Racing and Chasing

A.E.T. Watson
THE MARE RESPONDED, AND WON CLEVERLY BY A NECK
RACING AND 'CHASING

A COLLECTION OF SPORTING STORIES

BY

ALFRED E. T. WATSON

AUTHOR OF 'SKETCHES IN THE HUNTING FIELD
 'RACE COURSE AND COVERT SIDE' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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To H. B. McCALMONT, Esq. M.P. &c.

The good old fashion of dedication is a pleasant one, as it enables an author to associate his work with the name of a friend. For several years past I have been indebted to your kindness for so much sport and pastime, on land and sea, that I welcome the opportunity of inscribing my little collection of sporting stories to you—an owner of winners ranging from 'Isinglass' to 'Lemon Squash'!

Yours ever,

ALFRED E. T. WATSON.
PREFACE

In these days, when so many books are issued, some excuse seems to be required for the publication of a volume of reprints. I can only plead the cordial reception which was given to my former books, 'Sketches in the Hunting Field,' and 'Race Course and Covert Side,' by the critics and the readers to whom I endeavoured specially to appeal. The world of sport may be a limited one, but that its limits are enormous cannot be doubted by anybody who surveys the crowd at Epsom on the Derby Day, or at Aintree when the horses are at the post for the Grand National. I have to return thanks to Sir William Ingram for the kind permission he gave me to republish those of the following stories and sketches which appeared in the 'Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News' during the years that I edited that journal.

PALACE GATE HOUSE, KENSINGTON:

October 1897.
CONTENTS

A Question of Bits ..............................................
Phyllis and Ophelia ........................................... 19
A Good Day ..................................................... 40
The Great Downshire Handicap ................................. 59
His Own Petard .................................................. 81
A Short Head .................................................... 98
A Run ........................................................... 118
The Wrong Man .................................................. 139
A Good Thing .................................................... 157
Too Clever ........................................................ 178
Fox-hunting: a Sketch for Boys ................................. 202
A Lucky Mistake .................................................. 213
A Morning at Newmarket ....................................... 233
Making the Running ............................................. 252
Steeple-Chasing .................................................. 275
The Derby ........................................................ 292
The Discomfiture of Mrs. Trimmings ......................... 316
An Over-reach .................................................... 328
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FULL-PAGE

The Mare responded, and won cleverly by a Neck. Refused with a deliberation which Spurs and Whip are powerless to affect. Oakley held up his Handkerchief and shouted 'Go!' Even when put side by side with the other, the Likeness was not lost. Gradually drawing away Fortunatus, going well within himself, is coming on Neck and Neck with Puzzle. Hedworth was now Leading. General Truffles, who merely Hunts for an Appetite, is busy. It is wonderful how slippery Saddles are. One Man is placidly sitting on a Gate. 'Any hope of seeing you up North, Sir George?' Hugh read the rest of the Letter to Himself. Passed the improvised Winning-post three lengths to the good. An angry Command from the Huntsman. 'You must go away from my Garden. I cannot have People sitting here!' Sat on a Sofa and regaled the Girls with a Description of the Weather.

Frontispiece to face p. 8

" 14
" 28
" 56
" 76
" 92
" 120
" 124
" 134
" 146
" 150
" 190
" 208
" 320
" 322

IN THE TEXT

Osborne was naturally radiant as he received his Friends' Congratulations. 'Any Advance on £150?.' 'What's that?' I asked.

37
42
49
xii  List of Illustrations

A nice-looking little Boy came forward  . . . .  64
The Chesnut swept by in his Canter  . . . .  74
They all disappeared from his view with amazing suddenness  94
Perkinson set off Walking Homewards  . . . .  96
The little Black Beast  . . . .  107
That turn of the Head  . . . .  108
Fool that he had been!  . . . .  116
Tom turns round with a warning Finger  . . . .  122
A bad Seat and bad Hands  . . . .  128
Neatly slips over a Rail that rises beyond  . . . .  133
On the look-out for Rustic Half-crowns  . . . .  165
The two Animals were just going out  . . . .  169
Fisherman is over First  . . . .  173
‘A nice-looking One, that!’  . . . .  188
Enraged to see the jubilant Look on the Face of Weekes  198
The Boy had all his work to stop him  . . . .  219
‘That little Chesnut Brute goes well’  . . . .  223
‘Roquelaure Wins! Come on, Roquelaure!’  . . . .  226
Morning Exercise  . . . .  239
Cantering by on his Hack  . . . .  241
Between the Canters  . . . .  247
Won in a Canter  . . . .  250
Drove Cecil to Waterloo  . . . .  258
‘You pull back a bit!’  . . . .  269
In the Paddock  . . . .  271
Since our Forefathers had Spins against each other  . . . .  278
Started off on a Steeple-chase forthwith  . . . .  280
Caught his Horse by the Tail  . . . .  283
He comes over in grand style  . . . .  289
Her Interview with his Worship  . . . .  318
It looked almost a Dead Heat  . . . .  330
‘He looks well, doesn’t he?’  . . . .  336
The Flag was up, and down it fell  . . . .  339
CHAPTER I

The Glebeshire Hunt does certainly for the most part fancy itself, as the phrase goes. If you talked of provincial packs to a member of the hunt, it would never for a moment occur to him that you could by any possibility mean to include the Glebeshire, while a secret sentiment prevails in the bosom of many followers of these hounds that High Leicestershire is absurdly over-praised, and that what is called the cream of that famous country is very often only skim milk. There is cream to be found elsewhere, the Glebeshire men think, and there are those elsewhere who can appreciate cream. This pride is sufficiently praiseworthy if it be not excessive. It is well for a man to have a good opinion of his surroundings, and if Glebeshire is not all that fond admirers maintain, it is only fair to admit that a good pack, handled in a sportsmanlike way, run well after straight-necked foxes in a diversified district, and that a very fair proportion of the followers ride well to hounds.

Some men are always dissatisfied under every variety of circumstances, and Henry Lawford, who formed a
prominent figure in a group by the covert side one day in early December, is an instance. Lawford had everything to make him cheerful, except, indeed, that he possessed a disposition which is well described by the word nasty. Whether scent depends on the condition of the ground, or on the temperature, whether Somerville is right, or whether Beckford has good ground for his criticism on the subject in the course of his remarks on the bard of 'The Chase,' is a point which need not be here discussed, especially as the writer's well-grounded (as he supposes) opinions of one season are frequently upset altogether the following year. Men generally think they know when scent will be good. Very often they are wrong; but there is comfort in the hope, and Common Down, the meet of the day, held out every promise. Furthermore, Lawford could ride, and he was mounted on a big bay mare, an ex-chaser that looked extremely like business. Lawford could undoubtedly ride. He had courage, and was thoroughly accustomed to the saddle. He fancied that he was a sound horseman, in the sense of understanding the animal and the delicacies of the art of riding him, and here Lawford was wrong; but men sometimes are wrong in their own estimate of their knowledge of horses. Other instances have been known besides Lawford. Two or three acquaintances, conventionally called friends, were chatting in a group with him as they awaited the arrival of the hounds. There was a good attendance of sturdy Glebeshire farmers on strong, useful-looking animals—the Glebeshire farmer rides heavy; a famous jockey and trainer on a young chaser was there with his daughter on a once famous handicap winner, now a family hunter, and a couple of his sons, one on a pony and the other
on a thoroughbred, which the lad, evidently inheriting the paternal skill, handled with ease and adroitness. The doctor, on the animal that did duty between the shafts; a few red coats, several blacks, and a sprinkling of tweeds, with a concourse of carriages in the green lane which bounded the covert on one side, formed details of the scene.

'So you had a fair thirty minutes on Tuesday?' Lawford says to a visitor from a neighbouring hunt, about which Glebeshire is not jealous—only, somehow, it does not accept very cordially the record of smart things.

'A very good forty,' is the reply.

'Yes, they say forty, I know; but when I hear of runs I always knock off twenty-five per cent. I find you get nearer to it,' Lawford replies, sneeringly.

'You mean that you are likely to arrive at a more accurate estimate of the precise circumstances?' says Starchley, who has an unhappy taste for fine language. Starchley, beautifully got up, never misses a meet, rides up early to the covert side, empties his flask, smokes a cigarette, and after cantering over a field or two, goes home under the impression that he has been hunting.

'You'll find mine a very useful rule,' Lawford continues.

'Repeated experiences warrant its application?' Starchley suggests; but no one answers him, so he has some sherry. The visitor knows Lawford, and does not care about arguing.

'What are you riding, Lawford? Isn't that the beast that bolted with you last week?' another of the group inquires, after glancing down the lane to see if the hounds are in sight.
'Lawford has set up an ironmonger’s shop, and he’s carrying samples in his horse’s mouth,’ someone else says, pointing to the mare’s head, where, in fact, a good deal of metal is hanging.

‘Yes, but I charge ready money, so I can’t serve you, I’m afraid,’ he replies to the last piece of mild chaff. ‘She bolted with me last week, as you say, but I’ll take care she doesn’t do it this time. Halloo! what’s that?’ he continues, pointing to a field on the other side of the road, over which a handsome chesnut mare is progressing in a series of bucks and bounds. She is clearly in a very bad temper. Something has ruffled her equanimity—if she ever had any—and she is doing all she knows—her knowledge in this direction being extensive—to get rid of her rider, a groom who sits very tight and is not much disturbed.

‘What a brute! It’s Chippenham’s—there he is, in that phaeton, with the old lady, his aunt. I wonder how he likes the prospect of riding the chesnut?’ a young man on a steady-looking cob remarks.

‘It doesn’t matter much to him. Now, he’s a good man. Lawford,’ Oakley says; but Lawford does not answer. There is a good man, a very good man, in the hunt, Lawford is known to think; only his name is not Chippenham. ‘He went very straight on Tuesday, you’ll admit?’

‘He did. Quite straight—through a line of open gates. Never turned away from one of them,’ and the pointed ends of his moustache emphasised his sneering smile.

‘He did, and so did Charlton,’ Oakley replies, naming a famous steeplechase rider. ‘He wasn’t donkey enough to jump when it wasn’t necessary. He also went over
Merrow's farm without turning his head, though Charlton on Peeping Peggy nearly got into the brook beyond the spinney. But I forgot, my dear Lawford. You didn't see this, as your mare had put you down in a damp ditch some time before.'

Lawford did not by any means relish the allusion.

'The mare clumsily jumped into a fence and came down,' he says, with a flush on his cheeks. 'It does happen that way sometimes, as you'll find out when you know a little more about it. Even Charlton, you see, was nearly in a mess on a perfect jumper.'

'Chippenham's sapience does not permit him to jeopardise his neck on that animal,' Starchley says, directing attention to the phaeton. The chesnut mare, after refusing for a long time to go near the carriage, had been ridden up to it, and the result of a brief colloquy between master and man was that the mare's head was turned from the scene of action. She carried away a few yards of fence, refusing the gap and declining to jump, and was progressing sideways over the field she had previously crossed, apparently giving very spirited imitations of the severer exercises of the manége.

The sneer on Lawford's face intensified.

'Your straight rider is evidently in a funk. He daren't get on that mare. Doesn't know how to manage her, though with a horseman on her back she'd go well enough. The art of horsemanship doesn't consist entirely of sitting over a fence. It implies a knowledge of the horse and its ways that everybody hasn't got who climbs into a saddle and hangs on by the reins.'

Starchley was on the point of translating this sentence into something elaborate to an uncommon degree when the hounds approached, trotted past the cottages
at the doors of which women and children stood to watch, and so to the covert. It was a bit late, so that after exchanging a few hasty greetings with his friends, the Master nodded to the huntsman, who in turn waved to the pack. In a very few seconds they are in the well-grown coppice, the thick undergrowth of which looked just the place for a fox. As for Chippenham, it was obvious that he did not intend to ride. We had fancied, and somehow or other had hoped, that the chesnut, which unquestionably had been behaving badly, was merely being ridden about till the sport began. Chippenham, however, sat holding the reins of the phaeton horses, as if with no intention of leaving the seat. The chesnut did not reappear. Lawford watched with a contemptuous grin till he entered the covert, which the huntsman was losing no time in drawing up wind.

Of Chippenham we knew little. He had been abroad for a long time, and had only come a few weeks before to stay with his aunt, Lady Stockbridge; but, whatever Lawford might say, Chippenham rode the three or four hunters he had brought down with much skill and courage. We felt that he was a sportsman, and knew that he was a gentleman, while, straight as Lawford did undoubtedly ride, we did not feel that he, with his constant habit of detracting from everyone's good points, could be granted either of those enviable titles which were Chippenham's due.

Something is astir in the covert. A loud halloo resounds from the far end, and the remarks the huntsman is muttering to himself as he canters down the ride a moment afterwards show what opinion he holds of the young enthusiast who did not know when to hold his tongue. If there were time, and our excellent Joe
had the opportunity of five minutes' conversation with
the gentleman who hallooed, the latter's ideas concerning
the rudiments of fox-hunting would be materially
changed. A yell of another kind, however, evidently
means business. The joyful shout of the first whip is
not to be mistaken, and he would not shout unless there
was good reason. A couple of notes on the horn inform
hounds that the occasion for their best energies has
arisen, and away we pour down the ride and through
the hand gate, except some few who turn to the left
through a belt of trees and scramble over the fence,
which gives them no advantage, however, as hounds
speedily swing round to the right. Starchley, with much
regret, throws away a half-smoked cigarette and trots
after the field, now half across a big stubble, out of
which a couple of hares have just cantered with the
easy stride of hares which perfectly well understand that
they are not wanted, and nobody will interfere with
them.

At the end of the field, separating the stubble from
a wide expanse of grass, is a very comfortable fence,
a hedge and ditch, just one of those little places which
give the timid man confidence as his horse glides
quietly over. If by chance there is a stiff post and rail,
or a well-grown, thickly fledged bullfinch at the beginning
of a run before the man who is not quite certain of his
horse, and possibly still less certain of himself, demoral-
sation is not unlikely to set in. To begin well is to do
much. In some parts the fence consists simply of a few
twigs; in others it is thicker, near to the description of
a 'fair hunting fence,' and it is to one of the latter places
that Lawford makes his way. As the mare crosses the
stubble it is obvious that she would bolt for two pins—
supposing that two pins would be anything in the nature of an inducement to a well-schooled mare that has won steeplechases. Chippenham is standing in his trap, watching; Starchley, after looking up and down for the gate, spies one and very placidly trots towards it. The leading division jump the fence as if it were not there, most of the farmers go without looking twice, the trainer and his daughter take no notice of it, but the boy on the thoroughbred blunders in consequence of his eager horse taking off too soon, whereupon the other boy on the cob, the trainer’s younger son, chuckles merrily. With much movement of arms and legs a stranger in a frock coat and a beautiful pair of light trousers, rucked half-way up to his knees already, canters up and gets over; truly, he lands on his horse’s neck, loses a stirrup and drops his hat and whip; but he jumped it. The fence was not the terrific and almost insurmountable obstacle it will be made to appear in his thrilling narration of the incident when he gets back to London. There he is the right side, however, which is much, and in the saddle too, which is more.

But what has become of Lawford, meantime? He, unfortunately, is not the right side. With vivid remembrances of his last day on the mare he has brought a cutting whip instead of a hunting crop, hoping, perhaps, that it may remind her of former expeditions between the flags; and this he plies with a will. She has simply cantered up to the fence and refused to jump, refused with a deliberation which spurs and whip are powerless to affect. Lawford is left by himself, and has sufficient judgment to see that for the moment he cannot have his way in opposition to the mare. A couple of farmers are making for a gate away
to the right. Towards this hounds have swung. As they are going, one side of the fence is as good as the other, so, no doubt with bitter reluctance, he follows after the farmers, goes through the gate—the mare does not mind this—and is not quite the last into the covert for which the fox has made. This covert is newly planted, and the quarry does not dwell. Charlton, who is just before him, turns abruptly to the left. The trainer and his children, Oakley, and one or two more follow, as does Lawford, and before the latter knows where he is he has jumped a really awkward fence, newly and strongly made up, with a ditch on both sides.

So they go, well up with hounds, towards a low post and rails, which the leaders clear in their stride. As they approach Lawford feels a hesitation in the mare's gallop; a cut from the whip and a vicious dig of the spurs she only answers by a shake of the head. She comes down to it, and deliberately refuses. There is no gate here; it is a very long way to hounds by any other road except over, and over the mare will not go. He does all he knows, but he does not know enough to succeed. It was in consequence of her form in the hunting-field, in no way spoilt by her experiences between the flags, that Lawford had bought her, for a long price, when she got a bit too slow for chasing. She had never gone quite kindly with him. They had enjoyed some fair runs—she seemed to like it, but lately had got more and more awkward; had refused to jump, and bolted with him, an occurrence the repetition of which he determined to prevent by providing the severest bit he could come across. Yet she could jump, as her manner of crossing that fence out of the plantation had shown. Lawford used strong language in vain. When hounds were out of sight his
energetic addresses to the animal—vocal and instrumental—had done no good, and in the end, the whole hunt having disappeared, he was constrained to turn round and trot off homewards, the mare bending her head up and down in a regular rhythm, which soon provoked an angry tug at the reins.

CHAPTER II

The next night a number of us dined with the Master of the Glebeshire, Lord Fallowmere. Lawford had by no means recovered that little good temper which occasionally he possessed. His morning occupation had not improved his humour. It was not a hunting day, but he had caused the mare to be saddled, and had set himself to find out what was the matter with her. She was obviously sound enough in herself. Often when horses refuse to jump there is something wrong—a strain, a sprain, some hurt which perhaps leaves little or no outward indication, but is enough to make them shrink from the exertion of a leap. She galloped so strong and well that this could not be the cause of her persistent refusals. She did not go kindly, perhaps, but clearly there was nothing physically wrong. Nevertheless, irritating and perplexing as the morning’s work had been, before we went into dinner Lawford had found something to amuse him. Somebody had said that Chippenham, keen and fearless, would just have liked ‘taking it out of’ the chesnut mare we had seen misbehaving at the meet, only that an old servant of the family who had nursed him when he was a child was
very ill, and he had given up his day's fun in order to drive Lady Stockbridge over to see her.

'Too thin, my dear fellow, a very great deal too thin,' Lawford replied. 'If he had been mounted on a steady-going cob, you may depend upon it he would have let his nurse slide. Nurse! That's a good joke. The ardour of his desire to see his nurse was in proportion to that chesnut mare's kicks. Your straight rider is a fraud!'

'Well, you know, you only rode straight as far as the first fence yesterday, and then you and your mare got as crooked as you could be,' Oakley rejoined, nettled at the sarcasm directed at his friend.

Conversation in their corner of the drawing-room was checked by the entrance of the subject of their remarks, Chippenham himself, and soon after a move was made downstairs, where for a couple of hours the horse and the hound, together with that sporting little beast who is the occasion for so much sport in others, Reynard the Fox, were scarcely mentioned.

With the departure of the ladies men began to talk as they will talk in a hunting country at the table of a M.F.H. Oakley was chaffed about hunting in a green coat when green was not the colour of the hunt, the explanation of which was that he had lately jumped into a very weedy duck-pond, with so thick a layer of vegetation on the surface that, being very short-sighted, and having dropped his glass out of his eye, he had fancied he was landing on to a smooth bit of turf, whereas he was not landing at all. Then the conversation turned on horses that 'looked like jumping.'

'That bay mare of Lawford's looks like jumping till she gets to the fences,' Oakley remarked. 'Now, how are
we to judge her? What about a mare that looks like jumping under those circumstances, and won't jump?'

'Her conformation is noteworthy for the points on which Lord Fallowmere insists,' Starchley rejoins.

'That chestnut animal of yours must look awfully like jumping, Chippenham, for she jumps all over the place when you don't want her to. She ought to be a regular model of a jumper,' Oakley cheerily puts in.

'Inconveniently like jumping, Mr. Chippenham, I should fancy,' Lawford goes on, with intention. 'Happy is the man who has the driving seat of a mail phaeton, which does not jump, to fly to.'

'My mare is rather young at it, but she promises well when she isn't upset,' Chippenham quietly replied.

'I should like to see a match between the pair of them, Chippenham's and Lawford's, if I had nothing to do for the next fortnight. In that time Lawford would get three miles or so if he had luck and went just a bit faster than he did to-day. I haven't seen enough of Chippenham's, but your beast does look like a jumper, Lawford,' Oakley said.

'Yes, I don't remember to have seen one that looks more like it,' Chippenham said, innocently enough; but the speech touched Lawford on the raw. If the horse looked like jumping and did not jump, the inference—whether intended or not—was that the fault lay with the rider. Lawford, as already observed, fancied himself, not without some sort of reason, and it was a very sore point with him that he had been left at the fence over which such a rider as that young man in the frock coat had succeeded in crossing. His dinner had not done him any good, and he was quite ready to differ from anybody. If he could persuade Chippenham, of whom
the others seemed to hold an absurdly good opinion, to get on the mare which so steadily refused to do what he had bought her to do, his character as a horseman would be to a great extent vindicated, and a man of whom he had conceived a violent jealousy would be humiliated. Moreover, he was convinced that the story of the nurse was a fiction, and that Chippenham had in truth funked.

'If you think my mare looks so much like jumping, Mr. Chippenham, no doubt you can make her jump. She carried me well enough early in the season, and if you are a horseman, she will probably carry you equally well, though she was awkward yesterday. Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you a hundred she refuses with you if you ride her next time we are out; or I'll bet you another hundred you don't get her over the course the point-to-point chase was run across last month; or—yes, here's an idea—I'll ride you a match. I've got old Crusader at home; he's just about the mare's form—perhaps a bit worse—it's a very near thing between them. I'll ride you a match for a monkey, if you like. You on my mare that you seem to think so well of.'

'I don't bet hundreds and monkeys, thanks,' Chippenham answered. 'I only remember your mare when Gates had her, and she was useful then in moderate company. I saw her jump out of a covert yesterday as if she were sound enough.'

Gates, it should be remarked, is a gentleman rider who trains a few horses for his friends, has a great many of his own, and through whose stables nearly all the second-class chasers on the turf pass during their career.

'Then let's have some fun,' Lawford, whose idea of
fun was rather saturnine, responded; 'and we can’t if you go hunting with ladies in phaetons. It’s safe, I know, but it’s less amusing, I should think. Come! let’s make a match of some kind.'

'Go on,' Oakley said, encouragingly. 'I should like to see what you could do with Lawford’s mare. Ride her against Crusader.'

'I have no objection, if you think it will entertain you,' Chippenham said, and terms were arranged. The match was to be for 25l. a-side, as Chippenham was not a betting man. He was to have the mare for a week under his charge—she was already pretty fit to go—and on the following Thursday he was to ride over the point-to-point course against Lawford on his horse Crusader. Not without satisfaction Lawford remembered that the course in question included two of the jumps which his mare had very decidedly refused with him; and where a horse refuses once it is very apt to refuse again.

The secret of the match had of course crept out—it would scarcely have been a secret had it been otherwise. Quite a little crowd was assembled on the afternoon named at the gate from which the point-to-point chase had lately been held, and opinions were divided—Lawford for choice. Everybody had seen him go, and knew that he went well. Crusader, like the mare, was a cast-off from a training stable, had not lost the knack of galloping, and might with the utmost confidence be depended on to jump safely and steadily. Nevertheless, there was a feeling abroad that Chippenham could ride. The mare might, not improbably, refuse; all the same there was a chance of a race, and when the pair arrived on the spot the impression was strengthened. Crusader seemed to understand what was before him, and worked
his intelligent ears as if listening to the comments that were made. The mare, too, looked well, and went kindly enough; but this she was accustomed to do until she came to a fence and upset herself, if not her rider. Chippenham, in a double-seamed black coat, sat down in his saddle in a business-like way; Lawford, in a tweed jacket, was no less calculated to inspire his backers with confidence. Starting them was a very simple matter. Oakley held up his handkerchief and shouted ‘Go!’ as he flapped it into his pocket. Both jumped off at the word, Crusader in front till they neared the first fence, a hedge on the top of a bank, with a ditch on the take-off side, and as he came to this Lawford pulled back, leaving the mare in front. With a lead she might have done it; from what he knew of her he felt pretty sure that, coming to it by herself, she would decline to face it, and he recognised with pleasure those symptoms of refusal which he knew so well—the shortening stride, and the head moving from left to right and right to left. Instead of the easy swinging action there was a slight pause and jerk each time her forelegs touched the ground. Lawford was smiling sardonically, certain of a refusal, when the expression of his face suddenly changed. Clumsily as the mare approached her fence, she thought better of it at the last moment and scrambled over, pecking as she landed, for which, however, Chippenham was prepared.

Crusader was across without an effort, and went at once to the front again to try the same trick next time, a post and rails being the obstacle. As Lawford slackened speed, however, Chippenham slackened too, and they went over side by side. Lawford could not understand it. With every advantage in the way of
leads the mare had persistently refused with him; now, the first two jumps surmounted, she went on quite kindly. There was nothing for it but to hope that the open brook would settle her, for she never quite liked water. To this they came when some two miles had been covered. With much skill, sure of his horse as he was, Lawford half stopped him as they came close to the water, the result of which was that he dropped his hind legs, and only got over with a scramble. Chippenham felt unpleasant sensations as of an impending refusal, well as he and his mount had got on since the first fence. A grasp of the reins, at once firm and gentle, and a pressure of the legs kept her straight. On the brink her old instincts seemed to revive; she landed well over and went on willingly and gaily. Half a mile from home, with four fair hunting fences to cross, Chippenham was quite comfortable, going at his ease a length in front of Crusader, and as they neared the little group placed near the tree which did duty for a winning post, the sound of a whip and the fact that Crusader's nose could not be forced in front of the mare's girths showed Chippenham that all was well. So they brushed through the last fence, and passed the 'post,' the mare a couple of lengths to the good.

'I don't understand it!' Oakley said. 'Why will she jump with Chippenham when she won't with her own master, for Lawford can ride?'

'It is an occurrence which demands elucidation,' Starchley rejoined.

'What's the dodge? How's it done, Chippenham? Here I've gone and laid 5 to 4 on Lawford and you've been and beaten him,' Oakley inquired, as the pair, having pulled up, rode back, Lawford decidedly sulky.
Chippenham's somewhat sedate features were lightened by a smile. He was unquestionably pleased at the result.

'No dodge at all. Rather an absence of dodges,' he answered; and curiosity overcame discontent on Lawford's face as he listened. 'It was merely a question of bits. I remember the mare when Gates had her. No one could hold her; the stiffer the bit the more she pulled and the less she jumped. I've known other horses, too, that go very quietly and comfortably in the easiest of bits, and won't go at all when their masters put on all sorts of patent contrivances. When I saw the mare with what Oakley called an ironmonger's shop in her mouth, I thought very likely she would not go kindly. I tried her with the easiest bit I could find.

'Why, that's only a bit of rolled leather in her mouth now, isn't it?' Oakley said, inspecting the mare's lips, from which the ironmonger's shop had lately depended.

'That's all, and she doesn't pull in the least,' Chippenham answered. He was perfectly right. Other men before him have by experience learnt the secret he on this occasion successfully put into practice. Lawford listened with evident surprise on his face, and Oakley noted it.

'The way she jumped out of that covert the other day, when she was suddenly wheeled round and ridden at the fence before she had time to think about it, showed that she could jump, so I felt certain it was the bit,' the winner of the match continued.

'What was that you told us the other day, Lawford?' Oakley says, smiling at the discomfited owner of the mare that had won. 'The art of horsemanship does not
consist altogether of sitting on at a fence. It implies a knowledge of the horse and his ways, that everyone who climbs into a saddle and hangs on by the reins hasn’t got! Wasn’t that it? I don’t mean to say that you hang on by the reins, but when it comes to horsemanship you are several lengths behind Chippenham.'
PHYLLIS AND OPHELIA

CHAPTER I

The industry of horse training is much more widely spread than would be imagined by those who are accustomed to see a score or so of familiar names in sporting records. There are numbers of little men whose fame for good or evil is merely local, half trainers, half horse dealers, sometimes livery stable keepers as well, to the extent, at least, of letting out a hunter or two in the season. Such a one was James Dossie, of the Common Farm, Downleigh, who on a certain November morning a year or two since was strolling to and fro before the gates of his stable-yard as if waiting for somebody.

'"Good enough to win a little race,'" he muttered to himself, glancing at a letter which he held in his hand. 'Yes! I think we can manage that. Thomas!' he called out, and from the saddle-room a neat-looking light-weight groom appeared. 'How's the grey horse?'

'Oh, he's fining down. He'll get right enough till he's put into strong work again, and then he'll go,' Thomas answered, in a careless offhand manner, which showed that the relations of master and servant were on anything but a formal footing.

'Take his bandages off. There's someone coming to
buy a horse directly; a young fellow who's staying at the Manor House, and wants something good enough to win a little race with. Soldier, I judge he is. How did King Cole go this morning?' Dossie continued; for Thomas had superintended the exercise on the neighbouring downs, as he usually did, unless there chanced to be anything special in the wind.

'Went very short. He won't get through this bout, I guess,' Thomas answered, 'and that chesnut mare makes a worse noise every day. I don't know what's to be done with her. Hulloa! here's somebody! I suppose that's the one you expect?' and Thomas disappeared into the saddle-room, leaving the proprietor of the establishment to receive his visitor, a quiet soldier-like man of thirty, who had ridden up to the gates of the yard, and thrown his reins to a lad who came forward to take the horse.

'Mr. Osborne?' Dossie said, interrogatively. 'Glad to see you, sir.'

'Yes, I am Mr. Osborne. You got my letter, of course? It just occurred to me that you might have something in your stable that would suit me—something just about good enough to have a chance of winning a little race at Aldersham next month. Colonel Lockhart, a friend of mine, who bought Oddity from you some time ago, recommended me to look through your stable, and as I am staying a few miles off, I thought I would ride over and see what you had.'

'Glad to see you, sir,' Dossie repeated, much relieved to hear that one of his customers had been pleased with his purchase, which probably was not much of a rule when he sold a horse, his business lying to a great extent among those animals that did not improve upon
acquaintance when taken home. 'He was a sweet little horse, was Oddity, and I told the Colonel he would do us credit. Will you step this way, please, sir? Here's a little grey I should like you to look over,' and Thomas, coming forward at this moment, opened the door of one of the stables by which the yard was bounded on three sides.

The grey was stripped. Osborne looked him over carefully, and Dossie followed his glances keenly to note on what they rested. Osborne's eyes lingered on hocks that told a tale not to be mistaken by a practical horseman, and Dossie saw that he had something of a judge to deal with.

'Is he sound?' Osborne asked.

'Well, sir, I can only say that he's been doing well enough since I've had him, but I believe the man I bought him from had a bit of trouble with him,' Dossie answered, seeing that a little candour would make a good foundation for future assertions. 'I never sell a gentleman a horse without saying what I know and what I think. Now, there's a fine upstanding horse, sir. King Cole we call him, won a couple of steeplechases in the spring,' he continued, as Thomas turned back the clothing.

'No. I don't care much for King Cole,' Osborne remarked, for the horse's legs all round showed traces of a hard life. 'I want a horse that I can hunt when he has won a race or two, perhaps, and I should ask you to keep him here, in the first place, and prepare him for his engagement.'

That altered the case considerably. There was more to be made out of Osborne than the casual profit of a deal, and, as a matter of fact, Dossie had the animal
that was wanted in his stable, though he had not proposed to show her and let her go into other hands before he had talked the affair over with Thomas and with Mr. Sharpe, the 'gentleman rider' who performed on Dossie's horses. Thomas was a shrewd, hard-headed man of thirty, whose face and manner belied him. He looked a decent, civil servant, one who was meant by nature for a groom, and was at once recognised as that and nothing else. He had been in two or three good services, but an inclination towards roguery had proved irresistible, had destroyed his prospects when allowed full play, and so he was landed as factotum to Dossie, who was a keen hand at a bargain and knew his way about well enough, but had in the course of some two years been taught more sharp practice of the modern school by Thomas and Mr. Sharpe than he had gathered in a good deal more than forty years' experience of men and horses.

'Well, sir, I think I have just what you want. Will you step this way, please, sir?' Dossie said, leading the way across the yard to the opposite stable and opening the gate of a loose box.

'That's more like it, Mr. Dossie!' Osborne remarked, as he looked over a handsome bay mare that came forward amicably with her nose out to investigate her visitors.

'Handle her, sir—handle her!' Dossie exclaimed. 'The more you know of her the more you'll like her. She's as quiet as a lamb. Good all round, I think you'll say, sir. No fear of her not jumping, with those shoulders and quarters—but perhaps you'd like to throw your leg over her, sir? Certainly! By all means! Put a saddle on, Thomas!'
Phyllis and Ophelia

Dossie was so unused to selling a horse that really would bear strict inspection, that he almost overdid the part of the honest dealer. There was, as a very general rule, some weak point about the animals he offered for sale, and one that might be handled in the stable and freely tried outside was not often forthcoming. He had picked the mare up cheaply a few weeks before, at the sale, one miserably wet day, of the stud of a youthful plunger who had broken himself in three years after coming of age. Mr. Sharpe had not been to the stables for some time, and Dossie was waiting his arrival in order to discuss the best mode of proceeding. To sell it at a handsome profit, to keep it in the stable, to train and win a race with it at someone else’s expense, seemed a satisfactory thing to do, and Phyllis, as she was called, was offered accordingly. So far as looks went she was well enough. There was, indeed, nothing particularly striking about her, but she appeared sound and honest, and submitted to the operation of saddling with perfect good-humour, for Osborne had expressed his wish to give her a bit of a gallop, as Dossie suggested.

The downs were almost at the stable-door, just across the road. Osborne mounted, walked through the gate, passing the reins through his fingers, while Dossie and Thomas looked on.

'Jump her, sir. Do what you like. Throw her down if you can; but you can’t do that, I know,' the trainer said. Osborne, nodding, leant forward in the saddle, and off they went. The canter increased to a gallop as the mare left the watchers, but she was easily restrained, and came back heading for a row of hurdles that ranged in a line away to the left. The mare pricked
her ears and slid over in excellent style, finishing the gallop with a jump over a biggish made-up fence. Osborne’s good-natured face was slightly flushed, and his dark eyes sparkled as he trotted back to where Dossie stood.

‘Well, sir?’ the trainer asked.

‘Yes, Mr. Dossie, I like her much. She seems sound and good-tempered. What do you ask for her?’

Then followed the arrangement of terms, the arguments concerning which, as set forth by Dossie, need not be quoted at length. Her performances were naturally magnified; the races she had won were described in flowing terms; plausible excuses were made for her defeats. Osborne hated haggling, and made little demur when the price was named. Three hundred pounds down, fifty pounds more if the mare won the Regimental Challenge Cup, to win which was Osborne’s object in making the purchase. Meantime she was to stay and be trained at the usual rate. Osborne, as he mounted his hack and trotted along the road towards the Manor House, some ten miles off, where he was paying a duty visit to a somewhat dull party of elderly relatives, was perfectly well satisfied with his morning’s work; and Dossie, who had picked up the mare for rather less than a quarter of the sum he had received, was by no means displeased with his share of the transaction. Osborne wanted an animal that would have a good chance of winning the Challenge Cup at the Aldersham meeting, and his friend Lockhart had written to him to say that Dossie might possibly have a likely horse. ‘I hear he’s a shocking old thief, but he behaved well enough to me, and you can take care of yourself. As you are so near, you may as well go over and say I told you of him.
Perhaps he’s not such a rascal as they say, and at any rate fellows like that are glad to keep straight with a few people if they can,’ Lockhart had written.

CHAPTER II

Some three weeks after Phyllis had been bought and entered, Mr. Sharpe paid his visit, unusually long deferred, to the Common Farm, where, one morning, he might have been observed leaning back in a chair in Dossie’s business-room, puffing moodily at a cigar. Dossie was seated at the other side of the fire, looking bewildered, and seeking inspiration from apparently pressing trouble in brandy and water, while Thomas, a Newmarket snaffle bit in one hand, and a piece of wash-leather in the other, was standing at the table.

‘It’s a confounded nuisance!’ presently Sharpe said. ‘The whole thing fitted in so well. The mare is qualified to run in France; she could hardly be beaten, and is certain to start at a good price, for it isn’t likely to leak out that Vivandière and Quick March won’t be spinning. Instead of that, Phyllis goes to Aldersham, where she isn’t wanted, for she’ll beat the horse I sold to Major Congreve, and that’s quite good enough to win with her out of the way—at least, it ought to be.’

‘Yes, it’s a nuisance, as you say; but what’s to be done? I can’t kid young Osborne the mare’s dead and then send her to France. What a pity you didn’t tell me sooner!’ Dossie answered.

‘I did tell you that I had a game on for the mare if she was as good as you said, and I thought, of course, you’d keep her till you saw me,’ Sharpe responded, in a
surly tone. 'It's no good wrangling about it, though it's desperate bad luck, and as for backing the mare at Aldersham, I don't care for that much when an outsider has the ride.'

Thomas, from the other side of the table, looked up. 'You haven't been to Horley these last few days, have you, Mr. Sharpe?' he asked.

'No; nor these last few weeks for the matter of that. Why?'

'Because I see rather a funny thing there. In the last lot of horses that Tim Wetheral had from the Curragh there's a mare the very spit of Phyllis—an aged mare, same shade of colour, same star, and same white heel. Funniest thing I ever saw! I thought the gov'ner had sent Phyllis over for something or other when I came across her first; but there she is,' Thomas said.

Both the listeners turned with interest to the speaker. 'And what then?' Sharpe presently asked. 'What sort is she?'

'Very bad, they say. As slow as a man; can get over a fence, but isn't likely to win unless everything else falls down. Tim says it's no good running her, only if their horses don't win once or twice, somebody generally thinks they're being kept for something, and buys them. They've got rid of one or two that way that was no good at all.'

'Well?' Sharpe continued, as the groom laid down the bit and cloth on the table.

'Well, supposing the gov'ner bought the mare, and——'

'I see!' Sharpe broke in, nodding with a cunning twinkle of the eyes to Dossie, who was also just breaking his way through the mystery. 'You're no fool, Thomas.
I see what you mean. Send Phyllis to France, and let our young friend have the other one. But are you sure the likeness is as close as you say?'

'I tell you I had to look more than once before I was sure it wasn’t Phyllis, and he’s seen her just twice—the day he bought her, and one morning when he came to see her gallop in her clothing,' Thomas answered.

'If that’s so, it’s a rattling good dodge, and you are on a pony if it comes off. When can we see her? Where’s a railway guide? There’s no time to be lost.'

In less than two hours Dossie and Sharp were on their way to Horley, where Wetheral, a kindred spirit who kept an establishment somewhat similar to that presided over by Dossie, was to be found. There was no false delicacy about the transaction, and the visitors came to the point at once when Wetheral had exchanged greetings, and poured out the inevitable drink. Leading the way to the stall where the mare stood, Wetheral stripped off her clothing; and the two gazed with astonishment at the animal—Ophelia she was called—whose likeness to Phyllis, even to their practised eyes, was amazing.

'Thomas was right. Smart chap, that—very smart,' Sharpe said, and Dossie nodded assent, his gaze still fixed on the mare.

'It’s wonderful! They are as like as two peas. How’s she bred?' he asked. 'Both Solons? Well, that’s odd, though it doesn’t account for the likeness.'

It was, indeed, a strange accident. Wetheral was ready enough to sell, and the mare returned to the Common Farm with her new master. Even when put side by side with the other, the likeness was not lost—scarcely diminished. Phyllis was a shade the taller and
bigger horse, and her colour was a thought darker. The blazed faces varied very slightly. On the whole it was really hard to tell which was which when the pair were not together, and anyone but an exceedingly careful observer might readily have made a mistake even when they were.

When the two were seen out at work the difference was distinct enough. Phyllis was a freer jumper, galloped in better form, and was, all things considered, a good 21 lb. in front of Ophelia. The two varied so much that, there was no disguising it, a really good horseman like Osborne might be led to suspect, or at least to wonder at, the alteration in his mare's way of galloping and jumping; but for various reasons horses do lose their action and jump indifferently at times; and to suspect and to prove are different things. Wetheral was safe enough; Sharpe and Thomas were implicated in the fraud; the other boys at Dossie's place knew nothing and were not likely to learn anything—it was Dossie's whim to try and have boys about him who could neither read nor write; it might save trouble, he said, and, besides, in this case there was no writing to show anything. Phyllis was going to run in France, and once there (in the name of Ophelia, of course) was not likely to be recognised; if she were, proof was again well-nigh impossible, even if the suspicious person strove to arrive at facts. What could be said? Ophelia, b. m., aged, by Solon—Lady Jane, simply took the place of Phyllis, b. m., aged, by Solon—Aspasia. Who was to show that one was the other? If it came to hard swearing, Wetheral would have been bad to beat; and so the business was settled. Both took their gallops together, for the race in France (which a stealthy rumour declared was a good thing for Ophelia
—*i.e.* Phyllis—because the owners and jockeys of the two most dangerous opponents were *going for her*) was, as it happened, run on the same day as the Aldersham race, which Osborne would have won on Phyllis had all gone well, but which it was arranged he was to lose on the substituted Phyllis (*i.e.* Ophelia).

The completeness of the arrangement was derived from the fact that Sharpe had sold to a man in the regiment a chaser which would be quite good enough, under ordinary circumstances, to win the Regimental Challenge Cup, and Sharpe was *on* a hundred to nothing if it won. The excellence of Osborne's mare had crept out, however, and as soon as betting began on the race it was sure to be favourite; when, by backing the other and laying against the supposititious Phyllis, something extra might be made. The whole thing was delightfully plain and simple, and no less safe. It was difficult to see how a slip could occur, and the rogues chuckled to themselves as they thought of their own cleverness and the lucky way things had fallen out.

Both went on well in their respective fashions. Phyllis—the true Phyllis—improved greatly in her business, and got better every day; Ophelia looked the picture of health and condition, but galloped as if her legs were tied, and could never learn to get away from her jumps. The day arrived when they were to be sent away, Phyllis to France and Ophelia—to give the animals their right names—to Aldersham, for Osborne had decided to take her in good time so that she might have a school over the course. But just then a somewhat awkward event happened. Soon after the horses had come in from exercise a hack cantered up to the stable-door, and Osborne dismounted. Dossie, who was preparing to
despatch the two mares, happened to see his client, and recovered his surprise before he was obliged to speak.

'Very glad to see you, sir,' was his exceedingly untruthful greeting. 'You've come to have a look at the mare, I suppose? She's very well, I'm glad to say, sir. I was just going to send her on to the station,' and he showed his visitor a label with the mare's name, and Captain A. V. Osborne, Aldersham Station, written on it, slipping into his pocket at the same time another label with a different address that was to have been attached to Phyllis's collar.

'Thanks. Yes, I should like to see her. In the same box?' Osborne said, half leading the way to the spot where she had stood before, and where, in point of fact, she was still standing. 'I should have been over before; I hoped to come and ride a gallop or two, but the illness of a relative has prevented me. I feared, indeed, that I should not be able to ride at all, but things have taken a turn for the better. I was half afraid the mare would have gone, but now I can see her off. Yes! she looks well, indeed,' he continued, as Dossie stripped her. 'I'm indebted to you, Mr. Dossie, for the care you've taken. She ought to be about good enough to win.'

'Yes, sir, and I'm very much obliged for what you are pleased to say. I always do my best for gentlemen, and it's satisfactory when they recognise it,' Dossie, slowly recovering from his confusion, answered. 'I didn't even know you was in the neighbourhood, or I should have been proud to see you.'

'Never mind, Mr. Dossie. There she is, and that's the great thing. When I wrote to you last week fixing the train for you to send her by, I did not know that I could get down. What's that? The grey I saw before?
Phyllis and Ophelia

Those hocks don't look like winning races, do they? What's that mare? he added, pointing to Ophelia, who, Dossie was relieved to see, stood, well clothed, in a dark corner box.

'Oh, that's nothing, sir. My daughter's hack. I've just put her in there as I was pressed for room,' was Dossie's unblushing reply, and to divert attention he busied himself about Phyllis.

'Time to be starting, if she goes quietly to the station, isn't it? You call it four miles, don't you?' Osborne asked. 'I'll see her off, and then I must get back, for I can't follow till an evening train.'

Sharpe and Thomas, peeping round the corner of the saddle-room door, saw the unfortunate Dossie fixing his card to Phyllis's head-stall, and in a few minutes—earlier than was necessary, for Dossie was burning with anxiety to get his client out of the stable—the mare was prepared for the journey, turned round, and trotted off by one of the boys towards the station. Sharpe, who wanted to call at the saddler's shop in the town, mounted a hack, and set off on his journey, accompanied by Thomas, riding Ophelia.

'I'll see that it's all right,' Mr. Sharpe said, nodding significantly to Dossie, as he got into the saddle.

'You understand how it is?' the trainer said. 'You see, I had to put the wrong label on; but when you get to the station you'll have a chance, or, if not there, at some station where you stop, you can just——'

'Yes, I know; leave it to me,' Mr. Sharpe added, turning his hack's head, and following Thomas into the road.
CHAPTER III

The horses were duly boxed, and Sharpe took his place in his carriage, well supplied with his favourite sporting papers. He perfectly well understood what he had to do. Perhaps it would have been better to have done it before the train started, but, after all, it did not much matter. Before reaching Aldersham the train stopped for five minutes, and, slipping into the box in which Dossie's animals were travelling, he neatly and expeditiously changed the labels on the two mares' head-stalls, fastening the strings a good bit tighter than Dossie had fastened them. Osborne's groom was waiting at the Aldersham station to take charge of the mare, and she was safely handed over to him; after which Sharpe returned to his seat, for he was bound for London, in order that he might himself see the so-called Ophelia despatched on her journey across the Channel. A boy was to go with her; but he was a country lout, more than likely to get into the wrong train unless started on his way and placed under the supervision of the guard. Sharpe had plenty to amuse him, particularly in wondering what Osborne would think when he got on his mare, and what would be the sentiments of backers of Vivandière and Quick March when they found how far those animals were from their book form in the French race. His sale of the horse, Dobbin by name, to Major Congreve, of Osborne's regiment, was a perfectly bona fide transaction. Hearing indirectly that such a horse was wanted, he had negotiated the business, and Congreve, who had the most casual 'racecourse acquaintance' with Mr. Sharpe, had put him on 100l. to nothing if the horse won.
The excellent chance of the prospective hundred was not the least agreeable matter in Mr. Sharpe's thoughts, as he sped on his return journey to Aldersham on the morning of the race, a couple of days after, especially as the hundred would bring more money with it, both by reason of Dobbin's win and of 'Phyllis's' inevitable defeat. She was favourite at 2 to 1, Dobbin was at 7 to 1, and he had laid against one and backed the other. Of course he was going to assist Congreve all he could, saddle the horse, and give such advice as seemed likeliest to be of avail. Mr. Sharpe, it will be understood, though a 'gentleman rider,' duly elected, was, in plain English, a professional steeplechase jockey, who rode under false pretences; but that is too common an occurrence to excite surprise. In any case, he had a thorough knowledge of his business, and Congreve was extremely glad to meet him in the paddock before he went to dress for the Challenge Cup.

'Halloa! Here we are! That's all right!' the Major, who was rather a novice at the business, exclaimed as he met Sharpe. 'The horse is third favourite, but they're backing something called Phyllis all over the ring. A man in the regiment—Osborne his name is—got hold of it at Dossie's—you know him, don't you? Haven't I seen you ride his horses? Do you know anything about this one? They say she went in wonderful style over the course yesterday morning. Perhaps you know her?'

'No, I don't think I do. Let's see. Is it a bay mare with a white off heel? I fancy I've seen something with a name like that down there,' Sharpe answered.

'Yes, that's the mare—rather good-looking—blaze on her face. Is she any good?'
'I should say not, if it's the one I mean. If you can lay 50l. against her, I'll go halves in the bet; that'll show you what I think,' Sharpe replied. 'There's nothing at Dossie's just now likely to interfere with us.'

'I'm uncommonly glad to hear you say so—uncommonly glad, I can tell you. It put me into an awful funk, for the mare looks so well, and she has won races, you know. But if you know her, that's all right. I can lay 60l. to 40l. against her, no doubt, and that's how they bet now she's getting a warm favourite,' the Major replied.

Sharpe was strongly inclined to laugh, but suppressed the inclination. Everything seemed ready to his hand. The true Tommy Tiddler's ground was evidently a race-course where affairs were going right.

'There she is! That's the one!' the Major suddenly exclaimed, pointing across the paddock to the familiar figure of the bay mare. 'That's it, is it? I'm awfully glad. Ah! There's ours,' he added, as a big chestnut, which might have been called a bit clumsy by enemies, was led up. 'I'll go and get into my things.'

Congreve retired, and Sharpe went to superintend the saddling of the horse. While engaged in that operation, Osborne, in a pink and white hooped jacket, walked past him, but he had never seen Sharpe, or at least did not know him. Congreve, in a purple jacket and white cap, was not long in appearing. Dobbin was now second favourite, for when stripped the animal that had been most fancied after Phyllis was found to be very big and a trifle lame, while the rest of the field were for the most part a rather sorry lot—none, at least, looking dangerous; besides, Congreve could ride a little—well enough to do all that was necessary on such a comfortable horse as
Dobbin, if only he could be persuaded to let his mount alone, a lesson which Mr. Sharpe used his best efforts to enforce.

The course at Aldersham is not a good one for spectators. To see all the way round it is necessary to run backwards and forwards, in the midst of a crowd, to say nothing of chairs and seats, up and down the top of a hill; and Sharpe lingered in the ring when the horses had gone down to the post, to have a few last bets, and to give those he knew a hint to lay against the favourite. He did not, therefore, see the start, nor observe how one man tumbled off at the drop-fence, how two men came to grief with their horses at the open ditch, how one was shot over his horse's head into the brook, and another ran out, leaving only six competitors in the race. A rider in a white jacket was a hundred and fifty yards ahead, when he, too, toppled over a fence, and Dobbin was left with the lead; for Sharpe had told his rider not to keep too far behind the others, but not to be flurried if one or two got a long way in front in the first mile and a half, as they would probably begin to come back before the second of the three miles was finished.

Dobbin was going well enough. What much surprised Sharpe, when presently he fixed his glasses on the race, was that Phyllis seemed to be going well also. There was nothing in it yet. Condition would do much for a horse that came out of a training stable in a race against a lot of animals prepared at home; but still the mare seemed to jump more easily, and to gallop much more freely, than she had done at the Common Farm. Without a semblance of effort she kept her place a length or two behind Dobbin; and though the pace was very
Phyllis and Ophelia

moderate the others were beginning to tail off. Over the drop the second time Dobbin blundered a bit. Congreve sat tight, and pulled his mount together again very neatly, but this let up the mare, who now was holding her own quite easily, while Dobbin was beginning to labour. Congreve gave his horse a dig with a spur, and that put him a couple of lengths to the good again, but nearing the brook for the last time, Dobbin had to be waked up with the whip, and the mare, not yet touched, swung over and landed by his side.

What could it mean? Sharpe had the line between them clearly enough. They were running at even weights, and Dobbin had, or should have had, a good 21 lb. in hand. It did not look like it, however. As they neared the last fence Congreve was riding hard to keep his place. The mare was first over, and to all appearance winning anyhow. But Congreve was not to be beaten without making a fight for it. Sitting down, he did all he knew, and old Dobbin answered gamely to his calls. But it was no sort of use. Osborne, sitting quite still, watched over his left shoulder the struggles of his friend, and some sixty yards from the winning post let out the mare, who came away and won hands down by a couple of lengths.

Sharpe stood still for a minute before he could believe it. The mare had won, and won easily. There was the number up, and the spectators were cheering. The race was over, and his schemes were upset—how, he could not tell, but upset they were. It was not in an amiable frame of mind that he made his way to the paddock, but it was necessary to see the Major and say what could be said. Osborne was naturally radiant as he received his friends' congratulations—and friends are sincere
when they have backed you and won their money—while the Major was not unnaturally depressed.

'If that's no good, mine must be a very bad one,' he gloomily remarked, nodding towards where the mare was being led away; and at the moment a horrible suspicion began to dawn upon Sharpe! Before he could frame it in his own mind the Major's servant approached him with a telegram in his hand. It was addressed to

Osborne was naturally radiant as he received his Friends' Congratulations

Sharpe, from Auteuil Racecourse. He had asked his French confederate to send him a wire to Aldersham as soon as their race was over, and this was it. He opened it and read:—

'Mare beaten a hundred yards in a bad field.'

Then the suspicion took distinct form.

After all, Osborne must have got the true Phyllis, and the Ophelia, which had been sent to Auteuil, was in
truth what she purported to be, the veritable Ophelia! Could that possibly be it? What else could it be? And yet he had most certainly changed the cards, as he had told Dossie he would do, and he was positive, moreover, that the mare he intended to give to Osborne's servant had been given to him.

The stupefaction with which Dossie received the news of how the two good things—the four good things, for there were two horses to back and two to lay against—had been upset, and the rage of Thomas, when it was found that his neat trick had been ruined, are not easily to be described; nor would a detailed description of the scene which took place when Sharpe made his next appearance at Common Farm be edifying.

