

HOOF BEATS

FROM

VIRGINIA

&

OTHER LANDS





JOHN A. SEAVERNIS



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Merry Christmas to
Jimmy from
Theodora and
Aunt Rebecca,

Webster Family Library of Veterinary Medicine
Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at
Tufts University
200 Westboro Road
North Grafton, MA 01536



IN THE END HE CAME QUIETLY UP AND PUT HIS NOSE INTO FULLERTON'S
OUTSTRETCHED HAND

HOOF BEATS

FROM

V I R G I N I A

&

OTHER LANDS

PHILIP HICHBORN



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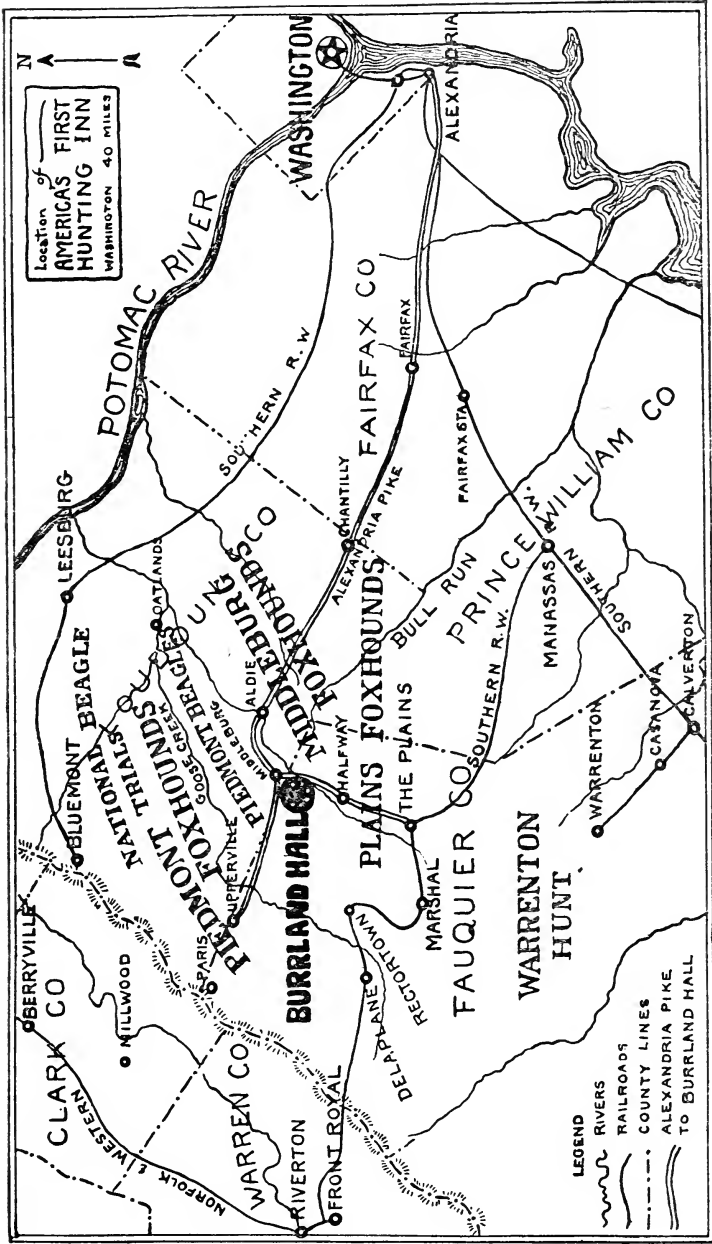
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To my Mother

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Virginia United Hunts District

HOOF BEATS

THE MARQUIS

WHEN the Marquis was sixteen, they “blistered” him, “fired” him, and then turned him out. He was dead lame in his off fore-leg; he would never gallop again, they said, but that is not the end of the Marquis’s life-story, on the contrary, the crowning triumph of the Marquis’s existence was yet to come.

Fullerton, whose horse he was, did not remember exactly why he had called him the Marquis, he said, unless it was because as a colt his arrogant pride and his courage suggested that of the old French aristocrats when they walked, smiling, to the guillotine. Fullerton had said at the time that if the Marquis ever broke his leg and had to be shot he would limp out into the paddock, with his head up, his nostrils dilated in that slightly contemptuous air he always wore (for the Marquis was descended from “Torchlights” on the male side), and would take his medicine like a gentleman and a sportsman. On his mother’s side, there was good standard-bred stock, bourgeois perhaps, but honest straight through—and if the Marquis got

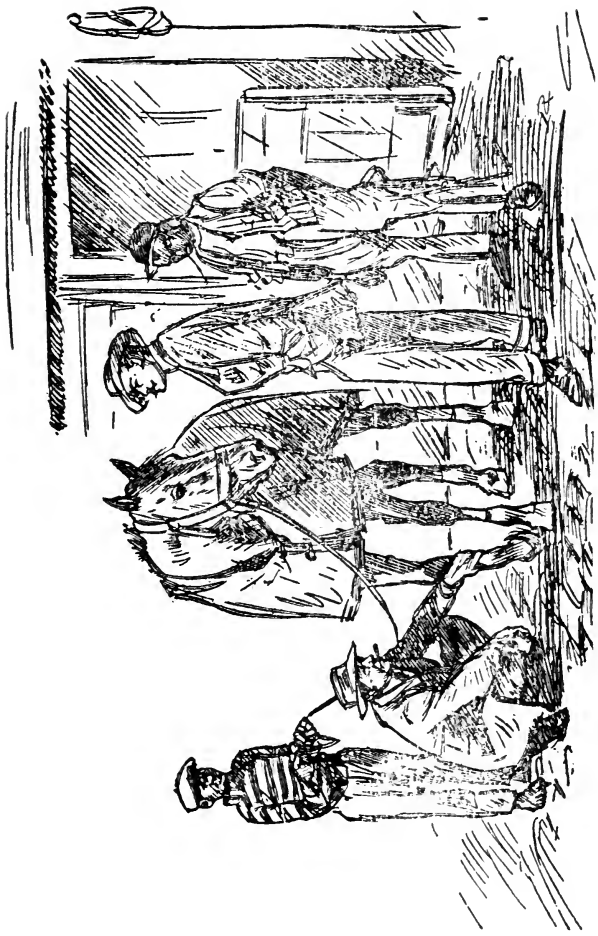
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his small ears and snake-like head and neck from his father, he got an extraordinary breadth of bone, a pair of quarters that couldn't be matched in Virginia, and some good hard common sense from his mother.

But the Marquis was sixteen years of age and he had been blistered, fired and turned out to pasture, which made the Marquis feel a good deal as it would an old veteran, who was being pensioned off at a soldier's home. The court that passed sentence on him consisted of Fullerton himself, which in itself was difficult for the Marquis to overlook, and Taylor the best "vet" in the South. The latter, squatting on his heels by the Marquis's foreleg, ran his hand carefully and skillfully over the tendon, then looked up at Fullerton and shook his head.

"He'll never gallop again," he said slowly; "he's been a great horse—but never again."

For a moment Fullerton looked away, out over the broad sweeping stretches of green fields and fences—big fences they were, too, and stone walls with a rail or two laid across, that made a horse pick up his feet well under him and do his level best each time—and Fullerton was afraid to look back again at the Marquis, who was playfully nipping his arm with the special privilege of old friendship. So Fullerton strode off to the house without a word, and called for old black Ephram.



"HE'LL NEVER GALLOP AGAIN," HE SAID SLOWLY

The Marquis

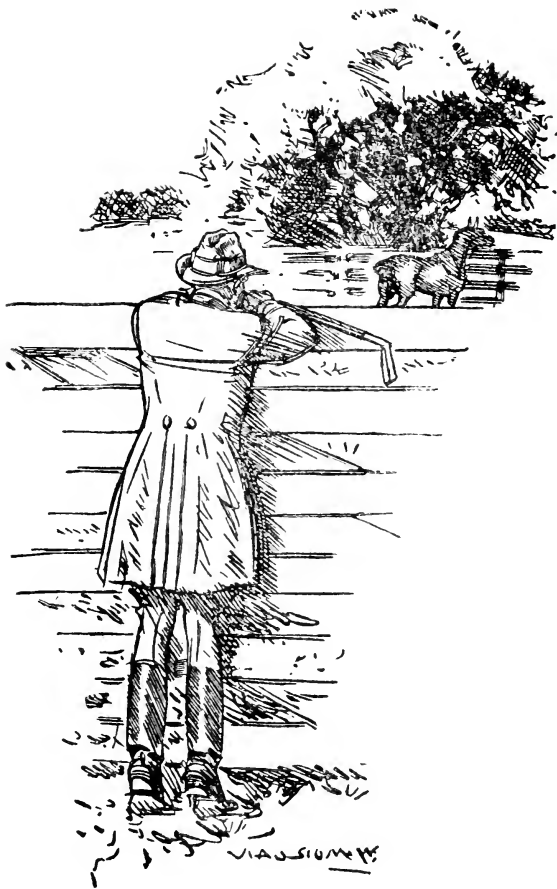
“Put the Marquis in the Spring Run pasture,” he said more sharply to the old man than he had ever spoken before. “He’s done for,” he added over his shoulder, as he went up the steps into the house. But the Marquis was not only hurt, but angry, and while it was comparatively easy for Ephram to lead the Marquis to the pasture—the latter being willing, of course—it was quite a different matter to keep him there, as will be readily seen later on. Fullerton did not depend entirely upon his trades for fodder for his horses or meat for himself, and so the “Spring Run” pasture, in which the Marquis found himself, was surrounded by a five-foot-six, white-washed board fence, that so far had effectually imprisoned any of the young horses usually turned out there. And, moreover, everyone in the neighborhood, even the most reckless ones, with the exception of one or two, in their cups, had passed the pasture fence by, and one of these—said old Ephram, who saw it—it threw half-way across the field, when his horse got too close under it as he jumped, and turned completely over. The other horse, Ephram told Fullerton “lep” it rather prettily, but his rider being somewhat cooler once over and more prudent, swore that he would stay there all night and be d—, before he would ride *out* of Spring Run pasture that night or any other. And it is true

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that the jump out is peculiarly nasty, being soft from where the brook overflows after a rain, and down-hill with a two-foot drop for a landing.

The Marquis seemed rather depressed those early fall days, and would stand in the corner of the fence, rubbing the side of his neck now and then, or gnawing off the top of the rail and if no one was there and the old brood mare in the next field with her silly stiff-legged foal was looking the other way, he would pick up the off foreleg that pained him and trembled a little. Then he would hold it a few inches off the ground, four or five minutes at a time, though, of course, the Marquis really never admitted even to himself that there was anything the matter, and pretended to believe that Fullerton was an ingrate, and Taylor the "vet" an unconscionable, crooked quack.

It had been warm during nearly all of October, and the grass and the trees as green as they had been the spring before, but as October passed and November drew near, there came a chill into the nights and the Marquis had begun to notice it—the fresh crispness in the air, and the smell of the early fall. He noticed the changed appearance of the trees, the sudden splashes of red and gold on the distant hills, and, whenever he got to thinking, standing there hock deep in a carpet of crisp, dried leaves, in the little gully beneath the old oak tree



THE MARQUIS WOULD SOMETIMES COMPLETELY IGNORE HIM

The Marquis

near the spring, he kicked himself into a temper. Fullerton occasionally came down there to lean on the fence and have a chat with the Marquis, but the Marquis was beginning to be much less hurt, and a great deal more angry—for he could stand quite a long time now on that condemned foreleg without pain—and Fullerton often had his trouble for nothing, since the Marquis sometimes would completely ignore him and go to the opposite end of the pasture with as much *sang froid* as you please. The Marquis, you must remember always, was born and bred a Torchlight, and besides was half-brother to Prince Royal who, as everyone knows, won the English Derby in 189-.

Then early one morning, quite far in the distance, he heard a familiar sound, and a little later saw Fullerton ride down the driveway on his latest three-year-old—a likely youngster, the Marquis had to admit—though the blood surged into his head and he kicked at the fence for an hour, off and on, when he thought that probably now this flea-bitten beast, with the long ewe neck, would take his place, and then with Fullerton up would show the county the way 'cross country, when hounds were in full cry. The familiar sound the Marquis heard was the ta-ta-ta-a-a of the master's horn, and it came softly and clearly

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from over the hills far away, to a pair of small, shapely, pointed ears, cocked attentively forward.

The Marquis listened a moment, then threw up his head with a snort, and with his tail held straight out, went trotting across the field, lifting his feet high and whinnying. His off foreleg was as good as the near one now. He had known all along it amounted to nothing. The Torchlights were a little wild, perhaps, in their youth—one might even be killed now and then—but they died “sound,” with their boots on as it were, not with bowed tendons or splints or curbs, but game and fighting to their glorious sporting end. So the Marquis made a swift circle of the pasture until he reached the upper end again, then he stood, his shoulders against the fence, his head stretched far out and trembling. With a sudden inspiration up went his sleek fine-bred head in the air with a squeal, and he wheeled directly about, galloped back a dozen yards, then dug his hind hoofs into the soft soil. His back roached, his quarters swelled with muscles, and with three long strides he reached the fence, another, and he rose into the air, seemed to hang for a fleeting instant upon the top rail, his two unshod hind hoofs just making a light rat-tat as they hovered, then his forelegs shot out straight and he dropped down the steep descent on the far side. Off he went, racing

The Marquis

down over the open meadow-land, and the Marquis had proved the "vet" was wrong. The tendon had been cruelly tested and had not been found wanting at the crucial moment. But the Marquis stopped at the top of the next hill; he heard no longer the sound of the horn, for he was to windward of it now and could neither hear nor scent the direction.

That evening when Fullerton rode home, covered with mud and happy, he saw the Marquis as usual in the Spring Run pasture, but when he called gaily to him, the Marquis did not stop nibbling at a particularly delicious tuft of grass, which he pretended to have discovered, but treated Fullerton with all the aristocratic scorn which it is possible for one with such antecedents as the Marquis to put into a single snub. Fullerton seemed rather inclined to treat the matter lightly—he had had a good day's hunting, and they had "killed" over there, near the mill on the Harris place; so he chuckled audibly at the superb, studied indifference of the Marquis, and called him old "bowed tendon." When Fullerton had gone the Marquis stopped nibbling, sniffed disgustedly and swished his tail in a burst of pent-up anger. The Torchlights all had very bad tempers when aroused, but it was usually soon over, and the Marquis was truly devoted to Fullerton.

