

RIDING MAN-FASHION.

BY ELIZABETH DUDLEY.

The fashion of ladies' side-saddles for horse-back riding was no doubt introduced for a good and sufficient physical reason, and my experience in equestrian exercise leads me to believe that the majority of women will always find the side-saddle more comfortable for them. It is claimed that, if the girth gives way, a lady will have no possible hold upon her horse, but will be thrown to the ground. She will, however, land upon her feet, or at least upon one of them; while, if the girth gives way when she is using a man's saddle, she will fall head downward with one leg bent under her body and the other elevated over the back of the horse. In this position she is more likely to break some bones than in the other.

We are told, to be sure, that in riding astride a lady would be able to keep "a horseman's grip" on her horse—and in case of a loose girth could hold her saddle in place. I doubt this. Our slender women and our fat women alike have no muscle. I fancy even the wiry-tendonned ballet-girl would be unable to control the powerful muscles by which a vicious horse strives to burst the girth, or take advantage of its becoming loosened, to escape from his rider. A well trained animal, in the event of such an accident, will slacken his pace at once, or even stop of his own will.

And the majority of our women are too short to look well in riding astride; they have not sufficient length of limb for the "horseman's grip." Anyone who has seen a boy of ten on the back of a broad, high horse, with his legs spread at right angles, can imagine the ridiculous appearance which most of the ladies will present in riding astride, and if they will practice this position much it will affect their gait. They will then, when walking, present the appearance of an old sailor just off a long voyage, who rolls along in the most absurd way, with his legs wide apart.

We shall have some hearty fun at the expense of these Amazons.

When I hear a lady complaining of the "uncomfortable" and "twisted" position of sideways riding, of feeling that her "back is crooked," or that she is insecure, I know that she does not sit properly. In the first place she must get a side-saddle which fits her. As some women are thin and some robust, some with long limbs and some with short, it follows that one form of side-saddle will not be comfortable for every woman.

Then she should take her seat firmly and evenly in the centre of the saddle, as if about to ride astride, and adjust the right leg in the most comfortable position possible; it must not be too much strained over to the left, and may, indeed be shifted a little more to the right after riding a short distance, and getting accustomed to the motion of the horse.

I was once visiting some friends who lived on an isolated hillside farm, when my host, in using some machinery, met with a serious accident. While his wife remained at his side applying cold water to the wound, I saddled a horse with a man's saddle (there was no other at hand) and dashed off for the doctor.

The road was deserted, so I naturally rode astride; but such a ride! On a hard-trotting, madly-galloping plough-horse, I went up and down the strong hill roads thinking that I should never come up with the doctor, who had left his home and started on his rounds. I caught him at last and turned him back, fortunately in time; but I hardly know whether the patient or myself suffered most for a day or two.

I was then an accomplished equestrienne on a side-saddle, and I resolved never to use any other.

When living on the Cumberland Mountains, in Tennessee, I rode constantly on horseback, always with a side-saddle, and my neighbors did the same. One girl whom I knew there rode on her brother's saddle frequently, whenever her sister or mother was with her; and never rode astride; she placed her right leg in the same position as when she used her own saddle. When I asked the reason of this she replied only:

"Pears like a gal couldn't ride man-fashion noway!"

Now this healthy, hardy mountaineer had a beautiful womanly form and was classically proportioned. As she wore neither corsets, paniers nor hoop-skirts, her figure could not be disguised, and if she could not ride astride, what woman could? I fancy that twenty miles' experience on a man's saddle over

a rough road will convince almost any of our ladies that she can't do everything "just as well as a man."

I have ridden with my baby in my arms up and down mountain roads so steep that when my horse was climbing up I had to lean forward until my cheek touched his mane, and when he was cautiously creeping down I was obliged to lean back until the strain became almost insupportable. In both positions I found the horn of the saddle a great help.

But the most trying situation of all was when, in the same country, I reached the ford of the Little Collins River, 200 feet wide, where usually the water was hardly up to the knees of a horse, and found it swollen by late rains and dashing along so swiftly that the horses could scarcely struggle through. One of our party crossed first, and we saw that the water rose to his saddle in the middle of the ford. It would be necessary to kneel on our saddles, and risk being swept off. Every man in the party begged to relieve me of my baby; they feared that I could not possibly hold him and steady myself—but he was too precious to be trusted out of my arms, and I knew I was a good swimmer.

I had my saddle changed for one of heirs, to have room for kneeling, and I looked well to the girth, the buckles and the straps, had my boy firmly bound to me with a shawl; then kneeling upon the saddle, my riding skirt tucked about me, my baby firmly clasped in my left arm, and my right hand twisted in the mane of my horse, we safely made the perilous journey. The intelligent animal had always been used to a slack rein, and needed no control. She picked her way with the utmost care, and when at last we reached the bank, I hung like a rag over her neck and kissed her, and felt better.

I have no space now to give experiences on this subject, but shall await with great interest the result of the experiment which some of our ladies mean to try in Central Park. I am anxious to know if they enjoy riding man-fashion.

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One brown mare mule 10 or 11 years old, scarred back with harness and saddle marks.
One dark brown horse 4 or 5 years old, branded on right shoulder J K (combined with ball circle over it).
One bay yearling mare, white spot on forehead.
One brown mare 8 or 9 years old, branded on left thigh U and on left shoulder resembling L m.
One dark bay mare 7 or 8 years old, branded on left thigh resembling O C, on right shoulder F, white stripe in face.
One dark bay mare 5 or 6 years old, branded on left thigh C S, small white stripe in forehead.
One bay mare 2 years old, ball face, branded O S on left thigh.
One sorrel horse 5 or 6 years old, branded on thigh (Spanish brand) and on left shoulder (Spanish brand) white spot on face.
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