By degrees the facts came out. Thomas, on arriving at the station on the real Ophelia, had, while putting the mares into the box, removed the label from her head-stall and substituted that which Dossie had fastened on to Phyllis. It was his scheme, and he supposed that the working of it had been left in his hands. Sharpe, on the other hand, had told Dossie to ‘leave it to him,’ and had undertaken to ‘see that it was all right.’ Having no idea that Thomas had changed the labels already, he had simply changed them back again, as before described. Osborne, therefore, had the mare he had bought, and the real Ophelia had been sent to France.

'Well!' Osborne said, in the smoking-room of his club one night some months afterwards, when Dossie and Sharpe had bungled over a swindle and had been warned off, 'I'm sorry about it. I suppose Dossie must be a scamp—Sharpe I know nothing of—but on the principle of speaking of a man as you find him, I
must say he behaved very well to me. I wanted something to win the Challenge Cup last year, you know. I asked him if he had anything, and he said he though he had. He sold me Phyllis, trained her for me, and she was even better than he led me to suppose. He certainly acted on the square with me over that business.'

'Ye—es,' said Congreve, contemplatively; but the acquiescence seemed halfway between doubt and denial. There was something about it all that Congreve could not quite understand.
'The first good day I really ever had,' the Major said, 'was not a little curious, because it all happened by the most ridiculous of flukes. I had a friend at that time who knew more of form, and of horses, and of the men who belonged to them, than any one I have ever met in my life. The absurd part of the thing was, that though he gave me the absolute winners of five races out of six, and I was keen to follow him, and do anything he suggested—I knew nothing of racing in those days, or less than nothing, if there is such a degree of ignorance—the only time I won that day was when I completely misunderstood what he said, and acted on my misconception.

So spoke the Major, as we settled down after dinner in the billiard-room of one of the pleasantest houses in the immediate neighbourhood of Newmarket one night during the Houghton Meeting. We had all done well on the Heath, and that is eminently provocative of appetite. The dinner had been admirable; those of us who retained a devotion to the '74 Perrier Jouet had been gratified, and others who preferred the somewhat livelier '80 had been considered by our thoughtful host; unless we were all egregiously mistaken, we knew of something in a Nursery next day that was bound to be
useful to us—to anticipate, let me remark that it started at 100 to 12, and won in a canter—our hacks were ordered for half-past eight next morning, so that we could have one of those delightful mornings on the Bury Hills which are among the chief pleasures of the sport at headquarters; and to fill in the time till we were ready for the game of ‘whiskey poker,’ which was to wind up the evening, nothing could be better than a story from the Major. No one knew ‘the ropes’ more perfectly than he. His judgment of a yearling was a surer guide to future results than the price it may have fetched at auction; for not once, or twice, or thrice, his prescience has been vindicated when he has vowed he would not have in his stable a youngster that has been knocked down for thousands, and when, on the other hand, he has noted as a good-looking colt or filly, sure to win races, some creature that has been led round and round the ring before any one responded to the inquiries of Mr. Tattersall: ‘Any advance on 150l.? ’ It had seemed to us, the younger members of the party, that there never could have been a time when the Major did not know all about racing, and the story of his inexperienced days promised to be diverting. The Major began:—

‘I dare say you fellows don’t know it, but you talk a language about horses that is Hebrew to an outsider. You don’t mean to do so; it isn’t silly swagger or side; it comes simplest to you, that’s all. Well, it was because my friend Wennington did this that I missed all his good things the first day I ever went racing, and finally turned up trumps. Wennington was a cousin of mine, and there were several reasons why he wanted to do me a good turn if he could—he’s my brother-in-law now,
as you may know—so when I first came to town he took me under his wing, and we had a very cheery dinner one night at the Drake. There was a Sandown Meeting on

next day, and during dinner he and the other two fellows talked horse all the time—I’ve done the same thing many nights a week since; but in those days our
local Hunt Steeplechases were the only events I had ever attended. I had casually read the racing news now and then, knew the names of some of the principal owners, and so forth; but that was the limit of my information. The anxiety of Wennington and the others for the special "Standard" was extreme, and when it came they began all over again a discussion about next day's sport. They were all members of the Club. I was not, of course; but the idea of anybody doing anything else next day except going to Sandown obviously struck them as inconceivable, and so it was arranged that I was to meet them on the platform at Waterloo next morning at 12.15; and though I could not go into the Club Stand, I could see the races from the reserved enclosure, and meet Wennington in the paddock between times, to be posted up in all the latest information.

I went down in the Members' train—no, I ought not to have done so, but as a matter of fact I still see people who have no business there doing so now—and it was agreed by Wennington and the others that the card was regularly laid out for backers—they couldn't go wrong. One cautious man in the corner of the carriage propounded the suggestion that cards of this sort were the most dangerous: something unexpected always happened, and the good things were upset; but it couldn't be so to-day, they declared. Anyhow, I was to meet my friend at an appointed place in the paddock before each race, and he would tell me what conclusions he had come to, he promised. The whole process of betting was strange to me; and understanding this, when we got down he thoughtfully introduced me to a prominent bookmaker, Mr. Roaster, with the intimation that I was solvent and had a permanent address.
'An excellent luncheon at a coach on the other side of the course formed an agreeable beginning to the day; and well in advance of the time set for the first race I was at our tryst, eager to begin the fascinating game of speculation. The crowd interested me vastly. Almost everybody seemed to be acquainted with everybody else. "How are you?—know anything?" was the familiar greeting; and to all appearance every one did know something, for there was usually an answer which not seldom led to prolonged controversy. I found diversion also in the horses which were being led round and round, and occasionally taken off to be saddled, and then, when the jockeys in their colours emerged from the weighing-room, I began to appreciate still more fully the fact that I was really at a race-meeting at last. Whilst I was gazing about, Wennington suddenly appeared, in evident haste.

"Oh, here you are. That's all right. Now, my boy, I don't advise anyone to bet, mind; I oughtn't to teach you to begin; but a bit of a flutter won't do you any harm, I hope. Indeed, unless I'm much mistaken, we ought to do you some good to-day. Look here! they tell me this is really good for the Duke, and you'd better hurry back to the ring and get on, because it will be a hot favourite and the price will soon shorten," he said; and with a parting nod was off in the midst of the stream that had set in towards the stands.

"Good for the Duke." I had the wit to surmise that the Duke was not a horse but a horse's owner, and so looked at my card. There were thirteen horses in the first race: two belonged to the Duke of Westminster, one to the Duke of Beaufort, one to the Duke of Hamilton, and nine to other sportsmen, and as I read
the names I found one of the creatures was called Duke of Richmond. "Good for the Duke." Which Duke?—there was a plethora of Dukes, and how was I to discriminate? Only six of the horses named on the card were going to run, I found, and Duke of Richmond was not one of them. It could not be he, at any rate; but what was it? Colours are easily distinguishable by us who know them; but it takes a perfect stranger a long time to realise what horses in the race correspond to those on the card, and then to fit them on to their numbers. The shouts of the bookmakers also tended to confuse me. There was a yellow jacket and a white cap, only at first I did not notice the cap, and had made that out to be the Duke of Westminster's; there was a white and light blue hooped jacket—that was clearly the Duke of Beaufort's; but then there was a cerise and grey sleeved jacket—that must be the Duke of Hamilton's; and for which Duke was it good? I was still pondering in doubt when the flag fell; something in white got off with such a start that I felt certain the race was over, and that Wennington's "Good for the Duke" was wrong; but on nearing home the white collapsed, the light blue hoops passed it, and the Duke of Beaufort had won—won anyhow, as even I could see. It was good for the Duke, but it had not been good for me. The other Duke's horse, I may observe, was tailed off, and my only consolation was that things might have been worse, for I might have invested some money on him.

'It was rather annoying, all the same, for I ought to have started my day with a nice little win; however, better luck next time, I thought, and after a stroll round to see what was going on, I returned to the spot where I was to meet Wennington. A bell rang, the numbers
went up—I had just found out that these proceedings were simultaneous—and he duly appeared.

"A bad price! I had to lay a shade of odds; but it was never in doubt, was it?" he began, and then he continued with emphasis, "Now, look here, Cora will be a red-hot favourite. They are going to back her, and of course she's dangerous on form; but from what I hear this thing from the North is sure to beat her. They wouldn't have sent it all this way for nothing, you know"—and I felt this little explanation was a concession to my ignorance. "I think Cora looks light and tucked up, too. You do as you like about saving on her, only I should certainly back the other to win the money."

"Thank you very much," I replied, "but—" I was just going to formulate a request for more detail about the "thing from the North," when, catching sight of some one to whom he evidently desired to speak, he exclaimed, "Ah! there's a man I've been looking for all day. Excuse me, old chap. Here again before the next race," and off he bolted.

"The thing from the North!" I studied my card, but could find no sort of indication as to where the horses came from. I had a copy of a sporting paper in my pocket, and sought enlightenment from that, but without effect. What could I do? Should I go to my bookmaker and tell him in an offhand manner that I wanted to back the thing from the North? What if he said "Which thing?" or put some other confusing question? I did not like to ask strangers in the enclosure, nor, indeed, did I know how to formulate my question; so I gave up the idea of betting, sat down to watch the race, and saw it won easily by a jockey in a violet and white belted jacket. As the winner passed
the post, my neighbour, a cheery-looking old gentleman, turned to me and said, "That was good, sir! I hope you were on it. I thought Mr. Vyner would not have sent it here for nothing, for it's in a race up North to-day that it couldn't have lost; so I took the tip. Nice price, too, 5 to 1!" and he went off wagging his head.

"This was very good fun for the people who understood the game, but it had rather a tendency to irritate me, for I seemed to be losing my chances. Wennington had doubtless been quite right; the winner was evidently "the thing" from the North, and my friend would of course be under the impression that, owing to his excellent advice, I had started on a good day. It wasn't his fault that this was not the case; only I must try, I determined, to get some more definite description of the next horse he fancied. As I was wandering about the paddock, I came across him before the time for our meeting.

"Did you get fives?" he asked. "Won in a walk, didn't it? We're doing well! I had five ponies; but I had a pony on the second, too, so I only won a hundred. Now, old boy, the next race is rather a puzzle! I'm inclined to think the Danebury horse ought to win, but I'm searching about for some one who can tell me—Oh, there he is! I was looking for you," he said to a gentleman with short grey whiskers, so well preserved that middle-aged rather than elderly might best describe him. "Does Tom fancy his much?" Of course I wondered who "Tom" might chance to be, though anyone only just a thought less ignorant than I would have known that the Danebury horse was one of Tom Cannon's.

"Yes, he does a bit," was the reply. "He's having
a tenner on; but Joe thinks he's sure to win with his."

""It ran badly last time it was out, didn't it? What happened at Newmarket?" continued Wennington.

""It was left,"' the old gentleman answered. "Ours has a chance, but it isn't a good thing, I'm afraid. It's behind the one that ran yesterday."

""That can't win, then, I should think. Thank you very much," Wennington observed, as his friend strolled on his way, "I know that Joe's was well tried before he ran at the last Newmarket meeting," he continued to me. "You'd better stick to that one, I think; I shall; but don't have much on. It's rather an uncertain race."

""But—wait a second—which is Joe's?" I asked, as he saw another friend in the distance, and was about to set off after him, as one has to do if one wants to avoid missing a man in a crowd. Still I was determined to arrive at something this time.

""Why, there—that chestnut mare!" he replied, and he was gone.

'What was the summary of my inspiration this time? That Joe's would win; and I hopefully turned to my card to find out which was Joe's. The quest proved vain! There was Mr. T. Cannon's b. c. Mischievous, and I had a vague idea that this was the Danebury horse to which allusion had been made. From some dim corner of my memory, too, I garnered the faint recollection that T. Cannon had a brother named Joseph, who trained horses; but there was no Mr. J. Cannon—no other Mr. Cannon at all—on the card. Yet a chestnut mare had been pointed out to me by Wennington as "Joe's."

As a matter of fact there were two chestnut mares walking the circle with other horses; one of them was
"Joe's"; and though I did not like asking the boys in charge what the animals were, I had seen other people make the inquiry, and determined to follow suit.

"What's that?" I asked, when the first chesnut mare came round and passed where I stood.

"Crescent," said the boy. And I found on the card,
"Lord Hartington's Crescent, 3 yrs., straw." That was not "Joe's," at any rate!

"What's that?" I asked again, when the other came round.

"Spitfire," answered the boy; and on reference I found again, "Baron M. de Tuyll's Spitfire, 4 yrs., white, black belt, red cap." That could not be "Joe's," I reflected, so here was another mystery! What did Wennington mean? He had left me under the impression that I must know all about it this time, at any rate; but I was as much confused as I had been about "the Duke" and "the thing from the North." I sauntered pensively back to my enclosure, where betting was brisk, and heard the names of several horses as I walked down by the rails; but before I could hit on a way of elucidating the mystery of "Joe's," the field had started, and Spitfire won; Mischievous second. I walked to the paddock to see them return, and as I watched the unsaddling of the winner, found the old gentleman who had previously spoken to me by my side.

"She's come on, that mare has, since Joe's had her," he remarked, and seeing no other way of arriving at a solution to the mystery, I inquired, merely for the sake of curiosity, who trained the animal now; receiving for answer, "Why, Joseph Cannon!" spoken in a sort of tone that I might have expected had I begged to know if he could kindly tell me what was the first letter of the alphabet.

Wennington appeared as usual—he was as kind and attentive as he could be, and he looked particularly pleased with himself and the world in general. He suggested a drink at the coach over the way, and thither we went for the purpose, finding friends who had done
well and badly, and, in fact, met with the varying fortune which accompanies turf speculations. As we left to cross the course, he said impressively:

"Now, I think Herbert's colt is sure to win this, but don't say a word about it, and you needn't be in a hurry to back it—it won't be favourite, and you'll get a better price by waiting. You see—"

"First of all, pray tell me who Herbert is," I interrupted. "You see, I don't know people's names, and I may make a mistake—it's very easy to get confused, I find."

"Of course it is, old chap; but I thought you knew that Herbert was running one of his—Herbert Newstead, who dined with us last night and came down with us to-day." Now at length I seemed to be upon safe ground! "He bought this colt at Doncaster last year," Wennington went on; "it ran fairly well at Ascot, but it hasn't been out since; however, he galloped it last week, and I don't see what's to beat it. I shall have a dash. You go in quietly and wait till the betting has settled down a bit. It looks as if we were going to have a real good day!"

He nodded cheerily, and went in at the Members' gate, whilst I pursued my way to my own stand. This time, at least, there could be no mistake! Mr. Herbert Newstead's colt was the animal I had to back. It was a comfort to be on the right track at last! If he had said Herbert's colt, I might have searched for a Mr. Herbert and not found one, or worse, perhaps found such a name and backed his horse; but about Mr. Herbert Newstead I could not blunder. The animal's name, however, I had not heard, and so pulled out my card. Where was Mr. Herbert Newstead? I read the conditions: "National
Breeders’ Produce Stakes,” &c., and glanced down the names of owners. At first I failed to find it, looked again with more care, and then a third time with scrupulous minuteness.

'It was not there!

'No name distantly resembling Newstead was on the card. My ears could not have deceived me. Most assuredly Wennington said Herbert Newstead, and of course I had dined with Newstead the night before, travelled down with him, seen him half a dozen times since. I knew he had horses—one of his was entered for a race earlier in the day, but had not run. There was the name on the card "Mr. Newstead's ch. c. Muzzle." What could Wennington have meant? Once more I read out every name on the card, but Newstead was not among the owners of animals in this race, that was certain. It was the most perplexing thing that had ever happened to me, and I watched the struggle, when presently the field started, in a dazed sort of way. A jockey in green and white sleeves won by a neck after a stiffish fight, and I found by the card that the winner belonged to Mr. J. Simons Harrison; so Wennington was wrong for once, and he was going to have a dash, he said, which I knew meant a big bet.

'Great was my surprise, therefore, to see him with a beaming countenance as he and Newstead watched the winner being walked away.

'"I hope you had a good race," Newstead said, in cheery tones.

'"What price did you get?" Wennington broke in.

'"Why, I had no bet," I began; "you said——"'
thing Herbert said after the race was that he hoped you were well on. Why didn't you bet?"

"But that's Mr. Simons Harrison's," I replied. "I couldn't find Newstead's name on the card, and had no idea which was his horse; in fact, I couldn't make out that he was running one. Why is Mr. Simons Harrison put down?"

"I see! Well, that is bad luck!" Wennington returned. "I'm awfully sorry! Simons Harrison is the breeder—the man Herbert bought it from last year, and he entered it. His name is down as the owner of Stirrup Iron that belongs to the Duke of Westminster, you see. It never struck me that you wouldn't understand."

"I'm very sorry," Newstead struck in. "I was hoping you had won a good stake."

"It's most unfortunate!" Wennington rejoined. "It never occurred to me that you wouldn't understand. I'm awfully vexed—it is such a pity! However, look here. They tell me this Stanton horse can't be beat for the next race."

"Whose horse?" I inquired—"Stanton's?"

"Wadlow's," he replied. "He's as good as the second in the Hunt Cup—however, I needn't go into details about that, but I believe the story is right, and if so, it can't be beat. It's no good waiting for the last race. There'll be only two runners, and they'll lay 20 to 1 on one, so we'll meet at the coach after this if you like. Rowsley has plenty of room, he says, and will drive us home. I wish you'd backed that, but it can't be helped!" He took out his card, and was apparently about to enter into an elaborate explanation, when a couple of his friends joined him, and after a moment they strolled
away talking earnestly, Wennington turning to give me a friendly nod and say, "At the coach after this race!"

'Once more I was left to my own devices, and returned to my accustomed place in the enclosure. Out came my card. Which was the Stanton horse, Wadlow's? He said Wadlow, surely? I searched the most puzzling document I had ever come across, but there was no Wadlow! It ought not to have been such a puzzle, either, for there were only three runners: 3, Lord Bradford's Mainsail; 7, Mr. L. de Rothschild's Diana; 10, Mr. Manton's Roseleaf.

'Of course! That was it. "Manton" was a misprint for "Stanton." Even in carefully edited papers misprints are not infrequent; they are, indeed, found in books that have passed through several hands in course of preparation, so what more likely than that they should be common in such an ephemeral publication as a race-card? How "Wadlow" came in I did not understand; for certainly Wennington had said Wadlow. There was the old gentleman who had told me who trained Spitfire—perhaps Wadlow was also a trainer? I would ask, and frame my question artfully, I thought.

'"Wadlow's is running, isn't it?" I remarked, carelessly.

'"Yes, certainly—it is indeed!" he answered, with a look of curiosity at me, and a wave of his hand to the number-board.

'"Oh, yes, of course!" I replied, as if I now knew all about it—which wasn't at all the case. Evidently I was right this time—"Manton" was a misprint for "Stanton." I would go and interview Mr. Roaster, who, I was gratified to find, knew me at once.

'"I've been expecting the pleasure of seeing you, sir,"
he said. "What can I do for you? I'll take 3 to 1—I'll take 11 to 4 from you, sir—5 to 1 Diana, and 6 to 1 Roseleaf!"

'I hesitated, not being sure of the phraseology I ought to employ. What he meant by "taking" I did not understand. However, I could not go wrong if I made my wants known in plain English, so I replied, "I want to back Mr. Manton's Roseleaf."

"Yes, sir. I'll lay you 6 to 1—that's a good price. Six hundreds—six ponies—six monkeys?" he rejoined.

'What was a monkey? I wondered. A pony, I had gathered, was 25l. I had found that out in what I flattered myself was rather a cunning fashion—Wennington had told me he had made 100l. by winning five ponies and losing one; but what was a monkey? Zoologically regarded, it was a smaller animal, and therefore, I had no doubt, was a smaller sum.

"I think I'll have the monkeys," I somewhat timidly rejoined. It struck me that he opened his eyes a bit, and the bookmaker by the side of him looked at me rather hard, I fancied, though I had no idea why. However, he quietly observed, "Yes, sir; six monkeys Roseleaf. Thank you, sir."

'As I returned to my seat I felt that I had an entirely new interest in the game. I should, indeed, rather have liked to know the precise sum I had speculated, but that gave me no uneasiness, for I reflected again that if people named sums of money after animals, there could not reasonably be much difference if the animals were about the same size; besides, Wennington had been so extraordinarily correct in his judgment that it seemed as if he could not go wrong. I watched the horses canter down to the post, and they were very soon sent on their
journey back again. The blue jacket led till they turned the corner, then its bearer dropped back, the other two came on together; suddenly the rider in the white and scarlet sleeves got up his whip and began to use it; the jockey in the all scarlet seemed to be regarding his companion’s proceedings with much interest, but his horse needed no coercion, and, gradually drawing away, got home well clear of his follower. Well, that was all right! Up went No. 10, and, a good deal better satisfied with myself, I walked over to the coach.

"Well, old chap," was Wennington’s greeting, as I found him—looking strangely glum, it struck me, and I wondered why he should do so—lighting a cigarette preparatory to climbing up to his place, "that’s an upset and no mistake! I thought it was the best thing I had ever known racing. Can’t make it out, by Jove! and confound it, I laid three hundred to one. How many times I’ve sworn I’d never lay odds! I’d won just over a monkey, too, on the day. However, one can’t always be right!"

"But," I rejoined, in a condition of much surprise, "you won right enough that time, surely? That was the one you told me to back." His observation was incomprehensible to me under the pleasing circumstances.

"No, my dear boy. Roseleaf! Most certainly it wasn’t. I told you I thought it was a certainty for Mainsail—I didn’t think Roseleaf had a hundred to one chance. Surely you never backed the winner?"

"Yes, I did. You never said Mainsail. You said the ‘Stanton’ horse, and I thought there was a misprint on the card and they had put ‘Manton’ instead. You said something about Wadlow, but I made out that he probably trained Roseleaf. What’s a monkey?"
Wennington looked at me hard, glanced at Newstead on one side of him, at Rowsley on the other, and then resumed his gaze at me.

"A monkey, my boy, is 500l.," he replied. "Have you been betting monkeys without knowing what you were doing, by any chance?"

"I did that time," I answered; "but I had no idea it was anything like that. I thought it was something smaller than a pony."

"What! five monkeys Roseleaf?" he inquired, in tones of amazement.

"Six," I replied.

"Well, by Jove, that is a caulker!" Wennington exclaimed.

"Capital, old chap! That's what I call a very pretty little bet!" Newstead broke in, while Rowsley and a couple of his friends, who were going back with us, burst into a hearty laugh.

"And what have you done to-day besides?" Wennington continued, with wide-open eyes. "You must have made up a nice little pile!"

"That's the only bet I've had all day."

"The only bet? Why, I certainly told you every other winner," he rejoined.

"Yes, I suppose you did," I replied; "but you told me in a way I couldn't understand. You said 'the Duke's horse,' and there were two Dukes with horses—"

"You couldn't have thought I meant you to back a half-broken-down hurdle jumper like that thing of Hamilton's—but of course you wouldn't know. I never thought of that," he continued, reflectively.

"Then you said something about a 'thing from the
North' that I couldn't identify. I told you why I didn't back Newstead's; and then I didn't know why you called a horse belonging to a Hungarian baron 'Joe's,'" I explained.

"Racing men often speak of a horse as if he belonged to his trainer," Newstead remarked for my edification, "and it never occurred to Wennington, I suppose, that you did not know Joseph Cannon trained for Max de Tuyll. Did he tell you 'the thing from the North'? No, of course you couldn't have known what he meant, though the phrase has no doubt been used hundreds of times to-day in speaking of Vyner's horse. It was bad luck, but you've made up for it!"

'By this time the horses were put to, Rowsley had picked up the reins, and the others were climbing to their places.

"Well, so the result of your not understanding is that you've won 3,000l.! I'm deuced glad of it, old boy," Wennington said, slapping me on the back. "That's what I call a good day!'"
CHAPTER I

The scene is a wide expanse of irregular downland, rising into eminences and sloping into little valleys, picturesque decidedly, for the country is remarkably well wooded, the tops of two neighbouring hills are covered with trees, and there is a long plantation, too, in the midst of the downs; while colour is given to the view by the wheat-fields away in the distance, gleaming golden in the sunshine, and by one curiously glowing red field, which apparently grows nothing but poppies. A few scattered farmhouses here and there in the perspective add further variety, the whole making a characteristic bit of southern English country.

It is wonderful how much the introduction of a little life adds to a landscape. A friend of mine lately showed me a picture he was painting of cliffs, both bare and grass-clad, descending to the sea; a beautiful view, but wanting something—life. I suggested that this was absent; my friend replied that he was coming to that, or rather had just come to it, but could not quite make up his mind what to introduce; and then, covering the painting with a glass which fitted the frame, he sketched in on the smooth surface a few sheep, a rabbit at the
mouth of its burrow, and another just running off and disappearing behind a big stone; some gulls were also scattered here and there, and the whole picture was transformed and made interesting to an extent I should not have believed possible. And figures were not wanting in the landscape I have indicated. Two men, mounted on hacks, sat motionless, their eyes fixed on some objects in the distance—four horses, trotting over a rise in the ground which for a moment hides them from view, and before they disappear, their neat appearance, their long tails and something dainty in their action, proclaim them to be what they are—racehorses.

The two watch the receding thoroughbreds, and the elder of them, Guy Howard, speaks—a man of fifty, but betraying few signs of his age, except a tinge of the grey in his hair and moustache.

‘Of course, it looks good. I had no idea that the handicapper could have let him off under 8 lb. at least, and he is better than well in with 8 lb. less; but all the same, I think you are an awful ass, my dear Cecil.’

‘Yes, I know that; and I know as well as you do that it is idiotic to plunge, and that the best things very often don’t come off, for reasons that sometimes you can explain and sometimes you can’t—and very often, again, you explain quite incorrectly. It’s no good telling me that, because one can’t go racing with one’s eyes open and not notice it every other week, at least! You’ve seen more of the game than I have, but I’m as well aware of all that as you can be,’ the younger replied, a serious tone in his voice, and a thoughtful look on his face, which suggested that racing was not altogether a pastime and amusement for him.
'How do you stand?' the other asked, after a moment's pause.

'I stand to win nearly fifteen thousand—fourteen thousand eight hundred and fifty. The money averages 8 to 1, but I got a thousand to eighty three times for a foundation. Yes, I am an awful ass, as you so politely observe, and yet there is a certain amount of method in my madness. If I don't pay Isaacs twelve thousand pounds before the seventeenth, he'll foreclose. I've got very little more than a thousand left, and what is the good of the few hundreds to me? I may as well go broke handsomely while I'm about it, and the case is just this: if Fortunatus wins, I shall be on my legs again; if he is beaten, I really shan't be much worse off than I am at present—it would only be postponing the evil day for a few months.'

'Your uncle's hopeless, of course?'

'My dear fellow, you know him as well as I do. If he knew anything about it, that I'd been mortgaging the old place and playing the fool generally, he'd never forgive me, and he'd take deuced good care to break off my engagement to Edie. She's all right—I mean I am sure of her affection—but what could we live on if I married her? No! On Fortunatus all my hopes depend. And here they come!'

Over the brow of the rise where we saw them disappear the four horses are now returning at a gallop, and the two spectators watch keenly as they approach. This is not exactly a trial, but a good strong gallop, the last Fortunatus is to have on his home downs before being sent to compete in the Great Downshire Handicap, in which the jockey-trainer, Dick Chattress, little sanguine as he is about anything, having seen certainties upset
so very frequently, thinks that he cannot be beaten if all goes well; for 'there's always an "if,"' as Chattress is accustomed to remind those who enjoy the benefit of his advice. Chattress is on the back of Lord Beverwycke's horse—his lordship is Cecil Auburn's elder brother, takes little interest in his horses, never bets, and races no one, probably including himself, understands why; but Cecil is keen, and devotes himself with delight to managing the horses, which Beverwycke gladly leaves in his hands, watching them run, lose, or win on the infrequent occasions when he 'goes racing,' looking very much bored all the time. As for Cecil, his means forbid much speculation, for the thousand a year his brother allows him for looking after the horses, added to little more than the same sum of his own, is all his income, and that does not go far if one deals much with the ring.

Here, however, the horses come, or rather three of them, for a mealy chesnut mare cannot live at the pace, and young Chattress, who is riding, judiciously eases his mount. One of the others also has to be driven a bit to hold his own; but Fortunatus, a superb-looking golden chesnut without a white mark on him, sweeps along not extended, his rider and trainer, Dick Chattress, still standing in his stirrups and bending in a graceful pose peculiar to himself over his horse's powerful neck. A little six-stone boy is on the bay mare by his side, and as they near the place where the two observers are waiting he sits down and finishes with his hands, his master watching him and saying something, apparently in the way of counsel or encouragement, which does not reach the spectators.

'Pon my word I never saw a better mover!' Howard
exclaims, as they canter after the others, who are now pulling up.

'I don't suppose you ever did, and I don't know where there's one to be seen,' replied Cecil.

'Well, Dick?' he says as they reach the trainer, who is now on the ground, patting the chesnut's neck, while the good horse does not blow enough to put a candle out, a contrast to two of the others, who show that the pace has been good by their drooping heads and heaving sides. 'If he doesn't win on Thursday, it won't be your fault.'

'No, Mr. Auburn. He's as fit as I can make him, and if he runs up to his trial—and there's always an "if," you know, sir,' he parenthetically adds with a shake of the head—'I don't really see what's got an outside chance of beating him.'

'You know that Mr. Auburn's been plunging, Dick?' Howard says as they trot towards the house, the trainer's hack having been brought to him.

'Yes, sir, so he tells me,' Dick answers, shaking his head again. 'He would do it! I tell him not to, but he won't listen to me! I think the horse is sure to win, and I shall have a pony on myself, but—what's that they say? "Nothing happens but the unexpected," isn't that it? And it's as true in racing as in anything else. But we'll get on, gentlemen, if you don't mind. Lunch will be ready, and I've got to catch the 3.50 train.'

'We're going up to town with you, and we should like to have a look round the stables first,' Cecil answered, putting his horse to a canter.

'Yes, gentlemen, and there'll just be time for a peep at the mares and foals,' Dick said, and in a few minutes they were dismounting before the trainer's hospitable
door, a white tablecloth covered with glittering plate and bright glass, a big silver trophy—a race cup—in the middle of the array, flowers tastefully arranged, and the necks of some bottles of champagne in an ice pail on the sideboard, showing that taste and comfort are here regarded.

A nice-looking little boy came forward to take Cecil Auburn's horse, and touched his cap with a smile.
‘Halloa, my lad! how are you getting on?’ Cecil asked good-naturedly. ‘How do you like a training stable?’

‘Very much, sir, thank you,’ the lad replied with a flushed face, pleased to be spoken to.

‘Are you learning to ride?’ the gentleman continued.

‘I hope so, sir; I’m trying. I’ve only been off twice, sir,’ he continued with some pride.

‘Well, my lad, do as you are told, try your best, keep your wits about you and your mouth shut, and you’ll get on. Mr. Chattress will look after you if you behave, I’ve no doubt.’ Something passed from Cecil’s pocket to the boy’s hand, and with a grateful ‘Thank you very much, sir,’ he led away the hack.

‘Who’s your friend? Howard inquired.

‘He’s the son of an old servant, a very good man. The boy was wild about being a jockey, and sensible enough, too, to know that he couldn’t get into a silk jacket and win the Derby without roughing it, and learning his work from the beginning. Dick’s kindly taken him on, and will make something of him, I hope.’

‘He’s a nice, well-behaved boy,’ Chattress remarked, looking after Auburn’s protégé, ‘and he seems to frame pretty well; though whether he’ll ever make a jockey it’s too early to say. But come in, gentlemen, and have some lunch.’

The well-fried trout, the plump chicken and home-cured bacon, the leg of mutton fed on the sweet grass of the neighbouring downs, and ’80 Perrier Jouet received ample justice, and the thoughtful look to some extent disappeared from Cecil’s face as they talked over the entries for the coming race. When he began his lunch
Cecil was sanguine that Fortunatus would win, and by the time the third glass of champagne was drunk he had not a doubt that the horse would not only win, but canter home—for he little knew the big 'if' that was impending over Fortunatus's chance, nor did Chattress in the least suspect it. The trainer-jockey had a great liking for both his guests, which they reciprocated, for Chattress was a man of high character and a perfect master of his business, who enjoyed general respect: a more interesting companion for men who were devoted to the turf could not easily be found.

'What are you most afraid of in the race, Dick?' Cecil asked.

'Well, sir, I don't think anything has a chance of beating the horse unless the "if" comes in. You saw him tried, and his trial just worked out according to what he has done in public, so it must have been right. I think he'll win—but I've often thought so, and something has happened,' Dick answered.

He knew how much Cecil Auburn's future—love as well as money—depended on the Downshire Handicap, and was grave at the thought.

'Yes,' Cecil persisted, 'but put it this way: if Fortunatus wasn't running, what should you fancy then?'

Dick deliberated as he filled his guest's glass with golden sherry, priceless wine which a grateful employer had sent as a present to him for pulling off a big event by the shortest of short heads after he was to all appearance hopelessly out of it at the distance.

'Well,' he answered, 'if old Boatman were as good as he was last year, he'd be dangerous, but I rode him at Ascot, you know, and he has quite lost his dash. I should rather fancy Puzzle if our horse was out of the
way. She belongs to queerish people, as you know, and you musn’t take all her running as correct, but she fairly held me at Kempton when I won on Lord Harry.’

‘Yes,’ Cecil interjected, ‘and you only meet her on 3 lb. better terms; that was a mile and quarter, too, so that she stays a bit; I didn’t think she was going to run,’ and his face grew serious again.

‘I’m not much afraid of her, all the same,’ Chattress said, reassuringly. ‘She doesn’t fairly stay. She died away to nothing at the finish, and that race was no test, for we only ran about a quarter of a mile—muddled along anyhow till we turned the corner, and my mare Flood Tide will bring us along in the race. The extra quarter of a mile is all in our favour, for our horse does get the course. They backed Puzzle that day, and I knew by the way George tried to hustle me out of it in the run home that he was desperately keen to win. Fortunatus was never so well in his life as he is now, and though I don’t like to hear of you plunging, Mr. Auburn, and am very sorry things are as bad as you tell me, I do think it will be all right on Thursday evening!’

All right! Dick Chattress and his friends as they drove to the station little dreamed of a scene that was being enacted near home.

It has been said that a long plantation stood in the midst of the downs. It afforded the horses shelter from various winds in bad weather, and the long ride up the middle was set out with schooling fences, where the young jumpers took their first lessons—a good place, as they could not well run out with trees on either side of them. Rabbits and oftentimes a few hares were found in this little wood, it was rather a favourite resort of pigeons, and on one occasion a big fox was put up and
The Great Downshire Handicap went off across the downs, straight away three miles on end, at a pace that made pedestrian observers bitterly lament that they were not after him behind a pack of hounds. Along the side of this plantation two figures walked in earnest converse.

'Not a thousand to one chance you haven't got!' exclaimed one of them, Barrick, a lad in Chattress's employ who rode a jumper occasionally, was often put up in trials at home, and 'did' Fortunatus. 'Our horse is sure to beat that without being asked to gallop.'

The other, Bob Hough, professional backer and rogue generally, picked a leaf from the foliage by his side and began to chew it meditatively, as he turned to retrace his steps, for they were at the end of a strip of plantation, as much out of sight of possible onlookers as they could get.

'How did you find out the weights you carried when yours was tried?' he presently asked.

'Do you suppose I've been 'ere five years without finding where the trial book's kept? One of the maids does me a turn when I ask her, and you may depend upon it that's all right. Our horse was never better. I rode in the trial, and I can tell you there was no mistake about it. Fortunatus will win in a bloomin' walk,' Barrick replied. 'How are they betting?'

'Oh, he's very hot—8 to 1 bar him, 100 to 9 ours,' Hough replied, 'ours' standing for the mare Puzzle; for Chattress had been correct in saying that she belonged to some queerish people, and if Hough did not own a leg of her himself, he was an intimate ally of the gang.

'We should win if you were out of the way, you know. She's not been on the job since Kempton, and it's a wicked shame that she's handicapped as she is after the
way she's been running,’ Hough said, with unconscious naïveté, for in truth the handicapper had not been hoodwinked. ‘There’s only old Boatman to beat, and he’s as slow as a man in boots. So, my boy, there’s only one thing to do!’

Hough took a pipe from his pocket, filled it, and lit a match, while Barrick looked on and said nothing.

‘When do you start?’ Hough presently asked.

‘I go by the 7.30 in the morning with the horse. The governor and some swells have started. He rides to-morrow, so he has to be there early,’ Barrick replied. The other looked cautiously round him, and then drew from his pocket a small phial containing some colourless liquid.

‘It’s the old prescription,’ he said, with an attempt at jocularity. ‘Fortunatus must not win that race, so you put that in his bucket when you give him his last drink, and he won’t, and you’ll do a good day’s work. Here you are,’ and he passed a couple of ten-pound notes into the hand of his roguish companion. ‘Put these in your pocket, and there’s ten more of ’em when Puzzle has won the Downshire Handicap.’

‘It won’t kill the horse, will it?’ Barrick asked, in rather husky tones.

‘No. It won’t kill him, but it won’t be good for his health, though it’ll do a lot of good to us,’ was the rascal’s reply.

‘Won’t he show anything? Won’t they suspect? The governor’s as sharp as a needle, you know.’

‘He won’t be sharp enough to find out anything this time, if you earn your money without making a mess of it. Just empty the bottle into his water, and he may win a race the month after next, but he won’t for a week
or two. It isn’t the first time I’ve tried it, and I know. But I must be off, and I don’t care about passing through the town. Let’s see! The coast is clear. Over the hill there to the junction, isn’t it? Seven miles? A devil of a journey, and I hate walking, but I don’t want to be seen by any one that knows me. You understand, and you’re on a hundred to nothing if Puzzle wins.’

With a nod to his accomplice, Hough started on his journey, and Barrick, the phial safely in his pocket, strolled back to the stable.

CHAPTER II

The Downshire Meeting is one of the most popular fixtures of the year, a general holiday for all those who live within twenty miles of the course and want to go, and largely attended by the usual army of lovers of the turf, for there are always some fairly interesting two-year-old events, and the Handicap is one of the few races on which there is still a ‘market’ some weeks before the day. Lord Beverwycke is not there to see the anticipated success of his colours, but of course Guy Howard and Cecil Auburn are present; and they look concerned, for the horse is going most curiously in the betting, and they cannot guess the reason.

‘He’s not even favourite!’ Cecil said in consternation, rejoining his friend after having been up to the rails and spoken to a bookmaker. ‘I can’t understand it! He was at 3 to 1 yesterday, and now you can get 11 to 2.’

‘What are they backing?’ Howard asked, and the answer came from the ring before there was time to reply.
Here! 4 to 1 Puzzle! 6 to 1 Boatman! 7 to 1 bar two!

Do you hear? 7 to 1 now! We must go and find Dick, and ask him what it means.

Two races had been run, in one of which Chattress, by an extraordinarily well-timed finish, had got the popular light-weight of the day, whose modest merits were absurdly overestimated, into hopeless difficulties, and won easily on a horse that ought to have been as easily beaten; but he was not riding in the race for which the field was on its way to the post.

Halloa! There's the horse!' Cecil exclaimed, as he noticed Fortunatus approaching under Barrick's charge. 'Looks well, doesn't he? Where's Mr. Chattress?' he inquired as Barrick touched his hat.

He was going towards the weighing-room a minute ago, sir,' the lad replied, and continued his round, taking no notice whatever of Hough, who stood to look at the horse as he passed, and was, for his own part, equally reticent with regard to his accomplice. They had met before, and though they had not spoken, a scarcely perceptible nod from Barrick assured Hough that the deed had been done.

Ah! There's Dick!' Cecil cried as the famous jockey emerged from the weighing-room, and, seeing the friends, turned and came towards them.

He, too, looked perplexed.

Good morning, Dick! Very glad to see you. Do you know how they are betting?' Cecil hurriedly asked. 'They're offering sevens. The horse is all right, isn't he?'

'They're offering eights, they tell me, sir,' Dick replied. 'But I can't make it out! He got here all right
and ate up—he always does that—and I rode him a canter this morning—no horse could have gone better. He's walking about somewhere here. I suppose they think they know something; and he nodded towards the ring, 'but what it is I can't guess!'

'Puzzle can't have come on enough to beat us, can she? She's first favourite,' Cecil asked anxiously.

'No, Mr. Auburn. We know the best and the worst of her. Our horse has come on. He's a 7-lb. better animal than he was when he ran last. How are they betting, Mr. Overton, have you heard?' Dick asked a friend of the stable who was passing by.

'Three to one on the field. Puzzle's favourite. Yours is going very queerly. Is anything wrong, Dick? He looks well enough,' was the reply.

'He is well enough—never was better in his life, and I can't understand it. I've sent in to have a pony on, and I shall get a better price than I expected. I can't tell you any more, Mr. Auburn. I'm just as confident as I was when he left home, but it's very funny they should be so full against him over there,' with another nod towards the ring. 'However, I must go and dress.' Such were Dick's final remarks as he disappeared into the room, and the friends, with a last wish of 'Good luck!' retraced their steps across the paddock.

'Five to two on the field, 6 to 1 Boatman, 10 to 1 bar two! Here, 10 to 1 Fortunatus! 100 to 8 bar three! Any price outsiders!' The ring was in full cry, and a common question was, What could be wrong with the former favourite?

'Is there anything the matter with your horse, Auburn?' 'You fancy yours, don't you?' 'Why are they laying such a price against Fortunatus?'
These and similar questions were rained upon Cecil, who could merely quote the jockey-trainer’s words.

‘This Fortunatus is a stiff ’un, I suppose?’ a ferret-eyed little man asked his friend, a ready-money bookmaker, receiving for answer only the question—

‘What do you think?’

‘Chattress says he doesn’t know why it’s gone out. I ’eard that from a pal I can trust,’ the little man continued.

‘Ah, he’s a clever man, but he don’t know everything!’ the other replied, and someone approaching at the moment he began again to roar out the odds.

‘By Jove! he looks well enough, if looks can win it!’ a man observed to his friend as Fortunatus came out of the paddock and walked down the course. ‘And moves well enough, too,’ he presently added, as the chestnut swept by in his canter, arching his neck in response to his jockey’s light hand.

‘I wish I knew what they think they know!’ Cecil said to his friend as they stood in their places on the stand.

‘It’s the strangest thing I ever knew racing!’ Howard replied. ‘There’s the favourite—a flashy-looking beast. Old Boatman goes very short, too. That’s a nice-looking one of Woodford’s, but she’s done no work he tells me. Only seven have passed—oh! there’s Billet at the post, beginning to kick about already.’

‘I’ve saved my money on the favourite, 2 to 1,’ a young friend of Auburn’s said, climbing up beside him on the stand. ‘All the sharps are backing it; lots of the bookies won’t make an offer. Billet’s third favourite—you can get 100 to 8 about yours. If anyone else but Chattress was riding, people would say things, wouldn’t they?’
'I shall go and take 1,000 to 80 more, in spite of the sharps and what they know,' Cecil said. 'Dick's confident, and I believe he'll win.' Howard endeavoured to dissuade him, but he was resolved, and going to the rails booked his bet, returning just in time to see the advance flag raised.

Meantime, if consternation had overtaken the friends of Fortunatus, the Puzzle partly were jubilant.

'You're sure it's all right?' Scully, a chief of the gang, asked Hough for the twentieth time, for he had betted more than he could pay if he lost—things had been going badly of late, and this was to be the grand
retriever. Hough once more in quiet tones assured him that there could be no possible mistake.

'The boy daren't deceive us, we know too much about him,' he replied in defence of Barrick's bad faith. 'He'd rather make a bit on the cross than on the square, and how's he going to get a hundred any other way? No, you bet your bottom dollar that the job's done, and you know that the stuff doesn't fail. There the young devil is.'

Barrick was indeed close at hand, and all eyes being turned towards the starting-post he gave his accomplices a knowing wink.

'They're off!' was now the cry, and Cecil, giving his glasses a last turn to try and improve the focus, watched with pale face and set lips.

'Flood Tide's bringing them along; by Jove, they're going a rattler!' Cecil cries as he follows the fortunes of the race. 'Old Boatman's dropping back and Black's taking a pull at the favourite. The boy can't hold Billet. But look how Dick's horse is sweeping along with them! If there's anything wrong with him I like them that way!'

Fortunatus was indeed going with the utmost ease, lying third, Billet having rushed past him; Puzzle at his quarters.

'She's going well,' Hough says, without, however, much conviction in his voice, for he sees what his associate Scully puts into words:

'So's that other devil, a d—d sight better than I like to see him.'

He is, indeed, going just as well as possible, for now nearly a mile has been covered, Flood Tide's bolt is shot; Billet, too, is growing very tired of running away;
and Fortunatus, going well within himself, is coming on neck and neck with Puzzle. Old Boatman, sticking to it gamely, is labouring hard, just behind Woodford’s mare, who is lasting longer than her want of condition seemed to render likely. The sentiments of the opposing parties have changed altogether. Consternation now sits on the faces of Hough and Scully, while Cecil is radiant, and a smile is beginning to curve Howard’s lips.

‘It’s a thousand to one on him, my boy,’ Howard cries. ‘Dick’s playing with the mare. Look at him looking round, and see Black all over his horse. He’s a dreadful finisher.’

‘The favourite’s beat!’ is now the cry from spectators. ‘Here, ten to one—twenty to one Puzzle!’ comes from the ring, followed by ‘A hundred to one on Fortunatus—Fortunatus wins!’ All which is perfectly true; for Dick, with an amused expression on his face, is critically and contemptuously watching the desperate struggle of his opponent, his own horse going on and winning in the easiest of canters by a very liberal length—it might have been a dozen lengths had he chosen, and that without calling on the animal for an effort.

The friends grasped each other’s hands—a grasp which expressed an infinity of congratulation and relief—as the winner’s number was hoisted, and Dick rode back to the paddock looking as unconcerned as if he had no sort of interest in what had been taking place.

‘Thanks, Dick,’ Cecil said, going to the jockey’s side as he unfastened the girths and pulled off the saddle.

‘It couldn’t have been much easier than that!’

‘No, sir, and it’s just what I expected. I told you that mare didn’t stay—there was really nothing to beat.’

‘You don’t know what a turn you’ve done me, Dick!’
FORTUNATUS, GOING WELL WITHIN HIMSELF, IS COMING ON NECK AND NECK WITH PUZZLE.
Cecil said as the successful rider left the scales, and 'All right!' was called. 'I took a thousand to eighty at the last moment—don't shake your head and say it was foolish, because it came off, you see!'

'Foolish all the same, Mr. Auburn,' Dick replied. 'They don't often go like that in the market without a reason, though what it meant this time I can't make out. I'm very glad, and now I must go and have some lunch, for I haven't had anything to eat to-day, and dinner yesterday was too light to be satisfying.'

In another corner of the paddock a group of five men were in earnest and angry discussion. Hough, Scully, and Barrick were three of them, and it would have been evident to an observer studied in physiognomy that something had dreadfully astonished and was still painfully perplexing them very much indeed.

About a week afterwards Cecil was again at Chattress's place to try some two-year-olds, Howard with him, the former much happier in his mind, for the debt which had weighed so heavily on him had been paid, and the cloud which seemed to be settling on his happiness removed.

Some trials had come off according to the wishes of the spectators, the three were at luncheon in the dining-room, and Cecil was reading the comments on the Downshire Handicap in a weekly paper just received.

'A more unaccountable piece of business,' the writer said, 'I do not remember to have seen or heard of. When horses go back in the market as Fortunatus did there is usually a most excellent reason for it, and nothing is rarer than their success. The horse looked wonderfully well, Chattress expressed himself as most
sanguine about the result, and as a rule he is far from a sanguine man; and yet, after having been freely backed at 3 to 1, Fortunatus went out to tens—indeed, I am told that a friend of the stable, who declined to be put off, took 1,000 to 80 just before the flag fell. Against Puzzle, on the other hand, you could not get an offer at the finish, and it is an open secret that some of her party have not been seen since the race. They “went for the gloves,” and some very dirty hands remain uncovered. It is a mystery of the most curious description, and one which no one seems able to fathom.’

Dick had listened to the extract with a smile on his face, and when Cecil put down the paper he spoke.

‘There’s a key to the mystery, all the same,’ he said, ringing the bell. ‘Send little Hughes here,’ he added, when the servant appeared.

Little Hughes, the lad whom Cecil had befriended, as we have seen, presently appeared, looking very shy and nervous, and touched his forehead to his patron.

‘Now, my boy,’ Dick said, ‘tell these gentlemen what you know about Fortunatus.’

‘Please, sir,’ the boy began, ‘that day you were here last I went up to the plantation in the afternoon. I often used to go and lie there and read, and watch the rabbits and birds. And that afternoon—I think I must have been asleep in the sun—I was quite close to the side, a little way in, and I heard Barrick and a strange man talking. He woke me, I think, by striking a fusee, and I heard him say that Fortunatus must not win the race.’

‘Barrick’s the boy that did the horse, isn’t he?’ Cecil interpolated, and Dick nodded.

‘And then, sir,’ little Hughes continued, ‘the other
man gave him a little bottle and told him to put it in the horse's water; he said it wouldn't show and wouldn't kill the horse, but it couldn't win if he took it, and then I knew something wrong was going on, and I didn't know what to do, for Mr. Chattress had left home, and I didn't know who to tell. I was thinking about what I ought to do all the afternoon, and just before tea-time I saw Barrick hang up his jacket in our room. There was no one else about, the boys were all on the cricket ground, so I went to his pocket and took out the little bottle and emptied the stuff away—it was just like water—and filled it again at the bucket. I thought he'd be sure to think it was the stuff he had been given, and it would not do any harm, and when Mr. Chattress came back I told him. I was sorry to get Barrick into trouble, but—'

'Trouble, by Jove! The infernal young scoundrel ought to be hung,' Howard ejaculated.

'Yes. He didn't wait to give me the chance of talking to him,' Chattress said. 'I've got a lovely ash stick that would have done him a world of good if I'd caught him; but he was off, and I've not heard of him since.'

'Well, my boy,' Cecil said, 'you've shown that you've got your wits about you, and I'm very pleased, as I'm sure Mr. Chattress is.'

'The mouse and the lion!' Howard put in.

'A very sharp little mouse indeed,' Cecil said, and went on, 'Now, my boy, you've done more good than you know, and we're more than pleased with you. Tell me, what do you want most in the world?'

'To ride a race, sir!' Hughes exclaimed without hesitation.
'So you shall, next week. Put him on old Cannon Ball, Dick, in the handicap—he'll win, too, if he sits still.'

'Yes, the old horse knows his business, and doesn't want much riding. You shall have the mount,' Dick said.

'What's that—a watch?' Cecil asked, seeing the boy's fingers playing with a little gold chain.

'Yes, sir; Mr. Chattress gave it to me,' the boy said, producing his new treasure, a gold timepiece.

'That's all right; but he knows what o'clock it is without it, all the same. Well, I'll give Mr. Chattress a hundred pounds to put in the bank for you,' Cecil said, 'and you shan't want a chance of getting on if I can help you.'

After which, with a flushed face, little Hughes left the room as happy as a king.

He had his ride, sat still, and old Cannon Ball carried him triumphantly home, thereby compensating for the slight disappointment he had felt in not being allowed to ride with whip or spurs. Cecil is happily married; Barrick has not been heard of, but Hough and Scully are to be seen hanging about racecourses outside the rings, whenever they are out of gaol, where they pass a good deal of their time.
The ardent spirits who had jumped the fence into the tempting range of meadows which presented such a charming expanse of galloping ground had been obliged to pull up, for beyond the fence hounds could make nothing of it.

'If he'll only give them time!' young Hedworth muttered, as he glanced towards the spot where Perkinson, the master, and Bob Couples, the huntsman, were in colloquy; but his fears, arising from too accurate a knowledge of Perkinson's methods, were justified. The eccentric M.F.H. cantered forward, Bob's horn summoned the hounds, and off they set to cast in the direction in which Perkinson, for some reason imperceptible to all except himself, assumed that the fox had gone.

'What's he at now?' Hedworth remarked to his friend Charlton. 'Why can't he leave the hounds alone for a moment and see what they think about it? I'll bet you 6 to 4 they don't pick it up!'

'I'll bet you 6 to 1 if you like, or 16 for the matter of that. My own impression is that the fox never crossed the fence at all, and why the deuce he should suppose it's gone on I can't guess.'
The field had trotted up to within duly respectful distance of the pack, but there was not even a whimper to show that the most impulsive of hounds suspected the presence of a fox. The cast was a failure, as probably each of the five-and-twenty or thirty men who were out, not excluding Bob Couples, felt certain it would be. After the hopelessness of the quest had been made apparent, Perkinson started off once more.

'Well, he's lost that fox in consequence of pure pig-headedness, but there's one good thing, we're sure to find in Hawk's Gorse,' Hedworth observed as, somewhat disconsolately, he followed the hounds; for a straight-necked fox had given them a merry fifteen minutes, and they had naturally supposed that they were in for a good thing, the more agreeable because good things had been sadly scarce of late.