Hoof Beats

“We’ll see,” he thought, and bared his teeth, which had grown long and showed his age quite plainly. “We’ll see about that bowed tendon, and you needn’t laugh so heartily yourself, for your seat isn’t what it used to be, nor your hands so light as they were when I was a likely three-year-old, and your knees used to shut on the saddle like the teeth of a steel trap, and the feel of the bit in my mouth was as gentle and confident as—” but the Marquis was no longer angry and was thinking of old times, though he meant to get even just the same. The Torchlights had never let a slight like that pass, and the Marquis was one of the best.

That evening when old Ephram went down to the paddock to take up the Marquis for the night, the latter pretended to be more sore than ever in his off foreleg, and limped worse than Ephram, himself crippled with rheumatism in the knees, so that finally the old man stopped for a moment in the road to rest him.

“Marquis,” he said, “we sho’ly has see our day,” then went on again shaking his head and muttering, but the Marquis only bit him smartly on the shoulder for reply, and received a whack from Ephram’s stick in return.

All the following morning the Marquis watched Fullerton, in the adjoining pasture, schooling



“MARQUIS,” HE SAID, “WE SHO’LD HAVE BOTH SEEN OUR DAY.”

The Marquis

and showing his youngsters over a couple of made jumps, to the stranger from the city, who had come down into Virginia to buy, and didn't care a rap for the price, if he could find what he wanted: "A horse that could carry his weight (he rode at a hundred and eighty), that could gallop, and jump the side of a house if need be," was the way the stranger, whose name was Williams, expressed it. The next day was a hunting appointment, and Fullerton was giving Williams his choice. Williams stood looking on indifferently; he had been searching for what he wanted for a month, and he knew a good horse when he saw one. At last he called to Fullerton.

"That last one," he said, pointing to a short-coupled, thoroughbred brown gelding, "looks as if he had some bottom and might possibly stand up under my weight. I'll hunt him to-morrow, what do you say?" Fullerton nodded. The Marquis looked away in disgust. He had known that brown gelding from a foal, and he never had shown any nerve, though he might possibly look well to a plow.

The men passed quite near the Spring Run pasture on their way back to the house, and Williams stopped for a moment, leaning, arms on the gate. "See here, Fullerton, you didn't show me that one," he exclaimed, "now that's what I call a

Hoof Beats

horse—bone, power and courage. Just look at his eye. I'll bet you anything you like he could carry my weight." But Fullerton only laughed and shook his head.

"He could have once, I dare say. In his day he couldn't be beat over big or trappy country; he's one of Torchlight's sons and a half-brother to Prince Royal, you know; but he's sixteen years old and has bowed a tendon badly. He can't take a step; he's dead lame."

And the Marquis gritted his teeth maliciously and took several steps, dead lame. He had suddenly made up his mind. He watched the two men down the road until they had entirely passed from sight, then he swung lightly about and quickly gathering his speed popped over the pasture fence, and then back again. The tendon was as good as ever, and the fence a mere bagatelle.

The next morning early as usual, old Ephram led the Marquis down to the pasture and sent him bucking and kicking into it with a hearty slap on his quarter, then closed the gate upon him. There was an air of suppressed excitement about the Marquis this morning and every now and then he would stand listening, his ears pointing attentively forward, first toward the house and then toward the broad sweeping country below and the distant hills. At last he saw approaching, Fullerton in

The Marquis

pink, riding his flea-bitten gray and beside him Williams on the thoroughbred brown gelding. At the same instant came again that familiar sound, which had become part of the Marquis's life, from somewhere off in the distance—that single, repeated inspiring note of the horn—and he galloped madly about in the pasture, stopping first here and then there to listen, until he had caught the direction. Then he stood quietly until Fullerton and Williams had passed. He watched them walk leisurely on, over the meadows below, opening a gate now and again—then they, too, heard the horn, and put their horses into a brisk canter straight for the top of the hill.

The Marquis could easily follow the bright pink of Fullerton's coat and saw moving about here and there on the crest of the hill beyond, silhouetted against the gray sky, other bright spots of color—the master and whips and a few of the field—already assembled, while an uneasy rabble of brown and white leaped about on the ground. He waited until they had passed over the crest of the hill, then he whirled away from the fence a few strides, and without effort jumped cleanly over. Now he listened again for a moment, head erect and body trembling with excitement. All was silence. Then down the wind came a faint sound—hardly distinguishable at first except to the veteran ear—

Hoof Beats

the low, undecided cries of a few hounds suddenly come upon the scent, then all at once a deep resonant throaty bay from twenty couples of frenzied hounds that split the morning quietness and waked the countryside for a mile around.

The Marquis did not hesitate now, but bounded forward, down across the broad meadow-land, his long, free, thoroughbred manner of going, which he got from the Torchlight side, carrying him gracefully, fast as the eye could follow. Gates he took in his stride without slacking speed; now he reached the top of the hill and went springing down the other side, his legs moving under him like the pistons of a finely turned machine. He had seen them there below him—the pack somewhat straggling now, a few taking the lead, but all in full cry—and following closely after, a dozen men or so riding, as the Marquis would have expressed it, “Hell for leather.” Banging down the hill he went after them, never checking his speed except at a stone wall perhaps, where, for a moment, he gathered his strength beneath him, before he cleared it swiftly and landed running on the other side, well in hand.

A few minutes more and he had passed Williams on the brown gelding, and ahead of him, he could see, scattered over the field, Fullerton, urging his flea-bitten gray, and perhaps a dozen others. The

The Marquis

Marquis had galloped a hundred yards past Williams before anyone noticed him at all, then he heard one man near him shouting, "'Ware horse; someone's down—but he hasn't a stitch of leather!" The Marquis increased his pace and followed Fullerton so closely over a stiffish post and rail that the latter turned in his saddle and swore, but the words remained half said; his lower jaw hung open, and his eyes were round with wonder. The Marquis was galloping beside him, head out-stretched and eyes bright, half a dozen yards away without even deigning a look; he meant to give Fullerton the ride of his life, something to talk about for years to come, and to make him moan in his sleep.

"Where'd that horse come from, Fullerton?" the master yelled back over his shoulder. "Isn't that your old cripple; it looks like the Marquis to me."

But Fullerton only swallowed hard and blinked his astonished eyes in a dazed sort of way as if he had suddenly seen a ghost.

Williams had recognized the Marquis too, and was spurring on the brown gelding. "See here, Fullerton," he called, "isn't that your old chestnut? I thought you said he was—" but Fullerton only shook his head hopelessly and gesticulated in the air,

Hoof Beats

They were riding hard, for the scent was breast high and the music of the hounds was continuous and beautiful to hear. A big stone wall lay before them, but the Marquis remembered it was there long before anyone else did. He saw the master settle down in his saddle, steady his horse a bit, then shake him up sharply with a dig of his long hunting spurs. The Master was safely over and away, when Fullerton cut loose the flea-bitten gray who always rushed his jumps, and was bucking and fighting to follow—but the Marquis was off before and crossed them on the way. It was un-sportsmanlike he knew, he had never tolerated it himself from another, but everything was fair today. He jumped it neatly, just resting his hind hoofs for an instant on the rail on the top of the wall, but the flea-bitten gray had swerved and refused when the Marquis balked him and nearly put Fullerton off, so that the latter finally had to be given a lead over by the next man that came along. The gray had soured and was acting in a peculiarly nasty manner, but what seemed worse to Fullerton was the way the others laughed.

The pace was a hot one—they had not checked for an instant—and the fox was in plain sight most of the time, running hard, pressed by the foremost hounds. The Marquis was riding the Master close, and the latter was yelling himself

The Marquis

hoarse, waving his crop, and trying to keep him off, but this was the Marquis's day, and he hung the Master up at the "in and out" at Blindman's Lane, and left him swearing with rage while someone opened a gate, before they lost the hounds completely. The fox was doubling back now and Fullerton on the gray with Williams close behind him had caught up again with the first flight and the Marquis now in the lead. They came hammering down altogether, a steep plowed field on the side of a hill, at a four-foot draw-bar and ditch at the bottom, and the Marquis led the best man over by a dozen lengths or more. He judged it, with the experience of many years, to exactly the proper instant, rose in the air, clearing the fence by the eighth of an inch, just leaving the marks of his hoofs on the farthest side of the ditch. He looked back as he galloped, to watch the gray take it—a wild flying leap in the air, with no proper finish at all; and then came the brown gelding, with no courage to try it, but forced under whip and spur. He took it crazily, side-wise, and landed hind legs in the ditch, then scrambled out frightened half out of his wits. At the next fence the Marquis increased his speed and rode Fullerton off, and left him swearing and shaking his fist, while Williams, who had seen it all, rocked in his saddle with mirth.

Hoof Beats

“What’ll you take for the Marquis?” he cried, but Fullerton only beat the air with his arms and made unintelligible sounds. It was all clear open country now before them, broad and rolling, with only a patch of woods here and there. The pack made the most of it and with a final spurt for the next half mile near Blindman’s Lane, a little above where they had crossed it before, they chopped their quarry in the open, when only the Marquis was there.

Afterward both Fullerton and Williams rode home past the Spring Run pasture, and found the old Marquis there chewing a mouthful of cool mud. Both men got off and tied their horses outside and went in through the pasture gate, and Fullerton called to the Marquis to come. Then the Marquis made a circle of the pasture, proudly, disdainfully, but in the end he came quietly up and put his nose into Fullerton’s outstretched hand.

“I’ll give you a thousand dollars for him,” said Williams. “I don’t care if he’s forty years old. He can jump the side of a house!” But Fullerton only laughed.

“Two thousand,” said Williams quickly without a moment’s hesitation, and glanced at the spot on the Marquis’s foreleg, where the firing had burned the hair off and left it bare. But to Fullerton’s everlasting credit, let it be said, for he had been

The Marquis

sorely tried that day, he replied quite firmly that the Marquis was not for sale, and taking Williams by the arm, led him off to the house.

The Marquis watched them until they were out of sight, then he galloped the length of the pasture, squealed, and rolled over five times, sprang up, shook himself, and stood still, his head resting on the gate, waiting for old Ephram.

CLEOPATRA

RAWDON MERRYWEATHER is one of those men that horses, dogs, and children are always making a fuss over. The one are continually licking his hands or the other sitting in his lap from morning until night so that if one knows Merryweather as well as I do, there is nothing surprising in coming suddenly upon him, as I often have, sitting in the chair before the fire, with Gypsy Maid and her latest litter of eight tiny fox hounds yelping nearby, and reading aloud to somebody or other's brood of six children, draped all over him like presents on a Christmas tree. But the grown-ups like him, too. The men worship him, and their wives assume a motherly attitude and affect to regard him as a brand to be plucked from the burning.

Merryweather is tall, over six feet, with rather stooping, remarkably broad shoulders and long, thin riding legs, slightly bowed from years spent in the saddle. He has a keen, aquiline face, his skin weather-beaten to a red bronze and as tough

Cleopatra

as leather. It is well known that he has only two suits of clothes—a pair of riding breeches and a coat, the cut of which is the envy of the county, and evening clothes. And it must often happen that when he takes one off, he puts the other on, since he is in the saddle all day, and no one ever stays up late enough to see him go to bed, or gets up early enough to find him still asleep.

But what Merryweather lacks in the way of a trousseau, he makes up in horseflesh; for in his stable is a row of six stalls, correctly appointed overhead with plaited straw and ribbon, and in them stand six well-groomed blanketed hunters, beginning at the left with the little thoroughbred mare, *Cleopatra*, and ending on the right with the big sixteen-hand chestnut steeple-chaser *Assurance*, a half-brother to *Fire-Alarm*, that sensational jumper which had such great success in England two years ago.

When Merryweather and I graduated, he bought a small farm, several good horses, and took up fox-hunting where he left off before he went to college; while I, on the contrary, studied law, married, and after a number of years of hard work acquired a small practice which begins at last to pay. The point I wish to make clear is, that Merryweather, when he asked me to visit him for fox-hunting, was as hard and strong as a ten-pen-

Hoof Beats

ny nail, while I was as soft and flabby as could be after years of desk work and quick lunches.

Rawdon wrote me that the hunting was fine this fall; and as he had not seen me for a year, he wished that I would come up some Friday, spend Saturday and Sunday, and go out with the Pickerel Hounds. Why they were called Pickerel Hounds no one knows, not even Rawdon, who is the moving spirit in the county; but Pickerel Hounds, I assure you, can run as fast and give as much tongue as any other, so that if they know they are called Pickerel it does not seem to depress them in the least.

I had not been very well of late, and so Rawdon's invitation seemed the very thing, and I went. Priscilla, that's my wife, and Bill, that's my eldest, he's six, and little Marjory, all kissed me; and Priscilla looked so worried and kept saying so often "Do be careful, John," that the children, taking the cue from her, lisped "Poor Daddy" until I felt half dead already, and for a moment thought of telegraphing Rawdon "Too sick to come; writing," but put the thought away as unworthy of me.

It was late and quite dark when I reached Den-
von, and the little station seemed to threaten me
gloomily. But as I stepped off the train Rawdon
rushed forward and in a moment was cracking my
knuckles together in his great hand, in that enthu-

Cleopatra

siastic but painful way he has, and already I began to feel like a different man.

“Here, John,” said he, “give me your bag and I’ll chuck it under the seat,” and he tossed it easily into the back of the big wheeled yellow break-cart. Then he sprang up into the cart and held up the robe for me, until I had it tucked in well around me. He picked up the reins and laid the lash playfully across our steed’s quarters. Afterwards, when the din had ceased and I could hear what he was saying, Rawdon told me the horse’s name was Cricket, as though that explained why he should try to kick the dashboard out of the cart six times in quick succession the moment he felt the whip. Cricket, Rawdon said, was feeling good. What Cricket needed, I thought, was an A No. 1 attack of my indigestion and he would make a well-broken, respectable horse that one needn’t be ashamed of. But I let it pass. There was no use being fussy, and, after all, Rawdon might really like Cricket; there is no accounting for tastes. Rawdon must have seen the expression of my face, or noticed the way I held on to the side of the cart, for he roared with laughter in his big, hearty way.

“That’s nothing,” he said at last, “wait until you see Cleopatra to-morrow, when first she hears the hounds or the horn. She makes Cricket look

Hoof Beats

like tiddlywinks compared to football, but you'll like her; she's a little bundle of nerves and courage. I ride her on a snaffle, though she does take hold somewhat at first—and you'd think she meant to bolt, but it's all just her play, you know." I didn't speak for a minute. It was the appropriate moment for some dare-devil *bon mot*, I knew, but somehow I couldn't seem to do it, and I swallowed hard instead. I was to ride Cleopatra. Rawdon had just said so; and Cleopatra made Cricket look like tiddlywinks compared to football, was a bundle of nerves and courage, and usually bolted at first, and Rawdon rode her on a snaffle bit. I tried to remember where I had put my life-insurance policy and couldn't, but I hoped Priscilla would be able to find it. At any rate the will made her executrix.

