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TALES

OF

THE TURF

AND

THE CHASE.

WITH TWO ILLUSTRATIONS BY RANDOLPH CALDECOTT.

'I wish your horses swift and sure of foot.'

SHAKESPEARE (*Macbeth*).

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TALES

THE TURF AND THE CHASE.

A NEWMARKET STORY.

'I TELL you I'm a ruined man, Dallas, if Satanas don't win this race. I've backed the brute with every stiver I possess. If it can be done, you're my man.'

The emphatic tones of the young man who spoke reverberated through the little passage; the full light of a late afternoon sun streamed through the open doorway which gave admittance from the High-street of Newmarket, lighting up the clean-shaven face of 'the knowingest jockey in England.' It is the eve of an important race, and the ceaseless passage to and fro of footsteps on the pavement outside keeps up a running accompaniment to the conversation. In Joe Dallas's sleepy gray eyes there lurked a suspicious gleam of amusement, almost of derision. The owner of the favourite, absorbed in the contemplation of his own shiny boots, did not see it. Joe and Jess Dallas, the Inseparable, as familiar acquaintances call the twins —Jess, Inseparable 1; Joe, 2—have come down from town this afternoon to their customary lodgings over a baker's shop. Inasmuch as Jess is very much the better-half of her man, having nursed him through a puny childhood, set him on his bandy little legs in the stable during a timid boyhood, administering allopathic treatment of soothing cajoleries to his recalcitrant manhood, she deserves the priority of rank she holds amongst knowing ones. Her ability to hold the bit and bridle of a somewhat slippery jockey is published far and wide in the streets of racing

Gath. Not that Joe Dallas is not admitted to be honest when he does ride. Once in the saddle he is to be trusted to do his utmost to win, and he has never been known to pull a horse. But he has the reputation for shilly-shallying in his engagements, and a notoriety for retiring from doubtful contests at the eleventh hour. There is always some plausible reason assigned; but Joe's 'cuteness lays him open to suspicion. The *on dit* that is not shouted on the housetops, but only whispered with bated breath within the precincts of certain stables, is that Joe Dallas has a heathenish leaning to periodical worshippings of Bacchus, and that from time to time wild fits of intemperance incapacitate him for racing. The secret stable conclave opines that Jess's constant presence guards him against sudden temptations of the enemy at critical moments. It is said that Joe has won more races than any jockey in England, and that his nest is very comfortably feathered with his gains. At any rate, Miss Jess gives herself airs, and is very high and mighty indeed with any impudent jockey or too familiar trainer who ventures to approach her with a modicum of respect. Every one knows her neat little figure by sight, for to know Joe is to know Jess. The likeness between the twin brother and sister is one of those singular resemblances we occasionally meet with. The same voices, as well as looks. The same tricks of gesture and methods of speech; for Jess is not irreproachable of mannish ways and horsey slang. The jockey's childish stature and closely-cropped head match hers exactly. Jess is certainly not a pretty girl, with her wide firmly-closed mouth and deep-set gray eyes, which flash and gleam rather more frequently than Joe's do.

Her complexion is tanned with exposure to all weather; and her nose, too broad at the nostrils, is clearly unfeminine in the strength of character it indicates. Look at her now, as she leans over the crazy little staircase of their domicile, listening intently to the conversation going on below. Her closely-fitting ulster and man-like felt hat scarcely distinguish her sex sufficiently. She still carries a small travelling-bag in one hand; for she and Joe have only just arrived. There is a strained look of attention and anxiety on her face, which even engagements for great races never bring there. She is more feminine than usual, in her eagerness. This young woman is the possessor of unrivalled *sang-froid* in professional moments of excitement. Her ungloved hands—how strong and sinewy they are for such a little body!—grasped the frail wooden balustrade with a nervous

grip, as the deep chest-voice of the gentleman below resounded through the passage. Joe answers,

'Never you fear, sir, that Satanas won't do the thing. May I never put leg across pigskin agen if he don't win in a canter.'

The gloomy face of the young giant behind the door does not clear as he says emphatically,

'There's more than money on this race, Joe.'

The girl listening so intently above falls silently back against the wall, the bronzed hue of her face fading to an ashy gray.

'If he takes me to hell after, he shall win the race, Mr. Ellis. Damn the brute! didn't I ride him yesterday, and didn't he go like blazes? Look at my hands. More than money on the race, sir! Lord love yer, Lord Castleton sha'n't have your gal!'

The girl, leaning against the wall with closed eyelids, pants like some hunted thing. Her hands have fallen nerveless beside her, and the little bag has slipped from her grasp. Presently the front door bangs with a concussion which shakes the landing where she stands. Joe and his employer have gone off together to the stables, where the favourite is watched and guarded with the same care as a royal treasure. Jess opens her eyes and sees the sun streaming warm October rays through the window of the sitting-room behind her. The numbness of the pain passes away, and she is alive once more with throbbing pulses and acute perceptions of her own anguish. With the sudden revival of strength, with passionate haste she wrenches open her travelling-bag, and carries it into their little parlour. Jess can write a fairly-decent letter, from having been from earliest days Joe's amanuensis and frequent prompter. On a sheet of paper drawn from her writing-case she scrawls hurriedly half-a-dozen lines. Her loose wide handwriting fills up two sides of her note. She seals it in its envelope before addressing the deed to the Hon. Rupert Ellis. With hard dry eyes she gazes at the superscription when it is finished. A despairing inability to cope with some crushing calamity seems to harden every feature into the stoniest despair. With the letter in her pocket, at last she gets up and walks out of the house and down the street.

Two hours later Jess is lolling in the armchair of the same sitting-room, with her feet on the hob, the *Sporting Times* in her hand, and a cigarette in her mouth.

Enter Joe.

'Well, old lady, what have you been a-doin' of since I saw you? I've been along o' Rupert to see Satanas. Rupert's in a

mighty funk about to-morrow. I never see him turn a hair afore with a bigger pot of money on. He's mostly one o' your sort—cool as a cowcumber after pickled salmon.' Joe smacks his lips over the recollection of one of his much-loved delicacies.

'It's all right, Joe, ain't it? The horse is a good one?' says Jess, with her eyes following the curling smoke which she slowly emits from her lips.

'Right enuf for me. I'm not a-goin' to say that the beast mightn't pull the arms off a piece o' putty of Fred Gannon's sort—one of your finicky, fine-mannered riders, as don't understand nowt that can't be rid wi' a piece o' silk. The hoss is a vicious one too. You should have seen him lash out at Rupert just now, as tricky as though he know'd he owed him summat i' the way of exercisings and railways. Lor' bless you, gal! what's come over you? You're as white as my grandmother's ghost.'

Jess uncrossed her feet slowly, and got up and peered at herself in the blurred little gilt-framed glass over the chimneypiece. She passed her hand wearily through her short brown curls, looking fixedly as she spoke at her own image.

'Not much of a show nag at any time, Joe, this beast. Not a well-bred one either: no women-folks ever to put her up to the tricks of their trade. Heavily handicapped all round. No staying power neither. Badly trained, Joe, badly trained.'

The jockey was staring at her in open-mouthed amazement. Jess shows dazzling teeth as her lips part in a cold smile on meeting his expression reflected in the mirror.

'I'm light-headed to-night, Joe. I'm not equal to travelling twenty-four hours on a stretch. I'm a-goin' to bed.'

The gibing tone in which she had jeered at herself suddenly changed to one of drowsy dulness. She lifted her two arms above her head, yawning loudly, and stretching her whole body after the fashion of mankind. The little jockey caught her round the waist as she attempted to pass him.

'My stars and garters, Jess, if you haven't been a-cryin'!'

For once his sleepy eyes opened wide.

'Deuce take you, Joe; let go, I say! Right you are, old man! I've been piping a bit over "Scrutator's" tip for the Beauty Stakes. I've backed the wrong horse, it seems, and all my month's winnings are safe to go to-morrow. Queen Eleanor, they say, has no staying power. Badly trained, Joe; badly trained.'

For a few seconds Joe looked at the doorway through which

Jess had disappeared, as if incredulous of such unaccountable behaviour being a reality. Then he scratched his head, and found consolation in one of the mild cigarettes which Jess kept for him. He took up the paper she had thrown down on the hearthrug, and began slowly to spell out the predictions, chuckling frequently over the forecast of the next day's races. After a while a slipshod maidservant cautiously entered the room, and glancing suspiciously at the drawn curtains, she advanced on tiptoe towards the absorbed jockey.

'I wur told to give you this if you was alone,' said this bashful maiden, producing a dirty scrap of paper from the recesses of consolidated gown and petticoats, retiring at once in the same mysterious manner, leaving Joe to digest the communication handed to him.

'Come down to the White Hart at eight sharp. There's a party as wants partickler to have a word with you. All in the way of business straight forrard.—Yours, G. SMITH.'

Joe threw the scrap into the fender, looked at his watch, took up his hat, and departed. Anything was better than a dull evening at home, and he chuckled once more at the notion of the tips which would be demanded from his oracular lips. If Jess only had not gone to bed! But is she in her room? Why, then, is the door locked from the outside? Who was it that stole, half an hour ago, down the creaky little staircase in hooded ulster and low felt hat? Is it not Jess's face that the lamps of Newmarket's streets flash down upon as a quick decided footstep resounds on the pavement beneath the windows of a large hotel?

From this hotel there shortly saunters forth, cigar in mouth, a tall man's figure. Without a vestige of timidity the ulster advances towards this uncertain giant. In a low voice, casual enough not to arrest the wrong person, he mutters,

'Jess?'

'Yes; it is Jess.'

'Anything gone wrong with Joe?'

'No. Let us walk on. The walls of Newmarket have ears.'

'Then what the deuce do you worry a man with such urgent messages for?' He tossed his cigar away impatiently.

'I meant to hear the truth from you, and I knew that Satanas was my best bait.'

'Well, girl! what do you mean by the truth?'

She did not turn her face towards him, as in a measured voice, a voice of ominous calm, she spoke,

'You have a big thing on to-morrow, sir? Yes, you told me *that*. You will marry Lady Laura Stewart if your horse wins the race. I think you forgot, maybe, to tell me that. Jess might spoil sport. Mr. Ellis, was that what you thought?'

Beneath a gas-lamp the man glanced uneasily at the quiet little figure which strode along, pace for pace, with him out towards the solitude of the Heath.

'Yes, it would be easy for me to put Joe in the way of temptation even yet. I might make you the loser in that way. You would then be a beggar, and Lady Laura would get a better husband in Lord Castleton.'

The deliberate statement of possibilities made the cold sweat to stand on the young man's brow, but he knew better than to waste words on Jess in such a mood. She went on:

'No one else can ride Satanas to win. You know that Joe is your best chance. Shall I go home and say to him, "Joe, you will make the fortune of a blackguard who has stolen your sister's love, and made her—— Joe, you are going to give a bride to the arms of the man who has played fast and loose with your sister Jess"? Shall I go home and do this thing, Mr. Ellis?'

She turned her face towards him for the first time, and, trying in the gloom to see his face, her voice sank into the most thrilling whisper. They stood facing each other.

'When I was a little child, at my mother's knee—how long ago it seems!—there was a prayer I used to say which went, "Lead us not into temptation." Many times in my life since I have tried to bring these same words back to my lips, but they never, never came until to-night. Because of those years ago—because those words will not leave me—I have come to say good-bye to you. Joe will win the race to-morrow, and I—I—O God, have mercy on me!'

She broke off suddenly, and lifted her hands to the dim stars with a movement of uncontrollable anguish. They were standing on the border-land of the Heath now. Only the twinkling of lights from private houses and far-off gas-lamps made illumination here and there. A chill evening air blew across the grass, and fluttered the skirts of Jess's ulster. The man drew nearer to her, stretching out a hand. With a swift movement she started aside.

'No, no, do not touch me! Do not let me think that you

can go to her with my kisses warm upon your lips. Listen! Do you not hear the clocks striking eight? You are dressed for dinner, and the lady will be waiting.'

He made a feint of sudden recollection: 'By Jove, you are right; I must be off. The house is in the trees, just over there. Now, be a sensible girl, Jess, and let's part friends. If Satanas wins to-morrow you sha'n't have cause to regret your share in the business. We'll be meeting somewhere hereabouts in the morning. Ta-ta till then.'

He waved his hand and strode away, humming an air from *Pinafore*. Deliberately wicked, you think. O, no. Heartless? By no means. Only brought up to follow a fashionable code of morals—to believe that certain breakages are the fault of the china's frailty, which no one expects the breaker to pay for—reared in the confidence that wild oats bear no retributive seed in any futurity. A hopeful scepticism of any Nemesis distinguishes the young philosophers of the nineteenth century beyond any other age.

Jess arrives at home, creeping noiselessly up the staircase, groping in the darkness for the balustrade. She wonders vaguely why there is no light. The sitting-room door is ajar, and only the dull embers burn in the grate; the room is empty, and there is no trace of any supper. She rings the bell sharply, and hears it tinkling long and quickly in some lower back region. The slipshod handmaiden presently stumbles up the stairs.

'Why is there no lamp, and no supper?'

'Mr. Dallas he said as 'ow he wouldn't want no supper, and as that you'd a-gone to bed.'

Jess looks at the girl fiercely, but controls her voice,

'Did he say where he had gone when he went out?'

The damsel looks dubiously round the room, even casting a soliciting glance at the dirty ceiling. Jess stamps her foot; then, in sudden confusion, the girl catches the eye of the jockey's sister, and, trembling, she begins to cry.

'The man he giv me a shillin', and said as 'ow I wur to give this paper to Mr. Dallas unbeknown to the lady; and you wasn't in the room, and I give it; and he went out a-callin' to me down-stairs as he wouldn't want no supper, and he'd got the latch-key.'

She sobs, and shakes out her confession in a series of jerks,

with the uppermost skirt of her parti-coloured garments raised to her face. She does not see Jess's face as she says gently,

'You may go.'

Jess knows now that she must anticipate the worst. She does not even know where he has gone, and it would be hopeless to search the many public-houses or betting haunts of notoriety. She does not sigh or weep like any ordinary woman, but, having stirred the fire and lighted two candles on the mantelshelf, she sits down to endure another martyrdom. She has promised what she is not able to perform, and her brain is dizzy with the poignant anguish of her mind. He will think that Joe's breach of faith is of her instigation—that she has betrayed him. Her eyes travel to the clock—only a little past nine. For a whole hour she sits with fingers interlaced, staring into the fire, only the gleam of her eyes giving evidence of quickly working thoughts. Ten o'clock. She rises, blows out the candles, and softly opens the window before returning to her seat. Eleven o'clock strikes outside. Once more she moves from her seat to take up her position on the window-ledge. The deep blue vault above is spangled with myriads of golden stars, shining cold and indifferent above the sound of human voices, wailing out prayers for help, sobbing out hopeless woe.

Two or three cabs rattle recklessly down the streets, taking home gentlemen from convivial gatherings or betting-rooms and the Club. Many roughs loiter about street-corners, while the policemen pace the pavement with extra nocturnal vigilance. As the hours wear on, and Jess sits at the open window, unconscious of the chill air, each striking of the clocks appears to make a more acute vibration than the last. One o'clock. Some noisy revellers singing loudly as they pass down the street. The lights in most of the houses are extinguished now. The fire in the room has gone out, and Jess does not notice it. The gas-lamp in the street below flickers before her gaze, and strange shapes seem to hover about it. Mechanically she counts the footsteps of the policeman as he passes every now and again down the street. Two o'clock. A foot-passenger of a ruffianly order kicks his dog, which slinks behind him, and the night is momentarily hideous with the howls of the suffering brute. He stoops over it as it lies in the gutter, and Jess hears a muttered expletive as he passes on alone; her eyes rest pitifully on the dim form of the moaning dog. After a few minutes it drags

itself on to the pavement, and crawls slowly down the street. Jess knows that it is ready again to lick the foot that struck it. Three o'clock. Another cab, which moves slowly, almost cautiously. Jess's heart stands still for a moment. The vehicle stops a few yards below the baker's shop; two men get out, carrying a small burden between them. They admit themselves noiselessly with a latch-key to the private door of the house in which Jess sits. The girl has struck a light quickly, and confronts the men, candle in hand, on the staircase as they enter.

'Dead drunk, Miss Dallas; you knows his ways,' says one of the men who carries Joe, in a sort of hoarse aside.

He was a bold man to address Jess thus in her present mood.

'Curse you! Put him down instantly, and leave the house. I've a reckoning to settle with you another time; Jess Dallas never forgets.'

The men slunk away like whipped hounds, for there was something almost terrifying in the girl's aspect and voice.

There at the foot of the stairs lay the poor little jockey in the unconsciousness of complete intoxication, neither moving nor comprehending, but only breathing stertorously. Alone, unaided, step by step, Jess as gently as she could, dragged him up the short staircase. Holding him from above by the arms, and passing backwards and upwards, she succeeded, after many pauses, in reaching the landing. Panting, exhausted, she lifted him into the room and laid him on the mattress, which she dragged from the bed to the floor; then, without a glance at the pitiable figure, she locked the door from the outside, and carried the key to her own room.

When she came again into the room, soon after ten in the morning, it was with difficulty that she roused him. She held a tumbler of not very clear soda-water in her hand.

'Drink this, Joe.'

Flushed, dazed, and thankful for anything to cool his parched lips, Joe, without demur, drank the mixture to the dregs. She watched him sink back like a tired child to his pillows, and on her face there was an expression of mingled grief and high resolve, which for once almost effaced its resemblance to the purposeless, inexpressive features she looked down on. She murmured, touching his powerless hand with her own,

'Poor Joe! poor Jess!'

Then Jess locked the door once more, taking the key with her.

It is twelve o'clock, and the glorious October sun is gilding every stable cupola outside the stirring town. A heavy dew still lies on the Heath, and the morning mists yet hang thinly over the distant woods. Up and down the long street, cabs and omnibuses keep in a constant stream of life, while an uncivil humanity blocks up the pavement at central points of interest. Villanous-looking bookmakers, seedy ostlers, with a doubtful crew of indescribable ruffians, herd together outside taverns, taking their morning stimulants before trudging on to the scene of action.

Over the baker's shop Joe Dallas sits in the huge armchair near the fire. The coals are heaped half-way up the chimney, and yet he shivers in close proximity to the blaze. The morning meal remains untouched on the table. Joe is ready for the race, dressed in the yellow shirt with black-striped sleeves, which indicates him as the rider of Satanas. He wears his jockey-cap well over his eyes, and his face is bound round with a black-silk handkerchief. His eyes are wild and haggard, and his face almost livid in hue. The clock on the mantelshelf tings the half-hour. Joe puts down his cigarette, and moves to the window. The flood of humanity is flowing onwards and upwards to the Heath. The loiterers are few, and strings of riders of both sexes, with many private equipages, go by. One or two familiar acquaintances glance up at the baker's windows, and nod to Joe. Another half-hour passes, and the streets are almost deserted. Policemen have leisure to chat to cooks, and maidservants cease to peer over blinds or survey the motley throng from up-stair windows. The very dogs appear to have gathered themselves together on the racecourse, and cats swagger about the streets unmolested by terrors. The whistle of a special train makes itself heard, and presently a royalty dashes up the street in a carriage and pair. On the Heath the hum and hubbub is at its height now. A small race has just come off, and lightly-clad jockeys are to be seen donning top-coats.

'Where's Joe Dallas?' inquires one of these gentlemen as he greets another.

'Ain't he in the Stand?'

'No; he ain't been seen this morning, and the crack's master have just sent down a cab for him. It looks fishy; he's always up to time if he means to ride.'

Two bystanders, to whom this conversation is audible, exchange glances of intelligence. Half-past one. Rupert Ellis

jumps himself into a cab, and is driven away post-haste to the town. The first cab sent is waiting at the baker's door, and Joe, muffled up to the ears, is just about to get into it. The owner of the favourite is relieved from a terrible dread at the sight of the jockey.

'Thought I was a-goin' to play you false, sir?' says Joe, in a harsh voice, as Rupert desires him to get into his cab.

'Damn it! if you'd a toothache like all the fires of hell you'd not be in a hurry to loaf about a paddock. I'm your man, sure enough; and we've a good half-hour to spare.'

The black-silk handkerchief which encircles Joe's face gives a tacit confirmation of the condition of his molar nerves. He holds his hand to his face frequently, as though suffering acutely. The two men are silent during the short drive. Master and man are both apparently brooding on the same absorbing thought—the day's race. It is only as they approach the Stand that a beautiful young woman—riding a showy chestnut, accompanied by a cavalier, with whom she coquets gracefully, laughing audibly from time to time at his remarks—attracts both the jockey's and his employer's attention. Mr. Ellis raises his hat, and the lady gives back a familiar little nod and a bewitching smile. Her companion scowls unpleasantly at the cab as it passes them. Joe Dallas, looking over his shoulder, sees the girl touch her lips with the tips of her fingers, and blow an airy kiss to the owner of Satanas. The strong whip which the jockey holds across his knees breaks like a twig in his hands with a sudden snap.

'What a rotten stick!' he mutters, glancing half-fearfully at his companion.

As the cab pulls up at the spot indicated the gentleman casually glances at his jockey's face.

'Why, man alive, what's the matter? You're as white as death. Do you funk this race?'

'You be hanged! It's this cursed toothache. For God's sake, sir, get me some brandy.'

Joe in his anguish appeared to forget his manners. There is a degree more of impudence and swagger about Joe's bearing to-day than ordinarily. As Mr. Ellis disappeared, two men, who had come suddenly round the corner, caught sight of the jockey seated in the cab. They started perceptibly, looking at one another in visible perplexity. The neat little figure huddled up in the corner of the vehicle was unmistakable.

Joe watched them as a cat watches mice, with well-feigned inattention.

'Zounds! Joe has jockeyed us after all. Drunk as a lord at three o'clock, and riding the great race ten hours after. Do you think he shammed drunk, Smith?'

The two worthies watch the manœuvres of their quondam friend from behind a sheltering booth, while he in his place, between half-closed eyelids, watches them. When Rupert Ellis returns with a liqueur-glass of brandy they can hear him say,

'Against my rules, Dallas.'

They can see how Joe's arm tosses the dram down his throat with a jerk. They watch him get out of the cab in rather a feeble way, and walk beside his companion with a slow and lingering step. Then they see him no more till he is on the favourite's back. The trainer, who gives Joe a leg-up on to the back of the restless, wild-eyed, raw-boned fiend, well named Satanas, remarks upon the jockey's demand to shorten the stirrups.

'Why, Joe, it's your usual length of leg.'

'Would you have me risk the race for the sake of an inch of leather? Don't I know what suits me best? S'pose my legs have shrunk up since the last time you mounted me. That's better. Let go, the brute will bite you.'

A preliminary canter calms the excited animal sufficiently for his master to approach and give the jockey his last instructions.

'All serene now, sir. I'm fit as a fiddler. Win the race? Of course we'll win, if I break my neck and go to kingdom come for it.'

The master lays his hand upon the saddle while he hands Joe a new whip.

'Remember all I told you yesterday, Joe.'

The jockey passes his hand over his eyes for a moment.

'You means the gal, sir. Ay, ay, the stakes is high this time. I ain't ever ridden for a woman before. She's a clipper to look at, with plenty of breed. Them's the sort for a gentleman. Now I'm off.'

The great brown horse, answering to its rider's will, shoots down the Heath to the starting-post; and Rupert Ellis, watching the stride of the animal on which all his hopes are founded, forgets how strangely hoarse and unnatural Joe Dallas's voice had sounded. The hubbub of a perpetual conflict goes on unchecked through all the preliminaries of the great race. There

is a continual Babel of voices, and a sea of grimacing, smiling, scowling humanity about the Stand and betting-ring. The riot of strife, provoked by greed, robbery, and wrong, rises and falls incessantly, till the sound goes forth, 'They're off!'

Now the throng presses forward to the barricade—now the din of voices is hushed, and betting-books have ceased to flutter leaves. Throbbing hearts send the blood impetuously up to dizzy brains, and eyes which scan the distant specks through powerful field-glasses are not able to distinguish what they look at. On and on comes the dark patch straight up the long course. No stragglers as yet. Nearer they sweep. One, two, have dropped behind. The sun shines gaily on the brighter-coloured shirts. A great chestnut with a blue jockey leads the troop, but all are well together. Rupert Ellis rides his gray hack, but carries no glasses. His keen sight picks out his own colours in the centre of the band. The chestnut's rider is urging him already. But slowly and surely Satanas creeps up to the leader's heels, though Joe is not using his whip at all. Two more well-backed horses drop behind as they draw nearer to the Stand. Rupert unconsciously grips the reins of his quiet nag, and feels his eyeballs burning with the tension of his gaze. Joe is too deliberate. He is a length behind, and Satanas pulling like mad. The blue jacket flogs the exhausted chestnut with desperate efforts. Like a flash of lightning they all go past, and Rupert for a moment sees the jockey's face turn towards the spot where he stands. Then, as if waiting for a signal, with a sudden loosening of the reins he suffers Satanas to rush in and pass the post by a length.

Joe Dallas gets quickly out of his cab and opens the door of his lodgings with his private key. Staggering up the stairs like a giddy or suddenly blinded man, he listens at his own bedroom door. Silence—complete silence. He takes the key of the room from his pocket, and enters noiselessly.

Sprawling upon tumbled pillows across a mattress on the floor, with blankets and sheets in wild confusion, lies another Joe Dallas. Another Joe opens bloodshot eyes and stares stupidly at the Joe who comes in, wearing the yellow shirt.

'What tomfoolery is this, Jess? Why did you lock me in? and what do you mean by a-putting on of my clothes? You think you can play the jockey, maybe. My watch has stopped. Is it time to rig-out for the race? Lord love ye, Jess, you've

the pluck of ten women, but you don't know what ridin' Satanas means.'

The velvet cap was thrown down now, the black-silk handkerchief impetuously torn off. The girl had two bright spots on her cheeks, and her eyes were shining with a feverish light.

'I have ridden Satanas, Joe. See here!' Out of her pocket she flung a packet of bank-notes on to the floor. 'He, your master, paid Joe Dallas these for winning the Cesarewitch.'

She leaned back against the door, breathing hard, while her eyes were fixed with a vacant stare. Joe sat up, staring at her with his wild and bloodshot eyes.

'I was on the loose, then, last night. You must have drugged me this morning, Jess. And you did it to save my name.'

There was a trace of maudlin sentiment in his tone. Jess looked at him almost contemptuously, and muttered,

'To save my own.'

Though desperately weary, and conscious of a brain quite overtaxed, Jess knew her task was not finished.

'There is something to remember yet. Let me say it quickly before it slips away. Remember, Joe, you won the race by a length, and weighed two pounds less than the last time. Now, get up, wash yourself, and dress quickly. Morris and Mr. Ellis said they would follow me at once.'

She totters to her own room, feeling with outstretched hands for the support of the wall as she moves. Mechanically she hastens to strip off the manly garb she wears, not from any womanly shame, but to preserve Joe's identity. She has only half-dressed herself in her every-day attire, when a sudden spasm of acute agony paralyses her movements. Another and another quickly successive pang of mortal pain, then a long loud scream as a fountain of blood comes bubbling from her mouth. Joe found her lying, face downwards, on the floor, with the discarded yellow shirt beneath her stained with her life's blood. When the doctor comes he can do nothing. He shakes his head outside the door, but goes away promising to bring back some restorative. Jess lies on the little iron bedstead, destitute of curtains. Through the high narrow window the slanting rays of warm autumn sunshine pour upon her face, so ghastly and rigid now. No gentle womanly hand removes the stained garments from her sight, or bathes her hands and brow. Only poor Joe hangs over her, in dishevelled attire and wild expressionless woe, unless the inarticulate sounds that issue from time to

time from his lips count as speech. By and by the rattle begins in the street once more as the current sets from the Heath. Jess knows that the day's business and pleasure have come to an end.