The Heatherley Hounds had not been having good sport, nor was the prospect improving. Who was to take them had been a problem, for agricultural depression had affected the banking accounts of the few men whom the district would have been glad to see at the head of affairs. Sir Henry Herries, the late master, had inherited an estate in the Midlands, and had gone to live on his new domains. The Grange, his place, was to let, and what was to become of the hounds had sorely perplexed sportsmen in the district, when suddenly Mr. James Perkinson, a gentleman who was understood to have made a fortune in the Potteries, came to the Grange, and took the hounds over also, the kennels being situated on the property. He, it was understood, would carry on the hunt, asking a subscription—a fairly liberal one; this was promised, and he agreed to make good the balance. In the Potteries, as else-
where, there are doubtless some very good sportsmen and some very bad ones; and it soon became evident that Perkinson did not belong to the former category. He was a curiously cross-grained personage, a man with whom it was impossible to get on. He entertained to a moderate extent, but sat at the head of his own dinner table, occasionally growling at a servant, but talking little to anybody else, unless an opportunity occurred of contradicting something that had been said. After one or two experiences, men who were asked to dine invariably found that a previous engagement would prevent them from accepting Mr. Perkinson’s kind invitation.

Little was seen of him out of the hunting-field, and what was seen of him in it did not tend to make him popular. He had no sort of consideration for the convenience of others. Sometimes hounds met at half-past ten, sometimes at twelve. It seemed to be his delight to run counter to everybody’s wishes, and though he would, and, whenever possible, did, spend unlimited time in digging a fox, the record of sport was wretchedly bad. It was felt that he would have enjoyed himself much more ferreting than fox-hunting, so fond was he of getting off his horse and waiting at the mouth of a drain till the unhappy little animal that had taken refuge there was got out. As for leaving the hounds alone at a check, and giving them the time to puzzle it out which Hedworth had hoped they would be granted, that was not at all Perkinson’s way. He insisted that they should be cast at once, and, having private theories, of which no amount of experience seemed to show him the fallacy, as a rule in the wrong direction.

‘Where is he off to now?’ suddenly exclaimed Charlton. ‘Isn’t he going to draw Hawk’s Gorse?’
To the surprise of those who knew the country best, after having appeared to head for that sure find, Perkinson diverged from it, leaving it on the right hand, or rather did not make towards it, as had been expected.

'He's going to the Bracken, you know. There has not been a fox there within my memory, and you may depend upon it there never will be. Why on earth doesn't he go where he's sure to find? I shall ride up and ask him,' Charlton said, and he cantered on to Perkinson's side.

'I fancied you were going to Hawk's Gorse, Mr. Perkinson. Would it not be well to try that? There's generally a fox there, isn't there, Bob?' Charlton remarked, seeking information from the huntsman.

'Yes, sir, it's as likely as any place,' was Bob's reply.

'Your fancy led you astray, Mr. Charlton,' Perkinson answered. 'I am not going there.'

'Of course it's as you like, but it seems a pity to pass the place now we are here, don't you think?' Charlton urged; but Perkinson did not condescend to reply.

'May I venture to ask where you are going?' he presently continued, biting his lips with irritation at Perkinson's silence.

'I am going to the Bracken. I presume I am at liberty to take my hounds where I please?' Perkinson said.

'Certainly, sir, you are the master; but fortunately I am at liberty to decline to waste my time outside coverts where there are no foxes. Good morning, Mr. Perkinson.'

He waited for Hedworth, and the pair turned aside; the greater part of the field also began to disperse when
it was known upon what a hopeless quest the master was bound, and he went on with something less than a dozen followers. One would naturally think that no M.F.H. would be ill-conditioned enough to miss a run for the sake of disappointing and annoying his field, but Perkinson’s behaviour on this occasion as on others was incomprehensible.

‘Disgusting state of things, isn’t it?’ Charlton said, as he and Hedworth trotted along the road, having made up their minds to spend the afternoon in seeing if a couple of four-year-olds that had lately been broken had any idea of jumping a hurdle. ‘It’s always such bad form to wrangle with the master; he’s just the man that one ought to support loyally; but when he’s such an offensive ass as Perkinson, what are you to do?’

‘I wish you’d taken the hounds yourself!’ Hedworth remarked.

‘I wish I could have afforded it, my dear chap. If I could not show sport, I would at least listen to suggestions and be civil to people. I’ve hunted here for thirteen years, Perkinson has been here just six months, so I might be supposed to know something about the country. Besides, Bob confirmed what I said about Hawk’s Gorse, as anybody else in the hunt would have done. I tried to make the best of Perkinson for a long time. “It’s only his way,” Carrol said; but I can’t see that “it’s only his way” is any excuse for a man if his way’s an offensive way.’

‘Yes,’ Hedworth returned, ‘you can put up with a good deal from a master if he’s a gentleman but a bad sportsman, or if he’s a good sportsman and not quite a gentleman; but when he’s neither one nor the other it’s rough on subscribers, and Perkinson treats the farmers
as if they were taking liberties in riding over their own land. I heard old Lopdell complaining bitterly of the way Perkinson had spoken to him, and Lopdell’s a thoroughly good old fellow. As for Bob, who used to be a decent servant, he dare not call his soul his own.’

‘But what’s to be done? We accepted him, and we can’t ask him to go. Besides, he’s just the sort of man who would take a delight in staying where he was not wanted. And to think of the good time we used to have with Herries, the best chap in the world! ’Pon my word the Grange doesn’t look the same place. We can only wait, and hope for the best, I suppose!’

By this time the friends had reached the gates of Hedworth’s house, and trotted in to console themselves with lunch, before taking the colts in hand and seeing how they framed for jumping.

CHAPTER II

Matters did not improve as the season advanced. Perkinson became more and more unreasonable, and the fields smaller and smaller. They never had been large, for the Heatherley Hounds hunt an out-of-the-way piece of country, which had formerly been an outskirt of a more important hunt; but in those days it was rarely that the latter came here, and so Sir Henry Herries’s father had obtained a cession of ground, built kennels, and started the Heatherley. Hedworth, Charlton, and some half-dozen of their friends had more than once discussed the desirability of staying away altogether, but they did not care to be driven from their sport by the ill-breeding of Perkinson; after all, they had subscribed
handsomely, and to have given up hunting would have been like cutting off their noses to spite their faces. They would have suffered: Perkinson would not have minded in the least; on the contrary, he would rather have been pleased. One day a hound, sick or sorry, had lingered behind the pack, and Hedworth, on jumping the fence, had lighted within three or four yards of the straggler. Need it be said that Perkinson started complaints about men who came out to steeplechase and rode over the hounds? It was not in the least Hedworth's fault, but it gave the tyrant an opportunity of which he availed himself, and relations grew more and more strained.

One day—there was no hunting—Perkinson, with Bob in attendance, was riding to a part of the country over which hounds had not been for a good many years. The property had belonged to a cantankerous old man, Sir George Cross, who had quarrelled with Herries, father of the late master, and warned the hounds off his land, assuring him that if he ventured to come in face of the prohibition, he would find no foxes; and so for a long time the coverts had not been drawn. He had died; his brother, who inherited, wished to be neighbourly, and having by accident heard of the warning off, had civilly written to beg Perkinson to come when it suited him to do so. Perkinson had, therefore, ridden over with Bob to inspect what was practically an addition to the country, an extensive tract of, for the most part, poorish grazing land, with some well-cultivated fields, which had been reclaimed by much draining, scattered about; but the land, poor as it might be from an agriculturist's point of view, was well enough for hunting if only a few litters of cubs could be
reared. Perkinson was riding along savagely, pondering over a paragraph which had appeared in one of the sporting papers. The writer had hunted a day with the Heatherley Hounds, and in a few terse lines had more than hinted at the uncomfortable state of things in the country. This had raised Perkinson's wrath against those who should have been his friends, for he failed to see that he was to be blamed, and he only.

'Take care where you are going, sir!' Bob called out, as his master turned into a gateway and set off at a canter across a rushy meadow. Perkinson took no notice, not understanding the reason of the caution; when suddenly he found that his horse was up to his fetlocks, and the next stride nearly up to his knees, his rider barely saving a fall as the animal stopped abruptly. He was in a bog, though, luckily for him, not in the worst part of it; but only with a good deal of splashing up of black mud was he able to escape.

'I holloaed out to you, sir!' Bob said, as he stood at the edge of the sound turf.

'Why the devil couldn't you say what it was?' Perkinson growled.

'I called as soon as ever I saw where you was going, sir. It's very bad in some parts about here, and very deceptive like; you don't know that they're there till you're in 'em. We shall have to take care when we come here, or some of the gentlemen 'll get into a mess,' was Bob's rejoinder.

'Some of the gentlemen will get into a mess!' How ardently Perkinson wished they would! It would be a lesson to that supercilious young ass Hedworth not to ride over hounds, Perkinson thought; for he had really half persuaded himself that Hedworth—the cheeriest and
pleasantest young fellow in the country—had been guilty of that offence. To see Charlton up to his ears, or old Lopdell half smothered—the second half of the operation for choice—would have delighted Perkinson. 'Some of the gentlemen will get into a mess!' How could he manage that this should happen? If only there were a fox, and if he only would take such a line that half-a-dozen or so of those whom he regarded as his enemies would get into one of those treacherous bogs! All of a sudden an idea struck him. The fox should be made to take such a line; or, at least, something that would answer the purpose of a fox. He called his huntsman to his side.

'Do you know, Bob,' he said, with what he intended for a smile, 'I shouldn't be half sorry if some of the gentlemen did get into a mess? It would teach Mr. Hedworth not to press hounds, and give some of the others a useful lesson.' What they were to learn was not very clear, but that did not matter. 'They are always grumbling that they never get a gallop, and I've a mind to give them a good one. We'll just lay a bit of a drag for them, across one of these bogs; and then,' he said, with a singularly unsuccessful attempt to bring out the humorous side of the business, 'we'll see the fun.'

Bob hesitated a moment, while his master glanced at him sharply; then the servant touched his cap, and essayed also to smile. He dared not call his soul his own, Charlton had said, and if he did not like the idea he certainly had not the courage to express dissent or doubt. Then the plot was arranged. A drag should be laid, crossing—as awkwardly as could be managed—the blackest and deepest of these quagmires; it was to be laid in the worst part of a cunning curve, so that the
men who rode, as they almost surely would ride, the inner line, would get into the thick of it. Bob was to show the way as far as it was safe; Perkinson, well away to the right, as he would take care to be, would be in good going. Perkinson was delighted. How lucky Bob had used that phrase about the gentlemen getting into a mess! Otherwise the notion would not have occurred to him; and now here was a way of paying off the grudge he bore.

For the Tuesday of the following week the meet at the Cross Roads, new to all but a very few members of the hunt, was announced. Old Lopdell was doubtless well acquainted with the lay of the land, for his farm was not far from the boggy part of the country; but if hounds got well away—and they would get well away on this occasion—it was in the highest degree unlikely that he would be near enough to the head of affairs to warn men mounted on such cattle as Hedworth and Charlton rode. Where an ugly fence had to be crossed, and Perkinson intended that his field should jump, the line was to run conveniently near a gate, for he himself did not like fences; then, after crossing a meadow which was to be carefully chosen for soundness, so as to get up a pace, the field was to be taken straight into the bog; and then the laughter was to come in.

Suppose Hedworth did not turn up on the eventful morning? That he or Charlton would fail to do so was Perkinson's chief apprehension, for it was mainly against the friends that his plot was directed, and they both lived a longish way from the Cross Roads. The thing had caused a good deal of trouble in process of arrangement, and it would have been a regular missfire had these two especially been out of it. Perkinson's satis-
faction was great therefore at finding Hedworth's horse, which had been sent on, being led to and fro, and at seeing his master and Charlton trot up within three minutes of his own arrival. Old Lopdell, complaining of rheumatics, was on a hairy-heeled cob; the field was exceptionally large, considering to what it had lately shrunk. Bob Couples seemed thoughtful; but Perkinson was in high good humour, and wore, for him, quite a cheerful look.

There was a little wood within a couple of hundred yards of the meet, and into this the pack was thrown after the master had waited the full time, and even allowed a few minutes' grace. A hound soon spoke, and a second seemed inclined to confirm it; but this was not what was wanted. The breaking of a veritable fox would have upset the little plot; so Bob got to them, very quietly whipped off the couple of hounds that thought they had made a discovery, and took the pack to the other side of the wood, to the spot where the drag was started. Having heard the two hounds speak, the burst which proclaimed a general acknowledgment appeared a natural sequence, and everyone was ready. This looked like the beginning of a good thing. The hounds were running hard—as well they might—and led the way over the first fence—a low hedge, to avoid which few cared to turn off to the gate, though the little detachment which is to be found in every field, and declines to jump on any consideration, diverged slightly, and passed through the welcome posts. It was long since hounds had gone such a pace. Obviously this new addition to the limits of the hunt was a valuable acquisition, for here was a straight-necked fox racing over what was up to the present a delightful country. Bob was not quite as forward as
usual. Perkinson lay well to the right of the pack, a few followed him; but the bulk of the field were rather to the left of the hounds, which leaned somewhat in that direction.

Thus a good mile was crossed. There had only been one ploughed field; meadow, stubble, and the corner of a common had made up the rest of the ground. Now they were in a field intersected by very narrow watercourses, with patches of rushes here and there. The plot was thickening: that is to say, the bog was not far off. Perkinson could see the clump of trees that grew close to the place where he had almost been in it—very black and nasty it was there—but that was nothing to the thick of it, in which his enemies would soon be splashing. Hedworth was just where Perkinson wished him to be—well in front. A lad on a thoroughbred horse, something that was being got ready for a hunt meeting, was leading; Charlton's horse had hit a rail rather hard and blundered on landing, but had speedily recovered, and Perkinson watched the recovery with much satisfaction. At another time he would have been glad to see Charlton down; this day he desired to see him the victim of another disaster.

Perkinson had been at particular pains, on the day when he first became aware of the existence of these bogs, to get their bearings. Hightree Hill was straight before them; some way to the left was a range of farm buildings, and just about midway between the two landmarks, the way they were now heading, were the 'deceptive-like' morasses. Nearer and nearer went the boy on the thoroughbred, and now by good fortune, as it appeared to Perkinson, either he checked the speed, or Hedworth went faster; at any rate, Hedworth was now leading,
well to the left of hounds, which were swinging round; Charlton was also close up, and a couple of others, no friends of Perkinson, were next. A hard-riding farmer headed the rest, and the field straggled a little already, for the pace had been very good. Yes! Now it is coming! The first half-dozen, Perkinson saw, were over a little brook, little more than a drain; the bog was just beyond. What a spectacle the trimly turned out dandies would be, soaked in that black mud! A dozen lengths more, half-a-dozen, and . . . .

How it happened it is impossible to say. No thought of where he was going had come into Perkinson's head. His eyes were eagerly bent on the men he disliked, who were on the point of making such grotesque exhibitions of themselves, when they all disappeared from his view with amazing suddenness. Where was he? His arms and legs—worse still, his eyes and nose, were buried in filthy slime, a fact he ascertained when he had succeeded in getting his head out of the mess. He was flat on the ground, and such ground! in fact, it was not ground at all. His horse was struggling frantically by his side, and as he opened his mouth to take a deep breath a disgusting clot, thrown up by the terrified animal, went half down his throat. He was alone, and a glance to the left showed him the field galloping on after the hounds, which latter were hidden from view, his point of sight being at the moment low. There could be no sort of doubt about what had taken place. He had brought the hounds—confound the brutes!—into this country to bog his followers; they had escaped, and he was bogged himself! His first impulse was to shout, but that he checked; yet, what was he to do? The foot of his
horse would be on him in a moment, he feared, so furiously did it plunge in its terror, and for himself, when he pulled one arm out the other sank in deeper, and precisely the same thing happened to his legs. His nose and mouth were full of the mess in which he was struggling. Would he ever get out of it? Before despair could set in, a rustic with surely the broadest
grin that ever was found on a human face was to be seen gazing at the hapless master. The lout looked as if he had not come across many jokes during his career, but this one would evidently last him for a lifetime. Perkin-
son would gladly have revived the terrors of the Inquisi-
tion, and launched them at the head of the yokel.

'What the devil are you grinning for?' he angrily demanded; but the question merely set the countryman
off into a burst of laughter, if the yaw-haw by which he gave expression to his merriment can be so described. Perkinson had the wit to see that abuse was worse than useless. He had struggled to an upright position once, but the attempt to take a step had thrown him down again, nor did he perceive in his state of confusion in which direction firm ground was to be gained.

‘Whoy!’ said the yokel, ‘yow’ve gotten inter bog!’ an all too obvious discovery.

‘Look here! Help me and my horse out, and I'll give you half a sovereign,’ Perkinson, utterly defeated, at length called out, and this put a new aspect on the affair in the rustic’s eyes. He ran and got a hoe, the handle of which he proffered, but it was not nearly long enough. A rope was the only thing likely to be useful, and he ran to fetch one, splashing up water as he went in a manner which explained much as to the state of the field, whilst Perkinson ignominiously sat down and felt himself sinking deeper and deeper as he sat. At length the rope was brought, a second rustic helping to carry it; the master, and finally the horse, were rescued, and the half-sovereign, with half-a-crown for his assistant, paid. Breathing out vague threats of vengeance—for it was not easy to see who was to be blamed—Perkinson set off walking homewards and leading his horse, his damp and sticky garments clinging to him, feeling, it may be assumed, much as an eel feels in a pond, only the eel probably likes it, and Perkinson certainly did not. Presently he thought that he might as well get on his horse. One stirrup-leather, the near one, was gone, left behind in the bog, but he managed to clamber up into the saddle and so reached home, a spectacle which vastly astonished the groom who took
his steed; but being at home the master could express himself with freedom, and he soon convinced the man of
the impropriety of standing and staring instead of doing his work.

"Perkinson set off walking homewards"

As for the field, they had what they generally acknowledged to be a rattling good run up to a big pond,
beyond which hounds could make nothing of it. The fox could not have drowned himself; but on the edge of
half an acre of water the scent abruptly stopped. That day at least no one suspected the truth. Some time afterwards, when Perkinson had given up the Grange and left the country, and when Charlton had accepted the mastership, to the great satisfaction of everybody, a rumour oozed out that Bob Couples and an old earth-stopper, who had long been connected with the hunt, were responsible for that excellent five-and-twenty minutes, and that the drag had been carefully laid on firm ground, passing the worst bit of bog in the district, however, on the outer side of the curve which hounds ran. What was Bob’s explanation to Perkinson, and whether he had in the course of the run expressed to Hedworth his conviction that the fox was pointing for Hightree Hill, thereby inducing him to keep well to the left of the line—these are points upon which it is impossible to obtain accurate information. It is certain, however, that a smile twinkles in the corner of Bob’s eye when references are made to the run from the Cross Roads, and he is believed on one festive occasion to have said that the best fun he ever saw in his life was Mr. Perkinson flopping over his horse’s head into the blackest and deepest bog in the Heatherley, to which he had, little suspecting, been carefully directed.
A SHORT HEAD

CHAPTER I

It was with an ugly frown on his by no means amiable features, and the utterance of a savage oath, that Francis Clifton crushed a letter in his hand and threw it into the waste-paper basket before taking up the morning papers to study the day's Sandown programme. The letter was from his trainer, and conveyed the news that a fatal accident had happened to a two-year-old they had been carefully 'readying' for a Nursery. The animal had been steadily pulled all the season; Clifton had on each occasion of its running backed it to make a show; it was quite good enough to win in its turn, but he had preferred to go for a coup, and now that it had got into a Nursery with about 21 lb. in hand, it had bolted at exercise, thrown its boy, and broke its leg over a gate. Things had been going badly with Clifton for a long time past, his failures being invariably attributable to the same cause—he was always a little too clever, and just over-reached himself when he was trying to over-reach those with whom he did business. Well connected, and starting life with a moderate fortune of some two thousand a year, he had gradually lost all his money and most of those who were reckoned as his friends for the
reason that he could not go straight if he tried—though there is nothing to favour the belief that he ever made efforts in that direction. He had trusted to this two-year-old to set him on his legs again, and now the beast, instead of a source of profit, had become a dead loss.

' I see nothing good to-day,' he murmured, as he angrily threw his dog out of the chair and sat down to look more carefully over the programme at which he had glanced. ' Nothing unless Weymouth runs Bowsprit in the Maiden Plate, and that's not likely. "The El Dorado Club,"' he read, turning over the paper and pausing at a paragraph. 'Yes! if that does not come off, I shall be in a hole!'

The El Dorado was a club in the establishment of which Clifton was interested, a club which was to be started by a little coterie of rooks, who hoped to beguile well-feathered pigeons into their nest. Facilities for betting 'on the tape' were to be provided, there was a scheme for running a little racing stable under the management of the committee, and Clifton hoped much from the association; indeed, that day at half-past five he had an appointment to meet Montgomery Isaacson and some friends who were to perform the essential operation of finding the money. The last race was at 5.15, a circumstance which prevented Clifton from going to Sandown, in view of his engagement. He was just wondering what he should do, when a knock sounded on the door, and, breathless from his hasty ascent of the stairs, a well-dressed young man entered the room.

'Good morning, Clifton! A deuce of a business I've had to find you—I didn't know you'd moved, and went to your old rooms, and then had to go to the club to find out where you lived. Look here. Weymouth asked
me to give you this. It's all right, I suppose? He wants you to do something about Bowsprit to-day. I have not a second—shall miss my train.’ So the new comer, Frank Harvey, hurriedly spoke, as with a nod he turned to leave the room.

‘Why, it does not go till half-past twelve,’ Clifton remarked, assuming that the Sandown train must be meant, and he followed his visitor to the door.

‘I'm not going to Sandown. Weymouth and I have to run down to Purbright. Back by dinner. Send him a line to say it's all right!’ Harvey spoke as he descended the stairs, evidently in the greatest haste, and going to the window Clifton saw him jump into a hansom that was waiting; the driver whipped up his horse and disappeared round the corner at speed.

‘What's this, I wonder?’ Clifton said, turning round and opening the letter which the flying messenger had brought. It ran:

‘Dear Clifton,

‘I want to have a dash on Bowsprit to-day, and should like to see what you can do for me. I want you to put me on 5,000l. You won't get anything of a price, of course; but please do the best you can. Send me a wire’—was it 'wire' or 'line' ? the word as written might be either—'to say what you have done.

‘Yours very truly,

‘H. Weymouth.’

Clifton sat down to consider the situation. He looked at the entries for the Maiden Plate, and so far as he could make out nothing had a chance of beating Bowsprit, though a speedy filly named High Street was perhaps likely to be backed, and another animal called
May Day had arrived and might find friends. Not for one moment did Clifton think how he could benefit Weymouth; his sole thought was what he could make for himself out of the affair. Weymouth, it should be said, was a wealthy baronet, only just of age, who had begun to race. He and Clifton belonged to the same club, the Junior Drake, where Clifton was accepted as something of an authority on turf affairs, and he had persuaded Weymouth that he possessed facilities for anything in the nature of a starting-price commission. Most of the men who did this sort of business were well known to layers, he had explained, and a gentleman had special advantages which the ordinary commissioner did not enjoy. Harvey, who was within earshot in the club when these sentiments were enunciated, had softly remarked to his neighbour that this might be true, but he did not see how the fact of Clifton undertaking a commission affected the question—an elaborate way of stating his opinion that he did not rank Clifton in the category in which that personage ranked himself. Weymouth, however, a simple-minded, kindly disposed lad, and no judge of character, had remembered Clifton's 'Give me a chance, old boy, when you want anything done,' and though he somehow did not care about Clifton or quite like being called 'old boy' by him in such a friendly manner, he did not mind giving him the chance he had asked for, particularly as he scarcely knew to whom else to apply.

Clifton pondered. It would be difficult in the extreme, if not impossible, to get on such a sum in the time at his disposal. It was now eleven, and the race was run at 3.45. What should he do? Try to back the horse for as much as he could? What was it likely to be, and how
much could he 'pinch'? What prospect was there of getting on anything for himself when he had such a sum to put on for Weymouth?

A brilliant idea struck him. Do nothing for Weymouth and keep the good thing entirely to himself! There was an excuse—that such a commission could not possibly be executed in the time. Harvey's visit was so flurried, in consequence of his having gone to the wrong address first and been delayed in finding out the right one, that Clifton might well pretend he did not understand his visitor's hasty remark that Weymouth was going out of town with him, and would not be back till dinner time. He could send a note round to Weymouth's house, therefore, begging him not to run the horse when there was no chance of backing him, explaining that it was impossible to get anything like 5,000L. on, and this letter Weymouth would not, he knew, receive till the evening, though of course Clifton would affect a belief that it would be received at once. Then he could quietly back the horse for as much as he could get on and keep the lot; for of course it must be good, or Weymouth, whose trainer was an extremely shrewd man, would not have wanted to have his dash.

Jubilant at the prospect before him, Clifton sat down to write:

'My dear Weymouth,

'I send the line you ask for without delay, by messenger, to say that it is absolutely impossible to get on anything like 5,000L. under the circumstances. Why run the horse in such a race? Even if you could get on, you would probably have to lay absurd odds, for nothing else will be backed. I strongly advise you not
to run—what’s the good? Bowsprit, from what you told me, is quite good enough to win a race in good company, when you could get a reasonable price. I have therefore done nothing, as what I could do would not be satisfactory to either of us, and I lose no time in letting you know. I hope you agree with me that this is best.

‘Yours always,

‘F. Clifton.’

‘There!’ he muttered to himself, as he blotted the last sheet, ‘I have begun with “I send the ‘line’” because the word he wrote may be meant for “wire” and he may very likely have told his man to re-telegraph it on somewhere. He’ll see that I read it “line,” and it’s as like one as the other. Let’s look!’ He studied a railway guide for a moment, and added, ‘Yes! that’s an idea; I can get back by the 4.30, and be in time for Isaacson, for that’s too important to be neglected.’ Taking up the pen he again wrote—

‘P.S. I did not intend to go to Sandown, as I have pressing business in town, but in case I can be of any use to you, I’ll manage to get down that we may talk it over. There’s a train back at 4.30 that will just do me.’

He chuckled to himself as he put this into an envelope. ‘That’s good!’ he said; ‘of course he will believe that I expect to see him on the course, and that I didn’t understand Harvey. He rang the bell, and gave the servant instructions that the letter was to be delivered with the greatest possible haste; and then, taking his race glasses, put on his hat and strolled off to look in at one of his clubs on the way to Waterloo.
CHAPTER II

‘Where’s Weymouth?’ Clifton, with an aspect of much concern, inquired of Beauclerk, a member of the Junior Drake, as they met in the Sandown paddock. ‘I’ve been looking for him everywhere.’

‘He’s not down—said last night he couldn’t come. He had to go to Aldershot or somewhere,’ Beauclerk answered, mixing up military resorts.

‘What an infernal nuisance!’ Clifton exclaimed. ‘I wanted most particularly to see him. I wish you’d tell him so if he’s at the club to-night. I only came because I made sure he’d be here.’

Things seemed to be going capitally. Weymouth would never doubt after the letter, but Beauclerk’s evidence of Clifton’s energetic search could do no harm.

‘I suppose Bowsprit’s good, isn’t it?’ Beauclerk remarked. ‘I went down heavy on the last race.’

‘I can’t see that it’s good!’ answered Clifton, who had so far succeeded in getting on by laying 250l. to 200l. in one case, 300l. to 200l. in another. ‘I think High Street’s sure to beat it. You can’t persuade me that she was having a go at Kempton, and I make out that she’s a 7 lb. better animal than Weymouth’s.’

‘Do you really, now? Well, ’pon my word I thought Bowsprit was good—couldn’t be beat. The Sandown five furlongs, I thought, would exactly suit him—just his course. I was going to have a plunge, and I’m in the deuce of a mess. Do you know anything?’ poor little Beauclerk pitifully asked.

‘I think I do!’ Clifton replied, mysteriously.
'Well, if it's good enough for you to back, it's good enough for me,' the other answered; and turning at once to a friend by his side, Beauclerk began—'I say, I hear High Street's sure to beat Bowsprit. I thought from what Weymouth said—' Clifton, walking away, heard no more. 'Talkative little ass!' he muttered. 'He and his friends will go dashing on High Street, and there may be a chance of backing the other at something like a reasonable price. A fool is useful sometimes.'

Bowsprit, a handsome bay colt, looked, as was generally admitted, a perfect picture, though Clifton could not help admitting that High Street was a handsome, racing-like mare. As he passed the telegraph board outside the dining-room, he saw a couple of messages for him. '350 to 200 on. No more same price,' one ran. 'Had to lay 400 to 200,' was the other; and now the numbers were up for the Maiden Plate, and the ring were offering to 'take 5 to 2, 4 to 1 bar one,' at which latter price High Street was backed to an extent that reduced the odds on the favourite—Bowsprit, needless to say—to 2 to 1 on, 75 to 40, 15 to 8, and such like sums, which, however, were laid with an avidity that sent him up to 3 to 1 on before the first break-away.

Clifton looked at his book. He had altogether laid 2,100£. to 1,250£., he found, for he had been obliged to bet quietly, taking care that no one who was likely to talk to Weymouth—and one never knows who is behind one on a racecourse—saw him helping himself. He might admit having two or three hundred on, but it was not his game to let Weymouth suppose that he had plunged, though according to the plot he had laid he was not supposed to know that Weymouth had not received his letter hours before and set someone else to do the com-
mission. The horses were at the post, however, and, as Clifton noticed with much annoyance, were likely to stay there for some time. The racing was late. The Maiden Plate had been set for 3.45, and it was past four—nearly 4.10; but something in a white jacket kept breaking away, and a little black mare would not join her horses. Clifton must catch his train, and had a fly waiting to drive him to the station, but it would take ten minutes, he reckoned, to leave his place on the steps in front of the Stewards' Stand, get into his trap and reach the train; and as he brought his glasses to bear on the horses at the five furlongs starting-post he saw that the white jacket was off again. A glance at his watch: 4.15—he must be off in five minutes, and there was the little black beast apparently trying to climb over the boarded fence behind the starter.

"Hulloa! I was looking for you. Are you on High Street?" came suddenly from a voice at his side. It was Beauclerk. "I've had a plunge—eleven hundred to four. Bad price, but it's the best I could get. Are you on?"

"Yes. I've backed it," Clifton replied.

"Heavy? Oh, I say, do you really think it's good? What do you know about it? If this doesn't come off, I shall be in a deuce of a mess unless Sapphire wins in the North. I've got 1,200 to 100 about him. Off! No, it's that beast in white. Oh, I say, don't you think Weymouth's horse'll win? Listen! They'll "take 3 to 1." There! "5 to 1 bar one"—beastly bad price I got. Ought to have had 2,000 to 400—it'll make a difference of a lot if it wins. What's the time? 4.20—ah! now he's got 'em. Yes. They're off."

So Beauclerk chattered as the flag fell, his words reach-
ing inattentive ears, for Clifton's attention was concentrated on the light blue jacket which Bowsprit carried, and he saw with much satisfaction that it had got well away on the rails, and when they had gone a furlong was almost clear of the rest. On they sped, the white a length behind and the crimson colours of High Street prominent amid the other half-dozen that came on in a bunch. Half the distance had been covered, and Ball,
the jockey on the favourite, a length in front, turned round to look at his followers—welcome sight! Few things in racing are so delightful as that turn of the head on the part of the jockey whose mount we have backed.

'Oh, I say, damn it! Bowsprit's winning after all. We're done, old chap! What an ass I was to be put off!

That turn of the Head

I knew it was good. Just like my luck. No? By Jove! look! the other's coming. He'll get up! High Street wins! Go it, High Street! We're all right, the favourite's beat!'  

So indeed it seemed. Ball was hard at work on Bowsprit; Netter on High Street had vainly sought an opening, but had found a way through just in time and was overhauling the favourite rapidly. It was indeed an
exciting finish. 'The favourite doesn't win! Bowsprit wins! No, he's beat! High Street wins! High Street's won! What a race! ' Such were the cries that came from backers, each in all probability shouting that what he wanted to happen had indeed taken place; and so the two leaders flashed past the post lengths ahead of the rest.

'Here, 10 to 1 on High Street!' came from a well-known voice in the ring, as with sinking heart and a curse on his lips Clifton turned away; for this to him meant disaster irreparable unless the El Dorado business turned out even far better than he dared to hope.

'Good business! Thanks, old chap! I can't tell you how much obliged to you I am! I thought—' the rest of Beauclerk's speech was lost to Clifton's ears, for he had barely time to catch his train—might, indeed, miss it unless by good luck it was late, and his luck was not in to-day, nor were Beauclerk's words of congratulation, based on the assumption that Clifton had backed High Street, welcome to his ears.

The flyman was on the alert with whip upraised. Clifton, who had rushed away the very moment the horses passed the post, jumped in and they were off.

'Beg your pardon, sir. Did High Street win?' the man asked, turning round.

'Yes; get on, damn it, you'll miss the train,' Clifton answered angrily, feeling for his betting book. There it was, no mistake about it—2,100!. He had not half the amount in the world. What a fool he was—and yet it had looked so good! What was to be done?
CHAPTER III

Suddenly an idea flashed across his active brain. His eye brightened and the blood mounted to his cheek, for he had hit on a brilliant notion to be thought out at leisure in the train which was just approaching the platform as he reached it.

This was the idea. Weymouth, as he had every reason to believe, could not have received his letter declining the commission. If not, and if he could only substitute another letter pretending that he had got the money on, Weymouth would pay him the 5,000l., he could pay the two thousand odd, and would make nearly 3,000l. by the transaction! If only Weymouth had not received the letter? That was the question. It was more important than the El Dorado business; however, he could wire Isaacson, saying he would be detained half an hour or so, and meantime drive to Weymouth's rooms and see what had happened. The plot seemed flawless, at least he had detected no weak point in it when the train drew up at Vauxhall, and there, dashing into a hansom, he gave the man directions to drive first to his chambers, for the letter must of course be written on his own notepaper, and he must fetch a sheet and an envelope. He had not to go far out of his way, and was speedily at Weymouth's door—if only he were still away and had not received that letter!

'Is Sir Henry in?' he asked the man.

'No, sir. Sir Henry went out this morning, sir. Said he would be home to dress for dinner,' was the reply.
'Ah! that's awkward. He's not been to Sandown, I think? Do you happen to know where he is?'

'Well, sir,' the man replied, 'Sir Henry went to Purbright, I know, sir, because he said just as he was getting into the cab that a telegram would come for him,' ('It was “wire” then,' Clifton thought), 'and I was to open it and wire the message on, and about two o'clock I had a wire from Sir Henry asking if there was no message.'

'Well, I think I'll leave him a note,' Clifton answered, striving to repress his excitement, and with a polite 'Certainly, sir!' the man led the way into the smoking-room.

On the table there were three letters, two stamped that had come by post, and the third Clifton's own note of that morning. Happy chance! Now he only wanted to be alone.

'You'll find pen and ink on the table, and there's paper in the drawer here, sir,' the man said.

'Thank you. Don't wait. I can find my way out. Sir Henry is sure to be home to dress, you say? Do you know where he dines?'

'I think most probably at the Junior Drake Club, sir. I heard him say something about it to Mr. Harvey when he was here this morning.'

The man withdrew. In one second Clifton had snatched up the letter, put it in his pocket, and his pen was flying over the paper as he wrote:—

'My dear Weymouth,—I hasten to send the line you ask. Of course I'll do as you wish, and, I need not say, do my best. Five thousand pounds is a lot of money to get on in so short a time, and we shall have to lay odds, of
course—longish ones, I fear; though from what I am told the High Street people are going to back her, and that will give us a bit of a chance to get on. She is a very good mare, better than people think, and I confess I am very much afraid of her, but you know how good your horse is, and in any case I've only got to do as I'm told; so you may depend upon it that your money will be on, and at the best price obtainable.

'Yours always,
'F. Clifton.'

'When he reads how much afraid I was of High Street he'll think what a good judge I am!' Clifton said, with a grin. 'I must leave another note to explain my call, I suppose. Let's see? What's it to be about?'

'My dear Weymouth,—I just called in passing, but shall be at the Drake and hope to see you to-night. I thought you were winning easily till just the finish, but I told you this morning that High Street was smart—and I got your money on at such a nice price too!'

(Here he paused and grinned again. 'What shall I tell him?' he muttered.) 'Five thousand to 3,750—almost 5 to 4, you see!

'Yours always,
'F. C.'

'Well, that's what I call a good day's work and a wonderful let off, by Jingo! That happy thought makes a difference of 5,000l. to me!' Clifton said to himself, with a pleased smile, as he drove off to his chambers.

The meeting with Isaacson and his friends was not satisfactory. Obstacles arose of a nature that need not be described, and after an angry discussion the Ei
Dorado was abandoned; but under existing circumstances, Clifton's robbery, to call it by its right name, having set him on his legs as he fondly imagined, he cared little for the other business, and was in no way depressed when he went into the Junior Drake and ordered his dinner.

'Had a good day?' someone inquired as he passed down the room. 'That must have been a near thing. I wonder what Weymouth did about his horse.'

'You had better satisfy your wonder by asking him, for there he is,' someone else broke in, as Weymouth and Harvey entered the room. 'Well, old chap, did you have a plunge?' the speaker continued, as Weymouth approached him.

'Oh, I backed it—thought it was sure to be there or thereabouts,' the owner of Bowsprit answered; and then, going up to Clifton, he quietly said, 'I've just got your letter. I'm awfully obliged for the trouble you've taken. You did it well, too. I can't think how you got on at the price! I made sure this morning when I wrote that they wouldn't take less than 5 to 2, but the colt was so well and it looked so good that I felt bound to run.'

Clifton thought that Weymouth took it all very kindly; but then, why should he not do so? He had been winning lately, Clifton knew, and money was of no importance to him.

'He certainly looked a picture,' Clifton rejoined, 'but High Street is very useful, you know. I told you so in my note this morning.'

'Yes. That's why I'm not disheartened,' Weymouth answered, 'though I certainly did think—made sure—Bowsprit would win in a canter. It must have been close. Were you down at the post?'
'No. I saw it from the stand,' Clifton said.  
'And which did you think had won? I'm told someone in the ring laid 10 to 1 on High Street after they'd passed the post?' Weymouth added.  
'Yes, I heard it. If High Street could have got through, she'd have won easily, I have no doubt,' Clifton answered.  
'Ah, well! I suppose my horse isn't quite as good as we thought, that's all!' Weymouth observed, turning towards Harvey, who at that moment joined them, special 'Standard' in hand.  
'Yours started at 11 to 4 on, I see—a short head,' he said.  
'Yes, and Clifton got me a wonderful price. The only thing I'm afraid of,' he added, speaking to his friendly commissioner, 'is that you didn't really win anything yourself. It was rather a silly business. I ought to have given you a lot more time to arrange it, I know. However, it's come off all right, that's the great thing, and I hope you won a bit, at any rate!'  
Clifton was bewildered. 'Come off all right,' 'Didn't win anything yourself'—what could these phrases mean from the lips of a man who had lost 5,000l. that afternoon? That Weymouth would not be downcast Clifton had supposed, but he was apparently elated, and someone who had just entered the room slapped the owner of Bowsprit on the back heartily, and, as they strolled to the table together, said something about 'congratulations,' 'thought the other had got up on the post,' 'most deceptive course in England,' 'no one could possibly say which had won from the stand.'  
A horrible suspicion suddenly overcame Clifton. He had rushed away in hot haste before the winner's
number was hoisted, feeling certain from the evidence of his own eyes and the observations of all around him that High Street had got up and won—a good neck, if not a half-length, he thought. But he had not looked at an evening paper. What if he and those who had stood by him on the stand were all alike wrong! He recalled instances in which he had previously been altogether deceived by the finish of races at the five-furlong post viewed from the stand—could he be so now? Where was the paper? The special 'Standard' was on a table by his side, and, hastily clutching it, he turned to the fifth page and read the report:

3.45. Maiden Two-Year-Old Plate of 200 sovs. 5 furlongs.
Sir H. Weymouth's b. c. Bowsprit, 9 st. ........M. Ball 1.
Lord George Greystock's ch. f. High Street, 8-11..Netter 2.
Mr. York's br. c. Harvest, 9 st.........................Wye 3.

There it was—no possibility of doubt about it! The names of the other five runners followed, and then came the description:

11 to 4 on Bowsprit, 4 to 1 against High Street, 100 to 11 May Day, 100 to 8 others. The favourite jumped off in front and made running to the distance, when High Street, who had been disappointed in the attempt to find an opening, got through and challenged vigorously, but Bowsprit, just holding his own to the end in a desperate finish, won by a short head; a bad third.

Clifton sank into a chair and gazed at the paper as if hoping that the words might form new meanings; but there the truth was, and now he began to understand the remarks Weymouth had made—remarks that had seemed so strange at the time. Fool that he had been! It was that brilliant idea, as he had regarded it, of substituting the fresh letter for that which he had written in the morning that had ruined him. How could he have been idiot enough to leave the course without a
glance at the numbers! He was in a hurry, it is true, but this would not have taken a moment. He knew full well how fatally deceptive the view from the stand is, how often the best judges watching from there are mistaken about what has won at the five-furlong winning-post.

Fool that he had been!

Why had he not just called at his club and looked at the tape? It is so easy to be wise, to know what one ought to have done, after the event! But what was his position? His own miserable fiction stood against him, the second letter he had written about the price, telling Weymouth that he had won him 3,750l. This unnecessary circumstantial lie had cost him the difference between
1,250l. which he had won and 3,750l. which he was by his own showing and handwriting bound to pay Weymouth—2,500l. Was ever a man in such a wretched fix by his own roguish blundering—when he thought, moreover, that he was acting so shrewdly and cleverly?

‘Aren’t you coming to dine?’ Weymouth cheerily called out, as he sat down to his own dinner. He had never liked Clifton much—had, in fact, distrusted him; but the event of the day had seemed to show that his distrust was unfounded.

‘No, thanks, I have dined,’ he answered, to the amazement of the waiter who was just putting on the table the soup he had ordered, and who looked after him with an expression of blank perplexity on his face as Clifton staggered out of the club.

Clifton was missing on the Monday, and Weymouth never got his money, though it is believed that Clifton managed to draw his winnings, and an idea prevails that he has gone to see if he can turn the same to good account on the turf in the colonies.
Whether a day can properly be described as fine depends upon the purpose which the speaker has in view: A fine morning for everything but fox-hunting is a phrase sometimes heard, and implies a clear blue sky, a warm air, and other attributes suitable for the purpose of a picnic, but very unsuitable for the chase. Spring has its welcome for many.

Verque novum stabat, cinctum florente coronâ.

But the ardent sportsman looks coldly on its beauties. When, therefore, it is said that the day is fine, it must be understood that it appears to be fine for the pursuit of the fox. Last night's rain has filled the ditches and left puddles in the road, and though the downpour ceased with dawn, clouds hang loweringly; but a faint peep of bluish sky is discernible, and suggests that there is no occasion for mackintoshes. It looks a likely morning for scent; but those who hunt most know best that the mysteries of scent are not to be fathomed. Often when the prospect of sport seems hopeless days are best; hounds run hard over dusty fallows, and are at fault in the dewy pastures, when the southerly wind and the cloudy sky, together with other traditional signs, are all propitious. What is scent? may be asked after hundred of years of sport. Does the fox leave it on the
ground he crosses by the pressure of his pads, or does the subtle essence float in the air 'breast high,' as they say—or does it do either, or both? We must watch the pack to-day and try to see; for, if you please, the Meadowmere Hounds meet at the Hall at eleven (breakfast at 10.30 being an addition to the cards). It is for this reason that little streams of horsemen have converged, cantering over bridle paths, across the fields, or trotting along the roads, and this is why so many led horses are parading about in front of the house. There are mounted men too. The farmers, as a rule, prefer to take their snacks in the saddle, and they munch their sandwiches, washed down by the contents of wine-glasses or tumblers as their preferences lie, in little groups under the trees, where also traps and carriages of various sizes and shapes are drawn up. There is an agreeable air of hospitality about a hunt breakfast which scarcely lingers anywhere else. In the dining-room of the Hall, long tables are laid out with what might be a substantial ball-room supper; the host's thoughtful providence has caused the erection of a sort of buffet at the end of the room, where those who do not care about sitting down—and a heavy breakfast is a bad preparation for a hard run—may be quickly served with 'pretty tiny kickshaws.'

Someone with whom Mr. Romford breakfasted had been told that it was not fashionable to give champagne, but it may be set down as a standing rule that it is always fashionable to give champagne on all occasions, provided that the champagne be good; and if it be not, to give it on any occasion is a sin. Here the corks are popping merrily, though men who mean business will not replenish their glasses. Young Urbington from
town is fascinated by the cheerful sound, and he has another glass, which is not the second. He is exhilarated by the festive surroundings, and indeed feels very much more like riding than he did when he dismounted at the door; for he and his big grey horse had a slight disagreement on the road here, and the obstinacy with which the animal insisted on having its own way made Urbington a little doubtful as to what might happen in the course of the run if matters did not go smoothly. General Truffles, who merely hunts for an appetite, is busy, of course. He may be said to have found, and does not care a jot whether the earths are stopped at High Elm Gorse, a question which is severely exercising the little knot of men who stand behind his chair. He is intent on the best Russian salad he ever ate, and, great as may be his dislike to the treacherous Tartar, there is no mistake as to the excellence of Russian salad.

The clatter of knives and forks gradually ceases, there are many vacant chairs, men are putting on their gloves, and from the windows it can be seen that not a few are already in the saddle. The hounds, too, clustered round the huntsman's horse, seem to know by instinct that a move is about to be made. The host and his sons have ceased to echo their kindly formula, 'Won't you come in and have some breakfast?' It is time to be up and doing; so Urbington has a liqueur of peach brandy to top up with, the General casts a last fond look at the salad, the young lady in the dark blue habit has caused her gloves and her whip to be retrieved from under the table, and the room is speedily emptied.

It is a fairly big meet. More than a hundred horsemen are here, in pink, black, or tweed, with breeches of leather or cord, and boots of the top and butcher
GENERAL TRUFFLES, WHO MERELY HUNTS FOR AN APPETITE, IS BUSY
A Run

varieties—this is not a select hunt in the Shires, but one which for over a century has been famous in its own country and surrounding districts. Some half-dozen ladies add picturesqueness to the field, and as the throng canters across the park, the rear is brought up by those who are determined to see as much as is possible on wheels. With average luck and a knowledge of the country that is often a great deal.

What would happen if there was not a fox in the home covert is a question to which an answer has never been needed, for a fox is always there. While snugly coiled up in a dry mossy bank sheltered by tall ferns at the foot of an old oak he has heard the approaching sounds, the significance of which he knows. He heard them a few weeks ago, on an occasion which made a very disagreeable impression on him, for an alarming clamour had so seriously disturbed him that he had felt it advisable to make all possible haste to an occasional resting-place in a wood some half-dozen miles away, and till he took refuge in a rabbit-hole, on the original tenants of which he had previously supped, the offensive din behind him had not ceased. He is therefore very quickly on the alert. He listens for one moment, ears pricked, brush stiffened, a light in his keen, intelligent eye, to assure himself that this is not an ugly dream—he had been reduced to rook for supper, and the bird he happened to find was, as Tennyson says, many summered—and then, there being no mistake about it, glides rapidly through the undergrowth, slips through a meuse, and with a whisk of his brush sets his face for High Elm Gorse.

Meantime, with a wave of the arm, Bill the huntsman has sent his pack into the covert. He jumps in after
them, a few more follow, others enter by the gate a little
to the right, and wait about in the broad ride where the
birchleaves—bad for scent, as some suppose—lie thickly.
The rest follow Tom the whip, who has quietly stolen
round to the left corner of the covert, whence—not too
far forward, for Tom is cautious—he can obtain a view
if the fox breaks on that side and takes the line he took

before. Young Urbington is close behind Tom, and,
standing up in his stirrups, looking over the angle of the
fences, sees some hundred yards away down the hedge a
sight that immediately induces him to open his mouth.
Tom knows by a sort of instinct what Urbington is going
to do, and turns round with a warning finger, just in
time to stop the halloo which is rising to the young man's
lips; for it is the fox, pausing a second to see if the road
is clear. Nothing is visible or audible on the line towards which his sharp nose points, so in a moment he is swinging across the field with easy stride, making fair haste, but not hurrying out of his collected pace.

Then, when he is through the hedge beyond and stealing over the plough, his bright red fur in contrast to the dull hue of the soil, Tom puts his finger to his ear and gives vent to a screech which causes horses and men alike to prick up their ears. Tom's sharp eyes have done good service; 'Tally-ho! Gone away!' is the cry; but he only just anticipated the hounds. Tuneable had already spoken and informed her gossips that a fox had lately been in the immediate neighbourhood, but she was heading away from his last resting-place. Phyllis had acknowledged the correctness of the discovery, when Dairymaid had dashed past her and thrust her nose into the very bed that had been just vacated, a discovery which she proclaimed with eager delight. Her sister Damsel, who really did not know anything at all about it, had not enjoyed the faintest whiff of fox, but was ready to declare that she had, chimed in, and the pack was rushing forward to investigate Dairymaid's assertion when the 'Tally-ho!' had sounded and set all doubts at rest. The huntsman takes his horse by the head and crashes through the young trees, over the stubs and half over half through the fence which separates the covert from the field. The pack is nearing the fence beyond; round each side of the covert comes a string of horsemen; others, who have been in the covert, make the best of their way to the fence the huntsman has charged, their horses blundering about in a manner which makes them admire the ease with which Bill's favourite gets over such ground as this just as if it were a level meadow.
The master is going in a good place some distance to the left, almost level with the leading hounds. Half the field diverge to a gateway on the right, and old Tom Maizeley, a sturdy farmer on a rough bay horse that badly wants clipping, pauses for a moment, and then, instead of following the fleeting throng, turns sharp round and quietly trots away at right angles to the line the hounds are running. Nor does he go alone, for some score of hesitating men, who know quite well that Maizeley has a reason for his proceeding, trust themselves to his guidance.

The first fence is a thin, straggling hedge, with no ditch, that horses may go through without a jump; though some of the more cautious spirits prefer the gateway, which does not give their animal an excuse for the display of superfluous energy, so that everyone gets comfortably into the plough, across which hounds are running their hardest. Some score of the pursuers take the next fence as they find it, but there is a ditch on the landing side, and this with many means following over a gap conveniently made by a tearing horse which got out of hand, and getting too near the fence, carried part of it away. So over a spreading pasture which delights the hearts of those who love a gallop.

But stay! all is not so smooth and easy as at first sight it seemed. The pack disappears for a moment beyond a slight rise in the ground with a corresponding fall, and when the field is near enough to see how things are going, a series of splashes and a check in the hounds' pace show that a brook runs through the field. There are no willows nor anything to mark it out at a distance, and strangers to the country who do not like jumping take a pull at their horses to see that they are not
It is wonderful how slippery saddles are.
getting out of hand, and can be stopped if the water should be uncomfortably wide. Striding away over the grass is excellent fun, but a brook of unknown width and problematical depth alters the aspect of affairs. A man in a tweed coat and gaiters is over first; master, huntsman, and whips follow handsomely; one pink lands side by side with the whip, another goes gallantly down to the water, but the horse stops abruptly, very abruptly, on the brink, and the rider's saddle being slippery—it is wonderful how slippery saddles are when a man has put on steam to get over a brook—he slides over his horse's right shoulder, a splash and a loose horse being two results.

Two hundred yards to the right a man in black, the right, that is to say the other, side of the water, is leading an increasing string. It is Tapeson, the lawyer, who knew of a ford, and Tapeson's intelligence is warmly appreciated by several sportsmen who were hard put to it to decide whether they should try their fate at the brook or go in search of the Maizeley detachment. That is the worst of water. If there is no bridge and no ford, the alternative is to jump or to lose the day's sport. If the man in a stone-wall country has patience, a big jump will become what is comfortably called a 'walking-place.' A gap is almost inevitable in a hedge, and when the gap has been crossed by a considerable portion of the field, it is usually so beaten down as to need no jumping; but a brook does not grow smaller—on the contrary, as its banks become poached or broken away it becomes larger; there is more to do and increased diffidence about doing it. To this brook Urbington comes down in capital style till he gets some sixty yards from the bank. The big grey has been shaking his head and reaching a bit
for the reins, but that is all. Urbington thought he could do this brook easily, though last time he was here he went across the ford; but hounds seem a long time getting across it. Captain Chipping, a good man to follow, has just landed with a scramble; as Urbington nears the water he begins to think whether he would not have done better to go round to the ford again; and indecision of this sort is fatal. Urbington does not quite know whether he means having it or not, and if he does not, how can the grey? The consequence is that the pair go slower as they come to the brink, that the horse, feeling a nervous hand on the rein, refuses, Urbington is shot off, and rolls into the water.

Tapeson and his company are well across the next field. Hounds, too busy so far to speak to it, swing round to the right, and this just lets up Maizeley and his followers, who have trotted down a muddy lane that would be green if it were not a shallow watercourse, and now join, galloping along a line of which a long vista of gates is an agreeable feature. The gates, too, intersect a series of easy fences, dividing fields where plough is rare; and it so happens that, though the gates are a trifle wide to the right of the line, it is a toss-up whether to pass through them or to bear a little to the left, jump the fences, and so keep on rather better terms with the hounds, is the wiser course to pursue. With what admirable ease does Sylvanson throw the fences behind him! His horse skims gaily over the pastures; he sits firmly yet easily in his saddle; he has the lightest possible touch on the reins; the casual observer might suppose that his hand was neither guide nor support. The fences may be a little larger or a little smaller; he sits in his saddle as if he were in an arm-chair, appa-
rently leaving everything to his horse, though, in fact, the community of feeling between them is of the closest; and when presently there is a suspicion of a peck and a bit of a scramble as the animal lands in a very soft place, he holds it together, quietly sitting still until it has recovered itself, and is again swinging along in its easy stride.

