

Schooling philosophy and horse welfare

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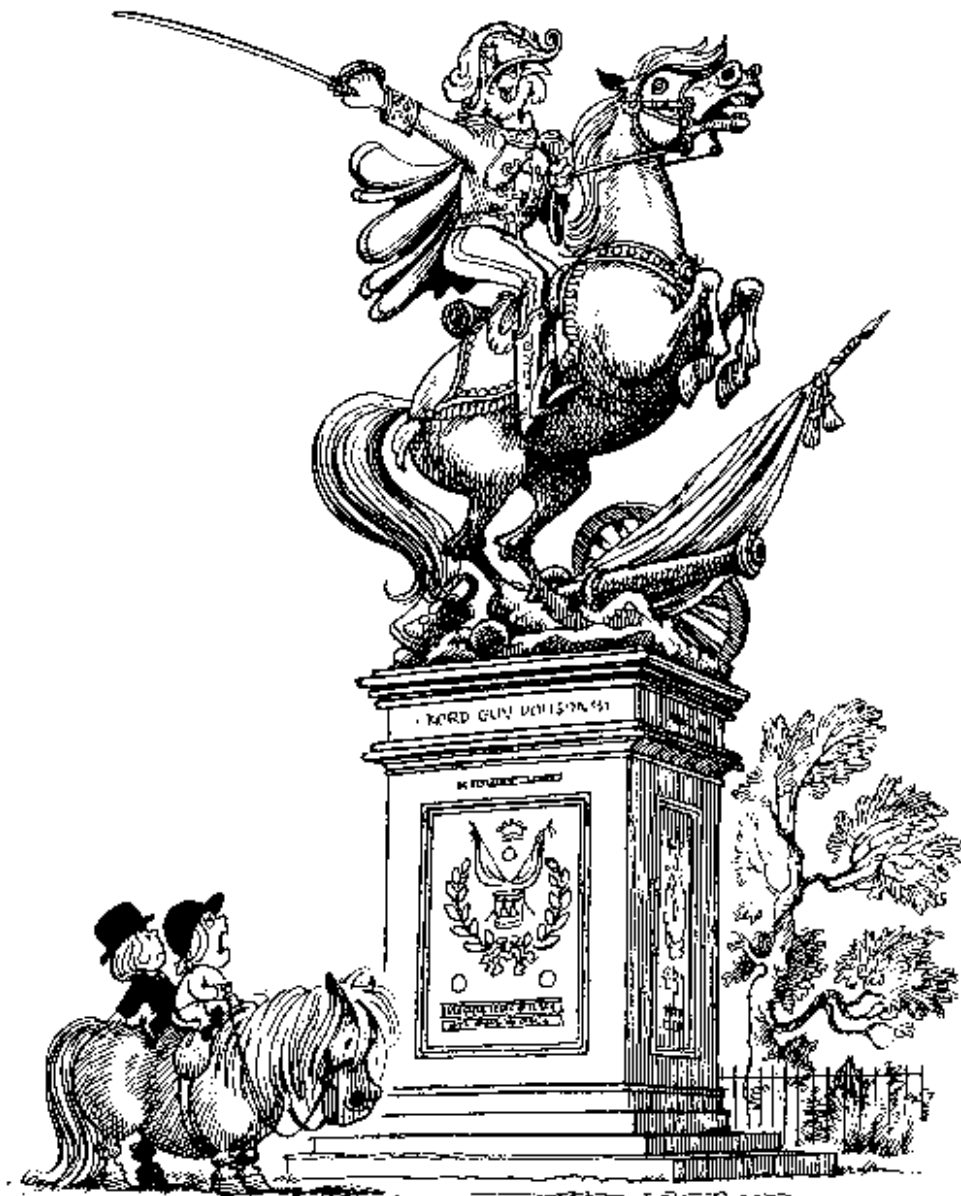
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Why learn something about the art of riding?

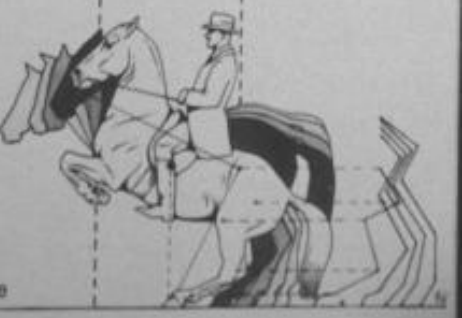
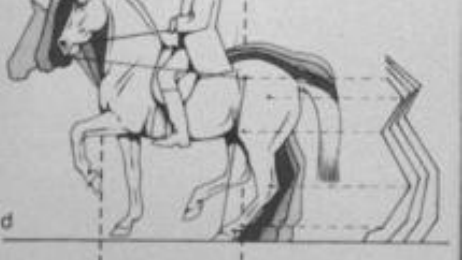
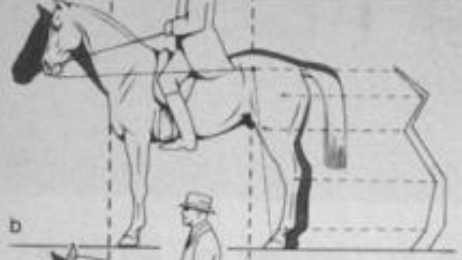
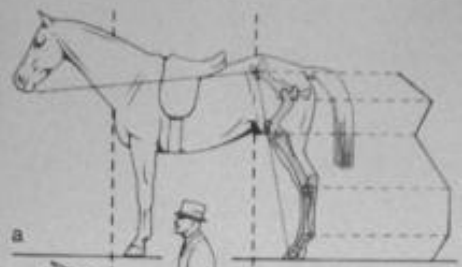
- A vet specializing in horses should be capable of establishing a relation between bad riding and lesions.
- One should realise that what is often seen nowadays is wrong. Incompetence is being compensated by tricks that become the rule.



"I DON'T THINK MUCH OF HIS SEAT."