We were driving at a rattling pace, the cart swaying from side to side, the Cricket's iron-shod hoofs banging on the hard macadam road. The lamps on either side of the cart, turned high, cast a bright reflection upon the stiff whitewashed fences at the sides of the road, and the moon, half full overhead, shone feebly over fields beyond, crossed here and there in the distance by a hedge or a fence, as the case might be.

"Stiff country?" I hazarded, at last as debonairely as I could.

Cleopatra

Rawdon smiled at me fondly.

“Good old sport,” he said enthusiastically, slapping me on the back. “Fancy your asking for stiff country, after all these years out of the saddle. Just like you were in the old days; couldn’t get ’em big enough, eh! Stiff country—well, I guess—there’s nothing stiffer this side of Ireland. Why, there was an Englishman out with the pack last week that said he had never seen its equal, that every fence looked as if it had been built by a carpenter, and we were down near Bremen then. *To-morrow* we are going to hunt the *Midvale* country.” I didn’t have to ask Rawdon what he meant by that. That fanatical fire, I knew so well of years ago, was burning in his eyes, and I had inside information, so to speak, that in the *Midvale* country a nice, well-meaning, four-foot post and rail was as a drop of water in the desert. Another quarter of a mile and we turned in at a gate and Rawdon sent the Cricket at a gallop up the driveway to the stable where two grooms with lanterns touched their forelocks in respectful silence and fell upon the Cricket and the break-cart with feverish haste.

In the end stall, Cleopatra, rudely awakened, put her head up over the side of the stall, rolled a red eye at me wildly, and bit at the horse next her, who returned the compliment gallantly. Rawdon

Hoof Beats

laughed and nodded his head at me over his shoulder.

“That’s Cleopatra; she’ll give you a good ride all right. All you have to do is to sit tight the first couple of fields and put her at the biggest panels you see. After that, if she doesn’t get away with you, she will settle down and a lady could ride her.”

I think the stable must have been warm after the drive in the cold night air, for I felt quite dizzy for a moment and took a swallow of water out of the spigot where the horses drank. How much nicer I thought it would be to have some-one else ride Cleopatra the first couple of fields over the biggest panels, and then get on her after she had settled down. I laughingly suggested the idea to Rawdon, but I must have done the laugh too well, for he took it as a joke and chuckled for several minutes.

The horse Merryweather meant to ride was a big, fatherly looking animal covered with brown fur that made him look about twice as large as he really was, and really more like some prehistoric animal than a horse; but Rawdon said he was a splendid jumper, over fifteen years old, and had never been down in his life.

I waxed honestly enthusiastic when I heard this, and Rawdon seemed pleased and said he would

Cleopatra

have been glad to have let me ride him, but the only other horse up to his, Rawdon's, weight had developed a splint—and besides Cleopatra was a more brilliant performer. I knew what that meant—a brilliant performer. It meant that Cleopatra, when she saw the first fence, would dig her hind hoofs into the soil, throw up her head with a snort, and when she got well going, about a mile a minute, would take off anywhere from twenty to forty feet in front of the fence, and if you came down again together, everybody turned in the saddle and congratulated you, and thanked heaven it was you and not they. I had once ridden a brilliant performer years ago, and for one reason or another I would have preferred not to ride any more geniuses of the horse world.

Rawdon's house is a stone's throw from the stable, and as we stepped upon the porch, pandemonium broke forth from within.

“Burglars wouldn't have much chance around here, would they, John?” Rawdon said, looking back at me as he put his key in the door.

“Sure they'll know you?” I jested carelessly.

“Oh, they'll know me all right; but John, I want to tell you, don't pat Roysterer until he's got to know you a few minutes. He's overzealous, you know, about guarding the place, and doesn't make nice distinctions.”

Hoof Beats

Personally I had never meant to pat Roysterer at all, after the sound of his voice, until I had known him quite a good deal more than a few minutes; and so when the door was pushed open and Roysterer, followed by six couples of assorted canines, all sprang upon Rawdon with loving cries, then suddenly saw me, I felt a strange feeling of diffidence about accepting Rawdon's hospitable wave of invitation to enter. Roysterer, being the largest and in a sense the leader of the others, seemed particularly upset and conscious of his position, and stared at me so long with his back roached and teeth bared that I felt quite uncomfortable until Rawdon gave him a sound kick, which, being a kind of passport for me, we went in without further annoyance. I felt quite important for a while after that; and later on I could see that Roysterer really would have liked to lick my hand. It was like being passed through the fire-lines by the chief of police, after some surly policeman had pushed you in the shirt front with a fat, smoky hand.

It was already morning before Rawdon and I stopped talking; and the last thing I remember after Rawdon showed me my room, was his telling me he would call me in the morning, and the next thing, just after I had gotten the covers really tight around me was his calling me. When I first

Cleopatra

heard someone knocking on my door I only dozed on happily, but as I grew a little more and more awake, something seemed to weigh upon my mind and depress me; and it was not until Rawdon stood in the door, crop and lash in hand, that I began to realize it was Cleopatra. It was only a few minutes now before I had to ride Cleopatra. They say condemned men, on the morning of their execution, often eat a hearty breakfast. It is true; I did. I felt I should need it.

The sky was slightly cloudy, and while the wind blew gently out of the south, there was an early morning crispness to it that put the horses on edge; and as the grooms led our mounts up from the stable, it was really more than one man should have been asked to do, to take Cleopatra all by himself. Sometimes Cleopatra lifted her head, and when she did so the groom went with her. There was no effort on her part. She was very graceful and pretty about it. She merely lifted her head and the groom went up in the air; then she would try to kick Granny, the other horse, with her heels. We watched them as they approached, Rawdon with pride in his eyes. As for me, I can't say *pride* exactly expressed my emotions; but then, of course, they weren't my horses. I was only going to *ride* one of them.

"Feeling pretty good, aren't they'?" said Raw-

Hoof Beats

don. "Perfectly devilish," I thought, but I said nothing. There did not seem to be any necessity, the thing was so obvious. Rawdon kept Cleopatra from sitting down when I got on her, while the groom swung to her head, so that for the time being I felt comparatively safe, and anchored like a ship in harbor, but it was only the calm before the storm.

"All ready?" Rawdon asked, smiling at me unconcernedly.

I gritted my teeth, took a firmer hold on my reins and nodded. The groom made a broad jump to one side that would have got him his "H" at college, Rawdon sidestepped a quick up-cut from her heels, and Cleopatra and I were alone. Never before in my life have I felt so much the want of a chaperone. But the worst was nearly over for the time being, and after a few buck jumps and a little pitching which carried us down the driveway and out into the road, she stood quite still and waited for Rawdon and his big brown gelding to come ambling along.

"She's always fresh like that in the morning," he called, "but she'll settle down, never fear. It's just her play, you know." I looked at Rawdon. There was no doubt about it; the man was quite serious and believed what he said. I made up my mind then and there that when an honorable

Cleopatra

opportunity presented itself I should roll off and let Cleopatra find another Antony.

It was some three or four miles to where the hounds met, and as we were in plenty of time we took it leisurely. Rawdon was very thoughtful about describing the country, and I remember in particular his pointing out the place where poor so and so broke his leg—or his neck, I forget which now, but I know it impressed me at the time. It was as likely a place to break a leg or a neck as I have ever seen—an unpleasant drop into a roadway, over a fence and a four-foot ditch. I made a mental note of the spot, which was near a farmhouse, and I felt that I should recognize it again anywhere.

The next moment Rawdon was alongside presenting me to a very pretty woman who rode a gray horse.

“Miss Smithson,” he began. “Whoa! John, I say, can’t you keep Cleopatra’s head up? she’ll kick in another second. Miss Smithson (behave, will you?), may I present Mr.—Walk now, you son of Satan! (Both spurs and a yank at the bit.) There now, be quiet. I beg your pardon, Miss Smithson, something seems to have got into Granny this morning. This is Mr. Ralston. Where are you, John, anyhow? Oh, there you are! Look sharp; keep her head up. Miss

Hoof Beats

Smithson, Mr. Ralston." It was done. Miss Smithson and I knew each other. She reached her hand quite graciously across Rawdon's horse, who was between us, but as Cleopatra seemed to frown upon the idea, and edged farther and farther away, the pleasure had to be deferred to another time.

We had stopped now on the edge of some woods, and with a wave of his hand the huntsman cast the pack into the heart of it, while some twenty or thirty of us waited, chatting together in low tones. One man had plaited his horse's tail with red ribbon. It was rather fetching, I thought, and I moved over closer in order to see how it was done; and I made a resolution that if ever I owned a hunter I would plait its tail in red ribbon. I must have been quite close when the beast kicked me, for he caught my boot squarely with both hoofs, and then squealed in a perfectly disgusting manner. The man turned in his saddle to see what he had hit, he must have been quite used to it I think; and I imagined he was going to apologize for owning such a vindictive animal, but he only frowned at me and muttered something under his breath. Rawdon rode up then and told me to keep away, as the ribbon in the horse's tail meant that he was a kicker and I have no reason to doubt him. A few minutes later I had quite for-

Cleopatra

gotten the incident, but it seems Cleopatra hadn't, and once when the kicker passed in front of us, she laid her ears back, stretched out her neck and fastened her teeth in the other's nose. After that I had a different feeling toward Cleopatra. There was something so finished about the way she avenged me that I felt I could better trust myself in her hands, if only she did not bolt those first few fields.

The hounds were whimpering in the woods now, and occasionally some old veteran would give a few staccato notes and arouse the rest of the pack for a short interval; but there did not seem to be any likelihood of their going away at once.

I began to examine the country around me. Suddenly I realized that we had come in through a gate that had been shut behind us, into a field entirely surrounded by fences. At first blush there is nothing startling about that; fields often have fences around them but there are fences and fences, and you can imagine what this one was like when I tell you that I decided on the closed gate as the least reckless means of egress. Miss Smithson's gray was a quiet, dignified animal with a docked tail and a pompous manner of putting down its front feet, and as I soon discovered that Cleopatra appeared to be on good terms with it, since they rubbed the tops of

Hoof Beats

their heads against each other's necks, I felt encouraged to speak to Miss Smithson herself.

"How do you like Cleopatra?" she asked me with a smile that disclosed some very pretty white teeth, and then not waiting for me to answer: "She's quite a handful, you know. Mr. Merryweather said he wouldn't let many people ride her but you. You must ride very well, don't you?"

I swallowed hard. I never enjoyed a compliment less.

"Miss Smithson, are you going to jump that?" I asked, pointing to the spite fence which someone must have built to cut off his neighbor's view.

"Of course," she said. "It's the only way out." And then she began to laugh, and her blue eyes twinkled.

"Oh, I know, you're feeling rocky, everyone does now and then," and she handed me a flask about as big as a silver dollar. I had just time to return it to her and take up my lines when there was a series of hysterical cries from the woods. Suddenly the pack seemed to have lost its mind, and someone standing up in his stirrups and pointing toward the valley, over the highest part of the fence, began to shout, "Gone away!"

It had been my intention, as I have said before, to jump the gate, which I calculated was several

Cleopatra

millimetres lower than the fence, but as that now lay in one direction and Cleopatra was galloping as fast as I have ever thought it possible for anything to gallop in the other, I gave up the idea altogether.

Just before I had gone to bed the night before, I remember Rawdon standing in the doorway, lamp in hand, saying, "Cleopatra likes to go at her jumps pretty fast, so don't check her. Let her go, but stop her when you're over or you never will." That was one of the things I had on my mind most of the morning; but just because she had a reputation for rushing her jumps seemed to me no reason why she should act as if she had been subsidized to carry the mails. I do not mind saying I shut my eyes, and did not open them until I struck the other side. Afterwards Rawdon, who followed me over on Granny, said he had never seen Cleopatra give such a brilliant performance. I rather imagined she had; it felt that way, but, of course, I had my eyes shut and can't be certain.

The hounds in the field beyond were giving tongue at a great rate, for the frost was just coming out of the ground and the scent lay strong and certain. Cleopatra had her head in the air, and as I held back on the bit I could feel her breath coming sharply through widened thoroughbred nostrils, and feel her short-coupled back bucking under me

Hoof Beats

as she fought for her head. Beyond, the pink coats of the huntsman and the master went bobbing on down the gradual slope of the valley, straight as the crow flies, over fence, stone wall and hedge.

It was quite apparent to me by now that Cleopatra had bolted. It was not to be doubted. She had gone three fields and as many fences, and, if anything, had increased her speed. But what worried me most was the extraordinary manner in which everything hurt so. There wasn't a place anywhere from my head to my feet, which I could honestly have made affidavit to, that was less sore than the other. In a way I daresay, it took my mind off other things and worked to my advantage, for I quite forgot Cleopatra and busied myself finding a place in the saddle that did not rub. Then suddenly I saw the huntsman go down hard, over a stiff four-bar post and rail into a roadway, and in a moment the master followed him, and his horse turned turtle in the air. For some reason or other it did not impress me, and as Cleopatra and I galloped at it quite alone, I could not help but feel a kind of admiration for myself. It was superb. The master said so that evening, for he was the only one near enough to see it except the huntsman, and he was chasing his horse. Cleopatra rose at it like some beautiful bird about



CLEOPATRA WAS GALLOPING AS ONLY A THOROUGHBRED CAN

Cleopatra

to take flight, and we cleared the fence and a good-sized ditch without a qualm.

The master, who was trying to mount, shouted for me to go on with the hounds, which was entirely unnecessary, as Cleopatra had caught the direction by the sound and was galloping as only a thoroughbred can. I had given up hope long ago, and as I had been prepared to die for some time past, there did not seem anything in particular to do but wait.

Once I looked behind me and saw only long stretches of fields and fences, but not a soul in sight. Then suddenly the hounds turned sharply in at somebody's farmyard and surged over the gate, and chopped their quarry there. Cleopatra surged also. It never occurred to me to try to stop her. She took one last delightful soar, and we sank gracefully but happily into a ton of hay.

I got off, that is, rather, Cleopatra got off me, and I stood up. All around me seemed to reign peace and contentment. Everything seemed contented; the hounds were calmly licking their chops, Cleopatra was breathing heavily but happily in my ear; and I—I stretched my legs and found myself alive. It was enough.

When the others came cantering along a few minutes later, I called to them and Rawdon got off

Hoof Beats

and tried to open the gate. I noticed that his chin barely rested on the top of it.

“John,” he called, “how do you open this gate? It’s padlocked.”

“You don’t; you come over it.”

Rawdon’s expression was worth much to see then, and the glances of the others quite repaid me.

“Here’s the brush,” I said in my best manner holding up as much of it as I had been able to save. “Quite a hot scent?”

“Well, I’ll be d—” said Rawdon, and looked at the master.