Presently there is a loud knock at the street door below, and a faint change of colour is perceptible on Jess's death-like face. Her eyes turn with indescribable yearning—which he does not understand—to Joe. He hears Rupert Ellis's and the trainer's voices, as they come up the stairs, and goes out to meet them. Jess's ears are strained to gather every sound through the thin partition wall.

'Hullo, Joe, what's come o' the toothache?'

'Sh—sh! Jess is very ill. Broken a blood-vessel, they say.'

There was silence for the space of a few seconds, and Jess breathed hard.

'So bad as that, Joe. Poor little woman!'

The trainer's voice was rough, but his tone was kindly. Jess waited for another voice to speak. Joe burst out with hard dry sobs,

'She's a-going to die—my little Jess to whom I owes everything since I was a little chap. I sha'n't never be no good for anything more. O Lord! O Lord!'

Some one stirred the fire hastily.

'Good God, man! I saw the girl last night—you can't mean it! Does she know you won the race? Tell her from me, Joe, that she kept her word faithfully, and I mean to keep mine. Give her this packet.'

Jess turned and moaned. If he had known the cost of keeping her word! But he never would know; and Jess pressed her hand against her side to still the throbbings which took from the short minutes left to her to live. Presently the two men went down the stairs more cautiously and silently than they ascended. Would he not pause at her door and make some sign, or speak some word of farewell? O God! how bitter it was to lie there helpless and hear his footsteps for the last time, and to know that love for her was dead, and even pity was cold! How softly Jess smiled when Joe came back to her! How unlike his her face was growing!

'Joe, stoop down and listen. Joe, this is the end of the race, I think. Never you and I neck-and-neck again. Never Jess to keep you from going on the spree. Joe, I think you won your last race to-day. O God! this pain—and to think that Jess

should live to be a roarer!' she panted out, yet smiling in her agony.

Joe sat on the bed and held her till the convulsion was passed.

'Remember, Joe, Jim Fellowes owes me a pony I won on the Beauty Stakes. Never you trust "Scrutator's" tips. Lady Eleanor came in two lengths ahead. It's always safe to back the Dullerton stables. They never turned out screws in my time—my time, O Lord! my time is over! Put your money on Trumpeter for the Derby. I see him go at the Chesterfield, and Jess knows a thing or two. Lift me—up, Joe; I'm broken-winded now. The ground has been too heavy for a badly broken half-bred.'

With quivering lips and haggard eyes she smiled up at him as, with rough tenderness, he wiped the damp from her brow. The doctor slipped in quietly again. He poured out a draught he had brought with him, and brought it close to her lips. She shook her head, and a flicker of cynical contempt passed over her face.

'No drugs, thank you. I never shirked a settling-day yet. The book is made, and I'm no welsher to the pain. Joe—last night I thought—that I should end my days in harness—working for—other people. Joe, I am glad it is not to be. Brother, I can't see! Carry me to the window.'

The doctor and the jockey between them lift her up and support her in a chair close to the open window. The air revives her for a moment, and the light of the sinking sun flashes a remnant of life into her glazing eyes. She—looking towards the Heath, where the roof of the Grand Stand is visible in the illumination—smiles with the smile of one who is victorious. With a supreme effort she stands up, stretching out her arms, and speaking with her old voice of clear decision,

'Rupert, Rupert, hear me! It was Jess that did it. Badly trained, Joe—badly trained. Lead me out of temptation, O God!'

With a smile still on her lips, and the glory of triumph in her eyes, she sinks back—dead.

It is late on the evening of the same day. Rupert Ellis sits alone in his private sitting-room at the hotel, with his betting-book in his hands. A pleased smile is perceptible on his handsome face.

'Mr. Dallas to see you, sir.'

Without any word of preparation the waiter ushers in the

whom it is customary to treat with a certain

respect, if not courtesy. Joe, ghastly almost as the waxen face of her who lies in the little lodgings in the High-street, enters. He stands near the door.

'Jess any better?' says the gentleman carelessly, holding up his claret-glass to the light, and not glancing at the jockey.

'Better? Ay, she is better.'

Something in Joe's rasping voice causes the young man to look round. As soon as Joe meets his glance he comes slowly nearer to the table.

'It wur Jess as rode Satanas to-day.'

The young man started, and drew his open betting-book towards him.

'What infernal nonsense you talk, Joe! You've been drinking!'

A strange smile flickered over the haggard boy-like face of the jockey.

'Not to-night, sir; not to-night, with that cold thing a-lying up-stairs with them words a-sounding in my ears.'

Rupert Ellis meets Joe's fixed glance with increased uneasiness.

'Sit down, Joe, and have a glass of wine. No? Here's a mild cigar, then.'

Joe hit the table suddenly, and with force.

'I wur brought home dead-drunk last night, and Jess, without my knowin' nought about it, dressed in my clothes this mornin'. You knows as how she rid the race, and won it too. Ay, my Jess wur always a game one. But you, you blackguard, it wur that murdered her! I know it now, though she died so hard, and never let on about you, scoundrel that you are!'

The magnificence of such heroism as Jess's does not strike the young man, but he is overwhelmed by the thought of such a fact becoming public. The truth of the assertion, remembering many incidents of the morning, he does not doubt. That Jess can be really dead seems incredible, and a rush of self-pity for his own misfortunes, the evil consequence dogging his success, swallows up any other thought.

'Dead? It can't be true!' he says, looking up at Joe's face, eager to discern a possible hoax.

With the same harsh rasping voice Joe goes on,

'I found 'em, them letters o' yourn to Jess, and I was minded to have a bit o' revenge—to take 'em to your young woman as you're sweet on. Ay, and I carried them then and there to the

door of the house where she's a-livin'. Does such as you believe in sperrits? Man, I tell you as surely as you live, Jess barred the door o' yon house, saying again so soft them words which wur her last—maybe you never heard them: "Lead us not into temptation," she said. It wur part o' a prayer we said when we was little uns together. Sir, I wur turned from the thought o' workin' more evil. I cannot work agen her will now, though many's the time I did it when she wur alive to cross me. Take them letters. They burns against my breast like fire. My Jess is none the less to me still because she cared for a scoundrel, and died by a-doin' of his will. But damn you, man, if ever I rides a race agen for you, and if I don't, by fair or foul means, live to see you ruined! My little Jess! my little Jess!'

THEODORE'S ST. LEGER.

IF you had searched all England through on the morning of September 16, 1822, you would hardly have found a more miserable and dejected person than the little man who, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, was strolling moodily down the High-street of Doncaster. And yet all the surroundings were calculated to produce feelings the reverse of melancholy. It was the morning of the St. Leger day; the sun was shining gloriously; Doncaster was crammed with eager sportsmen, and never had there been such a brilliant gathering of rank and fashion in the old Yorkshire racing town before; for royalty itself had deigned to favour the meeting with its presence and its smiles. Nevertheless, the little man had good cause for being depressed. He was John Jackson, the famous Yorkshire jockey, and the veteran hero of no less than seven St. Legers, who, thirty years before, had won the great race for Mr. Hutchinson on Young Traveller. No jockey at that time could show anything like such a score of Leger wins as John Jackson, though he was destined to be subsequently eclipsed by Bill Scott, and he had fondly hoped that he might add another to his laurels this year on one of Mr. Gascoigne's pair, either of which he thought was good enough to win with himself in the saddle. But Mr. Petre had first call upon his services, and had commissioned him to ride Theodore—Theodore the butt of every betting-man, the laughing-stock of every stable-boy. For had not Jim Bland that very morning in the Salutation contemptuously bet 100 guineas to a shilling walking-stick against Theodore? And the bet had been booked amid roars of laughter, while 500 to 5 was the current price, and the liberal offer went begging! The thought of that 100 to a walking-stick was gall and wormwood to Jackson, and his bitter mortification was increased when he learnt that Mr. Petre himself had made over his betting-book, with a bonus, to Mr. Wyville, only too glad to rid himself of such a hopeless bargain. Unlike his famous contemporary and

fellow 'Tyke,' Ben Smith, who was never known to lose his temper but once, John Jackson was, at the best of times, disposed to be quarrelsome; and had any one run against him in his present unamiable frame of mind, he would probably have fared as badly as a certain sweep at Catterick, who had the misfortune to meet John in one of his tantrums, and received a severe milling for merely smiling at him. As the morning passed on, the veteran jockey became more and more sullen and ill-tempered, and when at last he walked to the ground with his saddle at his back and his whip in his hand he was in that state which is proverbially ascribed to a bear with a sore head. He scaled in gloomy silence, then asked if any one had seen Mr. Petre or his groom or his horse. The answer was in the negative. Then he went to the rubbing-house and repeated his inquiries. No, no one had seen anything of owner or groom or horse; but a bystander remarked,

'They say Theodore's not coming; 'tis a hundred guineas to a walking-stick against him.'

That unlucky bystander did not soon forget the look which Jackson gave him, as he ground his teeth with an oath. Surly and glum, the wretched jockey betook himself to the Town Moor, where several of the St. Leger horses were already being walked about. Casting his keen eyes round he spied a horse at the far side of the Moor, near the hedge, led by a little stable-boy alone. Could that be Theodore? He walked up and said,

'Is that Mr. Petre's horse, my lad?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then bring him here and strip him directly.'

Peeling his own overcoat, Jackson showed in the black and pink sleeves, mounted, and recrossed the Moor. As he passed through the rubbing-house gate he overheard the following dialogue between two 'swells:'

'What horse is that?'

'Petre's Theodore.'

'What will you lay against him?'

'A hundred to one.'

'Done.'

'Done.'

'Will you double it?'

'No, no, I think that's plenty for once.'

Jackson's feelings, as he heard this dialogue, may be better imagined than described. He vented his rage upon Theodore,

and woke the brown horse up with a sharp application of the spur. Theodore, however, needed little waking up; he was as fresh and lively as a kitten, and strongly resented these pointed observations of Mr. Jackson. Then came the parade before the race. The favourite, Swap; Mr. Watt's Mandayne filly, Marion; and Mr. Gascoigne's Comus colt attracted most attention, whilst poor Theodore passed almost unnoticed in the crowd.

But before describing the race it will be as well just to notice the position of the favourites. Mr. Powlett's Swap was first favourite, and started at the short price of 6 to 4. About a month previously Swap had been the subject of some very mysterious operations. A gentleman whose reputation stood quite high in the sporting world received a letter by post purporting to come from Mr. Powlett, informing him that Swap had fallen lame, and commissioning him to lay against the horse at once. This he did accordingly to a considerable amount, at Tattersall's, on the 15th of August. When, however, he shortly afterwards arrived at York, he found that he had been the victim of a 'plant.' Mr. Powlett indignantly pronounced the letter to be a forgery, and Swap was at once reinstated in his position as first favourite; but the unhappy victim of the swindle was a loser to the tune of 1500*l.* At York races rumours were circulated that Swap was not a three-year-old, having been born on the 27th of December; and it was hinted that, should he be first past the post, this objection would be raised against him, and would prove fatal. Nevertheless he kept his position firmly in the market. Ajax was second favourite at 6 to 1, and Mr. Watt's Mandayne filly third favourite at 7 to 1. Theodore was at the bottom of the list; indeed he was not mentioned in the quotations, though on the previous Saturday 500 to 5 had been taken once about him. He had run well as a two-year-old; but his career as a three-year-old since the York Spring St. Leger Stakes, which he won, had been a failure, and he had been so badly beaten a few weeks before that he was considered to be quite out of the race. William Croft, in whose stable Theodore was trained, had tried the horse and found him wanting. It was decided that Theodore should not start, and that Jackson should ride the best of the stable, Mr. Gascoigne's Comus filly or colt, when a letter from a backer of Theodore, remonstrating with Mr. Petre for his intention of scratching him, made that gentleman resolve to run the horse. Speculation raged fast and furious; hundreds of thousands of pounds depended on the race;

Mr. Powlett stood to win 40,000*l.*, and his groom and jockey 10,000*l.* between them. Never had such sensational betting been known upon the Turf before, and the race was consequently looked forward to with intense excitement.

We left the competitors parading. They were twenty-three in number; and when the starter's 'Go!' was heard they got off well together. Jackson, who always made a good start, got to the front at once. The pace was a cracker; but still Theodore kept the lead. Jackson's surprise was great. But we shall let him describe his feelings in his own words. 'When we got to the first cross-roads,' he said afterwards, in the account he gave of the race, 'I lost all my ill-temper and mortification; I turned my head for a moment; a crowd of horses (twenty-two) were thundering close at my heels; the sight was terrific; the speed tremendous. Theodore pulled hard; but I held him tight. "Now, my little fellow," said I to myself, "keep up this pace to the top of the hill and I don't care a straw for the whole lot." I felt as strong as a giant; I thought my arms were made of iron; and the blood rushed merrily through my veins, while my heart thumped at my ribs. Away we went at a rattling pace; I was first over the hill, and was never headed in any part of the race.'

When the top of the hill was reached Jackson turned to look for Swap; he was in the middle of the ruck, and looked as if his bolt were shot already. '*You're* done,' said Jackson to himself; 'I sha'n't be troubled with *you*.' Coming down the hill he began to ease Theodore a bit, but kept a sharp look-out for 'the harlequins and the magpies'—Mr. Watt's harlequin jacket on the Mandayne filly, Marion, and Mr. Gascoigne's white and black sleeves on the Comus filly, Violet. It was the last-named that Jackson dreaded most, for he thought she had more strength and last in her than Theodore. And now came the tug of war. Just as the T.Y.C. was passed Marion challenged Theodore, and got as far as his girths. Then Mr. Gascoigne's pair challenged right and left, passing Jackson's boots, and almost reaching Theodore's neck. Then Marion challenged again. Then Mr. Gascoigne's pair again. But Jackson's skill, judgment, and nerve were equal to the occasion. Challenge after challenge was stalled off. Theodore got terribly excited, and wanted to rush ahead; but Jackson wisely reserved his powers, and never let him get too far in advance of his most formidable opponents. And here again we cannot do better than quote his own graphic

description: 'I could see head after head advance as far as my boots on each side; and when I encouraged Theodore forwards I could see head after head glide beautifully backwards out of my sight.' There was one more bold and desperate attempt to wrest the lead from Theodore, but it was defeated; and then Jackson said to himself, 'Now I think you're all done.' He felt that the race was his own, and his heart beat merrily at the thought. They were getting near the judge's box now, and already there rose into the air the mighty roar of a myriad voices, and 'Theodore, Theodore, Theodore!' was the cry. 'Violet's beat! Theodore wins! Bravo, Jackson! Petre, Petre!' But Violet was not beaten yet; she made a rush that brought her up to Jackson's boots. Then he lifted his arm high—down came the whip. Theodore gave a bound like a deer, and passed the post three-quarters of a length in front of the chestnut filly.

Rarely, if ever, has such a scene of excitement as then followed been witnessed on that time-honoured course. Jackson received a tremendous ovation as he returned to scale with Mr. Petre by his side, who was more amazed than any one else at the victory of his own horse, and bitterly chagrined he must have been at having actually paid Mr. Wyville a bonus to take his betting-book off his hands. Not one of the favourites was even placed; 50 to 1 had been wagered against Violet just before the start, and 90 to 1 against the Duke of Leeds' gray colt by Comus, who came in third. Swap was the object of general execration. And yet within forty-eight hours Swap completely turned the tables upon his victor; for in the Gascoigne Stakes, Theodore, with 4 to 1 on him, was beaten as easily by Swap as he had beaten Swap for the St. Leger. Of course there was a good deal of shaking of heads at Tattersall's on settling-day; and men recalled the scandals of Escape and Eleanor, and whispered darkly that all was not straight. But Mr. Powlett and Mr. Petre were well known to be men of unimpeachable honour—no one dared to accuse them openly of anything that savoured of dishonesty; and so Theodore's St. Leger to this day remains one of the unsolved mysteries of the Turf.

THE ROUT OF THE THIMBLE-MEN.

To the present generation of race-goers the thimble-rigger is only known as an insignificant and contemptible item among the miscellaneous and motley crowd of camp-followers that dog the march of the ever-moving army of the Turf. It is only in odd holes and corners that he ventures to ply his nefarious trade, and he flies at no higher game than the simple bumpkin or the drunken sportsman of Cockaigne. But it was far otherwise fifty years ago. The thimble-riggers, or thimble-men, were the terror of the racecourse. They frequented every race-meeting of any importance in large gangs, and were as desperate a set of ruffians as could be found. Woe betide the inebriated sportsman who fell into their hands! They stripped him of everything he had, and often maltreated him as well. It was by more artful dodges, however, that they, as a rule, earned their living; and it does seem strange that the race-goers of that day should have allowed themselves to be so openly and flagrantly victimised. There was a notorious case tried in 1823, in which there was plenty of evidence produced to show that gentlemen would often stop their carriages in front of a thimble-rigger's table, get out, and lose twenty or thirty pounds in a few minutes. When people who should have known better made such fools of themselves, it was not surprising that the thimble-men were so bold and defiant, and that their impudence increased in proportion to their success. At last, however, things reached such a pass that, in the autumn of 1830, the stewards of the Doncaster Meeting resolved to put down the thimble-men with a strong hand, and, if possible, rid the northern meetings, at any rate, of the pest which had so long infested them. Accordingly the stewards and the public authorities of the borough entered into an alliance to join their forces for the suppression of the thimble-riggers. By some means or other the thimble-men became aware that mischief was brewing, and they assembled in unusual numbers. So far from being dismayed, they had the audacity to contemplate meeting

force with force; and they were mostly ugly-looking customers; indeed, one of the magistrates afterwards described them as 'the most formidable body of desperadoes that had ever assembled at Doncaster or any other place.' There was every prospect of a free-fight, and those who were 'in the know' anticipated some very lively proceedings.

On the Monday of the race-week some four hundred or five hundred of the thimble-men took possession of a portion of the 'Town Field,' just behind the rubbing-house, set up their tables, and assumed a very menacing attitude. The police force, though doubled, was no match for such a compact array of desperate scoundrels; and, besides, the stewards and the borough authorities had not quite matured their plans; so the thimble-men were left unmolested for that day. Meanwhile the magistrates, seeing that the thimble-men were bent upon offering a stubborn resistance, took fresh precautions for insuring their defeat. The police force was still further increased, and a troop of the 3d Dragoons was ordered up from Sheffield, and directed, on its arrival, to take up a concealed position near the racecourse; the staff of the 3d West York Militia were placed under arms; and the Doncaster troop of Yeomanry were ordered to hold themselves in immediate readiness.

On Tuesday, an hour before the races commenced, the first attack was made upon the thimble-men. Lord Wharncliffe, Lord Milton, and several neighbouring magistrates, accompanied by a strong body of their servants, mounted and armed with hunting-whips, made a raid upon the tables. Contrary to expectation, a very feeble resistance was offered; the thimble-men were dispersed without much trouble, but no arrests were made.

Early on Wednesday morning, however, the burghers of Doncaster were roused by the tramp of marching men, and, on looking out, the thimble-men, to the number of some six hundred, were seen parading the streets. They had learned over-night that troops had been sent for to disperse them, and they were intensely exasperated. It was clear that their blood was up, that they meant fighting, and that the stewards and the magistrates would find it no child's play to drive them from the course. Before noon the thimble-men had occupied their old position on the Town Field; moreover, they had fastened and barricaded the field-gate adjoining the rubbing-house, and collected formidable heaps of stones to serve as missiles against their assailants. Public feeling was roused to an intense pitch of excite-

ment by these deliberate preparations for battle on the part of the thimble-men. The races, the favourites, the state of the odds, all were for the moment forgotten in the stirring prospects of a *mêlée* on quite a large scale. The mayor, the magistrates, and the stewards met in solemn conclave to decide upon their operations. The thimble-men were known to be reckless, revengeful, and desperate, and it was, therefore, necessary to exercise caution as well as courage in attacking them. It was resolved not to call out the Dragoons or Yeomanry unless it was absolutely necessary to do so. The mayor marshalled the police, one hundred strong; the stewards—Lord Wharncliffe, Lord Milton, Lord Downe, the Hon. W. Duncombe, M.P., Mr. George Savile Foljambe, Mr. Beckett Denison (afterwards Chairman of the Great Northern Railway)—supported by several of the neighbouring gentry, headed their own mounted servants, sixty in number, and the combined forces, horse and foot, advanced upon the field-gate. They found it strongly barricaded, and behind the barricades they could see the big heaps of stones, and the thimble-men arming themselves with the legs of their tables, very handy and effective weapons in a hand-to-hand fight. Howls and hoots and yells began to fill the air. The spectators, who clustered in thousands upon the grand stand and every available 'coign of vantage,' began to get a little nervous, ladies shrieked and fainted, and a very serious riot seemed impending. The leaders of the attacking forces consulted together, and it was resolved to try to effect an entrance to the Town Field by a smaller opening opposite the back of the grand stand. Simultaneously with this strategic movement the police made a determined assault upon the field-gate. The stones flew fast and thick; the yells and oaths of the thimble-men were awful to hear. But while they were engaged in front a party of the mounted men took them in the rear. The barricade was broken down. There was a hot fight for a few minutes, sticks and stones were flying in all directions, but a well-timed charge of the mounted men settled the business. The thimble-men broke and fled. Several of the ringleaders were captured on the spot; the rest made for the open country. And then came the amusing part of the scene. The mounted men gave chase after the nimble fugitives. Lord Milton and the grooms from Wentworth were conspicuous in the pursuit. They kept well together, took the fences in splendid style, and brought their game to hand in most sportsmanlike fashion. The

enclosures and gardens behind the Deaf and Dumb Institution afforded good covert to the hunted thimble-men, but they were bustled out in fine style; in vain they doubled and dodged, hid in ditches and crawled through fences. No fence or ditch could stop the gallant sportsmen who were chasing them. By this time, too, the spectators, finding that the thimble-riggers were getting the worst of it, and that there was not much chance of hurting their own skins, joined in the fun, and helped to catch the flying thieves. Such a scene of excitement and diversion was never witnessed on any racecourse before or since. Finally, when the victors gathered to count up the spoils, they found that they had taken some hundred and fifty prisoners. The big caravan was chartered, and the captives were sent off in relays under strong escort to the borough gaol. They were brought up two days later before the magistrates, and every mother's son of them was committed to Wakefield House of Correction for a more or less lengthy term of hard labour.

Such was the rout of the thimble-men, a feature in the Doncaster Meeting of 1830, which for a long while afterwards formed a leading topic of conversation in sporting circles. The thimble-men never held up their heads after it. Their ring was completely broken. Isolated gangs, indeed, continued for some time to prowl about the southern racecourses; but, as a regular organisation of resolute and audacious villany, they were crushed out. An intolerable public nuisance was thus put an end to in a manner which reflected the highest credit on all concerned in its abolition. If every Turf abuse were dealt with as promptly and resolutely, the true lovers of the great national sport would have less cause to grumble than they have.

THE FIRST OF THE PLUNGERS.

THERE was unusual excitement among Turfites at the First Newmarket Spring Meeting of 1789, for it had become generally known that a young nobleman of large fortune would then make his *début* upon the Turf, and it was expected to be a *début* of extraordinary splendour. Already the name of Richard, Earl of Barrymore, Viscount Buttevant and Baron Barry, had acquired some notoriety. His Eton contemporaries told how he had made his first appearance at that famous school with a *thousand pounds* in his pocket—the gift of his doating grandmother. They told, too, of his adventurous exploits: how he and a schoolfellow went the round of the inns at Windsor and the neighbourhood one dark night—having escaped from tutorial supervision—and changed all the signboards, and how it took weeks to rectify the result of the mischievous prank. A host of other stories of the wildness and extravagance of the young Earl were rife, and the hearts of the sharpers and blacklegs of London were jubilant at the prospect of plucking so promising a pigeon. At the time he made his first appearance in the *Racing Calendar* Lord Barrymore was but nineteen years of age. He had a rent-roll of 12,000*l.* a year, and a large sum in ready cash awaiting his majority. His estate at Wargrave, in Berkshire, was one of the finest in England, and there was not a young nobleman or commoner in the kingdom with more brilliant prospects. Nor was he without the gifts of mind and body to enable him to thoroughly enjoy his magnificent patrimony. He was witty and accomplished, he had an excellent memory, considerable oratorical powers, and remarkable facility in writing both prose and verse. His physical gifts were equally striking. He was six feet two inches in height, large framed, but thin, and wonderfully active. As a jockey he had no superior among the gentlemen of England, and his knowledge of horseflesh was, for one so young, surprising. It was only natural, then, that with such tastes and proclivities Lord Barrymore should be attracted to the Turf. And he was determined to cut a big figure there.

In the spring of 1789, when his lordship burst upon Newmarket in his glory, he had twenty horses in training, with ninety-six engagements. Most of these engagements were matches for sums ranging from five hundred to two thousand guineas. It would be of no interest to follow him through his Turf engagements; suffice it to say that at the end of the first year of his racing career he found that in matches and stakes he had lost some 7000*l.*, that his trainer's bill came to 3000*l.*, and that his betting-book showed a balance on the wrong side of rather more than 10,000 guineas. It must be admitted that this was a very creditable exhibition of plunging for a novice of nineteen. The next year Lord Barrymore increased his stud to thirty-five, with a hundred and sixty engagements. He was determined to have good horses at any price, and he did contrive to get three of the good ones, viz. Seagull and Chanticleer, for which two he gave 4000 guineas, and Rockingham, one of the best horses of his day, whom he purchased for 3000 guineas, sums hitherto unheard of on the Turf. Nevertheless, at the end of that year, too, he found himself out of pocket in stakes and training expenses alone to the tune of 8000 guineas, to say nothing of bets to the extent of probably twice as much.

The year 1791 saw Lord Barrymore at the zenith of his career as a plunger. He had indeed reduced his stud to twenty-four horses, but he plunged wildly on Rockingham, Seagull, and Chanticleer. At the Ascot Meeting—one of the most memorable, by the way, on record—Lord Barrymore prepared two banquets for the Prince of Wales, which cost 1700 guineas; yet the Prince was present at neither of them, and only three guests sat down to each of these sumptuous feasts. It was in that year that the Oatland Stakes were run for the last time at Ascot, and the excitement over the race was stupendous. The Oatland Stakes were then one of the most valuable and important prizes on the Turf. Their net value in the year of which we speak was nearly 3000 guineas, and no less than nineteen horses came to the post. For some time previously the race had been the principal topic of conversation and speculation among sporting men. The betting was fast and furious. Lord Barrymore's Chanticleer was first favourite at 9 to 2, and his lordship backed the horse to a very large amount. The Prince of Wales had his two famous horses Escape and Baronet entered, but neither was thought good enough to beat Chanticleer. The public took an immense interest in the race, which a contemporary sporting journal

described as 'the greatest ever decided in England.' Upwards of 40,000 persons assembled on the course, which was so inconveniently crowded that it was alleged that the pressure of the throng seriously interfered with the race; and it was for that reason that the Oatland Stakes were the next year removed to Newmarket, where, as there were no railways and only inferior coaching service in those days, the company was always more select than numerous. The race for the Stakes was a splendid one. The authority which we have already quoted says that you might have almost covered the first four horses with a blanket. The favourite, however, was beaten, the Prince of Wales's Baronet being first, and Chanticleer third, with Escape fourth, not a neck from Lord Barrymore's horse. Two hundred and fifty thousand guineas are said to have changed hands on the result, and Lord Barrymore himself lost nearly 20,000*l*. So severely was the young plunger hit that year that the next season saw his stud reduced to thirteen, with forty-one engagements. For the first time in his racing career he was able at the close of the year to show a balance in his favour of some ten thousand. But what he did win on the Turf he lost at play. In a single evening he lost 2800 guineas to the Duke of Bedford at 'all fours,' and his reckless betting at whist excited a sort of contemptuous wonder on the part of the great players who formed the objects of his speculation.