Contrast him with his friend Roller. In pluck they are equal. No one ever suggested that Roller shirked. It is his pride to go straight, and he goes. Just now he had the brook at a very wide and ugly place, a bad take-off and a worse landing, yet he never thought of drawing rein. But while Sylvanson’s horse glides over the ground and cheerfully takes his fences as they come, Roller is never quite on good terms with his mount. Its head is generally up as it crosses the flat; when they approach a fence he is found to be shifting his seat in the saddle and pulling at the horse’s mouth; a few jerks at the bit, a kick with the spurs, and often an unacceptable reminder from his hunting-crop on landing, are features of the performance. He is never comfortable. A bad seat—and bad hands as a necessary and inevitable consequence—is the explanation.

So easily does Sylvanson make his way that young Clerkson, a youth from town on a visit to some relatives in the Meadowmere country, who has been a little diffident about jumping, determines to have a try. He has had a few lessons in a riding-school, and has disported himself, quite to his own satisfaction, on a seaside hack; but the memory of an attempt to surmount a broken-down hurdle, during a day with some harriers, his only previous experience in the field, remains with him. He recollects a terrible shock, as some unexpected
impetus from behind knocked him on to the horse's neck, loosened both feet from the stirrups, and pulled the reins out of his hands, and a permanent impression that hunting, so far, at least, as it included jumping, was in the highest degree risky work, not again to be rashly undertaken, was strong within him this morning. But there can be no difficulty about doing what is done by that man to the left—Sylvanson. He will try; and so he turns aside from the next gate to jump the hedge a few yards from the convenient opening, the crowd at which necessitates a wait. His horse takes the hint and goes willingly enough. The fence is of the fairest, but a tremor seizes Clerkson at the last stride. His legs relax their grasp of the saddle, so by way of support he clutches tightly hold of the reins. The consequences
are possibly unpleasant, but entirely natural. The good horse rises gently, but necessarily stretches out his neck in landing. Clerkson's firm clutch of the reins, together with the thrust of the animal's hind quarters, pull and throw him forward at the same moment; there is no resistance caused by a hold in the saddle: he is nervously leaning forward instead of sitting back. He finds himself promptly deposited on the broad of the back, his ideas as to the simplicity and ease of the operation of jumping fences being in one single moment completely altered. Jumping is like swimming. The man who can swim, or sit a jump, cannot see the difficulty. It is the simplest thing in the world. If Clerkson had given his horse plenty of liberty, let the reins slip through his fingers, and sat with moderate tightness, he would have been over with a faint suspicion of the shock which has resulted in his downfall and the freedom of his horse, a freedom in which the animal is rejoicing by kicking up its heels, though it cannot understand what went wrong at the fence.

Meantime, the pack has been running hard and almost silently, so hot has been the scent. Thatchley Common has been crossed, and they are away again beyond over an enclosed country, where the hounds throw up their heads. Straight in front is a fold: the shepherd is munching his dinner: his dog, panting and with extended tongue, returns to his master's side. Some half-mile away to the right is a patch of withy beds, and the natural inference is that the sheepdog has courséd the fox in this direction, which has diverted him from his point. The shepherd has seen nothing, and has the candour or the lack of invention not to draw inferences and state them as facts. The hounds spread
themselves about the field, feathering up and down the fence beyond. The master's raised hand prevents the field from pressing on, but the greatest anxiety seems to be manifested by the sheep, which crowd up into a corner of their fold and look on with apparently critical interest.

No one doubts that the fox has made for the withy beds, but the master is a great believer in letting hounds work out their own problems for themselves, and he shakes his head as he sees his huntsman waiting for a signal to make a cast. All eyes are turned to the hounds at the right, where suddenly Dairymaid joyfully gives tongue. She is in her first season, but has before now demonstrated her trustworthiness, so that, though she is feathering down the other side of the hedge, wide to the left, away from what everyone supposes to have been the fox's line, her assertion is respected. Ranger, a grave old dog who hunts with 'the ladies,' and who never makes a mistake, jumps through the hedge to see whether Dairymaid is to be believed, and in a moment he opens out with a warm confirmation. Damsel again lifts up her voice, though she is far away from the drag, and cannot possibly know if the others are correct; the master makes a mental note concerning her, as he hastily turns his horse's head. Instead of going for the withy beds, as it seemed certain he must have done, the fox had evidently slipped into the ditch, wheeled sharp round, and gone in the opposite direction, leaving the shepherd's dog to run frantically after nothing; and if the huntsman had lifted his hounds instead of leaving them to help themselves, the wily creature would have been left to pursue his way at leisure, undisturbed. Dairymaid, who had no theories, but was honestly work-
ing for herself, discovered the truth; and the fox, who is, in fact, cantering easily along under the impression that he has shaken off his foes, quickens his pace again as he hears the chorus which acknowledges the line.

On the field speed once more; the check has been so short that the stragglers are barely up, Urbington, very wet and rather cautious, being in the ruck. Maizeley again turns off to the right, parallel to the big blind fence, the aspect of which greatly increases his following, especially as the country towards which hounds are heading is the reverse of agreeable to any but the thruster—small enclosures, with a good deal of plough, separated by straggling thorn hedges, with a ditch always on one side, and sometimes on both. Sylvanson, Chipping, the first whip, and a few more, including a lady on a thoroughbred bay, and Captain Paddock—a well-known gentleman rider, on Boreas, a chaser he has more than once steered to victory between the flags—scorn to turn aside from the uncompromising obstacle before them, and all get over, Chipping's horse blundering on to its head, but quickly recovering, Boreas clearing something that cannot be very far short of thirty feet. Master, huntsman, and a few others less ambitious, but no less determined to be there, have ridden to a place where the fence is thinner, and before the last of the little group comes to it a gap lets him through. In two streams the followers gallop across the plough; Maizeley and his party, the bulk of the field, are out of sight; the hounds are running merrily over a ridge and furrow beyond towards a fence, on the other side of which a rail is visible; and here grief overtakes Sapp on his 300-guinea chesnut horse, fondly supposed by himself and
the feminine members of his family to be the best-look-
ing animal in the hunt. A horse which ladies call a
‘sweetly pretty creature’ is not always a good hunter,
and does not even necessarily look like one. Sapp’s
chesnut has a graceful head and an arched neck; the
golden colour is specially bright, as he is kept in an oven-
like stable which improves his coat to the certain ruin
of his health. Very upright shoulders and very straight
forelegs are not supposed, or not understood, in the Sapp
family, to be detrimental, not to say dangerous, for a
hunter. When these shoulders are furthermore loaded,
as in the case of the chesnut, the ‘howling cropper’
which has been confidently anticipated for Sapp by all
who have seen the pair at work and are familiar with the
points of a horse, resolves into a matter of time—sure to
come sooner or later. A bit of a drop in the landing
side of the last fence has brought it off. Sapp cannot
understand it.

No one is going better now than young Maizeley, son
of our old friend, mounted on a clever four-year-old bay
mare that his father has bred and he has made. She
is as clever as a cat, has flown the big places, hopped
smartly and without effort over an awkward stile in the
corner, in a manner which will doubtless lead to the
accomplishment of her rider’s desire—to sell her; though
at the same time, whatever may be his father’s senti-
ments, he will be sorry to part from so sweet a mount.
When presently she picks her way over a brook at the
bottom of a descent, and, landing on the only sound bit
of turf, about two feet square, neatly slips over a rail
that rises beyond, Sylvanson, who has not quite seen how
best to surmount the obstacle, and has waited to note
how Maizeley accomplishes it, determines that the good
A Run

little mare shall be his before night, a desire still further confirmed as, after gliding smoothly over the ridge and furrow of the next field, she jumps lightly on to a narrow bank and so over the stake and bound at the top. Sylvanson does the same, and then turns his head as he

hears a crash behind him—Boreas is on his back, and Paddock rolling over and over till he is as far from the big chaser as his hold of the reins will allow. Boreas has not been taught to jump on to banks and take his fences in two. His only idea of crossing a fence is to fly it, and, taking off a bit too soon, he has struck the im-
penetrable stake and bound with his knees and turned over into the field beyond. The wind is knocked out of horse and rider, and both rise to their feet rather ruefully, Paddock blinking his eyes, and not quite knowing in what direction to look for his horse, till he feels the reins, which he has held in his hand more by instinct than from intention.

High Elm Gorse, on the top of a hill still some two miles distant, is felt to be the fox's point, but Dairymaid, racing away at the head of the pack by herself, swings to the left; Wanton follows her; Damsel, steaming on straight ahead, leads five or six couple over the fence before them; but Ranger detaches himself from the main body and settles on to the line Dairymaid has taken, running parallel to the ditch. The others soon throw up their heads, and the whip gets forward to put back those who have been led away by the deceptive Damsel, a handsome young hound gifted with stoutness and speed, but with no idea at all of hunting. Something has diverted the fox from his line, but what it can be there is not time to think, for a farmer on his cob some half-mile ahead is standing in his stirrups with his cap in the air. He is a man to be trusted, so the huntsman lifts his hounds, and with his now diminished following gallops in the direction indicated. The farmer trots forward to meet him.

'He came through the fence just there! He's dead beat.' (The man who sees the hunted fox usually says this.) 'Yes—that's it!' he cries, as old Ranger hits it off, and with a joyful burst one after another the pack cross to it. Through a gate into a green lane—gates are welcome to all now—and as luck will have it, up this lane the Maizeley detachment come galloping. Few of
them have jumped a twig the whole day, yet here they are, as well up as those who have been hard at it over a really difficult line of country. Of course now and then Maizeley is wrong, and if so, he will probably see no more of hounds that day; but often he is right, and sees a great deal of them. He has all the best of it to-day, for hounds bend towards him, run down the lane, and scramble through a fence into a meadow which begins the gradual rise towards High Elm Gorse. The earth is stopped, the master has assured his friends, so that, though horses' flanks are beginning to heave quickly and their nostrils to expand, things look well; for the Gorse is now scarcely a mile in front, and though it is up a slight incline that hounds are racing for the lead, it is all grass, fences are easy, and gates plentiful.

‘There he goes!’ presently sings out young Maizeley, whose sharp eye sees the good fox a couple of fields ahead, and the pack, as if they understood the words, crash through the next fence and go at a pace which tests the horses severely. Sylvanson is well up; the lady is half-a-dozen lengths behind him; a boy on a dun-coloured pony, sprung from no one knows where, is close at hand; master and servants are in their places, but the field straggles over a wide expanse of country. One man is placidly sitting on a gate, watching his horse career about the field with dragging reins; the rear rank is reduced to a walk; others are trotting; and in few cases is the gallop much more than a canter. Into the last field before the covert is reached hounds dash before the fox is through the fence beyond; Ranger catches view, and proclaims the tidings with a cry of delight. The poor fox, game beast that he is, is travelling slowly with dragging brush, little thinking that when he reaches the
A Run

friendly shelter for which he is heading, cross stakes in the mouth of the earth will prevent his entrance—and then, these turbulent enemies will be upon him! First Dairymaid is leading, then Wanton, then old Ranger rushes to the front with a flash of speed, and the poor fox is only in the sheltering undergrowth fifty yards before his pursuers, as they throw themselves in after him.

But what is this? By degrees the music ceases. The huntsman, who has got off his horse, and clambered through the fence, supposing that the hounds were into their fox, makes his way to the earth which he has been assured is stopped. The assurance was correct enough. No fox can have gone in there. He calls Ranger to him, but the hound can make nothing of it. A doubtful note now and then gives hope as the hounds pursue their patient search; but it dies away. Into the covert the fox certainly went, a very different beast from that which cantered so easily away from his resting-place this morning; but he has vanished, as foxes sometimes do. Perhaps in their eagerness hounds have run over him and he has found a shelter other than the one expected—that particular refuge the door of which was so carefully barred last night was not his goal—and amid the beech-leaves which so thickly strew the ground hounds can make nothing of it about the spot they have foiled. The fact remains that the fox is not to be found.

' A good thirteen miles, master!' Sylvanson observes, as they stand by the side of their panting horses just outside the covert, and the master has given due vent to his perplexity.

' Not less, I think!' he replies, more cheerfully. At least they have had a good run after a game fox, over a
A diversified line of country, with only two slight checks; how fast it has been the horses show.

Those who have second horses out are glad to see their servants appear in sight. Paddock by this time is nearing the stables where Boreas is trained, reflecting that chasers are not the most suitable horses for a cramped country. Chipping, who has been down twice, is walking home also, wondering why the big grey, which used to go so generously and well with his former owner, has fallen off so much of late; for it never occurs to the gallant captain that the horse is much the same but the rider very different. Young Maizeley rides off to his father and tells him that Mr. Sylvanson has given 200 guineas for the four-year-old. As the last of the field trots off down the slope to draw another covert, what in a human being would be a sigh of satisfaction, and what in an animal is much the same thing, comes from the very weary lungs of our friend the fox, lying at full length on the branch of elm. Running to view, the eager hounds had overshot their mark; the fox had slipped exhausted into the ditch on the covert side of the fence. With a last expiring effort, he had sprung up on to a broken wall, had run a little way along it, and leaped still higher into a branch of the tree. A little climbing has landed him in his present resting-place. Perhaps if Tom had not been so hasty in calling his hounds to him further into the covert, they might have hit it off again; but he, and doubtless they, alike felt certain that their prey was before them; and though a hound or two had returned to the ditch, they could not carry it on.

When presently, the covert being quite clear, he slowly descends from his perch, his limbs are painfully
stiff, and he walks in leisurely fashion to a refuge he knows of, having first of all tried the familiar earth and to his very great astonishment found that there is no way in. Then he wearily curls himself up. It has been a hard fight and a desperately near thing at the finish; but he is still a fox, and not a disrupted collection of half-digested fragments.
When a rich man has completed the purchase of a large estate, I suppose it is natural that he should look through the advertisements of other estates in the newspapers, and wonder whether he has made the best choice; usually concluding that he has not. Here in Hampshire is just the thing he wanted, whereas the place he has bought possesses several drawbacks. Why did he not wait a little longer? These, at any rate, were the reflections of Mr. Henry Higgs, the great dyer, proprietor of Higgs's Harmonious Hues, the beauties of which are prominently set forth on innumerable hoardings, in railway carriages, and so forth. One would not have thought that dyes were so necessary to the world as they seem to be from Higgs's success. I never bought any, and hardly know what people use them for; but there was the undoubted fact of Higgs's huge fortune. He had the largest house in South Kensington, the interior of which was declared by those who had seen it to be dazzling, for the Harmonious Hues had here been laid on thickly; but this 'noble mansion,' as the house agents had described it—I wonder what the personal qualities of a truly noble mansion are?—did not satisfy Mr. Higgs's ambition. He wanted a place in the country, a big place that would make its owner look a big man; and why should he not buy one? Money was plentiful with him, and, goodness
knows, land is cheap enough. If things recovered in the country, an estate would be a good investment; if not—well, it did not matter to him; he could afford it.

So Mr. Higgs looked about him, read the advertisements in the newspapers, and wrote to one or two house agents, who filled his letterbox by every post with written and printed accounts of properties for sale, maps, photographs, drawings in elevation and perspective, till it seemed that all England was to let, and the choice became more than embarrassing. At last he settled on Corinton Towers, a huge pile of buildings in South Wiltshire, standing in a large park, through which the river Corin flowed, 'affording the most picturesque and diversified views, plentifully stocked with trout,' the advertisement somewhat confusedly ran. The stables were large—rather tumbledown, but that did not matter—there was enough glass to afford employment for a small army of gardeners, and any amount of wood and plantation. There were no game-books for inspection; but then there is no difficulty about getting pheasants if a man can afford to pay for them; so Mr. Higgs wrote a cheque for five figures, and the first not a small one, without winking, and thus became 'Mr. Higgs, of Corinton Towers.' The Harmonious Hues, of which a few years before he had felt so proud, were to be sunk behind the Towers as much as possible.

Miss Matilda Higgs, only daughter and heiress, a somewhat angular young lady of nine-and-twenty, with a sharp nose and a corresponding voice, thought the Towers a 'nasty, damp, dreary place'; but still county society, into which she had no doubt that her father's wealth would enable her to enter, and indeed to shine, had unknown charms; though, as it was Miss Higgs's cue in life
to be rather dissatisfied and supercilious, she did not gratify her parent by expressing any admiration for his purchase. Matilda had refused many offers, it is true, but none from the right sort of people; and it was partly to give her a chance in a new sphere that her father had bought the Towers—not, indeed, that he was very fond of his daughter, but a well-connected son-in-law would, he felt, give him *prestige* and a certain sort of position.

Mr. Higgs, shrewder than his daughter, knew more about county society than she did. He had seen what happened in the case of his old friend, Thompson, the 'eminent provision merchant,' who had determined to be a country gentleman, and had not found the process of conversion easy. Thompson had set himself to work his way into society down the throats of its members—that is to say, he took a really good cook down to Essex with him, stocked his cellar regardless of expense, and invited everybody he met to dinner—everybody, of course, who was anybody. The wine was what he said it was, and cost what he said it did; he always told people what they were drinking, and what it 'stood him in,' to use his own phrase; but after two years of it he could not disguise from himself that it was not a success. He had dined in other people's houses, but had not felt comfortable there. What he should say to the lady he took down was a mental problem which grievously perplexed him for three days before an approaching festivity; for he knew that he must say something, and he did not know what; moreover, conversation, when it did begin, somehow or other never interested him. Mr. Higgs had been invited down to see his friend's splendour, but had grasped the real position of affairs; and, indeed, Thompson had confided to him that the people round about were 'a
curious lot—he didn’t seem to get on with them, somehow or other; he couldn’t tell why.’

Mr. Higgs had not spent 80,000l. in order to be made uncomfortable. He felt that there were reasons why Thompson did not get on with good people which did not apply to him; and, oddly enough, Thompson thought that if he was not comfortable among ‘the swells,’ as he described them to himself, poor Higgs would be very uncomfortable indeed; but then, of course, we do not see ourselves as others see us; if we did, the spectacle would possibly at times cause us a good deal of mental uneasiness. Mr. Higgs had been down to see how the land lay, putting up at the Wenhaston Arms. Wenhaston was the station for Corinton Towers, and, indeed, the name of Wenhaston pervaded the place. The Wenhastons, he very speedily learned, were the great people of the district, which old General Wenhaston had represented in the House of Commons for the last forty years, though he was not the Wenhaston of Wenhaston, and lived in Hampshire. The Wenhastons were, beyond all possibility of mistake, the people to be known if it were possible to get at them; and Mr. Higgs thought that it was.

He chanced to be a member of the new Kingdom and Colonies Club, and before he had bought or thought of Corinton Towers he remembered young Whittington telling him the names of the men who were in the smoking-room one day, Sir George Wenhaston amongst others. He had seen him there once or twice since, and had noticed that Whittington nodded and exchanged a remark with the baronet. Whittington would, he knew, gladly introduce him, or do anything else for a rich man; and the real fact was that Mr. Higgs’s con-
stant presence in the smoking-room of the Kingdom and Colonies, when he was in town, arose, not from a devotion to tobacco, but from anxiety to make Sir George's acquaintance. Higgs was determined that the Towers should 'go,' in fact. He did not propose to angle for social advancement with food and wine for baits, after the vulgar fashion of the mistaken Thompson. He would offer well-stocked coverts; he would have some good horses in his stable—perhaps a horse or two in some training stable; for owning the favourite for a big race was, he knew, the way to get one's name up, though, personally, he scarcely knew a racehorse from a shorthorn bull. He had, moreover, occupied for the last three years a deer forest in Scotland, the annual pilgrimage to which was among the disagreeables of his existence; for he was a wretchedly bad walker, and had never succeeded in hitting a stag on any of the very few occasions when he had 'stayed' throughout a stalk, though he feels certain that he could not have missed the finest beast he had ever got a chance at but for the unfortunate fact that just as he was getting comfortably into position he accidentally touched the trigger of his rifle, cutting the leather of Donald's boot with the bullet—a near thing for Donald. In fact, he had quite given up stalking, and always went out alone when he took his gun, having found it difficult to give an attendant a fresh reason why he missed every grouse that got up. But a forest in Scotland is a great thing to have. It is not everybody who can offer a man a week's stalking; very few people indeed enjoy such a privilege, and, hating Scotland as he did, he kept up his tenancy for purposes of social advancement.

Why does Mr. Higgs this morning abandon the study
of advertisements of freehold estates, prick up his ears, and glance rapidly from right to left? Why, that dark-whiskered man who has just entered is Sir George Wenhauston, and over by the window is Whittington going carefully through the entries for the Cesarewitch with some other young men, one of whom has heard, and softly whispers, a marvellous story of a horse in a northern stable that has not been exposed, is sure to get in light, and cannot be beaten. Whittington presently catches Mr. Higgs's eye, and strolls up to him, for he has already been asked to make this introduction; and when Sir George pauses in his conversation and turns to look for a paper on the table, Whittington is by his side.

'Very happy indeed to make your acquaintance, Sir George, I'm sure,' says Mr. Higgs, when the necessary formalities have been observed. 'You know, perhaps, that I've bought a little place down in your part of the country, and I'm sure I hope we shall see something of each other down there.'

'You are very good, Mr. Higgs,' Sir George says, that being, of course, the inevitable reply. 'I don't know what you call a little place, though, if Corinton Towers isn't a big one! I'm not down there much myself. By the way, allow me to introduce my cousin, Mr. Hugh Wenhauston'—and a good-looking young man of thirty, with a clear-cut, intelligent face, and brown moustache slightly turned up at the points, who had entered the room with Sir George, bowed to Mr. Higgs, who returned the salutation graciously, if not quite with the empressement he had shown when greeting the baronet. 'Hugh is down there a good deal,' Sir George continued.
'Generous man to give his cousin the run of his house,' Mr. Higgs thought.

'I hope you will like the place,' Hugh said.

'I hope I shall, I'm sure,' Mr. Higgs replied, and it was no doubt a natural aspiration; still, if one is to converse, one must often say things that really are not worth saying. 'There'll be some pheasants when October comes, and as I think us country gentlemen ought to do—what—we—er—should do, I mean, should do what we—er—that is, ought to do, I shall be happy to send my subscription to the hounds as soon as it's wanted.'

'Do you hunt, Mr. Higgs?' Sir George asked.

'Well, no, not exactly! I have not been out now for some seasons,' Mr. Higgs replied. He was fifty-six years of age, and had certainly not been out during that period, so that there was no fault to be found with the absolute veracity of the answer. 'I shoot a good deal,' he continued, anxious to vindicate his claim to some of the tastes and habits of 'us country gentlemen,' and this remark was in a way defensible. He did not shoot a good deal of game, it is true, but he fired a large number of cartridges, for one must do something in Scotland, and there is always a chance that you may kill a bird some day, even if your efforts for the last week or two have not been attended with success. 'Any hope of seeing you up north, Sir George? I've got poor Chaseley's place, you know, CorrieCUisk, and should be delighted, I'm sure, if you'd come and stay with me. I think I could show you some sport, too.'

'You're very good, but it's not much in my line. My cousin here is the man for that kind of thing!' Sir George replied.
'Could I tempt you up, Mr. Wenhaston?' the lessee of Corrieceuisk said, just a trifle less cordially, perhaps. 'Very glad to see you, you know.'

A polite excuse was on Hugh Wenhaston's lips. He did not much like Mr. Higgs, more than suspecting that he was a snob. The familiarly pitying reference to 'poor Chaseley' had sorely jarred, for Hugh and Lord Chaseley had been close friends before that disastrous Ascot which was to have been so brilliant for the Chaseley cherry and white hoops—was to have set their owner quite on his legs again—and had ended so sadly. Hugh had shot at Corrieceuisk, and the change of hosts from dear old Charlie Chaseley to Mr. Higgs would be melancholy enough; but there was something else to be considered. Adjoining the Corrieceuisk property was Glenlochrie, Lord Heatherton's estate, and he knew that Lady Alice and her mother were going north next week. Now, if he could travel up with her, if, furthermore, he could be quartered within some dozen miles of Glenlochrie Castle—well, it would be very pleasant indeed, so pleasant that he thought he could even tolerate a few dinners and evenings with Mr. Higgs; besides, perhaps the old fellow gave one a wrong impression at first; he might be 'all right when you knew him,' as the popular ballad has it, and in any case it would be well to find out what sort of a person he was, as he would be a country neighbour.

'You are very kind, Mr. Higgs, and I chance to know the place rather well, for Lord Chaseley was good enough to ask me there more than once. I have nothing to do just now, and shall be very glad to run up for a few days,' Hugh replied, somewhat to the astonishment of Sir George.
'ANY HOPE OF SEEING YOU UP NORTH, SIR GEORGE?'}
As for Mr. Higgs, he was fairly well satisfied. Of course, he would very much rather have had the baronet for a guest, but civility to his cousin would not be thrown away, and he was not sorry to have a man with him who had known the place in the days when its owner occupied it. The visit was therefore arranged, the date being left open (till Hugh found out precisely when Lady Heather- ton travelled up). Mr. Higgs, who had already been staying at Corrie-cuisk, was to return at once.

Hugh's journey up need not be described. Lady Alice was charming, and her mother gracious, delighted that they were to have Mr. Wen haston's escort. It was so fortunate they were travelling at the same time. What sort of a person was Mr. Higgs? There was never anyone they knew staying with him. Was he a pleasant person? He had a daughter, hadn't he? What was she like? Mr. Wen haston had never met her? Mr. Higgs quite a new acquaintance? Oh, really. Miss Higgs would be there, no doubt? (Did Hugh catch a fleeting look of displeasure in Lady Alice's eyes at the mention of Miss Higgs, and the idea of Mr. Wen haston being thrown into familiar association with her? He was not vain enough to think it, and yet her expression had momentarily changed.) She hoped that he would come on to them afterwards—the one thing Hugh had longed to hear!—any time that suited him; they were not nearly full, and would be delighted to see him; had intended to ask him what he was going to do when they met at dinner last week, but had missed the opportunity.

Need it be said that the invitation was accepted (for some reason or other Alice looked decidedly happy just at this moment), and that Hugh began to wonder how soon he could decently manage to escape from Corrie-
cuisk? It was not without a sigh that he parted from the Heathertons, and took his seat in the carriage that had been sent to meet him.

Hugh was so bored with his evening that a description of it would probably bore the reader. Mr. Higgs was not an entertaining host, and as Matilda knew no more about Hugh than that he was Sir George Wenhaston's cousin, she did not think it worth while to try and be particularly agreeable; nor is it certain that such an attempt would have been attended with success. Hugh took down an aunt to dinner, who evidently thought that it was a great privilege for any young man to be admitted to acquaintance with the Higgses and to receive their hospitality. She looked severely at him and shook her head when he confessed that he had no business nor profession, and did nothing to earn his living (whereat Hugh seemed rather amused), and she hoped that he would be careful and not injure himself or anyone else with Mr. Higgs's guns. Hugh explained that he was going stalking, had brought his own rifle, and having hitherto been lucky in avoiding the destruction of companions or gillies, he hoped that his good fortune in this respect would continue; but Miss Higgs was evidently not convinced or pleased. A man of Mr Higgs's age—his head clerk, as a matter of fact—and a young lady, who paid obsequious attention to Miss Higgs—the head clerk's daughter—were the other members of the party, and conversation chiefly turned on the family, tastes, habits, and peculiarities of Lord Hardenoch and his brother, the Hon. Lionel Checkless, who were to honour Corrie cuisk with their presence next week.

Hugh was not sorry to get to his bedroom, Miss Higgs, as she bade him good night, severely expressing
a hope that he was careful with his candle; for this lady seemed full of apprehension of danger from all quarters. However, the house was not set on fire. Hugh fell asleep trying to contrast an evening at Glenlochrie with an evening at Corriequisk, and awoke to find a beautiful morning. To breakfast by himself was not an affliction. He did not linger long over the meal, and set off happily enough—over the hills there to the right was Glenlochrie, and very soon he should be in the most delightful quarters he could imagine, a pleasant house, with the prettiest and nicest girl in the United Kingdom, and therefore in the world, for a companion—to the spot where he was to meet Donald. There he was, waiting. Where had Hugh put that letter which Mr. Higgs had given him the night before to give to the stalker? Ah, there it was; he had put it in his pocket overnight lest he should forget it, and the epistle, sealed, by the way—why should anybody seal such a letter in these days of adhesive envelopes?—he handed to the man.

'You're Donald, I suppose? Good morning! This letter is for you,' Hugh said.

The man took it and turned it over, and looked at it, but somehow or other did not handle it as men usually handle letters. It was evidently an unfamiliar object.

'No, indeed, sir, I was not Donald. Donald have sprain his ankle and canna' come, so he have send me for him. I was Alister,' was the explanation.

'All right, Alister, I'm sorry for Donald but glad to see you, and the letter will do for you as well as for him, no doubt!' Hugh said, cheerily.

Still Alister hesitated, and turned the letter over in his hand.

'Indeed, sir, I was not able to read. If you would
be so good as read it for me?’ he presently said, a little shamefacedly.

‘Very well, Alister, I’ll read it for you,’ Hugh rejoined, after a moment’s pause, for one does not like to open a letter that is addressed to anyone else; though in this case there was clearly nothing else to be done.

Hugh therefore took the letter, broke the seal, and read:—

‘Donald,—The bearer of this is Mr. Wenhaston——’

The reader paused, his brow contracted for a moment, but only for a moment, and then he gave vent to a little laugh, at which Alister looked up. Hugh read the rest of the letter to himself.

‘——is Mr. Wenhaston. Just let him see a stag. I don’t want the place to be disturbed, and we don’t want any venison just now for the house. My friend Lord Hardenoch is coming next week, and I want his lordship to have some sport. Just let this gentleman see a stag. You understand.’

What was Hugh to do? Go back, say a few dignified words to the old rascal who designed to make a fool of him by such scurvy treatment as this? Walk over to Glenlochrie and send for his things, with a note telling Mr. Higgs what he thought of such a trick? A man does not like to appear as the recipient of a snub even from such a creature as Higgs, and he would have to explain to Lady Heatherton why he had arrived so suddenly. . . . No, by Jove! That’s the idea, of course! And Hugh laughed again.

Alister, meantime, was waiting patiently, not sorry to see, as he supposed, that somebody else besides himself had difficulties with the products of pen and ink. Hugh caught his inquiring eye.
Hugh read the rest of the letter to himself.
'Ah, yes,' he continued aloud, 'The bearer of this is Mr. Wenhashon. I hope you will be able to show him some good sport. We want some venison just now for the house, and I shall be glad of some to send away, so do the best you can.'

Hugh looked up and found Alister scrutinising him.

'I think I was see you when my lord was here, sir? You shot with him?' he said.

'Yes, Alister. I remember your face, I think, though I don't remember a Donald in the place.' And Alister, as he pointed the way, explained that he was a native, and Donald an importation; he had been very much attached to his former master, was pleased to meet a friend, and the pair set off in high spirits. Was Hugh justified? I think he was. If you ask anyone to shoot, you practically pledge yourself to give him some sport if you can, and for such a mean trick as that which Higgs had designed a man ought to be paid out.

On the pair strode over the heather till a good three miles had been covered, and then Alister, with a gesture inviting caution, sank down and worked himself along on hands and knees, actions which Hugh adroitly imitated. When they reached the brow the expert stalker, who had made for an upstanding bit of rock, raised himself with exceeding gentleness, and Hugh no less carefully followed his glance, pressing his cheek against the stone which was their hiding-place. Yes! There are three stags some 150 yards away. Hugh can see their ears, and so judges his distance; and there is no doubt which is the best—not that reddish one standing broadside on, and offering so splendid a shot, but that big one whose hindquarters are towards the stone behind which Hugh and Alister are lying. A
magnificent fellow. Short on the leg, deep in the flank, a rich brown colour, with a well-developed black streak along his back, and spreading, sharp-tipped horns of extraordinary length, span and beam; and of course walking very slowly away as he feeds, with his hind-quarters persistently and directly towards his enemies. There is nothing for it but to be patient. Why does not the noble beast turn round and give a chance? Ah! that's it! A tempting mouthful to the left attracts the stag; he turns; Hugh cocks his rifle, which is resting in position on the deep moss which covers the stone, takes steady aim behind the shoulder just half-way up the body, and pulls the trigger. The stag starts, gallops forward for a hundred yards, and rolls over dead.

Alister was as pleased as Hugh, whose joke had acquired its necessary point by the death of the stag: and they steadied their nerves with a pull at our friend's flask. The stalker had a strong idea where other stags were to be found, and he was right. We need not follow them through the day, which had its disappointment, for the best beast they saw, in spite of all their care, was started off at a gallop just when, after a long and weary round, they had got well within range, and had decided that he was theirs—how alarmed neither could guess; but in two other cases patience and perseverance were rewarded. Three magnificent stags fell to Hugh's rifle before he set off homewards.

Meantime, at the house, Mr. Higgs had been pottering about in rather a perturbed frame of mind. He had received a letter from Whittington which put him out a good deal. His correspondent wrote to accept an invitation to Corriecuisk, but the passage which annoyed Mr. Higgs was the following:—
'By the way, you seem to have made a mistake about the Wen hastons. Sir George does not own the property near yours, nor, indeed, any other property for the matter of that. The young fellow who was with him that day you met him at the club, Hugh Wenhaston, is the owner of all that place, though the title is in the other branch of the family. Not less than 30,000l. a year Hugh Wenhaston has, they say, and they swear by him down in Wiltshire as the best fellow in the world. He has set Sir George on his legs two or three times, but I'm told he's gone another mucker, and that your man is disgusted this time, and says he won't do any more, though I suppose he will, as usual.'

Now, when Mr. Higgs had run up to town a few days before, he had met Sir George again, had asked him to lunch, Sir George had accepted, Mr. Higgs had amiably tried to put him on a good thing in the City, and from this had come an acknowledgment from the baronet—made artfully and with a purpose—that he was temporarily pressed for money. The end of it was that Higgs, never doubting that Sir George was the owner of Wenhaston, had advanced him 5,000l.; whereas he had been a little patronising to Hugh, while his daughter, he knew, had not tried to be more agreeable than usual, and altogether they had not got on very well, he saw. But they would for the future! Wenhaston should really shoot a stag to-morrow, if he could hit one when he had the chance; in fact, nothing should be neglected to make him enjoy himself; and so the old hypocrite strolled up and down before the house, ready to welcome his guest and condole with him on the 'bad luck' which he must, of course, inevitably have had after that letter to Donald.
The unexpected sound of wheels struck on his ear, and he was surprised to see Wen haston drive up in a trap.

'Well, my dear Wen haston, what sport? what sport? I hope you've had a good day—and you haven't exhausted the forest, I can assure you! I've been wondering whether I told Donald to take you to the best place, and rather fearing that I didn't; but we'll do better to-morrow. Come in! Come in!' "

'You're very good, but I've done very well to-day,' was the calm reply; and Mr. Higgs looked astonished. 'I was lucky enough to get three very fine stags,' Wen haston quietly continued, and Mr. Higgs looked more astonished still.

'Well, I'm very glad!' he said, and no doubt he was, though all the same he couldn't understand it. 'Come in! You must be tired to death! That's why you've driven, I suppose?'

'You are very good, but I fear I shall be unable to trespass longer on your hospitality,' Wen haston replied.

'Nonsense! Nonsense! I couldn't think of letting you go!' Mr. Higgs cried, feeling very uncomfortable, though what had happened he naturally could not tell. 'We'll go and do better to-morrow! You mustn't think of leaving! I never heard such a thing in my life!'

'Thank you, but I must get on as soon as possible.' Just then Hugh's servant came down with the luggage which he had been sent up to pack, Hugh having met him a little way from the gates. 'I shall be obliged if you will have my letters sent on to Glenlochrie, where I shall be for some time, and I am really much indebted
to you for an excellent day’s sport. Pray excuse my abrupt departure to the ladies.’

Wenhaston drove off—he had been obliged to walk several miles out of his way under Alister’s guidance to find a trap, but he was determined not to eat and sleep at Corrieceuisk—leaving Mr. Higgs very uncomfortable indeed. He must have found out what was in that letter, but how? Donald understood his master’s ways, and there was no shrewder servant in Scotland. What else could it be? Mr. Higgs racked his brain in vain, and as his sister and daughter did not know about the letter, he could not put it to them. He must tell them that Hugh had left, however, and said that he had to go to Glenlochrie.

‘Had to go? How could he have to go, papa? And how could he have heard anything from Glenlochrie to-day?’ Matilda asked.

‘Does the young man know Lord and Lady Heatherton?’ Miss Higgs asked.

It was the ambition of her life to make Lady Heatherton’s acquaintance. Had she been entertaining an angel unawares?

‘It’s very likely, I should think, considering that “the young man” moves in the very best society, and has one of the finest estates in England, worth at least 40,000l. a year,’ Mr. Higgs snappishly answered, adding on a bit to make Wenhaston richer than he was, and pretending that he had known it all the time.

Miss Higgs glanced towards Matilda.

‘But I thought,’ she began, ‘that Sir George——’ However, we need not follow the conversation of the Higgs family. There must be something wrong, they saw, or Wenhaston would not have hired the only trap
that was obtainable in a radius of twenty miles, instead of trusting to his host's stable, and the question in Higgs's mind was whether he had found out the truth about the letter, and whether, having found out, he would mention it. When Hardenoch and his brother had stayed their week, Mr. Higgs set off to town, and before he had been in the club five minutes he saw from the snigger on men's faces when they looked at him that they knew all about it, and also that they thought it an excellent joke. Hugh did not belong to the Kingdom and Colonies, and had few friends there; but everybody knew, and they all knew, likewise, he found, down at Wen haston.

Corinton Towers is again in the market. The place did not suit Matilda, and Higgs said he did not care for the neighbourhood.
A GOOD THING

CHAPTER I

If it be not absolutely correct to say that there are black sheep in every fold, it is a fact that in very few folds are the sheep all of immaculate whiteness. Some, at least, are likely to be tinted. The division lines between cunning and dishonesty are, in fact, often much narrower than those who pride themselves on their wariness are ready to admit; a man may, that is, keep the letter of the law and break the spirit. The proceedings of Captain Claude Upton, of H.M. Hundred-and-ninth Lancers, furnish a case in point. Upton would have furiously resented the imputation that he ever did anything detrimental to his character as an officer and a gentleman; but he had his own code of morality, and it was one that would scarcely have found acceptance with scrupulous people. Such men are rare in the British cavalry; the sheep are white as a rule; indeed, a roll-call of regiments could be named where, beneath a modern cheery lightheartedness and goodfellowship, which makes the officers the most delightful of companions, the veritable spirit of Bayard lies hidden; but Upton and one or two others in the same corps were of different mental mould from this. It was in his barrack-room, on a certain afternoon in early December, that he and his friends sat smoking.
'Well, I can't see that it's a good thing,' presently observed Frey, looking up from a number of the 'Racing Calendar.' 'I can't see that there's anything much in it one way or the other,' he added, taking a fresh cigarette from a box on the table and reverting to the page before him, where, under the head of 'The Hundred-and-ninth Lancers and South Downshire Hunt Meeting,' was the item:

**Match:** 100 sovs. each, h ft, three miles, over steeplechase course.
- **Captain York's Fisherman** .... 6 yrs. 12 st.
- **Mr. Barnes's Dewdrop** .... 5 yrs. 11 st.

'No,' acquiesced little Leigh, whose peculiarity it was that he always believed that he agreed with everyone, for he did not, in truth, possess wit enough to grasp both sides of a question at the same time. 'I don't see that it's a catch!'

Upton buried his fair moustache in his tumbler of brandy and soda and said nothing; but Darsham, who had sat silent for some time in a dark corner behind a big cigar, growled out an opinion that if Upton thought it was all right, it was not likely to be far wrong.

'That's very true. Old Upton don't make many mistakes, you know!' little Leigh replied, wagging his head towards Frey, as if reproving him for the implied doubt.

'Still, one would like to understand,' Frey said. 'Look here. They've met twice before this year, these two. They ran at Plumpton,' he went on, turning it up in the 'Guide,' notwithstanding that they were all quite familiar with the record, 'and Dewdrop ran nowhere; Fisherman second to a real good horse. Well, we'll put that aside if you like; they didn't back her, and I heard, when she ran at Kempton afterwards, that in the Plump-
ton race she "hadn't been having much of a go." If they are not having "much of a go," I suppose they are not having a go at all, but that's the way Woodwell put it. However, at Kempton, after Barnes had bought her, Dewdrop was backed, as we all know, and again she ran nowhere. York is surely a good 7 lb. and a bit more better than Barnes—he wouldn't mind my saying so if he were here; we all know that he is a very indifferent performer—so that it seems to me to come out a bit on the wrong side, if anything.'

'Yes, by Jove. I don't see anything in it, put that way!' came from Leigh. 'Do you see it, Darsham?'

'I don't want to see it if Upton does; that's good enough for me. If he says it's good, I shall back it. That hurdle-race at Sandown did not look good for Sea Swallow when Upton was managing the Stockdale horses; but it came off.'

'Yes, by Jove, it looked 100 to 1 against that, didn't it? But it came off all right. I only got fives, and everyone else got tens, and 100's to 8; but it won, didn't it?' Leigh prattled on. It is odd that very many people have a habit of asking questions to which there can be only one possible answer. 'Going across?' was the query put by a man, in one of Mr. Du Maurier's pictures, to an acquaintance whom he met on the boat midway between Dover and Calais. There could not be any sort of doubt as to the destination of the two; neither was going to get out and walk somewhere else; but such questions are common. 'Fine day, isn't it?' is a most familiar interrogation when the sun is glowing in the cloudless heavens, and a gentle breeze tempers the heat. The victory of Sea Swallow had been recorded for the last year and more in the 'Calendar,' and there could
not have been two replies to Leigh’s query. The fact is that such questions are not put to be answered, but are indirect admissions of conversational sterility.

Upton rather enjoyed the situation, and liked to tantalise the curiosity of the others.

'Your summary of affairs is perfectly correct,' he presently observed. 'On form I dare say the mare has no chance. Lots of horses that win races have no sort of chance on form; if it were not so, it would be easy to find winners.'

'Of course, there is a good lot of difference between York and Barnes,' Leigh put in thoughtfully, when the other stopped. 'Barnes doesn't ride very strong over fences either, you know, and he's had so little practice that he'd have no chance against York if they both landed together over the last jump.'

'Yes, I should say that there's a good 10 lb. between York, who has been at it hard for the last ten years, and Barnes, who very nearly threw away his race last week when he had certainly 21 lb. in hand—and the man on the back of the other was no flyer at the game either.'

Darsham, though he said little, was, in fact, as full of curiosity as the other two.

'You went down and rode the mare a gallop yesterday, didn't you?' he asked. 'Pity you are too heavy for the mount, Upton. I've seen such lots of good things thrown away at these little meetings because men did not know how to ride, and destroyed their chances. How is she? I suppose it is good?'

He could not resist asking the last question, though he tried to do so in a casual tone, for, as has happened yearly since the days of the Stuarts—since, indeed, the custom of backing horses was first organised—the talent
had been having a bad time that year, and the Hundred-and-ninth, which contained several men with excellent sources of information, had been hard hit; for it is very possible indeed to know too much when one goes racing, to grow confused in the multitude of counsellors, and just to miss winner after winner throughout the whole of a long afternoon. One may have known the trials of all the horses in a race, what their friends expect them to do, why this colt lost his race last week, why that filly won hers by a fluke, so that the form must by no means be followed, and a great deal more; but the result of all very often is that you have a plunge on the second, and find that you have tried to save your money on an animal that finishes near the tail end of the ruck.

' I think she's sure to win!' was Upton's reply to the other's question.

' You are deuced oracular,' remarked Frey, who was getting rather irritated at being put off; 'I wish you could contrive to be a little explanatory.'

' Well, my dear fellow,' Upton answered; ' suppose that in the Kempton race Dewdrop was not quite fit. Suppose we thought it was just about good enough to back, but that she might have been made a great deal better if we had had more time; supposing that, instead of laying well up with the leaders, as he was told to do, Barnes muddled along, and got shut in at the bend; supposing that there was a scrimmage at the turn, that he lost his iron, and was almost knocked over; and supposing that the mare was struck into and had her leg cut, and, in fact, that the whole running was wrong.'

' That would go a long way towards explaining why she did not show her form at Kempton, but it would not
give me any exalted confidence in Barnes's jockeyship,' was Frey's answer, when the other had finished his list of suppositions. 'He can't well get shut in in a match, and Bobby York won't hustle him; but it can never be a good thing with a bad rider up—that's the long and short of it. I remember a match some years ago. One of the horses was literally a good two stone better than the other, and by way of getting a bit of a price they got Morny Cannon to ride the bad one, knowing that a lot of backers would be sure to follow him. We thought it was a certainty for the other, for the man on it could ride a bit, at least so we fancied, but he was beat—Morny Cannon got alongside of him in the straight, and then it was all up. However, what all your suppositions amount to is that it wasn't a true run race at Kempton.'

'That's so. We tried her as soon as she was all right again—she had a cut above the fetlock that looked rather bad at first—and she has been going on the right way ever since.'

'Still, you never know how a bad rider will throw away a race. I don't like it—I certainly can't see that it's a good thing,' Frey objected.

'No, you know, that's true enough,' Leigh put in; 'I don't like it.'

'Then you needn't back it—there's no compulsion. If you think it's sure to be beat, back the other, and there you are!' was Upton's contemptuous reply.

'You've got something up your sleeve, I know,' Frey remarked, 'though I can't see what it is. Fisherman is fit and well, I know, and there can be no mistake about his age or anything of that sort.'

'Nothing whatever, so far as I know, I assure you. We've all known him since he was born—since he ran as
a two-year-old, and qualified at Kempton as a four, at any rate."

'Well, you seem satisfied, and that's a great deal, no doubt—'

'Makes it look pretty good, doesn't it?' Leigh interpolated.

'But I can't see how it can possibly be a good thing with Barnes up,' Frey insisted.

'No, by Jove, that's just where it is, you know!' Leigh once more acquiesced.

'I dare say Barnes is training on. He's having lots of riding just now, of course,'—Barnes was away on leave, staying with the trainer who had charge of his horses—'but you can't squeeze much experience into a fortnight's work. I should like to know what you are going on, Upton, for you would not be so confident if you didn't know something, and I can't see what it is.'

'Wait till the race, and you'll see then!' he answered, as the sound of the bugle caused him to rise and look round for his cap. The other sat silently when he had gone, trying to make it out, and Leigh fell to searching an old 'Calendar' for the utterly futile purpose of seeing what sort of form Dewdrop had shown as a two-year-old. There was no doubt whatever that Upton was familiar with nearly every move on the board. Like many other people, he generally lost during the flat-race season, but when sport began under N.H. Rules he was tolerably often correct in his judgment. Anything might win a short-distance flat race was the conclusion he had come to after a long experience of 'certainties'; but—though this is not the idea that would commend itself to casual observers of racing—a few jumps steadied horses, and gave the best animal the best chance, so that it was safer
to bet on jump races, in spite of the chance of a fall, than on races under Jockey Club Rules. The means of verifying Upton's idea is always at hand, and anyone who cares to look back through a few 'Calendars,' and note the proportion of favourites that won respectively on the flat and over jumps, may ascertain to what extent he is right. Doubtless, however, he knew the form past and present of jump horses better than that of flat-racers, and this of course aided his calculations; for, dangerous as it may be to trust entirely to form, past performances are by no means to be ignored without some reason.

CHAPTER II

The South Downshire Hunt and whatever regiment chances to be quartered in their country hold their meeting over a course partly natural, and partly artificial—that is to say, with the natural fences made up stiff where required, and the N.H. regulation jumps duly arranged—not far from a popular watering-place, so that there is generally a pretty good attendance. There were on the card three regimental races besides the match, two confined to the Hunt, and two open events—a sufficiently liberal programme. The day was fine and bright for the time of year, the temporary stand well filled, and a long row of carriages, including four coaches, showed the popularity of the meeting. Some ten or a dozen well-known bookmakers, and a number of others who, for some reason best known to themselves, confine their operations to minor and out-of-the-way fixtures, were in the ring, and a few more with slates and chalk to write down the odds were outside, on the look-out for rustic
half-crowns and shillings. Two races have been run, the course is being cleared for a selling hurdle handicap, and the ring is offering to take three to one; for Hawke, the well-known cross-country rider, is on the back of something in his uncle's stable, and this is put down as good business—there is, perhaps, no better jockey over jumps in England, and very few of the leading flat-race riders have much the best of him; though it is just as
well, perhaps, to find out whether he has backed his mount before being too certain.

Amongst the horses that are being led round in the paddock, from which the competitors for the hurdle-race are just emerging, is a big chesnut, and watching him as he passes is a tall, thin man, with a slight brown moustache, dressed to ride so far as his boots and breeches are concerned, an ulster covering whatever may be underneath.

'Looks well, doesn't he?' says Southey, the friend who is with him. 'You'll win, won't you, Bobby? I should think it's good for you on the Kempton running.'

'I thought so,' York replies, but there is an anxious look on his pleasant, kindly face. 'At least, I thought it was a very fair match at a stone; but the others seem to think they're sure to win.'

'Barnes can't ride, can he?' rejoins the other.

'Well, you see, he's not had much practice,' York answers, unwilling to speak slightly of one who is more or less a friend. 'He has ridden a few times, though I don't think he has won a race yet. That's his,' he continues, nodding his head towards a very compact, well-made, and evidently well-trained dark brown mare that passes them at the moment.

'Who suggested the match?' asks Southey.

'They did; Upton manages Barnes's horses, you know. He said he thought it would be a good race, and it seemed to me very fair.'

'I'm told something happened in that race at Kempton; she got knocked on to the rails, or something or other, didn't she?' the other asked.

'Yes, I believe something went wrong; but I won very easily,' York replied.
‘I shall back you, whatever they say about the other. It’s a good bit of a pull having you up against Barnes, old chap!’

‘I don’t know; I dare say he’ll do well enough. He’s been down riding gallops, and he’ll soon pick up. I shall have a hundred on mine, but I’m sure they were very confident. They’re off,’ he continued, looking towards where the hurdle-jumpers were drawn up in line, and as the flag fell, ‘I’ll take 4 to 1!’ came from the ring. ‘Hawke’s sure to win, I suppose. Halloa, Frey’s down—no! well saved!’ York said, noting the features of the race as he spoke. ‘Cock Pheasant’s beaten—they’re slipping along, aren’t they? Old Arthur’s horse is going well, isn’t it? It’s a bad ’un, but it’s wonderfully fit. No! It’s all over. Hawke wins!’ So it was. Two hurdles from home the others were dead settled, and the favourite, coming on, won in a canter by a good dozen lengths.

‘I must go and see about weighing,’ York said, as the horses that had just run returned to the paddock. ‘Do you mind putting me on a hundred? I’ve no idea how they’ll bet.’

‘Certainly; I’ll do the best I can. Lay odds if I have to, I suppose? Good luck, old chap! I shall back you, whatever they say.’

‘I’m betting on the match. I’ll take 2 to 1!’ is the cry which Southey hears as he heads for the ring.

‘What about?’ he asks of a bookmaker he knows.

‘Six to four bar one; six to four Dewdrop. I’ll take two to one,’ the layer replies. He was, as it were, wound up to shout out the first part of his sentence before he could make answer to the question.

Perhaps it will be as well to let the market settle down
a bit, Southey thinks as he pauses, and, glancing round, sees Upton in conference with Boyle, a bookmaker close at hand, who bets to big figures. Upton has—laid the odds. He is pencilling down 50 to 25 about Fisherman, and Boyle immediately opens with 'I'll take 5 to 2; 2 to 1 bar one!' Up comes little Leigh, looking very innocent, and takes 1,000 to 500 Dewdrop, passing on to another layer, and entering another bet. Frey and Darsham are also busy, and now only 6 to 4 can be got about the mare. Backers can lay 7 to 4 on the other.

Suddenly a little red-whiskered man rushes from the weighing-room to the ring, and whispers to the bookmaker who laid Leigh the big bet. He glances at the telegraph board, but the men are busy at it, and nothing is hoisted; but he changes his cry to—

'Here, 2 to 1 Fisherman; I'll take 7 to 4!'

This is a revolution indeed! What is the meaning of it? The explanation is soon obvious. Up go the numbers:

**Match.**

1 . . . . . . . . . Owner.
2 . . . . . . . . . Hawke.