The journey home was something of a triumph for me, and Cleopatra, having done her worst trotted along very demurely with the others.

“That was a very nasty place where the huntsman and the master came down,” said Rawdon; “I didn’t think Cleopatra had it in her. It’s where Smith broke his leg. You remember I showed it to you on the way over.”

“The place where Smith—”and then I stopped.

“What’s wrong? feeling a little worn? you look pale,” Rawdon inquired solicitously.

“Oh, no,” I replied, “not a bit of it.”

“Glad to hear it,” he went on, relieved. “Thought it might have been too much for you after you had not ridden for so many years. You rode like a veteran.”



- JEREMIEUX -

“HERE’S THE BRUSH,” I SAID IN MY BEST MANNER

Cleopatra

“Whenever I hear the hounds, you know, my blood gets up and I can’t get enough,” I replied loftily. “Royal sport, wasn’t it?”

“You bet. Cleopatra’s a great mare. I knew she’d give you a good ride,” Rawdon said.

“The greatest ever,” I answered.

“You can ride her next time.”

“Don’t mention it,” I returned absent-mindedly.

Rawdon looked surprised. “Anyhow,” he said, “I’m glad you enjoyed yourself. You know, I thought you might be a bit shaky at first. Any number are.”

I laughed heartily at the idea.

“Not with Cleopatra,” I replied fatuously.

“By Jove, that’s so,” cried Rawdon, pleased. “She’s a little ball of fire, Cleopatra is, a little ball of fire.”

And I think he struck it just right. Cleopatra is a little ball of fire.

HAMMERSLEY'S PLUCK

THE cup stands over the fireplace in the library, between the regimental colors. Its history is tradition now and every subaltern learns it by heart before he has been in the regiment a week. It is part of his education. I knew the story well as they tell it, for Hammersley and I were brother officers, but the real facts of the case I learned only a year ago this fall.

The hunting season was open and I had already missed several good "kills" for want of a proper mount, so it happened that I was in the Midland country looking about for a horse or two that could jump, when one day I heard of a dealer not far from where I was stopping. His place was a rather dilapidated, unpromising one, and I approached it with some misgivings that my time had been wasted, but there was a pleasant surprise for me when the "Midget" was led out. Never have I seen a finer animal—nearly seventeen hands, an eye full of courage, and a thorough-

Hammersley's Pluck

bred from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail. A little old bow-legged groom held the bridle with both hands, while he rattled the bit to keep him quiet and talked to him in a low voice. I knew at a glance the horse would suit and I was determined to have him if he could jump and the price was at all reasonable, so I asked them to put someone up and show me what he could do. A five-foot hedge, with a ditch before it, stood a hundred yards away, and the dealer, calling to one of his boys, told him to take the horse over it.

In the meantime I observed the old groom gazing at me curiously; suddenly a gleam of recognition crossed his face and he touched his hat deferentially. "Mr. Cyril, sir?" It was Hammersley's old stud groom and trainer, his hair whitened by the years and somewhat gone down in the world since his master's death, but the same "Judson" whom I had known when Hammersley was alive, and I wrung his hand like that of an old friend.

The next instant Judson was plucking my arm and pointing at the Midget excitedly; "There 'e goes, Mr. Cyril, 'e will fly it like a bird; 'e cawn't be matched in the kingdom. There, sir, what d' I say, like a bird, no stopping and losing 'is stride, just keeps on going clean and strong. Ah, sir, 'e takes me back a bit," and the old man's

Hoof Beats

eyes glistened. "'E's such another as 'im his lordship won the Queen's Cup with in—. Same manner o' going—and 'is 'ead, sir! Why, me as raised 'em both couldn't tell 'em apart. But the Midget's got a good disposition, and the other got 'is from 'ell. You were in the colonies, weren't you, sir? So you cawn't remember, as I do, the crowd, the whole regiment there and 'arf the aristocracy of H'england looking on. It seems like yesterday, and it's ten years a week from to-morrow, when I leads out Black Douglas, 'im kicking and trying 'is best to eat my harm off, with 'is lordship sitting there in the saddle so pale and thin.

"Ah, sir, it's so long ago now, and both 'is lordship and Master Harry are dead, that I don't believe as 'ow 'e'd mind me telling the truth of it, if you care to 'ear, sir. As you know, 'is lordship was always the 'ead of the house, even when the old earl was alive. 'E was the one who kept things going and took all the blame for 'is brother. Master Harry was the worry of 'is life, being always in trouble, when if it wasn't debts, it was women. 'Is lordship loved 'im better than anything in the world, and many's the time, 'e 'as come to me and said, 'Judson,' says 'e, 'sell Sandhurst or Rosemead,' or some other fine 'orse

Hammersley's Pluck

we 'ad in those days, and well I knows the money is to pay Master Harry's debts again.

"And then you know, sir, as how arfter 'e comes back from India, he begins to sicken with that damn heathen fever—asking your pardon for the word, sir. 'E never was the same again and 'e got worse and worse. All the time the estate was going to ruin and Master Harry worrying the life out of 'im, though meaning no harm, 'e worshipping 'is lordship.

"It was one night, or nearer morning, the wind howling and beating the rain against the windows fit to smash them in, that I 'ears someone moving about below in the stable. I jumps out o' bed and calls, 'Who's there?' 'Judson,' someone says, and I knows 'is voice; 'Judson,' 'e says, 'come down,' and I goes down. There 'e is, standing with 'is back to me, 'is legs spread apart and covered with mud from head to foot. He 'ad rode over from quarters, a fair twenty miles, as you know, and 'is 'orse more dead than alive. 'Judson,' 'e says, never turning around, when 'e 'ears me behind 'im, but staring at Black Douglas, 'this horse comes of good blood, 'is great grandsire won a Grand National.' 'Yes, sir,' says I. 'Don't interrupt,' says 'e, that being 'is way, and me as 'adn't seen 'im since 'e come home; but Lord, sir, 'e'd ha' give 'is right 'and for me and I knowed it.

Hoof Beats

Then 'e goes on, still staring at Black Douglas: "Judson, I want this horse fit to run in the "Queen's," two weeks from today. The entry must be in day after tomorrow. Attend to it. I ride 'im myself.' Then 'e has a fit of shivering, and I blessed near dies of fright when 'e turns around and I see 'is face, so changed it is.

"The next day 'e sends for me. I finds 'is lordship and Master Harry together, and Master Harry looking very sad and dejected. 'Judson,' says 'is lordship, 'I owe £5,000 that must be paid a month from to-day'—and right well I knows who owes it—'sell everything in the stable, get the best odds you can, and lay all on Black Douglas to win. I'll lay what I 'ave, myself,' says 'e. Then 'e comes over and put 'is 'and on my shoulder 'Judson,' says 'e, 'it's the family honor, that's all.'

"'Yes, sir,' says I, and goes outside and flings my cap in the air, for see what it means—'is lordship's colors to run again, as once couldn't be beat, and me to train the greatest three-year-old in H'england!

"Well, the colt did fine and showed better form every day, fast on the flat, strong at 'is jumps and liked it. But 'is lordship, 'e went the other way, from bad to worse. So a week before the race they puts 'im to bed and 'arf the regiment with a month's pay backing 'im, too. And no other

Hammersley's Pluck

man in the kingdom could ha' rode Black Douglas four mile 'cross country, the brute 'e was, the beauty!

"The odds were ten to one the day of the race, Black Douglas being a dark 'un and none taking the trouble to look up 'is pedigree. I was standing in 'is stall giving 'im a last rub-down with a handful of straw, and keeping my eye on 'im to see 'e didn't kick my brains out, when in walks 'is lordship, dressed to ride, leanin' on Master Harry.

" 'Well, Judson,' e' says, 'all ready?'

" 'All ready, your lordship,' says I. 'And are you going to ride?' I asks, seeing 'im there so faint and pale. 'Who else?' says 'e, sharp like; but that was always 'is way—few words.

"When the bugle sounded I give 'is lordship a leg up and leads 'em out on the course. Black Douglas was fighting ugly, for the crowds and the band set 'im crazy.

"The grand stands and paddock were jammed, and as we went by, the Guards give us three cheers. I tell you that made me feel proud. There were fifteen other starters, all good 'uns, too, but none of 'em looked like Black Douglas as I'd raised from a foal, and none of the gentlemen sat a horse like my lord.

"The music and the cheers from the Guards still rang in my ears, when down went the flag

Hoof Beats

and they were hoff. There was no keeping back with Black Douglas. When the flag fell 'e bolted and at the first jump he was a good 'arf dozen lengths in the lead. The pace 'e was going was awful; I shut my eyes and prayed, and when I opened 'em again, he was safe over and leading, with the field pressing 'im hard.

“Ah, but the way my lord rode was a picture; never a move did he make! He glued his knees to the saddle and gave the colt's head free play. The crowd was yelling itself hoarse, and Black Douglas still in the front, going strong; 'is lordship quiet and cool. Twice they'd been around, them always leading, when the favorite began to draw on. It was just before the water jump, and I see 'is lordship take one look back when 'e heard the sound of the other. The favorite's nose reached the leg of 'is boot, then 'is lordship leaned forward on Black Douglas' neck and I see the flash of the sun on 'is whip as it rose and fell three times. They took the water together, the grand stand rose as one man and a great shout went up as they cleared it. But the blood in 'em tells every time and the sting of the whip drove Black Douglas mad.

“One more jump, then 'arf a mile to the finish; the crowd barely breathed as it watched. The two were running side by side, and as they came

Hammersley's Pluck

to the hedge I gritted my teeth while my eyes burned in their sockets. They were over, and the field was left far behind. Then my lord started in to ride, and such a finish was never seen. The favorite was forcing 'im hard and both were at whip and spur. Neck and neck they came down the stretch. I couldn't see which was leading; 'twas 'orrible not to know.

"Then I see Black Douglas make one last effort a 'undred yards from the wire, and with the crowd screaming and surging over the course, 'e wins by a length.

"I can see 'im now, 'is lordship drooping on Black Douglas' neck as 'e rides 'im back and weighs in. Then the Guards, Tommies and all, rushes over and carries 'im hoff on their shoulders, 'e sitting there smiling a little, white as a sheet, 'olding the big silver cup with both 'ands. Then me and Master Harry, 'im with the tears running down his cheeks, leads Black Douglas back to the paddock.

"We win near £8,000 that day, and the 'orse 'imself would ha' sold for £5,000 after the race. But it all wasn't worth it, sir, no not to none of us, for it killed 'is lordship as you know. My lord lasted two days and then 'is heart, which the fever and racing 'ad damaged, give in and 'e died. They give 'im a funeral fit for a field marshal, for

Hoof Beats

the Guards, you see, loved 'im and thought 'e'd done it for them, and I'm not saying 'e wouldn't ha' done it, but I knows it was for Master Harry."

"What, sir," the old groom's voice trembled, "bring down the Midget and take charge 'o your stable—do you mean it, sir? My luggage, Mr. Cyril? I got it on, sir, asking your pardon. Ah, it'll be grand to serve a gentleman again, and you an old friend of my lord's."

THE BROOK

STRIVING found himself obliged to take a slow train. It left more than an hour ahead of the limited, paid its respects at each hamlet and finally crawled into New York only fifteen minutes ahead of the limited itself. But every minute was worth dollars and cents to the office. Striving was accustomed to fast trains and hated slow ones, besides he was not in a very amiable frame of mind. He felt overworked, below par.

“D—” Striving addressed the station porter who carried his bag.

“Sah?”

Striving regarded the man impersonally. “I’m tired. I’m sick of it.”

“Yes, sah, what seat did you all have, sah?”

“Seventeen,” snapped Striving.

The negro led the way, deposited the bag fussily and remained standing nearby with the usual air of anxious expectancy. His hopes gratified he expressed his thanks by a grinning display of

Hoof Beats

white teeth and touched his cap. Striving flung his coat and hat up in the rack overhead and dropped into seat number seventeen.

"Sick of it, sick of it," he murmured, "of the fight for money. I never cared for it anyhow."

The train started. Striving was due in New York at eleven. That afternoon he was to try a disagreeable and intricate case in the Surrogate Court of Appeals. No one knew it better than Striving. He didn't feel up to it, but he knew he would do it well. Everyone said he would do it well. That was why the office had sent him. What he needed, he told himself, was a rest, a good long rest out of doors, away from the sight of a desk.

The train acquired speed and Striving watched the moving scene; elevated trains that kept pace for awhile and then little by little dropped behind; smoke-begrimed tenements, with washings that swung in the November breeze, between windows, from which women scantily clad leaned, calling to one another across dark areas which the sun never penetrated; children playing wildly at some game in the streets and alleyways.

The city was left behind. A row of cheap suburban cottages followed, each with its quarter acre of land. Striving breathed more freely. They were getting into the country. The coun-

try! He had almost forgotten what it looked like. A dog raced madly toward the train,—pursued it barking. A factory came next, one entire wall covered with huge letters in black and white recommending a well-known “morning after” drug; then a corn field, a meadow, a silver brook, a post-and-rail fence, a ditch, an abandoned race-track, the grand stand tumbling, grass growing in the unused track. Striving noticed that a scrub game of football was in progress in the ellipse where once a steeplechase course had flourished. His face clouded; he had loved the sport once. He had done it well they said. It was the only thing Striving thought that he had ever done really well.

The speed of the train increased. It passed rumbling over a trestle straddling a small stream. On the opposite bank leaves were burning. They made a great glare even in the morning light. Striving watched indifferently. He was thinking of the Surrogate Court of Appeals. In a meadow ahead he saw a mare and foal drinking at a tiny stream of clear water, who suddenly, as the roar of the train reached them, tossed their heads high and went galloping off, nostrils dilated, manes and tails flying. Striving imagined he could almost hear the thoroughbred snort of mingled fear and rage. The mare and foal were

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aristocrats, any one could see that at a glance. In an instant they were lost.

Striving knew he ought to be going over and over the printed brief in the green bag at his side. What was that the senior partner had said just as he was leaving? What *was* it? Striving knitted his brows. Anyhow what difference did it make? Oh yes, now he remembered.

“Striving,” the senior partner had remarked, in that perfectly arid, bloodless way of his, “Striving, keep one thing in mind, and that is that a residuary devise, if it fails, goes intestate. Hammer ’em. Make ’em see it, d’ye hear?”

Oh yes, he heard. Of course he’d hammer ’em. But he couldn’t help thinking of that mare and foal by the stream. The mare reminded him of old Gypsy. How Gypsy could gallop! They couldn’t catch her once she got well away,—and only fifteen one at that—hardly more than a pony.

The train passed into broad, open country. Striving leaned back more comfortably. It was good to see the great rolling fields checkered with well kept stone walls and fences. He jammed his heavy carry-all bag to one side and stretched his long legs past the chair in front of him. Then he yawned and continued to gaze at the fast moving landscape a little wistfully.