We have spoken above of Lord Barrymore's aptitude for writing verses. As an illustration we may give the following anecdote: At the Second Newmarket Spring Meeting of 1791, Lord Barrymore matched the horse of a third party against a favourite horse of the Duke of Bedford's for 500 guineas. The articles were drawn up and signed, but unfortunately Lord Barrymore had made too sure of obtaining the consent of the third party; for the latter, after the match had been made, declined to let his horse run, on the ground that he had not been consulted before the terms of the match had been agreed to. As it was a P.P. match there was nothing for it but to pay forfeit, which Lord Barrymore accordingly prepared to do. But the Duke of Bedford good-humouredly proposed to let Lord Barrymore off the bet on condition that his lordship should compose a song upon the unaccommodating third party, the first letter of each line to be one of the letters in the name of the person in question, and the initial letters of the lines of the song, when read downwards, to form the name of the said party and

that of his town residence. Lord Barrymore accepted the proposal; the song was finished that evening, and sang amid tremendous applause to the members of the Jockey Club. And here it will be as well to wind up our sketch of his career on the Turf. In 1792 he sold Chanticleer to the Duke of York for 2700 guineas; and, at the close of that year, made such very material reductions in his stud as to show his intention of speedily retiring altogether from the fascinating sport, over which in four years he had lost no less than 100,000*l.* There can be little doubt that he was cheated both by his trainer and his jockeys, all of whom were in collusion with blacklegs and sharpers. And in those days it must be remembered that blacklegs and sharpers were to be found in the very highest circles—indeed, even among the members of the Jockey Club itself! Honesty was the exception, not the rule; and it was generally found in company with the simplicity and imbecility of the pigeon. Lord Barrymore himself, prey though he was to the sharpers, was not considered a sportsman of immaculate honesty, for plunging is not necessarily a proof of probity. He was at any rate suspected of sharp practice at play, and is said to have won a large sum from Charles James Fox, owing to the latter wearing big buttons of polished steel, which reflected his cards and enabled his opponent to forestall his game. It is only justice to Lord Barrymore, however, to add that he and Charles James Fox were considered the two best and fairest handicappers of their time, and there were few, if any, complaints against their adjustment of weights.

The decline of Lord Barrymore's interest in the Turf was, however, to be traced to other causes than his losses. He had from the first a passion for theatricals, and in 1790 he built a private theatre at Wargrave, which cost 60,000*l.*, and was probably the finest theatre ever seen in England. He spent upwards of 3000*l.* on the wardrobe, and had a regular company of professionals from London staying in the house for two-thirds of the year. These professionals were not the most reputable of their calling, and the orgies at Wargrave became such a scandal in the neighbourhood that, when Lord Barrymore was steward of the Reading Races, all the magnates of the county withdrew their support. The course was almost deserted, and Lord Barrymore had to run his own and his friends' horses for prizes given by himself! He was at this time, too, a great patron of the Ring. No less than six prizefighters were staying at Wargrave at the

same time; and, in fact, his lordship seldom appeared in public unaccompanied by a comedian and a bruiser. The well-known Hooper ('The Tinman'), a conspicuous ornament of the P.R. in those days, was Lord Barrymore's inseparable companion, and was instrumental in getting up some very pretty mills in Wargrave Park. His lordship was himself one of the best amateur boxers in England, and he was fond of exercising his fistic powers. The wagoners on the Bath-road supplied him with numberless opponents on whom to display his athletic prowess; for, like many of this class nowadays, they were lazy surly louts, who let their horses wander at their own sweet will about the road, obstructing the free passage of his lordship's phaeton, and, when remonstrated with, indulged in the foulest language. Lord Barrymore never allowed an insult of this sort to pass unpunished; he would pull up his horses, jump from his box, fling off his coat, and challenge his insulter to fight it out like an Englishman. The result, of course, was almost invariably in favour of the cool and skilful boxer; and when the wagoner had received what his lordship considered sufficient punishment, the victor magnanimously handed him a guinea, and bade him improve his manners for the future. On two occasions, however, the bruising Earl caught a tartar. Once the wagoner proved to be a sturdy West countryman, who closed with his lordship, and threw him so heavily on the hard high-road that he could not come up to time; on the other occasion the yokel turned out to be a provincial pug of no mean pretensions, who gave his noble antagonist something uncommonly like a hiding. But in each case Lord Barrymore bore his defeat like a man, shook hands with his conqueror, and doubled the usual guinea fee.

Not content with racing, theatricals, and pugilism, Lord Barrymore must needs aspire to be a master of hounds. He started a pack of staghounds, and his advertisement for deer to hunt with them was a signal for the dealers in such commodities to foist upon him all the halt, lame, and blind creatures they had on their hands. His hunting retinue, indeed, was gorgeous. There were four real African negroes, in magnificent dresses of scarlet and silver lace, who made the woods resound with the blast of their French horns. There was no end of liveried servants, huntsmen, whips, and grooms. The hounds were good enough, but there was never anything to hunt. The deer would not, or could not, run; and the whole thing was a burlesque which irritated genuine sportsmen beyond measure.

After losing a good many thousand pounds over his hunting establishment, Lord Barrymore concluded that hunting, as Artemus Ward says, 'was not his fort.'

The commencement of the year 1793 saw our noble plunger sadly crippled in his resources. He had pulled down his splendid theatre at Wargrave, which cost 60,000*l.*, and had sold the materials by auction for less than a tenth of that sum. He had reduced his racing stud to the modest dimensions of five horses in training. His estate was in the hands of a commissioner, who allowed him 2500*l.* a year out of the rents, the rest being sequestrated for the benefit of his creditors. By his choice of low companions he had alienated from himself all his aristocratic friends, and his highest enjoyment was boozing in rustic taverns with second-rate bruisers and fifth-rate actors. The Right Honourable Richard Earl of Barrymore, the quondam boon companion of princes, was now content to be chairman of a rustic Bacchanalian club at Wokingham; the honourable member of Parliament for Heytesbury had descended to the presidentship of a sixpenny debating society at Reading. To what further depths he might have sunk Heaven only knows, had not his career come to an abrupt and tragical conclusion. In the month of March 1793, he was with his regiment (the Berkshire Militia) at Rye. By his own request he was placed in command of the guard appointed to escort a party of French prisoners of war to Deal. His lordship accompanied the escort in his curricle, and amused himself by shooting rabbits and seagulls on the way. At the first inn outside Folkestone the party stopped for refreshment. The landlady was a young woman of considerable personal attractions, and Lord Barrymore stayed behind to pay her some gallant attentions. When he mounted his curricle to drive away, he handed his fowling-piece to his servant. The clumsy fellow contrived somehow to fire the gun off, and the contents lodged in Lord Barrymore's brain. His lordship fell from the box, and never spoke again. Such was the end of the first of the plungers. He was only in his twenty-fourth year when he met with his sudden death. In less than five years he had squandered 300,000*l.*, and left a fine estate mortgaged to the hilt. There have been many like him since; but of all the race of plungers, of whom he was the first, none has had a career so short or an end so tragical.

A CURIOUS RACE.

No one, probably, who has ever looked at the placid, heavy, unexpressive features of Queen Anne, as they are preserved to us in her portraits, would ever credit her with sporting tastes. Nor have any of her historians, so far as we know, ever said anything to suggest her indulgence in such tastes. They have represented her to us as a devout, chaste, and formal personage —a prude, in short, of the first water. Lord Chesterfield complained bitterly of the decorous dulness of her Court. Her Drawing-rooms, he said, had more the air of solemn places of worship than the gaiety of a Court.

'If a fine man and a fine woman were well enough disposed to wish for a private meeting, the execution of their good intentions was difficult and dangerous. The preliminaries could only be settled by the hazardous expedient of letters; and the only places almost for the conclusion and ratification of the definitive treaty were the Indian houses in the City, where the good woman of the house, from good nature and perhaps some little motive of interest, let out her back-rooms for momentary lodgings to distressed lovers.'

But for all the privacy with which she surrounded herself, Queen Anne was a keen sportswoman. She hunted regularly until her persistent habit of over-eating herself made her too fat to take such active exercise. It was, however, as a patroness of the Turf that she most deserves the respect of sportsmen. It was she who first started the Royal Gold Cups in the north, and not only did she give these cups, but she was very eager as a runner of her own horses on the Turf. She used almost invariably to enter her own horses for her own 100-guinea Gold Cups, for six-year-olds, carrying 12st.—four-mile heats. She was not, however, very fortunate. She had a pretty good horse in her gray gelding Pepper, who was placed for the York Gold Cup in 1712, and her gray horse Mustard (she had a fancy for grays) ran well there in 1713; but neither was good enough to win her a

Gold Cup. She was destined, however, at last to win a triumph at York, though it was a triumph of which she was never conscious.

The York Summer Meeting of 1714 commenced in the last week of July, and it was a memorable meeting in more ways than one. In the first place there was the largest attendance ever known. Old sportsmen had never seen any northern meeting patronised by such a number of the nobility and gentry. An eye-witness says 'there were no less than one hundred and fifty-six carriages at one time upon the course.'

The meeting opened sensationally. Her Majesty's Gold Cup was the great feature of the first day's racing. The race, as we have said, was for six-year-olds, carrying 12 st., and it was run in four-mile heats. In the third heat Mr. Childers's brown mare Duchess, ridden by Robert Hesselteine, ran a very severe and punishing race with Mr. Peirson's brown horse Foxhunter, ridden by Stephen Jefferson. Those were days when jockeys openly indulged in the foulest riding, and thought jostling and cannoning part of the legitimate canon. It was no uncommon occurrence for a couple of jockeys to lay into one another with their whips in the middle of the race, and finish the fight on horseback when they had passed the judge's box. On this occasion Robert Hesselteine made Duchess run Foxhunter so near the cords that his jockey was obliged to whip over the horse's shoulder. Duchess was thus enabled to gain the judge's fiat by a length. But no sooner had Hesselteine pulled up than Jefferson rode alongside of him and struck him across the face with his whip. Hesselteine returned the compliment, and they cut away at one another amidst the cheers of the bystanders till the blood was streaming down their faces, and dyeing their jackets and breeches crimson. When both were exhausted, the owner of Foxhunter claimed the race on the ground that his horse had been deliberately run up against the cords by Duchess's jockey. A committee of 'Tryers' was empanelled to consider the objection, and after mature deliberation they awarded the race to Foxhunter. Then there was a row between the two owners, and hard words were exchanged, which must have infallibly ended in a duel had not the friends of both parties interfered and suggested that the heat should be run again. It was run, and Duchess won by a clear length. But so far was this result from satisfying either owner that both claimed the prize—the owner of Duchess on the ground that his mare had won the decisive

heat; the owner of Foxhunter on the ground that Duchess, having been once disqualified by the 'Tryers,' was not entitled to run again. There were mutual charges of foul riding and foul play, and a challenge passed between the owners of the two horses, while the two jockeys had another set-to, this time on foot, which ended in the discomfiture of Hesselteine.

The end of it was that there was a law suit, and all bets were withdrawn, the cup meanwhile being invested in trust with Mr. Redman, Lord Mayor of York. The decision of the Court was a curious one. It was that all horses that had been placed in the different heats had an equal right to the prize, which must therefore be divided between them. Three of the owners sold their shares for twenty-five guineas each, and they were bought respectively by the Duke of Rutland, the Earl of Carlisle, and Sir William Lowther, who agreed among themselves that the cup should be run for at the York Summer Meeting of 1719, which it accordingly was, and was won by the Earl of Carlisle's chestnut gelding Buckhunter. The decision of the Court, by the way, was founded on these grounds. It was proved that the jockeys both of Duchess and Foxhunter had been guilty of foul riding, and that, therefore, the other two horses who ran third and fourth should have been awarded the heat. As they did not make the claim at the time, however, the Court decided that the third heat was null and void, and consequently, as only two heats had been run, the prize must be divided among the four horses which were placed in those two heats. We have been unable to find whether this remarkable decision was ever appealed to as a precedent.

But to return to the meeting of 1714. Such were the incidents of the first day. On the second day Queen Anne scored her first victory at York with her brown horse Star (afterwards Jacob). It was a very popular win, and numerous congratulations were sent by express to her Majesty; but they arrived too late. On the very morning on which Star won her her first great victory on the Turf (Friday, July 30), the Queen was seized with apoplexy. She remained in a state of unconsciousness till seven A.M. on Sunday, August 1, when she died. An express was despatched at once from London to York; for among the sportsmen there were many distinguished nobility and gentry who must be seriously affected by her death. After thirty-two hours' hard riding the express reached York about three o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, August 2, just after the first race had been

run. At the news of her Majesty's death the sports were at once abandoned. The nobility and gentry left the course, and attended the Lord Mayor of York and Archbishop Dane, who proclaimed his Majesty King George I. After this ceremony was over most of the nobility set off for London. It was, as we have said, a serious event to most of them, for they knew how keenly the Jacobites had been plotting, and there could be little doubt that before many weeks had passed they would have to be defending their new king and their own estates and heads from a Jacobite invasion. Never, therefore, we may be sure, was a race-meeting broken up under more momentous and agitating circumstances than the York Summer Meeting of 1714.

But there was one other noteworthy incident about that York meeting which deserves to be chronicled. Though the noble sportsmen were probably not aware of it, there was 'a chiel amang them takin' notes'—and 'faith he printed them.' This is his description of what he saw among the nobility and gentry at York races: 'They were all so intent, so eager, so busy upon the sharping part of the sport, their wages and bets, that to me they seemed just as so many horse-coursers in Smithfield, descending, the greatest of them, from their high dignity and quality, to the picking one another's pockets, and biting one another as much as possible, and that with so much eagerness as it might be said they acted without respect to faith, honour, or good manners.' Let us hope the expression 'picking one another's pockets' is only to be understood as a figure of speech; but in any case, that picture of the aristocratic sportsmen of 1714 is not a very creditable one, and does not say much for the morals of the Turf when George I. was king. And yet there are people who would have us believe that the said morals of the Turf have deteriorated—to which we answer 'Bosh!'

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THE PARSON'S JOCKEY.

HE was not much like a jockey when I first made his acquaintance. As lean as a rake, his skin puckered and wrinkled and dried, till it was like shrivelled parchment, and with one of the most painfully solemn faces I ever saw, he had yet an air of portentous dignity about him which inspired all his neighbours with respectful awe. He was invariably spoken of as *Mister* Miller, while the Reverend Canon Grosesmith, his master, was familiarly known and talked of as 'Grosesmith,' or 'Old Grosesmith.' He occupied the proud position of coachman and bailiff to that eminent dignitary. And when mounted on the box in sable livery, driving at funeral pace the Canon's two sleek and lazy bays, he looked quite as much a pillar of the Church as his master. He was a rigid teetotaller and vegetarian; defects in his character which were partially redeemed by his inordinate passion for tobacco, of which he consumed something like two ounces per diem, and that of the strongest too. Who would have dreamt that there was ever a time when this sober, dignified, and solemn gentleman was known as a rollicking young spark, as Bob, 'Mad Bob,' Miller? But it was so, and this is how I came to know it.

There was only one man breathing who had the assurance to call him 'Bob' at the time when I knew him, and that was his old 'pal,' Sergeant Wicketts, and even in his mouth the abbreviation sounded shockingly irreverent. The sergeant was an old dragoon who had served in the Peninsular War. He had ridden through a cavalry charge at the battle of Toulouse with his right arm dislocated and his sword hanging by the sword-knot from his wrist. He had rashly, as he explained to me, given the first Frenchman he encountered 'the point,' and being unable to extricate his weapon from the body of his enemy with sufficient quickness, as his horse pressed on, his arm was dislocated, and he rode defenceless through the charge, but, strange to say, came to no further harm. Periodically Sergeant Wicketts

came to the town near which *Mister* Robert Miller lived to draw his pension. On these occasions the two cronies dined together, and had a long smoke afterwards in the saddle-room. I was present at one of these 'smokes,' and then I heard the following story of the grave staid Mister Miller's adventures on the Turf.

I shall not mention precisely in what portion of her Majesty's dominions the scene of this story is laid, though I daresay some who know the place well may recognise it from the description. It is enough to say that it boasted one of the oldest race-courses in the kingdom—a beautiful stretch of turf a mile in length, lying between two bays; and, forty years ago, the races were popular and well patronised in the neighbourhood. The Rev. Dr. Grosesmith had been then installed some three or four years as rector of the parish. He was a clergyman of grave and serious demeanour, a learned man, an excellent preacher, and held in the highest respect by all classes. Mister Robert Miller had been about two years in the reverend gentleman's service as coachman and groom, and was believed by his master to be an exceedingly quiet and respectable young man. His solemn face even then stood him in good stead. But Mister Robert Miller's intimate associates could have given him a rather different character. For all his solemn face he could take his liquor with the best of them; and when once the liquor was in him, he was the maddest devil of the lot. Well, it was just before the autumn race-meeting, some forty years ago, and the rector had bought, a few months previously, a very stylish-looking little mare, a good goer, with plenty of blood in her. It was thought he meant her for his wife, who was a pretty fair horsewoman; but the mare had too much spirit in her for a lady's hack, and Mister Robert Miller had her all to himself, to get her, if possible, more tractable and steady. He was a smart horseman, was Mister Miller, had a good seat and fine hands; in fact, had all the requisites of a first-rate jockey. He cut a dashing figure on the parson's handsome little mare, and bragged a good deal in his cups of what the two of them could do if they tried. Two days before the meeting came off Mister Miller was drinking, with his companions, at the taproom of the George, and the talk naturally turned upon the coming races. The item in the programme which excited most local interest was a race confined to the district, for which a high official annually gave a thirty-guinea cup. There were four entries for this event, and the prospects of the four were being busily discussed

and criticised in the taproom of the George. A certain big raking chestnut was generally thought to hold the race safe. Mister Miller listened with ill-disguised contempt to the recital of the chestnut's performances and points. At last one of the supporters of the chestnut said:

'What are yer sniggerin' and sneerin' at there, Bob Miller? I s'pose yer don't think that little pony o' yourn would have a look in with him for the cup, do yer? Pity there ain't a pony race, though; happen yer might run into a place in such company.'

'Pony be d—d!' exclaimed Mister Miller furiously; 'the mare stands 14-2, and she'd make an exhibition of that chestnut over that 'ere mile course!'

'Why don't yer enter her, then? 'Afraid o' the parson, eh?' said his jeering friend.

'I'm afeard o' no man living, and no man has a word to say as to what I will or what I won't do with my horses,' replied Mister Miller, with a sublime mixture of audacity and dignity in his tone; adding, 'If I wanted to enter the mare, I'd do it.'

Then some laughed and others sneered, and all dared him to enter the mare; till at last, the liquor getting the better of him, Miller swore he *would* enter the mare. It was Sergeant Wicketts that clinched the matter by whispering to him,

'Enter her in your own name, man; the governor will never know. Bless ye, *he* never reads about the races.'

The end of it was that the next day the mare was entered for the race. She was in rare fettle—couldn't have looked better if she had been in strict training. Mister Miller was rather nervous as to the consequences of his escapade, should it reach the ears of his master; but he and the sergeant thought they saw their way to a good thing, and so 'piled their bottom dollar' on the mare. The eventful day came, and there was a good deal of joking among the crowd about 'the parson's jockey' and 'the parson's crack;' but Mister Miller saw nobody there who was likely to tell his master, and his spirits rose accordingly. I will not dwell upon the race—let it suffice to say that the mare, ridden with great judgment and skill, won by a length, and Mister Miller became the proud possessor of the cup, besides 'pulling off' a good round sum in bets. And now for the sequel.

The Reverend Dr. Grosesmith was in blissful unconsciousness of this sporting incident, and of his own connection with it,

when about ten days after the race he received the following letter from his bishop:

'My dear Dr. Grosesmith,—The enclosed has been brought under my notice. It certainly bears a strange appearance, but from what I know of your character I am sure you will have some satisfactory explanation to offer.'

The 'enclosed' consisted of a cutting from the local paper, containing a report of the races, in which the following line was underscored:

'The —— Cup, value 30 guineas, for all ages; six furlongs.
The Rev. Dr. Grosesmith's br. m. Mona (R. Miller) . 1.'

The worthy rector stared in amazement at this extraordinary announcement. *His* name *printed* as the owner of *a winning racehorse!* It was incredible. As soon as his first feeling of astonishment had subsided the rector at once sent for Mister Miller. Now it unfortunately happened that Mister Miller, having lost all his fear of detection after this lapse of time, had been carousing pretty heavily with his boon companions, and was considerably the worse for his potations when, in obedience to the summons for his immediate attendance, he was ushered into his master's presence. One glance at the rector's face as he stood in front of the fireplace was enough to show Mister Miller that he had been found out. The Reverend Dr. Grosesmith was white with rage. His hand shook as he handed the bishop's letter with the cutting to his coachman, and asked sternly,

'Now, sir, tell me what is the meaning of that—I suppose you know?'

Mister Miller was speechless. The rector continued,

'Do you mean to tell me, sir, that you have had the unspeakable audacity to dare to ride a horse of mine in a race, and bring my name into public scandal?'

There was no help for it. Mister Miller had to stammer out a feeble affirmative.

'Then I discharge you at once, sir. I am not sure that I ought not to prosecute you for defamation of my character. But at any rate you leave my service at once, and you will get no character from me, sir. Go, sir, at once. I see you've been drinking, and I suppose I have to thank your drunkenness for this.'

So, humbled, crestfallen, and very much sobered, Mister

Miller went out from the presence of his irate master. For a week he loafed about the place in a state of abject misery, except when he was drunk, though even then his condition was one of maudlin melancholy. It was Sergeant Wicketts that saved him. That veteran suggested that perhaps, if he ate humble pie and solemnly promised never to get drunk again, the rector might take him back. Mister Miller followed his old friend's advice, and the rector, like a good fellow as he was at heart, did take him back. The penitent jockey kept his promise, and not only never got drunk again, but gave up liquor altogether, and took to smoking instead. For thirty odd years he remained in the reverend doctor's service. During all that time, I need hardly say, no allusion was ever made between them to the memorable feat of the brown mare; but the rector himself soon came to look at it in the light of a splendid joke, and over his port-wine and walnuts, with much unction and many chuckles, used often to tell the story of 'The Parson's Jockey.'

BLIND JACK OF KNARESBOROUGH.

A BLIND sportsman! One has heard of blind men doing many strange things, and in spite of their loss of sight acquiring many wonderful accomplishments; but that a blind man—blind too almost from his birth—should be an energetic and enthusiastic sportsman seems incredible. For what sport is there to which the enjoyment of eyesight is not indispensable? Nevertheless it is of a *blind sportsman* that we purpose giving the true and remarkable history here. John Metcalf, the subject of our sketch, better known among his contemporaries as 'Blind Jack of Knaresborough,' was born at that town in the year 1717. He was attacked by smallpox at the age of six, and entirely lost his eyesight. From that time to his death he was stone blind, though it was only by looking closely at his face that one could discover that, like Banquo's ghost, he 'had no speculation in those eyes which he did glare with.' By the time John Metcalf was nine years of age, he could find his way all over Knaresborough without a guide, and blind though he was he was the most mischievous young urchin in the neighbourhood, always ringleader in every bird's-nesting or orchard-robbing foray. He was early taught music, and Squire Woodburn, who kept a pack of hounds near Knaresborough, hearing him play, took a fancy to him, and had him constantly up at the hall. Here Jack first displayed his passion for sport. He loved to be among the hounds, and the Squire made him a present of a couple of puppies. Squire Woodburn kept his hounds in a very primitive and careless fashion. They were not kennelled, but were allowed to loaf about the place. Master Jack took advantage of this, and used to come out stealthily by night and coax some of the hounds away, and hunt the Squire's hares by moonlight, his marvellous sense of hearing enabling him to follow them as accurately as if he had been gifted with the keenest eyesight. He early mastered the art of swimming and diving, and was as expert in the water as Mr. Charles Reade's 'Hero and Martyr,' James Lambert, being

on several occasions employed to recover the bodies of drowned persons. We have already mentioned his aptitude for music, and it was as a musician that he elected to make his livelihood. In those days, when London was practically as far off from Yorkshire folk as New York now is, every country town of any size had its 'season,' and one of the great features of the 'season' were the 'Assemblies,' which took place regularly two or three times a week. They were generally held in large rooms in the principal inns, each inn having its 'Assembly' in turn. Dancing of the old-fashioned country sort was the great attraction, and the dancers were satisfied with a band of three fiddlers, or sometimes only two. Jack Metcalf was appointed to the post of chief fiddler, or 'first violinist,' as he would nowadays probably call himself, to the Knaresborough 'Assemblies,' and was immensely popular with all the innkeepers, who gave him free quarters for the 'season.' He now took to 'cocking' as a sport, kept cocks himself, and seldom failed to put in an appearance when a main was fought within a distance of a hundred miles. He would place himself on the lowest seat in the cock-pit, with some trusty friend by his side, who was a good judge of the sport, and who not only kept him posted in all the varying phases of the combat, but by significant nudges enabled him to bet or hedge as might be required. He was for a long time a most enthusiastic 'cocker,' and, to judge by the expression on his face, any one would have imagined that he enjoyed the sport more than those who could actually see it.

His fame as a musician and as a jovial sportsman spread to Harrogate. The 'first violin' at the Harrogate 'Assemblies' was nearly ninety years of age, and the young people who footed it on the light fantastic toe found his playing much too slow to suit their tastes. Overtures were accordingly made to Jack Metcalf to take the place of this dodderer. Jack accepted them, and was soon as popular in Harrogate as he had been in Knaresborough. The nobility and gentry took an interest in him, and gave him their sole patronage, so that what with private and public engagements he had both his hands and his pockets full. Having plenty of ready money, he was able to gratify his taste for sport more extensively than before. He bought a horse, which he ran at all the local meetings, and which won him a good many small plates; moreover, he took to coursing, and still retained his fondness for hunting. In fact Master Jack, from mixing so much among the gentry, began to affect the manners

of a gentleman sportsman, and his noble patrons encouraged him in the affectation. For example, Sir Francis Barlow of Middlethorp, who kept a pack of hounds, asked Jack to bring his horse with him, and take up his quarters at Middlethorp for the winter. So Jack found himself in clover. He hunted twice, and sometimes three times a week, and on the remaining days attended private parties as violinist at liberal fees. He rode wonderfully straight to hounds, guided by his acute sense of hearing, with of course the occasional warnings of a friend who kept near him. On his return to Harrogate after the hunting season the following curious and amusing adventure befell him. As he was riding through York he was hailed by the landlord of the George, who told him that there was a gentleman within who wanted a guide to Harrogate, adding, 'and I know there's no one can do that better than you.'

It was agreed that the stranger should be kept in ignorance of Metcalf's blindness, and then the two set off together. Jack piloted him safely to the Granby, at Harrogate, having cleverly contrived to keep his secret. The stranger asked his guide to drink with him. Jack made a bad shot at the tankard, and had to describe a circle with his hand before he got hold of it. The stranger stared at him, and Jack, knowing very well the truth must come out sooner or later, went out, leaving the landlord and the stranger together.

'I think, landlord,' said the latter, 'that my guide must have drunk a great deal of spirits since he came here.'

'Why, my good sir, do you think so?' asked the landlord, in surprise.

'Well, I judge from the appearance of his eyes.'

'Eyes! Bless you, sir, do you know he's blind?'

