

François Baucher has been an extraordinary sensation in his lifetime due to his book, *Méthode d'Equitation Basee sur de Nouveaux Principes* [*Equestrian Methods Based on New Principles*]. In this book, he rejects proven riding methods, and considers his to be the only ones worth preserving. This is because he thinks his methods will prove to be the salvation of riding, an art that lies in ruins. Until recently, we in Germany were only able to judge Baucher by his theories. Thankfully, he gave us the opportunity to judge him in person.

Because my book, *System der Reitkunst*¹ [*System of Dressage*], and my other books have consistently shown me to be an opponent of his methods, the reader will perhaps expect from me a definitive answer to this dispute, a dispute that has been waged in different lands and with different weapons, but has yet to be resolved. I feel it is my responsibility to take this step to resolve the dispute because I hope to prevent much damage. I feel I am especially qualified to judge because Monsieur Baucher was nice enough to let me ride horses trained according to his method. I rode these horses to his satisfaction, obeyed his instructions, and, in his opinion, had them in proper balance at the end. I have also had the opportunity to watch him work horses on more than one occasion, horses that were not yet fully trained. From these experiences, I have thus formed my opinion.

It is my opinion that Monsieur Baucher's esteem is based on his talent for making his methods change to suit the audience. What his long-term effect will be and what the ultimate result for France will be can be disregarded. The essential question is whether the German riding system offers something acceptable and whether it is worth preserving. The presentation of the effects of the Baucheristic methods on his own horses force this question.

Baucher's method gives the impression of being a complete system, a close-linked chain, where the removal of one link will destroy the entire system. All aspects have their purpose and one must either accept the method in its entirety, or completely reject it. There is no middle ground.

In this case alone is his method original, i.e. it is either all or nothing. The individual links do not offer much that is new. Baucher is not an inventor. He has simply taken all the different, incorrect methods from the Duke of Newcastle² and from all of those trained in the old Italian schools and made them into "his method" to the ruination of the art of riding and to the confusion of riders everywhere. He has basically just taken the mistakes of others and made them into his principles. We should be thankful for the great number of bad riders that have gone through his system. They act as a mirror; nothing could be more advantageous than to hold him and his method up to the riding public as a sobering example.

¹ *System der Reitkunst* by Louis Seeger. Berlin. Publisher: Friedrich August Herbig. 1844.

² The Duke of Newcastle [William Cavendish], more than any other, has surprising similarities to Baucher and vice versa, so Baucher also has the pride of an inventor. In his *Nouvelle Methode pour dresser les chevaux*, the noble Duke says in Part 1. Chapter 1, "I am able to say that my book is not an imitation. It is not a copy of some other author. My previous lessons have not been formed by the practice of any other person because I am the inventor. My method is also the truth in that it is new. And if there is someone who does not approve of my book or finds it distasteful, such prejudice is enough to conclude that person did not understand my book. This is because the path is so short if you follow the way that I have trained horses. If one finds this is not a good book, I am still sure it is the best that has yet been written. I am unaware of the books that will be written in the future."

His system is, therefore, not original. The only novelty is the habitual weakening of the natural impulsion of the horse, which is brought about by the various incorrect methods.

We do not wish to criticize Monsieur Baucher directly for producing only circus horses here. There could have been other reasons or outside contributing factors for that. However, such a coincidence is not without meaning. The relationship between Baucher's methods and that of the goals of the people presenting the circus riding becomes all the more obvious.

Since it has become known to the circus directors that the presentation of lower trained horses, or at least ones that have not been fully trained in dressage, fills the circus' coffers, they either try to take up the training methods themselves or let someone else train the horses.

If the achievements of such horses are announced as a "Presentation of the Higher Art of Riding," one must forgive these circus riders for boasting. This is partly due to their ignorance of the higher art of riding, which is not just the training but also a condition of the preparatory dressage,³ and also because they care mainly about the wallets of the audience. The audience is assumed to be ignorant.

Connoisseurs of the art of riding do not expect to see completely trained school horses in the circus. This is because the small, round area without corners does not allow for correct dressage or for the presentation of a horse trained in it. If anyone other than Monsieur Baucher had made such claims, no one would have said a word because they would not have expected much in the first place.

Monsieur Baucher is entitled to a serious viewing of his presentation because he is the prophet of a totally new riding method, which should, supposedly, become the one and only. He is also the author of works that have caused much discussion worldwide. One could not believe such an extraordinary man would endanger his reputation by trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the German audience with imperfect presentations.

From what we saw here in Berlin, his presentations must have been, in his opinion, good examples of his riding ability. That said, one is able to judge his system accordingly.

We would first like to portray Baucher as presented to us by the circus of Monsieur Dejean. We had the opportunity to see this presentation almost on a daily basis. We intend to first describe the overall impression. Following that will be a deeper critique of his method.

First of all, I would like to compliment Baucher as a writer, as I am unable to compliment him as a rider. His books, although their original form was born of spirit and grace, must be re-evaluated after the appearance of Baucher as a rider. He presents us with a paradox. If he really sat as freely and lightly on the horse with as lovely a posture as he says, he would have had an easier time introducing his system.

He who has even the smallest capacity for observation will notice that Baucher's riding gives the impression of anything but freedom. The constantly gripping calves, together with a stiff upper body, give him a tortured elegance, which is worlds apart from the secure posture of a cavalier from the Old School.

However, not too much importance has been given to these superficial impressions; only the effectiveness of the riding will now be dealt with.

³ See farther below.