Striving was your hard-bitted type, born for

The Brook

the saddle, a nice depth of chest, a narrow waist, and lean flat legs. Even years at a desk where electric lights burned half the day had not spoiled his gift of birth. His skin too, was hard still, and if one looked closely,—most people did at Striving—one saw it had once been a deep reddish bronze.

Striving yawned again, then opened the leather case at his side and extracted a bundle of papers and a printed brief some hundred and twenty pages long. He glanced at the latter casually, disinterestedly at first, and then gradually, with an effort, forced himself to a final careful perusal.

Suddenly he became aware that the train was running more and more slowly and he looked up with an expression of annoyance. Finally it stopped with a groan and whistling of released air brakes at a small station the shed of which projected over the train and made further reading impracticable. Striving drew out his watch and noted that they were twenty minutes behind the schedule, threw the printed brief of the Surrogate Court of Appeals ignominiously upon the floor of the car and shut his eyes. When at last he opened them the train had moved out of the station and the car was light again, but he did not pick up the brief. He saw that someone had taken the chair ahead of him. It had been empty before. Over the top appeared a derby hat, that was all. It

Hoof Beats

amused Striving to study character, he had found the dress and luggage of travelers often a good index, but here all to be seen was the top of a derby hat and no luggage at all, so he turned again to watching the scene without. It was growing more beautiful every moment,—large open rolling country, not too flat, not too hilly, just exactly right he thought,—for hunting.

He leaned towards the windows and rested his elbows on the sill, his chin in his hands, staring. The chair ahead turned slightly and from under the derby hat a pair of eyes regarded him, but Striving did not notice,—he was riding to hounds. It had come back to him with a rush, years of it, hard riding, straight riding, and a slight flush appeared on his now rather pale cheeks.

They were passing through a beautiful valley. At one place a stout post-and-rail fence guarded the top of a ploughed field on the side of a hill. At the bottom a broad stream ran swiftly. The approach to the fence was good solid turf.

“Splendid,” Striving murmured, “but the deuce, look at the ‘drop’ and the plough soft, too.” He clenched his hands.

“Who cares, who cares, we can do it. Keep your hocks well under you and your head up. Now! well over, Gypsy, and ’ware the brook. Go it lightly, through this plough, you’ll need all

The Brook

your power soon, the brook looks nasty and wide. Now for it where that old tree is down."

"Don't," a voice whispered, "not there, not there, the bank gives way, and it's twenty feet across."

Striving started. The chair ahead had swung around and was pointing.

"Ride to the right, to the right where the willow is. Ride hard and give him his head when you're there."

"Never," Striving did not look around. "I'm sure hounds would go across there. We ride as the crow flies, where that old tree is down. If it's twenty feet wide we'll swim."

The train rumbled across a trestle and fifty feet below, the stream flowed rapidly.

"There, there's the place, I know I can do it. The landing looks good from here."

Striving stretched out his arms, his fingers tightly gripped. He was riding the brook. Then instantaneously it passed from view.

"You see, you see," he cried, not looking around, "I knew I could do it."

A ripple of laughter replied and Striving swung swiftly around. The laugh still rippled and Striving turned bright red. He could feel the hot flush creeping up to his hair, he wasn't quite sure whether he was more embarrassed or angry.

Hoof Beats

“Look here, what did you say?” He swung the chair ahead around. He faced a pair of blue eyes and white teeth that flashed, a habit, and a pair of smart-looking boots.

“Oh!”

The ripple still rippled on.

“I beg your pardon, I’m so sorry. I saw your hat, you know, and thought you were a man,” he made a movement as if to rise and bow, but a hand touched him and the ripple ceased.

“Don’t move,” the voice cried, “or you’ll miss the best of all. We’re coming now,—to the ‘lane’!”

“The lane!”

“Of course, the ‘lane’! I thought everyone knew the lane. There now, just behind that house. ‘In and out’ you know, and four foot six each way. Oh but I loved the way you rode the Babbington Brook, no one ever jumped it there before!” The eyes twinkled and the lips were compressed to keep the laughter back. Striving threw back his head and laughed, laughed as he hadn’t done for years.

“And now for the lane!”

“Come on,” the girl replied.

They were both riding now and had forgotten the rest of the car.

“Fearful rate we’re going,” Striving smiled. The train was making up time. The girl laughed.

The Brook

“Frightful, we’ll never get out of the lane alive. You see there it is, right there, don’t you see, just this side of that house. That’s Farmer Twillin’s house. He detests to have us go through. Now *you* ride there, just where the top rail is down. It’s the easiest place, we always put the novices over there!”

She glanced at Striving out of the corner of her eye. He did not observe the fun that was there. He was watching the lane.

“I’ll not ” he protested. “There’s where I go, where they’ve put in a brand new rail. A fall will do me good. You go where the rail is down, that’s the place for a woman.”

“I’ll not,” the girl replied in turn; “if you go there, I go,” and the fun died out of her eyes and she bit her lip with her teeth. To both the thing seemed extraordinarily real.

The lane was approaching fast and neither spoke. Then like lightning the train flashed past and both glanced at each other and laughed.

“This is your country?” Striving asked.

“Yes, I get off at Weston, that’s the next stop, you know. The hounds are meeting there.”

Striving’s face expressed his chagrin.

“I’m sorry. I’d like to have you tell me how it feels to ride over country like that.”

Hoof Beats

"But you ride, of course," the girl insisted.

"No, that is, I haven't for years you see."

He suddenly became aware that the girl opposite him had beautiful hair, and a wonderful red in her cheeks, good healthy outdoor red.

"Oh, and why did you give it up? I could never do that, give up riding!"

"It wasn't easy. It isn't easy now, but one can't practice law and ride, now can they?" he appealed.

"But why practice law?" the girl laughed, and then, "Oh I'm sorry I said that, it sounded silly. Of course you were right. Men can't just ride, someone has to practice law and build bridges. I daresay the world wouldn't go very far if men only rode horses."

Striving frowned. "I don't know," he went on half to himself, "I'm not so sure it makes much difference."

The girl looked out of the window.

"It *is* pretty country, isn't it?" she asked, "and we rarely draw a blank. We're not very smart perhaps, but we have a nice little club and one really does have to *ride* to get over the fences about here. And then, too, we don't have such large crowds out and that's rather nice. Everybody knows everybody else and we ride our own lines."

The Brook

The train was running more slowly. Both were conscious of it. Striving looked at the girl and smiled a little disappointedly. She seemed to understand.

"I get off here. I'm awfully sorry. I wish you were going with us." And then she laughed, spontaneously. "But it's good you're not. You never could have ridden Babbington Brook there by the fallen tree."

"I could," said Striving doggedly, and the girl laughed again.

The brakes ground on the wheels. The train slowed up and stopped before a tiny station. Just around the corner Striving had a vague idea he caught sight of a scarlet coat. The girl got up and put out her hand.

"I'm sorry," she said again, "that you can't be with us."

Striving took the gloved hand and shook it vigorously. It was not so very large, but it was quite firm and strong and responded.

"Good luck."

He followed her to the end of the car.

"We're strangers," he went on, "I won't be seen speaking to you. Your friends might not understand."

Again came the delicious rippling laugh.

"It wasn't exactly according to the rules, was

Hoof Beats

it, but—" she held out her hand again, "Good bye!

Striving watched her disappear around the corner of the station with a greater feeling of regret than he could understand.

"Jove," he muttered, "Jove, I'll bet she can ride, too. I haven't seen a girl like her for years."

He sprang down the steps and walked to the end of the platform. The conductor and the engineer were talking heatedly with the telegraph operator who had run out from his office. Evidently they were being held up to let some faster train by. No doubt he had a minute or two. He walked toward the corner of the station. What luck! There they were, the pack just coming down the road, and a dozen men and women nearby, some mounted, others tightening girths and fussing with stirrup leathers. She was there, too, on a big-boned thoroughbred gray. He looked as if he could gallop, Striving thought, and the girl sat as if only a fall could bring her out of the saddle. His breath came rapidly as the hounds drew near and his heart pounded as it hadn't done for years. The girl turned and saw him. He thought he could see the half twinkle in her eyes that he had noticed on the train, but she looked swiftly away again. He was afraid she was offended, perhaps he shouldn't have come, it seemed like following her. He hoped she wouldn't

The Brook

think him so unsportsmanlike, he really hadn't intended it like that. He wished he could tell her so. Some day he would, he determined.

The hounds were drawing close now, following after the Master. They were a well-drafted looking lot, and the horse, too, the Master rode was good to look upon. Striving stared. There was something very familiar about the way the master stuck out his feet and kept whistling all the time he rode. Striving thought he could almost catch the tune. He did at last, and stared harder than ever. Why it was Jerry himself, Jerry of the old days. They recognized each other simultaneously and the Master gave a great shout that put the hounds into an ecstasy of frenzied delight. Striving sprang forward down the road to meet the spurred horse and the two men's hands clasped. The others watched in wonder, no one had ever seen Jerry Riker show enthusiasm before for anything but horses and hounds.

"Splendid," he cried, "you've been coming for over five years, but it's all right so you've come at last."

Striving shook his head.

"Can't. I'm on my way to New York to try a case in the Court of Appeals. That's my train." He pointed backwards over his shoulder. The other looked up and suddenly began to holloa.

Hoof Beats

"Train! Where?" he cried. It had gone. Striving wheeled quickly.

A big-boned thoroughbred gray was standing near him, and he was sure he heard a ripple of clear laughter, then he raced for the station. In the distance the train was just disappearing and all he could see was the end of the rear car and a flutter of green flag. When he returned the Master was still chortling and rocking from side to side on his horse. Striving hardly knew whether to be angry or not. The girl had turned her face away as he approached, but he could see her shoulders shake. He stopped.

"You knew," he whispered, and the derby hat bobbed up and down.

Striving knitted his brows in vexation.

"I've got to get on somehow, Jerry. I wish I could stop but—"

The Master grinned exasperatingly.

"Only two trains stop here, the one you came on and the other at two."

"Oh Lord!" Striving groaned, "and my brief, what will Atkins say?"

"Let Atkins go hang," the Master insisted, "and jump on my second horse. She'll give you the ride of your life."

Striving shook his head again vigorously. The

The Brook

keen sense of his responsibility brought him up alertly.

"Impossible, the case would go by default." He looked up and saw a pair of blue eyes watching him, and a pair of lips that pursed, pretending to whistle. It came to him with a rush that she thought him afraid.

It cut him, but he couldn't help it. Then he walked to the station, leaving Jerry swearing mildly under his breath. For a moment he hesitated, then decision came to him. He hurried into the telegraph operator's office and picked up the telephone he saw there. In a short time he had the opposing attorneys on the wire in New York.

"What time does Grant vs. Ellis go on?" he called.

For a moment he listened, not speaking, then "three o'clock," he repeated, "Good bye," and hung up the receiver. He glanced at his watch. It was nearly eleven. The run was only forty-five minutes to New York. He shut his watch with a snap and bolted out of the station. He saw the groom on the second horse nearby. It was more than up to his weight, but, he couldn't deny the fact to himself, he felt a little shaky. He hadn't ridden for years and to get on a horse he had never seen before and ride over that country he had

Hoof Beats

watched from the train; well, it made him feel a little weak in the knees.

Then all of a sudden the unexpected happened. One young hound that had wandered off into a field unbeknownst to the Master had found something there, for his voice was raised joyfully to the skies. In an instant the Master was busily alert blowing his horn and shouting, but to no avail, the pack went over and under the fence, kaleidoscopic flashes of white and brown.

Down the road the Master galloped with everyone following after. Only Striving and the groom with the second horse were left. The groom fidgeted and glared at Striving; he wanted to be off, but he had had his orders. Striving looked at his watch and then at the railroad station, and thought of the Surrogate Court of Appeals. The next instant he had pulled the groom out of the saddle and was galloping down the road. How it all came back to him after so many years. The big thoroughbred mare with her long rangy gallop set him in a thrill of expectancy to see what she could do at a fence. In the distance he saw the hounds had struck a line across country in the direction from which his train had come. Soon he caught the others up and they all jammed at a gate, the Master swearing wildly, but nobody minded or heard. Then with a rush they were

The Brook

through, and Striving, his trousers flapping at his ankles, rode straight past the girl with the gray.

“You came,” he heard her whisper, “I’m so glad. I thought for a moment you—”

“You thought,” he grinned, “I could only ride,—on a train.”

The girl nodded and flushed, and Striving felt like a brute. But there was no time now to talk; the hounds were two fields away and running abreast high scent. Striving thought it the prettiest music he had heard in years. They were all riding hard at a stiff board fence and each was choosing his panel. The brown mare took it almost in her stride, but the gray flashed past her in the air, and Striving was sure he heard a rippling laugh. She was ahead of him now and he felt a wonderful pleasure in watching the wind as it whipped at her hair and the way she sat her horse.

He recalled landmarks here and there that he had seen from the train and he knew they were coming soon to the lane. He jabbed the brown mare with his heels and galloped close to the gray. The girl’s face was pink, their eyes met and this time she did not laugh.

“Oh,” she begged, “I was only joking,—be careful. Please follow me, this is all new country to you.” But Striving threw back his head and

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laughed, a big boyish laugh and sent the brown mare along.

They were leading the rest of the field with only the Master ahead. Striving could see him look back every now and then and shout. Behind him he heard the pounding of the gray's hoofs. Once he glanced back and waved his hand, but the girl did not reply. A few fields away he saw a house with below it a row of trees and recognized the lane. He marked the place where the new panel should be and soon saw it shining on the other side. They were going a rattling pace, for the ground was damp and the hounds had never lost scent. The lane lay at the foot of a hill, and Striving rode at it barely checking at all. The mare jumped in clean and he called to her when she jumped out over the stiff new rail. As he landed safely, a gray nose forged at his knee. He drew rein, put out a hand and gripped two smaller ones in his.

"You mustn't," he said. "It's all right for me. It doesn't make any difference, you know, about me, but the pace is too hot for a woman to ride like that."

The face was a little pinched and the color gone. It was the hardest day for years and the hounds had never checked at all.

"I'll follow you. I said I would on the train,"

The Brook

the answer came. This time there was no laughter. They went more slowly through a deep plough, both horses laboring, then out over a low stone wall and on to more solid ground again.

"The brook comes next," Striving heard a rather small voice call, and smiled and rode ahead.

"Take it down there," he commanded, pointing, "I'm going here." It was near the fallen tree. Then he sat down deep in the saddle and struck hard with both heels. The mare did not slacken her speed at all but seemed to fly off the bank. She landed with her fore feet on the other side and fought like a cat for a footing. She won, and was out and standing trembling on the other side. Striving turned in the saddle and waved to the girl to go back, but the gray was already outstretched in the air, a wild light in his eyes, his head high. The next instant he had struck short of the opposite bank with his forelegs crumpled, and the stream had caught both and rolled them under.