'Blind! Gracious God, you don't mean that! Why, I hired him as my guide here.'

'Yes, sir; he's as blind as a stone.'

'Well, landlord, this is too much; call him in.'

Thereupon Jack enters.

'My friend,' quoth the stranger, 'are you really blind?'

'Yes, sir; I lost my sight when I was six years old.'

'Had I known that, I would not have ventured with you for a hundred pounds.'

'And I, sir,' retorted Jack, 'would not have lost my way for a thousand.'

After that they had a friendly drink together, and the stranger

gave his blind guide a very handsome fee, remarking at the same time that it was the most extraordinary occurrence that had ever happened to him.

Space would fail us to enumerate half the wild pranks and adventures of which Blind Jack was the hero. His name and fame spread far and wide. There was nothing in the way of sport that he did not become an adept at. He was a capital hand at bowls, for instance, but he always demanded a bowl extra to compensate for his blindness. He managed in this way: a friend and confidant was stationed close to the jack and another midway. They kept up a constant conversation, and from the sound of their voices he guessed the distance. His dexterity at cards, too, was wonderful. He seldom lost a game, and 'swells' used out of curiosity to get him to play at their private houses. Presently, as Jack grew richer, he aspired to higher fields of sport. He was a constant frequenter of the big meetings, and was a most daring and successful speculator. His wonderful memory enabled him to keep the name and performance of every winner and every loser in his head, so that he was an excellent judge of 'public form.' He also at this time, 1738, increased his own stud, and it was in this year that he rode his memorable match. The terms of the match were three miles, owners up, for 100 guineas. The betting was 20 to 1 against Metcalf, because it was thought the shape of the course, a circular one, would be fatal to his chance. They had to ride three times round the course to make the three miles. There were posts at intervals, and at every one of these Metcalf stationed a man with a bell. The sound of the bells guided him and enabled him to keep the course. And the end of it was that he rode in an easy winner. As a horsedealer, Jack had few superiors in the craft, even among the proverbially crafty 'Tykes,' and many stories are told of his 'cuteness in this respect.

We have seen Jack figuring as a swimmer, a cross-country rider, a 'cocker,' a courser, a jockey, a bowler, a card-player, and a horse-dealer, but we have not yet exhausted even his sporting capabilities. He made himself a name also as a *bruiser!* Nature had intended him for a magnificent man. He stood nearly six feet two inches in height, and was very finely made. But his want of sight might well have been thought a fatal bar to his ever attaining pugilistic laurels. He was not long, however, in giving evidence of his skill with his fists. There was then at Knaresborough a man named John Bake. He was a

huge athletic fellow, of such great strength and ferocious temper that he was specially employed to serve writs whenever resistance was expected. One day Metcalf and a friend of his met this big bully at an inn. They joined in a game of cards, in the course of which Bake tried to collar some money which did not belong to him. Metcalf's friend remonstrated, and received a violent blow in the face from the bully. Metcalf then interposed, and also got a hot one in the face. He at once pulled off his coat, and challenged Bake to fight like a man. They had a desperate set-to; but Jack hit so hard and straight and measured his distance so well that, after six rounds, Bake gave in. Of course the confined space in which they fought was greatly in Metcalf's favour; but the fact that he, a blind man, fairly thrashed a man as big as himself, and reckoned the champion of the neighbourhood, is certainly one to which we doubt if the history of the Ring can afford any parallel. And here we must close our brief sketch of this extraordinary sportsman, though his sporting adventures would suffice to fill a volume. It was not, however, as a sportsman that he gained his chief celebrity. He became a soldier, and subsequently served all through the campaign of 1745 against the Jacobite Pretender. He played his fiddle at the head of his company after the fashion of a Highland piper; and his regiment (Pulteney's) was the only one, except the 'Old Buffs,' that had anything in the shape of a band attached to it. On his return from the wars he became a trader. In 1751 he started the first stage-coach, or 'stage-wagon,' as they called it then, between York and Knaresborough, driving it himself, twice a week in summer, and once in winter. Eventually he became a contractor for road-making, and it was in this capacity he made his fame and fortune, for his engineering skill and sagacity were remarkable. Finally he died at Spofforth, near Wetherby, on the 27th of April 1810, aged ninety-three years, leaving behind him four children, twenty grandchildren, and ninety great and great-great grand-children. So ends our memoir, too brief to do justice to the subject of it, but enough, we feel sure, to convince our readers that the annals of sport chronicle no more extraordinary character than Blind Jack of Knaresborough.

THE TOUT'S TIP.

'BAH! I tell you that "Training Intelligence" is all rot! What do these touts know about a horse when they see him? They just pick up whatever crumbs of information the lads and stable-boys choose to let fall, and dish them up for the papers. I'd no more go to them for a straight tip than I'd go to Gladstone for a character of Dizzy.'

The speaker was a man about thirty-five, big and blustering, with an emphatic warmth of manner which carried all before it. The place was the smoking-room of an hotel in a well-known Midland racing town. We had been discussing the memorial just presented to the Jockey Club by the trainers, petitioning that august body to take immediate steps to arrest the future progress of a system which the memorialists stigmatised as 'dishonourable in practice, injurious to owners and trainers, and entirely subversive of the morality and best interests of the Turf.' A distinguished sportsman and well-known writer, since dead, was present, and when I and one or two others maintained that under the present system of betting the public had a right to know the truth regarding every horse quoted in the betting market, and that the tout was, therefore, a useful public servant, that distinguished sportsman said almost savagely,

'Were I to commence racing again, I would hit the Ring and the betting fraternity such a hot one as would scare them from backing my horses for the future. I would give a public notice that any one backing my horses would lose their money. Supposing I started a favourite, I would lose rather than the horse should win, so long as I let the Ring in. I would remain quiet while they were "piling on the agony," and on the very day of the race scratch him. I shouldn't race for the public amusement, but for my own. What is the public to me, or what do I care for it?'

'That's a very extraordinary view of racing,' I said, 'and I hope there are not many sportsmen who hold it. It seems to

me that you confound the public and the bookmakers, and in trying to revenge yourself on your enemies, the bookmakers, you would simply be hurting the innocent public. You would be playing into the hands of the very men you want to break. I say that if an owner of racehorses bets largely, and is only too ready to win the money of the betting public, then he ought to have some respect for the interests of that public. And the public has a right to have its special correspondents at head-quarters to keep it accurately posted in all that happens to affect its interests.'

Then it was that the loud-voiced blustering gentleman, whose words I opened with quoting, sneered at the touts. The vigour of the invective for a moment silenced us. But presently a very quiet-looking old gentleman, who was sitting almost concealed in the corner, said mildly, but firmly,

'I think you're wrong, sir, in your estimate of the value of touts and training intelligence.'

'Indeed, sir!' exclaimed the blustering man; 'and may I ask why you think I'm wrong?'

'I think,' continued the old gentleman calmly, 'that the tout, as a rule, is a good judge of horses' capabilities, and, from his experience, can be trusted to give a sound opinion.'

'I totally differ from you, sir,' said the blustering man hotly; 'they're a worthless set of humbugs; and the so-called "Special Training Reports" are a fraud. No one ever found a tout a safe guide.'

'Pardon me, sir,' replied the old gentleman; 'if you will have patience with me, I can prove that your last statement is quite erroneous; I am myself an instance of a man who found a tout a safe guide. Indeed, I owe my present position in the world entirely to a tout; and I will tell you how it was.'

The blustering man and the 'distinguished sportsman' simultaneously gave vent to expressions of incredulity and impatience. But the majority of the company requested the quiet-looking old gentleman to proceed with his story, which he did as follows:

'I was at Doncaster on the Saturday before the St. Leger in 1838, and outside the livery-stables at which I baited my horse I saw a man leaning against a doorway. He had an unmistakably horsey look about him, and was, as I suspected, a racecourse loiterer. Just out of idle curiosity I spoke to him. "Well, who's going to win the Leger?" I said. Without a moment's hesitation, he answered as glibly as if he were announcing a fact that could

not be disputed, "Don John, and Ian will be second." "But how about Cobham?" (the first favourite) I asked. "Cobham," he answered, with the same matter-of-fact manner, as though there could be no possible doubt on the subject, "Cobham will break down at the end of the white rails opposite the Intake Farm." "What makes you state that so positively?" I inquired. "For these very good reasons," he replied: "Cobham is bad in his forelegs. He has not had a real rattling gallop for many a day. Besides, he is as fat as a bullock. Now, with his bad forelegs, his weight of flesh, and 8st. 7lb. (that was before the 8st. 10lb. days) on his back, depend upon it he'll never reach home." "And what makes you think that Don John is so certain to win?" "Because I've watched him closely, and I know there's never a horse in Doncaster can go with him. You may put that down as gospel truth." I was struck by the calm assurance with which the man spoke, and I went and backed Don John for as much money as I could put on. My prophet was right. Don John did win, and Cobham sure enough did break down, though it was not at the end of the white rails, but nearer home. I won *700l.*, and determined to give my prophet a handsome honorarium for his excellent tip. But I could find him nowhere. He had mysteriously disappeared, and I did not set eyes upon him again for many months. When I did see him, it was in the last place in the world I should have expected to encounter him. I was crossing Waterloo Bridge on the Friday or Saturday before the Derby of 1839—I forget the exact day—when I ran right up against him. I recognised him at once, and told him who I was, adding, that I had to thank him for pocketing *700l.* over the Leger. As he had no urgent business on hand, I asked him to come with me to a quiet tavern, and have some dinner. He consented. When we arrived at the tavern, and were seated, I told him of my intention to remunerate him for his tip, and begged him to accept a *20l.*-note. This he resolutely refused for some time to do, and it was only by insisting on it that I forced him at last to take the money.'

'Yes, I see you are smiling; you want to know where a tout is that would refuse *20l.* Nevertheless what I tell you is perfectly true.'

'He told me his story while we were discussing a bottle of wine after dinner; and a very melancholy story it was. I won't, however, trouble you with it now. I will only say that he was a man of good family, and had been educated at Cambridge, but

through his own misconduct came to grief. We passed on to the Derby prospects. He had carefully watched the movements of every horse, and he assured me that Bloomsbury must win, giving excellent reasons for his belief. Well, as you know, Bloomsbury did win, and I pulled off a very good thing indeed. Nor did I forget, you may be sure, my faithful and trusty tout. Once more, and only once, I was tempted to ask his advice and back his selection. That was at the Doncaster Meeting of the same year. He gave me Charles XII. with the same positive assurance as before. When the two first horses passed the judge's box, the general impression was that Euclid had won, and those who were in a position to see declared that it was so. I made up my mind that I had tempted Fortune once too often, and that at last she had jilted me. But, to my surprise and gratification, I found that the judge had given it as a dead heat between Euclid and Charles XII. I shall not easily forget the intense excitement with which I watched the running-off of that dead-heat. It was a near thing, but Charles XII. just did it, and once more I landed a large stake—so large that I could afford to give my tout a *douceur* of 100*l.* After those three *coups* I decided that it would be rash to tempt Fortune any more. With the money which I won on those three selections I went into business, and how I have prospered some of this company know well. I never saw my tout after Charles XII.'s Leger—though I was several times both at Doncaster and Epsom afterwards, and, perhaps, had I met him, I should have been tempted to back his selection again. Nor did I ever hear of him again—though he had my address, and might have written to me had he pleased. But I have never forgotten, and never shall forget, that I owe my present comfortable position to a tout's tip.'

When the old gentleman ended his remarkable yarn, the blustering man and the distinguished sportsman were silent. I daresay they were not convinced, but at any rate no one said another word that night against that much-abused but useful servant of the betting public, the tout.

'THE STAR OF PICCADILLY.'

ANY one strolling down Piccadilly on a fine morning in spring or summer during the first decade of the present century could not have failed to have his attention attracted to a figure seated on the balcony of a noble mansion overlooking the Green Park. It was the figure of an antiquated beau, well enough preserved, however, to look some years younger than his actual age. He was dressed in a blue coat and yellow breeches, and wore on his head a curious little brown chip hat lined with green. Seated there in his cane chair, he was too conspicuous an object to escape the notice of even the most unobservant. And a very brief contemplation of this singular figure let the observer into the secret of his motive in thus publicly displaying himself. No petticoat, whatever its size or condition, came within the range of this old beau's vision without being immediately honoured with a scrutiny from his ogling-glass. He was more than eighty years of age, but his devotion to the fair sex was as strong as when he had passed not a fourth of that period. Had you been a stranger in town, and asked who this gay old Lothario was, your question would probably have elicited a look of surprise, and the ejaculation, 'What, not know "Old Q."!' Having confessed your ignorance, you would have been informed that this was no less a personage than the notorious William, fourth Duke of Queensberry, whose sporting and amatory exploits were the talk of two generations of men about town. Your informant would probably have gone on to tell you that the ruddy look which 'Old Q.'s' face even then wore was due to the practice of having a thin slice of raw veal placed every night upon each of his cheeks before retiring to rest. You would also have heard that every morning, as soon as he rose, this evergreen old votary of pleasure immersed himself in a milk bath; that every evening, about five, he drove his single-horse chaise down to Richmond, and there enjoyed orgies of a peculiar character with certain gay lady and gentlemen friends, whose amusements were not

restrained by any prudish regard for decency or decorum. How far this scandalous gossip may have been true, we are not prepared to say. Probably many of the stories relating to 'Old Q.'s' amusements were false, and many more exaggerated. But though his amours—and many of them were exceedingly discreditable—gained him his chief notoriety, yet he had another and worthier fame as a sound and genuine sportsman. His career on the Turf was a long and honourable one, and was marked by some curious incidents, which are worth recording here. His name was first entered in the racing calendars in 1748. At the York Meeting of that year he rode two races on his horses, Whipper-in and Smoker, winning both. From his first appearance he was acknowledged to be the best amateur jockey of his time, and rode his own horses in most of his principal matches. He was an indefatigable matchmaker, and had a tower of strength to back him up in his jockey, the famous Dick Goodison. In 1750 he won the first of the many eccentric matches with which his name is associated. He laid a heavy wager with a well-known Irish sportsman that he would drive a four-wheeled carriage nineteen miles in sixty minutes. The choice of ground was stipulated for by the Duke (then Earl of March); and the only condition in respect to the vehicle was that it must have four wheels. Wright, the then famous coach-builder of Long Acre, constructed an ingenious machine of wood and whalebone, and the harness was of silk. The course at Newmarket was fixed upon for the match, which came off on the 29th of August 1750. Previous to the appointed day Lord March had made many trials, in the course of which it is said that no less than seven thoroughbreds were killed; but this was denied by the Earl himself. An immense amount of money depended on the result, and thousands of people assembled to witness the match. Four thoroughbreds, mounted by two of the lightest weights that could be procured, were harnessed to this singular chariot; and at the word 'Go!' they dashed off at a terrific pace, finally finishing the distance in fifty-five minutes. In 1757, at the Second Newmarket Spring Meeting, Lord March rode his memorable match with the Duke of Hamilton for a thousand guineas, and won. Probably most of our readers have heard of his famous bet that he would have a letter conveyed fifty miles within an hour, and how he won it by the ingenious device of enclosing the missive in a cricket-ball, which was thrown round a circle from hand to hand by twenty-four expert

throwers. But another incident in his sporting career is, we fancy, less generally known, and is worth giving here in full. Shortly after the carriage feat recorded above, Lord March matched a bay colt of his own against the celebrated Pot-8-os, the property of an Irish nobleman, who was one of the most notorious fire-eaters and successful duellists of his time, and of whom it was told he once flung an impudent waiter through a window, and, when remonstrated with by the landlord, coolly said, 'D—n your eyes, sir, charge the fellow in the bill!' In the course of the race Lord March's jockey contrived to slip his weights off, and they were picked up by a confederate and slipped back before returning to weigh in. The owner of Pot-8-os, however, had keen eyes; he detected the little game, seized Lord March's jockey by the shoulder, and swore he would horse-whip him within an inch of his life if he did not confess at whose instigation the fraud had been practised. The terrified jockey mumbled out something which seemed to implicate his master, whereupon the owner of Pot-8-os taxed Lord March with the offence. His Lordship made a haughty reply, which irritated the hot-tempered Irishman, and the result was a challenge from the latter. A hostile meeting was duly arranged for the 10th of June. Whilst the seconds were loading the pistols, to the amazement of Lord March and his friend, a man approached carrying a black coffin, which he solemnly placed immediately in front of Lord March. The feelings of that nobleman may be better imagined than described when, on looking at the coffin, he saw this inscription on the plate: 'William Douglas, Earl of March, who departed this life on the 10th day of June 1757.' Lord March turned pale, and asked what this ill-timed jest meant. His opponent cheerfully replied, 'Why, my dear fellow, you are of course aware that I never miss my man; and as I find myself in excellent trim for sport this morning, I have not a shadow of a doubt upon my mind but this oaken cloak will shortly be better calculated for you than your present dress.' The nonchalance with which this explanation was made was too much for Lord March's nerves; he refused to fight, and made an ample apology on the spot; nor could any insult afterwards ever induce him to send or accept a challenge.

Not long after this incident 'Old Q.' had another adventure somewhat similar, which did not by any means redound to his credit. He was one evening at Renny's gaming-house in St. James's-street, when that odious ruffian 'Savage' Roche wa

present, who gained his nickname from once pinning to the table, with a fork, the hand of an officer whom he suspected of foul play. Roche and Lord March had some dispute in which the nobleman gave the 'savage' the lie. The latter rose calmly from his seat, laid hold of Lord March by the ears, lifted him up by those appendages from the ground, and said, with supreme contempt, to those present, 'You see, gentlemen, how I treat this despicable little cocksparrow. As a man he is too much beneath me, or I would treat him as a gentleman.' Lord March bore the affront meekly, and never made any attempt to resent it—a fact that does not say much for 'Old Q.'s' pluck.

The year 1789 witnessed 'Old Q.'s' greatest triumphs on the Turf. He matched his horse Dash, by Florizel, against Lord Derby's Sir Peter Teazle for 1000 guineas, on the six-mile course, at the First Newmarket Spring Meeting of that year. Lord Derby tried to back out of the match, and offered half forfeit; but that offer was refused, and the race came off, Dash, who carried 6st. 7lb. against Sir Peter's 9st., winning easily. In the Second Newmarket Spring Meeting, with the same horse, Dash, he beat Mr. Hallam's b. h. by Highflyer, over the B. C., for 1000 guineas, each carrying 8st. 7lb. In the Second October Meeting of the same year Dash won his third match against the Prince of Wales's Don Quixote, 8st. 7lb. each, six-mile course, for 900 guineas; and on the following Tuesday week he won his fourth match against Lord Barrymore's Highlander, at the same weights, three times round the B. C., for 800 guineas, thus winning for his owner 3,700 guineas in matches within less than six months.

'Old Q.' continued his active and energetic support of the Turf until he came into the dukedom of Queensberry, in 1778. After that he was a less ardent patron of racing, though he continued to run horses until 1806. As he grew older he became more and more of a voluptuary. His country pleasures were mainly confined to his villa at Richmond, which was a marvel of sumptuous splendour. Being a bachelor, he conceived that he had no ties to bind him to respectable decorum, and therefore resolved to live just as he pleased, without caring what the world thought or said of him. Popular divines preached at him; satirists launched their keenest shafts of ridicule at him; caricaturists portrayed him as the hero of a thousand ludicrous and disreputable scenes. But 'Old Q.' never troubled his head about them: he lived solely for enjoyment; and so long as he had his

amusement, like Master Sly, he 'let the world slide.' But for all that he was not an uncharitable or wholly selfish man. He gave one of his estates to a number of superannuated Roman Catholic devotees who had sought refuge in England from the horrors of the French Revolution; he made a present of a very large sum of money to Lloyd's, for the relief of wounded seamen; and his conduct to all who had ever in any way ministered to his pleasures was singularly generous. Old reprobate that he was, he had a good heart. He was, at any rate, one of the foremost sportsmen of his age; and he kept his honour unsullied on the Turf at a time when an honest and upright sportsman was by no means common, even in the highest circles. He was eighty-six years of age when he died, in 1810, leaving his enormous fortune to Lord Yarmouth. His death gave as much surprise to his contemporaries as that of Charles Mathews to the men of our day. He seemed an evergreen everlasting, and proof against all the attacks of the grisly monarch. At the news of his decease even that precious old lunatic, George III., was amazed, and, in the words of 'Peter Pindar,'

'The king—God bless him!—gave a *whew!*
"Two dukes just dead—a third gone too!
What, what! could nothing save old Q.,
The Star of Piccadilly?"'

BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON.

'I DO wish to goodness somebody would take him away. There will be mischief if he stops much longer. I never saw him like this before.'

'Who?—like what, Mark?'

'Why, the Squire.'

'What is the matter now? Is he in one of his mad fits? Has he done any damage?'

'No. And that is the worst of it. When he takes it into his head to wreck a dinner-service, or to play Aunt Sally with the glass, I do not so much mind, so long as nobody is hurt. Such amusement calms him, and he always pays the bill.'

The speakers were Mark Hartbrook and Jane, his wife, host and hostess of the Whinridge Arms, Thornford. The scene of their anxious interview, their own small snuggery behind the bar; the time of it, an evening in April. The Thornford Hunt meeting had taken place that day, and it was now 'after dinner' with the stewards and their friends in the principal room of the Whinridge Arms.

Hartbrook had abundant cause for anxiety. The Squire, of whom he and his wife spoke, handsome Gustavus Whinridge of Thornford Hall, was their landlord, and Mark's former master. A warm-hearted generous-natured fellow, imbued with old world ideas of honour, he was, unhappily for his personal peace and the habitual comfort of those with whom he was brought in contact, handicapped with a hot head and a spirit that brooked not the least contradiction. For all his intermittent wildnesses—which would of course have been harmonious traits in a character of heroic mould, had he come into the world at the proper time, three or four centuries earlier—there were few persons in and about Thornford who did not speak affectionately of the Squire. There was not his 'marrow' to be found in those parts as a sportsman when he had youth to serve him; and now he was grown old and somewhat stiff in the joints he could, as his idolaters expressed it, take his own part with the best of them. Although

he was now short-leg in the Thornford Eleven, there was a time when he was equally good in any part of the field, and he is still to be relied on to face the fastest bowling without pads, and confront it with a rock-like defence. Albeit increased bulk had somewhat hindered his triumphs in connection with the Noble Science, he was as good as ever on the 12th and kindred days. But his 'awkward times' are a trouble to his friends, as Mark Hartbrook knows.

'He and young Dykely are flying at each other, Jenny; and how the row will end, *I* don't know.'

'What, the Captain?' queried Mrs. Hartbrook, with a look of alarm.

'Yes,' replied mine host. 'You know there's been bad blood between the pair ever since Marl got six months for poaching on Dykely's land. Although the Squire is a durable hand at preserving, he never forgave him for prosecuting that young scamp.'

'I never quite knew why Mr. Whinridge took so much trouble over that business.'

'O, that was natural enough! Marl's mother nursed Miss Augusta, the Squire's only daughter, and was with her when she died at Madeira. The old woman went to the Squire when her son was taken, and implored him, with tears in her eyes, to save the bad lot from being sent to prison. He promised he would, and I know how he tried. When he found that Dykely would not budge an inch from his position, although he did pledge his word that the lad should go for a soldier, or be sent out of the country any way, he got Vellumly to engage Riverags the Q.C. to defend Marl, and went into the witness-box himself, and spoke for the son of his daughter's nurse. That had some effect, I suppose, for Marl only got six months—if they'd given him his due, it would have been years instead of months; but Squire Whinridge never forgave Captain Dykely.'

'What are they disputing about?'

'Why, the Hunt Cup.'

'But if Dykely won, he beat nothing from the Hall.'

'What's that to do with it? The Squire means mischief to-night. Go it!' continued he, apostrophising a bell, which shook above his head with unusual violence. 'I know whose hand is at the other end of that wire. I must go; if anybody else faced him at this moment something dreadful would happen.'

Hereupon the bell was shaken with augmented ferocity.

'All right. I am coming, Gustavus the Terrible.'

With which satirical observation Mark Hartbrook vanished.

The scene in the dining-room as mine host entered was literally one of admired disorder. Half a dozen men were speaking at once, and two members of the company were accentuating their remarks by means of gestures that betokened anger. One was the Squire, who had risen his height—upwards of six feet—and was standing with his back to the uncertain mirror at the president's end of the table, confronting, with flushed face and dangerous eyes, his opponent, Captain Dykely, a thin-lipped, dark-haired, wiry man of pallid complexion. The voices could scarcely be said to mingle; Whinridge's was at the top of the entire discordant chorus of expostulation. He turned as Hartbrook entered, and, passing one hand through his yet luxuriant curls—in colour a slightly grizzled auburn—he folded his arms across his chest, and said,

'Hartbrook, I want you.'

'I am at your service, sir.'

'My friend'—a slightly sinister emphasis on the word friend—'my *friend* Captain Dykely and myself have had a dispute, and we want you to decide it.'

'If you can,' interposed the Captain, in a voice and manner that a less irritable person than the Squire would have deemed exasperating.

'I *know* he can, sir; and that ought to suffice. Now listen. You were on the holm to-day, and you saw the race for the Cup?'

'I did, sir.'

'Very good. Now what do you know about Fluefaker, Captain Dykely's horse? Is he not—'

'Squire!—Squire!' protested several of the company.

'You are right, gentlemen. I will not put a leading question. Well—Fluefaker?'

'Is a son of Agrimony and Fluff. Did nothing as a two-year-old. Was beaten when he was backed by the public, and won a couple of plates when he wasn't, at three. Was bought out of a selling race, and tried over hurdles at four. That is all I know. How he came to be qualified to run to-day for the Hunt Cup is what I do not know.'

'What did I say, gentlemen? That this horse was not a genuine hunter. That having been out a few times and looked on, whereby he got that trumpery certificate from a M.F.H., was not a proper qualification; and I repeat my words,' here Mr.

Whinridge brought his fist down upon the board with a defiant vigour that made the glasses jingle again. 'Why, gentlemen, at equitable weights this patched-up crock of a leather-flapper would not have the least chance against an honest hunter over a fair line of country.'

'He can be matched against anything you have got in your stables, when and where you please,' exclaimed Captain Dykely, by this time thoroughly roused.

'He can, can he?' almost shrieked the Squire. 'Then you are on, sir. Hang it, I'll run you for the Cup, and back mine for a hundred!'

'Yes!' replied the Captain, with energy. 'Catch weights. Name your time.'

'Name my time? Of course I will. My time, Captain Dykely, is *to-night*, one hour after moonrise!'

Perhaps the only person present who was amazed at this apparently insane speech was he whom (after the speaker) it concerned most, even Captain Dykely. To the others—especially to Hartbrook, who audibly chuckled—the Squire's impetuous seizure of the offer and fierce determination to have the wager settled out of hand appeared quite a matter of course.

In response to a question put to one of the stewards, who lived some distance from Thornford, as to whether he intended stopping to see the match, there was a loud shout of 'There! To be sure he will. And so will all of us. We would not miss the race for worlds.' In the midst of the hubbub, Whinridge, his whole frame vibrating with joyous excitement, left the room, taking Hartbrook with him. Dykely followed their example, with a grave air of deliberation that betrayed his awakened concern. He already repented him of his rashness. He felt, to quote the language of the Turf, that 'he had been rushed' into making the wager by the exasperating taunts of the Squire; and, looking at the 'arrangement' from a strictly sporting point of view, he began to have grave doubts of the issue. His own horse was none the better for the race that was in him, and he was completely in the dark about Whinridge's champion.