Main purpose of dressage as prescribed since the baroque period: gradual increase of **collection**, obtained through

1. increasing **flexibility**
2. **obedience** to light aids

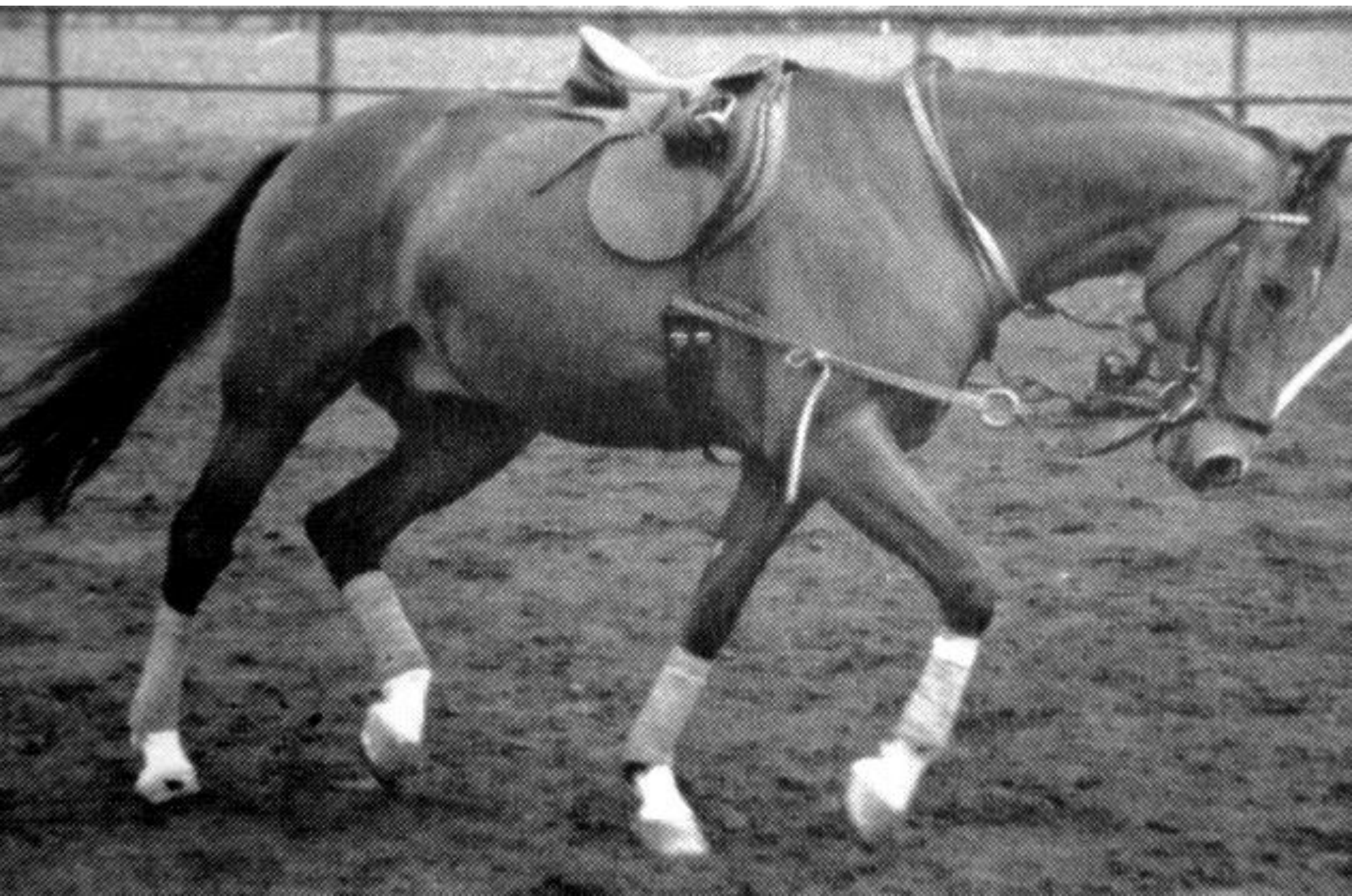


How obtain collection in the right way?

- *Gymnastics, make the horse flexible* without forcing anything. Feel whether your horse is **physically capable**. Importance of *shoulder in, voltes, transitions, mandibula relaxation*.
- Always aim for *lightness* at every developmental stage. Unconstrained gaits are not only nicer but should also be more animal-friendly.
- Abide by the principles of *learning processes*. Ensure that your horse is mentally capable of obeying, i.e. that it **understands** what you ask for.

Poll-flexion most often comes naturally as a concomitant of collection.

Don't force poll-flexion by systematically using drawing reins. Only for a limited period eventually to retrain wrongly ridden horses or horses with a conformation problem.



