

M0012670: Horse-back riding recommendations, 1740

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Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

according to the Degree of our Joy or Grief, as oft as the Welfare of Mankind is promoted by some common Benefit or Blessing of God.

But if any of the Remedies above-mentioned do not well agree, which often happens in cholerick and thin Constitutions, then a Milk diet may be used. For some Women (which should seem strange at first) that have been troubled a long while with Hysterick Diseases, and even such as have frustrated all the Endeavours of Physicians; yet have recovered, by dieting themselves for some Time only with Milk, and especially those that labour under the Disease I call an Hysterick Cholick, which cannot be quieted by any Thing but Narcoticks; to which, repeated by Intervals, the Women are much accustom'd; the Pain returning as soon as the Virtue of the *Anodyne* fades. But this is chiefly to be wondered at in this Method of Cure, viz. That Milk, which yields only a cold and crude Nourishment, should, notwithstanding, by Use, strengthen and invigorate the Spirits; and yet this will not seem disagreeable to Reason, if you consider, that Milk yielding only a simple Nourishment, does not busy Nature much in concocting it, as Meats and Liquors more compounded do, and that an equal Temper of the Blood and Spirits necessarily follows that perfect Concoction. For this must be also considered, that a bare Weakness of the Spirits, considered by itself, is not the Cause of those Confusions they are under; but the Weakness of them, compared with the State of the Blood: For it may be, an Infant has Spirits strong and firm enough, with respect to its Blood, but yet not proportionable to the Blood of a grown Person. Now, when by the continual Use of a Milk-diet (tho' it is crude and weak) the Blood is rendered more soft and tender, if the Spirits that are made by it are only equal to it, all is well. Yet all are not able to undergo those Inconveniences which most commonly accompany it the first Days; namely, because it curdles in the Stomach, and is not sufficient to maintain the ordinary Strength of the Body; but if they could, they might receive Benefit by it.

But nothing of all I have hitherto known, does so much comfort and strengthen the Blood and Spirits, as riding much on Horseback every Day for a long while; for, since by this kind of Exercise, the lower Belly is most strongly moved, in which the Vessels for Excretion (as many as

are appointed by Nature to drain the Impurities of the Blood) are situated. What Disorder of the Functions, or other natural Impotence of the Organs, can be imagined so great, as not to be helped by the frequent jolting of the Horse, and then too in the open Air; whose innate Heat is so extinguished, that it cannot be stirred up by this Motion and Ferment afresh? Or what preternatural Substance, or depraved Juices, can there be in any Creek of these Parts, which cannot by this Exercise of the Body, be either reduced to such a Constitution as is agreeable to Nature, or scattered every Way and ejected? Moreover the Blood being perpetually exagitated by this Motion, and thoroughly mixed, is, as it were, renewed, and grows vigorous again. And indeed this Method, tho' it is inconvenient for Women that are accustomed to a slothful and delicate Way, of living (for they may be injured by Motion, especially in the beginning) yet it is very proper for Men, and soonest restores their Health. One of our Reverend Bishops, famous for Prudence and Learning, having studied too hard a long while, fell at length into an Hypochondriacal Disease; which afflicting him a long time, vitiated all the Ferments of the Body, and wholly subverted the Concoctions: He had passed thro' long Steel Courses more than once, and had tried almost all sorts of Mineral Waters, with often repeated Purges, and Antiscorbuticks of all kinds, and a great many testaceous Powders, which are reckoned proper to sweeten the Blood; and so being in a manner worn out, partly by the Disease, and partly by Physick, used continually for so many Years, he was at length seized with a colliquative Looseness, which is wont to be the Fore-runner of Death in Consumptions, and other Chronical Diseases, when the Digestions are wholly destroyed. At length he consulted me: I presently considered, that there was no more room for Medicine, he having taken so many already without any Benefit; for which Reason, I advised him to ride a Horseback; and that first he should take such a small Journey as was agreeable to his weak Condition: Had he not been a judicious Man, and one that considered Things well, he would not have been persuaded so much as to try such a kind of Exercise. I intreated him to persist in it daily, till, in his own Opinion, he was well; going daily farther and farther, till at length he went so many Miles, as prudent and moderate