Fluefaker might have to meet a fresh horse; the Squire owned a strongish stud, which was seldom short of work. Then, a moonlight match! Who ever heard of such a thing? Well, although he was not a Jack Mytton, he was game to see the thing through, idiotic as it looked. The match was pay or play, and the Thornford Hunt Cup should never adorn the Whin-

ridge sideboard if *he* could help it. There was one element in the affair that favoured him. He knew the line of country, and if the moon behaved herself, there was no danger of his going on the wrong side of the flags.

Squire Whinridge was conferring with Hartbrook in a private room.

'Now, Mark, attend to me. I shall want you to help me through with this business. What are you smiling at, you knave? I suppose you think your old master has lost his head again. No, no; I mean to show you all, as well as that flashy Captain down-stairs, that I know what I am about. Where is Crowe?'

'Awaiting your orders.'

'And Appletart?—O, I can guess. With his mouth in the manger.' He rang the bell peremptorily. 'Tell Crowe,' he said to the neat-handed Phillis who obeyed the summons, 'to tie up Appletart's head at once, and then come to me.'

'Why, sir, you surely don't—'

'Have a care, or you'll head the fox. I *do* mean to run Appletart, if that is what you are aiming at. He was a bad third to-day, but his jockey did not ride him out for a place, or else I think he might have been second. However, we'll discover to-night whether the weights won't just bring the pair together.'

'But, sir—the jockey?'

'Ha! that's where you are, is it? Well, I own that the jockey is rather an important feature in the case. Tell me—what do you think of me for the mount?'

'You, sir!' replied Hartbrook, with an expression of horror. 'Why, you would be done by the length of a street. You ride fifteen stone if you ride an ounce.'

'No, no, no! Not as bad as that, Mark. However, wait. The jockey will be ready, never fear. The moon rises at eleven, and we have therefore nearly six hours to look about us. By this time Crowe will have abridged Appletart's supper. Look in, and then send here.'

Mark was nonplussed, as he told his wife when he returned to the snuggery. Squire Whinridge playing the very deuce and destroying things, he could understand; but Squire Whinridge going about in *that* business-like manner, he could not understand.

'He must have his knife pretty deep in this Captain Dykely,

Jenny, or he would not take so much trouble to get the better of him; for, mind you, the Squire is not one of the besting sort. But how he is to do it, *I* don't know. They bar professional jockeys; and where he is going to pick up a feather amongst the amateurs hereabouts puzzles me. All our good performers are on the meaty side. And a feather he must be, Jenny, to make the match a certainty.'

The news of the novel match spread rapidly through the town, and attracted to the recognised centre of operations, the Whinridge Arms, crowds of sportsmen and idlers of all classes anxious to hear 'the rights of it.' Upon the simple facts of the case there arose, as the moments sped, an airy superstructure of fiction, chiefly referring to the conditions of the forthcoming struggle, which would have done credit to the inventive powers of an American interviewer. If the moon did not rise, the match was to be ridden by torchlight. Each jockey was to carry a light, like a locomotive engine's, in order that the judge might see that neither of them went outside the track. These, with other statements equally picturesque, sufficed to divert the steadily increasing company during the time which intervened before that appointed for dropping the flag. Hartbrook profited hugely by the excitement. Every drop of the remarkable beverage which had been specially provided for the races was ungrumblingly consumed 'on the premises,' a source of deep commercial consolation to the mind of Mrs. Hartbrook, albeit she did not by any means relish the idea of serving such customers with the best ale at the price of the singular fluid just mentioned.

Both Crowe and the Captain's man—a taciturn person named Widgeon—were made much of by a company laudably desirous of obtaining what is known in sporting circles as the straight tip; but neither of the persistently catechised servitors afforded the inquirers any substantial satisfaction in the shape of answers. Crowe and Widgeon either knew nothing, or they were acting—reticently—under orders. The moon arose precisely at the time appointed by the local almanac, a circumstance that did not escape the admiring notice of those natives of Thornford who rather looked upon the placid orb itself as local property, and a movement was thereupon made towards the racecourse. But where was the Squire? From the moment he, Hartbrook, Captain Dykely, and William Heckler, the starter (who was on this occasion to act as judge), had arranged the *modus operandi*, he had been missing. His last words were,

'I don't care who starts them. Appoint whom you please. Mark, you tell Crowe to walk the horse up to the course in time. I shall be with you an hour after moonrise, by Heckler's watch; and if I am not, I forfeit.'

He thereupon strode down-stairs at a rapid rate, sprang into the waiting saddle, and rode off. He was gone before any of the few spectators of his departure had given his probable destination a thought. Mark, however, who observed the proceeding from one of the bar-windows, smote his thigh with energy, and exclaimed,

'Jenny, Jenny, my girl, I can see it all.'

'Can you?' replied that estimable lady, in tones of cool cynicism. 'I am delighted. Only, the next time you see it all, whatever that may be, oblige me by doing so in a quieter manner. You have broken one of our best jugs.'

'Da—, that is, never mind the jug. Squire Whinridge—I can see it all!'

'See what?' queried his spouse irately.

'Why, the jockey! Where is Grimstowe?'

'*I* don't know. There, get out of my way. You are neither use nor ornament here. Go and look for your Grimstowe.'

Nathaniel Grimstowe, Thornford's one 'member of Tattersall's and the leading Turf clubs,' was a continual cause of bickering between mine host and hostess of the Whinridge Arms. Mrs. Hartbrook did not approve of wagering on horseracing, except when it meant her husband's winning something handsome for himself and a new dress for her; and as those pleasant results had not recently followed Mark's speculations on the Turf, she, attributing his ill-fortune to the malign influence of Nathaniel Grimstowe, had learnt 'to hate the very sound' of that operator's 'name.' Hartbrook duly found Mr. Grimstowe, and, after a wordy combat with him concerning 'the price' of something, an entry made in a small oblong book showed that they had transacted business together. Thereafter, until a general exodus of his customers apprised him of the rising of the moon, the quondam servant of Gustavus Whinridge, Esq. went about his work with a countenance that beamed with unspeakable complacency. He suggested Tennyson's 'Miller'—

> 'The slow wise smile that round about
> His *rosy* forehead curled and curled,
> Seemed half within and half without,
> And full of dealings with the world.'

He believed that he had seen the cards in the Squire's hand, and on the strength of that conviction he had backed him to win the trick. He was positive (the language of his meditations was strongly flavoured with striking, if not always coherent, metaphor) that '*this* journey at least he had got Mr. Nathaniel Grimstowe, in a line, on toast.'

It wanted but twenty minutes of the stroke of midnight by Heckler's watch, and still the Squire came not. Standing about in animated groups in the paddock on Windyholm, the Thornford racecourse, were many of what might be termed the upper circles of sporting society, eagerly discussing the chances of the coming encounter; and as the moments sped, bringing the 'one hour after moonrise' excitingly near, wondering whether the match would come off after all. Fluelaker, ready for action, was being led about by the faithful Widgeon in one corner of the paddock, while Appletart, in his clothing, was being kept gently moving at the opposite corner; Crowe, of course, in jealous attendance. Although there was not a man present who had not seen the race for the Hunt Cup, most of them criticised the nags with that impressive air of professional knowingness exhibited by a group of Newmarket touts when an unfamiliar candidate for the Guineas makes his first appearance on the classic Heath. Second in order of interest to the two flyers was Captain Dykely. He was fully equipped for the fray, and had been on view for some time. It was evident to the skilled eyes that scanned him that he had made his toilette with uncommon care. 'Looks like business,' observed a critic of stably appearance to a grave and silent auditory of three listeners. 'Couldn't have been more particular if it was the Derby he was going to have a fly at. See his goloshes?' The interlocutor *had* seen those uncouth casings. 'The ground is not so sticky as all that comes to. Suppose he is afraid of carrying an ounce of clay on his boots? Well, I like a cove that takes care of his precious self. He means to have a good look in and no mistake.'

The subject of these not uncomplimentary observations conversed in low tones with the Marquis of Gules, one of the stewards, who was present in response to the Captain's urgent invitation.

'Do you think he means to forfeit, Dykely?'

'I really cannot say; it certainly looks uncommonly like a forfeit. But there is no accounting for anything that a Whinridge does.'

'Upon my word I think you are right,' replied his lordship. 'By the way, have you and he smoked the calumet over that poacher-fellow?'

'Not a bit of it,' rejoined the Captain. 'And it is my belief, now that I can be calm on the subject,—I was anything but that when I gorged the bait,—that he meant this match as a sort of Rowland for my Oliver.'

'But where is he? Ah, there goes the quarter!'

The sound of the chimes, as it floated on the gentle night breeze from the tower of Thornford parish church across Windyholm, was heard and noted by the crowd, now wrought up into a nervous state of expectancy by the continued absence of the Squire. Hartbrook, unshaken until this moment in his trust in the absentee's turning up in time, began to waver. Something had happened. Confound that Grimstowe! His bet with him was P.P. What *would* his wife say?

A sound of wheels. 'Hurrah!'

The cheer was not thrown away. It *was* the Squire, driving a dogcart at a rate which an officer of the county constabulary would have pronounced dangerous, had anybody *but* the Squire held the ribbons. He pulled up by the paddock-rails, and, leaping out, turned to assist his companion to alight, saying as he did so,

'Hartbrook, where are you? Take care of these. Now, Redgy, come with me.'

'Why, it's his son Reginald!'

In the hubbub caused by the arrival of Mr. Whinridge and his youngest son, a pale thin boy of about twelve years of age, it was by no means easy for the principals in the little drama to make the preparations necessary for raising the curtain.

Hartbrook, proud of his office, carried a light racing-saddle and its necessary 'accompaniments,' and, walking by the side of the youth, followed the Squire into the paddock.

'I guessed it would be you, Master Redgy,' said Hartbrook, in a gleeful whisper; 'and I've backed you. It's a splendid moon, and you know the track.'

'I should think I did, Mark. And you too, eh? Recollect when I would insist on your taking me the whole line, you on old Goliath and I on my pony Lilliput? And how frightened mamma was; and how the guv. tipped me a sov., eh, Mark?'

Hartbrook's memory was fully as retentive of those forbidden adventures as the boy's, but he did not consider this as an appropriate occasion for refreshing it.

'Yes, yes, of course I remember, Master Redgy. Fine times they were. Now tell me, what does the Squire really say about the match?'

'He has no doubt of Appletart's ability, but—'

'He has of yours?'

'Not exactly that. He thinks the exploit is rather too much for my years, and' (whispering) 'that the Captain would have no objection to taking a mean advantage of this infant if he saw the opportunity. O, I must tell you—such a lark! I was out at a dinner-party with mamma and Gretty when the guv. got to the Hall to-night. So what does he do but gets into a tail-coat himself and comes to fetch us home, he said. We *were* hurried off, I can tell you. And sent to bed at once. Mamma thinks he is going round with the keepers, and that I'm in bed!'

By this time they had reached the paddock. The Squire's arrival was greeted quite as fervently as, if more quietly than, it had been by the crowd outside. He shook hands with Lord Gules, expressed his delight at knowing that his lordship had consented to act as starter, and then faced the Captain.

'Now, Captain Dykely, shall we get ready?'

'Your jockey, Mr. Whinridge?'

'Is my son Reginald? Have you any objection to him?'

'Every objection, Mr. Whinridge. When I made this—I don't mind admitting it—stupid match, it was *not* with the idea that I was going to have for an opponent a mere child.'

'Child or not, he rides.'

'I am no more a child than he is, papa!' exclaimed the boy. 'If I can ride, what more does he want?'

'Hear, hear!' cried the crowd.

'*If* you can ride!' said Captain Dykely, with a sneer.

'Dykely,' interposed Lord Gules, 'I must say that, according to the terms of the match, you are bound to accept Whinridge's jockey, or forfeit.'

'Very well,' rejoined Dykely sullenly, 'very well. If the baby breaks his neck I am not to blame, mind. Let us get it over.'

There was a stampede on the part of the auditors at these words in the direction of the two most formidable obstacles in the track, a made fence at the beginning of the straight run-in, and the brook on the far side. The boy, giving up his overcoat and hat to Hartbrook, and putting on a silk cap which he produced from his pocket, presently appeared, like his opponent,

fully equipped for action. In default of silk he wore a thin jersey, but otherwise it would have been impossible to find fault with his appearance. His father gave him a leg up, and then walked by his side to the starting-post, where Lord Gules was already waiting with the flag.

'Redgy, my dear,' said the old fellow, in a voice that was strangely husky, 'you heard what that brute said about your breaking your neck?'

'Yes, pa.'

'Well, Redgy, it made me feel that I possibly was wrong in subjecting you to such a risk. I should never forgive myself if anything happened to you, and I am sure your mother would never forgive *me*. Now, Redge, although you have but the years of a child, you are not without a man's sense—don't mind me at all. If you have any doubt, jump off, and I'll throw up the match.'

'Papa, you *must* let me ride! After what that fellow said it would be too bad to be prevented from showing him up. Never fear. I'll stick on!'

'Redge, your hand.'

The boy placed his hand in that of his father, who grasped the warm little palm with fervour, and gently drawing down the lad's head, kissed him, The man and boy understood each other. It was seldom Gustavus Whinridge was betrayed into such an exhibition of what he would have termed feminine weakness; but the boy knew what this demonstration meant far better than if it had been expressed in the tenderest words.

Completely out of the view and hearing of the people, who by this time thronged the stand, the Squire imparted his final orders.

'Keep with him, but not too close, for the first mile, and then come away as hard as you can pelt. It is a splendid moon—almost as light as day—and you ought to do the journey without the least mistake. Now, Redge, my own dear boy, show them what sort of metal you are made of.'

Without another word he left his son and Captain Dykely to amble their way to the starting-post, and mounting a hack which Crowe had in readiness, cantered across to a bit of rising ground near the brook, where he could obtain an excellent view of at least three parts of 'the country.' About the same time Widgeon, Captain Dykely's man, 'a durable hand at a bet, and one of the win-tie-or-wrangle fraternity' (this was Hartbrook's

unsolicited testimonial to character), was deep in an endeavour to advise Superintendent Pompert of the Thornford Constabulary in the matter of the probable behaviour of a restless multitude already gathered around the two ends of the water-jump.

'You see, super, my governor, the Capt'in, is nervous; and the nag he's a-riding is nervous; so if I was you, super—excuse my making so bold—I'd pot most of my men by that there brook to keep the crowd quiet.'

'Thank you, my man,' replied the superintendent, in freezing tones, 'I have made my arrangements.'

'O, have you, Mr. Pompey-and-Cæsar?' rejoined Widgeon, in a safe whisper, as he turned aside and left the lofty officer to his own devices. 'Then I'll bet a pound to a shillin' some of those boys there'll unmake 'em. Go along, old turnip-tops; keep that bull's-eye quiet, can't you? That's enough to make any hoss shy.'

The remark is addressed to one of the superintendent's most zealous subordinates—a young man new to the force—who is acting to-night as though he considered a plentiful production of disturbing fireworks part of his duty. Widgeon takes a front place by the brook. Crowe does likewise. Behind them and a group, three deep, of mere spectators, is Gustavus Whinridge, a prominent object in the silver-and-gray landscape as he stands motionless, waiting for the shout that is to signal the start. It comes at last. 'They are off!' and the Squire, his eyesight made keenly telescopic by the love he bears to his boy, cranes forward hungrily, and, missing no incident of the battle, begins in spirit to ride the race himself.

'That will do, Redgy boy; that will do! Let him make the running! Now then, wider, wider, Redge! Keep away from his whip-hand. How gloriously that son of mine rides, to be sure—like a man! *Now* THEN! Capital, cap-i-tal! Ah, only just over, Redgy. The next take-off must be better judged than that, or you will be spilled, to a certainty. Now they are out of sight.'

The Squire knew every inch of the country over which the two horses were galloping; therefore his guesses as to what they were doing, so long as the nags remained in view, were curiously accurate. To the other spectators, Heckler the judge and Hartbrook perhaps excepted, the incidents of the race were unsupported guess-work of the roughest description; the grotesquely shifting shadows which were cast by the two horses rendering

obtaining an exact idea of the precise positions of the pair a matter of impossibility.

'Here they come!' shouted the Squire, in a strangled voice. 'Here they come, and my boy is leading! *Let* him have it, Redgy! Lose him, my dear child! lose him! Good lad! He is coming away like a steam-engine!'

As Appletart approached the brook the excitement of the Squire intensified, especially when he saw that Captain Dykely was rapidly lessening the gap between him and the Squire's horse. There was only about a length and a half of moonlight between Appletart and Fluefaker as the former rose like a bird over the brook and landed in safety.

'Thank God, that's over!' murmured Whinridge; but he spoke too soon. The youthful ornament of the Thornford constabulary flashed the bull's-eye across the path of the foremost horse, which shied, and then, terrified by the cheering of the crowd, tore along in a manner that betokened an early dissolution of partnership between him and his jockey.

In a voice that was neither a shout nor a yell, but a frantic blending of both, Mr. Whinridge exclaimed:

'The horse has bolted! Out of the way with you! Redgy, keep him straight, my boy! Good lad, good la-ad, go—!'

'How much did I win by?' asked the boy faintly, as he opened his eyes in a hushed apartment in the Whinridge Arms. He had not spoken since they picked him up and found that an arm was broken. 'How much?'

His father, whose eyes were moist and dim, and whose voice was quiet like a woman's, said:

'Twenty lengths was the judge's verdict, Redgy—twenty lengths. And the cup is for you, my boy. And whenever you think your father is getting out of bounds, as you may think hereafter, *show* him that goblet, and remind him of what he went through when it was Won by the Light of the Moon.'

THE RETURN MATCH.

IT was the last meeting likely to be held under the management of the Redmarshall Race Committee. For years the enthralling subject of removing the meeting from Brackenlea to Snipey Willie's meadows, a peaty piece of ground nearer the enterprising town of Redmarshall, had afforded the public-spirited controversialists of the place an unfailing excuse for publishing their clinchers in the impartial columns of the local press. For years the duty which the Corporation of Redmarshall owed to the burgesses in respect of this much-desired change had been intermittently dwelt upon (chiefly at public meetings) by the representatives of the North-East Ward, near which ambitious section of the borough Snipey Willie's piece of boggy land was situated. Even the local poet had been enlisted in the popular cause.

> 'Brackenlea's a barren spot
> With one solitary cot;
> Snipey Willie's meadows are
> More commodious by far.'

was a quatrain that carried conviction to the mind of every unbiassed reader, and might, peradventure, have eventually carried the question if the Fates, in the shape of a railway company on the one hand, and a far-seeing builder on the other, had not intervened. Brackenlea was wanted by the company, and the bog by the builder. Whereupon the race-committee advertised their last meeting.

Up at the Hurst, Mr. Hugh Winpenny's place, on the evening before the races, these were naturally the leading topics of conversation. As they were, too, at Redmarshall, over the mahogany of Captain Wolviston, R.N., and likewise at Brackenlea Park, Lord Hart's place. Although returning two members, a Whig and a Tory, Redmarshall, which was a fiery furnace of party feeling at election times, took no account of political differences of opinion during the races. Those were drowned, as it were,

in the Redmarshall Cup, a handsome piece of plate, the desire to possess which sufficed to make the race for it one of the most exciting local events of what Turf reporters would term the fixture.

It was the day of slow travelling; and the meeting was too good an opportunity for social enjoyment not to be made the most of when it *did* come round, which, after all, was only once a year. It was then a race of hospitality on the part of Winpenny, Wolviston, Lord Hart, the leading doctor and lawyer of Redmarshall, and many others. The Hurst, however, was the head-quarters of the choicer spirits of the meeting. Apart from the fact that he was a steward (as his father and grandfather had been before him), he owned a small stud of horses; and he generally supplied a strong favourite for the Cup.

'Win.,' observed Ralph Freeman, Esq., of Thistleby Hall, a friend of thirty years' standing, and an out-and-out sportsman, 'I look upon myself as an ill-used personage.'

'How's that, Ralpho?' replied the host, at the same time casting a glance around the table, and signalling to a reverend guest the fact that the bottle lingered. 'How is that?'

'Well, here we are about to celebrate the obsequies of Redmarshall Races—'

'No, no, no, no!' protested the host and several of the guests. 'Not a bit of it!'.

'You will admit that it is the last meeting on the old spot—where you are to find another, I don't know—and that it ought therefore to be uncommonly good.'

'So it will be,' interposed the Tory member for Redmarshall, another steward.

'I beg leave to deny it; and this is my grievance. Not only is the entry for the Cup wretchedly small, but neither Win. here, nor Lord Hart, nor Sir Thomas Acklam is represented. I wanted to see one of the old-fashioned fights to wind up with. It does one's heart good to hear them shout when a native bred 'un sails past in front. Upon my word, if I had suspected there would have been such a falling off in the grand old race, I would have entered something myself.'

There was a general laugh at this last remark. Squire Freeman's name was not associated with uniform good fortune on the Turf; far otherwise.

'What could I do?' asked Winpenny. 'The mare was amiss; and until it was too late I did not find out that Crowfoot had

grown into a stayer. What was the use of entering a six-furlong horse—as I always believed him to be—for the Cup, which happens to be as severe a mile-and-a-half course as you will find in England? Beetlewing will win.'

'Yes, bar accidents,' said Sir Thomas Acklam. 'But tell us, Winpenny, we shall see your colours displayed to-morrow or next day on something? I mean to show, although I have nothing in my stable fast enough to beat a donkey.'

'Run, yes!' replied Winpenny, filling himself another glass of the wine that had never betrayed him. 'Yes, I shall run; and you must back me. Not you, Courtney,' continued he, addressing his broad-minded friend the parson, who shook his head and smiled, 'because, as you know, the Church always stands in with me—when I win.'

This allusion to his own free-handedness elicited from the reverend gentleman the remark,

'The Church has no reason to complain, I am sure.'

Which naïve admission augmented the merriment of the board. Mr. Winpenny continued:

'The other day I ran Crowfoot at Ruddyford, and—'

'Won,' said Sir Thomas.

'Yes, won; and I will tell you how. There are reports of the affair in *Bell* and the *Sun*, but they are inadequate. It was a fifty-pound plate, and as I had been rather heavily hit at the meeting, I thought to myself, this is just Crowfoot's distance, and he shall earn his expenses and mine. Of course I told Walton to get away and win; and get away he did at score. But there was another in the race—a horse called Slider—who also came away, and for most of the journey was neck-and-neck with Crowfoot. Indeed, we were beaten a furlong from home. From that point mine came on, and won by half a length.'

'But what has all that to do with Redmarshall?' inquired Mr. Freeman.

'I will tell you,' rejoined Winpenny. 'I was too far off to notice it; but when I was assisting Walton off with the saddle to weigh-in, he informed me that Slider's jockey had bored him all the way, and they were going to claim the race on the ground of foul riding. Sure enough they did. For once, however, they reckoned without their host. The Ruddyford stewards believed my jockey, and taking a proper view of the other evidence—I never heard such skilful hands at misrepresentation in my life—gave me the race. Walton told me afterwards that their jockey,

who was no other than the notorious roper Headstall—you know, he was suspended for six months last season for his nefarious practices—said to him, "Wait till we meet again. I'll bet a guinea we have every coin we have dropped to-day back again, and a lump on the top of it." When Wrighton mentioned to me, quite in a casual way, that Slider had been entered for the Greystone Plate, I at once entered Crowfoot.'

'Same conditions?' inquired Sir Thomas.

'Not exactly. I carry a winning penalty of three pounds. But I had plenty in hand at Ruddyford, and I shall win. The Slider party are a gang of the vilest thieves on the turf, and it won't be my fault if I don't break them—from Black Yarnold, the ostensible owner of Slider, down to the bookmaker Leek.'

'And we must back Crowfoot?'

'Yes,' replied Winpenny, laughing; 'back him, as the speculators would say, for pounds, shillings, and pence. I am so sure of the result that I have promised myself the pleasure of buying Blanche a certain roan mare she has set her heart upon out of my winnings.'

Thereafter the conversation deviated into other channels. By no means the least attentive of Mr. Winpenny's auditors was Trenholm, the butler. Sleekly clerical in appearance, and a man of few words, the which he distributed, both on duty and off, with notable discretion, he was nevertheless, for his position in life, a bold speculator in the lottery of the Turf. In days gone by, when the Hurst stable had 'pulled off good things,' Trenholm had never failed to throw in for a heavy stake, without his master having the ghost of a suspicion of the extent of his daring. Winner or loser, he never, so to put it, 'turned a single hair.' He had his regular agent in London, a financial operator on the Turf of long standing, to whom he intrusted his commissions on distant events; while his Redmarshall agent was a game-dealer named Featherstone. Said Trenholm to himself, when the Crowfoot discussion had come to an end, 'I must see Featherstone to-night.' Turning over in his mind various pretexts for escape, it suddenly occurred to him that Mr. Winpenny had conferred with him that very afternoon on the subject of the morrow's breakfast, and the probable neglect by Featherstone of certain orders for birds was pointed out. There was no time to be lost. Those necessary contributions to the larder might even then be on their way from marshall to the Hurst.

Taking advantage of a discussion which appeared to monopolise everybody's attention at the table except Mr. Winpenny's, Trenholm approached that gentleman, and in a whispered 'aside' urged the necessity of an immediate expedition to 'the town.'

'Certainly, Trenholm. I am glad you have mentioned it. Send Bates at once; or, stay, perhaps you had better go yourself. Ring for him; he will take your place. We can manage, I think. And if you hear any news from Wrightson, let me know. We shall be in the billiard-room when you return. Don't remain away longer than is necessary.'

Trenholm assured his master that he would use all expedition; and, leaving Bates in charge, devoted five minutes to a consultation with the cook, and then set out for the town.

His interview with Featherstone was brief but decisive. If there were any speculation on the Greystone Plate, as well as on the Cup, that night, let him get as much on Crowfoot as possible at a good price, but he was not to speak if there appeared the least danger of spoiling the market. The Slider party might be shy. Anyhow he was to put the money down without flinching at the post, no matter what the price was; and he (Trenholm) would go as far as fifty. There were the notes.

'O, there is no occasion for that, Mr. Trenholm,' observed the commissioner, with a gentle air of deprecation, accepting the sheaf of rustling paper nevertheless. 'We understand each other. You are not going to run away.'

'Never mind. There is nothing like a clear understanding in these matters. By the bye, about those birds? I promised the Squire I would mention them.'

'Don't fash yourself, Mr. Trenholm. My man must have been at the Hurst a quarter of an hour after you left. You will find that Mrs. Robinson has got them trussed by the time you get home. But you are not going off like that, surely?'

Trenholm was not. After refreshing, as suggested, he bade Featherstone good-night, and repaired to Wrightson's.

He found that zealous clerk of the course in consultation with the printer of the morrow's card.

'Ah, come in, Trenholm. Take a seat. There—throw those newspapers on to the floor. We were just mentioning your name—or rather your master's—before you came in. Mr. Yarnold and several of his friends have been here looking at the entry

for the Greystone. A shady lot, Trenholm—a very, very shady lot. But that is no concern of ours. We get 'em of all sorts racing, and it is not our business to complain, so long as we conduct the business of the meeting to the satisfaction of the stewards, and avoid objections. Like to look at the card? What do you think of that? Reads almost as well as a York Autumn, eh?'

'It does indeed, Mr. Wrightson. Rather a weak entry for the Cup, though; but the Greystone will make up for it.'

