



# **On casting horses for operations : with a description of the new casting hobbles, invented by Bracy Clark**

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# ON CASTING HORSES FOR OPERATIONS,

WITH

## A DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW CASTING HOBBLER ;

*Invented by BRACY CLARK, F.L.S. and Foreign Member of the Royal Institute of France.*

*London, 2nd Edition, 1842.*

THIS improvement in the apparatus for casting down horses, and better securing them for operations, presented itself to me about six years ago [1st Ed. 1808]; the great advantages of the plan having been fully confirmed by frequent use during this period, I have been induced to make it more publicly known. And these hobbles were exhibited about this time to the Society for the encouragement of arts, manufactures, and commerce, in the Adelphi, and obtained for their inventor their large silver medal presented by the hands of the Duke of Norfolk.

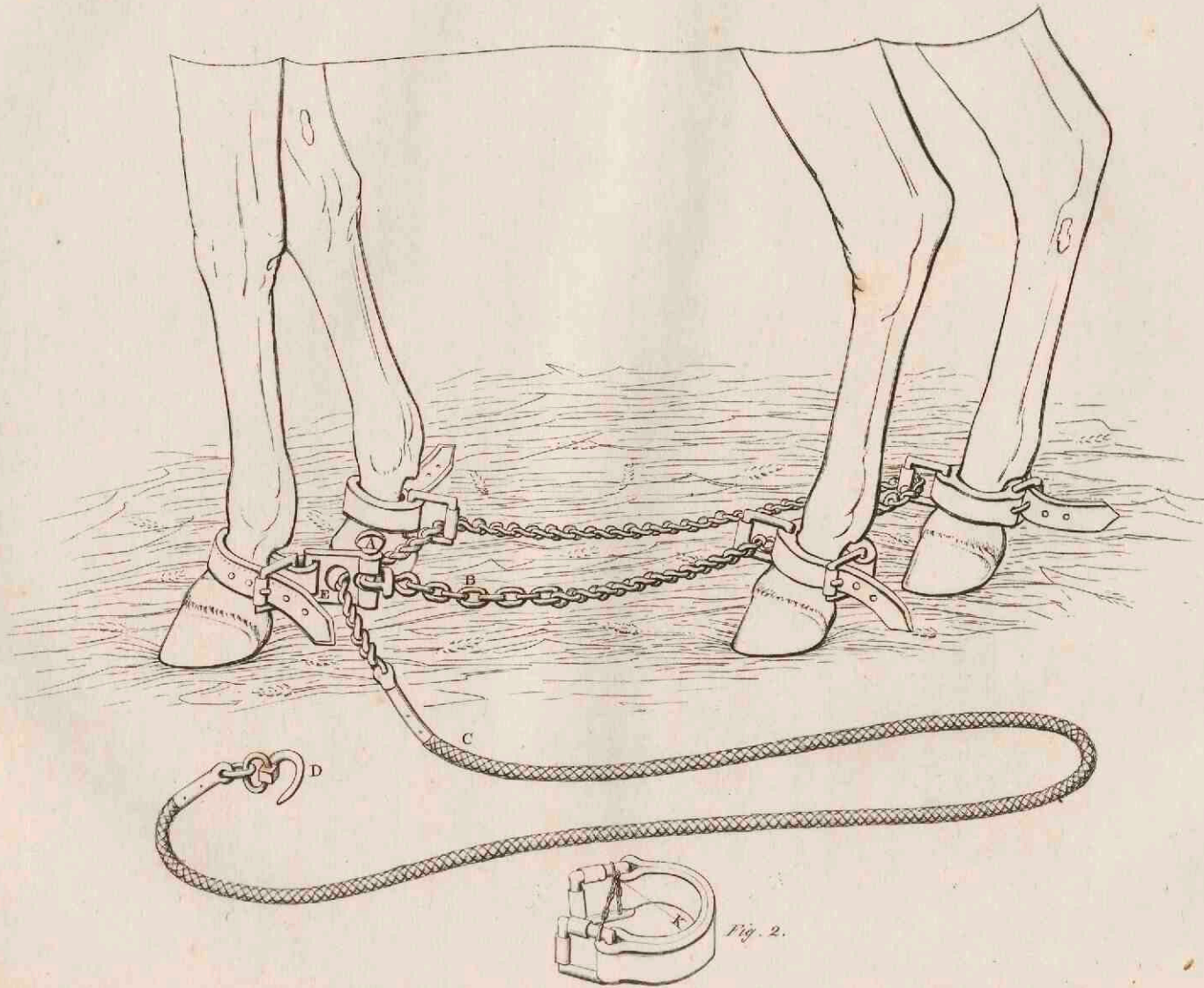
In casting horses after the common mode, some straw, enclosed in a knot, was used to form an obstacle to the return of the rope through the four rings, and, in order to insert it, it became necessary to relax the rope for a time, during which, if the horse struggled, he would draw the cord back through the rings, and sometimes get upon his legs again, a circumstance we have seen to happen; this imperfection is wholly removed by the present apparatus. The knot of straw also drawn tighter, and condensing by the struggling of the horse, would give a degree of liberty to the legs that was often very inconvenient in the performing of an operation, which is also entirely removed by the present apparatus, which can be drawn as tight as you please, and afterwards is subject to no relaxation. But a much greater advantage than the foregoing, is, that all the four legs are released at once, and the inconvenience and risk of undoing a leg at a time, after the old mode, is entirely done away. The friction and strain of these new Hobbles is chiefly confined to the iron parts, which gives them a duration in wearing that is almost endless. The iron chain terminating the rope, is found to pass or slide through the rings with less friction, if well made, than a rope would do; and, by the use of the steel rollers, it requires much less force, and consequently fewer men in casting the horse.