The shabby little red-whiskered man has found out all about it, an incautious word dropped by the too jubilant Leigh having roused his suspicions. He has ascertained, not only that Hawke is to ride, but that the mare is greatly fancied. Upton is known to be wide awake. The fact that he and a few others had laid the odds on the horse had entirely deceived the ring, especially as York is known as a good horseman, and Barnes as a very bad one. Leigh's bet made Boyle pause for just a moment, but he had seen young men do foolish things
before, and paid little attention to the circumstance. Now, however, he understands, and is soon offering to take 3 to 1, so great is the rush to get on Hawke's mount; indeed, the odds presently point still more clearly to the good thing, and Southey does not know what to do about

York's 100l.—he had nearly been laying 100 to 50 on the now non-favourite, and it was, at any rate, well that he had not done that. The two animals were just going out, and he had time to rush across and catch York as he was at the gate leading to the course.
'I haven't put that money on for you. Shall I? They're laying 7 to 2 on the other. What's the meaning of it?' he asks.

'Oh, it's all right,' York quietly replies, with just a shadow of vexation in his tone, however. 'Barnes has sprained his ankle, and got Hawke to ride for him.'

'But I thought it was owners up.'

'I thought so too. That's what I meant, and I assumed that he meant the same; but nothing was really said about it when the match was made, and, of course, he can get anyone to ride that he likes. It's certainly my fault, if there's any fault at all.'

'I don't believe in his ankle—it's an infernal piece of sharp practice—not but what you'll hold your own, old chap, only of course we were—at least I was—going on the knowledge that Barnes is a rank duffer on a horse. However, I'll put it on for you, shall I? All right. Good luck! I do hope you'll win. You're good enough if the horse is,' Southey said, thinking that it was not complimentary to his friend to show too much vexation and regret because he had to ride against a first-rate jockey.

'No! Hawke's a goodish bit in front of me,' York answered, with a smile. 'We'll have a good go, though, all the same!' and he trotted off.

The lightness and ease with which Fisherman skimmed the hurdle in the preliminary, and the firm, but gentle hands and graceful seat of his rider, showed that they were far from a pair to be despised; still, if the mare were what was now evidently believed, she must be desperately dangerous with so superb a horseman as Hawke on her back. However, Southey executed his commission, took 300l. to 100l. for his friend,
three modest ponies for himself, and turned away to take his place on one of the coaches, finding himself next to Leigh.

'Have you laid the odds?' the little man asked. 'What? Backed the other? Don't be foolish! Look here—' he had lunched early and often, and a combination of champagne and a highly promising bet—though the monkey he had put on had to be shared with Upton and Barnes—greatly excited his never very strong nerves. 'Look here! The best thing ever known. The mare's a good 21 lb. in front of the other—two stone, by Jove, she must be; she's a certain jumper; couldn't fall if she tried; gallops like blazes, and stays for ever; and though Bobby York's useful enough, he's a bit behind Hawke, don't you know. It's a thousand to three. Look here! I can tell you just—- Ugh! Halloa! Eh? yes, yes; where's my cigarette case? Have a cigarette? Do! Blowed if I know where my cigarette case is!'

Upton was just behind him on the coach, and it was a furtive but severe prod in the back from Upton's umbrella that interrupted the flow of Leigh's too confidential eloquence. At that moment the flag fell, and a quiet 'There they go!' uttered by someone on the coach, took the place of the excitable shout of 'They're off!' which always follows the start for a flat race.

Both animals jumped safely and well. Dewdrop led about a length; and so, steadily but at a good pace, they galloped between the jumps, rising and landing almost simultaneously. It was a left-handed course, and though York did not suppose that Hawke would try to knock him over and so make the good thing a certainty, he lay just a trifle wide—a few feet off to the right.
'She's going well, isn't she? Hawke's standing 50l. to nothing with us. Oh, it's a good thing!' Leigh said very quietly to Southey—he could not help talking, but did not want another angry dig in the back.

'Here they are! Nothing in it so far!' Southey replied, as the pair passed the stand for the first time, having gone rather more than a mile.

'Now they're coming to the ditch—she's over—so's York,' Leigh cried with exultation, as he noted the mare's jump, but with something of regret as his friend, now a couple of lengths behind, but still going strong and well, landed also. Of course it was all right—a good thing, there could be no doubt about that, but nevertheless it would simplify matters if Fisherman would fall. To all appearance neither was likely to do anything of the sort. There had been no mistake on either side, the nearest approach to one having, indeed, been made by the mare; for Hawke had driven her hard—little as, to do her justice, she wanted driving—at a big black fence. She had taken off too soon and carried away a good-sized piece of the top; but she was clever as a cat, and Hawke is the less likely to hustle her again, the observers think, as they take note of the incident. The brook is a very simple business. Both fly it side by side, and gallop on—they are now less than a mile from home, and the pace is strong—towards perhaps the worst fence on the course, a drop which had to be approached rather on the turn. Fisherman is over first by a shade, but the mare is at his quarters, and so immediately afterwards they disappear for a moment or two behind a rise in the down land which hides them from sight.

'Halloo, York's in front!' Leigh cries, as they
become visible again, and Fisherman is seen to be nearly a couple of lengths to the good.

'Yes, but the other's with him—it's right enough!' mutters Upton, in a tone not altogether free from a shade of anxiety.

'Here's Hawke's playing with him!' is Leigh's explanation.

'It's a thousand to one. Look, he's closing up now!'

The mare was, perhaps, getting a bit nearer to the
leader, but she ought not to have been behind at all, especially so near home. Upton strongly disapproved of even so skilful a horseman as Hawke playing with a man—if that were it—who was not likely to make a mistake, even though he might not do anything brilliant; and there were only two more fences to jump. The mare is closing, however, decidedly. She is scarcely a length behind as they charge the last fence but one; and York is glancing round nervously. Only one fence more! They near it almost neck and neck. This is where jockeyship will tell, and the professional horseman will beat the amateur. But no! York is over first; the other seems to hesitate a second, and then jumps sideways. Hawke snatches her round, but Fisherman is a full two lengths to the good, and see! Hawke gets out his whip.

'The favourite's beat!' 'Here, the field a pony!' 'Two to one I name the winner!' 'Fisherman's winning.' 'Nonsense, Hawke's coming—he's won!' 'Come on, Bobby! Hurrah!' 'Hawke'll do him yet!' 'Not he—the other's won!' 'Which of 'em is it?' 'Hawke's won!' 'Fisherman's won!'

So the confusion of shouts rings from stands and coaches and spectators at the cords. Hawke is riding hard and catching—certainly catching—the leader. York has hit his horse twice, but he puts down his whip, and is riding home with his hands, while Hawke is at it whip and spur, and so, amid a scene of the wildest excitement, they pass the post.

Leigh draws a long breath and looks very pale.

'The mare's won!' he says; 'but it wasn't such a good thing as I thought. Wonderful good race Hawke rode, didn't he? Deuced close, though, wasn't it? He
A Good Thing

was all right, though! I knew he would be! You can’t get the best of Hawke. He did win, didn’t he? Ah! There’s the number!’

Up it goes, and there is a cheer from the crowd. It is No. 1—Fisherman has won the match.

Leigh stands with his mouth open, gazing at the board; Upton compresses his lips, and mutters an imprecation; Southey slips down from the coach to meet his friend as he rides back to weigh in.

‘Rattling good race you rode, old chap. I am glad!’ Southey says, as he pats the horse’s shoulder. ‘I thought he was going to do you!’

‘So did I,’ York replies, blowing a bit—it was a tough finish. ‘That mare’s come on wonderfully since Kempton. I’m glad the old horse has won, though—good old fellow!’ and he pats his favourite’s neck. ‘Hurrah!’ shouts an enthusiastic little crowd as York re-enters the paddock—for a good many of the spectators had laid odds before the betting veered round. Barnes, forgetting all about the ankle he is supposed to have sprained, omits the limp he had adopted, and walks up to meet his jockey with a look of deep vexation on his face; and for his part Hawke looks very sulky. He supposed that they knew what the mare was, and he had backed her for what was a lot of money for him, he said. She overjumped herself a bit at the drop, it was true, and he lost a couple of lengths or so; but if she had been what they told him, she’d have won right enough; and he sullenly pulls off the saddle, and stumps off into the weighing-room. Leigh had by this time changed his opinion as to Hawke having ridden a wonderful good race, and was vowing that he had never seen a race so chucked away. Barnes would have ridden a thousand times better him-
self—if Hawke had come only two seconds sooner, he could not have lost, and so on. Upton says little, but in the few remarks he makes his language is strong.

As Hawke was driving away from the course with a friend, in one of the local shandrydans, the look of sulkiness had entirely disappeared from his face. He was, in fact, grinning as if an excellent joke had just struck him—as, indeed, from his point of view one had.

'That was a game, wasn't it?' he cried, slapping his companion on the knee.

'I should like one of 'em once a fortnight reg'lar till further notice!' was the reply.

'What precious flats them soldier sharps are!' Hawke continues. "Yes," they says, "don't you breathe a word to a living soul about your going to ride. They don't know nothing about this mare, and they'll lay odds on the other, especially as Captain York can ride a bit, and the man they think's going to ride this one can't. But there's nothing about owners riding in the agreement," they says, "and when your name's hoisted there'll be some fun! They'll be laying more than a shade of odds on you by that time, I expect, so you keep dark, and you're on fifty to nothing if you pull it off, and it's a cert." Oh, thinks I, I can do a bit better than that for myself if that's the game! You can never make quite certain of winnin' a race, but you can generally make pretty sure of losin' one. What did you do?'

'Why,' replied the other, 'I got on 160l. down there, 100 to 30 twice, and the rest at 3's and 5 to 2, and I wired up to have 200l. on at starting price. You jolly well give me the jumps, though, all the same, at the finish.'

'Yes, it was a hardish job, too, to do quite comfort-
A Good Thing

able. She's a good mare, that. I tried to pull her into a fence on the far side, but she scrambled over somehow.'

'You 'ad a bit of an easy, though, after the drop fence,' said the other.

'Yes,' Hawke grins; 'I didn't hurry very much behind the hill there—I know that place where they can't see you, and it's useful; but you see I had to make a bit of a show, and the Captain was stopping a lot at the finish. If I'd caught 'im by accident, there'd have been a go! You don't know who's looking at you, and it don't do to make people think that anything's wrong. If I hadn't jumped the last fence sideways, though, and made a show of pulling her round again, I shouldn't 'ave known what to 'ave done in the straight.'

'I see you whacking away at your old boot, and kicking and spurring at nothing,' the other says, with a laugh.

'Yes, I had to gammon a bit!' Hawke rejoins, and echoes the laugh. 'She's a real nice mare, though. I wish we could get hold of her, and we'd win a race.'

'Some day or other, when you was 'aving a go?' and the friend chuckled.

'Yes, that's it. But we've done pretty well to-day, too. That was a real good thing!'
The race for the Dunchester Stakes was being run, and the horses had neared the distance. Already there was a tail, for the pace had been good, but there were still three in it, and the favourite, Little Duke, was one of them. To all but eyes of exceptional acuteness his chance seemed to be at least as good as that of the animals that galloped to right and left of him; but on one of the stands were a couple of men side by side—one with a somewhat sardonic cast of countenance, whose small dark eyes were hidden for the moment by his race-glasses, and the other of a Saxon type, with a neatly trimmed, light brown moustache; and it was the latter who, having keenly scrutinised the three horses, said in a quiet but decided tone, ‘You win, Moss!’

Mr. Moss hesitated for a moment or two, and then rejoined, ‘Yes, it’s good! I knew it was—it’s all right!’

Both the speakers had that peculiar gift of seeing what horses are doing which is bestowed upon, or acquired by, so very few. The trainer of the favourite, Little Duke, had indeed shut his glasses and given it up, for he saw what would win, though the multitude of
racegoers did not, and after the words quoted had been spoken, and the trainer's glasses, as aforesaid, had been put away, a roar of 'The favourite wins! Come on, Little Duke!' arose from the rings. Little Duke responded to the efforts of his jockey as best he could; he was game enough, and that is a great quality in these days; but to win a race speed also is required, and Little Duke's bolt was shot. His rider had up his whip; a washy chesnut on the rail side was also struggling on under difficulties, and Mr. Moss's bay mare Smeuse, a neck behind, was certainly going the strongest; for though her jockey was beginning to ride with his hands, he had not yet resorted to any extreme measures. A dozen strides from the post the favourite, Little Duke, and the chesnut were being pressed to do all they knew, and the next moment the rider of Smeuse hit his mare once, she responded, and won cleverly by a neck.

Moss let loose a deep sigh of relief; he had been watching the struggle breathlessly, in spite of his confidence.

'That's all right!' he said to his companion, Cartwright, turning and making his way through the crowd to meet his mare as she reached the paddock. 'I knew it was good, and I haven't won half enough. If I'd only been in luck, I should have had a real good go; but I had no pluck!'

'Well, old chap, I'm very glad,' Cartwright replied, as they reached the stair and began to descend, 'but I don't know that it's plucky to get out of your depth. She had a bit in hand, all the same.'

'Oh, yes; she won in a canter,' Moss responded, which was not quite the fact, nor, indeed, did he suppose
it was; but it is thus that men sometimes like to magnify the achievements of the horses that carry their jackets.

By this time the friends were at the weighing-room door. Smeuse duly arrived, and the 'All right!' was called, to the immense satisfaction of Moss, who had, in fact, supported his mare with great confidence, and won little short of £6,000, irrespective of the stakes—money which at the time he wanted badly. Not many congratulations were bestowed upon him as he strolled through the paddock; for though many had suspected that the mare was better than past running made her out to be, few had known enough to venture on backing her for more than a trifle to save. Among those who had a pleasant word to say, however, was a young man, not much more than half-way through the twenties, who had been standing in a somewhat pensive attitude and gnawing his lip—his fair moustache was scarcely long enough to be gnawable—before he caught sight of the owner of the winner.

'Well, I congratulate you, Moss!' he said. 'I thought the favourite was winning till they were close on the post; but I'm very glad you pulled it off.'

'Thanks, very much, and it's very good of you, my dear Dane, because I'm afraid you did not back it,' Moss replied.

Dane smiled, though the smile did not quite conceal the trouble in his face. 'No, I couldn't very well, after what you told me about her, could I? I had a plunge on the favourite. I thought it was good.'

'Well, my dear fellow, you know there's nobody I would have told so soon if I'd really fancied it; but I thought the favourite had a good 7 lb. in hand of me.
Mine’s only a moderate mare, you know, and I was very doubtful about beating Cockchafer. I’m sure you know I’d have told you just what I thought about it!

‘I’m sure you would, my dear fellow; and I’m just as much obliged as if I’d won. I only hope you’ve had a real good race,’ Dane warmly replied, his youthful generosity—we are so hearty when we are young, and, thank goodness, some men keep young to an advanced age—aroused by the apparent heartiness of the other’s tone; and then, with a kindly nod, he moved off.

‘Didn’t you tell him to back it?’ Cartwright asked his friend, with an inclination of the head towards the retreating Dane.

‘Not me!’ Moss replied, with a derisive chuckle. ‘I knew she’d go back at the finish, and I wanted to have a bit more on myself. He’d have had a thousand on, and a nice price I should have got!’

‘Yes; only you wouldn’t have had that bit more on if it had not been for your win over his filly in the Maiden Plate yesterday; and he went out of his way to tell you about that. He hadn’t backed it at the time either, and, by Jove, your monkey shortened the price about his beast. You got evens, and he had to lay 7 to 4 on, I know.’

‘It’s rather amusing to find you setting up as a moralist, or whatever you call it. He’s a silly young cub, and he’s got to buy his experience as I’ve had to buy mine,’ Moss replied, with a contemptuous sneer. ‘Come and have a drink, and don’t talk rot. You’ve won a bit, and that ought to be good enough for you without concerning yourself about a young fool like that.’

‘All right,’ Cartwright replied; ‘though, all the
same, I don't see that a fellow's a fool for thinking that a pal—or a man he believes to be a pal—wouldn't put him in a hole if he could help it. I do think you might have told him, as he'd done you a real good turn. However, it's not my business. Have a cigarette?'

Cartwright produced his case, and the emollient influence of tobacco was called into requisition to soothe their nerves, nor did it spoil the flavour of the brand of champagne with which Moss rashly thought proper to celebrate the victory of his mare. Cartwright was not a very scrupulous person; contact with Moss, an old school friend with whom he seemed to have been more or less mixed up all his life, had not tended to render his feelings more sensitive or refined, and he was of weaker will than his constant associate; but all sentiments of honour and goodfellowship were not extinct in Cartwright's nature as they appeared to be in Moss—assuming that he ever had any, which is, perhaps, a somewhat daring assumption. Cartwright, moreover, was a poor man, and was under an obligation to Moss which he could not repay, though, in truth, as Cartwright knew decent people, was a member of two or three good clubs, had generally the entrée into places where Moss could not appear, and was often very useful, the obligation, if it could have been properly assessed, would have been not a little on the other side.

Dane, for his part, wandered off slowly, and the gloom again fell upon his countenance. He had dissipated the greater half of his inheritance in something less than three years. Succeeding at the death of his father to a fair estate of some 8,000l. a year, which cost about 10,000l. to keep up, he also found a nice round sum of close upon 100,000l. waiting for him, and this had
seemed boundless wealth. He had become an enthusiast about racing, and after all, if a man gives close on six thousand guineas for a couple of yearlings to add to his string, what appreciable effect has that upon 100,000l.? Then his trainer had advised him to buy a plater—not a common beast, but one for which the owner bid up to 1,250 guineas. Surely it was good business to go fifty more, and have a real plunge. A plunge, indeed, was the only way of getting home, and it was certainly arranged with kill, a starting-price job that would have half closed a dozen prosperous establishments, and severely shaken many others. Perhaps there never was a commission more cleverly planned, and if all had gone well, the result would have been a little fortune; but—fatal but!—a brute trained by Mr. Arthur Yates, that started without a price, and was ridden by a jockey no one had ever heard of, just got up in the last stride, and won by a head; the more irritating because the measure of everything else in the race had been so accurately taken—and all came out right to an ounce—only no one had bothered about the unknown creature from Bishop's Sutton. The yearlings turned out still worse than the plater, for the one never ran, and the other, having become a bad roarer after an attack of cold, could never get even second in a selling plate. Dane betted, as a rule, on every race; he had a temporary fancy for yachting, and hired a boat; he was fond of shooting, and went in for the sport in a manner which made his father's old keeper stand aghast. Dane, in fact, played the game all round, and was invariably astonished whenever he looked at his bank-book to discover that he had so many hundreds or thousands less than he had confidently expected to find. One cannot eat one's cake and have it, as we all know; but Dane
ordered slices of different sizes to be brought him by means of requests on oblong slips of green paper, and did not realise how the luxury was diminishing. He had a right to live up to a liberal sum, and he had lived up to about three times the amount; and this was the more unfortunate as he had lately perceived the fact, mirrored in the bright eyes of his pretty cousin Violet, that life has in it worthier ambitions than winning races or leaving the card table with a few hundreds to the good. How sweet Violet would look tripping about the grounds of his place, the Hurst, wandering round the old-world gardens, with their wealth of scent and colour, behind the sheltering walls of peach blossoms and purple plums, and, in fact—but his reverie was interrupted by the sight of his trainer, old Bill Weekes, across whom he stumbled while his thoughts were far away.

'Good day, sir. Had you a bet? I'm afraid you did not back the winner. You would have been sure to be on the favourite'—his owner was a special friend of Dane's, as Weekes knew—'and certainly Smeuse had no chance on her public running since the spring. She's a nice mare, too,' the old man added.

'Yes, Mr. Moss did not fancy her much, he told me, and won very little. He thought the favourite was certain to beat him,' Dane replied, and Weekes looked at him shrewdly.

'Is Mr. Moss a friend of yours, sir?' he asked.

'Oh, yes, he's a great friend of mine,' Dane answered, with youthful simplicity. At his age the line between acquaintances and friends was indefinite, and in his pleasant, easy-going way he liked most people he came in contact with if they were affable to him, as they usually were, he found. He had lost 1,500l. on the
Stakes, and mainly because Moss, a good judge, had so confidently assured him that the favourite could not possibly be beaten. That he had been 'put in the cart' he had no sort of idea.

'I asked because I wondered whether he would let us have a gallop with his mare,' Weekes continued. 'I like trying with horses that we know are in form; we have nothing to gallop ours with, and if Mr. Moss would lend us his mare to tell us something about our Cesarewitch horses, we should know where we were.'

'I've no doubt he'd be very glad; he's a very good fellow and always ready to do one a turn,' Dane answered; 'there he is! I'll ask him at once,' he continued, as, looking around, he caught sight of Moss making his way through the crowd. Moss answered the beckoning finger by stopping, and was joined by Dane and Weekes.

'I wanted you to do something for me, old fellow, if it isn't asking too much,' Dane began. 'The fact is, Weekes wants to know something more about our Cesarewitch horses than he can find out, and we thought that perhaps you wouldn't mind lending us your mare to gallop them with. I'm afraid it's asking you a great favour, but—' Dane was not used to making such requests, and ended rather vaguely with an observation about 'knowing what a good chap you are.'

Moss regarded all requests from one point of view. Would the thing desired do him any good? Rapidly revolving the query in his mind, he came to the conclusion that all his interests were in a cordial affirmative. He would ascertain what Weekes, a very shrewd hand, thought about the great 'back-end' handicaps, and would, at any rate, know what chance his lot possessed,
for Weekes had four horses entered for the big race—
Jovial, a good animal, but harshly treated with 8 st. 4 lb.;
The Caliph, a three-year-old who had shown some form,
but never quite done what was expected of him, at 6 st.
13 lb.; Brown Shoes, a five-year-old mare that on some
running was let off with two pounds less, 6 st. 8 lb.;
and Gardenia, a weed of no account, at the bottom of
the handicap, but too slow to win with the proverbial
postage stamp on her back. 'She stays; but it takes
her a long time to do it,' a famous jockey had once
answered, when asked a question as to the capacity of
the mare after a race in which he had ridden her.

'I shall be delighted, whenever you like, of course!
Very pleased to be useful, my dear Dane,' Moss replied.
'You can have her when you like—and I'll come over
myself and see the gallop, if I may? I dare say I can
get a bed at the hotel in the town?' he added.

This was not in the least what Weekes wanted. He
knew rather more of Moss than his employer did, and
was aware that the owner of Smeuse had fancied his
mare, and had a good win; but he did not bother him-
self about matters that did not concern him. His stable
had been out of form, but the horses were pleasing him
more and more every day; only he wanted to make sure.
Smeuse would not deceive him, whatever her owner
might have been inclined to do had money depended on
it; only he had not bargained for Mr. Moss's presence,
and feared that it would be expensive in the way of
shortening the price if they determined to back anything
they ran. Still, if you borrow a man's horse, you cannot
possibly refuse to let him see it gallop, and Weekes, as
he was accustomed to do, made the best of the situation.

'I hope you won't think of going to the hotel, Mr.
Moss,' he responded. 'If you don't mind accepting my humble hospitality, I shall be happy to do all I can to make you comfortable. Any day next week that will suit you and Mr. Dane will suit me, and I shall hope to hear that you are coming.'

CHAPTER II

The day had been duly fixed, and Moss and Dane had found their way to the old trainer's place, where they had been regaled with an excellent dinner, consisting of trout caught that afternoon in the stream that ran near the house, a saddle of four-year-old mutton that had passed an appetising life on the neighbouring downs, and some plump young partridges. Nor was the wine unworthy of the fare, for though Weekes was not one of the modern school of trainers, who consider it necessary to present the outward appearance of men of fashion, and suppose that they are greatly condescending when they accept employment, he was modern enough to understand the possibly fastidious palates of his visitors. Smeuse had arrived in the same train as her owner, and at five o'clock stables they had seen her comfortably ensconced in her box, next to The Caliph, a handsome chesnut colt that had run second for the Criterion the year before, but had only won one small race in poor company as a three-year-old, though he had run fairly well in the Prince of Wales's Stakes at Ascot.

'A nice-looking one that!' Moss had remarked, as they came to him. 'Is he in the gallop to-morrow? I remember how he came up the hill last year in the Criterion—I thought he was going to upset the good thing!'
'No,' Weekes answered, 'I don't want to know anything more about him. He did come up the hill, as you say, sir; but with those quarters he couldn't help it. She's a nice little mare,' he continued, as they passed to the box occupied by Brown Shoes, 'a bit small, but all quality!' And Moss, making a mental note to look out for The Caliph for the Cambridgeshire, when he might be expected to come bowling up that hill again (for of course all this took place before the Cambridgeshire finished at the Rowley Mile Stand), looked with admiration on the good little mare who next morning was to
show what she was made of. Jovial, too, was inspected, and found to be looking wonderfully fit and well; so much so that the fact of a public fancy for him, and his having been backed at the comparatively short price of 100 to 6, was quite explicable. The light-weight of the Cesarewitch entry was not seen, or, if Moss and Dane passed her box, they failed to notice her, and no one drew their attention to the creature.

That the party was up betimes next day need scarcely be said. It was a beautiful morning; the sun lighted up the lingering flower-beds on the lawn, and when the three rode out beyond the gates, the larks sprang up from the dew-bespangled grass and ascended, singing joyously, with the beams glinting on their wings. An old hare lobbed off leisurely as they cantered past her form, and a big covey of partridges which rattled up and off suggested that this must be a good game country.

The horses that were to be tried had already reached the downs when the trio arrived, the scheme of the trial having been settled the night before. Neither Jovial nor The Caliph was in the gallop, nor had Weekes included the light-weight. Smeuse and Brown Shoes, both five-year-olds, were each to carry 8 st. 7 lb., as that admitted of the trainer's nephew, a successful jockey, riding the Cesarewitch entry for his uncle; Past Master, a speedy horse in the stable, was put in to make a pace with a light lad on his back, and a two-year-old that seemed to have a remarkable capacity for staying, and with which Weekes thought he might win the Feather Plate over the Cesarewitch course, was also to run, with a tiny boy on his back, who, saddle and all, was well under 5 st.

The two miles and a quarter course was in the shape of a horseshoe, so that the observers could see the start
—not that there is much to see in a start for a race over this distance—and trot across in plenty of time to see the finish also. Weekes's handkerchief was raised and dropped to send them on their way, and immediately Past Master jumped into his bridle and set off at a cracking pace.

'They are going very fast,' Dane observed, as the leader sped on a couple of lengths in advance of the two mares, at whose quarters the two-year-old was racing. Past Master increased his lead to a good four lengths when they had almost reached the end of the first mile, still going within himself; but a couple of furlongs further, he was being driven to keep him in front, and here he rapidly compounded, leaving the mares to go on neck and neck, the two-year-old now a couple of lengths behind. At the end of the second mile the youngster was pulled up—the boy had been told not to ride him out, and he and Past Master cantered on in the rear. Smeuse was now in front, leading half a length or so, but she was beginning to labour in her stride, and in another moment her rider took up his whip, Brown Shoes still galloping at her ease. A furlong from home Moss's mare was being hard ridden, but she could not keep her place. With scarcely an effort Brown Shoes overhauled her, and, the other being ridden out, passed the improvised winning-post three lengths to the good.

Moss was the first to speak, as they trotted on to where the two mares were pulling up.

'Well, the Cesarewitch is over!' he exclaimed. 'My mare would be a certainty at 6st. 3lb.—or a bit more. I congratulate you, Dane—it's a real good thing for you.'

'Yes, sir; your mare stays so well and has a turn of speed to finish with when she is not quite beaten,'
Weekes replied, while Dane again thanked the owner of Smeuse for lending her to enable them to find this out.

‘And now, Mr. Moss,’ Weekes continued, looking grave, ‘I needn’t ask you not to speak of this; you’ll like to back our horse, no doubt, and if you’ll tell us what you wish, the money shall go on with ours.’

‘I need hardly say I sha’n’t speak to a soul about it. Thanks! If I may stand in with you, I should like to back it, of course. I don’t bet much now—it’s a luxury I can’t afford. I rarely have more than a tenner or so on; but I’m sure this is good, and I should like to stand in a pony.’

‘Certainly, sir,’ Weekes replied; ‘but are you sure that’s as much as you’d like to have?’

‘Well, you might get 1000 to 30, I should think, as they are backing old Jovial and the favourites are at a short price; or 1000 to 40, at any rate. If you can do that and let me stand to win a thousand, I shall think you’re very kind,’ Moss answered.

‘By all means, sir,’ was Weekes’s reply; ‘and,’ he added, ‘if we should find a better at the weights, shall we put your pony on that?’

‘No, thank you!’ Moss replied. ‘What I’ve seen’s good enough for me. My money on Brown Shoes, please!’ and something like a faint sneer curled his lip, for this was exactly the sort of thing, he thought, he would have said himself lest a stranger, such as he was here, should be too confident, and back the winner of the trial on his own account as well as standing in with the stable.

‘Very well, sir; just as you like; but I shall most probably have another feel at them before the day,’ Weekes replied.
‘I shall not be afraid of that—you’ll not find anything to beat this one. I can tell through mine, you see,’ was the reply, and they trotted off home for a look round the place before lunch and a return to London.

‘It’s good!’ Moss exclaimed to himself, as, having parted from Dane at the station, he got into a hansom and drove to his rooms. ‘My mare at 7 st. would smother the lot, and this one gave her something like a 10-lb. beating, I should think. Smeuse at six stone two or three! By Jove, it’s the best thing I’ve ever been in! I wonder whether old Weekes is mug enough to suppose that I shall be content to win a thousand over it? It’ll be odd if I don’t touch up those brutes over the rails to a pretty tune.’

With these pleasing reflections he reached the door of his rooms, where Cartwright was awaiting him.

‘Well? Did you beat the lot, or did the lot beat you?’ Cartwright asked.

‘There was only Brown Shoes in the gallop. The Caliph’s going for the Cambridgeshire, and Jovial won’t stand a preparation. It was a real good gallop. Past Master brought them along a regular hopper for nearly a mile and a half. Old Smeuse, with 3 lb. the worst of the weights, won pretty clever at the finish—pretty easy, in fact—by about a couple of lengths. I knew she would,’ was Moss’s description of the event—a description which, it will be observed, had not the merit of anything approaching to accuracy.

‘Ah! that doesn’t make theirs out very gaudy, I’m afraid? You won’t back it, I suppose?’ Cartwright asked.

‘Well, I don’t know. It’s putting Smeuse in at a
weight that would give her a sort of chance, you know,' Moss answered.

'Would it? Not a very good one, I should think!' his friend rejoined.

'No, perhaps not; but that young ass Dane is certain to back his mare for a pile of money, and there'll be good hedging. I think I'll get you to put me on a couple of hundred as quickly as you can. You'll get 33's, very likely 40's, I should think; but keep quiet about it, whatever you do,' Moss said, and his friend arose.

'I don't think it's good enough for me to touch. I sha'n't do anything for myself?' Cartwright remarked, half interrogatively.

'I hardly know how to advise you; you know just as much as I do now,' Moss replied, as he helped himself to a brandy and soda and lighted a cigarette, before settling down to write a number of letters and send off several wires.

Weekes was not greatly surprised when he opened his special 'Standard' next morning—the morning papers did not reach him till midday—to find that Brown Shoes had come from 33's offered, at which she stood the day before, to 22 to 1 in London, and 20's in Manchester. He merely nodded his head, and a peculiar smile wrinkled the corners of his mouth. 'I thought so!' was his only ejaculation, 'and it'll be 100 to 6 tomorrow.' He was not far out, for 'Brown Shoes, 100 to 7 t and w,' was the quotation; and again he smiled. As for Moss, two pages of his betting-book were closely covered with figures, which overflowed on to the page following; and as he lay back in his chair, cigar in mouth, contemplating the calculation, there was no mis-
taking the serenity of the pleased expression on his face.

'Ah, I forgot,' he suddenly exclaimed, adding to the bottom of the list '1,000 to 40 with Dane.' 'I don't expect he's got much on at 1,000 to 40 either. I'm afraid he was a bit too late!' Moss observed, with a chuckle.

CHAPTER III

The Cesarewitch day had at length arrived. Moss had eagerly anticipated the occasion, for he wanted money badly, and, so far as he could see, the result of the race could scarcely fail to enrich him by not far short of 30,000l. Cartwright got him a good price to his 200l., and other agents had also been quietly set to work with satisfactory results. Brown Shoes was now quoted at 100 to 12, there being a couple of better favourites; indeed, about Anvil, a three-year-old son of Vulcan, who had shown good form, and who had been very highly tried, 7 to 2 was the best offer; though Moss had no fears of this animal, as he was very far indeed from being a boy's horse, and the shrewdest judges were convinced that he would never stay the distance. Prairie Belle, the second favourite, the same good judges declared, had not done anything like a real Cesarewitch preparation, and the more Moss heard of these two the better pleased he felt about his prospects. He had not seen Dane since they parted at the station after the trial; but Brown Shoes had arrived, and pleased even the Newmarket critics by her style of going, though these critics are little given to approving of 'provincial' horses. The Caliph had also been sent, to make running for his stable
companions, Moss assumed; for though the pace in the Cesarewitch is always exceptionally good, someone has to make it so. Jovial had given way, as his trainer fully anticipated he would, when the winding-up gallops found out his weak place.

It was a bright day, and Moss felt on excellent terms with himself; though, as he listened to the roar of the ring, he was the least bit astonished at the rather persistent way in which The Caliph was backed.

'I suppose someone thinks he knows something, and the crowd follow like sheep,' Moss observed to Cartwright. 'They want a pace for the mare, and I've no doubt that's why they brought the colt; though in my opinion they might just as well have left both of them at home. I wonder how they are betting now?'

Going to the rails, he asked the price of Brown Shoes. '100 to 12' was the answer. 'And what price The Caliph?' he continued.

'Well, I'll lay you 10 to 1,' the bookmaker replied, the offer being received with a kind of snort of contempt.

'What nonsense! 20 to 1 you mean, I suppose. I'll lay you twelve, if you like!' Moss cried.

'Very well, if you mean it, I'll take 1,000 to 80,' the bookmaker answered, and Moss eagerly assented.

'Twice?—three times if you like,' he continued; but a cautious 'No, thank you, twice will be enough—2,000 to 160,' and the bet was booked.

The numbers were presently hoisted—twenty-two starters, and Moss went into the Birdcage to look at the animal that carried his fortunes; but he could see nothing of Weekes nor of his two horses, which, as a matter of fact, were being saddled down at the Ditch stables. He found Prairie Belle, however, and saw she
was so far from really ready that he was in no way surprised to hear 100 to 7 offered, and when the horses set off on their journey to the start the powerlessness of Anvil's boy to do anything with that wrong- and strong-headed animal was abundantly apparent. Once more he looked for the blue and white diamonds which Brown Shoes carried, or for the yellow and black hoops which were borne by The Caliph, who was entered in Weekes's name and ran in his colours, though it was understood that Dane owned a share of him; but the pair and their trainer were invisible, nor had he seen Dane—whom, however, he did not particularly want to see—for having a very heavy stake depending on the race, Dane preferred to sit in his fly in solitude till he knew the best or the worst.

It does not take long to send a Cesarewitch field on its way, and very soon after the white flag, held conspicuously on the top of the Ditch, had been raised, it fell, its fall being of course acknowledged by the familiar cry, 'They're off!'

Moss's nerves were under pretty good control, but he felt his heart bumping furiously as he kept his glasses fixed on the spot where the field would reappear when they had sped past the gap, looking there like horses in a scene at a theatre. Dane, too, waited and watched with eager anxiety, striving to make out colours in the distant line of horses as they turned the corner of the Ditch and came into the straight. Something in red seemed to be in front, wide on the left, and the still uncertain spectators assumed, correctly as it happened, that this was Anvil, at whom, indeed, the boy had never been able to get a pull till they had gone a good mile and a half, when the brute, having done pulling, had done going. On they came, a white jacket was now well in front, and—
yes, there could be no doubt about it, at the quarters of the leader was a bright chesnut carrying a jockey in yellow and black hoops. This was The Caliph, there was no doubt about it; but where was Brown Shoes? Moss swept the field with his glasses, and presently made her out, going on about fifth or sixth, but some lengths behind the leader—and surely it was time for her to draw up, for the first two were now at the beginning of the stands, and moreover the rider in white had got out his whip and was using it too, but without avail, for the chesnut swept on, going well within himself.

'The Caliph wins!' 'The Caliph for a monkey!' 'Here, 6 to 4 on The Caliph!' such were the cries that arose from the rings, and Moss looked on aghast. Was there still time for Brown Shoes to get up? Could she make up five lengths in a hundred yards?—six, seven lengths in fifty?—for that's what it had now come to. No! Impossible! And the more so as the handsome chesnut showed no signs of going back to his horses; on the contrary, he galloped on as if the farther he went the more he liked it, and finally passed the post a very easy winner by a liberal three lengths, which might have been very much more had his jockey pleased. Quarter Deck, a lightly-weighted outsider that came with a bit of a rush at the finish, just beating Columbine—the bearer of the white jacket—a neck for second place. Prairie Belle was placed fourth, and not far behind her was Brown Shoes, pulling up.

Dane sank back in his fly with a heavy sigh of relief, while a furious curse came from between the clenched teeth of Moss, as he stood motionless on the stand from which he had seen the race, staring hard at the number-board as if unable to believe that his eyes had not
played him false. So confident had Moss felt, that had he been offered 10,000l. down that morning for his prospective winnings, he would have refused; and now! He had lost close on 3,000l., and—all of a sudden the thought struck him with dismay—he had actually laid 2,000 to 160 against the winner. Close on 5,000l.—and he pressed for money and without resources!

_Diagram: Enraged to see the Jubilant Look on the Face of Weekes_

Half mad with fury, he rushed to the Birdcage, and was still further enraged to see the jubilant look on the face of Weekes as he gazed after The Caliph, who was being led away.

'This is a nice trick you've played me, Mr. Weekes,' he hissed into the trainer's ear. 'It's like your infernal
impudence, too. You borrow my mare, and then let me in like this. But I'll be even with you, you rascal!'

Weekes turned to his interlocutor with an air of affected surprise, though anyone who knew the old man's shrewd face would have perceived a slight twinkle in his eye.

'You must not talk to me like that, sir!' he responded. 'I don't understand what you mean, but I cannot allow myself to be abused.'

'Don't understand?' Moss rejoined, scornfully. 'Didn't you make me back that infernal mare, when all the time you meant to win with the other?'

'I think you must have forgotten your own words, sir. If you will recollect, I most particularly asked you if you would have your money on if I found anything better than the mare you saw tried; and you certainly said in reply, "No, thank you. What I've seen is good enough for me. My money on Brown Shoes, please!" I took very particular note of your words, I assure you, sir.'

Moss had entirely forgotten. All his hopes had rested on the mare, though he had tried to hide the fact, even from his intimate, Cartwright, and so far as Weekes was supposed to know, had not a bet beyond the 1,000 to 40 he stood with the stable; and he had failed to recall the facts of which the old trainer reminded him. He could not contradict him, but he could complain, and that savagely.

'And you never thought, after borrowing my mare to try with, that you were bound to give me a hint?' he bitterly exclaimed.

'Well, sir, the fact is someone was backing the mare heavily, and—and I needn't tell you who it was. If you
had acted straightforwardly by us, we should have done the same by you; but I chance to know whose money made the mare a favourite—and it was not right, sir, after what took place on my downs. But if you are pleased to blame anyone, you must blame me. I manage Mr. Dane’s business, and he was so anxious to speak to you about the horse that I persuaded him to stay in Scotland till the day of the race.’

Moss turned away with a wrathful exclamation. The most exasperating thing of all was that by his ill-judged cunning he had been playing the very game Weekes desired! His money had made Brown Shoes a favourite, and the consequence was that Weekes had been able to back The Caliph to win a very large stake—not less than 40,000l. was the amount realised by the stable commission—at long prices.

Stalking moodily along, pondering on this, a deep frown on his face, he met Cartwright, who for his part looked angry also.

‘If it’s any satisfaction to you to know it, The Caliph is a good 12 lb. better than Brown Shoes at the weights, and Weekes was perfectly aware of the fact when you were down there. I suppose that, as he was satisfied about it being so, he left The Caliph out of the trial because you were present. I chanced to have heard about that trial; and why you should have lied to me and swore your mare won, I don’t know. For the future I beg you’ll do your business with a friend whom you can trust,’ and he turned contemptuously away.

Dane, having got back his losses, or at any rate the greater part of them, determined to plunge no more. He was too fond of racing to give it up, and indeed had no reason to do so, especially as the pretty cousin he
was to marry also found mild amusement in the sport; but he will not bet recklessly or heavily. As for Moss, that Second October Meeting finished him; for in the attempt to get his money back the usual fate befell him; he lost more, 'went for the gloves,' missed them, and his account was in consequence missing likewise on the following Monday. The turf knows him no more, and its state is by so much the more gracious.
Are schooldays the happiest time of a boy's life? I do not think the proposition that they are so can be universally accepted, for boys and schools differ considerably; but I fancy it may be taken as a fact that no one enjoys a day's hunting more than a boy on his pony. What fun we used to have! and as we take in the general features of the field around us to-day, what fun the boys seem to be having still! In our way we are as fond of the sport as ever; but not many of us enter upon it with the wild delight we used to feel when, on approaching a jump, our only thought was whether the brave little pony could do it; and there was no wonder as to what would happen to us if he failed. Of course we used to come off gaily, after which we gaily got on again, and, I think, rather liked a fall or two than otherwise. Were we ever a nuisance, we sometimes wonder, as we occasionally see boys who little know what mischief they are doing in the field? We hope not; and it is the main object of this paper to tell the boys something about the principles of fox-hunting, so that they may enjoy the sport intelligently, and make their participation in it not unwelcome to others.

The object of fox-hunting, it need hardly be said, is
to kill foxes, and this is a business in which a pack of foxhounds takes the keenest delight. In order to realise the incidents of a day's hunting, we had better, perhaps, imagine ourselves at the meet, and we will get there early. A few mounted men and a couple of ladies are before us, and a few carriages are also here, the occupants being anxious to see what can be seen on wheels. There, standing by his pony's side, is little Tommy Stout; and here, surely enough, galloping up as hard as he can go, is little Johnny Green. We know the disposition of these two boys: how one was thoughtless, cruel, and mischievous, and put pussy in the well, and how the other pulled her out; and probably, by watching the proceedings of the pair, we shall see what a lad ought to do and what he ought not. Already, indeed, there is something to be learnt. Tommy, with regard for his pony, has trotted quietly up, and has thoughtfully got off its back to give it as much rest as possible; Johnny, who has unnecessarily armed his heels with a pair of spurs (taken surreptitiously from the saddle-room, we may be sure, for his father would not have permitted him to wear them), has galloped every yard of the way, and taken a casual turn round a meadow, the gate of which was left open, in addition. His pony is hot and panting in consequence; but Johnny never thinks of this, and forces his way through the group, pushing against the hind legs of a lady's horse, which switches its tail and threatens to kick.

But here come the hounds, sixteen couples, surrounding the huntsman's horse, and many of them, you see, looking up lovingly into his face. As he came along he has been throwing bits of biscuit to them, and calling them by their names, recognition of which they have
seemed very proud. Time is up, everything is ready. Tommy Stout has patted his pony's neck, seen that the bit lies comfortably on the bars of the animal's mouth and that the saddle is firmly fixed, and is trotting along in the midst of the field. But this is not Johnny's way of doing things. No sooner has a move been made than he sticks the spurs into his willing little beast, and dashes to the head of affairs until he is right in the midst of the hounds—one of which he has certainly ridden over, for it yelps with pain.

'How dare you ride over my hounds, you clumsy little lout!' the master cries, as he sees his favourite injured. 'If you cannot behave properly, you shall not be allowed to come out.' Johnny looks sulky, but of course has nothing to say.

The covert to be drawn is a wood with a good deal of undergrowth—a favourite haunt of foxes, which is rarely or never blank; and at the side of this the field is now drawn up, while the huntsman waves his hand as a signal to his obedient hounds, and they scramble over the fence and spread themselves about. Hither and thither you will see them range, sniffing with curious noses at the places where instinct tells them a fox is likely to have been. Presently one pauses and 'speaks.' He thinks he has found a recent lurking-place of his natural enemy; but another sniff leaves him in doubt, and a second experienced old hound, that has come up to see whether there is anything in the discovery, pauses only for a moment at the spot, and is off again. But fifty yards away to the left something has been found. You may see a hound give first a merely interrogative, then an eager sniff, and, being now sure of his facts, he announces his find with such confidence that his friends
know he must be right, and with one accord crash through the undergrowth to convince themselves.

The fox has, indeed, just been there. The master sits on his horse at the corner of the covert, together with the bulk of the field; at the other corner is a smaller group, Johnny Green, who has not cared about meeting his rebuker's eye, among them. If the fox will only break away over the line of country between these two bodies of horsemen—each of which is a little way back from the corner, so that if the fox pokes his sharp nose out, he can see nobody—there will be every probability of a famous run. A few keen and experienced eyes can see the wily beast gliding and insinuating himself round the trunks of the trees—now plunging into and then emerging from a patch of fern or bramble which momentarily hides him. He is making for the very point at which observers hope he will break; he has reached the hedge, and is about to slip over the ditch, and so away across the meadow. Look how stealthily he goes, with ears pricked, and keen eyes which see everything that is to be seen! Jack, the first whipper-in, a little in advance of the group, is all on the alert, and as soon as the fox is well away across the meadow and through the opposite fence he will give a wild, exultant shriek, and lustily raise the cry, 'Gone away!' Men are settling down in their saddles and arranging their reins; Tommy Stout's heart is beating quickly, for he understands the situation, as does his pony, which is reaching out its head, anxious to be off—when suddenly the fox turns round, and glides back into the covert.

What alarmed him? Everybody sees too plainly. It is Johnny Green, of course. It had suddenly occurred
to him that he would join the larger group; so, with a cruel dig of the spurs and an unnecessary cut with his whip, he has set off to gallop down the fence just at the very moment when the fox was about to cross it. Master Johnny is not sensitive, but the 'talking to' that is administered to him when, all unconscious of the mischief he has done, he smilingly gallops into the group does bring a blush to his cheek.

Meantime the chorus from the pack has swelled, and died away. By what means the hounds have lost so hot a scent it would be difficult to explain, unless the fox returned on his own line; but so it is, till one of them reaches the spot where the creature was about to break. Here the chorus fills again; and as luck will have it, the mischief Johnny did in heading the fox is not irreparable, for while his enemies rush back a little way into the covert, his nose once more pokes through the hedge. Tommy, having a clear view through the trees, sees him and involuntarily opens his mouth, a movement which the whipper-in perceives, and he lifts up a warning finger, for he fears that the boy is going to shout too soon; but Tommy had no such intention. Yes! there he goes! With a wave of his brush, he bolts across the fields, glides through the fence beyond, and his red body can be traced against the darker earth of the ploughed ground over which he is stealing, when Jack raises his voice. Tommy cannot restrain himself: 'Tally-ho!' he cries. 'Gone away!' cries the whip; the hounds, already on the line, crash through the fence, which cracks with their weight, as they impetuously fling themselves on it almost in a body. The huntsman sounds a final note on his horn, and puts it into the leather case at his saddle-bow, as he jumps the fence and takes his
place a little to the right of the pack. There are no hounds for the whipper-in to bring on, for all have got well away, and there is Tommy galloping a little behind the master, while Johnny, again at his poor little willing pony with whip and spur, forgetting the mischief he did in the road, is galloping his hardest immediately behind the pack, to the imminent danger of the rearmost hounds.

The fence in front is a big one, hedge and ditch, and Johnny bears away to the right after a well-mounted farmer who prefers the gate. With a cunning movement of his hunting-crop, the farmer draws back the latch, and pushes the gate open, giving it another poke as he goes through, that it may not shut in the face of his followers; but Johnny makes no effort to repeat this courtesy for the convenience of those who are behind him. He just squeezes through, and the gate slams in the face of the lady who was coming next. The field they are now in has been sown, and the young corn is just showing its tender head. Everyone but Johnny keeps carefully either to the furrows or rides along the pathway by the side of the hedge; but Johnny, heedless of, or not understanding, the cries that are raised after him, dashes across the field.

Hounds are running hard, for the scent is hot, though, as we have seen, it is late in the season, when, as a rule, scent is less strong than at an earlier date. The fence beyond is a simple hedge, from which few are inclined to turn, though Johnny is doubtful. Coming to it, he pulls up; then he thinks he can get over, for to right and left of him everyone crosses it without an appearance of effort; so, after stopping his pony, he gives it a kick with the spurs and a stroke with the whip, and the
little creature, most ready to do anything that his cruel young master wishes, makes his leap. But the fact is that Johnny 'funks.' As the pony rises, he holds tightly on to the reins, and fear causes his legs to relax their grip; the consequence is that the thrust of the animal's quarters throws him forward, and as he grasps his reins all the tighter and the shorter, he is half dragged and half impelled out of his saddle, flies over the pony's head, and lands on his back.

Shall we see how Tommy Stout manages? In the first place, he is not afraid, and does not lose his presence of mind, which is half the battle, for he knows that his pony's hind-quarters will give him the forward thrust that we have been talking about, and that when the animal lands he will want a certain amount of freedom for his head. The pony goes confidently, for he knows that his young master means to jump, and so they canter to the fence. Tommy gives the pony his head, grasps the saddle with his knees; there is no rigidity about his loins—that is to say, he is sitting firmly, but at the same time easily. The animal rises, bounds across, and lands lightly, Tommy having leaned back to counteract the forward impulsion, and, as a very famous steeple-chase rider used to say when instructing a pupil, 'given plenty of rope.' He has, therefore, in no way 'hung on by the bit,' as Johnny tried vainly to do. The jump has been no exertion, and has not at all disturbed him or his little steed; and Johnny, rising from the ground just in time to see the performance, looks on with envy, and maliciously thinks how much he should like to punch Tommy's head.

On they go. Johnny's good little pony has placidly waited for his clumsy master, and is rewarded with whip
AN ANGRY COMMAND FROM THE HUNTSMAN
and spur for his consideration; for on level ground Johnny does not mind galloping.

Suddenly the leaders stop. Hounds have checked, and no doubt the country lad there, sitting on a gate scaring crows, has frightened him from the line. Hounds are puzzling it out when Johnny arrives, and he is about to walk his pony into the midst of them when an angry command from the huntsman to go back and get out of the way sends him rearwards; and he hates Tommy more than ever, as he sees the master leaning down from his horse and talking to him. The master, indeed, is pleased with the lad, who is intelligent and plucky, and has asked a sensible question about scent. The master is explaining something of the mysteries of this volatile essence: how sometimes the fox seems to leave it by the pressure of his pads, and how at other times scent apparently floats in the air above the fox's line, or not always actually above, for, he remarks, hounds will often run hard along one side of a fence when it is known that the fox has passed down the other side. Again, there are occasions when the scent seems to be in suspension. Hounds can make nothing of it at a certain place; they cast themselves, return some minutes afterwards to the precise spot where they had formerly failed, and the scent is then strong. He also told the lad how carefully hounds will work at a check, some, of course, with far more industry and judgment than others; for there are hounds which only pretend to hunt, making no real effort, and deceitfully joining in the cry when another winds the fox, though in truth the shufflers have detected nothing, and cannot at all confirm their companion; but hounds know quite well which of their brethren is trustworthy.
Some of the pack had by this time frankly given it up, and were looking to the huntsman for a hint, when old Rattler, wide to the left, spoke to it, and at the same moment a farmer on his cob on the rising ground beyond held up his hat, a signal that he had seen the fox. Away they dash again, Tommy and the master jumping a nice little fence before them, while Johnny, who had been nearly off a second time over a gap, followed a few of the more cautious spirits through a gate which took them on to the highway. New stones had just been put down here, and, to avoid them, all the horsemen except Johnny cantered along the strip of grass that bordered the road. He, with no consideration for his pony's feet, or for the fact that, game and gallant as the little animal was, it was now thoroughly tired, drove it along over the sharp stones.

'Look at that young rascal! He ought not to be trusted on a pony,' an honest old farmer said to a neighbour. 'He has been bucketing the poor little beast about all day, and beating it with the whip that ought to be laid over his own back. Hi! you boy—ah! I thought that's what would happen! Serve him right, if the pony had not hurt itself!'

The last exclamation noted the downfall of Master Johnny Green. His pony had made a false step, and came down, shooting his rider over his head on to the flints. The little creature was soon up, with a pair of broken knees, while the origin of the mischief was helped to his feet by a man who happened to be at hand. When he had recovered his breath Master Johnny yelled lustily, and not without some sort of cause, for his face, hands, and elbows were badly cut, and the torn knicker-
bockers showed that his knees had not escaped damage. Johnny looked a rueful object as, still sobbing, he walked down the road towards the farmhouse whither the man was taking him, one spur lost, and the broken whip in his hand.

Meantime, Tommy had been going gaily, his pony still fairly fresh, creeping and climbing where it could not jump. Though he was some little way behind at the time, he heard and understood the burst of delight with which the hounds caught sight of their fox and ran to view, and was just able to make out that the little red beast popped safely into an earth which, luckily for him, was open, when the leading hounds were within fifty yards of him.