'Just what I say, Trenholm. Thanks to Crowfoot and Slider coming together again so soon after the Ruddyford meeting, the Redmarshall folk will not suffer to-morrow for lack of excitement. You see, that three pounds penalty will make it more of a match. There is nothing else in the race that can stretch their necks, as far as *I* can see. Are you off? Well, give my compliments to your master and Sir Thomas Acklam, and—you can show them this rough proof of the card—tell them that there is every prospect of a rattling good meeting. Mind the step; and be careful of yourself along the Elton-road. Ha, ha! Mr. Yarnold and Company—I suppose you know they call him Black Yarnold, not without good and sufficient reason, *I'll* be bound. As I was saying, Mr. Yarnold and Company have gone in the same direction. Slider and their other horses are at Tanner's place, which, as you know, is half-way between the town-end and the Hurst. Ah, it's a fine night, but there are some ragged clouds about the moon that mean mischief. Well, we can do with a shower; it will improve the going. Good-night, Trenholm.'

Responding to the benison of the garrulous official with another, Trenholm set out at a brisk pace homewards. He had no desire for a wetting; and there was a freshness in the air which pointed to an early realisation of Wrightson's forecast. He had accomplished about three-quarters of a mile of his journey when the moon, whose sectional appearances in rifts of clouds of increased density had latterly become rarer, retired entirely from view, and, after a few warning drops, the rain came down in drenching earnest. Trenholm knew every yard of the road. The shower had caught him within a dozen paces of a gate that opened into one of his master's fields. Clambering over with surprising agility for a man of his weight, he sought the partial shelter of a convenient hayrick, and waited with philosophical patience for the shower to cease.

Some wayfarers, belated like himself, had ensconced themselves at the other side of the stack. Taking advantage of the pattering sound of the rain, he crept cautiously into a roomy cutting which had been made in the solid mass of hay, and covered himself with the rushes that had formed the thatch. Even if the moon suddenly reappeared he was safe from observation. It was race-time, and he could not be *too* wary. His watch was well worth the attention of any of the disciples of St. Nicholas who were on the look-out for unconsidered trifles of that description, to say nothing of the contents of his purse and note-case. He crouched and listened. The voices grew more distinct. He could distinguish the words 'Winpenny,' 'Slider,' 'Crowfoot,' 'won at five furlongs,' 'put the cross on—'

If he could have been seen at that dreadful moment his visage would have presented a mingled expression of horror and amazement. He would have given anything to have been able with safety to indulge in the relief of speech. A muffled groan was all the sound he dared indulge in. He broke out into profuse perspiration, which became the more profuse the more he listened. Yet he dared not move. Presently the rain abated, and the moon broke from behind a sombre bank of cloud. Then he heard a voice which, as he said afterwards, he could have recognised amongst a thousand, utter these words:

'Come on. I have had enough of this. I am nearly choked with hay-seeds; and my boots are ruined. We shall have to step it to Redmarshall, or we shall be locked out.' He heard also the rapid thud—thud—thud of footsteps retreating across the sodden grass; then followed a sound as of men climbing a gate, and the conflict of rough coarse voices of different compass. Thank God! his companions were gone.

When poor Trenholm again reached the road he paused, wiped the moisture from his clammy brow, clenched his fist, and shaking it in the direction which the conspirators had taken, said, in a tone of suppressed excitement,

'Well!—of all the—the SCOUNDRRRELS I EVER heard of, or read of, or saw—you are the biggest. But—stop a bit.'

He arrived at the Hurst—somehow. Before retiring to his room, to think—there was no sleep for him that night—he managed, with extreme difficulty, to deliver Wrightson's message to his master. Next morning he arose at an unwontedly early hour, and proceeded to rouse the maids from their precious slumbers, a duty which had hitherto devolved on the house-

keeper. The visitors at the Hurst at race-times were early risers to a man; but on this occasion one of them did not emerge from his bath into the pure air which came fresh from the moors a moment too early for Trenholm. That one was Mr. Freeman. The bemused butler had resolved, after much mental travail, to confide in his master's old friend. For various conclusive reasons it appeared to him that recourse to Mr. Winpenny would be attended with risk. Trenholm's early diligence was speedily rewarded by the appearance of Mr. Freeman, making his way towards the stables.

'Good-morning, sir; can I have a word with you in private?' asked the butler beseechingly, and almost out of breath. Late hours and lack of sleep had affected him.

'Good-morning, Trenholm. Certainly. What is it? Got a moral for the two-year-old race? Come in here.' He led the way into the library.

The expression of gentle pity which was apparent in the old gentleman's face gradually gave way to one of severe gravity as Trenholm poured forth an agitated account of last night's discovery. Except to interpose three or four pertinent questions, he spoke not until the surprising story was at an end, and then he rose and said:

'I think you have been prudent in keeping this matter from Mr. Winpenny. Dismiss your fears. I may find it necessary to take Sir Thomas Acklam into my confidence; but in any case rest assured that I am operating. If you are backing Crowfoot, and I know you are fond of an occasional investment, be careful whom you bet with. If it be with any of the Slider party, make them post the money. I will take care that Mr. Winpenny and his friends are warned. We must not linger too long over the breakfast, so see there is no delay on your part. Now make your mind easy. Those scoundrels shall remember the last meeting at Brackenlea as long as they live.'

Mr. Freeman succeeded in getting the morning visit to the stable postponed until after breakfast; and, excusing himself from waiting for the coach which was to convey the party to the course, said they might pick him up in the town, as he had something to see to there which would not wait, and proceeded thither at the rate of six miles an hour.

'Trenholm!'

'Yes, Miss Blanche.'

The only daughter of Hugh Winpenny, Esq., a lovely girl of

sixteen, radiant with health and anticipated enjoyment, approached him as the last guest left the Hurst on the tour of inspection just mentioned, and, standing before the faithful servitor, who had grown gray in the service, added, with an air of frank *naïveté*,

'How do I look?'

'As you always do, Miss Blanche. I had rather some one else answered that question. I *suppose* Lord Ernest will be one of the Brackenlea Park party.'

'Now! If I have told you—but there, I know I can trust you, Trenholm. You see I am wearing the Hurst colours'—and she turned archly to show her dress—'although disagreeable papa is not going to run anything of ours for the Cup. No. He is not a disagreeable papa. He is a dear, dear love of a papa. Do you know if little Crowfoot wins that Greystone Plate, he is going to give me— Well, I sha'n't tell you.'

'But I know, Miss Blanche.'

'You do? Well, then, tell me. Will Crowfoot win?'

'I hope so. Yes, he will win' ('that is,' he muttered to himself, 'he will get the stakes'). 'O, he'll win hard enough.'

Trenholm had been looking out of the window as he spoke. The sight of Sir Thomas Acklam making the best of his way towards a plantation of firs, wherein there was a footpath which was a short cut to Redmarshall, had inspired the butler's concluding remark. If Mr. Freeman and the baronet could not bowl them out, it *was* a pity!

There was a brilliant company in the stewards' stand, declared the local chroniclers; and the course was thronged with precisely such a numerous company as might have been expected to assemble to assist at the last Redmarshall race-meeting on Brackenlea. The two tug-boats which had been converted into excursion steamers for the occasion had delivered huge cargoes of passengers from Redmarshall, and it was a subject of remark that the roads which converged to a point convenient to the course were never so thronged before. Mr. Wrightson was in raptures. The receipts had swollen the exchequer to an extent that made the continuance of the meeting, elsewhere than at Brackenlea, a matter of certainty if only another course could be found—and that was, after all, very much a question of funds.

Three races had been decided, including the Cup, which had fallen to the favourite, Beetlewing. The next was the Greystone Plate. To the surprise of the betting-men from a distance this

apparently inferior race gave rise to more speculation than any of those which had preceded it. There were five runners, but only two were supported, as the learned in Turf lore phrased it, 'for money,' Mr. Yarnold's bay horse Slider, and Mr. Winpenny's four-year-old chestnut colt Crowfoot.

As soon as the market steadied down—as the learned would probably have said—it became obvious that, notwithstanding the favour in which Crowfoot was locally held, the stranger would remain first favourite. The Winpenny party were therefore enabled to back Crowfoot at an unexpectedly remunerative price.

Mr. Freeman is not in the ring when the numbers were put up. Neither is Sir Thomas Acklam. Neither is Trenholm. Mr. Freeman is wandering about in an aimless sort of way amongst the luxuriant furze and bracken, which at the farther side of the course forms a shaggy knoll, wherefrom a curious observer armed with just such a telescope as that which he carries shut up in his pocket, would be able to see what was going on at any given part of the course, and be himself unobserved. The baronet is sauntering down with the official of the flag to look at the start. His interest in such an inferior affair is incomprehensible. This will be the second time he has taken stock of the rough 'stob' (or stake) which does temporary service in that furzy ferny hollow for a starting-post for the six furlongs. At least one half of that end of the course is invisible from the stand and judge's box. Trenholm is lying down, somewhere in that neighbourhood, with his eyes fixed steadfastly on the 'stob.'

The flag is dropped to a good start; Sir Thomas Acklam finds no fault with it, but immediately follows the flying field at his briskest pace; and Slider wins. Everybody leaves the starting-post and rushes towards the ring in time to note the cheers of the Yarnold party suddenly subside at the words 'There is an objection—don't pay!'

No, not everybody. The starting-post is yet an object of absorbing interest to unnamed actors in the little drama. Clearly observed by Mr. Freeman and Trenholm, too clearly it may be for their after-comfort, are a couple of men, who, alternately creeping and walking stoopingly, emerge from their ambush of furze and withdraw the 'stob!' Returning to their cover, they dive swiftly in and out until they arrive at the spot where this rough piece of wood had originally stood. In a few seconds the 'post' is replaced, and Black Yarnold's unscrupulous agents

lounge towards the ring as though nothing unusual had occurred. At the same time Ralph Freeman, Esq., shuts up his telescope, and moves off in the same direction; an example which Trenholm, shaking himself like a water-dog, immediately follows.

By this time the excitement in the ring has reached fever-heat. Black Yarnold is fuming and threatening, and his congenial jockey is using unlovely language. Mr. Winpenny, who could not make out at first what it all meant, grasps the situation when Sir Thomas Acklam, rather blown with his exertions, enters the weighing-room and orders it to be cleared of all but the reporters and the parties interested in the dispute. Presently Trenholm, also 'scant of breath,' appears, and, after him, at length Mr. Freeman.

'Now, Sir Thomas,' observed Wrightson, 'will you be good enough to state your objection?'

In brief but emphatic terms the baronet told the story of the conspiracy. From information which he had received—here he glanced at Mr. Freeman and Trenholm—he suspected foul play, and Mr. Freeman and he took steps to frustrate it. Knowing that they were likely to be beaten at a distance of six furlongs, the Yarnold party—O, Mr. Yarnold need not bluster, that would not go down at Brackenlea—conspired to shift the stob a furlong nearer the winning-post. They were allowed to do it; but they were watched. Mr. Freeman saw the post removed and replaced, and so did Mr. Winpenny's butler, Trenholm. The two men who rang the changes were, he believed, in custody.

It was well for them they were, or the people would have torn the rascals to pieces. As it was, Black Yarnold and his jockey (both of whom were afterwards sentenced to banishment from the Newmarket-regulated turf) did not escape to their hotel without previous immersion in the river and 'sair banes,' to say nothing of injured attire. The Winpenny party were great winners by the race, and of course Blanche was presented by her father with that lovely roan mare.

RETURNING FROM COVER. [*Drawn by* RANDOLPH CALDECOTT.

HUNTING IN THE MIDLANDS.

'JEM PIKE has just come round, gentlemen, to say that they will be able to hunt to-day, after all: and as it's about starting time, I think, gentlemen, I will, with your permission, order your horses round.'

The announcement, as it came to us over our breakfast at a hostelry which I will call the Lion, in a market-town which I will call Chipping Ongar—a highly convenient hunting rendezvous in the Midlands—was not a little welcome. Jem Pike was the huntsman of the pack, and Jem Pike's message was an intimation that the frost of last night had not destroyed our sport for the day. The morning had broke in what Jem would call a 'plaguey ugly fashion:' from an artistic point of view it had been divine: for hunting purposes it had been execrable. A thin coating of ice on one's bath indoors, a good stiff hoar frost out, crystallised trees, and resonant roads—all this was seasonable, very, and 'pretty to look at, too.' But it was 'bad for riding;' and we had not come to the Lion at Chipping Ongar in order to contemplate the beauties of Nature, but to brace our nerves with the healthy excitement of the chase. Full of misgivings we descended to breakfast, in hunting toggery notwithstanding. As the sun shone out with increased brilliance we began to grow more cheerful. The frost, we said, was nothing, and all trace of it would be gone before noon. The waiter shook his head dubiously, suggested that there was a good billiard-table, and inquired as to the hour at which we would like to dine. But the waiter, as the event proved, was wrong, and we were still in the middle of breakfast when the message of the huntsman of the Chipping Ongar pack arrived—exactly what we had each of us said. Of course the frost was nothing: we had known as much; and now the great thing was to get breakfast over, and then 'to horse away.'

After all there is nothing for comfort like the old-fashioned hunting hotels, and unfortunately they are decreasing in number every year. Still the Lion at Chipping Ongar remains; and I

am happy to say that I know of a few more like the Lion. They are recognisable at a glance. You may tell them by the lack of nineteenth century filagree decoration which characterises their exterior, by the cut of the waiters, by the knowing look of the boots. Snug are their coffee-rooms, luxurious their beds, genial their whole atmospere. It is just possible that if you were to take your wife to such an establishment as the Lion, she would complain that an aroma of tobacco-smoke pervaded the atmosphere. But the hunting hotel is conspicuously a bachelor's house. Its proprietor, or proprietress, does not lay himself or herself out for ladies and ladies' maids. It is their object to make single gentlemen, and gentlemen who enjoy the temporary felicity of singleness, at home. If it is your first visit, you are met in a manner which clearly intimates that you were expected. If you are an old *habitué* you find that all your wants are anticipated, and all your peculiar fancies known. The waiter understands exactly—marvellous is the memory of this race of men—what you like for breakfast: whether you prefer a 'wet dish' or a 'dry:' and recollects to a nicety your particular idea of a dinner. Under any circumstances a week's hunting is a good and healthy recreation; but it is difficult to enjoy a week's hunting more perfectly than in one of these hostelries, which have not, I rejoice to say, yet been swept away by the advancing tide of modern improvement.

Of whom did our company consist? We were not a party of Meltonian squires, such as it would have delighted the pen of *Nimrod* to describe. We were neither Osbaldestones nor Sir Harry Goodrickes: neither Myddelton Biddulphs nor Holyoakes. A Warwickshire or an Oxfordshire hunting field differs very materially, so far as regards its *personnel*, from a Leicester or a Northamptonshire gathering. The latter still preserves the memories and the traditions of a past *régime*, when hunting was confined to country gentlemen, farmers, and a few rich strangers: the former is typical of the new order of things under which hunting has ceased to be a class amusement, and has become a generally popular sport. Now it is not too much to claim for hunting at the present day this character. The composition of the little band which on the morning now in question left the Lion Hotel at Chipping Ongar, bound for cover, was no unimportant testimony to this fact. We were half a dozen in number, and comprised among ourselves a barrister, a journalist, a doctor, and a couple of Civil servants, who had allowed ourselves a

week's holiday, and who, being fond of riding, had determined to take it in this way. In an average hunting field of the present day you will discover men of all kinds of professions and occupations —attorneys, auctioneers, butchers, bakers, innkeepers, artists, sailors, authors. There is no town in England which has not more than one pack of hounds in its immediate vicinity; and you will find that the riders who make up the regular field are inhabitants of the town—men who are at work four or five days in the week at their desk or counter, and who hunt the remaining one or two. There is no greater instrument of social harmony than that of the modern hunting field; and, it may be added, there is no institution which affords a healthier opportunity for the ebullition of what may be called the democratic instincts of human nature. The hunting field is the paradise of equality, and the only title to recognition is achievement. 'Rank,' says a modern authority on the sport, 'has no privilege, and wealth can afford no protection.' Out of the hunting field there may be a wide gulf that separates peasant from peer, tenant from landlord. But there is no earthly power which can compel the tenant to give way to the landlord, or the peasant to the peer, when the scent is good and the hounds are in full cry.

As we get to the bottom of the long and irregularly-paved street which constitutes the main thoroughfare—indeed, I might add, the entire town of Chipping Ongar—we fall in with other equestrians bound for Branksome Bushes—the meet fixed for that day—distant not more than two miles from Chipping Ongar itself. There was the chief medical man of the place, mounted on a very clever horse, the head of the Chipping Ongar bank, and some half-dozen strangers. As we drew near to 'the Bushes' we saw that there had already congregated a very considerable crowd. There were young ladies, some who had come just to see the throw off, and others with an expression in their faces, and a cut about their habits, which looked like business, and which plainly indicated that they intended, if possible, to be in at the death. There were two or three clergyman who had come from adjoining parishes, and one or two country squires. There were some three or four Oxford undergraduates—Chipping Ongar is within a very convenient distance of the city of academic towers—who were 'staying up' at their respective colleges for the purpose of reading during a portion of the vacation, and who found it necessary to vary the monotony of intense intellectual application by an occasional gallop with the Chip-

ping Ongar or Bicester pack. Then, of course, there was the usual contingent of country doctors: usual, I say, for the medical profession gravitates naturally towards equestrianism. If a country doctor rides at all, you may be sure he rides well, and is well mounted, moreover. There was also a very boisterous and hard-riding maltster, who had acquired a considerable reputation in the district, a fair sprinkling of snobs, one or two grooms and stable cads. There was also an illustrious novelist of the day, the guest of Sir Cloudesley Spanker, and Sir Cloudesley Spanker, Bart., himself.

We had drawn Branksome Bushes and the result was a blank. Local sportsmen commenced to be prolific of suggestions. There was Henham Gorse, for instance, and two gentlemen asseverated most positively, upon intelligence which was indisputably true, that there was a fox in that quarter. Another noble sportsman, who prided himself especially on his local knowledge pressed upon Jem Pike the necessity of turning his attention next to the Enderby Woods, to all of which admonitions, however, Mr. Pike resolutely turned a deaf ear. These are among the difficulties which the huntsman of a subscription pack has to encounter or withstand. Every Nimrod who pays his sovereign or so a year to the support of the hounds considers he has a right to a voice in their management. Marvellous is the sensitiveness of the amateur sportsman. It is a well-established fact, that you cannot more grievously wound or insult the feelings of the gentleman who prides himself upon his acquaintance with horses than by impugning the accuracy of his judgment in any point of equine detail. Hint to your friend, who is possessed with the idea that he is an authority upon the manners and customs of foxes in general, and upon those of any one neighbourhood in particular, that there exists a chance of his fallibility, and he will resent the insinuation as a mortal slight. Jem Pike had his duty to do to the pack and to his employers, and he steadfastly refused to be guided or misguided by amateur advice. So, at Jem's sweet will, we jogged on from Branksome Bushes to Jarvis Spinney, and at Jarvis Spinney the object of our quest was obtained.

'Tis a pretty sight, the find and the throw off. You see the gorse literally alive with the hounds, their sterns flourishing above its surface. Something has excited them, and there 'the beauties' go, leaping over each other's backs. Then issues a shrill kind of whimper; in a moment one hound challenges, and

next another. Then from the huntsman comes a mighty cheer that is heard to the echo. 'He's gone,' say half a score of voices. Hats are pressed on, cigars thrown away, bridles gathered well up, and lo and behold they are off. A very fair field we were on the particular morning to which I here allude. The rector, I noticed, who had merely come to the meet, was well up with the first of us. Notwithstanding remonstrances addressed by timid papas and well-drilled grooms in attendance, Alice and Clara Vernon put their horses at the first fence, and that surmounted had fairly crossed the Rubicon. Nay, the contagion of the enthusiasm spread, as is always the case on such occasions, for their revered parents themselves were unable to resist the attraction. Sir Cloudesley Spanker asserted his position in the first rank, as did also the distinguished novelist his guest.

It has been remarked that all runs with foxhounds are alike on paper and different in reality. We were fortunate enough to have one that was certainly above the average with the Chipping Ongar hounds. Our fox chose an excellent line of country, and all our party from the Lion enjoyed the distinction of being in at the death. Mishaps there were, for all very weedy screws came signally to grief. Old Sir Cloudesley related with much grim humour the melancholy aspect that two dismounted strangers presented who had taken up their lodging in a ditch. The two Miss Vernons acquitted themselves admirably; so did the rector, and I am disposed to think that the company both of the ladies and the farmers vastly improved our hunting-field. It is quite certain that clergymen, more than any other race of men, require active change, and they get what they can get nowhere better than in a hunting-field. Nor in the modern hunting field is there anything which either ladies or clergymen need fear to face. The strong words and the strange oaths, the rough language, in fine, what has been called 'the roaring lion element,' these are accessories of the chase which have long since become things of the past. And the consummation is a natural consequence of the catholicity which hunting has acquired. There are no abuses like class abuses. Once admit the free light of publicity, and they vanish.

There are hunting farmers and hunting parsons, clergymen who make the chase the business of their life, and who get a day with the hounds as an agreeable relief to their professional toils. There is not much to be said in favour of the former order, which has, by the way, nearly become extinct. It survives in

Wales and in North Devon yet, and curious are the authentic stories which might be narrated about these enthusiastic heroes of top-boots and spur. There is a little village in North Devon where, till within a very few years, the meet of the stag-hounds used to be given out from the reading desk every Sunday after the first lesson. Years ago, when one who is now a veteran amongst the fox-hunting clerics of that neighbourhood first entered upon his new duties, he was seized with a desire to reform the ways of the natives and the practices of the priests. Installed in his new living, he determined to forswear hounds and hunting entirely. He even carried his orthodoxy to such a point as to institute daily services, which at first, however, were very well attended. Gradually his congregation fell off, much to the grief of the enthusiastic pastor. One day, observing his churchwardens lingering in the aisle after the service had been concluded, he went up and asked them whether they could at all inform him of the origin of the declension. 'Well, sir,' said one of the worthies thus addressed, 'we were a going to speak to you about the very same thing. You see, sir, the parson of this parish do always keep hounds. Mr. Froude, he kept foxhounds, Mr. Bellew, he kept harriers, and leastways we always expect the parson of this parish to keep *a small cry of summut*.' Whereupon the rector expressed his entire willingness to contribute a sum to the support of 'a small cry' of harriers, provided his congregation found the remainder. The experiment was tried, and was completely successful; nor after that day had the new rector occasion to complain of a deficiency in his congregation.

Tories of the old school, for instance Sir Cloudesley Spanker, who has quitted himself so gallantly to-day, would no doubt affirm that fox-hunting has been fatally injured as a sport by railways. The truth of the proposition is extremely questionable, and it may be dismissed in almost the same breath as the sinister predictions which are never verified of certain naval and military officers on the subject of the inevitable destiny of their respective services. Railways have no doubt disturbed the domestic tranquillity of the fox family, and have compelled its various members to forsake in some instances the ancient Lares and Penates. But the havoc which the science of man has wrought the skill of man has obviated. Foxes are quite as dear to humanity as they can be to themselves; and in proportion as the natural dwellings of foxes have been destroyed, artificial homes have been provided for them. Moreover railways have

had the effect of bringing men together, and of establishing all over the country new fox-hunting centres. Hunting wants money, and railways have brought men with money to the spots at which they were needed. They have, so to speak, placed the hunting-field at the very doors of the dwellers in town. In London a man may breakfast at home, have four or five hours' hunting fifty miles away from the metropolitan chimney-pots, and find himself seated at his domestic mahogany for a seven o'clock dinner. Nor is it necessary for the inhabitant of London to go such a distance to secure an excellent day's hunting. To say nothing of her Majesty's staghounds, there are first-rate packs in Surrey, Essex, and Kent, all within a railway journey of an hour. Here again the inveterate *laudator temporis acti* will declare he discerns greater ground for dissatisfaction than congratulation. He will tell you that in consequence of those confounded steam-engines the field gets flooded by cockneys who can't ride, who mob the covert, and effectually prevent the fox from breaking. Of course it is indisputable that railways have familiarised men who never hunted previously with horses and with hounds, and that persons now venture upon the chase whose forefathers may have scarcely known to distinguish between a dog and a horse. Very likely, moreover, it would be much better for fox-hunting if a fair proportion of these new-comers had never presented themselves in this, their new, capacity. At the same time, with the quantity of the horsemen, there has been some improvement also in the quality of the horsemanship. Leech's typical cockney Nimrod may not have yet become extinct, but he is a much rarer specimen of sporting humanity than was formerly the case.

It is a great thing for all Englishmen that hunting should have received this new development among us, and for the simple reason that salutary as is the discipline of all field sports, that of hunting is so in the most eminent degree. 'Ride straight to hounds and talk as little as possible,' was the advice given by a veteran—our old friend Sir Cloudesley Spanker for instance—to a youngster who was discussing the secret mode in which popularity was to be secured; and the sententious maxim contains a great many grains of truth. Englishmen admire performance, and without it they despise words. Performance is the only thing which in the hunting-field meets with recognition on sufferance, and the braggadocia is most inevitably brought to his proper level in the course of a burst of forty minutes across

a good country. Again, the hunting-field is the most admirably contrived species of discipline for the temper. Displays of irritation or annoyance are promptly and effectively rebuked; and the man who cannot bear with fitting humility the reprimand, when it is merited, of the master or huntsman, will not have long to wait for the demonstrative disapproval of his compeer.

Hunting has been classed amongst those sports—*detestata matribus*—by reason of the intrinsic risk which it involves. Is it in any degree more dangerous than cricket or football, shooting or Alpine climbing? In Great Britain and Ireland there are at present exactly two hundred and twenty packs of hounds. Of these some hunt as often as five days a week, others not more frequently than two. The average may probably be fixed at the figure three. Roughly the hunting season lasts twenty-five weeks, while it may be computed that at least ninety horsemen go out with each pack. We thus have one million four hundred and fifty-eight thousand as the total of the occasions on which horse and rider feel the perils of the chase. 'If,' says Mr. Anthony Trollope, in the course of some admirable remarks on the subject, 'we say that a bone is broken annually in each hunt, and a man killed once in two years in all the hunts together, we think that we exceed the average of casualties. At present there is a spirit abroad which is desirous of maintaining the manly excitement of enterpise in which some peril is to be encountered, but which demands at the same time that it should be done without any risk of injurious circumstances. Let us have the excitement and pleasure of danger, but for God's sake no danger itself. This, at any rate, is unreasonable.'

These observations have somewhat diverted me from the thread of the original narrative. Should, however, the reader desire more precise information as to the particular line of country taken up by the fox on that eventful day with the Chipping Ongar hounds, will he not find it written for him in the pages of 'Bell'?

So we met, so we hunted, and so we rode home and dined; and if any person who is not entirely a stranger to horses wishes to enjoy a few days' active recreation and healthy holidays, he cannot, I would submit, for the reasons which I have above attempted to enumerate, do better than go down to the Lion at Chipping Ongar, and get a few days with the Chipping Ongar hounds.

INFLUENCE OF FIELD SPORTS ON CHARACTER.

FIELD sports have been generally considered solely in the light of a relaxation from the graver business of life, and have been justified by writers on economics on the ground that some sort of release is required from the imprisoned existence of the man of business, the lawyer, or the politician. Apollo does not always bend his bow, it is said, and timely dissipation is commendable even in the wise; therefore by all means, let the sports which we English love be pursued within legitimate bounds, and up to an extent not forbidden by weightier considerations.

But there seems to be somewhat more in field sports than is contained in this criticism. The influence of character on the manner in which sports are pursued is endless, and reciprocally the influence of field sports on character seems to deserve some attention. The best narrator of schoolboy life of the present day has said that, varied as are the characters of boys, so varied are their ways of facing or not facing a 'bully,' at football; and one of the greatest observers of character in England has written a most instructive and amusing account of the way in which men enjoy fox-hunting. If, therefore, a man's character and his occupations and tastes exercise a mutual influence upon each other, it follows that while men of different disposition pursue sports in different ways, the sports also which they do pursue will tell considerably in the development of their natural character.

