THE CANTER.

We have hitherto devoted our attention to systems of locomotion which permit the division of a stride into two co-ordinate parts, each of which, with a reciprocation of limb action, is essentially a repetition of the other.

We now come to a different class of motion, the strides of which cannot be so divided, and each one must be considered as a unit, unsuited for equitable partition.

The canter has the same sequence of foot-fallings as the walk, but without the same regularity of intervals, and during a portion of the stride the body has a longer or shorter unsupported transit. In this gait the spring is invariably taken from a fore-foot, while the landing is effected on the diagonal hind-foot.

Series 43 demonstrates the spring on the point of being taken by \( \triangle \) in 4; \( \bullet \) is not squarely on the ground until phase 9 is attained; the other three feet in the meanwhile are being gradually thrust forward. In 12 \( \triangle \) comes to the assistance of \( \bullet \), when the support is administered by the right laterals, but for a very brief period; \( \circ \) quickly follows in the wake of its diagonal, and in the next phase the rear part of its shoe is in close proximity to the ground. So rapidly does the following usually take place, that the ear is frequently incapable of recognizing an interval between the successive sounds of the foot-impacts. We now find \( \bullet \triangle \circ \) engaged in supporting the body, \( \triangle \) having the greatest strain.

At an ordinary speed the first hind-foot to fall is lifted in advance of the second fore-foot’s descent, and, as in 16 and 17, the diagonals assume the responsibility of support. \( \triangle \) is now brought to the relief of \( \triangle \circ \); the former, however, soon dissolves the tripartite, and relinquishes its offices in favour of the left laterals; this partnership is of brief duration, for in 22 we find \( \circ \) deserting its post, and leaving \( \triangle \) to its solitary labours, which it satisfactorily performs through several phases, when it joins its companions in the enjoyment of a period of rest, from which \( \bullet \) will again be the first to go to work.

From this analysis we ascertain the sequence of phases in a representative stride to be—
ANIMALS IN MOTION.

The earliest reference to the canter in English literature is probably in a seventeenth-century book by Brathwait, “Clitus’ Whimsies,” who alludes to the gait as “a Canterbury.”

Dr. Thomas Sheridan, in a poetical letter to Swift, says—

“When your Pegasus cantered in triple and rid fast.”

Dennis, “On the Preliminary to the Dunciad,” has:

“The Pegasus of Pope, like a Kentish post-horse, is always on the Canterbury.”

Burns, in “Tam Samson’s Elegy,” and in “Tam o’ Shanter,” refers to the “canter” simply; as does also Combe, in “Dr. Syntax,” xxvii. and xxxviii.


Byron, Fennimore Cooper, Washington Irving, Tennyson, Lytton, Dickens, Smedley, Dobson, Darley, Sir F. H. Doyle, Charles Reade, Dr. Livingstone, Saxe, and many other authors, in prose and poetry, discard the “brey,” and advert to the motion simply as a “canter.”

The notion of this gait of the horse deriving its name from its association with the “Canterbury Pilgrims” is untenable. Many passages in the “Tales,” and the illuminations in the Ellesmere manuscript, disprove the supposition, as we have already seen in the “amble.”

Had the spring been made from △ the landing would, of course, have been made on ○, the others falling in regular order.

During a slow canter △ will sometimes be discovered acting in association with the other three, and the curious phase presented of a five-mile gait being realized, with all four of the feet in contact with the ground at the same instant.

A PHASE OF THE SLOW CANTER.
It is far more likely that the alternate rising and falling of the fore- and hind-quarters of a horse in the execution of the movement, suggested a resemblance to the alternate tilting or “canting” of a plank on which children sit in the game called “see-saw.” If a saddle were to be arranged over the fulcrum, and the plank rapidly but gently “canted” up and down, a rider on the saddle would not fail to experience a sensation similar to that produced by the canter of a horse.
THE CANTER.

ONE STRIDE IN TWENTY-THREE PHASES.

Horse "Daisy."

Length of stride: 96 inches (240 metres).

Approximate time of stride: 60 second.

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THE CANTER.

ONE STRIDE IN TEN PHASES.

Horse "Clinton."

Length of stride: 108 inches (270 metres).

Approximate time of stride: 52 seconds.

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THE CANTER.

SOME PHASES OF THE CANTER FROM SERIES 44.

Horse "Clinton."
THE CANTER.

ONE STRIDE PHOTOGRAPHED SYNCHRONOUSLY FROM TWO POINTS OF VIEW.

Length of stride: 114 inches.