The master's house being near, Tommy was asked in to lunch, his pony having been eased of saddle and bridle, and regaled with some welcome gruel. With a hunter's appetite, Tommy walked into a most succulent pork pie, and afterwards found and made the very intimate acquaintance of a cake which was precisely to his taste. With a tip of half a sovereign, a kindly shake of the hand, and promise that they would make a sportsman of him, Tommy was sent on his way rejoicing; while Johnny, ignominiously driven home by a ploughboy in the farmer's tax cart, was sent to bed with the information—the facts of the case having been meantime gathered—that he deserved what he had got and a sound thrashing into the bargain for his cruelty to the pony. Johnny, stiff and sore, sobbed himself to sleep, and now thinks that hunting is an absurdly overrated sport; but little Tommy Stout is keener than ever, and he and the pony are equally convinced that fox-hunting
—especially when the fox gets comfortably to ground, for he prefers not to see justice done on the despoiler of poultry-yards and the arch-enemy of the bunnies, not reflecting on the disappointment of the hounds—is the best fun going.
'It's absolutely my last chance, and though I don't believe in "having a dash" any more than you do, I shall risk it!'

The speaker, Gerald Ashdown, was one of two men who talked as they strolled to and fro on the terrace before the Towers, a pleasantly-situated and most comfortable-looking country house belonging to Ashdown. It stood high, and the outlook was over a landscape of prosperous appearance, with the sea sparkling in the sunlight for a background. Away to the right was a wide expanse of picturesque down, to the left some coverts, which suggested sport to come later on; but the owner of the place kept his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the ground as he and his friend, Horace Cranleigh, passed backwards and forwards.

'Well,' Cranleigh rejoined, 'I think he'll win, but you know—'

'Yes, I know as well as anyone can tell me of the hundred accidents that may occur. A horse may get shut in, the jockey may make a mistake if he means doing his very best, leave it too long or come too soon—I know all that; no fellow can go racing long without
seeing a host of certainties upset. But what am I to do? I must get hold of 8,000l. by the 25th; your horse is sure to start at a good price, and I think sure to win; and it is my only chance.'

' I could let you have a couple of thousand, or a bit more perhaps, if that would be any use,' Cranleigh said, 'and I should be more than glad.'

'You're awfully good, old chap; but it wouldn't, a thousand thanks all the same. I was an ass to go fooling about in the City at all—I never did so without making a mess of it. Old Stimson says he can pull me through if I let him have 8,000l., but that is the least, and I know the old boy would do all he could for me,' Ashdown answered. 'No, I shall have my dash; and if it doesn't come off, this place must go, and I shall have to try the Colonies, I suppose! What an idiot I have been!'

'And your cousin Ethel?' his friend said.

Ashdown shrugged his shoulders. 'There's no engagement, you know. I haven't dared suggest it, and, besides, her people would not hear of it while I'm in a mess. It seems hard that a fellow's happiness—and a girl's too, perhaps, for I do believe she's fond of me—should depend on a horse getting his head in front. Ah! if I had my time over again!'

'Well, old chap, you saw the trial, and you know just as much about Roquelaure as I do! He certainly has come on wonderfully, and he always runs best with Leighton, though he's not supposed to be a crack jockey. I think it's good, I confess, and why they back the two favourites so I can't understand! What do you intend to do?'

'I've got about 1,400l. left, and I intend to have on
1,200l. I told Smith I wanted him to do something for me, and that I'd send him a wire in the morning. I was afraid to ask the price to-day—it doesn't do to get things talked about; but Haygarth was chatting about the betting on the handicap at lunch, and I heard him say they were offering 100 to 8. If I could get on at about tens or a bit less it would be all right!'

The Towers, it should be explained, was about twenty miles from the scene of the Meadshire meeting, then in progress. Cranleigh was the owner of Roquelaure, a useful bay four-year-old that had been let into the Meadshire Handicap with a good 7 lb. less than his owner expected; nor was this all. 'I don't complain of the weight they give me. It's the way they let the other beggars off that spoils my chance,' an historical owner once remarked when looking through a handicap; but here Roquelaure had been let off light, and Cranleigh found nothing to complain of—rare position for an owner—in the burdens allotted to the rest. Cranleigh and his special friend made out that the colt's chance was not only second to none, but far better than that of anything engaged, and Ashdown had accordingly made up his mind to have the dash, the success of which would save him from the troubles by which he was surrounded.

The estate, when he had come into possession, was somewhat severely dipped, and agricultural depression had made things worse. Though not given to betting high, he was fond of the sport, and had a few horses, which turning out badly, had helped to embarrass him. He had been rather pressed for money, when the glowing stories told him of a marvellously productive gold mine had induced him to put into it the greater part of the capital he could scrape together; nearly all the rest was in a Colonial
bank, and both investments had lately turned out melancholy failures. He had met demands by raising more money on his estate. Still further calls were made upon him, and now, with a balance of some 1,400l. at his bank, he was obliged to find the 8,000l. mentioned in the course of a few days. The dash referred to seemed to him the only means of extrication. If it came off, well and good; present trouble would be averted, there was hope that both the mine and the bank might 'come right,' or at any rate get a great deal better than they were, and he might again live his life in England. If not, if Roquelaure were beaten, there was nothing for it but the sale of the Towers, realisation of his shares—if they fetched anything—and a start for a new career in the Colonies on the little surplus that could be scraped together.

Cranleigh was staying with his friend for the meeting; they had just returned, and next day, when the Meadshire Handicap was run, Ashdown's fate was to be decided

'Just about time to dress, isn't it?' Cranleigh said, throwing away the end of his cigarette. 'I wish I could come back with you to-morrow and drink the horse's health if he wins; but you'll be cheery enough if he doesn't disappoint us! I should think Smith ought to get you an average of tens, or close to it. I shall have 300l. on myself, and he might as well do the lot, I should think. If anyone else is inquiring about the horse it will interfere with his plans. You said you were going to wire, didn't you? Do you mind telling him to put on 300l. more? I shall be horribly cut up if it doesn't come off, old chap, for it'll seem my fault somehow; but I certainly can't tell you anything more than you know,
and I do hope and believe that it's all right—though I hate dashes!'

'Yes, I'll tell him. That will be 1,500l. altogether—and if it does come off, by Jove! I shall be happy! It'll seem too good to be true. But come on, let's go and dress, it's more than half-past seven.'

CHAPTER II

It was happily fine weather next day, and though the Meadshire meeting is not one of the chief events of the racing year, the attendance was very good. The handicap was the third event on the card, and the horses were already being led round and round preparatory to saddling.

'What's that bay? It isn't Catapult, is it?' a man of horsey aspect inquired of his companion, just as Cranleigh and Ashdown joined the circle.

'No. It's Roquelaure. Deuced good-looking horse, I call him. He ran well, too, at Newmarket in the spring,' the other rejoined.

'Pon my word he is a nice horse. I don't see anything I like better, to look at. He won't beat the favourite, though, I fancy.'

'Oh no—no chance—I think he's sure to run into a place, though, and I shall have a pony on one, two, three, I think,' said his companion.

Ashdown glanced at Cranleigh and smiled. It is pleasant to find other people admiring the horse you want to win, and Cranleigh and Ashdown had each convinced themselves that the favourite, Maid of the Mill, was a very bad animal. Her form in the book was good enough, but they knew that the victory on which her
friends based their calculations was one of those flukes which do at times occur in racing. She had beaten two good animals, but one of them, a mare, had not given her running, and the only person who really knew why the other had not won was the jockey, though the stable suspected the nature of his knowledge, and if he had not had a real good race by being beaten, well-founded rumour sadly belied him.

'There's Maid of the Mill,' Cranleigh observed, as a little chestnut mare entered the paddock. 'Looks light,' he continued, as she passed them.

'Yes, Stead always does gallop his horses to death. I expect they've tried her half a dozen times, too, and been no wiser afterwards,' his friend answered. 'They are taking 6 to 1 about St. Christopher,' he went on, nodding his head towards the horse mentioned, another chestnut with a big white blaze on his face.

'Yes, but I'm perfectly certain he does not stay a mile and a half. I'm not in the least afraid of him,' the owner of Roquelaure replied. 'Have you seen Smith, by the way?'

'No, but I told you I'd had an answer, didn't I? I thought I did. His wire came while you were upstairs.'

Ashdown handed the message to his friend. It ran: 'Message received, shall be attended to. Fifteen hundred. Smith.'

'By Jove! he does look well, doesn't he?' Cranleigh observed, as the horse passed them again. 'There's Downs; let's go and see what he says.'

Tom Downs was the trainer of Roquelaure, and he greeted his employer and his friend with a touch of the hat and a smile in which confident anticipation was obvious.
'Well, Downs, he looks well!' Cranleigh said.

'Yes, sir; I've never had him better,' was the reply.

'He did a real good gallop on Tuesday morning the whole distance, and the boy had all his work to stop him,

though they'd come along all the way, and Festivity brought them the last five furlongs a real rattler.'

'What are you afraid of, Downs?' Ashdown asked.

'Well, sir, I really don't see what is to beat us,' Downs answered. 'I don't think the favourite's got a
chance. That race they’re going on was all wrong, I know. St. Christopher is a nice speedy horse; he might do us if it was a mile; but our horse stays so well, and St. Christopher can’t get a bit over his distance. This course wants a lot of doing, too, you know, sir.’

‘Old Hermitage will stay, at any rate,’ Ashdown remarked.

‘Yes,’ Downs answered, in a tone that suggested little respect for the horse; ‘but he’s dreadful slow.’

‘Has Figtree a chance?’ Cranleigh asked, as a black mare, the animal in question, was led off to be saddled.

‘No, sir, I can’t see it. She won’t run her race out, either. I’ve sent in to have 50l. on ours—I suppose you’ve done all you want to, sir?’

‘I’ve had a dash, Downs,’ Cranleigh said. ‘Do you know how they are betting?’

At that moment Downs noticed a man hovering near them as if waiting for an opportunity to speak, and he went off to exchange a few words. Returning, he answered:

‘That’s the man I sent in to back him for me; he took 100 to 12, but says you can’t get it now. I hope he’ll win for all our sakes, sir, and it’ll surprise me much if he does not go close.’

‘Only 8 to 1 now? Ah! Smith’s been at work for us; but let’s go and see him saddled,’ Cranleigh remarked, as they followed the horse to the corner of the paddock, where the trainer had just taken off Roquelaure’s clothes. Leighton, the jockey, in Cranleigh’s orange jacket and blue cap, appeared while the work was in preparation, and touched his cap to his employer.

‘Looks well, sir!’ he said, noting his mount with satisfaction.
‘Yes, doesn’t he? What’ll beat you?’ the owner asked, not, perhaps, having a very high regard for the jockey’s opinion; but it is none the less interesting to hear what people are thinking and saying.

‘Well, sir, they’re very sweet upon the favourite, but I never thought she was much of a mare, though she isn’t badly in. If it’s a slow-run race, St. Christopher might run well, but he doesn’t get the course. I don’t know that we’ve got much call to be afraid of anything.’

‘The horse is very well, Sam,’ Downs said quietly, after looking round and waiting till one lingerer who was within earshot, pretending not to listen, with his ears busily pricked all the time, had walked away abashed. ‘I think he’s sure to win—at least I can’t see what’s to beat him. You know he’ll stay. If there’s a good pace, lay up with the leaders; if there isn’t, bring them along. We don’t want to muddle on and then have St. Christopher beat us for speed in the run in.’

Sam Leighton nodded a sort of indication that St. Christopher should be well stretched out if he had to do it himself, and was then put up on his horse.

‘Good luck to you, Leighton; I’m very anxious to win this race,’ Cranleigh said, as the jockey gathered up his reins and felt his irons. ‘You’ll do the best you can, I know.’

‘Yes, sir. I’d like to win it for you,’ he said, as he followed on out of the paddock, and the friends turned, after a nod to the trainer, to go to their places.

‘I wonder what Smith’s done for us,’ Ashdown said, as they walked towards the club enclosure. ‘Do you think we could find him?’

‘No,’ Cranleigh answered, ‘I should think it’s doubtful. We’ll look in the ring; but he may be in the
stand, or on the trainers' stand, or in a carriage over the way. Let's go and see them canter, and get a good corner to watch the race from. Smith does his work well. I think it ought to average close on nines from what I can make out.'

'Must be about that,' the other rejoined. 'By Jove! If it comes off, old chap, I shall be thankful! It'll put me straight and a good bit over to go on with. I wrote to tell Ethel that everything depended on your winning.'

'Poor little girl! When will she know, I wonder? A girl can't go down to the club and see the winner come up on the tape, and I don't suppose they take an evening paper,' Cranleigh said. 'There's Smith—no, it isn't,' he added, after another look into the ring. 'I don't see him, and it's no good searching. Let's go up! There they come. That little chesnut brute goes well, there's no denying,' he observed, as the favourite swept past, and cries of '5 to 2 on the field!' showed that others admired her as well. 'But I'm quite satisfied with mine all the same,' and there was ground for satisfaction with the movement of the handsome bay. So they settled down into their places and adjusted their glasses, Ashdown's mind for the moment oblivious to the scene before him as two pictures flashed through his brain. One was of a friendly old lawyer sitting in his chambers, with a grave expression on his kindly face, as he declared—for so, if this orange jacket did not come home first, he would have to declare—that the misfortune was not to be averted—the old place must go. The other picture was of a chesnut-haired girl sitting pensively in her pretty boudoir, a look of keen anxiety on her delicate features, and of mingled hope and sadness in
her blue eyes as she, too, waited for news which meant to her happiness or misery.

'They're off! No! False start!' That was the cry which recalled Ashdown to himself. 'It's Figtree playing the fool,' Cranleigh continued, 'and Hermitage won't join his horses. Can't he kick! He's old enough to

'That little Chesnut Brute goes well

know better than that. They ought to go now—yes—they're off!' The flag had indeed fallen and the eventful race begun.

There was no doubt about the pace, the friends were delighted to see; for though Roquelaure could have come on in front, it was just as well that running should be made for him. Old Hermitage, who went one pace for
ever, carried his green jacket in advance; but before they had gone two hundred yards something in blue and white hoops went to the front and came along with just a bit the best of its boy; Hermitage four or five lengths behind, Roquelaure at his quarters. Maid of the Mist, fighting for her head, was a couple of lengths from Cranleigh's horse, St. Christopher not far off; then a ruck, with Figtree conspicuous in the rear; she would not gallop to-day, even at the beginning of the race.

'Coming a deuce of a pace, aren't they?' Cranleigh said, his glasses following the field; but Ashdown could not answer. He felt the thumps of his heart, almost heard them; a casual movement of Leighton's elbow sent a tremor through him—he thought Roquelaure was beaten, half a mile from home as they were, and that the jockey had already begun to ride; but his better judgment at once negatived the suggestion, and told him that Hermitage, going at full stretch, could have no chance, for Roquelaure strode along close up to him, with his head in his chest, and the leader in the hoops was already done with—she was now head and head with Hermitage, now half a length behind, and so passed out of the race. On they came, Maid of the Mist, her jockey in vivid red, well up with the leaders, St. Christopher, too, improving his position. 'The favourite wins!' is the cry, as her head reaches Roquelaure's girths, Hermitage dropping back, not because he is going any slower, but because the pace has improved. 'The favourite wins!' her backers cry. 'Wins! She's beaten now,' is the counter shout. 'Look there! St. Christopher walks in!' is the answer from one of his supporters, and there seemed reason, for the favourite's
jockey had got out his whip and in a moment more was using it vigorously.

'"It's all right, my dear old boy. We win!' Cranleigh murmured under his breath.

'I believe we do—St. Christopher will never stay home,' Ashdown whispered, for lack of breath and that thumping heart almost took away his power of speech. 'St. Christopher's beaten now!' he added, as the jockey on the second favourite also began to ride his hardest.

'Roquelaure wins! Roquelaure walks in!' comes the cry; for, still going strong, the bay is two lengths ahead and the distance passed. Leighton looks round to his right, and notes Maid of the Mist and St. Christopher both in sore trouble; he glances over his left shoulder, and apparently sees something there that he does not like, for he begins to ride the horse with his hands as if anxious to get home.

'What's that thing in white coming up on the rails?' Cranleigh mutters.

'What is it?—By Jove, it's catching him!'

'Roquelaure wins! Come on, Roquelaure!' 'He's beat!' 'Not he—he's all right! Good old Roquelaure!' 'He's won! Won a head!' 'No—dead heat! The other got up!' 'Nonsense—Leighton won clever!' Such were the cries that resounded from all sides as the bearers of the white and the orange jacket swept together past the post.

'What was that? Did the other get up?—I'm horribly afraid he did,' Ashdown exclaimed.

'I don't know—we shall see in a moment. What was it—all white?' Cranleigh answered, rapidly glancing from the judge's box to his card. 'Why, Projectiles—No. 27, that's what it is.'
'No. 5's won!' someone shouts. No. 5 is Roquelaure, but it is to be feared that the assertion is merely influenced by hope, for the judge has yet to make his announcement. Will it be No. 5? The frame has been lowered. Ashdown gazes with white face and eager eye. Will it be No. 5—the 5 that is to allay his fears and make a man of him again? Surely Roquelaure won? It must be '5.' Is it? No.

'27.'

'So the inexorable judge announces. Can there be a mistake? See, the frame is lowered! No. Only to add the placed horses:

27
5
18

'The shortest of short heads,' the judge presently tells
Cranleigh; the third beaten six lengths, old Hermitage, who plodded on and accounted for the favourite.

'Cruel luck!' Ashdown muttered, half to himself and half to his friend. 'What a difference it would have made to me if the head had been the other way!'

'I am more sorry for you than for myself,' Cranleigh answered. 'And he had won, too, everywhere but on the post. I could not make out why Leighton sat down to ride—I thought he had got them all settled. Projectiles! I remember her being talked about as a two-year-old, but she's never won a race, and I don't believe the boy who rode ever had either. Shall we go and see what Leighton says?'

'No, my dear fellow, thanks. I'll go home, if you don't mind'—the word 'home' had a bitter sound, for the Towers was soon to be home no longer. I've got a lot of things to see about.'

'Just as you like. I wish I could go with you, but I must be in town to-night, and I dare say you'd sooner be alone. I'll send a cheque for the £300, and mind, if a couple of thousand is the least use to you, I can let you have it without any sort of inconvenience.'

'Thanks, old boy, you're more than good, and you know how I feel your kindness; but it would be no use, I'm afraid. When shall I see you? Come and lunch at the club on Monday. I have to go and see Ethel in the afternoon. I told her I would, and she understood that what I had to say depended on to-day. A short head! Good-bye, dear old boy!'

Ashdown grasped his friend's hand and left the course, while Cranleigh went to see his trainer and jockey, to learn that Projectiles was much fancied, and had been well backed—there had been a lot of money for
her on the day. Leighton could say no more than that he had seen her coming full of running when he looked round after challenging and getting the better of St. Christopher, and the mare's light weight had got her home.

CHAPTER III

The lunch at the club on the following Monday was a somewhat gloomy function, and indeed, how could it be otherwise? Ashdown had seen his lawyer, the Towers was to be advertised for sale, and with what he could scrape together from the wreck its owner was to try his fortune in the Colonies. There was a prospect of his mine and bank recovering, but such prospects are often deceptive, and for the present expatriation seemed the only course; so, though he tried to be cheery, there was necessarily an effort about it. Ashdown, moreover, was weighed down by the thought of the task he had before him—the interview with his cousin Ethel; and towards three o'clock the friends set out for Charles Street, where the girl lived, Cranleigh saying that he would stroll as far as the street corner; but turning up St. James's Street, they saw their commissioner, Smith, approaching. Ashdown was half annoyed at the remarkably genial smile which overspread his face as he caught sight of them—he did not expect sympathy from the man, but he need not have grinned so broadly; there seemed no occasion for that! If the dash had come off, Smith could not have looked more pleased, but, of course, he knew nothing of his client's circumstances, and could not guess what the race for the Meadshire Handicap had meant to Ashdown.
'I was just going round to see if I could catch you in, sir,' he said, the smile on his jolly, broad features growing even more pronounced.

'Oh, were you?' Ashdown remarked. He settled by cheque; the letter would have gone by an early post, and he could not understand with what object Smith had intended to visit him.

'Yes, sir, and I must congratulate you. Sorry I can't do the same to you, Mr. Cranleigh,' he added, with a nod to the owner of Roquelaure. 'I thought you were going to win—thought you had won, too, till the number went up.'

An expression of blank amazement was on Ashdown's features. Congratulations? On what? Why was he to be congratulated for losing 1,500l. by a short head, and that, too, after victory and success had looked so certain? Cranleigh was equally puzzled, and looked it.

'But I don't understand, Smith. You got my wire, I know, for I received your answer, and you acted on it surely?' Ashdown exclaimed, the idea occurring to him that possibly Smith had been in some way prevented from getting on, or, on second thoughts, that there was something wrong about the winner; and yet, it occurred to him the next second, he had just said he could not congratulate Cranleigh. What could it mean?

'There's no objection to Projectiles, is there?' he inquired, however.

'Objection? Bless you! no, sir. What made you think of that?' he said. 'She's right enough!'

'But you got my wire—what did you do? You put the money on?' Ashdown continued.

'Why, yes, sir,' Smith rejoined, now beginning to look puzzled himself. 'I got a bit on at twenties, then
I took 1,000 to 70 three times and 1,000 to 60 twice, but it closed up, and it was all I could do to get tens for the last money.'

Why, Ashdown wondered—and Cranleigh shared the sentiment—was Smith going into these details? What did it matter now?

'Well, you got good prices at any rate,' Cranleigh said, the other being too puzzled to speak. 'I had no idea they laid anything like that.'

'Yes, sir, that's it, and I was bringing along the cheque to hand you yourself, Mr. Ashdown, if I found you in—it's 17,480l. in all. Should have been earlier, but I was kept waiting at the club,' Smith said.

'The cheque! Seventeen thousand pounds! Good Heavens, man, what do you mean?' Ashdown cried. 'Why, the horse was beaten—I lost!'

'Why, what do you mean, sir?' Smith replied, in as great a fog as the other. 'Beaten? If she was beaten, they've paid on her and I've got the money—that's all I know!'

'What message did you receive?' Cranleigh joined in, desiring to trace the mistake to its source.

'Why'—Smith felt in his pocket, pulled out a notecase, and produced the pink telegraph form—'there it is,' and he handed the paper to Cranleigh. It read:

'Please put me 1,500l. on Projectiles Meadshire Handicap. I know you will do best you can. Gerald Ashdown.'

Ashdown looked over his friend's shoulder, and they gazed at it blankly. It was some time before either could speak, but at length Ashdown broke the silence, though he could not quite realise it all.

'But I wired you to put the money on Roquelaure!'
'Well, sir, all I can say is that's the message I received, and I did what I was told,' Smith answered. 'If it's a mistake, it's one on the right side!'

'BUT——' Ashdown began.

'There are no "buts" about it, sir. The money's won, and if Roquelaure had got the race, I should have asked you for it, you may be sure,' Smith said.

'Well, I can't understand it. It's the most incomprehensible mistake I ever heard of!' Ashdown exclaimed.

'I really don't know whether it is,' Cranleigh broke in. 'There's no doubt, my dear chap, you do write about the most villainous hand in England. I shouldn't wonder if in your scrawl one word doesn't look very much like the other. An "R," for instance, is very easily mistaken for "Pr" in almost anybody's fist; then the next letter's "o," and the next has a tail to it. As you write it, I should bet that the letter would be quite as much like a "j" as a "q"—you'll never pretend that you dotted a "j" in your life? Then "uel" isn't unlike "ect," for there again you'd never think of crossing a "t." The last few letters of any word you write always come out a series of more or less indefinite scratches—I can quite understand a mistake being made.'

Smith had been making marks in his book. 'There's no doubt that anybody might mistake "Pr" for "R," and still more "Pro" for "Ro"—I dare say you're right, sir, but that's how I received the message, and there's the letter I had written to you, with the cheque inside.' As a matter of fact, however, the explanation was simple. The telegraph clerk had been unable to make out the word in the message, but he kept his wits about him, and
having just a smattering of racing knowledge, he had looked at the entry in a daily paper, the name 'Projectiles' had caught his eye, and with this impression he had readily concluded that that was the name on the form.

'Well, Smith, it's the most amazing and delightful error I've ever heard of—the most wonderful instance of the value of a bad handwriting, too! It makes more difference to me than I can explain to you, and somehow or other I can't help feeling grateful to you for it,' Ashdown said.

'Nay, sir, it's not that. I did what you told me, or what I thought you'd told me, and I'm glad of it, I can tell you. Well, sir, I do congratulate you now! It's a curious thing, my word it is! But all's well that ends well, they say! I must hurry on, so I'll say good-day to you, gentlemen, and equal good luck next time!' And he went on his way, after shaking hands with the unexpected winner.

'I can't believe it, old boy! It's too good to be true!' Ashdown exclaimed, opening the letter and drawing out the cheque. 'Seventeen thousand four hundred and eighty pounds—there's no doubt about it; but a quarter of it's yours.'

'No, my boy, threes into fifteen don't go four times; but we won't talk of that. You go on and have your miserable parting with poor Ethel!' Cranleigh said, with a smile.

'By Jove, old chap, I never thought I should be so happy again in this world. I'll go on; but it won't be to say good-bye. The Towers won't go, and they'll soon have a mistress. I really do think this is a record of all possible lucky mistakes!'
Newmarket Heath! For centuries past the name has been full of memories for, pregnant with meaning to, multitudes of Englishmen—since, and indeed before, King Charles II.'s devotion to the best of all conceivable racecourses secured for a portion of it the immortal title of 'The Rowley Mile.' The 'mind's eye' sees more clearly than the actual organs of vision; and we may easily guess the familiar scenes that have been conjured up to wandering lovers of the turf in all quarters of the globe. They have looked over the Indian landscape, the strange Eastern foliage before them, the jungle beyond; but they have seen that stretch of green turf, bush-harrowed so that it is marked with alternate rows of light and dark, such as the finger makes on a piece of velvet, and watched the line of horses that constitute the Cesarewitch field, still indistinct in the distance, turn the corner of the Ditch into the straight. Around the wanderer, as he leans against the ship's side, has been nothing but endless miles of grey-green sea; yet the mind's eye plainly perceives the field for some big race approaching the Bushes, and notes how the favourite begins to flag—how his jockey, after riding with his hands, presently has recourse to whip and spur, while the unthought-of outsider easily holds his own, his rider glancing from right to left to see if among the beaten
horses near him there is perchance one with enough left in him to make it possibly necessary to sit down and finish.

How much that head to the good or bad may mean! The wanderer recalls the delight with which he has watched the 'good thing' come off—the good thing that means a copious replenishing of an exhausted banking account; half a dozen hunters, perhaps, when hunting had seemed sadly problematical; payment of debts that pressed most inconveniently and threatened disaster. Far more frequently he remembers the sickening sensation he has felt when, at the distance, the rider of the still better thing—the 'certainty' that could be demonstrated to have at least a stone in hand by the most moderate computation—grew uneasy on his horse, drew out at length the fatal 'flail' which so rarely does any good—and so frequently a great deal of harm—and, struggling gamely but hopelessly, was beaten out of a place. He is a very unwise man who trusts his fortunes to the legs of a horse; for, as has been said, the 'Racing Calendar' is mainly a record of good things that have not come off. The amateur speculator in the odds inevitably has the worst of it in the long run, particularly if, by having a little the best of it for a time, he acquires a dangerous confidence in his luck or judgment—to whichever of the two he may attribute his success. It is a bad game, the odd thing about it being that so many who fully recognise the fact continue to play it.

There was once a man who went to Australia to seek his fortune, and who, after long and arduous struggles and privations, succeeded in his endeavour. He came back to England, where things did not go well with him, and at length it came to the point that all his future depended on a mare he had in the Cesarewitch. He
backed her for all the money that was left him. If she won, well and good; he would settle down to the life he loved, that of a country gentleman, with plenty to spend when he made those little excursions to town which are so agreeable a break to the rural existence. If she were beaten, he would have just enough left to pay his passage back to Australia, there to begin all his toil again. One can imagine his sentiments as, the day of the race which meant so very much to him having at length arrived, he watched the horses come into sight, come nearer and nearer, as he saw one after another drop away beaten, the mare that carried all his hopes going strong and well, comfortably holding her own. 'Gratitude wins!' impulsive members of the crowd begin to shout—'Come on, Gratitude!' and it seems that she is winning easily. All the rest are beaten except one that struggles on gallantly, and though Gratitude appears to be going the stronger of the two, her victory is not absolutely assured; at least, her jockey sees that a final effort is necessary. Under pressure she shoots ahead when a few strides from the post, and 'Gratitude's won!' is shouted with increasing confidence. But the rider of the other is an artist; he has reserved something for the one final rush, and for that something he now calls. So they flash past the post, and voluble spectators interested in the result declare that Gratitude or the other has won, according as their hopes are fathers to their belief. No one except the judge can say for certain. So deceptive are the angles on this wide course that from points of view even near the post horses that are well behind seem well in front. On the judge's board all eyes are eagerly—many feverishly—fastened. Will it be No. 7, Gratitude, or has the other's rush succeeded—
will it be No. 13? After five seconds, that seem to be fifteen minutes, the number is put in the frame and hoisted.

It is '13.' Gratitude is beaten. 'Almost a dead heat; the other just got up in the last stride,' is the report of the judge, inflexible Rhadamanthus; and so for Gratitude's owner good-bye to England, home, and beauty. That he should have patted the mare's neck when he sorrowfully met her in the Birdcage after the race says very much for the goodness of his heart. She had done her best for him, and now must pass into other hands, instead of leading the life of ease he had pictured for her—happy summers beneath the pleasant shade of leafy branches in the spacious paddock that would have been her home. There, with her foal by her side, she was destined to live if only that short head had been the other way; now she may pass into less kindly hands, sink from grade to grade till she cannot win a selling hurdle race for a gambling coper, and so end her days in a night cab. As for himself, a digger's hut and hard fare are his portion, to be accepted with such resignation as is possible. We may imagine the picture that passed before his mind's eye as at nightfall he looked over the shadowy bush once more. Can we doubt that continually in his mental vision he saw Newmarket Heath, thrilled over that desperate finish, and again, watched the frame rise with that fatal '13' at the top?

But the theme was to be a morning at Newmarket, the rehearsal of the performance—the tragedy or comedy, as the case may be—to which a mention of the Rowley Mile has led; for the real devotee of the sport will take as much delight in these mornings as in the more exciting afternoons. To many visitors, those who arrive
by train, Newmarket seems to consist of the High Street and the Heath beyond. They know no more of the place than that, going up the street, the stands come into view as they mount the hill at 'the top of the town,' passing near the cemetery where Frederick Archer, most resolute of riders as he sat down and seemed to drive his horse before him, now lies. 'After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.' The casual visitor, as he leaves the station, sees an expanse of turf before him, but he regards it with very little interest, even if some horses are walking about on it, or a yearling or two is being lunged round in a circle at the time of year when breaking is in progress. As for the Limekilns—a name that means so much to the lover of the real Newmarket—he has no idea even where they are.

Let us mount our hacks and see what is to be seen this bright morning in that direction, on the Limekilns and the Bury Hill; for a hack is an essential to a morning at Newmarket, and happy is the man who has a really good one, a creature that will stand when he is wanted to do so, not swerving, curvetting, jumping, or playing at being a racehorse when his rider, race-glasses in hand, is intent on watching the approaching field, and then, dropping the glasses, on taking careful note of all that is happening as the horses thunder past; a hack that can also go a bit when wanted to go, for occasionally one is anxious to get over the ground quickly. We will start from the bottom of the High Street, close to the Clock Tower, which Blanton, a trainer, whose name is remembered in connection with Robert the Devil, presented to the town. To the left are The Severals—unde derivatur no one knows—an irregularly shaped area of well-worn turf on which a long string of horses walks
A Morning at Newmarket

round, some in crimson clothing, some in green, and some in white and orange, indicative of the colours of the three owners who are the chief patrons of Green Lodge. The touts—there is a whole host of them by the stables to the right, where George Dawson trains for the Duke of Portland and others, and there are more at the end of the tan gallop just across the road—the touts, I say, have a really marvellous power of recognising horses, the more to be admired when one remembers the multitude of yearlings that have to be impressed on the memory each season; but to an occasional race-goer who who has no eye for a horse, and possesses just a vague smattering of turf knowledge, the clothing is a great guide. At Sandown and Kempton, for instance, such an one will recognise the sheets of a popular owner, look at his card, and inform his less instructed friend that 'There's old Whalebone!'—Whalebone being an enormous bay horse that is entered for the next race, and has been taken away to be saddled, whereas the animal indicated is a little chesnut filly that is to run in a race afterwards. He knows the clothing, but not the animal.

A number of horses in dark blue, with a coroneted 'P' at the corners of the cloth, have emerged from the gate of Heath House some time since, and are about to canter; and this is one of the sights we have come out to see, for there is an unfailing interest in noting the different ways in which horses move, some with quiet, long, low, stealing, effortless stride, that delights the expert who perceives how the animal reaches out, 'gets away from himself,' as some trainers quaintly describe it; some with a dash and energy that appear altogether irresistible, suggestive of the impossibility of defeat to
those who do not know that all this vigour is often apt
to expend itself in half a mile, leaving the animal sprawl-
ing helplessly. There are indeed few things more decept-
tive than drawing deductions from the way in which
horses gallop when they are not racing; and so, when
the novice comes in to breakfast after a morning on the
Heath, and declares his conviction that Don Quixote is
sure to win that race to-morrow, for he never saw a horse

Morning Exercise

go in better form, the more experienced friend is not
absolutely convinced. How tightly these boys sit! Few
equine movements are more disconcerting than the
species of semicircular bucks such as the brown filly is
indulging in—she swings round suddenly and violently,
arcing her back at the same time; but the urchin in
the saddle merely kicks her in the ribs, and regardless
of the blue blood that flows in her veins, of the long
ancestry of winners which the Stud Book shows her to possess, reproves her in as gruff a voice as he can assume; and then, with three other bucks in rapid succession, she follows on in her place. But it does not do to conclude that the boy will make a jockey—far from it. There are hundreds of boys who can sit thus unconcernedly on a wiry and slippery thoroughbred, who have, moreover, year after year, experience of riding gallops, which should enable them to become judges of pace, and, indeed, who are put up in trials if they give any evidence of ability to their masters, always on the alert for a boy who can ride; and yet the number of really capable jockeys can almost, if not actually, be counted on the fingers of one hand—most cogent proof of the fact that jockeyship is an art with a vast deal in it.

As we watch the disappearing string, a cheery 'Good morning!' comes from someone who passes—a famous jockey cantering by on his hack—one whom we have known well since he was a boy riding exercise on his south-country downs, and 'shaping' in a way that delighted the prince of horsemen, his father. So we canter on by his side.

'You're busy this morning?' we suggest.

'Yes, I've ridden two trials on the other side, and have to ride two or three more here,' is the reply; for if a popular jockey makes a great deal of money, he has to do a great deal of work for it. Over the springy turf we canter, the larks constantly darting up at our horses' feet—an extraordinary number frequent the Heath—the rooks, engaged upon their business, settling and cawing solemnly, and we discuss the past day's racing, with a few words about that which is to come, taking care, however, not to ask indiscreet questions, which a rider in the
confidence of various stables has no right to answer; for perhaps we are more or less associated with other establishments, and realise what our feelings would be if matters connected with them were made the subject of general gossip. In poor Sir John Astley's entertaining reminiscences he gave cordial credit to George Fordham for his discretion in this respect; though 'stable secrets'

are much rarer than outsiders suppose. There are, indeed, idiots to be met who are fully convinced that almost every race is a matter of previous calculation, and, generally, of deception, trickery, and collusion; owners and trainers, one and all, with almost undis-
coverable exceptions, being actuated by thoughts of illicit gain, with no idea of sport. Men who think this merely judge others by themselves. There are rogues on the turf, and there are others more than ready to sail just exactly as near to the wind as they can do without incurring disgrace and the penalties that attach to it; but these black and piebald sheep are scarcer than is generally supposed by the arrant outsider who foolishly and quite incorrectly supposes himself to be smart; though 'to jockey' means, according to the dictionaries, 'to cheat,' 'to trick.' We know that the jockey riding by our side is as incapable of wrong as if he were accustomed to wear sleeves of lawn and not of silk.

'Your little brother is riding well,' we observe; and with a smile our companion answers:

'Yes, he is; he'll get on. He's about the only boy I ever saw who will sit down and go with his horse. Boys are usually like that, you know,' and, sitting up in his saddle, he leans at an angle over his hack's neck; 'they want to go faster than their horses. Ah! those are the ones I'm looking for,' and he rides off towards a long string that has just come into view.

We, too, are in search of a string, so we will pull up by these trees and look round on the pleasant landscape. To the right is the red house of a member of the Jockey Club, to the left is the town. A little engine with a couple of trucks goes puffing along an invisible line away from the station, but not in the direction of London: it is drawing building materials up to Cheveley for the great house that is being built there. Beyond the smoke are woods and fields which recall the most delightful memories of wonderful days when pheasants rocketed over our heads fast and high, or when the driven
partridges came skimming down wind, giving very short time to those who were not keenly on the alert, but by the rapidity of their appearance and disappearance adding to the joy of the successful shooter, who, holding far forward, intercepts one; mayhap, with luck, a brace; and has not time to congratulate himself before seizing his second gun and making ready for others that come, heralded by the welcome cry of 'Mark!'—for birds are thick here in this glorious game country; and then the hares! The Ground Game Act has done little mischief round Newmarket, and when we come from luncheon in the keeper's snug cottage, where an appetising meal has been prepared, we are aware what a row of them will be laid out to relieve or throw up the gorgeous colouring of the long lines of pheasants. Picturesquely dotted here and there about the landscape in front of us are red-brick houses, or long ranges of red-brick buildings, stables in which are kept the horses whose names are household words. Passing to and fro in the distance are the men who make up contemporary turf history, and others, too, attracted by the national sport; for there in the midst of a little group canters H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, tempted here, as humbler mortals are, by the fascination of the thoroughbred horse in undress.

The lot we are searching for are not in sight, so we jog on, pulling up now and then to watch some sheeted string walk or canter past, to note the rising hope of one stable, the beast that has so bitterly disappointed another. The tall, slim figure on the bay hunter is a once-famous gentleman rider—and one with better hands than most professional cross-country jockeys possess—who, having no other occupation, wisely devotes himself to the
business he understands best, and trains horses for his friends. The idea of a gentleman taking to the business was not a little derided when he began, on the ground that he either would not stick to it, or, sticking to it, would make a mess of it; but neither supposition has turned out to be correct; his horses are quite as fit and well-trained as other people's, and he wins his share of races. Yesterday he did not win one that he thought he could not lose, but he is philosophical, and in reply to a word of condolence, only makes a wry face, in which good temper is still dominant. These disappointments will happen—it is the fortune of racing.

It is rather remarkable how many of the trainers have been steeplechase jockeys. Here is one who carried off the Grand National, height of a cross-country rider's ambition, and was successful, moreover, on the stable's second string. There is nearly always a humorous twinkle in his eye, and you can imagine how it was developed on that occasion. Are those the ones we are seeking, there in the distance to the right? The clothing, and a conspicuous pair of white hind legs on an ungainly chesnut, suggest it; but closer examination shows a white pony and a white cob in attendance, and we know what horses those must be, for the trainer rides the pony, and a particularly well-known sportsman, manager of the stable, is surely on the cob. An exceptionally sound and wary judge of racing our friend is, too. If he tells you one of his has a chance, or that 'you had better have a few sovereigns on that one to-day,' you would be unwise to neglect the hint; for, though his face may seem impassive, few things that come within the range of his eye-glass escape being accurately summed up.

A wide belt of trees is now in front of us, a tan track
being laid by its side, and up the tan—for the fine weather has hardened the turf—come a number of horses, watched by a gentleman who sits with somewhat bent shoulders on a dark-coloured pony with a silver mane. Most sagacious of turf guides, philosophers, and friends as he is, we may be sure that nothing that is to be seen evades his observation. Perhaps you were surprised yesterday by the victory of some animal you had been convinced could have no sort of chance; but 'the Captain' will tell you why he believed it was certain to win. Possibly you may have a great fancy to-day for some much-talked-of horse that is already a hot favourite; but he will quietly give you a convincing reason why it can have nothing beyond the very faintest prospect of success; and most likely you will find his prognostications borne out to the letter. Most likely, too, you would read in some of the lower-class racing papers, if you looked at them, the grossest innuendoes as to the animal's running, the writers going as far as they dare to hint that the beaten animal, who had been foolishly elevated to false favouritism, was never 'meant.' No less alert is the trainer, who sits on his pony, raising his hand at intervals to warn a boy that he is going too fast, or—but this very rarely indeed—waving it to another as an intimation to quicken his speed; and so the lot, including a winner of the Derby 'going great guns,' as the vague phrase has it, pass by. He is a wonderful judge of what horses are doing, this trainer. Once he stood watching the horses as they neared the stand in a race; 'Mine's won,' he suddenly remarked, while yet the field were some quarter of a mile from home, and he put away his glasses. To the not wholly uncultivated eye of his neighbour, three or four seemed
to have a tolerably even chance, for all appeared to be going equally well, and none were being pushed; but though there was no cantering in, and indeed something of a fight at the finish, the trainer was right. The eye of long experience, especially in the case of a born horseman, sees much.

We have not yet found the horses of which we are in search, however, but, cantering on by the side of the tan, soon desery the familiar clothing and greet their trainer, who has something of excitement on his face this morning, for, indeed, a couple of the choicest two-year-olds in his stable are about to be tried. He trained a Derby winner once—one of the best of Derby winners—moreover, the very best, he will strenuously maintain; and he can give no better praise to anything of which he is fond than declaring that it looks 'just like the old horse.' If there is no very great resemblance in make and shape between the 'old horse' and the descendant, he will find similarity of action, and it is his delight to stand behind a yearling in the stable, rake aside its tail with his walking stick, and discover in its hocks and thighs the looked-for likeness.

'They've done here. We were just going through on to the Limekilns,' he says; and we pass through the belt of trees—the long wood, indeed, for it is more than a belt—to find ourselves on a broad expanse of green turf sloping down from the wood to a road something less than half a mile beyond, on the other side of which many horses are walking about. We are on the Limekilns. Scattered here and there are little groups of men, mounted and afoot, a lady or two being in some cases with them, as a rule on horseback; and from right to left sheeted horses follow each other
past the groups, friends and associates commenting on the going of their own or other people's; for these habitués of the Limekilns are often as well acquainted with the horses as are the touts who stand, with glasses levelled, just on the verge of the wood. It is an animated scene; to the lover of horseflesh one of perennial delight.

'These are the weights,' the trainer says, handing a sheet of paper, on which is written:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>st</th>
<th>lb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solomon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlequin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathmore</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowery Land</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solomon is a useful plater; Harlequin a son of the 'old horse,' and even handsomer than his sire; Strathmore is a big bay, no beauty, but one that looks like racing and moves like a racehorse; Flowery Land has shown some fair form and carried off one of the principal early two-year-old races; but it is hoped that the other two are better than he. The weights are high so that jockeys can ride, or rather so that one in particular who is attached to the stable can be up on Solomon; they are to wear silk, in order that the youngsters may grow accustomed to the rattle and crackle of the jackets when they come to racing, and perhaps because silk gives a more business-like air to the performance. The horses are stripped, the riders throw off their coats and appear in racing costume so far as their bodies are concerned, for the usual breeches and gaiters deck their legs, and, accompanying owner, trainer, and a friend, we take up our position by the improvised winning-post. There is a stir round about, for a gallop always attracts some attention, and these are known to be colts from whom not a little is expected; so that most of the groups move towards the ground along which the four will come.

What will happen? The thing we trust that we may not see is Solomon in front at the finish. It is asking the young ones to do a good deal to beat him at 10 lb. this early summer day; but they are expected to do a good deal, and it is well to know what they can do. We hope, too, that the presumed treasures are 9 lb. better than Flowery Land; so that we do not want him to win. It is an exciting moment, for we have watched these two young horses for months past, with despondency sometimes when they did not seem to move well, when their action appeared lacking in freedom; with
exhilaration at others when they have gone in good form; though we have always borne in mind what has been already remarked as to the frequent deceptiveness of horses that go wonderfully well at work when they are not racing.

We shall soon know!

‘They’re coming!’ the trainer says, gazing through his glasses; and, drawing a long breath, we strain our eyes towards the advancing quartet, still too far off to be made out with anything like distinctness.

‘Flowery Land is this side,’ he continues.

‘Going well, too!’ the owner adds; but ‘They’re all going well at present,’ is the trainer’s reply.

They are nearer, and we are able to note something that pleases us very much indeed. The rider of the animal on the further side—Solomon—is already at work; and he is one of the very few who never move until it is necessary.

‘Solomon’s beat!’ we proclaim, and so he is. There can be no doubt about that. The other three speed on towards us. Which will crack first?

‘Flowery Land wins! No!—he’s beaten!’ the owner cries in a breath; his jockey is hard at work, but he struggles on with bulldog courage. Strathmore’s lad has started riding too, and the big bay begins to sprawl a bit. Meantime Harlequin is going well within himself. Solomon, who had been on the right, as already said, has dropped back. Harlequin’s jockey glances at his opponents on his left, and sees that he has them safely beaten. So they pass us.

‘In a canter, by a good length,’ says the trainer; ‘and it won’t surprise me if you’ve got a Derby horse, sir.’
'I couldn't separate the next two,' the owner says, repressing the excitement he must keenly feel.

'No, there was nothing in it; but Strathmore has

all the improvement to make,' is the reply, as we gallop off to where the lot have pulled up. They are, happily, all sound, so that there need be none of that anxious
A Morning at Newmarket

listening for the most unwelcome noise one sometimes hears on these occasions—that catch in the breath which proclaims the incipient roarer. The first jockey we meet is the rider of Solomon, just getting on his hack. ‘They beat you easily? ’ is the trainer’s interrogative greeting.

‘Oh, yes. They had the speed of me all the way. I felt from the start that I had no chance,’ he answers; and his opinion is worth much. ‘That’s a real good ’un, Harlequin, and the big one will win plenty of races too; he ran green when we jumped off.’

‘Was it a good start?’ he is asked.

‘Very good. Flowery Land had just a bit the best of it; but we were very even.’

The winner, a beautiful colt, is a picture indeed, as he stands with expanded nostrils—from excitement, not distress—turning his head from side to side, and moving his delicate ears, as it seems, interrogatively. He has never been asked to do this sort of thing before, and does not quite understand what it all means. A real good horse, doubtless, with infinite possibilities; and yet we remember that when we first saw him canter his action was so round, and he seemed to labour so much, that we hastily set him down as a handsome failure—to have these hasty impressions very agreeably removed when one morning a jockey who could hold him together and ‘get him out’ replaced his boy. Then he showed himself a different animal.

It is in assisting at such an incident as this that one really enjoys a morning at Newmarket.
How little we can guess what the future has in store for us! It had seemed to Cecil Holme that he only wanted two things to make him perfectly happy—a commission in such a regiment as the Hundredth Hussars, and a knowledge that his affection for his cousin Florence was returned. He had passed his examination in due course, he was gazetted, some tender passages with Florence had convinced him that all was well in that quarter, and he furthermore had reason to believe that her father, General Onslow, would for his part show no opposition. Could he have been assured a few months before that this would have been his position, he would have laughed to scorn the idea that anything in the world could by any possibility have annoyed him; nevertheless, on this December morning he is about the most miserable man in London.

That he could be troubled by money matters had never struck him as possible. He had actually inherited a very small amount, only some 10,000l., but an aunt allowed him 600l. a year, besides paying certain of his expenses, and he had reason to hope that, if all went well, her large fortune, or at any rate the greater part of it, would revert to him. But he had spent the year in London—that is to say, his headquarters had been in the capital, for he had temporarily resided at Newmarket and in the neighbourhood of Ascot, Goodwood, Stock-
Making the Running

bridge and other racing centres, the result being that the 10,000l. had gradually but surely vanished; nay, more than 10,000l. had gone, for at one time after Ascot, where he had been lucky, Cecil was handsomely 'to the good,' the consequence being that at the next meeting he had taken to betting in hundreds instead of in ponies and tenners, and as this meeting was a shockingly bad one for backers, his winnings and a good deal more had disappeared. He had been on such good things, too! The number of seconds he had run was something too frightful and exasperating for contemplation. If Thunderbolt had only got home instead of being beaten a head by an outsider no one had ever heard of before, a brute that nobody backed for a shilling, it would have made a difference of over 3,000l. to him; and, as everybody said, Thunderbolt ought to have won in a canter; but the boy wanted to be clever and win by a head, in consequence of which, having stopped his horse, he could not set him going again, and was just beaten. What agonising moments were those until the number went up! That week sadly reduced the account, and since then things had gone persistently wrong, a visit to the Lawn Club and an evening's baccarat having cost the best part of 500l. Of course he had no business to bet and gamble like this—he felt it all the time; he was an earthenware vessel swimming down the stream with brazen pots, and was sure to be broken; but some fellows seem to have such luck, and why should not he have his turn? Surely it must come! So we all think; but though it may be on its way, we are too often done for and out of the game before it reaches us.

What Cecil was having for breakfast, or rather what had been served, it is impossible to say, for the covers
were not removed from the *entrée* dishes. He had nibbled a bit of toast and tried to strengthen his nerves with a liqueur of brandy—a bad practice, to which, let it be admitted, he was not addicted; but his letters were the reverse of consoling.

'My dear Holme,—I would wait with pleasure if I could—hate bothering a pal, but I'm rather in a hole myself, and shall only get through with a squeeze. Awfully sorry!—Yours,

'Claude Thornton.

'P.S.—Ought not Port Admiral to win the Hunters' Flat Race to-morrow? It's a good thing if Carnation does not run, and I should be inclined to have a splash.'

Cecil owed Thornton 120l., and had asked for a little time. The next letter was of the same sort, Paul Jones being a bookmaker:

'Sir,—I should be obliged if you would let me have cheque for amount due to me (335l.) at your earliest convenience. I do not like to press a gentleman, but I have had some heavy losses and bad debts, and am in want of the money.—Yours respectfully,

'Paul Jones.'

The next correspondent was his uncle:

'Dear Cecil,—I am not running anything at Sandown. My jumpers are all short of work. I regret to note the anxious tone of your letter. I see you at the rails rather oftener than I like, and hope you are not making a fool of yourself. Backing horses is a very bad game. I shan't be at Sandown, and it would be just as well, perhaps, if you did not go.

'Your affectionate uncle,

'Herbert Onslow.'
Cecil had written to his uncle to ask about the chance of a horse engaged in the principal chase at the Sandown Meeting, and this was the reply. The General had a few horses in training, but did not bet himself, and was the very last man to whom Cecil would have been inclined to apply for help, involving, as such application must do, a confession of his losses; for the fact that he had run through 10,000l. in eight months, and that he owed the best part of 1,000l. more, would, he well knew, have so irritated Florence's father as to make relations between them exceedingly strained, to say the least of it; for the General hated gambling—not in a fanatical way, for he played his game of whist, and lost or won a pound or two, as the case might be; but this was a very different thing from losing one's whole fortune and incurring liabilities which one had not the means to discharge. And this was Cecil's case, for as another letter on his table told him, in answer to an inquiry he had made, the balance at his bank then amounted to 213l. 7s. 5d.

Notwithstanding the bitterness of his past experience, however, he had decided to try once more. When the last certainty he had backed was upset, he had fully determined to believe no more in 'good things'; but hope springs eternal in the human breast, the sickness of defeat passes away, and one becomes sanguine again, or at any rate, sufficiently sanguine once more to tempt fortune. Cecil's good thing, too, was for the very race referred to in Thornton's letter, and it was neither Port Admiral nor Carnation, but a mare called Chimney Corner (by Rooftree—Puss). He had seen the mare run, taken rather a fancy to her make and shape, and he had been told that her connections were in the highest degree confident of landing a handsome stake.
A man who goes racing frequently makes very odd acquaintances in a very informal way, and Cecil probably could not have said how he first picked up—or was picked up by—Captain Stebbing. The Captain, however, had certainly acquired an influence over the enthusiastic young race-goer. Cecil had come to town knowing nobody in the racing world except his uncle, who, though he kept horses, was not a regular attendant at meetings, and could not be described as a regular follower of the great game. But Stebbing, who had a plater or two in training, knew, if not everyone, at least a great many people. He was apparently on intimate terms with half the men in the paddock; for if Cecil did not actually see him speaking to them, Stebbing was able to tell him what they thought and said and did. Stebbing had taken him to see a trial on the downs where he trained, had shown him the interior of weighing-rooms and other haunts which delighted a youth eager to get behind the scenes, and had on several occasions told him of 'good things.'

It is true that these good things had not by any means always come off, and twice or thrice when he had stood with the Captain on his horses—once he had 300l. on—they had been beaten by a most unfortunate accident, the nature of which the disappointed owner explained—there never was such a cruel piece of bad luck. Stebbing was not a gentleman, Cecil felt, though he dressed well, drove a good-looking pair of horses, and talked decently; and one day, just after he had been telling Cecil a great deal about the feelings and opinions of a prominent owner, the very man who was being discussed passed close to them, and certainly did not return Stebbing's half-familiar, half-hesitating nod of the head; but then, people are often preoccupied on racecourses, and cannot
Making the Running

keep nodding like a Chinese mandarin all day long.