Now, the field sport which is perhaps pursued by a greater number of Englishmen than any other, and which is most zealously admired by its devotees, is fox-hunting. It is essentially English in its nature.

> 'A fox-hunt to a foreigner is strange,
> 'Tis likewise subject to the double danger
> Of falling first, and having in exchange
> Some pleasant laughter at the awkward stranger.'

And it is this very falling which adds in some degree to its popularity; *suave mari magno*, it is pleasant to know that your neighbour A.'s horse, which he admires so much, has given him a fall at that very double over which your little animal has carried you so safely; and it is pleasant to feel yourself secure from the difficulties entailed on B. by his desire to teach his four-year-old how to jump according to his tastes. But apart from this delight—uncharitable if you like to call it—which is felt at the hazards and failures of another, there is in fox-hunting the keenest possible desire to overcome satisfactorily these difficulties yourself. Not merely for the sake of explaining to an after-dinner audience how you jumped that big place by the church or led the field safely over the brook, though that element does enter in; but from the strong delight which an Englishman seems by birthright to have in surmounting any obstacles which are placed in his way. Put a man then on a horse, and send him out hunting, and when he has had some experience ask him what he has discovered of the requirements of his new pursuit, and what is the lesson or influence of it. He will probably give you some such answer as the following.

The first thing that is wanted by, and therefore encouraged by, fox-hunting, is decision. He who hesitates is lost. No 'craner' can get well over a country. Directly the hounds begin to run, he who would follow them must decide upon his course. Will he go through that gate, or attempt that big fence, which has proved a stopper to the crowd? there is no time to lose. The fence may necessitate a fall, the gate must cause a loss of time, which shall it be? Or again, the hounds have come to a check, the master and huntsmen are not up (in some countries a very possible event), and it devolves upon the only man who is with them to give them a cast. Where is it to be? here or there? There is no time for thought, prompt and decided action alone succeeds. Or else the loss of shoe or an unexpected fall has thrown you out, and you must decide quickly in which direction you think the hounds are most likely to have run. Experience, of course, tells considerably here as everywhere; but quick decision and promptitude in adopting the course decided on will be the surest means of attaining the wished-for result of finding yourself again in company with the hounds.

Further, fox-hunting teaches immensely self-dependence; every one is far too much occupied with his own ideas, and his own difficulties, to be able to give more than the most momentary

attention to those of his neighbour. If you seek advice or aid you will not get much from the really zealous sportsman; you must trust to yourself, you must depend on your own resources. 'Go on, sir, or else let me come,' is the sort of encouragement which you are likely to get, if in doubt whether a fence is practicable or a turn correct.

Thirdly, fox-hunting necessitates a combination of judgment and courage removed from timidity on the one side and foolhardiness on the other. The man who takes his horse continually over big places, for the sake of doing that in which he hopes no one else will successfully imitate him, is sure in the end to kill his horse or lose his chance of seeing the run; and on the other hand, he who, when the hounds are running, shirks an awkward fence or leaves his straight course to look for a gate, is tolerably certain to find himself several fields behind at the finish. 'What sort of a man to hounds is Lord A——?' we once heard it asked of a good judge. 'O, a capital sportsman and rider, was the answer; 'never larks, but will go at a haystack if the hounds are running.'

It is partly from the necessity of self-dependence which the fox-hunter feels, that his sport is open to the accusation that it tends to selfishness. The true fox-hunter is alone in the midst of the crowd; he has his own interests solely at heart—each for himself, is his motto, and the pace is often too good for him to stop and help a neighbour in a ditch, or catch a friend's runaway horse. He has no partner, he plays no one's hand except his own. This of course only applies to the man who goes out hunting, eager to have a run, and keen to be in at the death. If a man rides to the meet with a pretty cousin, and pilots her for the first part of a run, he probably pays more attention to his charge than to his own instincts of the chase; but he is not on this occasion purely fox-hunting; and, if a true Nimrod, his passion for sport will overcome his gallantry, and he will probably not be sorry when his charge has left his protection, and he is free to ride where his individual wishes and the exigencies of hunt may lead him.

What a knowledge of country fox-hunting teaches! A man who hunts will, at an emergency, be far better able than one who does not to choose a course, and select a line, which will lead him right. Kinglake holds that the topographical instinct of the fox-hunter is of considerable advantage in the battle-field; and it is undoubtedly easy to imagine circumstances in which a

man accustomed to find his way to or from hounds, in spite of every opposition and difficulty, will make use of the power which he has acquired, and be superior to the man who has not had similar advantages.

Finally, fox-hunting encourages energy and 'go.' The sluggard or lazy man never succeeds as a fox-hunter, and he who adopts the chase as an amusement soon finds that he must lay aside all listlessness and inertness if he would enjoy to the full the pleasures which he seeks. A man who thinks a long ride to cover, or a jog home in a chill dank evening in November, a bore, will not do as a fox-hunter. The activity which considers no distance too great, no day too bad for hunting, will contribute first to the success of the sportsman, and ultimately to the formation of the charcter of the man.

Fishing teaches perseverance. The man in *Punch*, who on Friday did not know whether he had had good sport, because he only began on Wednesday morning, is a caricature; but, like all caricatures, has an element of truth in it. To succeed as a fisher, whether of the kingly salmon, or the diminutive gudgeon, an ardour is necessary which is not damped by repeated want of success; and he who is hopeless because he has no sport at first will never fully appreciate fishing. The skilled angler does not abuse the weather or the water in impotent despair, but makes the most of the resources which he has, and patiently hopes an improvement therein.

Delicacy and gentleness are also taught by fishing. It is here especially that

> 'Vis consili expers mole ruit suâ,
> Vini temperatam di quoque prorchunt in majus.'

Look at the thin link of gut and slight rod with which the huge trout or 'never ending monster of a salmon' is to be caught. No brute force will do there; every struggle of the prey must be met by judicious yielding on the part of the captor, who watches carefully every motion, and treats its weight by giving line, knowing at the same time—none better—when the full force of the butt is to be unflinchingly applied. Does not this sort of training have an effect on character? Will not a man educated in fly-fishing find developed in him the tendency to be patient, to be persevering, and to know how to adapt himself to circumstances? Whatever be the fish he is playing, whatever be his line, will he not know when to yield and when to hold fast?

Read the works of those who write on fishing—Scrope,

Walton, Davy, as instances. Is there not a very gentle spirit breathing through them? What is there rude or coarse or harsh in the true fisher? Is he not light and delicate, and do not his words and actions fall as softly as his flies?

Shooting is of two kinds, which, without incorrectness, may be termed wild and tame. Of tame shooting the tamest, in every sense of the word, is pigeon-shooting; but as this is admittedly not sport, and as its principal feature is that it is a medium for gambling, or, at least, for the winning of money prizes or silver cups, it may be passed over in a few words. It undoubtedly requires skill, and encourages rapidity of eye and quickness of action; but its influence on character depends solely on its essential selfishness, and the taint which it bears from the 'filthy' effect of 'lucre.'

Other tame shooting is battue shooting, where luxuriously clad men, who have breakfasted at any hour between ten and twelve, and have been driven to their coverts in a comfortable conveyance, stand in a sheltered corner with cigarettes in their mouths, and shoot tame pheasants and timid hares for about three hours and a half, varying the entertainment by a hot lunch, and a short walk from beat to beat. Two men stand behind each sportsman with breechloaders of the quickest action, and the only drawback to the gunner's satisfaction is that he is obliged to waste a certain time between his shots in cocking the gun which he has taken from his loader. This cannot but be enervating in its influence. Everything, except the merest action of pointing the piece and pulling the trigger, is done for you. You are conveyed probably to the very place where you are to stand; the game is driven right up to you; what you shoot is picked up for you; your gun itself is loaded by other hands; you have no difficulty in finding your prey; you have no satisfaction in outwitting the wiliness of bird or beast; you have nothing whatever except the pleasure—minimised by constant repetition—of bringing down a 'rocketter,' or stopping a rabbit going full speed across a ride.

The moral of this is that it is not necessary to do anything for yourself, that some one will do everything for you, probably better than you would, and that all you have to do is to leave everything to some person whom you trust. Or, again, it is, get the greatest amount of effect with the least possible personal exertion. Stand still, and opportunities will come on you like pheasants—all you have to do is to seize them.

But it is not so with wild shooting. Not so with the man, who, with the greatest difficulty, and after studying every available means of approach, has got within range of the lordly stag, and hears the dull thud which tells him his bullet has not missed its mark. Nor with him, who, after a hurried breakfast, climbs hill after hill in pursuit of the russet grouse, or mounts to the top of a cragged ridge in search of the snowy ptarmigan. Not so either with him, who traverses every damp bit of marshy ground along a low bottom, and is thoroughly gratified, if, at the end of a long day, he has bagged a few snipe, nor with him, who, despite cold and gloom and wet, has at last drawn his punt within distance of a flock of wild duck. In each of these, endurance and energy is taught in its fullest degree. It is no slight strain on the muscles and lungs to follow Ronald in his varied course, in which he emulates alternately the movements of the hare, the crab, and the snake; and it is no slight trial of patience to find, after all your care, all your wearisome stalk, that some unobserved hind, or unlucky grouse, has frightened your prey, and rendered your toil vain. But, *en avant*, do not despair, try again, walk your long walk—crawl your difficult crawl once more, and then—your perseverance rewarded by a royal head; agree that deer-stalking is calculated to develop a character which overcomes all difficulties, and goes on in spite of many failures.

The same obstinate determination which is found in this, the *beau idéal* of all shooting, is found similarly in shooting of other kinds; and it is a question whether to the endurance inculcated by this pursuit may not be attributed that part of an Englishman's character which made the Peninsular heroes 'never know when they were licked.'

Cricket is another field sport, the popularity of which is rapidly increasing; partly from the entire harmlessness which characterises it, and leads to the encouragement of it by schoolmasters and clergymen, and partly from the fact that it is played in the open air, in fine weather, and in the society of a number of companions. I do not propose to inquire whether there is benefit in the general spreading of cricket through the country, or whether it may not be said that it occupies too much time and takes members away from other more advantageous occupations, or whether the combination of amateur and professional skill which is found in great matches is a good thing; but I wish, briefly, to point out one or two points in human character which seem to me to be developed by cricket.

The first of these is hero-worship. The best player in a village club, and the captain of a school eleven, if not for other reasons unusually unpopular, is surrounded by a halo of glory which falls to the successful in no other sport. Great things are expected of him, he is looked upon with admiring eyes, and is indeed a great man. 'Ah, it is all very well,' you hear, 'but wait till Brown goes in. Smith and Robinson are out, but wait till Brown appears, then you will see how we shall beat you: bowl him out if you can.' His right hand will atone for the shortcomings of many smaller men, his prowess make up the deficiency of his side. Or look at a match between All England and twenty-two of Clodshire, watch the clodsmen between the innings, how they throng wonderingly round the chiefs of the eleven. That's him, that's Daft, wait till he takes the bat, then you'll 'see summut like play.' Or go to the Bat and Ball after the match, when the eleven are there, and see how their words are dwelt on by an admiring audience, and their very looks and demeanour made much of as the deliberate expressions of men great in their generation. Again, see the reception at Kennington Oval of a 'Surrey pet' or a popular amateur, or the way in which Mr. Grace is treated by the undemonstrative aristocracy of Lord's, and agree with me that cricket teaches hero-worship in its full. What power the captain of the Eton or the Winchester eleven has, what an influence over his fellows, not merely in the summer, when his deeds are before the public, but always, from a memory of his prowess with bat or ball! There is one awkward point about this; there are many cricket clubs, and therefore many captains, and when two of these meet a certain amount of difficulty arises in choosing which is the hero to be worshipped. In a match where the best players of a district are collected, and two or more good men known in their own circle and esteemed highly, there play together, who is to say which is the best; who is to crown the real king of Brentford? Each considers himself superior to the other, each remembers the plaudits of his own admirers, forgets that it is possible that they may be prejudiced, and ignores the reputation of his neighbour. The result is a jealousy among the chieftains which is difficult to be overcome, and which shows itself even in the best matches.

On the other hand, the effect of this very hero-worship which I have described, is to produce a harmony and unity of action consequent on confidence in a leader which is peculiar to cricket.

Watch a good eleven, a good university or public-school team, or the old A.F.P. for instance, and see how thoroughly they work together, how the whole eleven is like one machine, 'point' trusting 'coverpoint,' slip knowing that if he cannot reach a ball, coverslip can, and the bowler feeling sure that his half rollings, if hit up, will be caught, if hit along the ground, will be fielded. Or see two good men batting, when every run is of importance, how they trust one another's judgment as to the possibility of running, how thoroughly they act in unison. Such training as this teaches greatly a combination of purpose and of action, and a confidence in the judgment of one's colleagues which must be advantageous.

The good cricketer is obedient to his captain, does what he is told, and does not grumble if he thinks his skill underrated; the tyro, proud of his own prowess, will indeed be cross if he is not made enough of, or is sent in last; but the good player, who really knows the game, sees that one leader is enough, and obeys his orders accordingly.

There are other points taught by cricket, such as caution by batting, patience and care by bowling, and energy by fielding; but I have no space to dwell on these, as I wish to examine very briefly one more sport, which, though hardly national, is yet much loved by the considerable number who do pursue it. Boating is found in its glory at the universities, or in some of the suburbs of London which are situated on the Thames. It is also found in some of the northern towns, especially Newcastle, where the Tyne crew have long enjoyed a great reputation.

By boating, I do not mean going out in a large tub and sitting under an awning, being pulled by a couple of paid men, or drawn by an unfortunate horse, but boat-racing, for prizes or for honour. The Oxford and Cambridge race has done more than anything to make this sport popular; and the thousands who applaud the conquerors reward sufficiently the exertions which have been necessary to make the contest possible.

The chief lesson which boating teaches is self-denial. The university oar, or the member of the champion crew at the Thames or Tyne regatta, has to give up many pleasures, and deny himself many luxuries, before he is in a fit state to row with honour to himself and his party; and though, in the dramatist's excited imagination, the stroke-oar of an Oxford eight may spend days and nights immediately before the race in the society of a Formosa, such is not the case in real life. There must be

no pleasant chats over a social pipe for the rowing man, no dinners at the Mitre or the Bull, no *recherché* breakfasts with his friends; the routine of training must be strictly observed, and everything must give way to the paramount necessity of putting on muscle. In the race itself, too, what a desperate strain there is on the powers! How many times has some sobbing oarsman felt that Nature can resist no longer the tremendous demand made on her, that he can go on no longer; and then has come the thought that others are concerned besides himself, that the honour of his university or his club are at stake, and has lent a new stimulus and made possible that final spurt which results in victory!

The habits taught by boating, whether during training or after the race has commenced, lead to regularity of life, to abstemiousness, and to the avoidance of unwholesome tastes, and their effect is seen long after the desire for aquatic glory have passed away.

Such are some of the most prominent influences of English field sports; and as long as amusements requiring such energy, such physical or mental activity, and such endurance as fox-hunting, stalking, and cricket, are popular, there is little fear of the manly character of the English nation deteriorating, or its indomitable determination being weakened.

'FOR SALE—A THOROUGHBRED NAG, UNBROKEN.'

I.

THE nag was a mare. Father bought her of a sharp horsey innkeeper in the neighbouring town, who had had her of a man who had taken her in payment of a bad debt of Captain Pumpkin, bankrupt. When she was brought home, with her foal of three weeks trotting by her side, we all gathered round with the warmest interest. Nobody could enough admire the beauty of the pair. What a graceful deer-like creature was the foal! How clean and elegant were the limbs of the mother! ('I could break 'em wi' my boot,' cried little Bill, with a heroic look, dealing an aimless kick into the air.) What spring and speed there were in that long pastern, and this great muscle in the thigh down to the hock! 'And her tail,' remarked Sissy—(which did not hang limp and nerveless between her hips, as is the habit of most equine and vaccine tails, but which had a kind of defiant cock)—'her tail,' said she, standing back, with her head on one side, 'has as fine a curve as an ostrich-feather.'

'Well, Joe,' said my father, after smiling placidly on us all, observing the old groom standing apart rubbing his nose in quizzical silence, 'what do you think of her?'

Joe put his finger to his cap and came forward. He seized her by the nostrils and the nether lip, and looked into her mouth.

'Rising four-year-old, Joe,' said my father.

'Umph!' grunted Joe.

He stepped back, and ran his eye all over her for a moment, as if for something he had lost; then, again stepping forward, he bent down and lifted her forefoot to tap the frog. With a mischievous flash of the eye she turned her head, and seized in her teeth the most obtrusive part of Joe's garment. Joe dropped on his hands. We all laughed; how could we help it? Joe rose in some perplexity, and turned to me quietly with '*She* ain't no good.'

'Rising four, Joe,' said my father, 'and quite unbroken.'

'Umph!' said Joe to me, 'she's out six, if she's a day.'

'He,' said father, pointing to the foal, who was staring and sniffing at us, 'is a son of Cavalier, Joe.'

'Umph!' said Joe again to me, in an undertone, '*she* ain't no good; an', as the sayin' is, if ye want to know wot 'e 'll be, arx his dam, so '*e* ain't no good, nuther.'

II.

ONE day a clever talkative neighbour passed along with my father.

'Ha,' said he, 'a new horse?' stopping and leaning on the paddock-fence; 'a brood-mare, eh?'

'Ye-es,' said my father, getting through the fence, followed by his friend; 'isn't she a beauty?'

'She looks very handsome.'

Then the gentleman rushed at her, hooting and rattling his stick in his hat to make her show off her paces. Away she went at a tremendous trot round the field, with her tail cocked high and her foal galloping by her side.

'She steps well,' said he, coming back to my father. 'A little wide behind; but all the better for that—shows speed. That's a very pretty creature of a foal, though, as swift and graceful as a fawn. Where did you pick 'em up?'

Then my father related all about the purchase, I suppose; for I did not hear, being outside the fence, and father not having so loud a tongue as his friend.

'O, *I* know her,' cried his friend; 'she used to belong to Captain Pumpkin.'

Father nodded.

'By all accounts, then,' said his friend, shaking his head, 'that *I* have heard—mind you, that *I* have heard, for I don't swear to their absolute truth—*she's a horrid vixen!*'

My curiosity had by this time carried me through the fence.

'How can they tell?' asked my father, with the least touch of impatience in his voice.

The fact is, from various dark hints that had been hovering around him for some days, the suspicion was beginning closely to press him that he had not made so keen, so prudent a purchase after all.

'How can they tell, when she's never been tried?'

'Tried, Mr. Turnham? Lor' bless you! she's been tried—if

she's the mare—and gone over two trainers, Davenwick and Mossfoot; and if she's the same, she has a bit out of one ear, as if nibbled by a rat, and she has a fore-pastern fired.'

So saying he approached the mare again.

'Woa, lass; woa, little wifie.'

With a toss of her head and a scornful glance of her eye she dashed off, but not before we had observed the marks on the pastern of the near forefoot—an appearance of tightness, with rebellious little ridges of hair running from top to bottom, about an inch or so apart.

I remarked to my father that I had observed these marks from the first, but had not understood them.

'Hadn't you better, James,' said he, turning on me, 'go and feed that dog? He's been howling for at least half an hour.'

Thus civilly he ordered me off; and I went.

I was out riding the rest of the morning. When I returned I heard from Joe, while he was hissing over the hot flanks of my horse, that my father had sent the pretty mare with her foal off to a distant field.

''E 'ad 'er in fust, though,' said Joe, with a wink.

'Well,' said I eagerly, 'and did you see the—the—mutilated ear, and the fired pastern?'

'Bless you, Master James,' said Joe, stopping and looking up, 'I seen 'em afore.'

'Seen them before, and never mentioned it, Joe?'

'Mention it, *Mister* James, d'ye say? Now you knows better'n that. You knows 'ow master, your father, does. 'E won't a 'ear uv 'es bein' tuk in from nobody; *but* when 'e *sees* 'e is tuk in, away he packs the thing wot tuk 'im in out uv sight somewheres, which he's done this blessed day.'

And Joe with a chuckle resumed his hissing and thumping.

'Joe,' I said, after having considered a moment whether I should reveal my ignorance, 'what do they fire a pastern for?'

'Fire a pastern for, Mister James?'

He rose slowly, and began absently to feel for the horse's ribs.

''Cos it's cruel, Mister James; 'cos the 'oss 'as smashed 'isself some time or nuther, an' it's swelled big, an' they lays somethink over it an' lays the iron on 'issin' 'ot—*that* precious soon lays the swellin'. *That's* wot they does it for, Mister James, 'cos they thinks the 'oss likes it, I dessay.'

At lunch says father to me, 'I don't see, James, what's to hinder you from training that mare.'

'No more do I, father,' I answered, after a moment of surprise. 'I don't see why she shouldn't be managed. I'll sit her if she don't lie down and roll with me; and if she does, I can stand over her till she gets up again.'

My father looked at me steadily, and demanded,

'Who said she laid down and rolled?'

I looked foolish, and replied that I had heard no one say that—only—

'Only,' repeated my father, waxing warm, getting as nearly angry as I ever saw him get, 'that's how a poor brute's character, like many a man's, is whispered and winked and nodded and hummed and hawed away, before— Take and try her.'

I was overwhelmed with the unusual volume and warmth of my father's speech. I felt hurt, too; but I promised to do my best and gentlest with the mare. But here my mother interposed. The whispers defamatory of the mare that had got abroad had crept insidiously into her busy household ears, and she now, in some anxiety for the life and limb of her first-born, hinted that it might be better to let an experienced horse-breaker have her first.

'That's just the fault I have to find with these men, my dear,' said my father, 'that they are horse-*breakers*. If an animal shows any will or spirit of its own, they have no thought of trying to bend it—they must break it. If they can't, the horse is a vixen —full of vice—they can do nothing with her. She passes from their hands—or rather from their fists and whips and feet, and the sound of their coarse voices—with a mortal dread upon her of any human being, so that it will be difficult, very difficult, for any one to do anything with her, except'—and he gave me a straight kind look (as a peace-offering, I suppose, for the sin of his warm words)—'with the most patient and thoughtful treatment, which I hope—I think James will give her.'

Such words from my father, who seldom spoke either in praise or blame, sounded to me the rarest flattery. I blushed, and resolved to do my best.

However, I found that in private my mother had prevailed upon my father to let the mare remain unhandled till the harvest was past, by which time, perhaps, her high fierce spirit (if she had it) might have sunk to a very tame ebb on an exclusive grass diet.

III.

IN the mean time fresh evidence of the depravity and wide reputation of the mare kept coming to light in a most sprightly irritating fashion. One market-day, for instance, while I was looking on at the sale of some store-pigs, I became conscious that a man, who looked like a respectable groom or coachman, was fidgeting about and eyeing me as if he longed very much to speak, but could not find enough assurance either in his pockets or within his ample waistcoat. Feeling for the man, and seeing no harm in him, I made up to him with some remark about the pigs, with which he agreed. He very soon took occasion to ask if we hadn't that mare up at our place.

'I don't know,' said I; 'we have several mares;' though I was quite sure which he meant.

Yes, yes; but it was that vicious thoroughbred that had belonged to Captain Pumpkin; that was the one he was a-speakin' of.

'O, *you* know her too, do you?' I said.

'Know her? Bless ye, know 'er as well 's I know my own mother! Warn't it me as saw 'er grow up a colt, an' as fust tuk 'er in? You know that mark on 'er ear? she's got a big ear an' a ugly cartey 'ead, too big for 'er blood.' Well, that 'appened when she was fust tuk in, an' was just a-bein' bound wi' the 'alter in the stall, when up she rises on 'er 'ind legs, playin' this yere in the air, a-sparrin'-like; up she rises an' strikes 'er 'ead agin a beam, an' cuts 'er ear clean off; 'twas just a-'angin' by a rag o' skin. So off I goes for the vet, an' when 'e come we casts 'er, an' 'e sews it on. Ye'll see the marks of the stitches yet, sir, if ye look. Fired in the pastern? I don't know nothin' about that, sir. Very like that was done by one o' them trainers. She went over two on 'em, you know, sir.'

I hinted an opinion that they had not understood, and had bungled her, and that I meant to try her myself.

He looked me up and down in surprise, till I blushed.

'Excuse me, sir, but hes your family insured your life? You'll excuse me, you know, sir,' said he, advancing nearer, 'but she's a spoiled brute. She ain't good for nothink. Kind gentle treatment, sir, do you say? Well, that's just where it is. *If* she 'ad, sir, or if she 'ad 'ad, as you may say. But, ye see, she's been 'ashed an' knocked about by them fellers, she 'avin' a devil uv a temper uv her own to begin with. Well, ye see, they've come off

second best, as the sayin' is, an' she knows it. It's too late, sir; she's got off too long with it.'

'Why, how old is she?'

'How old, sir? Let me—' ('scratch my beard,' he might have said, for that was what he did)—'she was dropped, sir, the year Blenkiron won the Derby; she's gettin' on for six, sir. Well, sir, you *may*, after a while, manage to ride her, but—'

The ellipsis of speech was made fully explicit by a portentous nod.

On our way home from market I retailed to father what I had been told. 'And,' I concluded, 'he said we *might* get her to be ridden, but as for harness—'

'You see, James,' said my father, 'these men have so mismanaged her, that our work will be more difficult than if they had never seen her.'

'Yes; that's just what *he* said.'

'Who said?' asked my father, looking at me keenly.

I felt the rebuke to the full; he needn't have said another word; though he did add, after I stammered in reply, 'The—the man—'

'Do you usually accept as gospel all the gossip you may pick up from this and that creature you know nothing of?'

I was nettled. 'But surely, father, in this case—this gossip—there is a probability—'

He saw I wished to entangle him in an argument.

'Now, James,' said he.

The tone and the gaze subdued me. I was dumb.

It will thus be seen that my father still believed that the mare, notwithstanding the many serious rents and holes in her credit, had something of a character to lose; and he was resolved that, if she could not be rehabilitated with a new one, no one should be encouraged by him to spy and point out other blemishes in the old—not even his son. He seemed determined to stick by her to the last.

IV.

I SAY *seemed* now; but who then would ever have dreamt of reading at Michaelmas in a catalogue of a neighbour's sale the following entry by my father?—'*A Thoroughbred Nag, four years, with Foal; unbroken.*' I was astonished, for I had overheard not the faintest whisper of an intention to sell her. I

could not help showing my astonished face to my father. He turned away, explaining the entry by—

'Your mother's afraid of you with her' (meaning the mare).

I submitted to be thus saddled with the blame as gracefully as I could.

But there was no such luck as to be rid of her so easily. She was as well known among the gentlemen with the knowing little tufts and the tight trousers—ay, and among the farmers too—as any lady who has been defamed is when she ventures into society: she was infamously well known. And she stood in the yard, with her innocent little son, quiet and placable, as meek as milk. It was no doubt to her a matter of indifference who possessed her, if she was left undisturbed in the enjoyment of her small maternal cares, and of the sweetest of grass and other provender.

And, of course, in a little while every mortal man and boy knew her bad points and her vices off by heart. If one man did not know quite all, others (who had never spoken to the man in their lives before) strove for the pleasure of pouring into his ears their gratuitous information. The deuce! it made me quite wroth. Two men were talking her over quite openly. Some little distance off another man was eyeing her with the dubious balanced look of a possible bidder, when suddenly he overheard from the others a derisive, 'Unbroken! Ha, ha! Why, she,' &c. They were turning away, when the man in alarm sidled up to them. Did he just—did they know anything of that mare with the foal? Did they? They hoped they did! Ha, ha! I grew more and more angry. Why could they not give the poor brute a chance for her—sale? One of them was arrested in the full flow of imparting all he knew by chancing to cast his eye over his shoulder and observe me. 'Sh!' said he, 'his son!' 'Where?' asked the stranger; and when he knew, he stared at me as if I were a pestilent swindler, till I turned away red with rage and confusion.