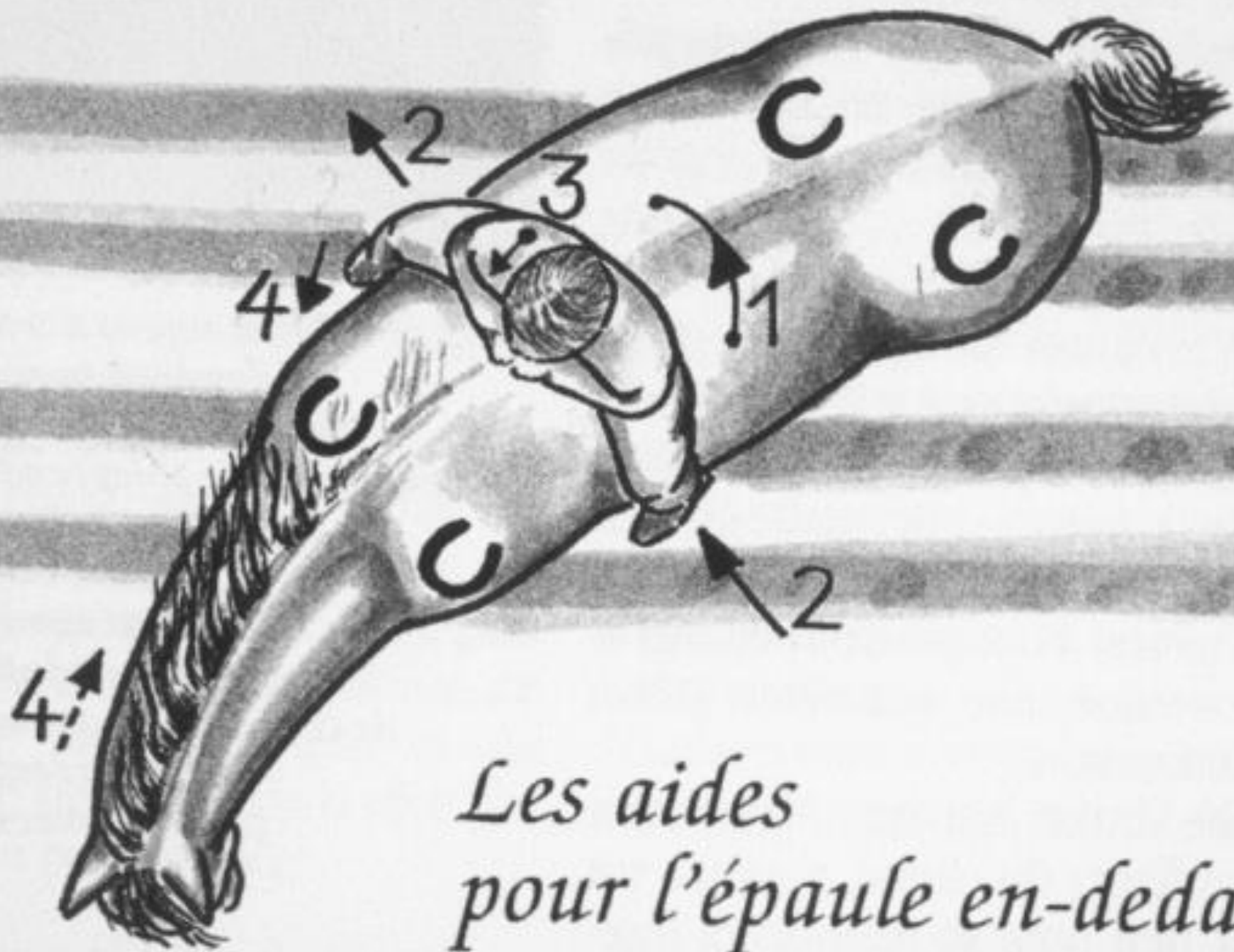




Barroet inv.

Tardieu Sculp.

L'Épaule en dedans.



*Les aides
pour l'épaule en-dedans*



De

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Magazine voor sportp



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AAN KOP

ISES









A few examples of aiming for the ideal: true collection and lightness.

Utmost lightness:

- working with a contact consisting of the weight of the reins
- strong impulsion: shooting forward at the slightest request of the seat







What happens when the stiff horse
pulls against the hand and without
poll-flexion?



All too often one tries to inhibit the upward head movement coercively with martingales, drawing reins, harder bits...



Niets drukt zo zwaar op de rug van een paard dan een slechte ruitterhand



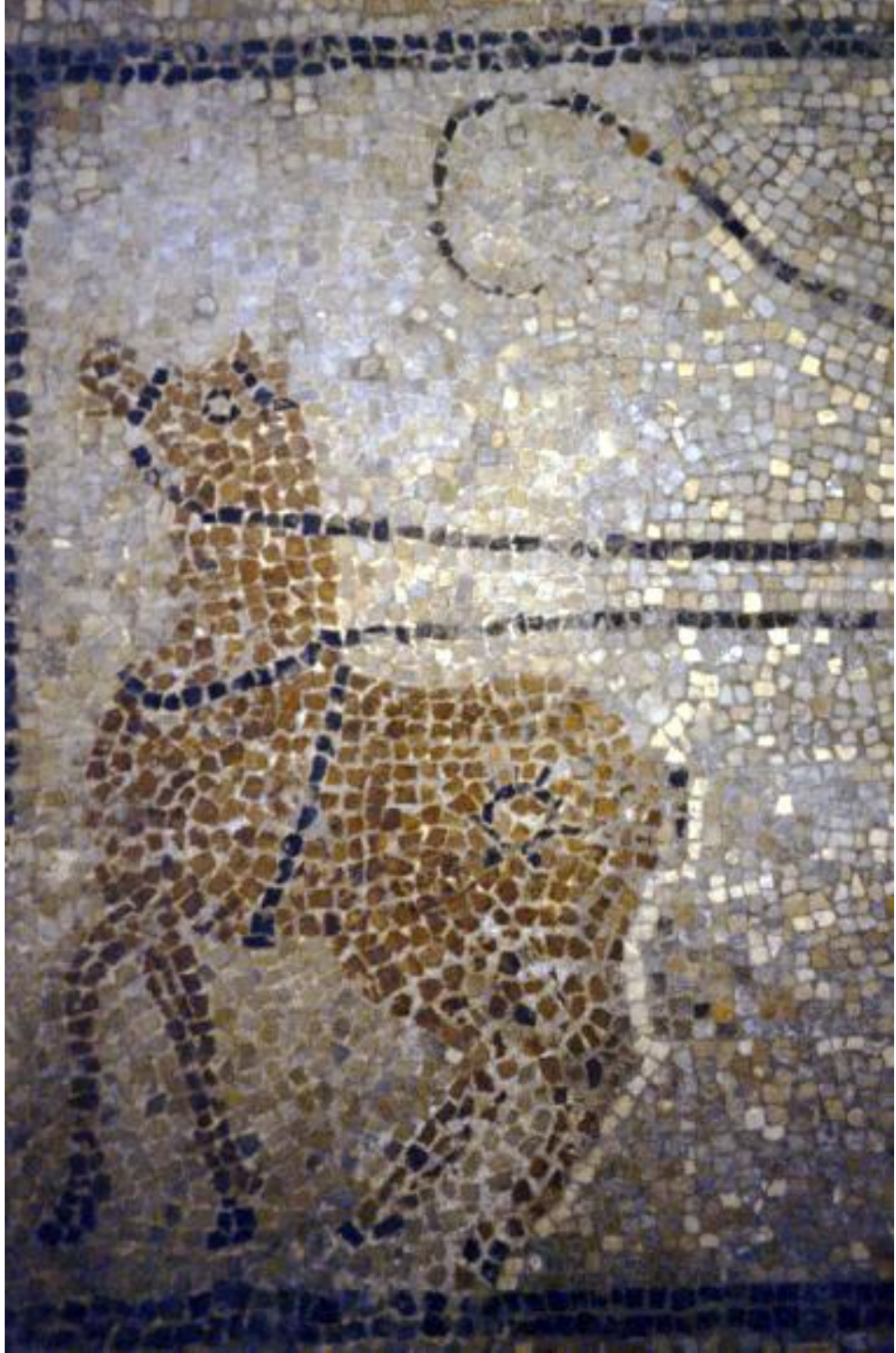




**Dear FEI,
One is competition legal
the other isn't.**

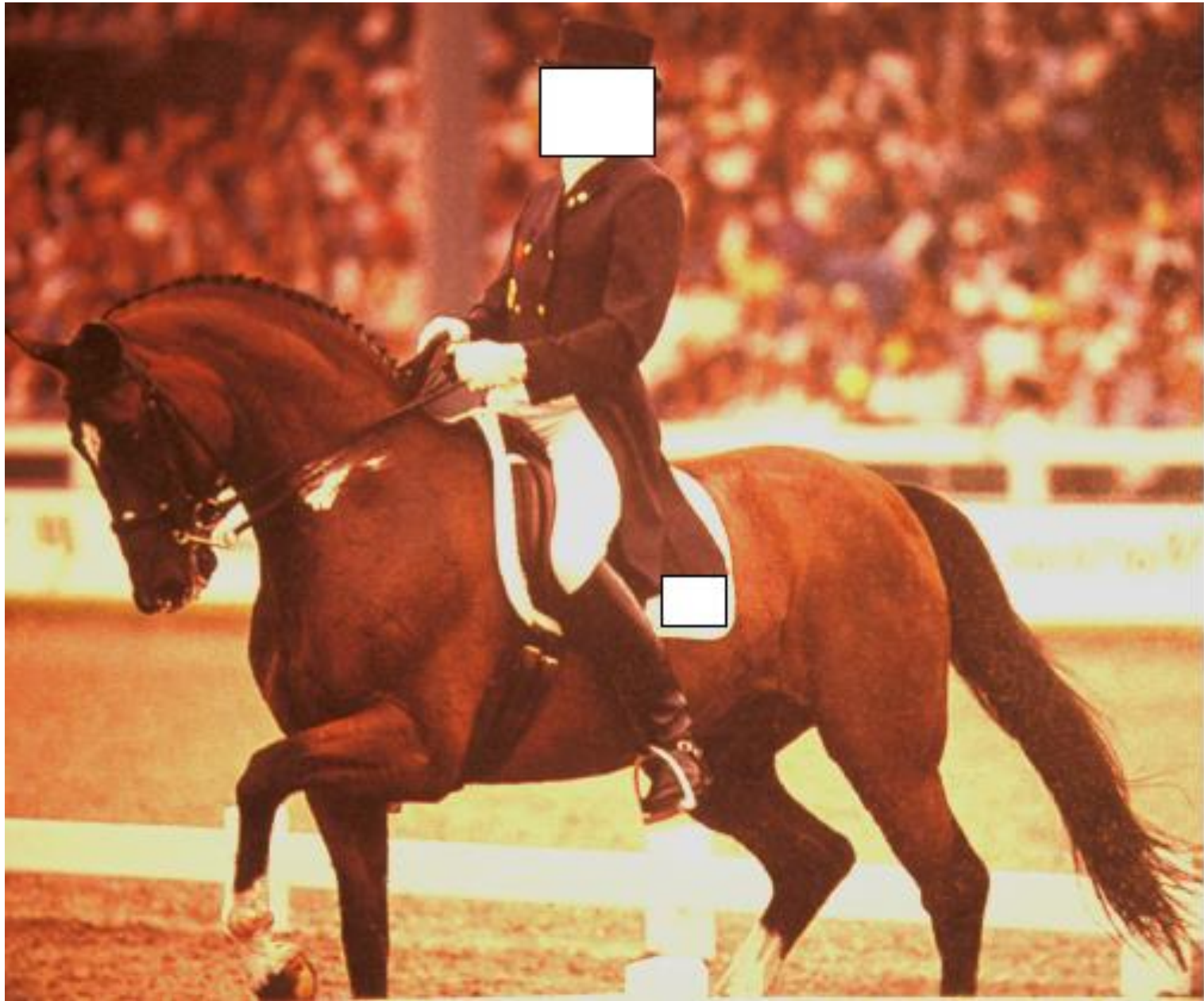
We need to talk.







All too often one sees horses
coercively poll-flexed with or without
out higher neck position





An extreme form: hyperflexion or Rollkur







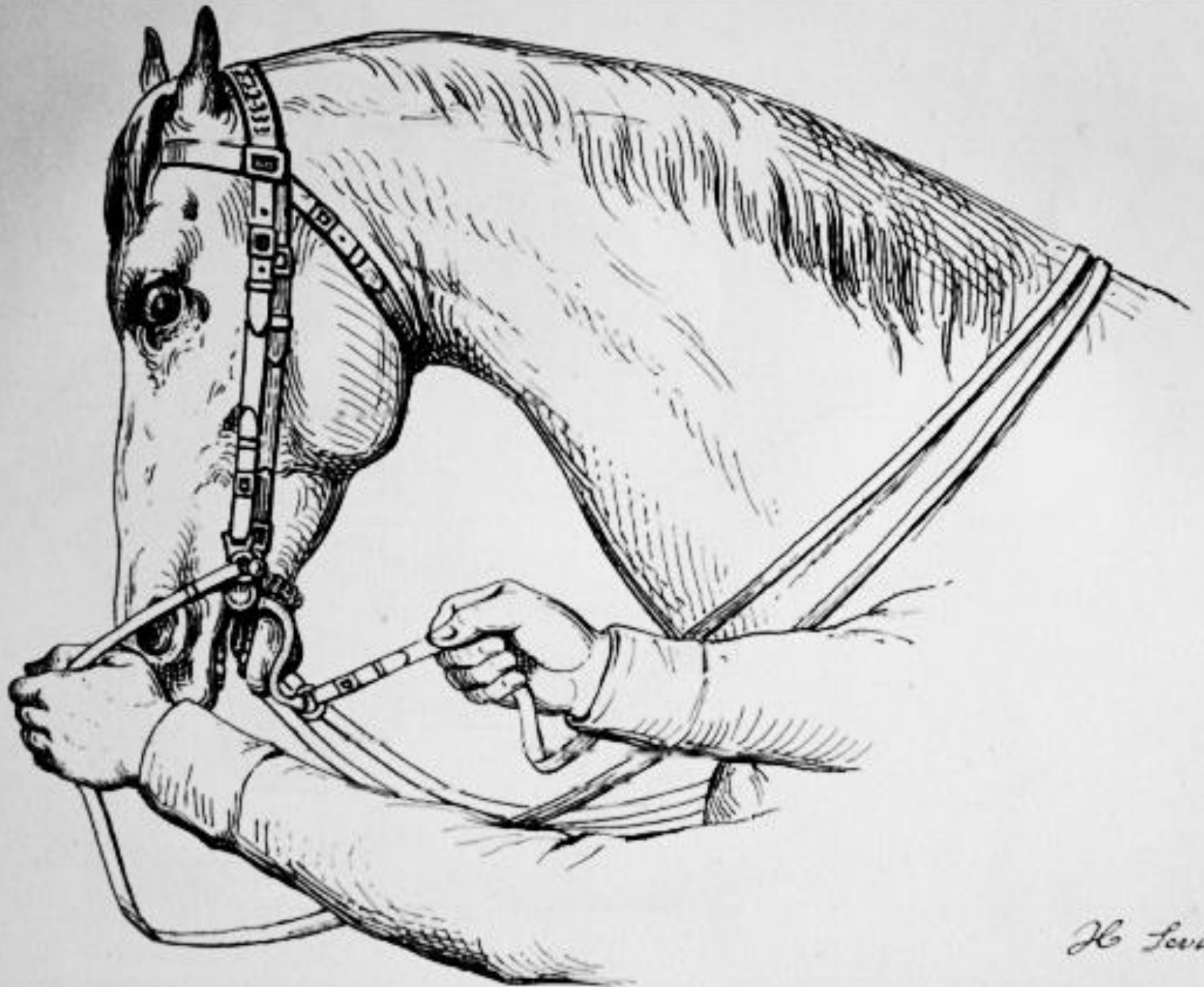


Why has the 18th century knowledge largely disappeared in the following centuries?

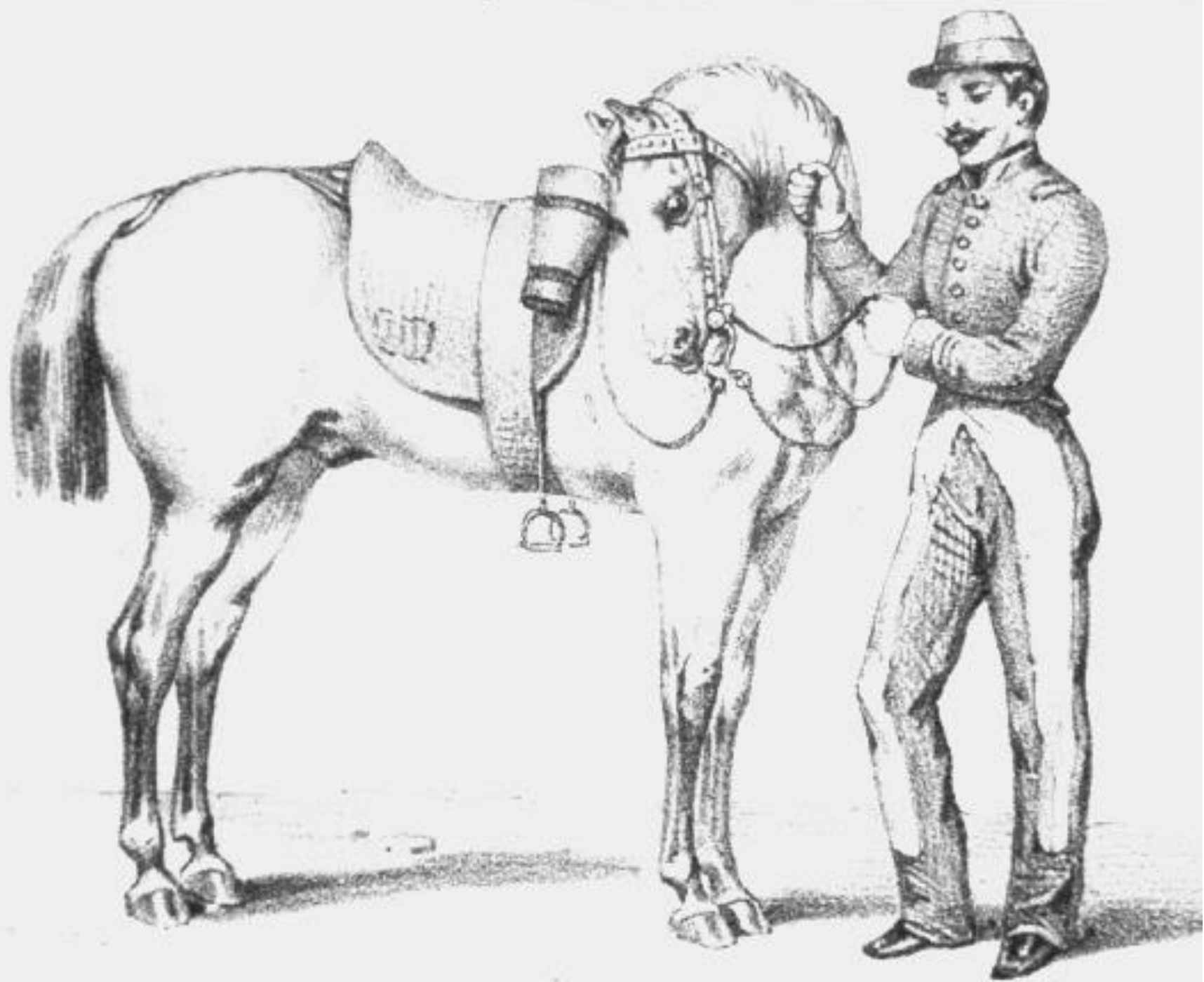
- Closure of the academies after the French revolution.
- Anglomania in the 19th century: racing and hunting require quicker horses. More weight on the forehead and no or weak collection. Extreme example: TB, but with strong “engagement” (≠ collection).
- Mass training in the army.
- Competition pressure in the 20th century.

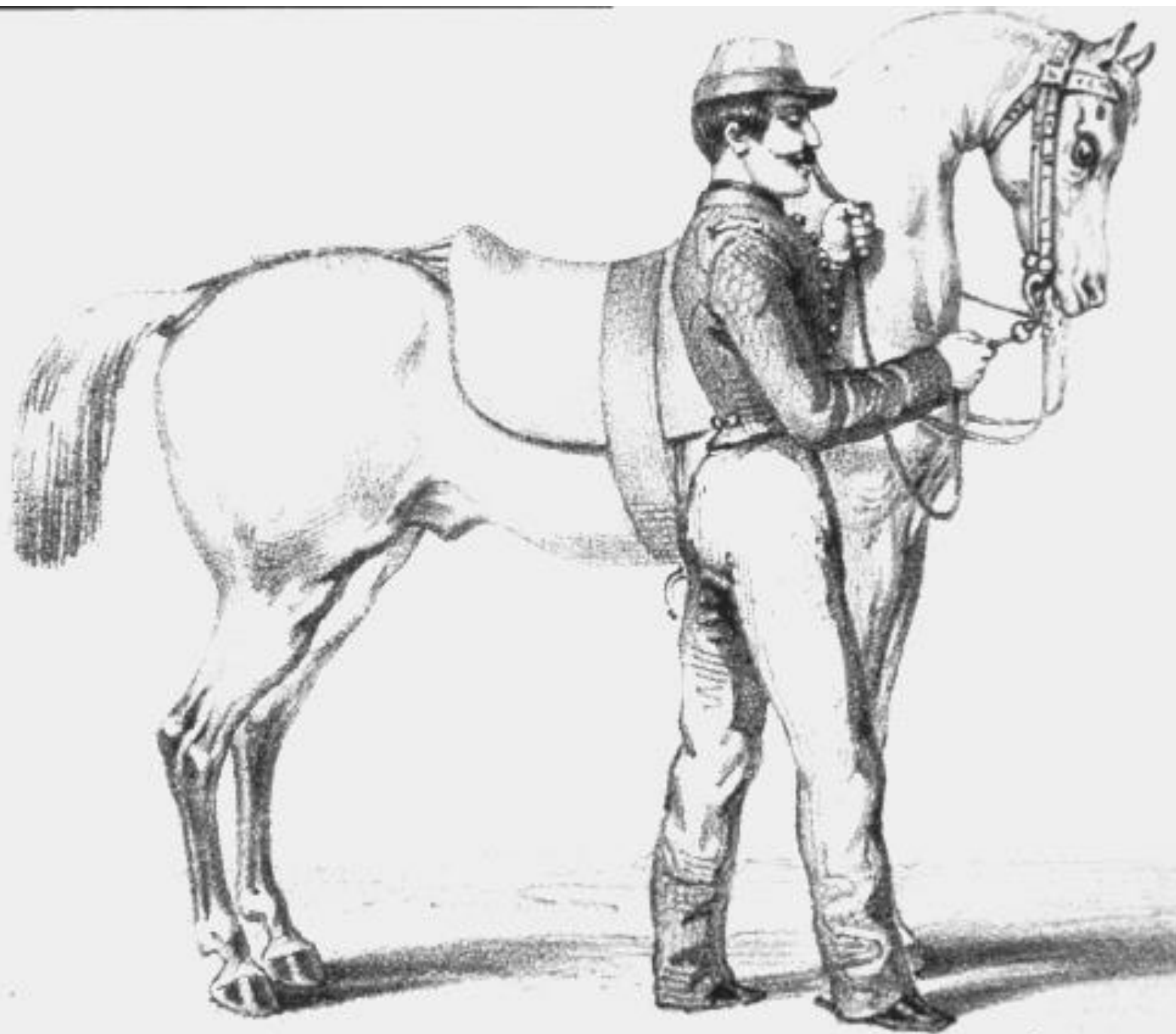
Anything new in the 19th and 20th century that is positive?

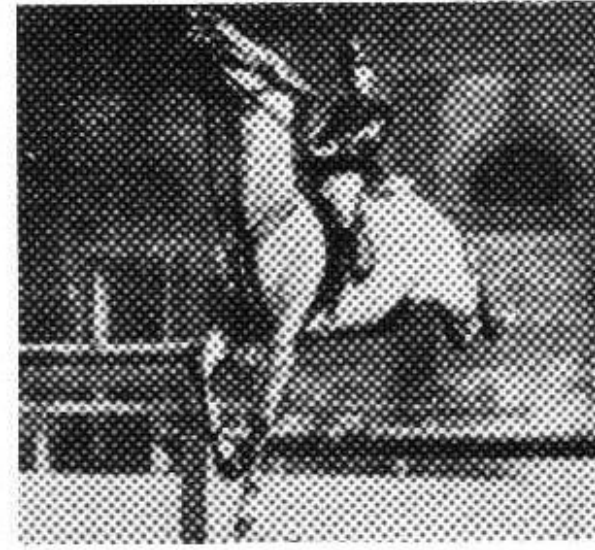
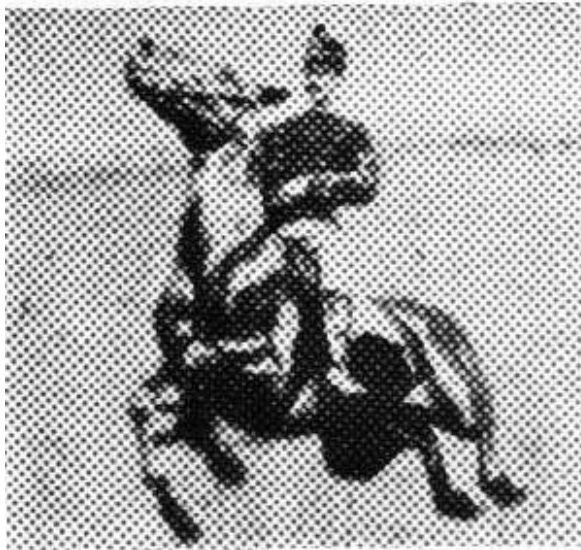
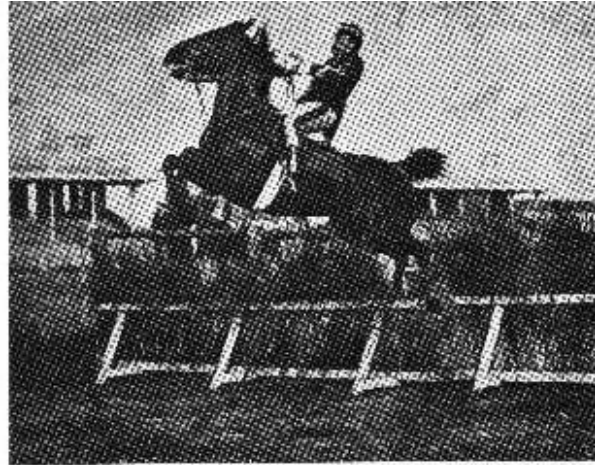
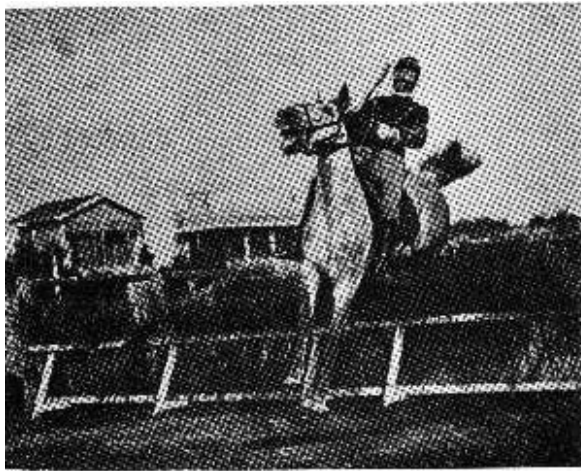
- Baucher developed a kind of Swedish gymnastics (Pehr H.Ling, 1776-1839) and a new equilibrium with his first method. Dangerous with tactless people.
- Caprilli's "new" jumping technique ("forward seat").
- Position of the jockey in TB racing ("monkey crouch").