Whether Stebbing did or did not own half Chimney Corner Cecil could not quite make out; but on the previous afternoon the Captain, making him promise not to say a word about it to any human being, had told him that this was Chimney Corner's journey, that she had been kept for a race in which the public were sure to make a hot favourite of something else, that it was a starting-price job, and he had better have on all he could afford, as it was an absolute certainty—could not possibly be beaten. Stebbing had added that he would come round in the morning to Cecil's rooms, and they would go down together.

Cecil was not yet a member of Sandown, nor was the Captain; the reason he gave—for he apparently thought some sort of explanation necessary—being that in the Members' Enclosure a man knew everybody, and it was impossible to keep his business to himself; whereas outside one could keep a stiff upper lip and get out of the way when advisable—reasoning which struck Cecil as a little thin, perhaps; but then Stebbing undoubtedly knew infinitely more about racing than he did, and there could be no sort of doubt in some way or other made a very handsome income out of the turf—at least, he was a very well-to-do man, and had no other ostensible means of livelihood.

The Captain—Cecil was ignorant of the origin of his companion's rank—duly arrived. He was a heavy-browed, dark-complexioned man of five-and-forty, with big moustache, whiskers, and a blue-black chin, showing where a coarse beard had been reaped. He called in his phaeton and drove Cecil to Waterloo, where they took
their places in the Sandown train. Naturally the talk was of racing—of what else should the talk be on the way down? A man may ask his friend if he has seen Harry lately, where he dined last night, or discuss the best play to go and see that evening; but the chief subject of discourse is, of course, the day's sport.

Drove Cecil to Waterloo

'What will win the flat race?' the occupant of the corner seat asked.

'One of two,' his opposite neighbour replied.

'Yes, I know that—that's very clear; but which?' the first speaker rejoins. 'I can't separate Port Admiral and Carnation.'
‘They’ve run before, I see,’ an innocent young man, who has been diligently studying a turf guide, chimes in. ‘They ran at Kempton—indeed, I remember seeing the race—and Port Admiral won by a length. Why should he not win again?’

The two men who had begun the conversation glance contemptuously at the last speaker, who can’t tell why he should so obviously be scorned, for the facts are as he states them; but their companion, more charitable, furnishes an explanation.

‘Carnation was short of work,’ he says. ‘There was nothing in that race. They’ve met since. No,’ he continued, turning to his friends, ‘I can’t separate them. They ought to be running dead-heats all the afternoon. I never knew two so close together on form.’

What about Chimney Corner? Cecil thought, and he glanced at Stebbing, who, however, sat still absorbed in his paper, and made no sign.

‘It’s good for one of these two; there’s nothing else within 21 lb. of them,’ the first speaker said. ‘“Red Deer”—a wretch; “Señorita”—she’s no good,’ he continued, reading down the card. “Mainsail”—won’t run, he was as lame as a tree last week; “Chimney Corner”—dreadfully moderate; “Vintager”—no good; and the rest worse, if possible. I wonder if they’ll both go?’

‘I rather fancy Port Admiral, and Bedford’s horses are in great form just now,’ was the rejoinder; but the quiet man, who had enlightened the ignorance of the student of public form, thoughtfully lit a cigar and pondered over the problem.

‘I don’t know; I should almost be inclined to pick the other,’ he presently said. ‘She has come on a lot,
I know, and you must remember that she had a great
turn of speed as a two-year-old.'

'Bedford's horse stays,' the other suggests.

'So does she,' is the reply.

Will not someone even condescend to discuss the
outside claims of Chimney Corner? Cecil wonders. He,
at least, cannot contain himself any longer, and, though
he dare not be too explicit, gently observes—

'Has nothing else any kind of chance?'

Stebbing glances up from his paper with expression-
less countenance, but says nothing; two of the other
trio shake their heads.

'It's no good looking beyond those two; 100 to 1 on
them against the others,' one replies, and the train
slackens speed.

'Who were they?' Cecil asks his companion, as they
get out of the train and set off across the ground towards
the stand.

'I don't know—I see them racing; but they are
evidently mugs, though they don't suspect it. Port
Admiral and Carnation! The 21 lb. they talk about is
all the other way, my boy! This is a good thing, and
I'm glad that nobody seems to be on the track of it.
However, you're going to have 200/. on, aren't you?
You'd better make it a monkey—it's a chance that does
not often happen, and we're keeping it all to ourselves
in the stable—you're the only man outside that I have
told, or shall tell; you'd better make it a monkey?'

'No, thanks,' Cecil replied, 'I'm very much obliged
to you, and it's awfully good of you to let me know about
it; but I've lost so much lately I daren't venture; and
besides, don't you have a difficulty in getting so much
on a hunters' race at starting price?'
Making the Running

Stebbing glanced at his companion out of the corner of his eye, but the result of his scrutiny apparently satisfied him.

'Difficulty!' he rejoined. 'Not if you go the right way to work, and know the ropes. We shan't touch London, very likely, or only for a trifle, at any rate. There's Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Glasgow—we're doing this all over the country, and I wish you'd have your monkey on; I should like you to have a good win, for I've slipped up with you once or twice' (thrice, Cecil remembered, but he said nothing), 'and I want you to get it all back with a profit.'

Cecil, however, was for once firm. A very few months before he would have ventured 2,000l. on such a good thing; but though he believed implicitly in this, he had, at the same time, learned that certainties on the turf are very uncertain, and if by any evil chance this should not come off, his balance in St. James's Street would be—the thought caused him a heavy sigh—just 13l. 7s. 5d., out of which he had to pay 455l. for debts of honour—a bad look-out!

In spite of good resolutions not to bet, Cecil ventured a fiver on the first hurdle race, landing a 5 to 1 chance, and he put 20l. of his pony on the winner of the steeple-chase at 3 to 1, so that he was a bit in, and asked Stebbing if there was still time—which Stebbing said there was, just—to make the 200l. into 250l.? On the next hurdle race Cecil did nothing, hearing such contradictory accounts that he dared not venture (when he began racing he would have had ponies and fifties on three or four out of the seven starters); and then came the flat race, on which he was to retrieve his fallen fortunes.
Stebbing had gone off on business of his own, leaving Cecil wandering disconsolately about the paddock, reflecting on the position of affairs which would arise if this good thing were beaten. Where was he to get the money from to pay Thornton and Jones, and, indeed, to keep things going? How could he join his regiment, begin his career, when he was a defaulter? Jones knew all about him, and might go so far as to threaten, indeed actually to make, application to his uncle; and what would Florence’s father say to a young man who had practically passed the fool stage and merged into the rogue?—for awkward names are applied to youths who bet when they know they cannot pay. Strolling thus about the paddock, head down, Cecil found himself face to face with a couple of friends, one in cap and jacket ready to ride, the other in everyday garb; and he greeted them as cheerily as he could.

‘Halloa, Chester! What’s the meaning of this?’ he asked, referring to the cap and jacket.

‘Tom is training on to become the Arthur Coventry of the future,’ replied the other, Douglas by name. ‘He is “Mr. Edwardes,” if you please, and he’s going to ride that high-class racehorse Vintager. If you want to lose your money, you had better back it.’

‘Don’t be too jocular!’ Chester replied. ‘I’ve got a decided chance on the Leicester running, and my horse was never so well in his life. In fact, I’ve half a mind to have a plunge.’

‘Don’t be an idiot,’ Cecil rejoins; ‘there’s a good thing in the race.’

‘Then I wish you’d tell me which of them it is, for I don’t see how you are to separate Port Admiral and Carnation.’
‘But there’s another; I’ve backed——’ Here Cecil, almost carried away by his impulsiveness, paused, and at the moment Stebbing hove in sight and approached the group. The Captain liked to know very young men with money, especially when they had a mania for racing, and he showed no disinclination to join in the conversation, so that Cecil introduced him in due form.

‘Cecil’s telling us a good thing for this race, and it’s not Port Admiral or Carnation,’ Douglas observed. ‘I’m sure it’s not Vintager, though Mr. Edwardes thinks it is; but dear old Cecil always was an enthusiastic duffer, who went plunging about on some vague rumour and getting done. What’s the good thing this time?’

Cecil, a bit nettled at being chaffed, replied a little angrily—‘I’ve got 250l. on it, and haven’t backed it on a vague rumour either! Do you mind telling them, Stebbing?’ he added, in a low tone, taking the now frowning Captain a little aside. ‘They’re good fellows, and I’m sure they won’t breathe a word of it to anybody. Chester—he’s “Mr. Edwardes”—is just the sort of man to back his own crock, and it would be a pity if he threw away his money. I should like them to know.’

Stebbing was fairly perplexed. The one thing he knew was that Chimney Corner had not a 100 to 1 chance unless Port Admiral and Carnation fell over the rails, or in some way or other came to grief, and to recommend these young strangers to back her, in face of the fact that they would inevitably see her beaten in the course of the next few minutes, would scarcely enable him to present himself afterwards in the character of an infallible guide. But he did not see how he could escape. Cecil had let the cat out of the bag, and silently he cursed his stupidity for doing so. He had told the two
that he had 250l. on something, had practically said that it was by Stebbing's advice, and the best way out of the difficulty seemed to the astute Captain to cast in his lot with Cecil, assume an air of frankness, and think of a good excuse afterwards to explain away the inevitable defeat of Chimney Corner. He did not know how nearly Cecil was at the end of his tether; had an idea that there were rich pickings yet to be had from him; and so—these reflections having passed rapidly through his brain—he hastened to reply in a low and confidential tone:

'Well, we thought that Chimney Corner would win. She has come on wonderfully of late—they always overdid her when she was at Newmarket, and she never showed anything like her true form. If she runs up to her trial, I think she'll win.'

'We're backing her starting price,' added the all too confidential Cecil, at hearing which Stebbing bit his lip; 'so mind you don't breathe a word of it. In fact, you'd better not touch it yourselves—stand a tenner each with me, if you like.' And the two accepted the offer, which Cecil booked.

'You talk too much, my dear fellow,' Stebbing said, rather savagely, as they walked towards the reserved enclosure. 'You should not have said a word—that's not the way to play the game.'

Cecil apologised. It was a mistake, he knew; but Douglas had spoken in a chaffing way which vexed him, and he wanted to show, with youthful vanity and impetuosity, that he did 'know something,' that he was much astuter than his friends supposed.

They took their places in time to see the horses come out. There were five runners: Port Admiral, Mr. Bedford up, was now a hot favourite at 6 to 4 on;
Making the Running

Carnation, Mr. Western, who had opened as good a favourite as the other, was being backed feebly at 5 to 2; Red Deer, no one seemed quite to know why, found friends at 7 to 1; and 100 to 8 bar three was freely offered. The big chesnut, Port Admiral, had a very taking appearance; but there was a business-like look about the little bay mare Carnation that could not escape the critics; Red Deer was a flashy, long-legged beast of the flatcatching type; Chimney Corner a well-shaped but small brown mare; Vintager a fox-catching hunter, evidently outclassed.

Just as Stebbing and Cecil reached the entrance to the reserved lawn, a tall, hatchet-faced man beckoned the former aside.

'This is good for the Admiral, isn't it?' he asked.

'Yes, they've settled it. Carnation won't win. It's all right,' Stebbing replied.

'Good to lay the odds? No mistake? Quite sure?' the other persisted.

Stebbing only answered with an inclination of the head, full of significance, and passed on to join Cecil who was waiting for him.

Stebbing did, in fact, on this occasion 'know something.' There had been a short but important conversation earlier in the afternoon between Bedford and Western.

Strolling together, as if by chance, from the door of the weighing-room, where they had been to see that their bags had arrived, Bedford had presently remarked, 'I suppose one of us will win?'

'Looks like it,' the other answered, and then there was a pause.

They strolled on.
'Well!' Bedford at length rejoined. 'Which is it to be?'

'I don't care. Which you like. You win if you want to,' Western said.

'All right. What will you have on mine?'

'A hundred, and you must not give me less than even money if they want to take odds.'

So in a few words the bargain was arranged, and the pair of noble sportsmen separated. Bedford glanced about the paddock, evidently in search of someone, and presently spotted his man, an evil-faced personage with a big moustache, twisted at the ends so as to impart a Mephistophelian expression to his countenance. He was going to ride Chimney Corner, in whom he had some interest; for, in fact, the mare belonged to him and his trainer, Stebbing having no share in her, though to Cecil he rather implied that he had.

'Do you run?' Bedford asked, after they had exchanged nods of greeting.

'I don't know. I think not. What's the good?' Jackson, as the other was called, replied. 'You'll win, I suppose?'

'I am sure to win if I have a good strong pace all the way; but if they muddle along, Western will very likely beat me for speed. If you'd make running for me, I couldn't lose.' Bedford paused, and Jackson made no sign, so the other continued, 'And I'll give you a pony.'

Jackson held out his hand, not in the attitude of one who desires to ratify a bargain, but as if waiting to receive something. 'Short reckonings make long friends' seemed to be his maxim, and Bedford, understanding, took out his note-case, and put into the expectant palm two ten-pound notes and a fiver.
'Look here, you know, don't go along half the journey and then drop back. My horse is a good one, and I don't want to expose him more than I can help. If I win a length or so, it's quite good enough. You'd better back mine away—I'm doing it.'

Jackson nodded, and stowed the notes in his pocket. Thus the little plot had been arranged, though in some mysterious manner the ring had grasped the fact that Carnation had little chance, for she had retired to 7 to 2 and 4 to 1, while it was scarcely possible to back Port Admiral at any price, and 100 to 8 bar three was freely offered. Cecil was something more than anxious, in spite of Stebbing's reassuring words. Young Douglas had come from the members' enclosure to find his friend, not liking the outlook.

'Your good thing is going very badly in the market, old chap. If that tenner of mine isn't on, I'd rather not have it, I think. Is it done?' he asked.

'I'm afraid it's too late,' Cecil replied. 'We're on, aren't we?' he said, turning to Stebbing.

'Yes, I've had a wire from my man to say that it's all done. But don't you be afraid! Favourites don't always win,' Stebbing said, looking mysterious, and Douglas with a more or less cheery 'All right, then!' strolled away.

The flag soon fell, and Vintager was first off, a fact for which he, and not his rider, was solely responsible, for the horse evidently had things all his own way; but Chimney Corner was at his quarters, and the pair went on thus till the top turn, where Vintager ran out, leaving Jackson with a lead of a dozen lengths, which he increased going down the hill. Red Deer was well beaten before they had gone a mile; Bedford on Port
Admiral, in orange and white stripes, Western on Carnation, in green and black hoops, went on side by side, swinging easily along, but now twenty lengths behind the leader; and so they passed the railway gates, and turned the corner.

'They'll never catch her!' 'You wait and see!' were the remarks that came from watchers on the stand; and Cecil's hopes began to revive, while Stebbing seized the opportunity of murmuring, 'What did I tell you?' though he had quite made up his mind what was now about to happen. Western, however, began to grow a little nervous.

'Hadn't you better get on and close up?' he cried, as they galloped side by side. 'She'll take some catching.'

'Lots of time. I don't want to win half a mile. She'll stop going up the hill, and I shall be there,' Bedford answered.

'Well, get on a bit, at any rate,' Western returned.

'You pull back a bit,' Bedford said; 'this brute lays hold so when you're alongside,' and Western somewhat reluctantly complied.

'Now the favourite's coming up!' was the cry from the stand, for Port Admiral seemed to be leaving Carnation; but still Chimney Corner's red jacket was a dozen lengths to the good.

Soon, however, Port Admiral began to creep up. He was evidently catching the other, and catching her pretty fast; but by this time the beginning of the stands was reached, and there was not much farther to go.

'The favourite wins! The favourite walks in!' shouts an enthusiast who has had a plunge on Port Admiral, and believes that his money is as good as
already won. Cecil, his heart thumping against his ribs, watches breathlessly.

'The favourite don't win! He'll never get up!' yells another observer.

Jackson has not asked his mare to quicken her pace, and twice looks back. Why does he not push on a bit and make sure? for Bedford's orange and white striped jacket is now picking up at a great pace. He has closed the gap between him and the leader, and Port Admiral's head is at her quarters—at her girths; but now they are close on the post. Is there time? The roar from stands and ring is tremendous.

'Come on, Bedford!' 'Port Admiral!' 'Chimney Corner—why doesn't that idiot send her along?' 'The favourite's beat!' 'The favourite wins!' 'The other's won!' 'Here, 2 to 1 on Chimney Corner!' But the
judge's box is now passed—it was a near thing indeed. 'Did he get up?' is the general question, and everyone answers it according to his disposition. The sanguine who have backed the favourite say 'Yes'; the despondent say 'No.' Bedford is a good rider, and not likely to misjudge; yet such mistakes are made! What number will go up? Cecil knows both numbers well; but yet he glances again at his card.

Port Admiral is No. 1, Chimney Corner No. 8. The judge is leaning out of his box; a board is put into the frame and hoisted. Cecil can hardly see—the whole place swims before his eyes. 'What is it?'

'No. 8!'

'Thank you!' he gasps out with fervent emphasis, turning to Stebbing by his side.

'Damnation!' is that gentleman's extraordinary response, uttered with scarcely less fervour than Cecil's expression of gratitude; and the remarkably successful tipster abruptly turns round and walks off to the paddock to see the horses come in.

Cecil, elated but surprised—for 'Damnation' is such an odd thing to say when you have spotted and confidently backed a winner at 100 to 8—walked after his friend, meeting Douglas on the way.

'By Jove, old chap,' Douglas said, 'that was exciting, wasn't it? I thought the winner would just get home; but Bedford rode a rotten race, you know, and I'm told he had a thousand on. I'm glad I was too late to get out of that tenner. He's a wonderful man, your tame tipster. What's his name? Who is he?'

Cecil smiled, but did not reply, for he was making a mental calculation, or rather trying to do so, for he had to work it out on his card. 'We shall get 100 to 8,'
had been Stebbing's remark, and if so, deducting the two tenners he had let his friends stand, he had won 2,875l.

Meantime the riders of the placed horses had unsaddled, and gone into the weighing-room.

'I couldn't wait for you, you know!' Jackson said, as he walked by Bedford's side, amazed at the result and furious with himself for not having even had a tenner on his mare—and at such a nice price! Western was savage
also—indeed, 'savage' hardly expresses his condition of wrath.

'You ought to have won in a walk,' he exclaimed, angrily. 'I hope you don't expect to get a hundred out of me for that exhibition!'

'I do, though!' Bedford answered.

'Then you won't!' was the reply.

Bedford, however, did not seem to be very much put out at his failure, and the reason why might have been gathered from a conversation which took place a few minutes afterwards in a secluded corner of the paddock. Having put a covert coat on over his jacket, he strolled out of the dressing-room, and was casually joined by a friend. They walked on without speaking a word or making a sign till they were quite free from neighbours, and then, each looking at the other out of the corner of his eye, a smile which developed into a chuckle overspread both their faces.

'That's about the best thing I ever knew in my life! What a joke—and a deuced profitable one, too!' said the friend.

'Yes, but it was all I could do to get him to beat me at the finish. The idiot was waiting for me to come up. No one said anything, I suppose?' Bedford inquired.

'Oh, yes, they said lots of things—that you weren't fit to ride a donkey race, wanted to be clever and win a head, and so got done, and it served you right. You're the worst judge of pace that ever got on a horse, and an ass generally.'

Bedford was far from being annoyed. He laughed heartily, indeed, at these severe reflections on his skill as a horseman.
'We are on all right, I suppose? There's no mistake about that?' he asked, suddenly growing serious.

'Oh, no, it's all done right enough,' the friend replied. 'I wired up, "Good for a monkey," and he won't make a mistake. They can't return it at less than 12 to 1—you win 6,000l.'

Odd rumours get spread on racecourses, and in odd ways. A story was, for example, whispered about that Bedford had hit on a splendid piece of roguery—to square the only dangerous horse in the race, to get an outsider to make running for him, and to take care just to be beaten, apparently by miscalculation; and it was said that he had 500l. starting price on the winner. Certainly the conversation just quoted seems to give some colour to the story.

Cecil got his money from Stebbing. When, two years later, a turf scandal came to light, it became tolerably evident that the Captain's simple game had been to induce silly young men to let him put large stakes for them on horses which he declared were good things, though he knew that they had no chance. He had a long mental struggle before he made up his mind to part with the large sum—2,875l. it was, for Chimney Corner's starting price was duly returned at 100 to 8—which Cecil imagined he had won. It was, however, a question of paying up or disappearing from the turf altogether, for Edwardes and Douglas were witnesses who would have been able to confirm Cecil's story. Greatly struck with Stebbing's knowledge and perspicuity, these two young men had shown much deference for his opinion when he met them afterwards, and it occurred to him that, starting with such a reputation in their eyes, he might turn them both to profitable account, as they were both
young and green. On the whole, therefore, he decided to pay and look as pleasant as he could. The curious exclamation, after the race, that remarkably earnest 'Damnation,' he explained to Cecil, was wrung from him because he had confused the numbers, and thought that Port Admiral had just got up and beaten their good thing—would Cecil dine with him on settling day and receive his winnings as an appetiser? Cecil would, and did. He met some sharp-visaged strangers, who were exceedingly anxious to play cards after dinner—any game Cecil liked to name; but in spite of urgent pressing from the Captain, who, indeed, grew quite nettled at the refusal, Cecil begged to be excused. He did not like the look of his fellow-guests, nor could he quite get over that 'Damnation,' and the look with which the word was accompanied.

His experience had cost him a lot of money, but he considered it cheap. His aunt is about to double his allowance in order that he may marry Florence—she is so pleased to hear, she writes, that he never bets nor gambles; and in fact he does neither. As Florence has a small fortune of her own, they will get on well enough. They will go racing. I am sure; but that Cecil will impoverish himself in the pursuit of good things is improbable. Of the actual facts in connection with Chimney Corner's win he is not certain; but if the truth be that he profited by the roguery of others, there was, at any rate, poetical justice in the circumstance that the man who was bent on robbing him had been forced to pay handsomely for the attempt.
STEEPLE-CHASING

There is something so manly, so English as we Englishmen are pleased to understand it, about the sport of steeple-chasing, that its decadence would be a matter for much regret. Chasing has just that sort of danger about it that Englishmen like to encounter, a danger which skill and courage, as a rule—except in the case of untoward accidents, which may happen to the most peaceful of men while stepping into a hansom cab—will surmount; and one may permissibly talk of Englishmen in this connection, because the sport has never been really popularised abroad, though it has keen adherents in France. It very frequently happens that a man not only owns a chaser, but rides him. On the telegraph-boards at meetings where cross-country events are being decided, 'Owner' is a familiar adjunct to the number of the horse on the card; and in this respect chasing appeals to the sportsman more directly than racing on the flat.

After all, what has the owner of a racehorse to do with his property, at least in a very great many cases? Mr. Saddlington or Lord Cropper is congratulated on the victory of his chesnut colt, or the gallant struggle of his bay filly; but what has Saddlington or his lordship done to achieve these gratifying results? Very often just nothing at all, except, indeed, writing an occasional
cheque, which is not an intellectual or difficult performance in a general way, supposing that a man has a balance at his banker's—when someone who is not thus equipped obtains money for his cheque, ingenuity of a more or less reprehensible character may have been employed. A man's trainer advises him as to the purchase of the animal, a well-bred youngster with make and shape to recommend him, or a recognised performer, as the case may be. The trainer has the sole charge of the horse during its preparation; he points out where the chances of winning races are best, where it shall be entered and where struck out. He conveys it to the scene of action; often hires a jockey; gives him instructions how to ride; tells the owner what in his opinion the prospects of success are, and often—if unfortunately the owner bets—drops a suggestion as to how much it will be safe to risk in that ever-whirling Charybdis, the betting-ring.

The chesnut wins, and Mr. Saddltington is discussed as if the whole thing had depended on his knowledge and dexterity; or the bay loses, and men condole with Cropper, or perhaps inquire among themselves how so notorious a donkey can expect to win races. But with a chaser it is different. Cropper can probably ride a bit; if he can't, he thinks he can, which is to a great extent, at least so far as the fun is concerned, the same thing. He goes down to his training quarters, and has a spin over the fences. It may be that he is going to ride his own animal in the race for which it is being prepared, and if so, he will very likely be in the saddle when the trial takes place, supposing always that the horse is tried; for some good judges hate trying horses if they can do without it; that is to say, so long as they see that the
chasers have their action, are well in themselves, and have done enough work, they are content. But probably Cropper likes riding a trial. He takes some friends down to see it, to whom he explains why he came off at the open ditch—no fault of his, of course—if any little mishap of that sort should occur, and who cheerily 'have their pony on' out of affection for old Cropper, when he comes out gaily in his colours on the day of the race. The trainer has been told that he is 'on a hundred to nothing' (need it be explained for the benefit of any reader that this means he is to have 100£ in the event of victory at no risk to himself should there be a misfortune?); and as he sees his lordship riding at the first fence he looks grave, as if inwardly speculating on the present market value of the wager.

All owners are not like this, it need hardly be said. There are men who know as much about horses as their trainers, whose advice a trainer would seek, not out of compliment, but for its real value. Sometimes, too, a keen and sensible young owner learns to think for himself, and by his shrewd suggestions makes his trainer think too, that the old rule of thumb methods may need revision. On occasions, again, the owner of the chaser is really a horseman, who can well hold his own against professional rivals; but the men described are typical, and, as a rule, the owner of the chaser, supposing that his years do not much exceed forty or his weight eleven stone, has more direct connection with and knowledge of his property than the owner of the five-year-old who has been let into the Cambridgeshire at 6 st. 7 lb.

The nature of chasing has altered since our forefathers, mounted on their favourite hunters, had spins against each other in the course of a run, and were prone
to magnify the excellence of their steeds, or, perhaps, the capacity of the steeds' riders, after dinner. At this period—just after an excellent repast when a glass of superb olive port has followed a good deal of champagne—fences are very apt to grow remarkably in height. That jump out of the plough was a good-sized one at

**Since our Forefathers had Spins against each other**

twelve o'clock in the morning. There was an awkward ditch on the take-off side, the landing was indefinite, and the binders made jumping it necessary—an attempt to run through would have resulted in a turn-over, it could not be else. But it was not the enormous place it presents itself to the imagination of the man who jumped
it when he recalls it to memory after having passed the claret, not for the first time. It was not so high by nearly two feet as he now supposes; and his estimate of the ditch is excessive; he forgets, too, that he by no means liked the look of it when he saw what was before him, and that he was unaffectedly glad when he had landed, not sitting down in his saddle quite as he would like, but on his horse's neck with a lost stirrup iron, on the other side. He only remembers that he did get over in safety, and he does not think—when the decanters are round again, and he hears his neighbour hinting that he did get great things in jumping out of a certain lane, a jump that a boy might have cleared on a Shetland pony—that anybody in the Hunt could have followed him. It may have been the horse, it may have been—perhaps, he thinks, it was—the rider; but he is fully satisfied that the pair are invincible, so satisfied that he is ready to back his opinion and make a match on the spot.

By some such reflections as these it was that steeple-chases were originated in former times. Matches grew up in the course of discussion about the events of the day's sport after hounds—and probably the older generation of sportsmen were more careful to ride after hounds instead of over them? Sometimes, indeed, the men could not wait till morning to decide the question, for more than one case is on record where a party of sportsmen have risen from the table and started off on a steeple-chase forthwith, putting white shirts over their coats, so that competitors might be visible, and a man who was down might not be jumped on unnecessarily in the shadow. The deciding of such races must have had a serious tendency to perplex the judge.
In those days steeples had something to do with steeple-chases. Courses were not marked out; that came later, and the regulation 'steeple-chase course' of the present day later still. Some distant point was fixed on—four, five, eight, it might have been ten miles off (unnecessarily and cruelly severe chases of twice ten miles are recorded), and to this the riders made the

best of their way. The hunters that ran these races were, as regards the question of speed, almost immeasurably inferior to the chasers of to-day, which latter are with the rarest exception thoroughbred; most believers in the past flatter themselves that there was wonderful superiority of endurance about the old-fashioned hunter, that is to say, that he could 'stay' at racing pace better than
our horses, casts-off from the flat, as they often are. The latter are not trained to stay exceptional distances; if they were, a fair proportion of them would probably do so. Nevertheless, one cannot but regret the contests of a by-gone age, and admit that there was more of the real spirit of sport in them than in the 'fashionable' Sandown chases of to-day—infinitely more.

Pluck has in no way decreased. Not long since a good man who is still to the fore, Mr. Arthur Yates, broke his collar-bone on his way to the post for a four-mile steeple-chase, but took so little notice of the matter that he rode his race and was beaten only by a short head. On another occasion, the same rider, after a bad fall, caught his horse by the tail, and, getting somehow into the saddle, won in a canter. The sound horsemanship of Mr. J. M. Richardson, the delicate handling of Mr. Arthur Coventry, were probably never approached by the good men of half a century back; yet there was something about these old chases which calls for special admiration.

A great deal more tax was laid on a man's resource. He had not to jump so many regulation fences, but to find his way over the country. Discretion aided him, or want of discretion stopped him, as the case might be. He had ground of all sorts to cross, and here his judgment was tested—how best to get over the plough; whether it was a good thing to ride a little out of the line, where the going was heavy, to splash down that watery furrow; how to manage the ridges, whether to chance that boggy piece and dash boldly through it, or to cast about for firmer ground. To weigh all this, and to pick good places at the jumps—the country was a stiff one, but a man did not select ugly places for the sake of
crossing them—showed that knowledge of the real sport which one cannot but admire. A man mounted on his own horse, set to perform a task like this, and performing it successfully, awakens a sentiment of esteem which is not extended to Saddlington, when one of his horses, a failure on the flat which looked like jumping, and has been half schooled over fences, gets home in front of three animals a shade worse than himself over two miles of a modern steeple-chase course.

Chasing used to be nearly allied to hunting; now it is a sort of offshoot of racing. We have seen how chases were got up in the hunting-field, and how the consequence was a struggle over so many miles of country—fair hunting country, as a matter of course—and generally 'owners up.' But this sort of thing did not last. A well-bred hunter doubtless held his own in most cases against a coarser-bred animal; but the thoroughbred was superior to all. A man, we will say, had a horse which disappointed him continually under Newmarket rules.

'What's to be done with him?' the owner says, when, after having been fancied and backed, he has run third, an outsider winning, with the first favourite second.

'Well, sir, he's got a turn of speed, and he looks like jumping. He might win a hurdle race,' his trainer suggests.

'See what you can do with him, then,' is the owner's reply, and the disappointing one is put into schooling for hurdles, or, if he jumps well but is not very speedy, for the more advanced game over a country.

This was what frequently happened just after it had been discovered that an extended interest was being taken in 'chasing,' that people would flock to a district
where a steeple-chase was announced, and that, being unable to see what took place when a contest was held over so many miles of straightforward hunting country, these people would pay for places on a stand—near which a betting-ring had also been set up. The area of

view was circumscribed, and so the course became short. To fit these exigencies some of the fences had to be made, and they were made easy. The cast-off from the flat was taught to jump them, and when it came to galloping, the true hunter had no chance against him. Running such horses was evidently a good speculation. More of
them joined in the game, the pioneers having been successful; steeple-chase courses of the artificial pattern were made up; the clerks of these sought entries; steeples had by this time nothing to do with steeple-chasing; courses were constructed to favour the race-horses at the expense of the hunters, because the former were ousting the latter from the field.

Thus steeple-chasing, that is steeple-chasing proper, declined. Courses sprang up, or, it should rather be said, were made up, in all directions, the clerks of these courses lived on their success, and laid themselves out to secure as many entries as possible; it is natural, however regrettable, that they should have made their courses more and more easy, half-schooled chasers being more plentiful than the finished article; for it takes a long time thoroughly to teach a steeple-chaser his business. Jumping fences in the hunting-field is one thing, jumping them at racing pace is quite another. Most men who have had any experience of country life know how the hunter jumps. As he sees the fence before him, he usually shortens his stride, goes at it in a more collected form, pauses more or less as he takes off, and, having made his effort, slightly pauses again on landing. These pauses would just lose a man the race over a country, and the great thing is to teach chasers to collect themselves when at full speed, to get away from their fences, to go at them with the slightest possible diminution of pace, and to be off on the other side without dwelling. To do this so as to win races is a matter which requires much time and much practice. What are called 'natural jumpers' are all well enough; but nature does not take steeple-chasing into consideration when she helps her equine children on the way they should go.
It is an interesting sight to see the young horse being taught the business in which it is hoped that he will shine. He has good shoulders, and as regards make and shape the essentials for a chaser—in fact, to employ the technical phrase, ‘looks like jumping.’ Kindness, patience, and good ‘hands’ are the requisites in the teacher—a good seat is understood, but most boys in training stables have this. Few young horses hit upon just what is wanted at first. To begin with, they generally make too much fuss about it, clearing each little fence in their nursery ground as though it were the ditch in a real steeple-chase, just as after a career over the dangerously easy fences of the average modern course they get careless; for this paradox may be taken as a fact: the more easy a course is, the more dangerous it is likely to prove. If steeple-chase courses were what they should be, only steeple-chase horses would run over them—that is to say, horses that had been duly schooled and taught their business; and these fences would require so much jumping that the rider would be forced to steady his horse at least a little to make him go at the obstacle in something like collected form, instead of galloping at and ‘chancing it.’

Here, however, is our young one coming—we had almost lost sight of him. He is to have his first gallop at racing pace over his training ground, having been through his course of schooling and acquitted himself well. We will take our place by this fence and watch.

The big brown is a well-known chaser who wants a gallop; the grey mare is a hunter—a genuine hunter by profession—who is to be run at a local meeting, and is let into the spin to see what pace she has—if any; and the bright chesnut, on which the trainer himself has
mounted—after seeing him carefully fitted with 'boots' lest he should cut or overreach—is the novice. The spacious downs are dotted with made-up fences, forming a circle some mile and a half round. Away to the right are the grand stand, the disused telegraph-board, the weighing-room, and other buildings belonging to the course where the annual meeting is held; their present deserted aspect makes a striking contrast to the busy scene with which they are once a year associated. A string of some thirty sheeted horses are walking round and round; and up the slope surmounted by the plantation, grown to protect horses from the weather, whichever way the wind may be, half a dozen others are moving at a half speed gallop. It is that familiar scene, the race-horse at home.

But the three have started off, and near the first fence. They come to it in a line, but the brown is over first, and, moreover, is away first; more is not perceptible except that he evidently has the lead when they have landed, a lead soon wrested from him by the impetuous young one, whose rider does not violently haul at his head, but lets him go on for a little way almost as he pleases, and then quietly draws him back again to the others. They near the fence where we stand, and now we shall see what they can do! The brown has taken hold of his bit, not to run away, but to lean on his rider's hand; the grey on the left is evidently galloping her hardest though her companion is going easily within himself; the young one speeds along, his hinds legs well under him, and as they near the fence, he pricks up his ears to take in, as it were, what he has to do. The thud of their hoofs on the soft turf is unchecked. Here they are! The brown, with no perceptible effort in rising, glides
over the fence. It is firmly made up, as he knows, and he jumps it with nothing to spare, but safely enough. How he picks up his legs is not easy to say, for the twigs seem to brush his girths as he crosses. The pace is altogether too fast for the hunter. She is flurried, and gets right under the guard rail in front of the fence, she knocks it with all four feet, so that at this jump, when by an effort she is safely over, she pauses more than at the former. The youngster is across before her. He gives his head one shake, rushes at it, is well over and off again on the other side so quickly that five or six strides beyond he is level with the brown, who rose a length in front of him. The old one is, perhaps, a trifle slow with age, though he still wins chases, and what he lacks in speed is to a great extent compensated for by the cleverness with which he fences. As for the hunter, it is already evident that only in the most moderate company can she hope to hold her own.

The amateur trainer is very apt to make blunders about his horse's ability, because he does not know what will happen to him when it comes to racing, as in the case of the grey mare just introduced. At home she has been reckoned something out of the common. As it seems to her owner, who has nothing by the side of which to test her merits, she gallops very fast indeed. She never dreams of refusing or turning her head when sent at a jump, and his early ambition to win a race with her at a local hunt meeting has grown till he has come to regard her as well able to hold her own in a chase at some popular meeting. For this reason he has induced the trainer of our young one to let him have a turn against something with a reputation; but as he watches, with all his partiality for the old mare he cannot but
perceive that the home efforts were sadly delusive, and that when it comes to the real thing she is altogether out of her element.

Let us canter across and take up a station at the spot where they are to finish. They near the last fence, and the young one is a couple of lengths ahead. Except that he is a little too eager, he comes over in grand style, taking off, indeed, six or eight feet too soon, and jumping big, but none the less easily and cleverly. The brown slips over in his almost mechanical style, and then—for this is a bit of a test if not quite a set trial—his rider tries to overhaul the chesnut; but though the old horse answers to the call as well as he can when the rider’s whip is raised, the leader, hardly out of a canter, holds his own, his trainer turning his head as they jump, so entirely at home is he ‘in the air,’ to see what the followers are doing. As for the hunter, she has lumbered up to the last fence, stopped almost dead from sheer distress, gamely thrown herself over, landing anyhow, and is coming on at the best pace she can raise—which is a very bad one—far in the rear. The young one promises well. The grey is a hunter and not a racehorse, which to all intents and purposes the chaser of to-day must be.

The old kind of sport has not quite died out, but it would be pleasant to see it more common. Local hunt meetings over natural countries chosen in some part of the hunt, with occasionally a point-to-point race—which is to all intents and purposes the veritable old steeple-chase—are still held, and a good deal of fun surrounds them. Not that the word ‘fun’ describes the affair from Fluffyer’s point of view, when the last act of the comedy is reached. Fluffyer is one of the men who are most fond of hunting in the summer when there
is none. Few men possess more pairs of top boots, and he has his own opinion as to how he will look in a racing jacket. Of course there is a dinner to arrange.
preliminaries. 'Quid non ebrietatis designat?' Horace asks—the noun is used in its mildest and most innocent significance—and at least it gives Fluffyer rosy hopes of victory. What a simple thing riding over a steeple-chase course is!—to the looker-on, that is to say; and at the moment Fluffyer is imaginatively standing aside to note the victory of that famous jacket, or, to be accurate, the jacket that is to become famous. Enter a horse? Of course he will. He would not miss the chance on any account. Chasing is simply the best sport he knows, until, time having passed, the eventful day has arrived, he is mounted, and has almost forgotten the brilliance of the jacket in a feeling of amazement at the marvellous way in which the fences have grown. He has known the country for years, but never knew the jumps to be so big—and not only so big, but so ugly; for he forgets that, as a rule, he has tried the gates or taken his turn at a gap. These are not now available. Instead of picturing victory, he actually begins to wonder whether he will get home safely. The amazing coolness of experienced riders who are accustomed to riding, and are not in the least disturbed at the magnitude of the task before them—as he supposes, for, in fact, it is a very ordinary course—in no way comforts him. He has had misgivings more than once of late, and the consequence of all this is that he nervously wrestles down his horse after scrambling clumsily across the first two obstacles.

One of the chief causes of the temporary decadence of chasing arises from the patronage given to hurdle-racing. It is a simpler thing to jump hurdles than to jump a country; there is less wear and tear for horses, and a great deal more money to be won. Some of the prizes at the debased sport are comparatively handsome
ones. At the present time there are more good horses running in hurdle-races than was ever the case before, and fields for chases are as a rule very small, for the hurdle-racer is an immature chaser, and if in his immaturity he pays best, why go on with him? Chasing is the nobler game, but much schooling over a country destroys a horse's speed, and speed is wanted for hurdle-races, in which the perfect competitor gallops, taking his hurdles, in his stride, and, as it were, disregarding the flights altogether.

Of late, for various reasons, steeple-chasing has somewhat languished; but the spectacle is too picturesque and popular, the sport too characteristically English, to make reasonable the fear that it can ever die out.
THE DERBY

I will spare repetition of that too familiar story of what Lord Beaconsfield said to Lord George Bentinck when the future Premier was told that he did not understand what winning the Derby really meant. He knew little of racing, but he knew that; and, indeed, it is the one great event in the racing year in which multitudes of those who have no cognisance of turf affairs permit themselves to take an interest. To what part of the world is not the name of the winner sent flashing along wires and cables within a few moments of the thrilling time when the horses have rounded Tattenham Corner, strided down the hill, passed the bell, and then, amid the roar of the multitude, dashed by the post? The winner may only just have got his head in front; but he has ‘won the Derby,’ and is accordingly exalted—unduly exalted, it may be, for a head is a desperately narrow margin—far above his fellows. The regular devotee of racing concerns himself all the year about other events, notably, perhaps, the Cambridgeshire; but to the ordinary Englishman, at home or abroad, there is one great race in the year, a national institution, and that is the Derby.

My experiences go back some nineteen years, though at an earlier date I did chance to see Pretender and Pero Gomez speed past the judge head and head, in the race
which still provokes discussion as to which won. One may answer with considerable certainty that Pretender did so; but there are those who still maintain that for once in his memorable career the judge made a mistake; and these people are only half convinced when it is impressed upon them that the judge is the one man who can see a finish infinitely better than anybody else.

Ten years later I had begun to grow acquainted with the turf, to know some of the men whose names had been marked in my imagination by a mysterious halo, to understand a little about 'form'; and I went to Epsom firm in the conviction that the Duke of Westminster's Victor Chief could not be beaten. He was a great, fine golden chesnut—possibly at the present time I might be inclined to set him down as flashy, but I then thought him all that was beautiful. Others of our party were persuaded that the chesnut had no chance with Cadogan, a thick-set little bay horse, reported to have done something remarkable when tried ten days before. When we are young and quite inexperienced we are so invincibly confident! The Victor Chief party scorned the idea of their champion being beaten—being even made to gallop by Cadogan; the Cadogan party were equally contemptuous at the ridiculous notion of their hero being pressed by Victor Chief. If any foolish person had suggested that neither would finish in the first three, we should have known what to think of him! But so it was to be. We could hardly believe our eyes when the field swept into the straight, and the yellow jacket, together with the black and blue cap, were seen in the ruck, and when on the whip-hand a clumsy-looking bay that we had not condescended to notice before was evidently having all the best of it. Sir Bevys was the animal in
question, with George Fordham on his back, and, as history records, he won from Palmbeater and Visconti.

Of course it was all wrong. To argue so was, at any rate, our only consolation; but a still greater surprise was in store for us—one of our party had backed the winner! It was the late Palgrave Simpson, the dramatist, who, I think, had never seen a race of any kind before, and took not the faintest interest in sport. He had been talking about some new play when the flag fell, and could not understand our being more absorbed in the race—the Derby!—than in the question as to whether some actor had been right or wrong in his reading of his part the night before. When we, silent with consternation, gazed blankly at the number-board, he was evidently anxious to resume the discussion; but seeing that his audience was not enthusiastic on the theme, he inquired what had won; and, when informed, told us, with a mixture of satisfaction and surprise, that he had 'two soverweigns,' as he used to call those coins, on the winner. We endeavoured to impress upon him how foolish he had been to think that the horse could win—the horse had just done so, but that was by the way—how worse than remote his chance had been on any reasonable calculation; when he placidly informed us that he had not thought anything about it. He felt that he ought to have the 'two soverweigns' on something to signalise his visit to the Derby, and he had chosen Sir Bevys because it was a name he had used in one of his early poems! So much for knowledge and what is called 'information.'

The Duke of Westminster was to have his turn, the first of his turns, in the Derby, next year, and with another chestnut, Bend Or. How much of Bend Or's
fame as a racehorse, when one comes to think of it, depends on that one victory, which he ought never to have gained, which, indeed, it should rather be said Archer gained for him! Few who saw that race will forget it. Rossiter on Robert the Devil had won, if he had only been aware of the fact; but Archer, hampered as he was with the lame arm which Muley Edris had savaged, pulled his horse together for one mighty rush, and Rossiter, turning his head instead of riding home, gazed at his great adversary with a species of fascination. Bend Or won by only a short head; but it was the Derby. Next time the horses met, in the St. Leger, Bend Or was far behind—sixth; and though a fortnight later, in the Great Foal Stakes, Across the Flat, the Derby running was only just reversed, the head by which Tom Cannon on Robert beat Archer could, I fancy, have been greatly extended; but that the consummate horseman could make certain of his head even against Archer. In the Champion Stakes, a fortnight later still, and this time with Rossiter against Fordham—Archer having to ride Charibert for Lord Falmouth—Robert the Devil beat Bend Or ten lengths. Next year this was again reversed, and the Derby running seemed to be confirmed, for Bend Or beat Robert the Devil a neck. In truth, however, that meant nothing. The bay was quite unfit; he had suffered from what is technically called a 'leg,' and when, the evening before the race, Tom Cannon felt the injured limb to see what he thought about the prospect of its standing the strain of the race, the colt put the leg up into his manger to escape the pain of the pressure.

Next season the house of Grosvenor, as represented by the present Lord Ebury, was just to miss the mark, and America was to triumph with Iroquois. Peregrine
was a hot favourite, but nevertheless the colt, who had won the Two Thousand from Iroquois in a canter by three lengths, had a weak spot—an incipient 'leg'—in saving which he injured the other, as often happens, and he was never seen out again after the Epsom reversal of his Newmarket running. Lord Rosebery was third with the big bay Doncaster colt, Town Moor, as he had been the year before with Visconti; but, in truth, the three-year-olds that ran in the classic races were very moderate in 1881. Had the best of his age—another American colt, Foxhall—been entered for the Derby instead of Don Fulano, the prize, I have no sort of doubt, would have gone to him.

There was a 'good thing' in 1882, and it did not 'come off,' which is, indeed, a very common fate of good things. Bruce, a son of See-Saw, was a colt that 'could not be beaten,' but was, the winner being a shelly chesnut mare belonging to the Duke of Westminster, Shotover by name. As a two-year-old Shotover had run thrice without success, her last appearance having been in a nursery, when she carried only 7 st. 6 lb. and finished nowhere—a position it seems to have been expected that she would occupy. Next year, however, she had won the Two Thousand from a very moderate field, 'moderate' in turf language signifying something between good and bad, with a very strong leaning towards the latter. Two days later she had failed in the One Thousand, second, with the third only a head behind her, and it seemed improbable, to say the least of it, that she could have any chance against Bruce, who had never been beaten, starting four times as a two-year-old, and winning comfortably on each occasion. Bruce, ridden by a very bad jockey, Mordan, had easily beaten Nellie in the
Criterion, with George Fordham up on the latter; Shotover in the One Thousand had just beaten Nellie a head, with Fordham again on the filly, so that she had every advantage of horsemanship in that race; how easily, then, ought Bruce to beat Shotover, who was on this form practically the same mare as Nellie! But that was reckoning without jockeyship. In the Derby Tom Cannon rode Shotover; Mordan performed on Bruce, and at Tattenham Corner the latter took a wide sweep into the adjacent country and lost incalculable lengths, Cannon meanwhile coming the shortest way round, and then steering his mare through her horses with the ease and judgment which always made his riding so delightful a spectacle to the appreciative observer. So her name was added to those of Eleanor (1801) and Blink Bonny (1857), the three fillies that have won the Derby.

It is difficult to speak of 1883 without reference to the ugly rumours which were current after Galliard's defeat; and at the same time it is assuredly not in the least my purpose to dwell on any unpleasant stories. One thing certain is that Charles Wood on St. Blaise saw and seized his opportunity to dash round Tattenham Corner and secure his place on the rails, and the shortest way round is always an advantage, except under peculiar circumstances. (In Sir Bevys's year, for instance, when the lower side of the course was fetlock deep, George Fordham came wide on the right that he might have firmer ground to gallop on.) Wood gained a good two lengths by his alertness in rounding the bend, and he held it to the finish, Highland Chief also beating Galliard. It was the only race St. Blaise won that year—not reckoning a walk over—and the only one Galliard lost;
but they never met again. St. Blaise made one solitary appearance as a four-year-old, and was then sold to go to America, where his sons and daughters have made him a great name. Galliard was not seen out as a four-year-old, and is the sire of a large number of horses, for the most part modest in capacity, and, as a rule, distinguished for fretfulness and uncertainty. Some people like the young Galliards, however, and his yearlings sell, nine of them a couple of years ago having made an average of not much under 500L each.

The story goes that when St. Gatien was first seen out, in a little race, the Teddington Two-Year-Old Stakes at Kempton Park, a severe critic, looking at the colt and his two opponents as they cantered down the course, protested against the breeding of such rubbish, declared that the three were not worth 50L a head, and that it was waste of time waiting to see them try to gallop. Little did that scornful looker-on—little, indeed, did anyone—suppose that the colt he derided would divide the Derby (and that with a vastly inferior horse), win the Ascot Gold Cup, the Jockey Club Cup three years in succession, win the Cesarewitch with the unprecedented weight for a three-year-old of 8 st. 10 lb., and perform other brilliant achievements, which have made his name great in turf annals!

Lord Falmouth's horses had been sold in the April of the year, and Sir John Willoughby—whose name has been so prominently before the world of late in another sphere of action—had given 8,600 guineas for Harvester, a Sterling colt. Sir John owned at the same time a filly called Queen Adelaide (for her first season she ran without a name, and was then for a time called Solitaire), who had not only won the July Stakes at Newmarket,
but had beaten the flying Busybody (another of Lord Falmouth's stud) in the Dewhurst Plate—a great performance indeed, though Busybody had 3 lb. the worst of the weights, and that equalised the neck beating. Presumably Sir John had ascertained that Queen Adelaide was better than Harvester, and there seemed confirmation of this in the knowledge that Busybody was better than her ex-stable companion also. 'On form,' therefore, Harvester could have no sort of chance in the Derby, and, as a matter of fact, Queen Adelaide was a warm favourite at 5 to 2. It was confidently expected that a fourth filly would be added to the list of winners. Harvester was backed at 100 to 7, or at least 100 to 7 was offered against him; but the 'form' was woefully upset, for Harvester and St. Gatien ran a dead heat, beating the mare two lengths—a most unexpected result. St. Gatien had suffered from sore shins shortly before the race, but that the gallop did him no harm is shown by the fact that he went on to Ascot and gave a taste of his quality by beating that good mare Corrie Roy in a canter for the Gold Vase, with much the worst of the weights, Tristan behind the pair, a bad third.

The relative value of Harvester and St. Gatien was here to be readily gauged through Tristan. This horse was beaten on Tuesday, and again on Thursday, in the Gold Cup, by St. Simon; so that on Friday—the Cup course at Ascot is a terribly tiring journey—he must certainly have been far from fresh, probably a good deal behind his true form; but in the Hardwicke Stakes on that day he came out again, Harvester opposed him, and the Derby dead-heater was beaten easily by half a dozen lengths, a colt called Waterford separating the two. Harvester's subsequent performances were extremely
moderate. He won a little race, beating nothing, at Goodwood, was afterwards defeated by a third-rate colt called Cormeille, and could only get eighth in the St. Leger, Queen Adelaide finishing fifth. The filly, of whom such great things were expected—and with reason—never won again; eight times she failed as a three-year-old, five times next season, and thrice the year afterwards. No one could have supposed, after her notable victory in the Dewhurst, that she would run sixteen races during the next three seasons, and fail in all! That is the uncertainty of the turf, which, for some incomprehensible reason, is called 'glorious.'

When Lord Hastings's Melton first came out, in the New Stakes at Ascot, he was supposed to be inferior to his stable companion, the Duke of Portland's Langwell; but the race effectually showed the incorrectness of that estimate, and Melton, though beaten a head by Luminary in the July Stakes, won the Middle Park Plate and the Criterion, leaving off at the end of the season with a high reputation.

During the winter of 1884-5 a doubt as to whether Melton would stand began to prevail in the stable, unpleasant suspicions of a weak sinew having begun to develop. Special interest therefore attached to his reappearance, which was in the Payne Stakes at the Newmarket Second Spring Meeting. There were four runners, and as soon as they came into sight, it was quickly evident that Melton did not mind galloping. He won his race, and then the question arose whether he could beat Paradox; for though this son of Sterling and Casuistry had only just won the Two Thousand by a head from Crafton, Archer admitted that he had ridden a very bad race—in fact, but for something very like a
bit of foul riding, Tom Cannon would just have got up on Mr. Gerard's colt; and had there been an objection, it is tolerably certain that Paradox would have been disqualified.

I chanced to meet Webb on the Derby day, as he walked down by the back of the stands to the paddock to ride Paradox, and, being strongly of opinion that nothing could beat Melton, remarked to him I feared he would not quite win.

'I'm sure to go very close, if I don't beat the favourite, and I may do that!' he replied; and very close he did go. Both he and Archer rode with admirable judgment and wonderful vigour, and the shortest of short heads in favour of Lord Hastings's colt was the verdict. I never saw a horse go more beautifully than Melton in the preliminary canter before that Derby. His action was the perfection of grace and ease; he covered an extraordinary amount of ground in his stride, but moved so lightly that he gave one the impression he could gallop over eggs without breaking them. He was a good horse, but much inferior to St. Gatien, as was demonstrated conclusively more than once; though when the two met in the Jockey Club Cup of 1886, Melton had been overdosed with whisky, and as Tom Cannon, who rode him, declared, was more than half drunk.