Striving was off his horse in a flash. Down stream a heavy root projected and he could see that it had caught them. The girl was out of the saddle, but holding tight to the pommel. Striving was not a good swimmer, but he went in without hesitation and in a moment had the girl in his arms. The gray was keeping his head out of

Hoof Beats

water and pawing madly for a footing on the bank which was lower and more solid here. Striving called to him and the horse responded madly. Then with one wild effort all three came out together, dripping and exhausted. The gray stood shaking with fright for a moment, and then galloped crazily away. In the distance the brown mare joined him and the two raced across the open fields.

Striving laid the girl on the ground. Her eyes were closed. He chafed her hands and called to her in sudden fear. Her eyes opened and searched his, then her head fell back on his arm.

“Oh, why did you do it?” Striving pleaded. “It was no place for a woman to ride.”

The other smiled a little weakly.

“I said I—”, she gasped a little for breath and her breast heaved, “I said I would follow you, you know,—and I, that time I doubted you. I’m sorry.”

Striving smoothed back her hair, which clung damp to her forehead.

He bent nearer. “I don’t know who you are, but you are a nervy little beggar.”

The other smiled somewhat wanly. “So are you,” she said.

Their eyes met again. Striving looked away and his arm trembled a bit.

The Brook

“There must be a farmhouse somewhere about. We’ll get a trap and drive. They’ll be frightened when they see our horses come in.”

He picked her up in his arms without waiting for consent and began to walk. The girl did not speak and he carried her in silence. After a little she asked to be put down, and Striving held her by the shoulders for a moment to steady her, for she swayed dizzily. At last they reached the road. Striving drew out his watch.

“One o’clock. Where are we?” he asked anxiously.

The girl started.

“Oh, your case! I forgot. You’ll never forgive me. Go, leave me now, you can make the two o’clock train.”

For a moment Striving did not speak. He couldn’t leave her in the road like that.

“Isn’t it odd, the whole thing, the way we met and all?” He thought he saw the color coming back into her cheeks.

The girl nodded.

“Yes, isn’t it? I didn’t know you and Jerry knew each other. Jerry’s a corker, don’t you think?”

“Oh yes, Jerry and I are old friends.”

“I’m so glad. He’ll be galloping this way blow-

Hoof Beats

ing his horn like a crazy man as soon as he sees my horse. We're pals you know."

Striving felt his heart choking his throat.

"You love Jerry," he asked a trifle painfully, "and Jerry loves you?"

"Of course."

The girl looked at Striving. Striving was staring ahead.

"It's always like that, isn't it?"

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing."

The note of a horn carried down the wind and they stopped to listen. The sound of a running horse was quite clear—the rhythmic beats of hoofs on the country road.

"Jerry! He'll be so relieved to find me all right, you know. I'll tell him what you did. He'll never forget it."

A man in a scarlet coat appeared around the corner of the road urging a big half-bred chestnut with a pair of long hunting spurs. All at once he saw the two in the road and pulled up so abruptly that it threw the horse to his haunches in the road.

"Phew!" he ejaculated, mopped his forehead with his sleeve, and stuck his horn into its leather case on the saddle.

"Phew! Jane, you've scared me out of seven

The Brook

years' growth. Now, what the devil have you been up to? Soaking wet, too. Been in Babington Brook, I bet. Remember what I told you about that? By Jove, you sha'n't ride any more if you can't behave. I'll take your horse away."

The color was back in the girl's cheeks. She laughed.

"Laugh, you'll see. I'll do it." The Master shook his heavy crop at her.

Striving stood frowning. The girl put her hand on his arm.

"Don't mind him, he's always cross like that when he finds I'm all right. It's just because he's scared—isn't it Jerry?" She laughed again. "Jerry, this gentleman pulled me out of Babington Brook. We rode it," she spoke a trifle proudly; "that is, he rode it and I followed him where the fallen tree is."

"What?" Jerry's mouth hung open. "You, too! Well I'll be d——."

The Master's horse put out his nose and the girl stroked it.

"The mare got over clear, but Sportsman jumped short with me and we went in up to our necks. He," she indicated Striving, "dove in after me. You'd better thank him, Jerry, if you care."

Hoof Beats

Jerry stuck out his hand.

"Fancy you, John, riding the Brook after all these years. There's no use trying to thank you about Jane, she's all I've got in the world, you know, except that thoroughbred mare you were on and two half-bred hunters."

A ripple of laughter followed.

"I didn't know you were married, Jerry."

Striving stared down the road.

The girl looked up puzzled.

"Married?" the Master seemed distressed at the thought. "Heaven forbid!"

Striving looked up at him quickly and then at the girl.

"And you're not going to be?"

"Never!" There was no doubting the Master's decision. It was convincing to say the least.

The girl was beginning to understand and turned her head away. Her shoulders shook and she watched Striving out of the corner of her half-closed eyes. Striving gave up in despair.

"Then who, I demand to know, is this young lady described as Jane, who says she loves you, and who, you declare, is all you have in the world?"

Jerry put his hand over his mouth and guffawed.

"That young person," he cried, pointing, "is my sister, and if she gets into any more trouble I'm going to take her home and spank her, though

The Brook

why you didn't know seems too stupid to me for —”

He jerked his reins sharply. His horse was nibbling impatiently at the toe of his boot. The girl turned and controlled her laughter.

“And this gentleman, Jerry, may I be properly introduced, since he saved my life and carried me in his arms for a mile?”

“Eh? You don't know, either? Well, I *am* hanged.”

Then the Master, standing up in his stirrups, grew sarcastically funny.

“Allow me, Miss Riker, Mr. Striving. Mr. Striving, Miss Riker. I daresay you *have* both changed. You haven't seen each other since you used to slide down our cellar door together in the old town house.”

The girl and the man looked at each other.

“Jane!” Striving said, and his voice was a little husky.

“John!” The girl did not laugh.

“Jane, do you remember the chap that came between us, and—”

The girl looked up at the Master.

“Cut along, Jerry, quick, and get the trap. I'm going to drive John to the station. We can make the two o'clock if we hurry.”

Jerry looked at them both, perplexed.

Hoof Beats

“Well, I’m hanged,” he murmured to himself and cantered briskly down the road.

Striving took off his coat and put it over the other’s shoulders in spite of protest. She was shivering. He took both her hands in his.

“You won’t be angry, will you?” she asked. “Of course, you must get there in time.”

“Angry, of course not—not with you. Why, think of it, I might not have seen you at all.”

The girl looked away.

“Perhaps,” she hesitated, as if it were difficult to say, “perhaps you’ll come again and hunt some day.”

Striving brightened.

“Of course.”

He did not release her hands.

The Master was coming down the road leading a shaggy farm horse attached to a rickety buggy.

“Hello,” he shouted, “jump in, you two, and drive hard. You can make it. Jane, you’ve got a high fever, your cheeks are red as poppies.”

The girl and Striving glanced at each other, then at the Master, and laughed happily.

“Oh!” the latter intoned knowingly, “I see!”

The girl sprang into the vehicle, picked up the whip and the lines. Striving followed quickly. The horse started and the Master rode alongside.

The Brook

“Goodbye,” he said; “daresay you won’t be back now for another five years?”

The girl shot a look at Striving swiftly. Their eyes met and he smiled.

“Tomorrow’s Sunday, you know. I rather thought I might stop off on my way to—.”

The Master regarded his sister and Striving with an expression of resignation and pulled up his horse abruptly.

He was left in a cloud of dust on the side of the road.

“Well, I’m *hanged*,” he declared audibly. A ripple of laughter was his reply.

THE BISHOP OF BARCHESTER

IT ain't always easy to tell a gentleman, sir, because often they is when they ain't. And then, again, there's no mistakin' it, and that's the kind the capt'in was."

"Captain who?" I asked, tactlessly. Judson regarded me with an air of astonishment which put me conspicuously in a class by myself.

"Capt'in Ponsonby, sir!" Judson's manner informed me that there could be but one captain and that my *faux pas* was well-nigh unpardonable. I endeavored to redeem my fall from grace.

"Oh, of course, Captain Ponsonby," I nodded, knowingly, "to be sure, and you were saying?" His expression was that of one not to be easily gulled, his head on one side—then, satisfied of my good faith, he scratched a match on the seat of his trousers and puffed at his little stub of a pipe.

"The capt'in, sir, as everyone knows"—he emphasized the last words a trifle for my benefit—"is the best all-around man on a 'orse in Hengland—or hout of it" he added, lest the desired impression be insufficient.

The Bishop of Barchester

“E could ride a kangaroo over a six-bar gate if ’e chose, sir, and, to my way of thinkin,’ what ’e did was ’arder. E’s the quiet sort, you know, as doesn’t do a lot o’ talkin’, but when ’e wants a thing ’e rides for it, straight as the crow flies, and ’e gets it. And when ’e’s crossed, sir, it’s stand from under—though there ain’t a kinder more respected officer in the whole bloomin’ British harmy. We was hout in Hindia, sir, which the same ain’t much of a country, with its niggers and ’eat, at a big garrison town, called Delhi. There was plenty goin’ on, too, considerin’ the distance from London, what with ’orse-racing, flirting and quarrels; and most everybody, officers and Tommies too, were busy, at one or the other, or all.

“But the capt’in, ’e knows ’is way about a bit, ’aving been in ’ot places before, and so now and then, ’e wins a race or two, or, perhaps, drops into the club for tea. And that’s a funny thing, too, for a man that ’as knocked about with ’orses—the capt’in don’t drink nothin’ but tea. The way the whole thing started, they tells me, was at the club, two days since the Hon. Major Percy Clinton came to join the Eightieth ’Orse. The capt’in is sittin’, sippin’ ’is tea as cozy and ’armless as you please, with the noise and larfter around ’im, when in comes the major and invites the capt’in

Hoof Beats

to drink. — Now, it's a well-known thing in Delhi, and 'arf of Hengland for that, that the capt'in don't drink 'ard liquor. 'E 'ad broke 'is favorite 'orse's neck, so the story goes, one day on Epsom Downs when 'e'd been looking on the bottle and wasn't fit to ride. Well, everybody looks around for a minute, as they know 'e don't like to be arsked, to 'ear what the capt'in will say. It seems 'e 'as known the major before, and I fawncy don't think much of 'is style, for 'e looks up and says with a smile:

“ ‘Major,’ 'e says, ‘you know very well I don't drink; won't you 'ave a cup o' my tea?’ The major is the kind I spoke of—them that is, or ought to be, but ain't—though the Ponsonby name is a thousand years older than Clinton, even if the capt'in's father ain't a manufactured lord. So the major, who is a sort of a bounder at 'eart, larfs and rings for the boy.

“ ‘Get me a man's drink, a B. and S., and leave the capt'in 'is tea.’ 'E says it narsty like, with a mean, sarcastic air, but they tell me the capt'in only chuckled.

“ ‘What's your objection to tea, major?’ 'e says it provokingly slow; ‘hit's a 'armless beverage, takin' it all in all,’ and 'e arf closes 'is eyes at our colonel, who's red in the face with rage—'cause you see it's a kind of an insult to the regi-

The Bishop of Barchester

ment, too, as well as to the best 'orseman in Hengland. The major, who rather fancies 'imself as a rider, don't answer the question, but says:

“ ‘See 'ere, Capt'in Ponsonby, you brag of 'ow you can ride' (and that's a lie, for the capt'in never talks 'orse), 'but I'll lay you an even 'undred pun and beat you four and a 'arf miles 'cross-country on anything, over anywhere you say.' ”

“They fixed it then and there, with the others crowdin' around, and wrote out the major's words. They say the captin' was almighty solemn and then, all of a suddent, 'e larfs. Everyone turns around to see what the joke's about, for they know 'is sense of humor, and the major says:

“ ‘Perhaps the tea 'as gone to 'is 'ead,' but the capt'in just roared with pleasure. Gawd! What a sense of humor the capt'in 'ad! Then the colonel—old Kris, the Tommies call 'im—bein' a terrible knowin' one 'imself, begins to larf until 'e starts chokin' and they 'ave to 'elp 'im into a chair.

“ ‘Lord bless me, Cyril, me boy,' 'e gasps, 'that's the capt'in, you know—'do you want to kill me with your devilish tricks? What, ho!' And 'e begins to larf again. But the capt'in's face don't show a sign, and 'e's puffin' a cigarette. 'E squints at the colonel sharp-like through 'is eyeglarss.

“ ‘Colonel,' 'e says, 'be quiet, sir, or you'll pop

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off in this 'eat some day like a kiddy's balloon' and 'e takes 'im under the arm, and the others can 'ear 'em go out o' the door, the colonel still splutterin' and gaspin' for breath.

“That's the way I 'ears it, from Dawson, 'ead man at the bar, and 'e says that 'e and five others keeps busy all night servin' drinks and that ten thousand rupees were writ in the book, on the race to follow. It's to be run in a week—and this is Saturday night—over the old Delhi steeplechase course—four mile and a 'arf—think o' that! They makes it that long, so's there's no chance for a fluke, and the best 'un must win in the end.

“Now, the capt'in's got a couple o' good 'uns that cawn't be matched near or far, as no one knows better than me, sir, as often sleeps in their stalls, and tended 'em like children on the voyage from Liverpool. 'E's also got one other such as no one ever saw, that the capt'in takes more pride in than 'e does the cross 'e sometimes wears when we're reviewed by 'is Royal Majesty or 'is 'Ighness, the Prince of Wales. This other, I own it, is a hanimal that's 'ard to beat, for 'e'd do 'is slowest quarter in a bit under twenty-six. 'E's out of a famous English racing mare by a fresh little Arabian donkey that prides 'isself, too, on 'is forefathers and 'is dead-game sportin' blood. Yet, it's a mule, sir, a sixteen-'and mule as white



“THE COLONEL WAS SPLUTTERING AND GASPING FOR BREATH”

W. H. CHAMBERLAIN

The Bishop of Barchester

as snow, with ears that would reach from Charing Cross to the Marble Arch—and a tail like a feather duster—just a bunch of 'airs on the end.