H. Lewis







5, 6, 7 and 8. PRE-CAPRILLI JUMPING POSITIONS
Note effects of the retreating hand and Hanoverian bit



16. Birth of the forward seat, 1904

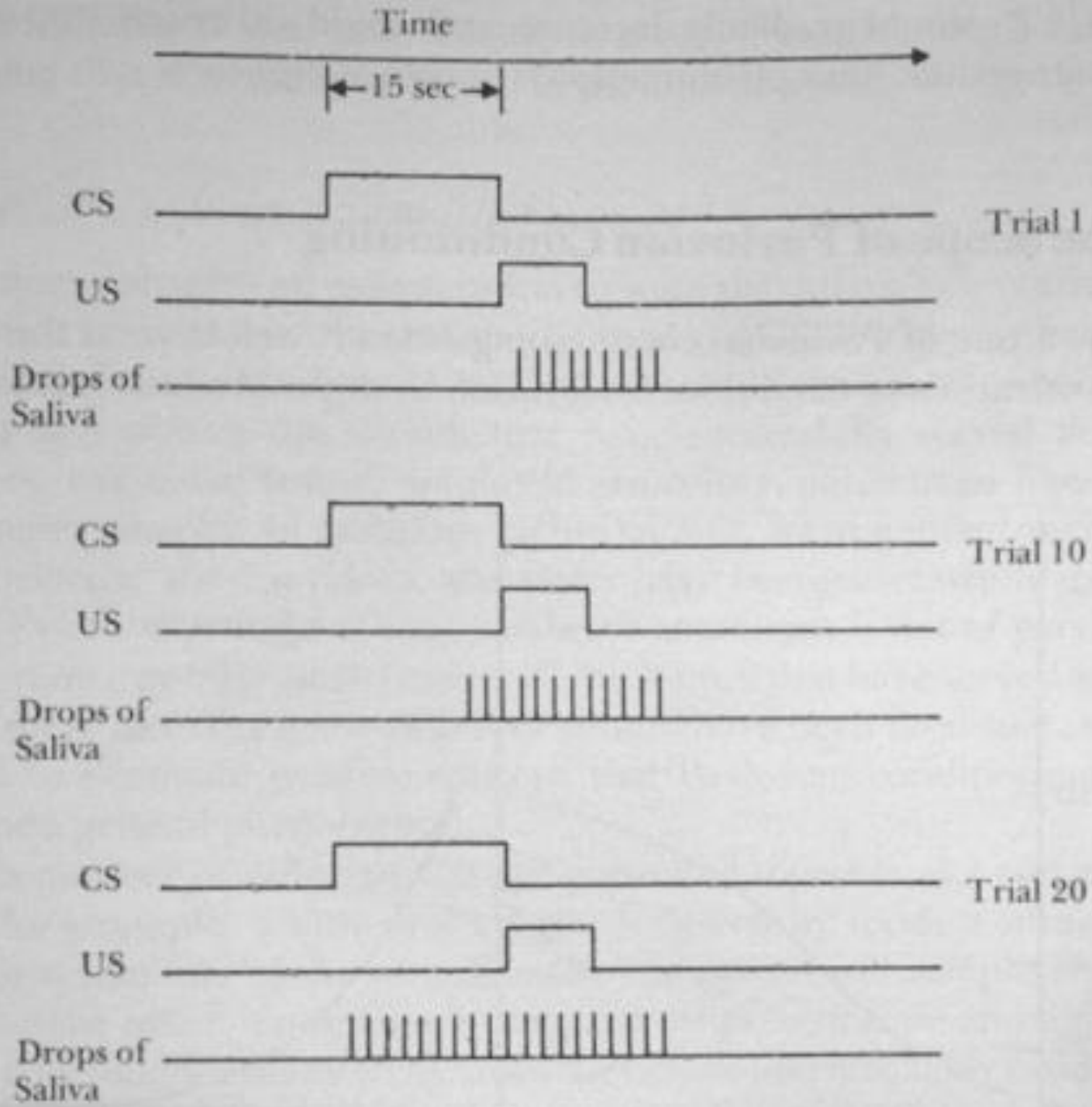




The old masters had understood intuitively the learning principles as established in the early 20th century by the behaviourists and the Pavlovian school

“independance of aids”

- Clear stimuli, non- equivocal: perfect equilibrium in order to ensure an absolute control of legs, hands, seat.
- *Stimulus discrimination* (e.g.: position of the calves according to the aim: forward, yielding, piaffe,...)
- *Overshadowing* (2 stimuli > 1 is not perceived)



B.

Tone



Trial	Tone	Light	Shock
1	Off	Off	Off
2	On	On	Off
3	On	On	Off
4	Off	Off	Off
5	Off	Off	On
6	Off	Off	On
7	Off	Off	Off
8	Off	Off	Off