1886 was the greatest year of modern times, for the Duke of Westminster's Ormonde was the hero, and the chesnut son of Bend Or and Lily Agnes had rivals of exceptional excellence in the gallant little Bard, Minting, Saraband, and others who would certainly have made great names for themselves in an average season. In spite of all that Minting did, I have always believed that
The Bard was the better of the pair; for assuredly the sturdy little son of Petrarch made a vastly better fight in the Derby than Minting had made in the Two Thousand, notwithstanding that The Bard was not ridden to orders, his jockey, who had been told to 'come along with him,' as he stayed so well, being some distance in the rear as they rounded the Corner. Then the white-ticked chesnut raced up to the mighty bay, and as they galloped to the bottom of the hill seemed fairly to hold him for half a dozen strides, whilst a tumultuous roar resounded over the Downs; but Ormonde drew away, and the race was over. One of the little vignettes of turf life which remains imprinted on my memory is of General Owen Williams and The Bard, after the race, in the enclosure in front of the weighing-room, by the side of the Club Stand. The beautiful colt rubbed his nose affectionately against his master, who responded by stroking the creature's soft muzzle. It was a charming picture. As for Ormonde, he was invincible, and as there is no possibility of determining whether he was as good as or better or worse than St. Simon and other giants of an earlier period, enthusiasts must be left to argue according to their prejudices; and how prejudiced we are, especially those of us who believe that we are peculiarly open-minded and free from any description of bias!

Before the race for the Derby of 1887 it was generally set down as 'The Baron's year.' No one, I imagine, supposed that The Baron was a good horse; his performances did not bear critical examination, particularly his narrow victory—or escape from defeat—in the Craven Stakes, when a very bad animal nearly ran him out of it. But it was a poor year, and the difficulty was to see what
could beat The Baron, who, moreover, was trained by Matthew Dawson, and so gained a host of adherents who regarded this master of his art as a magician. A great many people try to find merit in a Derby favourite and The Baron was esteemed by them as one of the 'good old-fashioned sort'—certainly there was nothing that could be called 'flash' about this stolid brown. Merry Hampton, who had never run in public, was not much 'fancied.' 'I think he is sure to run into the first three,' his owner remarked to me on the morning of the race; 'but I suppose The Baron will win, though it would not take a good one to beat him.' Tom Cannon, who always disliked to hit a horse, rode The Baron, and to the surprise of lookers-on had his whip up before Tattenham Corner was reached.

'I was just marking the place where I should have to begin when we were round the bend,' Cannon quaintly replied, when I observed to him, after the race, that he had set to work early. How bad The Baron was racegoers saw afterwards, and Merry Hampton, whose career was short, was very far indeed from good.

That Ayrshire was lucky in having the way cleared for him in 1888 there can be no doubt. The year before, when the Ascot meeting was approaching, rumour began to be busy about a wonderful dark chestnut colt at Kingsclere. He was a son of Hermit, whose stock were doing wonderful things at the time, and was said to have been tried a 'wonder.' There was a good deal of foundation, moreover, for the report. Ayrshire and Seabreeze were both out of the common; but in the New Stakes Friar's Balsam, as the Hermit colt was called, cantered away from the pair with the most consummate ease, a fact which gave ample proof of his merit. He
added the Middle Park and Dewhurst Plates to his score, and to search elsewhere for the winner of next year's Derby seemed absurd—it very often does so at this time of the year, and that is one of the reasons why the 'ring' grow rich. All seemed to be well with him, indeed, far on into the season. The horses had actually gone to the post for the Two Thousand Guineas—or it should rather be said were on their way thither—when Tom Cannon discovered a curious tenderness in the horse's jaw, and it soon appeared that his mouth had been severely injured—as John Porter, his trainer, supposed at the time by the boy who looked after the colt having angrily jerked his bridle to keep him quiet, or to punish him for not being quiet, while being dressed over. The poor beast could not take hold of his bit; doubtless he was suffering and out of health, and the Duke of Portland reaped the benefit with Ayrshire. Twice that year the Oaks winner, the beautiful filly Seabreeze, had the best of the Duke of Portland's colt. She beat him out of a place in the St. Leger, and a fortnight later, in the Lancashire Plate, he ran second to her. He was a good horse, though with no pretensions to be considered a 'smasher,' in popular phraseology, and that he should have won close on £36,000 during his turf career was in a very great degree a result of wonderful luck.

At this time, indeed, the Duke of Portland's luck was emphatically in the ascendant; for whilst Ayrshire was carrying off the three-year-old race, Donovan started the season by winning the Brocklesby, and had an extraordinarily successful time of it in the two-year-old stakes, marred only by two defeats, when Chittabob—an exceptionally good colt, who was never quite right during
his whole brief career, suffering from some injury to or
weakness in the shoulder—beat him for a valuable prize
in the North, and when Mr. Douglas Baird's El Dorado,
another good but very self-willed colt, ploughed through
the mud at Goodwood, and upset the 'certainty' for the
Prince of Wales's Stakes. The 'Racing Calendar' has
been described as 'the record of certainties that have not
come off.'

More often than not winners of the Brocklesby
Stakes at Lincoln, the first important two-year-old race
of the season, are of little account later in the year; but
Donovan kept on winning, and that he was beaten in the
Two Thousand was entirely due to a marvellous piece of
horsemanship on the part of Tom Cannon. F. Barrett
on Donovan supposed that he had nothing but Pioneer
to beat; Watts on Pioneer was only anxious to keep
near Donovan, and by getting 'first run,' or by
some exercise of his art, snatching a lucky victory.
Tom Cannon on Enthusiast watched the pair, and when
they had ridden their horses out, swooped down on them,
upsetting one more certainty. Donovan, according to
the calculation of experts, had about 21 lb. in hand—and
was beaten.

'I saw them having two little races all to themselves
a long way from the winning-post,' Cannon remarked in
explanation, after the surprise had been accomplished,
'and when they began a third, I thought I would join
in!'

The Newmarket Stakes—run this year for the first
time—the Derby, the Prince of Wales's Stakes at Ascot,
the St. Leger, the Lancashire Plate, fell to Donovan
one after another, and he finally retired from the turf
with a sum of 55,154/. won in stakes to his credit,
the largest sum ever accumulated by a horse up to that time, and only since surpassed by Mr. McCalmont's Isinglass.

In 1889 the two-year-old fillies were far better than the colts, for that was the year of the flying Signorina, one of the speediest animals that ever ran, and she was supported by Memoir (not nearly so good as she afterwards became, for she improved greatly with age), Riviera, and Semolina. During the winter the wise men agreed that, so far as the colts were concerned (and Signorina was not entered for the Derby), the race lay between two, Surefoot and Le Nord, though Mr. Douglas Baird's Martagon had once got to Signorina's head, and that, too, soon after he had been coughing and was thought to be not at his best. To search beyond the two was, however, esteemed ridiculous, and as there was a doubt about Le Nord's ability to stay, the Derby looked good for Surefoot. It looked better still a little later on, for he won the Two Thousand Guineas handsomely; and another of the turf vignettes imprinted on my memory is of Surefoot after that race, as he stood, head uplifted, gazing round him in the little railed-off enclosure before the weighing-room door in the Birdcage, a glorious specimen of the English thoroughbred horse. But Surefoot had a dreadfully bad temper. I am told that, when sent from his training quarters to run for the Eclipse Stakes next year, it occupied a troublous two hours to get him a couple of miles along the road to the station. In the Derby he was so busily occupied in trying to savage his neighbours that he could not be persuaded or coerced into galloping, and the race fell to one of the worst animals that ever carried off a Derby in Sainfoin, a chesnut colt that John Porter and Sir Robert
Jardine, who owned him between them, had sold to Sir James Miller in the spring. That Porter, who knew so well what winning the Derby meant, would have parted with a horse that really possessed a chance of success had been deemed absurd; but the result showed what mistakes the shrewdest and most experienced men could make. With regard to Surefoot, the fact was that he could not stay; but his speed was astonishing, and few animals ever travelled quicker on a racecourse than he did in the Eclipse Stakes next year, when, after being absolutely last and apparently quite out of the race—20 to 1 was offered against him in running—he took it into his head to gallop, dashed up the hill, and won decisively.

No two-year-old stood out in 1890, and during the winter, when so many elaborate speculations—which experience so very frequently proves to be altogether incorrect—are formed about the Derby horses, five animals were marked as possessing a chance: The Deemster, Orvieto, Orion, Peter Flower, and the French-bred Gouverneur.

Mr. Leopold de Rothschild's Bumptious had done sufficiently well to make it a subject of regret that he had not been entered. Such regrets are annually expressed, and enlightenment comes later when it is shown, as it was in this case, that the animal omitted has no sort of pretension to stay a mile and a half. Rumour had spoken of a colt at Kingsclere—Common, a son of Isonomy and Thistle, belonging to those old allies, Lord Alington and Sir Frederick Johnstone—that was likely to win races; but when the day of the Two Thousand came round, the event was supposed to rest between Gouverneur and Peter Flower, unless Orvieto beat them. The plain-looking brown Common, however, won by
three lengths from Orvieto, Gouverneur only fifth; and this so entirely altered the aspect of affairs that Common became favourite for the Derby, and won it easily from Gouverneur. The Deemster and Orion were here fifth and sixth; Peter Flower was last; Orvieto did not run. In the St. Leger history repeated itself; that is to say, Common beat Gouverneur, though not with nearly so much ease as at Epsom; and after the race the winner was sold to Sir Blundell Maple for 14,000l.

Nothing is more absurd in turf literature—if the use of the word 'literature' may be excused—than the wild and whirling panegyrics to which animals of more or less merit frequently give rise. 'The horse of the century' is discovered about every other year; and his existence was loudly proclaimed when Orme first appeared, as he did in the Richmond Stakes at Goodwood. He was a son of Ormonde, very like his sire in appearance, with the same trick of carrying his tail twisted to the off side as he walked; and, of course, his parentage and resemblance created an interest in him. His first race was not a particular triumph. He won, it is true, by three-quarters of a length; but the filly Flyaway, whom he just beat, had 12 lb. the worst of the weights, so that if the pair had met on even terms, she would have won by further than she was defeated. Two days later Orme won the Prince of Wales's Stakes, after being pressed by Dunure, a very moderate colt; and in the Lancashire Plate he was beaten by Signorina. She had quite lost her brilliant two-year-old form, and during the previous two years had only won a single race, against a solitary opponent, of moderate calibre, Susiana by name, a mare that never won a race during her whole turf career, though she ran second with astonishing regularity. It
should be added, however, that much fault was found with G. Barrett’s riding of Orme on this occasion. The third horse, Martagon, was only a head behind Orme, who carried off the Middle Park and Dewhurst Plates, and was supposed to have the Derby at his mercy.

In the following spring a number of horses in different stables were attacked by a disease of the mouth which caused their tongues to swell and boils or abscesses to form on their lips and gums, and, as was generally believed, among the victims of the outbreak was Orme. A veterinary surgeon who was called in gave it as his opinion, however, that the colt had been poisoned; and a great sensation was, of course, created. John Porter, the trainer, still maintains the poison theory. The Two Thousand became at once exceptionally ‘open,’ and a new favourite had to be found for the Derby. But about this there was no difficulty, everything pointing emphatically to Orme’s stable companion La Flèche, an own sister to Memoir, for whom 5,500 guineas had been paid as a yearling—and it may be added that La Flèche was a very cheap purchase at the price. That La Flèche should have been beaten in the Derby is one of the most remarkable instances on record of the uncertainty of racing, except, indeed, that fillies are often out of sorts in the summer-time. A tedious delay at the start no doubt contributed much to the result. La Flèche finished three-parts of a length behind Lord Bradford’s chestnut colt Sir Hugo, on whom Allsopp rode a well-judged race. But over a mile in the Lancashire Plate, and over a mile and three-quarters in the St. Leger, the superiority of La Flèche and the falseness of the Derby running were most amply and unmistakably proved. In the St. Leger, too, Orme appeared, and another thing abun-
dantly demonstrated was his inferiority to the mare over this course—a fair test of ability to stay. The fact is that Orme was a brilliant miler; but a horse to be admitted to rank in the first class must be a stayer, and those who saw La Flèche win the Ascot Cup with her ears pricked—the Ascot Cup over that terribly severe two miles and a half—could not well have had any difficulty in summing up the respective merits of the horse and the mare.

The Newmarket Stakes of 1892 ended in the finish of three heads, Webb, in Prince Soltykoff's pink jacket, on Curio, beating Robinson, the trainer, in the Duchess of Montrose's scarlet, on St. Angelo; St. Damien close up. 'What with Robinson the jockey, who cannot ride, and Robinson the judge, who is apparently colour-blind, I find it difficult to win races!' was the sarcastic comment of her Grace, who imagined that the scarlet was before the pink at the critical moment.

The next race that May afternoon was a Maiden Plate. The favourites were a colt named Queen's Pardon and a filly called Sweet Laura.

'What is that of yours?' a friend asked Mr. H. B. McCalmont, as a bay, carrying the quartered scarlet, red, light blue, cantered past.

'He's rather a nice colt,' was the reply. 'A little backward at present, but sure to win a race some day.'

Sure, indeed; for the colt was Isinglass, and, with a single exception, he won every race in which he was started! A curious tendency always existed to disparage Isinglass. Some horses are habitually overpraised, others are always underrated, and Isinglass during his racing career was one of the latter class. When he next came out, at Ascot in the New Stakes, he was not so
good a favourite as Royal Harry—a creature that was soon running in, and failing to win, little hurdle races—but Isinglass had no difficulty in disposing of his rivals, though he was always a lazy horse, inclined to 'make a race' with anything—a type of animal very much esteemed by experts. For the Middle Park Plate there were three better and two equal favourites; but Isinglass again won, with Ravensbury—who was destined to be second to him so often—occupying that position for the first time. Two Thousand Guineas, Newmarket Stakes, Derby, and St. Leger, fell to the colt—whose dam had been bought out of a cart for 19l. —poor Ravensbury second in all except the Newmarket Stakes, where he was third. But the hitherto invincible bay always had a rooted dislike to going in front—making his own running—and, as it is maintained by his friends entirely from this cause, the Duke of Portland's Raeburn, with 10 lb. the best of the weights, beat Isinglass a length in the Lancashire Plate.

Meantime another 'horse of the century' had been discovered in Lord Rosebery's two-year-old son of Hampton and Illuminata. He came out at Epsom in the Woodcote Stakes, and achieved a victory that was little expected, for it had been thought that the winner of that race would not 'take much finding,' as the phrase goes. Odds of 3 to 1 were laid on a filly called Glare; but the Illuminata colt won, and in due course he carried off the Coventry Stakes at Ascot and the Middle Park Plate. Next year the Two Thousand, Newmarket Stakes and Derby fell to Ladas, as he had now been called, the last victory giving rise to an extraordinary scene of excitement when Lord Rosebery, who was Prime Minister at the time, led in the winner. An extravagant estimate
The Derby

of the colt was formed by some of the newspapers, notwithstanding that Matchbox had not received more than a 7-lb. beating in the Derby.

When the race for the Princess of Wales’s Stakes—a prize of close on 11,000l.—came on for decision, the disposition to overrate Ladas and to underrate Isinglass was shown by the ‘market.’ Odds of 2 to 1 were laid on Lord Rosebery’s colt, 8 and 10 to 1 was betted against Mr. McCalmont’s four-year-old, who was, indeed, known to be ‘short of a gallop or two,’ to quote the phrase the trainer Jewitt used on the morning of the race; but at the distance Watts was ‘riding’ Ladas. Isinglass, though also being ridden, answered to the call with the utmost gameness, and won by a head from Bullingdon, a Melton colt, handled with wonderful skill and judgment by Mornington Cannon. An excuse was made for Ladas that his teeth had troubled him, and he had not fed well in consequence; but fifteen days later the two met again in the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown, no excuse was possible for either, and Isinglass won in the most decisive fashion. Once more Ladas was to fail as a three-year-old. Slight odds were laid on him for the St. Leger, but to the general amazement a filly named Throstle—a half sister to Common—won the race, mainly owing to the art of her jockey, Mornington Cannon, once more. Throstle was reckoned from 21 lb. to 2 st. inferior to her stable companion Matchbox, whom she beat in the race with considerable ease—another instance of the ‘glorious uncertainty of the turf.’ Isinglass went on triumphantly, and as a five-year-old won the Ascot Cup, a race that used to be accepted as setting the seal on the merit of a great horse. As was shown by a tabulated statement of his winnings, a
The facsimile of which, as drawn up by his owner, was published in the first number of the *Badminton Magazine*, he earned during his career 57,185l.

The three-year-olds of 1895 were about the very worst on record. At Liverpool, when the probability of the Cup being won by Telescope—by no means severely handicapped—was suggested, a contemptuous rejoinder was: 'Why, he is worse than Sir Visto!' And Sir Visto had won both the Derby and the St. Leger! To dwell on the events of such a year would be waste of time.

But while the three-year-olds of this season were thus bad, there seemed some good two-year-olds, notably St. Frusquin, Persimmon, Regret, and Omladina. As for the last named, as so very often happens in the case of two-year-old fillies, she trained off, showed an incapacity to stay, and was indeed so great a disappointment that the Duke of Westminster sold her. He sold Regret also, after the colt had shown that he had been considerably over-rated for one thing—scarcely by his trainer, however, for John Porter had never supposed that he was a really good horse—and for another thing that he resolutely declined to do anything but the best he could. Between St. Frusquin and Persimmon, however, partisanship ran high, and when at last they met in the Middle Park Plate the event was an exciting one. Persimmon was said to have been suffering from some ailment to his teeth which often affects young horses, but that there was not much wrong with him was suggested by the fact that he started a strong favourite at 2 to 1, odds of 4 to 1 being laid against St. Frusquin. In the race, however, Persimmon was third, five lengths and a half from St. Frusquin, with Omladina a good
second. It was then thought that, had Mornington Cannon—in strict obedience to orders—not made so much use of the filly she would have won, instead of being beaten half a length as she was. Regret was understood to be 'the same animal' as Omladina, and the inference was that the Derby lay between Regret and St. Frusquin. The former did not appear till late in the following year, but St. Frusquin had meantime grown in favour, Persimmon had declined the Two Thousand, had occasionally gone in slovenly fashion at exercise, rumours to his detriment even up to when he did reach Epsom; 5 to 1 was laid against him, St. Frusquin being backed at 13 to 8 on. Had Mr. Leopold de Rothschild kept him fresh for the Derby, the chances are that he would have won; but he had run twice previously—with success—and certainly did not look his best. He was beaten by a neck, but that the world in general still considered him the better of the pair was proved by the 'market' in the Princess of Wales Stakes a month later. Persimmon had 3 lb. the worst of the weight, it is true, 9 st. 5 lb. against St. Frusquin's 9 st. 2 lb. That would have equalised the neck beating so nearly that, if the Derby running were accepted as correct, it should have been the same odds against both, or a shade perhaps in favour of an animal with the prestige of having won the great race; but the ring laid 4 to 1 against Persimmon, only 5 to 2 against St. Frusquin, who beat his rival by half a length and never ran again.

Meanwhile it had seemed that Lord Rosebery must have an altogether exceptionally good two-year-old in Velasquez, who came out at Ascot, won the New Stakes in a canter on July 4, the Prince of Wales Stakes at Goodwood and the Champagne with equal ease; and Lord
Rosebery, one of the soundest of judges, believed that Velasquez was considerably the best horse he had ever owned. When the Middle Park Plate day arrived, Velasquez did not look quite himself, as it was understood that the extremely heavy going—for it had been raining much, and the course was very deep and holding—would be against him. There was an idea of sending his stable companion Chelandry to run instead, but finally he was sent to the post, and 5 to 1 was laid on him, for he had only Galtee More to beat, and the colt's previous form was very remarkable. Velasquez ran very badly however, and was beaten six lengths; next season it was found that Galtee More had 'come on' and greatly improved, and also that Velasquez did not really stay. Lord Rosebery's colt was beaten easily in the Two Thousand and decisively in the Derby, the history of which is thus brought up to date.
THE

DISCOMFITURE OF MRS. TRIMMINGS

Mrs. Trimmings was a personage who awakened the somewhat dubious and hesitating admiration of her scullery maid. The upper servants did not share the sentiment, for they had wit to perceive that their employer could only conventionally be regarded as a gentlewoman; but Mrs. Trimmings was a very great lady indeed—in her own opinion. Her husband had made money in London, had retired from the comparative ease of an industrious life to the harder duty of passing his days with his wife, listening to her nagging tongue, and watching her ridiculous attempts to obtain recognition in a rank of society to which she did not belong—this latter endeavour being, as we know, a not uncommon weakness.

Society! a word divine
To those who long, but are not yet there,
For which so many people pine
Who are not happy when they get there.

In London it was of course hopeless for Mrs. Trimmings to try and 'get on' in the way she wished; but there is often hope in the country, so she had settled down in a villa at Eastcliff, a pretty little seaside place on the East Coast which her husband had bought, hoping
that she might make some way in time among the country people by lavish subscriptions to local charities, and patronage of whatever public object would consent to be patronised; while there was always a chance that the casual visitors to the place might mistake her for a lady.

When Mrs. Trimmings first went to Eastcliff she had laboured under the delusion that the very picturesque grass-covered cliff before her house was her private property, and she was much annoyed when a more accurate perception of the true state of things had been impressed upon her. Had she owned this, she would have been mistress of a very nice little seaside estate, and, indeed, she tried to assert an ownership, and prevent the honest fisherfolk from passing over her green, the consequence being that at high water they would have had to go round inland about three-quarters of a mile to get from one part of the beach to another, unless they went by boat. They are a submissive, simple-minded folk at Eastcliff, and a few of them had begun to make this inland pilgrimage, when the mayor, a kindly old gentleman, ascertained what was going on, and very promptly put a stop to it. The recollection of her interview with his worship made Mrs. Trimmings smart for some weeks afterwards; but time mitigates unpleasant remembrances, and she had for some time past been in the habit of glaring at anyone who ventured on the hill.

Besides this weakness Mrs. Trimmings had one great ambition—to obtain an entrance into Covertside House, the residence of Lord Covertside, the local magnate, who lived some three or four miles from Eastcliff. She had been to a garden party given there for a charitable object, and to a villagers’ flower show held in the park,
but that was not what she wanted; her longing was to gain admittance to the interior, to dine if possible, to lunch if it might be, and to be able to speak of 'dear Lady Covertside and the girls,' with a shade more claim to the familiarity. Of course Mrs. Trimmings always represented, to those who were ignorant of the truth, that Lady Covertside was her dearest friend; but it would

be pleasant for purposes of impressing humble strangers to be able to say something about the inside of her dearest friend's house, for inability to answer a simple question which had arisen on this head had once covered her with confusion.

On a certain day in late September Mrs. Trimmings, sailing round the town to let the tradespeople see her
new cloak—nearly all the visitors had gone, for Eastcliff is not a popular watering place—observed the Covertside barouche standing outside the vicarage, and it made her heart beat, because Lady Covertside had intimated that she would call on Mrs. Trimmings when next in the town with reference to some private theatricals, to promote the success of which, since it would bring her into communication with ‘county people,’ she was prepared to spend anything in—or out of—reason. Turning round, therefore, she made the best of her way home—to have been out when Lady Covertside called would have been a terrible blow—and in a few minutes was ascending the hill towards her house. A little boy—impudent young rascal!—was crossing the green, and that vexed her; and there was absolutely an intrusive donkey daring to eat what she regarded as her grass; there, too, just under the shelter of the wall of her house was a lady, seated on a camp stool, reading to a little girl on a smaller stool by her side. The young mother looked up from her book, and bent lovingly over her child as she arranged its jacket; for though the wall afforded shelter from the keen wind, the weather was bleak, and the child looked somewhat pale and thin. This spectacle roused Mrs. Trimmings’s indignation. Mother and child were making themselves at home on her green—at least on the green that she would have liked to be hers—under the very wall of her garden; the public side of it, truly, but no matter. Perhaps they would make a practice of sitting there. On the whole, Mrs. Trimmings determined to protest. Approaching the younger lady, she said—

‘You must go away from my garden. I cannot have people sitting here!’
‘I am sure I apologise if I am intruding,’ the young mother said, while the child looked with wondering and rather frightened eyes at the person who spoke so rudely and roughly; ‘I was informed at the hotel that this was a public green, or I should certainly not have come here.’

‘I don’t like people on the hill so near my house,’ Mrs. Trimmings continued.

‘But, surely, madam, that is unreasonable?’ the younger lady gently replied. ‘My little child is delicate, just recovering from a long and severe illness, and this is the only sheltered spot out of the east wind. I am sorry to be beholden to you for even the protection of your wall,’ she continued, with just a shade of indignation in her voice, ‘but I cannot expose my child to danger to gratify a request which you must excuse me for saying you have no right to make if this is not your private property.’

Tears had come into the little child’s eyes—she was unaccustomed to other than gentle words, and this angry woman with the red face frightened her; but Mrs. Trimmings had no sympathy with childhood or suffering; that the bitter wind blew keenly over the hill was nothing to her, and she snorted indignantly as she looked from the child to its mother.

‘I have expressed my wishes, and I think it very bad taste for people to intrude,’ she said, and with another snort and a comprehensive glare, she passed through her gate and vanished.

She was not home too soon, either, for the Covertside carriage had just turned the corner, and was coming up the hill.

‘Must we ask her to dinner, mother? Is it really
'You must go away from my garden. I cannot have people sitting here!'
necessary? She’s such a dreadfully vulgar woman, it makes one ill to think of having her for a whole evening!’ Lady Hilda—the elder of the girls—said, making a last despairing appeal.

‘My dear, we must. It’s a nuisance, of course; but we’ve asked everyone else who is helping, and we can’t leave her out. I don’t like the prospect any more than you do,’ said Mrs. Trimmings’s ‘dear Lady Covertside’; ‘but she has behaved very liberally about the orphanage—this was the charity to be benefited by the theatricals—‘and—well, we must!’

‘I don’t believe it’s liberality, mamma,’ Ethel said, with a toss of the head; ‘it’s her speculation. She spends money to force her way where she isn’t wanted! You promise you won’t ever think of having her in London, don’t you, dear?’

‘Of course not; but here it’s different, and we must make the best of it.’

The effusion with which the ladies were greeted need not be described, nor the rapture which thrilled Mrs. Trimmings’s bosom when the thrice blessed invitation was given to dine and hold a sort of committee to arrange the theatricals. They were going to play a comedy by Mr. Lyghte, the popular dramatist of the day, and Mrs. Trimmings was enchanted. She knew him well, she declared, and his sweet wife. They were quite in society, she informed her visitors, lest Lady Covertside should suppose her guilty of an acquaintance with anyone who was not. You saw them everywhere. Mrs. Lyghte was quite charming; she had often met them in London at dear Lady Lobbington’s—for dear Lady Lobbington, it should be explained, was a great authority with Mrs. Trimmings, whose sister, people did say, had served her
eccentric ladyship in the capacity of maid, and had been promoted to the rank of humble companion. Had Lady Covertside ever met the Lyghtes? Mrs. Trimmings had; knew them well; her son and Lyghte belonged to two or three of the same clubs, and were great allies. Mrs. Lyghte was very clever, and it was said had written 'The Way of the World,' a novel, published anonymously, which had made a brilliant success last season. Mrs. Trimmings nodded her head oracularly, as if she could tell a good deal about the composition of this work if she were inclined, and conversation was for a short time continued by her recital of the movements of noble families whose doings had lately been described in various public prints, the speaker setting the details forth as much as possible as if she were talking of private friends. Lady Covertside rose and fled when she could stand it no longer. 'What an awful woman!' Hilda exclaimed as they presently drove away, and her mother simply shrugged her shoulders.

The week of anxious expectation which preceded the day of the dinner passed slowly; but at length the time arrived, and Mrs. Trimmings triumphantly told her coachman to go to Covertside House, as if it were one of her accustomed resorts. The coachman winked at the footman, and he passed it on to the housekeeper, who was seeing her mistress off, for the weaknesses of Mrs. Trimmings were perfectly well understood in the servants' hall. They summed up their mistress accurately enough, and, indeed, 'Lady Covertside' had not been off her tongue for the week past.

She arrived so early that, though the girls were in the drawing-room—they make a little grimace at each other when Mrs. Trimmings was announced and came
SAT ON A SOFA AND REGALED THE GIRLS WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE WEATHER
sailing in—the hostess and some visitors who were staying in the house were not yet down; so Mrs. Trimmings sat on a sofa and regaled the girls with a description of the weather which Lady Lobbington was experiencing in Scotland.

Presently Lady Covertside entered.

'No one down but you, girls?' she said. 'Lucy is generally first. By the way, you know Mrs. Lyghte, don't you, Mrs. Trimmings? She and her husband are staying with us, I'm glad to say, and he is kindly going to stage-manage his play. Isn't it lucky that we've been able to catch him?'

From that point of view it was lucky, perhaps; but the information much disquieted Mrs. Trimmings. She had, indeed, professed a close intimacy with the Lyghtes; but the fact was that she had never, so far as she knew, seen either of them in her life—how could she by any possibility have guessed that there was a prospect of their coming down to Covertside? And, moreover, the 'Lucy,' which evidently referred to Mrs. Lyghte, showed that she was on intimate terms with the family.

'I'm really vexed with Lucy,' Ethel interposed. 'I do think it's mean of her!'

'Don't be silly, dear. I quite understand, myself,' Lady Covertside rejoined.

'I don't mind. I'm cross,' the girl replied, with a pout. 'She knows how we wanted her to come, and she goes and stays at an hotel within three miles of the house.'

'My dear, she wanted a little perfect rest and quiet for Edith, and you can't say that our nursery is a very quiet place just now. Besides, she'd fixed to-day, and didn't know whom we might have in the house.'
'She might have suggested it—a friend like her!' Ethel went on, resolved to maintain her own opinion and keep up her affectionate little grievance with her friend.

A vaguely unpleasant sensation began to steal over Mrs. Trimmings—a dim suspicion crept into her mind.

'Has Mrs. Lyghte been staying at Eastcliff?' she asked.

'Yes, she has been for nearly a week at the hotel,' Lady Covertside answered.

'It's—it's strange I did not see her,' Mrs. Trimmings replied, for the reason that she did not see what other reply was possible at the moment. How was she to get out of this hobble? 'I hope she liked it,' she added.

'Yes, she liked the place very much, though she had an unpleasant experience one day. One of the lodging-house keepers was very rude to her,' Lady Covertside replied. 'I can't think which house Lucy can mean,' she continued; and then, in explanation to Mrs. Trimmings, 'She was sitting under the shelter of a wall, out of the wind—her little child, a dear little thing, has been ill for a long while; they despaired of its life at one time, but it is growing quite strong, though it still needs much care—when a vulgar woman went up to her and very rudely told her to go away. I can't think who the woman could be—it's so unlike the Eastcliff people—or what green she can be speaking of.'

It had come! Mrs. Trimmings gasped.

'What I can't make out!' Lady Hilda indignantly exclaimed, 'is how any woman could be brute enough to drive a delicate little child away from a shelter into the bitter east wind! What can such a woman be made of?
The gross insolence of the thing, too! I only wish we could find out who it was! I should like to let her know what I think of her.'

Lady Hilda quite casually glanced at Mrs. Trimmings, and something in the red face she saw before her arrested her attention; but Lady Covertside did not observe, and rejoined—

'I'm really disposed to share your indignation, Hilda. It was, I think, the most unwarrantable liberty I ever heard of, for Lucy cannot possibly have strayed into private ground. I can't see the woman's object in being so offensive.'

What was the wretched Mrs. Trimmings to say? This was putting the matter in an entirely new light, and looked at from this point of view, the conduct described did seem barbarous. The feelings of the young mother and her delicate child had not entered into Mrs. Trimmings's thoughts; she had only considered the invasion of 'her' green, and the situation generally was so overpowering that she—she, the friend of dear Lady Lobbington—was too overcome to resent the idea of having been mistaken for a vulgar lodging-house keeper!

At that moment the door opened, and Mrs. Trimmings turned a despairing gaze towards it. It was as she had feared—her surmise had been but too accurate! The young lady who entered with her husband was too surely the lady of the hill. Impulsive Ethel jumped up and kissed her friend.

'I'm very angry with you, Lucy, and I'm going to quarrel with you; but I'm so glad to see you that I'll keep the quarrel till to-morrow!' she cried.

'Come and sit by the fire, dear; it grows chilly in
the evening. Oh, by the way, you know Mrs. Trimmings, don’t you? I need not introduce you!’

The hapless Mrs. Trimmings, with a look of agony on her face, tried to say something, but the words would not come, and instead of the rapturous greeting that might have been expected, Lucy, after glancing at her husband—a look, the significance of which Mrs. Trimmings had the perception to understand perfectly—bowed very coldly, and said in a tone which made Lady Covertside look up in astonishment, ‘I have—had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Trimmings once before.’

The ‘once’ sounded oddly, and the speaker’s manner showed plainly enough that the meeting had not been an agreeable one. Lady Hilda’s quick wits grasped the situation, and the wretched Mrs. Trimmings, catching her eye, felt that she knew. The arrival of guests caused a diversion, however, and Mrs. Trimmings, limp and miserable, was led to the dining-room. She did not enjoy her dinner. How little we know what is going to happen to us! This was the evening for which she had longed, and now that it had come, it was about the most wretched she had ever spent. Her neighbours tried her with one or two remarks, but she made incoherent replies which showed that she did not understand what was said to her. As for the conference about the theatricals, she had not an idea to utter, and at the earliest possible opportunity she ordered her carriage. Lady Covertside was conventionally polite, but said ‘Good night’ with a cold severity which showed how little she really desired that her guest might enjoy repose. Hilda bowed, but determinedly avoided giving her hand; Ethel deliberately walked to the other end of the long drawing-room just as her turn to bid their visitor farewell was
coming, and put her arm round the waist of her friend Lucy.

As Mrs. Trimmings drove home, the events of the evening seemed like a horrid dream, but she knew that they were only too true, and felt that she could not again face Lady Covertside and her daughters, whom she had formerly so longed to see. She set off next morning for London, and proposes to winter abroad. It is thought (and hoped by those who know her best) that she may never return to Eastcliff.
"The favourite wins!" 'He's won now!' 'Come on, Hamlet!' 'Hamlet's won!' 'I knew it was a certainty; why didn't I have a real dash?': Such and similar were the cries which accompanied the finish of a National Hunt flat race at Sanfield Park; and there seemed reason in the current opinion. Hamlet, a good-looking four-year-old, lately bought in Ireland, had started a hot favourite, partly because his form in a preceding race justified the laying of 2 to 1, and partly because he was ridden by the well-known Jack Tomkins, nominally a gentleman-rider, and well described by the latter half of the compound word, infinitesimal as was his claim to the former. There had been five starters; three wretches were tailed off; Beanfeast was leading two or three lengths at the distance, but on her back was that enthusiastic young amateur, Harry Montague, whose proceedings in the saddle were invariably erratic in the extreme.

Montague stuck to riding with indomitable resolution, in spite of the chaff with which his efforts were received by his friends—chaff which was always good-natured, however, for Harry was the best of good fellows, cheery, kind-hearted, and without an atom of conceit. For two
years he had ridden his own horses without ever winning a race; but he lived in hope, and hope—so often disappointed—was doubtless reviving in him now.

Why does the raw amateur find it so apparently impossible to sit still? Old Beanfeast was going strong; all that was wanted was for Harry to keep him at it with his hands; but he looked back at Hamlet, did not like what he saw, and up went that fatal whip, by the injudicious use of which so many races are thrown away.

'I knew it!' exclaimed Willie Skene, looking on from the Club enclosure. 'He might have just got home if he'd left the old horse alone, and now he's done it again!'

'Poor old boy, I wish he'd given himself a chance. He is so keen, I should love to see him win a race,' Charlie Addington replied. 'What a pretty horseman that brute Tomkins is!'

The comment was justified. Over a country or on the flat there was scarcely a better rider in the ranks of professionals; and the contrast between him and Montague, who was now all over his horse, could not well have been more striking. 'Hit him, sir, hit him! No, by Jove, he's missed him!' was the advice and observation of an onlooker, when just such another rider as Harry Montague was trying to finish one day; but Harry did get one or two in! Beanfeast—with his head loose, of course—swerved and scrambled, while Hamlet was gradually but surely catching him. All the same, they were now very near the post, and the second had a full length to make up. An accidental prick from the spur on the near shoulder rather straightened the leader, and rapidly as Hamlet was overhauling him, it looked almost
a dead heat—no one could be quite sure which had won—as they passed the post.

'I say! He ran that fine! I suppose he did get up?' Skene remarked.

'It looked almost a Dead Heat

'Of course he did; Tomkins doesn’t make mistakes. But it was a very short head, all the same! What’s Hamlet’s number? 2?—there it goes. No, by Jove! Look! 5! Harry’s won. What a joke!'
‘Well, he certainly didn’t deserve to win; but there it is. Let’s go and see him,’ Skene continued, and they hurried from their places to go round and meet the triumphant jockey on his return to the scale.

Harry was blowing like a grampus, more from excitement than want of condition, as he sat in the saddle by the weighing-room door, realising the delightful fact that he had won a race at last—actually, and no mistake about it, won—and that, too, after a desperate fight with probably the most accomplished—if least respectable—of all possible adversaries. When he slid from his horse, his fingers trembled so much that he could hardly unbuckle the girths.

‘Well, old chap, you rode like a demon—a somewhat wild and injudicious demon, perhaps—but you got there all the same, and that’s the great thing, after all!’ Addington said to him, patting him on the shoulder.

‘Yes, at last, old boy, but I thought he’d done me,’ Harry answered jubilantly. ‘Of course I know you’re going to say I started riding too soon, but you don’t know how awful it is to have that fellow stealing up behind you, and how it makes you want to get home!’

‘You’ll buy the old horse in, I suppose?’ Skene said, in a low tone, as he walked into the weighing-room with the saddle-laden victor.

‘Buy him in? I should think so, after winning on him! Would you mind bidding for me?’

‘What will you give? Let’s see, he cost you 240, didn’t he?’

‘Yes; but I wouldn’t let him go for twice that, though I’m not flush just now, and I had only a tenner on. He must have come on, you know, a lot. A head better than Hamlet! and, of course, I know that
Tomkins can give me a lot of weight, though I did beat him, didn’t I? and after a deuce of a set-to in the bargain! he grimaced with delight. ‘I suppose he left it too long; thought he’d catch me easier than he did. I don’t think I’m quite as bad as I was, you know, old chap. You must learn a lot in the course of time, and I’ve ridden close on thirty races without winning!’

‘Oh, yes, you’re coming on—by degrees. But am I to go to a monkey?’ Addington asked, and the beaming jockey, as he prepared to enter the scales, begged him to do so, and a little over if necessary.

‘Tomkins took things too easy for once; those clever fellows are too clever at times,’ young Crichton observed to his friend Cecil, one of the stewards of the meeting, as they strolled towards the paddock; and Cecil, with some hesitation, replied musingly, ‘Yes, I suppose so.’

Also approaching the ring now being formed round the auctioneer were Tomkins, the unsuccessful jockey, and Payne, the owner of Hamlet. Their faces were alike imperturbable, and their voices low, but there was an accent of satisfaction in Payne’s subdued tones.

‘You never rode a better race than that, Jack, in all your life,’ he muttered. ‘Couldn’t have been more neatly done!’

‘I don’t know; I wasn’t happy till the number went up, I can tell you. I thought the silly young fool must have gone a bit faster at the end, and I almost came too soon. I calculated on letting him win a good neck. Did anyone say anything?’ Tomkins inquired.

‘No, not anyone to take notice of. Larkin said, “I suppose that just suited you!”’ but I didn’t answer. Craik and his friend were doing the job for us, and I suppose we shall get a fairish bit more for second.
Young Montague won't let it go, I expect; we shall be safe bidding up to near on a monkey!

'What may I say for the winner, gentlemen?' the auctioneer began. 'He won handsomely, gentlemen, beating a good horse,' &c. &c. Ultimately Beanfeast was bought in for 480 guineas, leaving 200l. surplus for Messrs. Payne and Tomkins, in addition to some 600l. they had made by laying against their own horse; for, as the reader will have gathered from the scraps of conversation that have been recorded, these two astute personages had perceived that money could be made with greater certainty by losing than by winning the race. Bad as the other three starters had been, the two could not trust so very poor a horseman as Montague to win outright; they hoped he would do so, but it was not good enough for them to bet on; still, whatever beat Hamlet was sure to realise something that would leave a decent surplus for the second. Craik, a bookmaker of their own kidney, had undertaken to get what he could out of their horse, and besides the money that they thus won, if the roguery could be carried out without awakening suspicion, a very incorrect idea of Hamlet's real capacity would remain to be turned to account on some future occasion. Lord Cecil's hesitation in agreeing that Tomkins had made a mistake arose from a dim perception of what had really taken place; but Tomkins had ridden his nefarious race with a skill which went far to quell suspicion, and Cecil could do no more than make a mental note.

Poor Harry would have been less happy if he had only known the true state of the case. He hoped everyone he knew would come and talk to him about the race; and then there was the special 'Standard' to be read,
and all the sporting papers next day, and the weeklies after that! Men would come up to him in his club and say, 'You won a race at Sanfield, I see.' There it was on the boards of all the clubs at the present moment! Fellows would read it, and say to each other, 'Hamlet was beaten, I see; Montague won on his own horse!' His trainer, too, must think better of him, and the circumstance that he could not have thought much hitherto had been a standing source of regret to Harry. Winning meant such a lot! He had a place at last in the list of successful riders, and he really did not like to take off the blue and white striped jacket that had been first past the post.

A battered old hanger-on to racecourses, Jerry Smithers, had for a long time past attached himself to Harry's service, carried his bag to and from the station, and made himself as useful as he knew how, and Harry by no means despised the old man's congratulations.

'Done it at last, sir, and I'm real glad! I knowed you would some day if you stuck to it, and you rode a good race home, too, sir. A bit too flurried, if you'll excuse me, sir, when you see him coming to you; but he's a desperate fellow to be alongside of, is Tomkins, sir.'

'Thank you, Jerry; I'm afraid you didn't back me,' Harry replied, half trying to persuade himself that it was in the least likely the old man might have done so.

'No, sir. I didn't have no bet. Things is very bad, sir, and my rheumatics do trouble me so I can't get about as I should like. Missed two weeks, sir; had to stay abed, and then there's nothing to be picked up.'

'No nearer to the bird-shop, Jerry?' Montague
asked, as at length he drew off his colours. 'You haven't taken that yet?'

'No, sir,' Jerry answered with a sigh; 'the old woman is always talking of it; but we don't get no nearer. Ah, sir, if I could once get a start, me as knows what birds is! To see them and have 'em chirruping and chirping, and the singing ones going of it! To sit in the warm—it's been my dream of happiness; but I have no luck!'

'You back winners sometimes, don't you, Jerry?'

'Yes, sir, for half-a-crown or five shillings, and make a bit and lose it. I can't win at the game, sir; I hears too much for one thing, and studies the form too much for another—the two don't agree. Thank you kindly, sir, and I hope you'll keep on now that you've begun.'

Harry was too anxious to get out and talk about the race to linger in the room now that he was dressed, and if some of his friends were inclined to chaff him about his finish—the only spur mark on old Beanfeast had been on his shoulder—it is a very soothing reply to an argument that, whatever happened in the race, your number went up when it was over.

CHAPTER II

'He looks well, doesn't he?' Harry Montague, dressed ready to ride, suggested to Skene and Addington some ten days later. They had met in the paddock at the Gatton meeting, and watched old Beanfeast being led round and round. In truth the old horse had looked much about the same for the last three years—rather round in the joints, a bit curious about the hocks, and
devoid of any points on which the eye of the impartial critic could dwell with pleasure; but the owner of a steed that has carried him to victory after a long succession of failures to get first past the post is not quite an unprejudiced judge. Harry had been very happy since Sanfield Meeting, although he had derived a somewhat mitigated satisfaction from the papers. Most of them had seemed to him culpably deficient in comment.

Their announcements, as a rule, had been far too bare. They had merely, for the most part, said that the race was won by Beanfeast, ridden by his owner; one had indeed declared that 'after a most energetic attempt to throw the race away, Mr. Montague had gained an entirely unmerited victory,' and another had referred to the owner’s 'admirably successful imitation of a wind-mill in a gale'; but a more amiable writer had said that
it was pleasant to see perseverance rewarded; a few others had made comparatively civil remarks, and the result of the whole was to make him doubly anxious to win again.

‘There go the numbers, six runners, and very, very bad indeed, bar Hamlet. Now, do just tell me what you really think, Willie,’ Montague said. ‘Have I a chance?’

‘Well, my boy, you must have, of course, on form; and if you won’t mind my saying so, I’m sure you’d have won easier, much easier, last time if you’d sat still; so you’ve got a bit in hand that way if you have a little more patience,’ Skene replied.

‘I think the old horse is better, too. He was short of a gallop before—they are rather afraid of that leg, you know—so that’s another trifle the right way, and every little helps. Look at poor old Jerry; he’s dreadfully lame to-day. Thank you, Jerry,’ he continued, when the old man had come up and expressed his good wishes. ‘You’re on three sovereigns towards the bird-shop if we win.’

Montague was, in fact, rather hopeful than sanguine; but quite a different tone prevailed in a little group of three—Payne, Tomkins, and Craik’s friend and partner—who were discussing the situation together, awaiting the instruction to ‘Mount, gentlemen, please.’ Craik had sent word that every arrangement had been made for the starting-price dash on Hamlet.

‘It’s simply the best thing I ever knew racing,’ Tomkins replied to the inquiry of the friend as to whether there was no way in which it could ‘come undone.’ ‘Why, 21 lb. wouldn’t bring them together if Montague could ride. You’ll see what will happen.
They say I left it too long last time; well, I shan't leave it too long this!

'We shall have to let the horse go,' Payne broke in. 'I'm told that that there Lord Cecil thinks something about the last time he was out, so Jack will come along this time; and there's the excuse, if they say anything, that he didn't make enough use of him before. See?'

'IT'll never be in doubt, my boy, and I can tell you I want it. Things have been going very queer of late,' Tomkins rejoined.

It is curious that the rogue so seldom thrives in the long run. This may be said without depreciating the astuteness of the few 'professional backers' who furnish exceptions to the rule, though we have the satisfaction of seeing some of the most rascally of these hard hit, and indeed knocked out, at times. Payne and Tomkins had recently found people who played their own game better than they, and had suffered in consequence—and they would indeed have been in a bad way, to the great advantage of the turf, had they not known that Hamlet was a little gold mine. Of the six starters, Beanfeast was a long way second best, even allowing for lack of jockeyship on the part of his owner; two of the other riders, indeed, were quite as bad as he, and their horses were worse than Harry's, who did go a bit when he had been kept sound enough to do a little work—in fact, the confidence in Hamlet was entirely justified; and as he cantered to the post, there was a business-like look about him and his jockey which showed why the ring were offering to take odds and were laying 2 to 1 and 5 to 2 against Beanfeast, in spite of form that was not ten days old.

The field were at the post, the flag was up, and down
it fell; the six started in a line that was speedily broken by the appearance in front of the red jacket carried by Hamlet.

'Tomkins is bringing them along!' Addington observed to Skene. 'What's his game? To take the steel out of his horse and let Harry catch him, do you think? They are coming a rare bat!'

'The Flag was up, and down it fell

'I'm afraid the steel will be out of Beanfeast first. I don't think the old beggar will like being hustled like that. Look! the last two are dead beat already,' Skene rejoined.

More than half the journey was covered, and the four-year-old was ten lengths ahead; Beanfeast second, two or three lengths in front of the next couple, that were side by side; the last pair dropping further and further into the rear.
'He's not slowing down,' Addington said. 'Poor old Harry! how he must be longing to get up his flail! But he vowed he wouldn't touch his horse till the last dozen strides, whatever happened.'

'Oh, Hamlet's won in a walk,' Skene answered. 'There goes Harry. I knew he couldn't stand it any longer; but it's no good, old boy, you're done!'

Harry had broken his resolution long before the distance was reached; but there was some sort of excuse for him all the same, for, doing his best without coercion, the gap between himself and the leader was increasing. He might have saved himself the trouble, nevertheless. Beanfeast could not mend his pace. Hamlet was still going at his ease, and, recognising the hopelessness of the case, Harry wisely ceased to persevere, leaving Hamlet to win in a canter by twenty lengths.

It was a sore disappointment to the beaten jockey. A lingering notion that possibly he had not won the previous race on his merits had vexed him, and he was doubly anxious to prove—to be able to feel—that there had been no mistake. That victory had been so pleasant! and what could such a hollow beating this time mean? The old horse was well, he knew; he had done nothing stupid, had not hurried off in pursuit of the leader till Beanfeast was well on his legs, but nevertheless had lost no time by reason of any vain hope that Tomkins did not know how fast he was going, and would come back to him. He was fully conscious of Tomkins' excellent judgment, and after the first quarter of a mile or so had steadily endeavoured to do a little more than keep his place—gradually to get just somewhat nearer to the red jacket that was dashing along in front. No one, indeed, could have ridden better. The truth was
that Tomkins was perfectly correct as to the relative form of the two horses. He had said that he had a good 21 lb. in hand, and that was just about the state of the case.

Skene and Addington received him at the weighing-room door with a sobriety of demeanour unlike the jubilation of the Sanfield success.

'Odd change of form!' Addington remarked. 'It wasn't your fault, old boy. You couldn't have done more!'

Harry dismounted, and began to undo his girth. 'It's good of you to say so, old chap; but I don't know. I ought to have been nearer at least, I expect,' he replied; and just then old Jerry, hobbling and panting, forced his way through the crowd. With much eagerness and a hurried 'Beg pardon, sir,' he touched his patron on the arm.

'Well, Jerry, I'm sorry you did not win your little bet,' Harry said, with a rather sickly smile—to have been beaten in such hollow fashion was a blow.

But Jerry had something to say, and as he said it, walking by Harry's side, as he went towards the weighing-room, a strange look of incredulity and surprise on Harry's face gradually changed to a smile of satisfaction.

Satisfaction was also predominant in another little group close at hand. Tomkins' countenance was not an expressive one, but a grin spread over his features as he listened to the account Craik's friend had to give of these proceedings. There was nearly 3,000l. for Payne and his gentleman-rider to divide, the biggest haul they had ever made.

'That silly young bleater, Montague, thought he was sure to win—he did, I tell you! "Going to do me
again?” I says, as we went to the post. “I’m going to try,” says he. “Well, don’t you try too hard,” I says, “because you might hurt yourself,” and he looked at his friends for applause at so shrewd a witticism. ‘Tom Tubb did laugh,’ he continued; ‘Shall I put him over the rails for you?’ he says, quiet, when Montague had gone on to speak to Mr. Coventry. ‘I’ll do it with pleasure,” he says, “if he’s in the way”; but I says——'

‘What’s that? Objection? What for, I’d like to know? Because I won too far, I suppose. Objection, indeed! That’s good!’

Tomkins and Payne had almost reached the weighing-room door, when someone emerged from it uttering this totally unexpected cry, and the crowd round about immediately began to ask each other what it could mean, and what was wrong. From start to finish the winner had been out by himself; certainly there was no bumping. Weight? Payne and Tomkins were not in the least likely to make a mistake; unless they did it on purpose, and that seemed in the highest degree improbable in the present case. What could it be?

Tomkins and Payne entered the room just a trifle disturbed, but confident that there could be nothing really wrong.

‘Who’s objecting, and what for?’ Tomkins asked.

‘Wrong age, Mr. Tomkins,’ they say. ‘Hamlet is said to be a five-year-old,’ a courteous official said.

‘What rot!’ Tomkins replied, with much wrath and indignation. ‘Who says it?’ But he began to quake, for assertions so easy of proof are not often made without good reason.
And, of course, the reason was good. Jerry, it appeared, had been standing to watch the race next to an acquaintance, an Irish tatterdemalion, who earned a precarious livelihood on racecourses.

'Ah! it was a good thing,' Jerry had muttered, when he saw Beanfeast beaten and his three pounds done for.

'It wouldn't be so good if I'd been on the second!' his Irish friend had mysteriously remarked, and Jerry had naturally inquired what he meant. Thus it came out, indulgence in the favourite spirit of his native land having rendered him incautiously frank. He had recognised Hamlet as a horse he had known well in Ireland; had taken pains to ask a question or two about the son of Danebury and Gertrude; and had made up his mind, from what he heard, to interview the owner, and see what he could get for holding his tongue. Jerry, eager to do his patron a turn, and not oblivious, it may be, to reviving hopes of his three pounds, persuaded his friend that he would do better to let the owner of the second know of his discovery; and one way was as satisfactory as the other to the Irishman with an eye for a horse, who was duly rewarded, and drank his own, and Jerry's, and Harry's, and Beanfeast's health continuously for a month, for the matter was very soon settled—objection sustained—race awarded to Beanfeast.

Harry was not altogether satisfied, for Hamlet had beaten him so very easily; but it soon became apparent what a really good horse at this game the five-year-old was, and when, soon afterwards, Harry won another race in quite a moderately good little field, he grew more pleased with himself and old Beanfeast. By degrees,
too, he began to ride with judgment, and over a country
or on the flat is now far from being despised. The
stake which the disqualification of Hamlet had put to his
credit was 200l.; he divided it with Jerry, who started
his long-desired bird-shop, and has done so well with his
canaries that he is thinking of launching out wildly into
piping bullfinches.
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