The apparatus itself is represented in the plate annexed, and the following brief description will enable the reader to form a correct idea of the nature of it:—One of the Hobbles, it will be observed, is made different to the rest, which we call the *principal* or *master Hobble*; it is seen on the near fore leg, and is always to be placed or fixed on the fore leg of that side of the horse that is designed to be uppermost when on the ground; the end of the chain is fastened to this Hobble by means of the moveable pin (A), and is prevented from falling out with any agitation of the apparatus, by having two or three turns of a screw in its upper part, under the thumb piece (A). The chain (B) is terminated by a swivel and loop which is placed in the notch through which the pin (A) passes and is thus fixed, the links at this end of the chain are made more rounded and open, in order to receive the hook for fastening him; the rest of the links are twisted and made shorter that they may run more readily through the square leg rings; to this chain is attached the cord (C); we have preferred one of those which are called “patent ropes,” being plaited of strands of equal tension, and are found not only stronger but more flexible than the common ones. The other extremity of this cord has attached to it, for convenient use, and to prevent it being lost or mislaid, the oblong curved hook of iron (D).\*

\* Some have proposed to shorten this chain, and I formerly tried it so myself, but found it not to answer near so well, and rejected it again; for the rope bent at right angles, if much resisted, will get



THE NEW HOBBLE S.





It would appear almost needless to describe the manner of using or applying the apparatus, it is so simple, and the plate so plainly indicates it; it will be evident, that on drawing the rope, the legs are forced together, and the horse is made to fall; some straw being placed on the ground to receive him: he is no sooner down and the feet drawn together, than the hook (D) is passed through one of the open links of the chain, which, as it cannot then return back through the perforation in the iron plate (E), he becomes most perfectly fixed, and nothing further is necessary; and far more conveniently so and effectually, than can be done by any noose or knot of the rope that could be devised.

The operation performed, simply the removal of the pin (A) sets him at liberty again, as the extremity of the chain can then pass without impediment through all the rings and come away.