Light

Shock

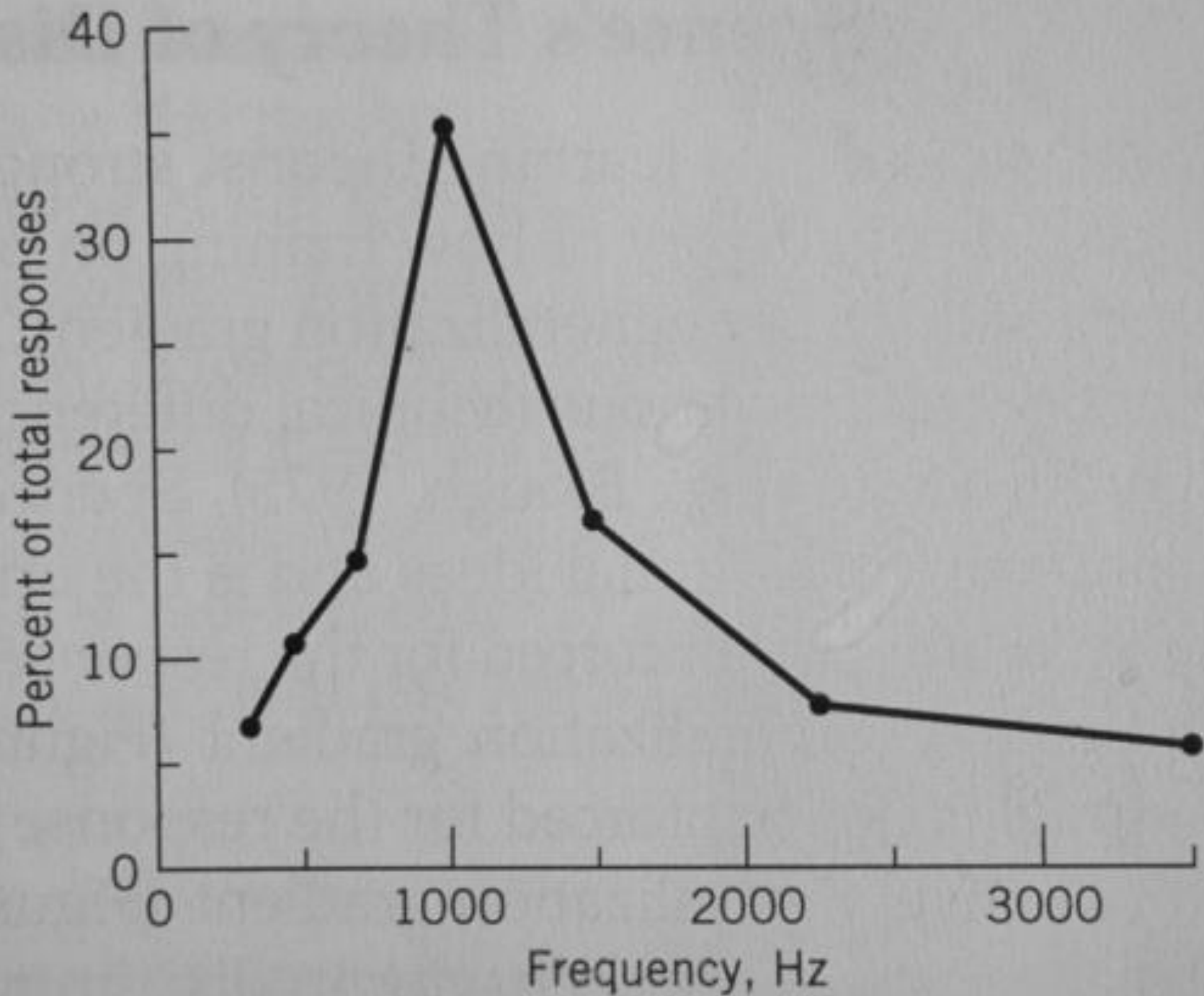


Light?
[Conditioning]

8 Trials

“discretion of aids”

- Contributes to **lightness**
- Based on “*generalisation*”
- Use gradually lesser aids: 300g > 250 > 200 > 150 >....
- Preferably let legs hang along the flanks of the horse without contact. It’s clearer to go from 0g to 100g than from 250g to 350g.
- “*Association chain*”: progression buttocks > calves > heels (“attack of the spur” = draw attention, not inducing pain; idem long whip!)



“descente de mains, descente de jambes”

- “... and of the voice, the seat (some say, but...)”
- = as soon as the horse is in the required rhythm or attitude: stop all aids!
- Consequences if not applied:
 - *Habituation*: less sensitivity
 - Conflict, confusion, uncertainty about the adequate reaction > negative emotions > decreased attention, interferences with the learning process, or learning of an undesirable reaction
 - No *negative reward* possible

“Mains sans jambes, jambes sans mains”

- Contradictory stimuli = *experimental neuroses*
- Simultaneous signals “forward” and “stop” > stronger aids > vicious circle (e.g. various drawing reins, forced poll-flexion)

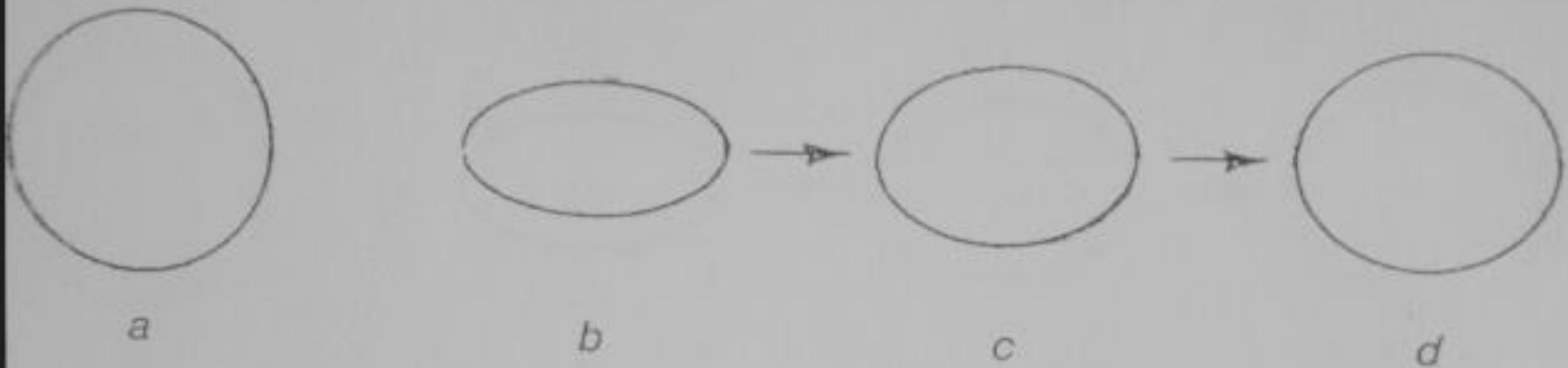


Figure 2.6 Shenger-Krestovnikova's stimuli. Dogs were conditioned to respond to a circle (a). Their responses to an ellipse (b) were extinguished. As the ellipse was gradually changed to look more like a circle, as in (c) and (d), the dogs' ability to discriminate broke down, and, in Pavlov's words, their behavior "presented all the symptoms of acute neurosis."

Besides learning theory, how can science help? A difficult task.

- Scientists need to be really knowledgeable about equitation
- Difficult to set up a good experimental design (developmental stages, unconscious influences (blind!), breed differences in parameters, compare meaningful groups, bias to obtain desired results,...)
- Getting the cooperation of riders and trainers

An example: mouth lesions
incidence in academical and
“modern” ridden dressage horses.
(Shauni Van Hal, Veterinary
Master’s thesis, 2019, Ghent
University)

	Modern	Academic
No lesions	7 (12%)	18 (75%)
Lesions	53 (88%)	6 (25%)
X2 =	32,92	P < 0,001

	Modern	Academic
No Lesions	0 (0%)	18 (75%)
Lesions	14 (100%)	6 (25%)
X ² =	19,77	P < 0,001