But when the old gentleman in green spectacles and white gaiters asked the boy who was standing with the mare whether she went quietly when ridden, and the boy replied, 'O, bless you, yes, sir; why, I rode uv 'er over 'ere myself this morning, an' she went as quiet as a lamb,' I chuckled with delight, though I knew that boy would not dare to lift a leg towards her. I, at least, did not register the lie against the boy, it was told in so good a cause.

But the worst was yet to come. Her turn came, and she was trotted out before the auctioneer.

'Now, gentlemen,' &c.

'How old is she?' demanded an oldish nondescript fellow in a wide-awake hat and a blouse, who was reputed to possess the fastest trotter in the district.

'Four year old, gentlemen; and quite unbroken,' said the auctioneer, consulting his catalogue.

'Now, gentlemen, what's—'

'It's a lie!' shouted the old fellow. 'She's six, if she's not seven; an' as for her being unbroken—'

But here a sense of fairness and of privilege stirred the breasts of many, who interrupted him with,

'A bid! A bid!'

'Ten pounds!' shouted he.

'Ten pounds, gentlemen. Ten pounds is bid for this thoroughbred mare with foal—'

'Who is the foal by?' asked a voice from the crowd.

'Cavalier,' whispered my father from behind the auctioneer.

'By Cavalier, gentlemen,' shouted the auctioneer.

'It's a lie,' muttered the old fellow.

'Mr. Cross, gentlemen' (that was the old fellow's name), 'is cross because she is not a *cross*.'

Here there was a loud bucolic laugh from the crowd.

'No, gentlemen, she's no cross, she's thoroughbred. There's blood, gentlemen. Trot her out again, Tom.'

Bill cracked his whip, and shouted, and Tom trotted her out, but with little enthusiasm. The bucolic audience laughed, wagged its head, and winked.

'Well, gentlemen, what do you say? Mr. Cross, let me start with twenty.' Mr. Cross shook his sulky head. 'No! Have a catalogue, Mr. Cross?'

'I don't want a catalogue,' said Mr. Cross.

'No, gentlemen, but Mr. Cross wants a thoroughbred mare, with foal, for 10*l*., gentlemen—a nag that could win 'im a trotting-match. Out with her again, Tom! There, gentlemen, what action and spring! She'd do a trotting match for you every day in the year, Cross—Sundays excepted. On Sundays, gentlemen, Mr. Cross is too good a man to run matches.'

But it was of no use; he might fire off the most pointed wit he could invent, no higher bid would be thrown to him in return: the crowd grinned and giggled, or stood silent and suspicious.

Mr. Auctioneer turned and whispered to my father, and the mare was walked off covered with ignominy.

As we drove home, I ventured a remark, amongst others, upon the unseasonable interference of the old idiot in the blouse.

'I'm pleased she's going to stay with us,' said my father curtly, and gave the horse a cut with the whip.

I could not make my father out; I was silent.

V.

IT was November, and the height of the shooting-season, when father reminded me that an attempt must be made to train that mare; had we not better begin at once? I agreed that we had. It was always great trouble to take and halter it. But, for the most part, once in a corner she submitted to be led off quietly.

We tried the saddle on her, just to see how she would wear it; for nothing serious could be attempted till that precious baby of hers should have been weaned. She submitted to the saddle as if she had been under it all her days. She seemed so quiet, I thought I might try how she would endure one seated in the saddle. It was a safe enough venture for me, for there were two or three men about who had helped in her capture, and father was at her head. I did not like the glance of her eye as I placed my foot. I sprang into the saddle and stuck, prepared for the worst. But she could not have stood more quietly if she had been made of wood. I walked her up the lane, with her foal trotting by her side, or behind, or in front, and I walked her down again. I walked her about the green, and tried to excite her to a merry prance or two, but no—she was as sober as an old cart-horse. I will confess I felt rather disappointed that she had shown not a spark of the wild devilry that was said to be in her. I got off in disgust. Then I thought I would try a remount alone, she seemed so meek a brute. I had no sooner reached the saddle than she kicked up like a donkey, and trotted off with her beautiful springy step, trying to rub me off against hay-ricks and stable-walls and fence-posts. 'Well,' thought I, 'this is more promising,' and dismounted the first opportunity.

I shall not trouble you with a detailed account of the weaning of that blessed baby: how he was penned into a large stall adjoining that in which his mother was bound, with a great deal of litter strewed deep about the floor and piled high against the

wall; how he screamed and neighed (never have I heard so deep, so fierce a neigh as mother and son both possessed); how to escape his pursuers he leapt up among the piled litter to climb over to his dam—and would have climbed, and broken limb or neck, had I not fortunately been in his rear and seized his tail, and hauled till he rolled over in the litter, and was lost for the moment, all except his thin legs, which fought desperately with the air; how, when taken and securely haltered, he danced and pranced about the green, threw himself down and screamed once twisting me over with him; how, after he had worked himself into the last state of perspiration and excitement, he leant—absolutely leant—up against me to rest, poor little fellow! He was at length, though nothing like cowed, led away to a distant part of the farm and introduced to the company of other colts who had lately passed through the same bewildering experience as himself, and had survived it, and who now knew no more of mother or father than does an Arab of the streets. He raced about and screamed for his mother, to the no small surprise and contempt of his comrades.

Parted from her first-born son, that mother led us such a life! If ever there was a real nightmare of flesh and blood, it was she. Three, four nights running, father, Joe, and I sat up with her (all three the first night, the other nights by turns), and if we had not she would have hanged herself over and over again. A very legion of devils seemed to possess her. She neither ate nor drank, nor lay down day or night, but made violent wrenches at her halter (which she broke again and again), threw herself against the walls and on the floor of her stall, like a lunatic. I never saw or heard of a horse behaving so before.

'Lor' bless you, yes, sir,' said Joe, raising his eyebrows, 'at weanin' wuss—much wuss, sometimes.'

Well, I never had seen it; but I was young, and I ventured to doubt whether the mare would not rather die than give in, and whether we were not acting a very cruel part. In expressing as much, I looked at my father; but he stood and smoked, fixed and inscrutable as an Indian chief. Her last paroxysm must have been very violent and peculiar. I was with her on the fourth day alone, and had run indoors to my mother to get a mouthful of something warm, when suddenly there came from the stable the most dreadful clatter and snorting. I rushed out, and found her lying with her tail where her head should be, but with her head still bound to the manger so that it was dragged

over her shoulder towards her tail in a most constrained position; she had one hind-leg over the halter. I saw I could do nothing for her—she must lie there till she could burst herself free. She made a few ineffectual dashes, kicks, and snorts; then, with swelling ribs and a tremendous snort, she put out her strength. The leather snapped beneath her chin, and she stood with all her feet out apart (as if she meant to fly), and looked about her. Then, with a big sigh, she lay down and was quiet.

VI.

SOON after this, it was possible to begin the work of breaking in. For two or three nights after the weaning and watching my sleep was over-ridden by that mare. In wakeful intervals I endeavoured to mature my green opinions on the best mode of training. I convinced myself by certain links of reasoning, which I lost in my sleep, that the too common whack and halloo—'crack whip and dash away'—method (if method it were) would never do with a creature of her high mettle. I would use her gently. I recalled the saying of an old gentleman, who had been much in the society of horses, that he had often struck a horse, but had never known the blow do any good, and I resolved that under no provocation would I strike her. I sleepily argued with myself that the doctrine of original sin was inapplicable to horses: there was no such thing as inborn vice among them; what seemed such was only either youthful mischief, or ignorance, or, at the very worst, fear.

One evening, in the absence of my father, I flaunted forth these revolutionary notions before a sympathetic but unpractical female audience, consisting of my mother, Sissy, the village school-mistress (an old maid of prodigious learning and vast powers of utterance), and the old retriever dog. The ladies applauded my humane opinions; the old dog barked and howled as if in dissent and lamentation. Then the lady of prodigious lore, with a delicious roll in her voice, asked Mister James if he had never heard how it was that man was at all able to restrain and dominate so noble and fiery an animal as the horse.

Well, I replied, casting about in my mind, perhaps I had.

That Nature, in her beneficent wisdom, had so constructed the lens of the horse's eye that a man appeared to him of gigantic size, huge and towering?

'Dear me!' said I, 'I never heard that before!'

'Have you not?' said she. 'It's one of the many marvellous facts science has demonstrated to us. If it were not for that, a small boy like Billy there' (Billy tried to look unconscious, and pulled up his stockings) 'would never be able to lead about a horse and manage him.'

'Indeed!' I exclaimed.

Here Billy interposed the irrelevant fact that he had ridden the old gray mare to water and back again, and all alone too.

'No; not quite alone, Billy,' suggested Sissy.

'Well,' quoth Billy, rather sulkily, 'there was only Joe besides;' who, no doubt, was a considerable figure of authority to the gray mare, if not to Billy.

It occurred to me afterwards—keen objections or smart answers never do occur to me till the occasion for their application has slipped past—that if the lens of the horse's eye had this enlarging power, then everything he saw through that lens—not men and little boys alone—must be of monstrous size! Why does a horse, then, not run away when he sees a fellow-horse? Ha, ha! He does shy, though, when he sees a dark bush in the twilight. Can it be that he imagines it a great tree?

However, I resolved to be as big and important in the eyes of that mare as her lens would possibly allow. But in a day or two, I must confess, I lost in dignity and self-respect. The mare had run with open mouth at that boy who had lied so well on her behalf. Possibly some moral lens she kept somewhere had a more than nullifying effect upon her physical, and had shown her him as a very small boy indeed, as a mere worm of a boy. She struck him down with her fore-feet as soon as he entered her box, and she would have trampled him to death had he not contrived to creep away, very sore, under the manger, where he lay beneath her watchful eye till I entered, and found and released him. I tied her up and began to groom her (I had begun thus to make myself intimately acquainted with her temper, and with all her little ways)—I say, I began to groom her. She was rather dirty about the hocks, and I suppose I must have scratched her a little in applying the currycomb there. She struck out a fierce high kick, which just missed me. I instantly dug her in the ribs with the comb. I at once regretted it. She plunged about a little; and I saw from her evil eye and flattened ears she had taken it in great dudgeon. I had lost whatever

slight hold I had got of her equine affections; but the worst was, I had broken my resolution at the first trial.

VII.

TO-MORROW was the day when she was to have her first '*plunge*,' as Joe phrased it, and my mother's anxiety visibly deepened.

Why could we not, she urged my father, let her plunge about for a few days with a man-of-straw or a sand-man on her back? She had seen that done at home.

'With a good result?' asked my father.

My mother did not know with what result; but she thought we might try it.

I suggested as a compromise that she might wear a man-of-straw in the night; but my father at once put that aside by reminding me that the mare lay down in the night now, and that if she found she could lie down comfortably with the man-of-straw —(here my father could not refrain from laughter—whatever at, my mother wondered?)—she would try and lie down with me.

'No, my dear,' said he; 'we must try her with this man-of-straw first,' looking at me and laughing. My father was unusually facetious.

When I was mounted for the '*plunge*'—

'Always a short stirrup,' said my father emphatically, 'when you're on a horse you're not sure of.'

While he on the one side and Joe on the other were shortening the leathers, the mare kept treading and treading (as if she had been in the army and had learnt to mark time), cocking and switching her long switch-tail, till she almost whisked old Joe's withered head off.

'Woa!' cried Jack, 'you—;' he felt my father's calm eye on him, and said, 'you bonny Bess!'

'We must cut it off,' said my father.

He meant the mare's tail not Joe's old head.

But before my father's sharp knife was produced, and while he was still smiling at Joe's mishap, round came the terrible tail on his side and whisked his hat away; some of its loose longer hairs even reached and stung my nose. I believe she knew well what she was about; I could detect the ardent mischief in her eye and the backward prick of her ear. But we soon had her tail abridged to some inches above her hocks.

She trod and trod in her easy springy style, catching at and chewing her bit (it was a simple champ-bit with keys), but she would not step an inch forward in obedience to my mild requests and entreaties. My father, at length out of patience, gave her a smack on the shoulder with the end of the rein he held, and away she dashed. But she found in a little that, what with me on her back and father and Joe with a rein on either side, there was little room for the play of her own free will.

She submitted sullenly: sullenness and design were always expressed to me by her Jewish cast of nose and long narrow forehead. There are no points so attractive in a horse as an open frank nostril and a broad forehead.

'I don't like that head of hers,' said I to Joe; 'I can't think she's thoroughbred.'

'Thoroughbred? Lor' bless you, Mister James, ye've jest got to twig that cartey 'ead to know that; though it wouldn't do,' added he in an undertone, 'to say that to master. No.'

I went to feed her (I always fed her myself). I mixed in a sieve a quantity of chaff and bran, with a sprinkling of salt and two or three handfuls of oats, for we thought that full measure of hard food might make her like Jeshurun. She observed my movements over her shoulder in sullen expectancy. I put it in her manger. She sniffed at it, tasted it, tossed as much as she could out with her nose, and then turned and glowered at me; till, with a sound more like a pig's grunt or a testy man's 'humph!' than an honest equine snort, she returned to her manger and began eating.

'There,' cried Joe, wagging his head at me, 'not she! O, no! Don't you make no mistake!'

After these oracular words from Joe, I resumed,

'I'm sure she and I will never be good friends. She looks so secret, so crafty and designing, there can never be any confidence between us.'

'Ah!' said Joe, looking puzzled.

'I shall never be able to trust that Jew nose.'

Joe laughed, and kept repeating to himself, 'Jew nose,' as if it were a very rich joke.

We plunged and trained her in the soft field the next day, and the third day, and the fourth, and the fifth; and my father said every day with increasing confidence as the days passed, 'I don't see anything about that mare that should make folks

say she plays such tricks. She's as docile and good a thing as can be.' I was silent.

At the end of the week she seemed so submissive and tractable that my father thought she and I might very well be trusted alone. I, however, still distrusted the sullen craft of her eye; and that Jew nose, I said to myself, I could never be reconciled to. I saddled and bridled her, with the least tremor of anxiety disturbing me. I was going, for security's sake, to put a curb-bit in her mouth; but father said, 'O, fie, no; you'll spoil her mouth.' So I allowed her the usual champ-bit. She grabbed at it when it was presented to her mouth, as if she understood how near she had been to losing it. I led her out; Joe came forward to hold her head.

'Let him mount by himself,' said my father. 'She must learn to stand without being held.'

She stepped round and round in a staid funereal style, as if performing at a circus. At length I got into the saddle, and, quick as thought, she bolted with me, past Joe, back into the stable. I had just time to think of Absalom's fate before I leant far back over her tail and passed under the low lintel of the door. I was much nettled, but I restrained myself. I got off and led her out again in silence, exchanging with the brute a glance of defiance. She wanted to go through the circus performance again. My blood was rising; I shut my lips and was resolute. I held the rein, but made no effort to mount, till she stopped and looked at Joe, and from Joe to me, as much as to say, 'What does this mean?' Whilst she was considering this, I leaped to the saddle, and away she went, as on the first day I bestrode her, to scrape me off against a fence. Failing in this, she darted forward a few yards into the road, stopped dead, and kicked clear up like a donkey.

'Grip hold o' the saddle be'ind,' cried Joe.

Again was she disappointed. She whisked her tail smartly and dashed away up the lane, as if possessed by all the devils that drove the herd of swine to commit suicide. I pulled my very hardest to rein her in; but the champ-bit could restrain her no more than a rotten stick. 'Well, my pet,' said I aloud, 'go as hard as you can pelt, but I'll stick to you.' Forthwith she began to prance and rear. A gate by chance stood open, and before she was aware I had touched her with my heel and she was in the ploughed field. After plunging and rearing for some time, till I thought the next moment she would fall backward

and crush me beneath her, she played what I had been led to understand was her great trump-card—she lay down and rolled. But her feet were clogged with the soft loam, and the action was not so quick but that I had time to get my foot free from the stirrup. I stood over her, as I had promised myself I would. She glared back at me in surprise. She planted out her fore-feet, preparing to rise. I was ready; remembering Joe's last words, I grasped the saddle behind me. It was well I did, for with the jerk with which she rose she almost jerked me over her head. She seemed to have expected thus to get rid of me She looked round and stood still a moment to consider what she would do next. 'Do what I want you to do,' said I, then touched her with my heel, and guided her across the field. She stepped along steadily enough till she reached the farther side. I had begun in my triumph to despise the clumsiness and fewness of her tricks, and to laugh at myself for having looked forward to her playing of them with such anxiety, when she espied under a wide-spreading oak a breach in the wattle-fence between the field and the road, and dashed straight at it, will I, nill I. Again I thought of Absalom, this time with more propriety. Before I could count six we had passed under the tree; a crooked finger of one of its great arms had snatched my hat—luckily leaving me my head—we were down the steep bank, and tearing along the road as hard as she could gallop.

'This is nice,' thought I, 'very nice.' I must confess I thought bitterly of my father. He had allowed me to be carried off by this brute; he would now be sitting down quietly to lunch at home; but I would lunch at—*where?* The road was straight and firm, and her feet covered mile after mile; while I, hot, tired, and hatless, resigned myself to a Gilpin ride. Ten good miles, through sun and shade, without the interruption of a single turnpike. Up Sharpthorne Hill she slackened pace a little, and I got her danced down the long street of the village of Cripley and into the George yard, twelve miles from home. I shouted eagerly for the ostler, for she seemed inclined to return to the road. A little bow-legged man appeared.

'Had a stiff run, sir?' said he, as he stood at her head and glanced at her lathered shoulders.

'Rather,' said I. I swung myself off, and walked away to find the inn-parlour.

I lunched off the remains of a leg of mutton the innkeeper's family had had for dinner. I rested a little, and then, in a hat

borrowed of the landlord, walked out to the stables to look at the brute. The little ostler had scraped her down and thrown a cloth over her, and she was munching some fragrant hay as if nothing had happened.

'Come from Captain Pumpkin's, sir?' asked the ostler.

I shook my head and looked at him; I guessed what was coming.

'Not?' said he. 'I thought this yere mare was his.'

'Yes, it was,' I replied; 'but my father bought it.'

'Ah!' said he, with a look which added plainly, 'What a green fellow your father must be!' He added aloud, 'P'raps 'e got 'er cheap?'

'I can't say,' said I.

'Well,' said he, 'I thought I knowed 'er, If ye once clap eyes on 'er, you'll easy know 'er agin, you know, sir,' he continued, with a hoarse laugh; 'this yere ear, and the fired pastern. Woa, tit!'

'Ye-es,' said I, in a tone of dolour, and related to him some of our adventures.

'Ah,' laughed he, getting quite lively, 'she *is* a bad un, ain't she? She's the tippest-topper at badness ever I see. So sly, too. Lor' bless you, sir!'

He seemed about to relate some remarkable anecdote of her history, but thought better of it, and said,

'Don't you wear of yerself out with her, sir. She'll break your neck, or break 'er own, afore she's done.'

'Ah!' said I.

'Ride 'ome on this yere 'oss, an' let me walk 'er over in the mornin'.'

O, no, I wouldn't hear of such a thing. I'd ride her back, though heaven should fall. So I mounted and cantered away. I thought I was going to get her home pretty easily; but at the head of the village she turned and gallopped back into the George yard.

Little bow-legs laughed, and asked, 'What will you do, sir?'

'Go in and have a smoke,' said I, 'and try again.'

I went in and smoked a cigar. Then I returned to the brute. I was determined she *should* go home now.

She danced and capered to the no small dismay and delight of the village children and gossips. This seemed to furnish her cunning head with a new idea; for every time she caught sight of a house or cottage with a child or two about she played off

these pranks. Not only so, but she played off again upon me all the tricks of the morning. She lay down and rolled in the road, and managed to give my foot something of a bruise. My patience was entirely gone; I whipped her with a will. She rose, filled with rage and surprise, and tore away home like the wind. When we came to that gap in the fence again, up the bank she shot and under the tree—in whose branches I left my second hat—and away across the field. Now came her final, her grand *coup*. I rode her straight at the hedge, expecting her to clear it, from the way she took the ground; but she stopped dead, with her forefeet in the roots of the hedge, and over I'd have gone head foremost into the ditch, like a sack of coals shot by a coalheaver, had I not feared some such catastrophe and gripped the saddle according to Joe's advice.

I got home about tea-time.

'O, here you are! I thought it was all up with you,' said Joe cheerfully.

'Well,' said my father, 'how did you get on, James?'

'Get on, father? It was not the getting on—it was the keeping on!'

'That's it,' laughed Joe.

My father was silent.

I entered the house. I saw my mother had been crying.

'My dear boy,' she exclaimed, 'what a figure! You're crusted with dirt!' Where's your hat? Are you hurt much? Get the tea made, Sissy. O, it's a mercy you've a whole bone left in your skin!'

'That you haven't walked home with your head under your arm,' said Sissy.

'I did almost leave it stuck in an oak,' said I.

'No-o!' exclaimed Sissy incredulously.

'I've been so dreadfully alarmed,' said my mother, looking tenderly at me, 'all the day. You've been gone six or seven hours.'

'Five and a half, mother,' said I.

'Wherever have you been so long?'

Whilst I was relating my adventures, my father came in and sat down. When I had finished,

'Now promise,' said my mother, 'that you will never ride that brute again.'

'We-el,' I hesitated and looked at my father.

'O, he's going to try her again to-morrow,' said he, with a twinkle in his eye.

'I'll go out myself,' cried my mother, 'and shoot the nasty brute, before he shall mount her again!'

'You don't reckon the loss, my dear,' said father calmly smiling.

'I'd rather lose her ten times over than lose my son.'

'Well, well, my dear, we'll put her down to "The Warren."'

Where she may be seen by any gentleman in want of a 'Thoroughbred Nag, fourteen and a half hands, young, and unbroken,' and unbreakable; for let who will possess her, she has not yet seen the man who can be her master.

HALF AN HOUR WITH A SPORTING PROPHET.

SOME short time ago, owing to the excellent arrangements of the Great Eastern Railway, I found myself landed at the Newmarket Station in advance of the time fixed for the first race. The day was not a very pleasant one; and feeling disinclined to leave the station, I amused myself by scrutinising my fellow-passengers until they left the platform, and then, going into the waiting-room, seated myself by the fire. I had not been there long before a man I had noticed selling cards on the platform came in; he was rather a remarkable-looking man, with clean-shaven face, small dark eyes, and had a very shrewd, not to say cunning, look about him; a very shiny 'topper,' and highly-polished, but very seedy, boots, added to his appearance; and as we were the sole occupants of the room, began a conversation. Soon, however, taking a seat at the table, he produced a large bundle of telegraph-forms from his pocket and began filling them up very rapidly. Presently noticing, I suppose, that I was looking with rather a curious eye at his work, he took up several of them, and pushing them over to me, said,

'There, sir, that's what I am doing.'

On reading them I found they were all telegrams relating to betting and Turf matters to be sent off to young fellows at Cambridge, London, &c., under various pseudonyms—'The Boy round the Corner,' 'Weasel,' 'Auceps,' 'Viator,' &c.; some were to back No. 2 for the Two Thousand, others various other numbers, and one telegram stated amongst other things that Mat Dawson had sent a certain horse a stiff mile and a half gallop that day; this I knew to be untrue, and told the man so, to which he coolly replied,

'Bless you, sir, what does it signify? They likes to fancy theirselves well posted up in racing, and think that they have private information about the horses' work.'

I was very much amused at the man's impudence, and asked him if he really was the person who advertised in the sporting

papers under all those names. He at once acknowledged it, and said he made a very tidy living by it. Seeing, I suppose, that I was very much amused by his story, he went on :

'I does it all quite respectable, and has my regular list and subscribers. Trials is *extry ;* and I expects five per cent on winnings.' Then growing confidential he added, 'This is how I works it ; I takes the list of the horses entered for any big race —the Derby and suchlike—and numbers them all down regular ; then I gets out my "Weasel" paper and begins : No. 1 is a good horse, and must be kept on the right side of the book ; No. 2 ought to about win ; No. 3 comes from a dangerous stable ; No. 4 we should recommend if he had not run so cowardly in the Dewhurst Plate, however another course may suit him better ; No. 5 is in the same stable as No. 3, and directly we know their intentions will forward them ; No. 6 is about held safe by No. 1 ; and so on. Then I goes on as "Viator," and takes the list "t'other" way up, and begins from the end ; and next I begin as "Auceps" from the middle, and works down ; and then as "The Boy round the Corner," I begins in the middle, and works up—what a Cambridge gent once called "permitations," and "combinations ;" and that's how I does it, you see, sir. I don't say none mayn't win, so I must be right ; and then if they wants more "particlars," thems "extry."'

'But,' said I, 'how about the trials that are extra ?'

'Well, sir,' he replied, 'you see I charges heavy fees for they. They ain't altogether pleasant things to be caught at, and I can't say as I holds with going near them, so I puts the fee at a high figure so as to choke them off ; for,' added he, putting on an appearance of intense honesty, 'I don't like to rob people, and always gives them a chance for their money. Besides, I has my character' (he drew himself up in a dignified way) 'to keep up.'

'But do you get paid on your clients' winnings ?' I asked.

'O yes,' he replied ; 'pretty fair for that.'

'But isn't your dodge seen through ?' said I.

'Lor bless you, no, sir,' he said. 'I don't send no "dead uns," and gives them all a chance ; and then when they wins they are just pleased, and says what a wonderful chap "Viator" is, always right. And then them that loses don't like to say so, and either holds their tongues or "purtends" they've won ; so it works that way.'

'Your principal employers, I see, come from London and Cambridge ; don't you get any from Oxford ?' I remarked.

'Why, no, sir, not as a rule; they're too sharp there, and many of the young gents' governors keeps racers. I was at Oxford myself once, sir.'

Seeing me look surprised, as he did not give one the idea of a graduate, he added: 'Assisting a gentleman in the tobacco-business,—leastways, he *called* it that; but he made his money by other things, and at last he carried on so, and got so unparliamentary, that the dons dropped on to him, and he got discommonsed, and had to reduce his establishment; so I left. But Cambridge is a different place altogether; "the scums,"' as he politely termed them, 'sends their sons there, "competitioners" and "standards"' (what he meant by this last term I have not any idea); 'and they lives in such holes and corners and upstairs where an Oxford gent would not keep his dog. But you would be surprised, sir,' he went on, 'if you knew half the people that writes to me for "tips." Lots of ladies writes too, not that they write in their own names; but I spots them at once, they always wants a "certainty," and tries to alter their writing to make it look big and round and man-like; but they always forgets, and makes the first letter natural, and then tries to go on big, but some of their peaky letters and long tails will drop in, so I always twigs them; and then they're so fond of promises. Blessed if I don't think every sort but bishops comes to me.'

Just at this point, another train coming in, he had to run off to sell his race-cards; so his revelations came to an end. But the conversation was literally and exactly as I have stated it, and I can say in corroboration of the man's description of the way he worked his 'permitations' and combinations,' as they had been termed, that, seeing amongst the telegrams two addressed to persons that I knew, I took the trouble to make inquiries of them, and as I was in possession of the secret, discovered at once that the plan was worked as the man told me.

Now this story is literally true, the only exception being that I have altered the pseudonyms that the man used. As may be imagined, I was greatly amused at these candid revelations. Of course I knew that 'tips' were the utterest humbug; but had thought that they came from stable-boys or odd men about the racing-stables who tried to add to their wages by this means, and had no idea that they were merely the offspring of the brain of an unscrupulous vagabond.


TALES OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND