

HORSE TAILS

By AYELEN

Dear Mother,

We had a wonderful time at the trail ride but I hope that more of the people that are buying Morgans to show discover (or at least remember) that a Morgan is a useful horse! Out of the 14 horses trucked in to the ride only five were purebred Morgans and one half-bred. Not that the other horses were not good horses . . . indeed some of them were such excellent useful horses that Morgan owners should buck up and realize that in the field where we think the Morgan is unsurpassed, that of versatility, there is now competition. That may come as a shock to those who read in show results the widening trend to give the best ribbons in pleasure classes to Morgan horses . . . a useful Morgan horse must still appear someplace other than at the shows!

You know we ride our Morgans a great deal. Of course during the actual showing of a particular horse, especially a green one, the pleasure riding is more restrained and no matter how natural we think we are shoeing there may be a difference in the shoeing we prefer for showing and mountain trail riding. There are many fine Morgans winning in the shows today even in the Saddle-type of classes that are regularly used for pleasure riding . . . that is the way it should be. The Morgan owner that never rides his horse but in a ring is missing something and cheating the horse out of some comradeship he was bred to give. Working a horse entirely in the ring to perfect it is the job of the professional (but I have seen Harold Childs aboard a good road horse with reins light and enjoying the different experience very much!) . . . pleasure riding a horse can serve to condition it. Ring work is boring and can be overdone by an amateur. It is necessary as a part of the preparation for showing but I believe that the amateur that does not use his Morgan between shows for some pleasure is just missing the boat.

Most of us have Morgans and show because we love horses. We like to support area shows as we can show off our Morgans and we can thereby enjoy and be a part of one of the nicest fraternal sporting crowds in the world and always hope for a good ribbon or two occasionally. I don't think many pleasure horse owners sell a horse be-

cause it gets beaten occasionally. Even a horse kept purely to show will get beaten so why deprive yourself of the pleasure of using your Morgan. I really think the use will make him a better showhorse if your riding is a sensible kind of riding. It may come as a surprise to people to learn that I think a pleasure horse should have high natural action . . . I firmly disbelieve that any horse that doesn't have a high trot is just "going to BE a good pleasure horse" just because he hasn't action enough for the show ring. No, I feel that the action of a horse to show can be improved and balanced by proper training . . . the action of a trail horse may mean the difference between the rider enjoying his ride or coming home aching in every muscle. It has been my experience that horses with no action, especially if they never seem to collect themselves, will shake you up a lot more on the road, even though the high stepper may on occasion fuss up into a parade gait that you would just as soon trade for a walk . . . nevertheless the action seems to come from behind, and if the hock action is good, you generally get a good ride, and if the front action that goes with it is not quite high enough to show it can be improved by proper training and balancing.

The thing that impressed me the most at the Trail ride (in addition to being mounted on a smooth-gaited, but high-trotting pleasure Morgan), was to watch the other good trail horses. All the Morgans there were of a high calibre of good using pleasant and tough horses that no trail was too brushy for, that no ascent too steep for, and precipitous travelling was just no problem. The thing that I want to point out to most Morgan owners that plan to sell Morgans to use as a versatile horse is this . . . we had two registered Arabs on the ride, one a broodmare and the other a stallion used for breeding and showing, a good one. Both were in excellent riding condition and both stayed right with the Morgans hill for hill, no matter how rough the trail, there were our friends on the Arabs. A friendly rivalry sprang up between the two breeds and neither failed to show what a good horse would really do. I think this is something that should chill the spine of most Morgan lovers, as I have been viewing

with real alarm the spread of the Arab in good old Morgan territory. If we are to get the tremendous prices we are finding with Morgans they are financially in the same bracket of buyers with Arabs. We have long felt we had the best horse . . . I still am sure the Morgan is *far superior* both in common sense, intelligence and in smooth easy riding gaits to the Arabian horse. But as more and more Arabs come out to compete with us on our own ground we had better get some of our good useful horses on the road and use them. The Morgan is easier prepared to show as I was told by a trainer that there are more half broken Morgans showing than any other breed because the Morgan is the only horse in the world that has such natural poise and sense that he can salvage good performance with so little training.

The fitting of a Morgan to show should make him only a better using horse. I realize it is comparatively easy to break a horse to pleasure ride, as past the fundamentals stage the "training" consists of mainly conditioning and familiarity with things. The horse finished only to show has to make an adjustment to become a pleasure horse which is not too difficult but ask any good trainer and he will tell you that pleasure riding is good for a horse. The horse finished only to pleasure ride acts somewhat like a "country bumpkin" on occasion but after he gets some schooling and gets the idea he will show too and usually likes it. The polish lacking can be supplied in that case. Therefore it seems to me that for the Morgan to stay in his touted position of versatile pleasure horse he should not only be shown, but also, used and kept as a pal.

I think the most perfect pleasure horse I ever rode in my life was Sentimental Lady. Schooled beyond my inept appreciation, still I knew I could ride her anyplace and enjoy her gaits that were smooth and even; her mouth an unsurpassed instrument of delicate response; her beauty and many other things . . . and she's a good stake horse in anybody's competition . . . yet she is a pleasure horse at home and when she is prancing along on light rubber shoes for pleasure riding on the black-top what could be healthier, and what could be nicer than a pleasure horse that can do it right in the ring?

Let us still hope to keep the Morgan versatile and useful and show him well trained also. Guess I'll get off my soap-box!

Your loving daughter