“But jump, sir? Oh, I 'ave to admit it, though it hurts, that's what it does—'e once beat our own Lady Godiva, Gawd bless 'er—that's the capt'in's thoroughbred mare. 'E beat 'er two lengths from take-off to landing, at every jump in the field, and led 'er 'ome by a 'ead, sir, at the last quarter, though, of course, the mare won out in the end. Think of it, sir, an old racing man like me—'aving to 'andle a mule, and one whose name was My Lord the Bishop of Barchester—think o' that for the name of a mule. Oh, the capt'in 'as a 'orrible sense o' humor when anyone treads on 'is toes. I don't know what the Bishop o' Barchester done, but it's certain 'e would ha' near dropped dead if e'd ever read the *Pink 'Un* or the *Delhi Sporting News*, or see 'is twin, the mule. Well, I'm standin' in the stable doorway when I see the colonel and the capt'in comin', both talkin' as 'ard as they can. 'Judson,' the capt'in says, when 'e's near me, 'bring out My Lord the Bishop of Barchester,' then 'e fits 'is glarss in 'is eye, and hexamines that mule inside out, and rubs 'is legs 'ere and there. Then 'e thumps 'im in the belly and the Bishop swells up fit to bust, and 'e gives 'is 'orful braying sound that's scarin', that's what hit is. The

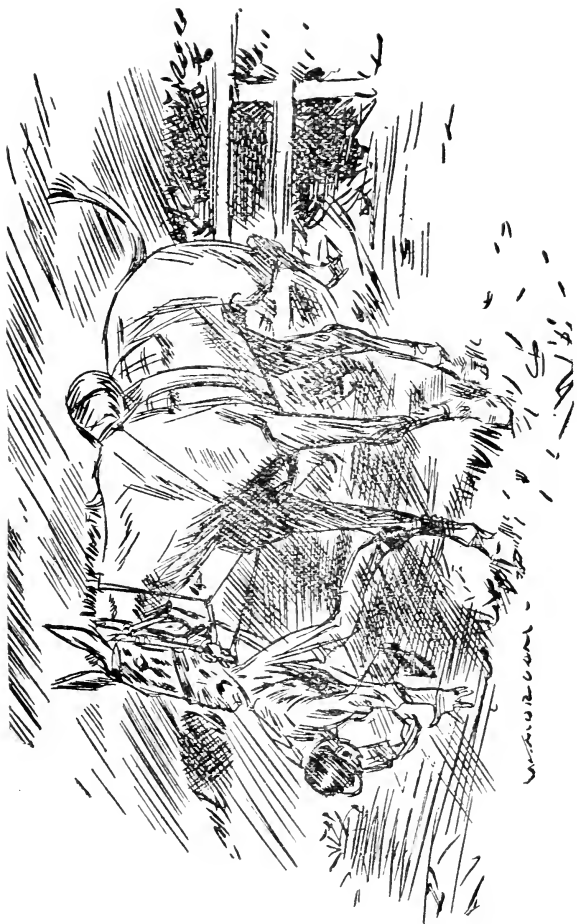
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capt'in shoots 'is eye-glarss, and that in itself is something to see, and then 'e smiles at the colonel, who's grabbed 'old of the side of the stable when 'e 'ears the frightful huproar.

“ ‘It's all right, sir,’ says the capt'in; “is wind is as sound as a sovereign and 'e could gallop another mile if 'e chose.’ The colonel mops 'is forehead.

“ ‘I'll take your word for it,’ 'e says, ‘only let me know before, and when you're goin' to test 'im again.’

“From then on I knows my business. No one's to 'ear a word o' it, but I'm to 'ave 'is 'Oliness ready and fit to win. Somehow the Bishop knows I don't like him, though I cawn't say as who started the fuss, but 'e certainly makes life difficult in the early mornin' canters. First, 'e won't let me come near 'im, then arfter 'e will, but just as some lad is about to give me a leg up, 'e lets out 'is orful roar. I've 'andled some narsty mean 'orses and a couple of man-killers, too, but, sir, they was babes in arms and little Moses compared to this godly mule. Most 'orses is fools, sir, there's no denyin' that, even me that loves 'em cawn't. But this mule, why 'e thinks like the rest of us, only a damn sight quicker, beggin' your pardon, sir. 'E's got legs longer than any 'orse I ever see and 'e jumps in a free-and-easy style—



“ THEN 'E GRABS ME BY THE SEAT OF THE BREECHES AND SHAKES ME LIKE A DOG ”

The Bishop of Barchester

not like the average army mule that pops over a fence as a cow breaks out of a pasture—but flies 'em like any first-class 'orse which 'as done 'is mile at Newmarket. One mornin', the day before the race, I'm schoolin' 'im over some 'urdles, when 'e gives me a narsty spill—(I knows, o' course, 'e done it on purpose from the way 'e stopped and looked)—then 'e grabs me by the seat of the breeches, shakes me like a dog would, and brays 'til I nearly goes mad. 'E knows full well I won't let the boy club 'im, for fear o' 'urtin' our chawnces. Oh, the Bishop, 'e 'ad a keen sense o' humor, too, 'e 'ad, but 'e knows just 'ow far 'e can go, and 'e plays no games on the capt'in, but acts like Mary's lamb. To see 'im nosin' the capt'in's pockets for sugar, or beggin' a apple, perhaps, and seemin' that righteously good, used to make me sick to my stummick arfter 'e'd treated me so. But I'm gettin' behind in my story and that's what you're waitin' to 'ear.

“It's a fair, bright day and the paddock and grand stand is crowded. There's a lot o' good pony races, too, just to fill out the card, but o' course everyone's on hedge for the big match between the Hon. Percy Clinton o' 'is Majesty's Eightieth 'Orse, and Capt'in Cyril Ponsonby, V. C., o' 'is Majesty's Own Black Watch. And it's not a bad appearance the people made that day

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for such a God-forsaken place like that 'ot and 'eathenish land. The ladies looked pretty, too, and the orfficers giv' the scene a bit o' dash and smartness in their white uniforms and their silken racing colors. It seemed like a bit o' old Hengland, sir, everybody 'avin' turned out to see the sport, and the Tommies in the rival regiments began passing scurrilous remarks good-humoredly to each other the minute they reached the field. The capt'in 'adn't told 'ardly a soul which 'orse 'e meant to race and 'e 'ad that right under the agreement they made. But, somehow, it 'ad leaked out, or some pryin' chap 'ad seen me school-in' the Bishop o' a four a clock in the mornin'. Now, the major was no yearling, and 'e 'ad some good 'orses, too, though in course 'e wasn't the mechanic on a 'orse that the capt'in was, as could be seen by the prices quoted. When the word gets out in the paddock that the capt'in intends to beat the major with a mule, you should 'a' seen the people runnin' to 'edge a bit, in order to save their pay.

"But most 'o the crowd didn't know a thing about it, and just sat impatiently waitin' to see the major ride out on 'is chestnut mare, the best 'un 'e 'ad, and to see if the capt'in would race the Lady Godiva or the Viceroy. The bugle sounds and everybody leans forward watching the pad-

The Bishop of Barchester

dock gate. And sure enough, out comes the major ridin' 'is little chestnut bit o' all-right, 'er stepping as light and pretty under 'im as a piece o' cork in a choppy sea. Then there is somethin' o' a wait, so they tells me, as if Hi didn't know better than anyone else—the delay resultin' from 'is 'Oliness 'avin' 'ooked 'is teeth around my thumb as I'm spongin' out 'is mouth. Then the capt'in gets provoked and kicks him with the spurs—the Bishop gives a buck-jump, lets out one o' them 'orrifying sounds, and goes boundin' through the gate and up onto the turf. One woman fainted, so the colonel says afterward, though 'e's apt to hexaggerate, but Hi knows the band stopped playing right in the middle o' "God Save the Queen," and leaned over the railin' to see what 'ad 'appened, for I was there and sees them. Then people just sat down wherever they 'appened to be, and 'eld their sides, near bustin' themselves with larfter. I would ha' almost felt sorry for the major if 'e 'adn't been so ugly. Oh, the captin's got a 'orrible sense o' humor when 'e's 'urt.

"And maybe that mule didn't know, sir? Oh, no, 'e didn't know nothink, 'e didn't, so white and innocent lookin'! 'E was just a bit o' a Shetland pony, pullin' the nussmaid and kiddies about in the park, 'e was. Why, the way that mule carried on was frightenin'. Everytime the starter, who's

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gettin' more and more 'ighsterical and wipin' the tears out o' 'is eyes, raises the flag ready to start 'em the Bishop just guffaws. At last, everybody sees the capt'in, who 'asn't cracked a smile, pick up 'is reins, clap 'is knees a little tighter, and 'ears 'im call out: 'All ready, major?' The major don't answer, bein' far too angry, an' busy with keepin' 'is 'orse under 'im at all, but the starter drops the flag with a shout and they're hoff.

"The people ain't larfin' none now. There's rupees up, an' reputations, because it's easy to see that if the capt'in beats the major, 'e, the major's, got to get 'is transfer. 'E couldn't stand it in Delhi. It ain't like hold Hengland. It ain't like anything but Delhi, where it's 'ot as 'ell most o' the time, and people act different from the way they do at 'ome. They ain't got the patience, an' I've seen a couple o' friends fight like tarriers over nothing—just the orful 'eat. And everyone knows, too, that if the major 'appens to beat the capt'in, 'e's got to keep 'im beat, and that's somethink no man can do.

"It's a heart-breaking pace they makes it, with the major in front goin' steady, and the Bishop fightin' for 'is head like some hold steeplechase crack, a dozen yards to the rear. Personally I 'ates 'im—that mule. I never 'andled a meaner, narstier brute in my life, an' 'e don't know what



“'E SKIMS THE TOP OF THE BRUSH WITHOUT AN INCH TO SPARE.”

The Bishop of Barchester

gratitude means, but I 'as to admire 'im when 'e clears the water. 'E looks like 'e's goin' to a fire, the way 'e skims the top o' the brush without an inch to spare and lands runnin' three feet the other side o' the ditch. The best timber-topper in Hengland couldn't 'a'done it prettier. Oh, it's a pictur', it is, Hi grant you, sir.

“'E's easy to follow without glarses, 'e's so white and pure-looking, a poundin' on back o' the major, with the capt'in balancin' 'is 'undred and thirty pounds as quiet asamouse, and never raisin' a finger. You can understand what it means to Delhi, that must 'ave its excitement now and then—just to keep body and soul together—so many thousand miles from 'ome. I ain't afraid the Bishop cawn't stand it, either, for a mule 'as got more lives than a cat, but I thinks that if the major's chestnut leads them into the stretch, she'll win out with 'er wonderful burst o' speed. And that's what the crowd thinks, too, for whenever the capt'in passes them they yell out for 'im to close up and get a lead on the mare. But 'e, the capt'in, takes 'is horders from nobody, and even the colonel, old Kris, often arskes 'is advice—so 'e and the mule keeps a-pluggin' just as 'appy as ever you please. You can see it makes the major nervous, and, bless you, why wouldn't it, to 'ave a sixteen-'and mule and the capt'in 'arf a length

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from your boot. But it cawn't go on forever and the capt'in bides 'is time. Then 'e jabs 'ome the spurs and goes 'ard to the whip, when they're arf a mile from the judges. The Bishop gives one switch to 'is almighty neglected tail and responds like a bloomin' hexpress train, never touchin' 'is 'oofs to the ground. 'E looks like a streak painted along the rail and 'e comes rompin' under the wire fully six lengths ahead.

“Then I leads 'im back so that th' capt'in can weigh in. Gawd! can I ever forget it, that 'orrible din in my ears. 'E just roars with indecent delight and brays until I thought I'd kill 'im. I knew my life was a failure if I 'ad to 'andle that mule arfter 'e'd won the race. 'E acted like a blarsted fiend, 'e did, with 'is jumps and kicks in the air.

“The crowd all swarmed around 'im, the people 'arf foolish with joy. Someone offered to buy 'im and I caught the capt'in's heye, but 'e only smiles and pats 'im. The major somehow disappears, though the crowd keeps callin' 'is name, until the capt'in raises 'is 'and, “That's enough,” he says, “that'll do.”

“Delhi near went mad that night and the men in the Black Watch fought the men in the other 'til mornin', in places, they say. I knows I licked one bloomin' Tommy for callin' the Bishop o'



“’E JUST ROARS WITH INDECENT DELIGHT AND BRAYS UNTIL I THOUGHT I’D KILL HIM”

The Bishop of Barchester

Barchester 'a white-'aired billy goat,' though 'Eaven knows 'e's that and worse. Personally I stayed hout all night, that night. I didn't dare to go 'ome, sir, with the Bishop hownin' the stable, and brayin' fit to kill. Oh, the major? 'E stuck it hout a week, but 'e couldn't stand it longer, for every time 'e meets a chap 'e gets arsked to a cup of tea. Why, they talk about it now, sir, all through 'is Majesty's service, though it 'appened some years ago, 'ow the capt'in beat the major on a bloomin' blarsted mule."

MR. LEFFINGTON FEELS INSPIRED

QUOTED Mr. Leffington:
“One white foot, buy a horse; two white feet, try a horse; three white feet, sell a horse; four white feet and a white nose, cut off his head and throw him to the crows.”

“So you think Gwendolyn’s husband has four white feet and a white nose,—eh Margaret?”

Mrs. Leffington put down her pen, looked over her shoulder at her husband and frowned in exasperation.

“Richard I wish you would scrape your boots outside and not track that red mud all through the hall and living room, besides too, your spurs cut the rugs. It’s just as easy to hang them out on the hat-rack or give them to Ruggles to polish.”

Mr. Leffington uncrossed his legs and pushed surreptitiously under the rug with the toe of his left boot, several pieces of caked mud.

“I’ll try to remember, my dear,” he said, smiling good-naturedly behind her back with magnani-

Mr. Leffington Feels Inspired

mous resolution, remembering that all women were fussy about the house and had to be humored, —“but what about Gwendolyn’s husband, why are you so down on him?”

“Gwen’s a dear girl,” Mrs. Leffington replied irrelevantly poisoning her pen for a moment in search of a word.

“She came high for John,” Mr. Leffington mused, rubbing his boots together absent-mindedly into a cloud of yellow dust.

“You know I didn’t mean that,” said Mrs. Leffington tormented into putting her pen down altogether and turning around to face him. “Richard, you have a horrible habit of construing people’s words into something they don’t mean at all. What I really meant, was that Gwen is the sweetest, dearest, most lovable girl in the world, and if she couldn’t live with John Rexford, then its only John Rexford’s fault. I was just writing her when you interrupted me,” Mrs. Leffington continued, pausing a moment for the desired effect, and her husband grinned appreciatively, “to ask if she would come down Sunday and spend the week but I won’t of course if you’re not going to be nice and make her have the loveliest time we are able. There will be hunting twice, at least, on Monday and Wednesday, and perhaps again

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later during the week, so that there will be plenty for her to do."

"And for the horses," Mr. Leffington added. "For a little woman, Gwen is the hardest rider I ever,—"

"Richard!" Mrs. Leffington stopped him sharply.