We may observe, that each square leg ring, except the *principal*, is provided with a steel roller or is cased with plate-steel, which, turning readily upon the iron, serves to diminish the friction, though it has been found, if made simply of a large half round iron ring,—in which way this apparatus has been several years used in the king's body guard, by my friend Samuel Bloxham,—to answer particularly well; yet, we think the rollers preferable; and it may not be without its use to remark, that if the steel cases or rollers are resorted to, they should be made of very stout plate-steel, so strong that the chain should not, in passing through the rings, or in the struggles of the horse after he is down, be subject at all to be forced or indented by him, which would render them perfectly useless.\*

Some persons have expressed a desire, that not only the legs should be set at liberty when the chain leaves the Hobbles, but that the straps also should disengage themselves from the legs; a proposition that appeared truly difficult; nor will this circumstance, in actual practice, be found of so very great moment as might be imagined; however, this difficulty we have overcome, and the proposition is fully accomplished, by the use of the Hobble, fig. 2, having no buckle at all, but is furnished with two rings, attached to the two ends of the strap, which ends of the strap, fly open as soon as the chain is drawn away and the Hobble falls from the leg. The little chain and hook (K) is found necessary to hold the two ends or rings together about the leg, during the time of the introduction and passing of the chain. There is provided also, to the square leg rings, moveable rollers, to the upper as well as to the front parts, and which are found greatly to assist in destroying the friction, the chain having during the draught a strong pressure upwards, as well as forwards.

As casting the horse adroitly will greatly recommend the veterinary practitioner in the eyes of a discerning spectator, so we shall subjoin a few hints and cautions which practice has

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indented pretty deeply, and then the friction becomes very considerable, and more force is then required to draw it through than with the iron chain, which as it cannot at all indent, runs glibly through to the last. And I may observe that this system is now adopted indeed in the execution of criminals at the Old Bailey, and is found much more suddenly effectual.

\* Some difficulty attends the making of these Hobbles well, and especially for single sets; I have therefore had a few dozen sets made for public sale, with good straps and iron work, steel rollers, &c. with a blinding-hood, loose Hobble, and the description of them, price 5*l.* 5*s.*—

I never was encouraged by the sale of more than two or three sets of them, and they have now got into other hands and are sold pretty extensively, with some fantastic variations in the master Hobble, called improvements of course, but any that I have yet seen, should rather be called disfigurations.



taught us for effecting it the more easily and with less risk of accidents or injuries. For we remember in early times of this profession, our friend Moorcroft, in casting a horse for Lord Kinnaird, with the common Hobbles, broke his back.

With high-spirited, shy, or skittish horses, much discretion is necessary, and the four Hobbles cannot be applied with too much expedition; there should be a man to each leg, and the rope previously passed through the rings, and made fast to the pin, with men ready at the rope in case of any sudden movement or stuggling of the horse on finding himself hampered, to pull him down immediately, and prevent his moving from the spot; and, on all occasions, the horse should be blinded previously to the Hobbles being applied, and a twitch to the nose or ear is also useful to divert his attention. The blinding-hood should be very coarse, thick, soft, cloth, and made to cover the head and upper part of the neck, with ties below of ferrit or tape; it is best applied by being laid upon the crest, and then gradually advanced forwards over the head and eyes, and tied, which is always to be undone but not removed, till he is fully at liberty for getting up. The smith's apron usually used to be resorted to in these cases for blinding; it is however but a very uncertain and indifferent blinding-hood. And this hood cannot be made of too thick materials, as it may then be of very great use in defending the head and eyes from injuries after the fall and during the operation.

