. 1](#)).





FIG. 1.—STRICT REGIMENTAL.

For these reasons, as far as soldiers are concerned, I do not see how the present system can be altered for the better, unless it be by placing the three last fingers of the left hand between the reins ([Fig. 2](#)), instead of the fourth finger only. The reins held in this way are as easily and as quickly shortened, by drawing them with the right hand through the left, as if they were separated by the fourth finger only. I always adopted this mode myself when my sword was in my hand; and I should think it worth trial for all soldiers. My two last chargers had been notoriously restive horses, and I could not have ridden them in the strictly regimental mode.



FIG. 2.—VARIED REGIMENTAL.

But I see no reason why, because *Two hands* soldiers are compelled to guide their *should be used* horses with the left hand only, and with *to the reins.* the fourth finger only between the reins, that ladies and civilians should be condemned to the same system. On the contrary, I would have ladies as well as gentlemen use both hands to the reins, whether of the curb or of the snaffle, somewhat as the rough-rider or colt-breaker uses the reins of a single snaffle; but the reins should enter the hands outside instead of inside the fourth fingers, and they should quit the hands between the first and second fingers instead of between the first finger and thumb, as will be explained in the next chapter.

Fasten the end of a rein to the upper part of the back of a chair; pull the reins enough to raise two of the legs off the ground, and to keep the chair balanced on the other two. Take your reins as ladies and soldiers are taught to take



them (Fig. 1), both grasped in the left hand, the fourth finger only between them, and (I quote from the regulations of the English cavalry) “the top of the thumb firmly closed on them—the upper part of the arm hanging straight down from the shoulder—the left elbow lightly touching the hip—the lower part of the arm square to the upper—little finger on a level with the elbow—wrist rounded outwards—the back of the hand to the front—the thumb pointing across the body, and three inches from it.” In this position we are taught that “the little finger of the bridle-hand has four lines of action—first, towards the breast (to stop or rein back); second, towards the right shoulder (to turn to the right); third, towards the left shoulder (to turn to the left); fourth, towards the horse’s head (to advance).” Try the second motion: you will find it a very nice operation, and that you are capable of shortening the right rein only in a very slight degree; you will also find that, if the hand ceases to be precisely opposite the centre of the body, the moment it is passed to the right the right rein becomes slackened, and the left rein is pulled. This is still more the case when the horse’s neck is between the reins; the left rein is then instantly shortened across the neck.

I will not assert that the art of riding *A soldier’s horse must turn on the wrong rein.* rough-rider, riding-master, or any horseman whatever, who turned his horse, single-handed, on the proper rein. But I may assert that it is an exceedingly nice and delicate art. It is the opera-dancing of riding. And it

would be as absurd to put the skill of its professors in requisition in common riding or across country, as to require Taglioni to *chasser* over a ploughed field. For single-handed indications, supposing them to be correctly given—which, as I have said, I have never known; but supposing them to be correctly given—they are not sufficiently distinct to turn a horse, except in a case of optimism. That is, supposing for a short time a perfectly broken horse, in perfect temper, perfectly on his haunches, going perfectly up to his bit, and on perfect ground. Without all these perfections—suppose even the circumstance of the horse being excited or alarmed, or becoming violent from any other cause; that he is sluggish or sullen; that he stiffens his neck or pokes his nose—single-handed indications are worth nothing. But as for riding a horse perfectly on his haunches through a long day's journey, or in rough or deep ground, or across country, one might as well require infantry to make long forced marches at ordinary time, and to strictly preserve their touch and dressing; or, still to compare it to opera-dancing, Coulon to go through a day's shooting with the *pas de zephir*.

But correct single-handed indications, with the fourth finger only between the reins, will not be obeyed by one horse in ten thousand. Try them in driving. There the terret-pad prevents their being given incorrectly, and a bearing-rein, a severe bit, and a whip, give you every advantage in keeping your horse collected; yet you will find them wholly inefficient. The soldier, who is compelled to turn to the right by word of command, when the correct indication is unanswered, in despair throws his hand to the right. The