In the plate annexed, the legs of the horse are seen to be brought approaching each other out of the perpendicular, and drawn towards the centre of the body, by which the power of resistance is greatly diminished, and into which position they may mostly be brought before the men begin to pull the rope, or the horse is aware of being hampered or is disposed to make any resistance; and if only one or two of the legs are so situated, it will have its effect in facilitating the fall without his moving from the place on which he stands; but, with some very shy horses, it is best not to make any attempt of this sort; but with all heavy or draft horses, it will be found more particularly of advantage. When it is practicable, it is also most advantageous to get the two legs of the off or opposite side to the men pulling at the rope, into this situation, that being the side on which he is to fall; as he then will more certainly fall to that side. Some horses spring from the ground, when they find themselves entangled, in which case their fall becomes more uncertain; if in this case by chance, they should fall towards the rope, they must be turned over on their backs after the Hobbles have been made fast by the hook.\*

In casting down, I have thought the following stratagem of use, which is to pull lightly at the tail in the opposite direction to the one we desire him to fall—he naturally opposes you and pulls against you—when he is acting pretty strongly in this manner, suddenly change your pull for the opposite, which will decide his fall.

They often, when they find their legs drawn together, bend their knees, and it is then rendered uncertain on which side they fall; he who has the head, if a strong man, can then best decide his fall, as also by the tail, but if it should so happen, it is not very difficult to turn him over on his back.

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\* We may also reverse the proceeding, by passing the chain only through the four hobble rings, and then pin it, not passing the rope through at all, which is more speedily done if the horse stand fair and quiet, and then the trouble of getting the knot or splice of the rope through with the chain is avoided. Also if the chain be a little lengthened the rope might be dispensed with altogether.



It is not bad policy also to push him hard with the hand on the side he is to fall, he naturally leans against it, and on suddenly withdrawing the hand and at the same time pulling the head and tail, he will fall on that side.

The horse's tail, as having great command of him under the circumstances of his being poised and about to fall, has been usually my post of duty in this process, and frequently, in the moment of balancing, the opportunity is afforded of deciding the fall on the side we wish; a steady confidential man also should be placed at the head, and another of this description should manage the rope next the Hobbles, taking a short hold almost close to the apparatus, pushing with the other hand against the shoulder or side of the horse, and renewing his hold as the rope passes; this, however, requires some address, as the horse may, if it is resorted to too soon, lean towards it, which they are apt to do when any thing is pressing against them, and so fall on the near side, that it should be desisted from if this is likely to take place, but may much assist if duly used.

In the moment of pulling the rope stationed at the tail, I take the opportunity with my foot of touching pretty sharply the hind leg on the off side, or side from the casting rope, and, as he lifts it up, it is drawn inwards towards the centre of the body, and greatly assists in the proceeding, determining generally his fall to that side.

One hint more I might also subjoin, in respect to handling the horse, for it is very common to see the shoeing-smiths about any operation of this sort of a painful kind, approach the horse with a timidity and suspicion, and touch his legs and other parts with their fingers' ends cautiously, thereby creating an unnecessary alarm and irritation; he should, on these occasions be approached with confidence, and the flat hand be used with the greatest firmness and freedom.

There is a small part or addition to this apparatus, which I have not yet described, which is a loose Hobble, or noose, for taking out a leg, if necessary, or to tie it in any position to the other legs, that may be required for the conveniently performing the operation, or, in case of accident, it may be used to secure him from rising: if made of a common rope with a flat webbing at the end, and an iron ring to pass it through, it answers very well, for such we have constantly used; and, it may be almost superfluous to add, that at least two or three trusses of straw should be scattered upon the ground to throw him down upon, to prevent bruises or other injuries.

In this way, the most painful operations may be performed upon this powerful animal with perfect safety; and I rejoice the more at the success of these means, as I well remember, in the commencement of my studies in this art, that casting the horse was attended with so much trouble and difficulty and uncertainty from being badly performed, that instead of it, severe twitches were had recourse to, during an operation, applied to the nose as well as both ears; and he was often most cruelly beaten with whips and sticks, to make him stand up during the performance of firing or other very painful operations, to make him stand quiet, and he was often in this manner most shamefully and scandalously abused, which now there can be no just cause whatever for resorting to.

As it is by practical improvements, the veterinary art must be advanced in utility and estimation with the public; so I shall feel happy, if this little invention may be considered as in any small degree contributing thereunto.

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