"Oh, all right my dear," said Mr. Leffington indifferently getting up, letting out another hole in his belt and stretching his long arms over his head, "I guess the horses can stand it, only the last time you remember, when Gwen was here, Aviator threw a curb, Also-Ran slipped his hip, and—but never mind. Gwen can ride the Rocket until he can't rocket any more and then she can have old Nut-Cracker and I fancy even Gwen can't make Nut-Cracker go any faster or jump any bigger than he wants to. And if she can, God bless her is all I say. Personally you know I like Gwen. She's a nice sweet sort of girl, and all that as you say, even if she does lack training, but I'm prejudiced of course, because there's John, that I've known and liked for ever so long. They don't come much better than John, and he's got the firmest seat and the lightest hands of any man in this country."

"Perhaps those qualifications do not necessarily constitute a good husband," Mrs. Leffington put

Mr. Leffington Feels Inspired

in somewhat sarcastically, turning up her nose ever so slightly. "Besides he can't ride any better than you can."

Mr. Leffington smiled, pleased in spite of himself, at his wife's partisanship, and ignored the first part of her remark completely.

"Do you remember, Margaret, the time the hounds killed in Bagby's barnyard. That was where John first met Gwen, two years ago last Thanksgiving; she followed him over the barnyard fence, a mere five feet or so—as you happen to know. The rest came in by the gate,—which was the proper way of course,—but you should have seen how John looked at Gwen when he lifted her out of the saddle, and the way her eyes never left his. That was love at first sight all right. Damned shame I say, whatever the trouble is." And Mr. Leffington having delivered himself of this unusual bit of sentimentalism to the astonishment of his wife, took the letter she held out to him for mailing and left the room. Once he paused in the hall as if in doubt, started on, then paused again. Finally with the determined air of one who screws up his courage with, 'who's afraid,—not I', he proceeded with firm tread out to the stable. He had neglected to tell Mrs. Leffington that John Rexford would be staying all the next week at the

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club on his invitation and hunting with the Harkaway pack, for which he, Richard Leffington, had the honor to carry the horn.

The following Sunday morning just before the church hour, Mr. Leffington called out to the stable for the boys to put the Nut-Cracker into the yellow-wheeled break-cart and secretly congratulated himself that Gwen had chosen so propitious a time to arrive as Sunday morning. Usually at this hour Mr. Leffington was conscripted to drive Mrs. Leffington to church, which, to Mr. Leffington's fancy, lurked in sad and everlasting sorrow five or six miles down the hardest pike in the state. To be sure Mrs. Leffington often let Mr. Leffington come out before the sermon, but not always, and so Mr. Leffington's soul was this Sunday morning unaccustomedly joyful and he looked forward to seeing Gwen with a pleasure which a few days before he would have believed impossible. Mrs. Leffington in the meantime had remained home from church, her great sacrifice somewhat ameliorated however by the pleasant anticipation with which one woman looks forward to that intimate conversation with another, who has recently been made supremely happy or unutterably miserable, by a man.

As Mr. Leffington drove gaily out of the stable yard and playfully welted the Nut-Cracker with

Mr. Leffington Feels Inspired

the lash of his whip, he felt suddenly compelled to throw himself quickly to one side in order to avoid two iron shod heels that shot unpleasantly near his head. Mr. Leffington always said that the Nut-Cracker had a keener sense of humor than any horse he had ever owned and infinitely more human than the second man. So after the Nut-Cracker had had his little joke, passed through a series of unlisted gaits, and finally settled down to his usual long swinging trot, Mr. Leffington better able then to sit in the cart without holding on by both hands, had an opportunity to light his pipe and to think. As a matter of fact the former was a much easier and more usual pastime than the latter, although his friends often said that when Richard Leffington did really choose to concentrate and use his mind for anything but killing foxes, he could cause more trouble in five minutes than any other man in the state.

What weighed most on Mr. Leffington's mind this Sunday morning on his way to the station, a mile or two down the macadam pike, was the unwelcome recollection that he had advised John Rexford to take the ten o'clock train, which was the same he was now on his way to meet. He had little fear that Gwen and John would meet on the train as probably John would sit in the smoker reading the Sunday comic sheets, his feet on the

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seat in front of him, but when the train stopped at Harkaway, it was odds on that they would be the only two to get off the train except the conductor who didn't really count of course. Therefore as Mr. Leffington drove down the leisurely descent of the last hill, and the station lay before him grim and forbidding a few hundred yards away, a kind of mental nervousness took possession of him which he felt quite unable to throw off. At first it occurred to him that he would wait innocently in the cart behind the station and at least avoid anything approaching a scene, which to Mr. Leffington was a worse prospect than death itself, but somehow this plan seemed to have points of strategic weakness, and so when the whistle of the engine was finally borne crisply down the wind from the station beyond, it found Mr. Leffington shifting his feet nervously, and lighting and re-lighting his pipe, on the platform near the track. The Nut-Cracker too seemed nervous and uneasy upon hearing the on-coming whistle of the train, but to anyone who knew him, this was but one of his many poses, and while he trembled in the shafts and snorted in the most approved thoroughbred fashion, he stood unhitched and unnoticed.

When the train finally rumbled up to the station and stopped, the first person Mr. Leffington saw was John Rexford on the steps of the smoker and

Mr. Leffington Feels Inspired

in an instant Mr. Leffington was shaking his hand and dragging him towards the waiting room. Having once deposited him there and told him to wait, he shut the door behind him and reached the platform just in time to escort Gwen around the corner of the station, install her in the break-cart, spring in himself, and urge the not unwilling Nut-Cracker in the direction of home at a smart canter.

In spite of the fact that Gwen kept up a sprightly conversation and seemed peculiarly flushed and talkative, Mr. Leffington could not rid his imagination of the picture of John Rexford, sitting for the next three-quarters of an hour in the cold waiting room at Harkaway with only the half-witted baggage man for company.

He remembered now for the first time that John had a very nasty temper when sufficiently aroused and he looked at Gwen with a feeling something akin to sympathetic fellowship, and his replies were absent-mindedly brief and thoughtful.

In the driveway before the house he left Gwen and Mrs. Leffington locked in an affectionate embrace, which seemed to fairly cry out that all men were bad, and standing up in the cart tanned the Nut-Cracker into a healthy sweat, until the latter had entered so much into the spirit of the game that he galloped one of the fastest quarters

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of a mile he had ever done,—past the station,—where Rexford stood on the platform roaring with laughter at Leffington's apparent discomfiture. But after the Nut-Cracker considered that the joke had gone far enough,—it was in reality a heavy toll gate that decided him,—he allowed Mr. Leffington to drive him back to the station where they picked up John Rexford and carried him off to the club, while Mr. Leffington tried to explain his sudden desertion of his friend, so often and so vociferously, that Rexford immediately grew suspicious and regarded him with a cold and disconcerting eye.

On the drive home alone from the club, Mr. Leffington had an opportunity to carefully consider the events of the day, and decided that the plot had thickened already more than he had bargained for, and that in the role of Cupid he was getting considerably out of his depth. But as moments of inspiration come to even the least of us, so was Mr. Leffington illumined and in spite of the lesson he had so lately experienced he slapped his leg in his enthusiasm and exclaimed aloud, which made the Nut-Cracker, mistaking it for a command, jump violently, nearly putting Mr. Leffington over the back of the cart, and go trotting off down the road.

In the meantime, while Mr. Leffington had

Mr. Leffington Feels Inspired

been driving the Nut-Cracker more or less unintentionally up and down the pike, Mrs. Rexford had had a very good cry in Mrs. Leffington's room, in which Mrs. Leffington had joined her, and by the time he reached home, both women were in a softened and communicative mood. Of course John Rexford's name went unmentioned whenever Mr. Leffington was present, as by general consent, though Mrs. Leffington by now had heard everything John Rexford had done since the time he first met Gwendolyn, and all the things good and bad, his mother had told her about him when he was a boy. In the first place Mrs. Rexford said John had humiliated her before all the stable, by peremptorily forbidding her to jump her newest hunter over the paddock gate. And one evening he had actually not come home for dinner without even telephoning and there were other things,—but enough,—Mrs. Rexford wept copiously on Mrs. Leffington's sympathetic shoulder.

Mr. Leffington's hard-bitten look and six feet of bone and sinew made a very striking figure in a pink coat, white breeches and topboots, and for the time being he exercised very much the same amount of power, and commanded as much respect as the captain of a ship. Even Mrs. Leffington then never dared use quite the same tone as she

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affected when Mr. Leffington once removed his badge of office. There was not a better M. F. H. in the state, or a man who knew his country half so well, and Mr. Leffington being in a sense subtly, yet modestly aware of the fact, generally, on days of hunting appointments, wore his full regalia until it was time for bed. It was not so much that Mr. Leffington desired to flout his temporary superiority over Mrs. Leffington upon these occasions, as that he wished to bring her to a realization, two or three times every week, that he, Richard Leffington, was still a man, even though he was her husband. And secretly of course, Mrs. Leffington was fatuously proud of him and adoring and Mr. Leffington being subtly aware of this, let her run the house, and him, pretty much as she pleased.

And so on Monday morning very early, just after the first gray light had come, Mr. Leffington was up, scrupulously dressed, fussing nervously about in the stable, and girding up the Nut-Cracker who swelled himself unconscionably, while Mrs. Leffington and Mrs. Rexford called through the halls to each other to hurry, and dropped hair-pins and nets all over the floor, until at last all three were mounted and cantering down the road to the club.

Mr. Leffington had a great deal on his mind this

Mr. Leffington Feels Inspired

particular hunting morning, since the direction his inspiration the day before had taken would be greatly affected by coming events. He noticed with pleasure that Gwen started violently when she saw John at the club which he took to mean they had not seen each other the morning before on the train, and that a whispered conversation followed quickly between she and Mrs. Leffington, in which the latter often looked at him, Mr. Leffington, in a manner which he easily catalogued through long experience, as "stormy."

At last, screwing up his courage he joined John Rexford in conversation, right under the guns as it were, and finally with a nonchalance of which Mrs. Leffington would have believed him incapable, gave three long blasts on his horn as a warning to all late comers, stuck his heel into the Nut-Cracker's side and moved off alone in his glory at the head of an eager pack of twenty couples, a good sized field following on behind. He had given the Rocket to Gwen to ride, which was the safest and biggest jumping horse in the stables, and he had seen that Rexford found a good mount at the club, so that it was not that which weighed upon his mind and caused him to remain unusually silent as they trotted down the road past Four Corners, and then turned up into some thick woods at the crest of the hill overlooking the

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Gainsborough Farms, and with the help of his two whips cast the pack into the most likely part.

Mr. Leffington was not a sentimentalist, he himself would have been among the first to deny it, and his new self-appointed role, as peacemaker to a pair of quarrelsome lovers, did not sit comfortably on his broad shoulders. It had been Mr. Leffington's sudden idea the day before when he had slapped his leg so smartly in the break-cart and startled the Nut-Cracker from his somnolence, that if he could bring it about that the hounds should kill again in Bagby's barnyard, as they had two years before, when Gwen had followed John over the gate, and he had lifted her out of the saddle, why then the same might happen again, why not, and— But foxes are notoriously untrustworthy, and cannot be expected when hotly pursued by a pack of twenty couples and as many more horses and men, to choose any particular place in which to die, so Mr. Leffington was obliged to think of some much more dependable scheme.

When Mr. Leffington once made up his mind he was nothing if not thorough, and from the time he paid the stable boy to drag an anise-seed bag in a circuitous and tortuous route from the crest of the hill overlooking the Gainsborough Farms until the boy finally climbed the fence into Bagby's barnyard, then got out the remains of a dead fox

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which someone had shot, and placed it in the middle of the yard,—there was not a link in the chain missing, and Sherlock Holmes himself would have been obliged to take numerous hypodermics of the deadly drug and play on the violin for hours before he could have discovered the deception.

To Mr. Leffington's trained and veteran ear, somewhat guiltily sensitive this morning, the very manner in which the hounds acted after they were cast into the woods, was suspicious. The blatant way in which they picked up the scent *en masse*, as it were, and went away in such unheard of full cry, before people could even tighten their girths, made Mr. Leffington think that the stable boy must have emptied half of the aniseed bag somewhere up there in the woods, and he fancied that he could almost detect the scent himself. Mr. Leffington glanced back every once in a while over his shoulder, whenever the Nut-Cracker stopped pulling and boring long enough to give him a chance, and he noticed that John Rexford was riding well up in front and that Gwen was close behind him. The field however had straggled and Mr. Leffington chuckled inwardly to see how well his plan was working out, for in truth it had been no careless makeshift, and he had reckoned upon the fact that both John Rex-

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ford and Gwen could be counted on to outride the others,—and that especially the Rocket, on which Gwen was mounted, could outgallop and out-distance any horse he had ever owned over big country, when the hounds were well away. Indeed after another look behind him Mr. Leffington found it necessary to sit very close to the saddle and take a good hold of the Nut-Cracker's head, for the latter had caught the dull sound of horse's hoofs pounding on the turf behind him, and showed his irritation by bolting in a characteristic manner. Mr. Leffington might be said, and he admitted as much later on, to have been carried entirely against his will into the deep running creek at the edge of Runyan's plowed field,—and out again, for the last of which he silently gave thanks,—while the others came through the ford and avoided a drenching, which was the way any sane person or horse for that matter, would have chosen; but no one would have hazarded the statement that the Nut-Cracker was sane, when the hounds were running.

The country was opening up now, and the pack was plainly visible two or three hundred yards away, their music carried joyfully down the wind to horses and men. As they galloped on, the hounds never checking at all, they came finally in sight of Bagby's white-washed board fences and Mr.

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Leffington knew that three minutes more at the rate they were going would see the end of the day. To Mr. Leffington, Bagby's barnyard fence looked peculiarly high as he rode at it down the side of a hill, the hounds already swarming over and under it, and he hoped that the Nut-Cracker would feel in a proper frame of mind, for Mr. Leffington had known the other long enough not to have any illusions as to his being made to jump it if he had rather not. But the Nut-Cracker made a clean performance and Mr. Leffington barely had time to get away on the other side before John Rexford landed behind him closely followed by Gwen. The rest of the field came galloping down the hill and seeing that the hounds had already killed, dismounted and came more or less leisurely through the gate.

Mr. Leffington was busy cutting off the dead fox's brush for Gwen, but he was not to be denied the pleasure of being in at the death as he would have expressed it, and so when John Rexford came over to his wife, lifted her out of the saddle into his arms and she clung to him desperately and Rexford kissed her,—Mr. Leffington watched it all in shameless triumph with an inscrutable smile illumining his lean bronzed face.

And to this day the Harkaway Hunt does not know, with the exception of Mrs. Leffington,

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John Rexford and his wife, for it was far too good to keep entirely to himself, that one of the fastest runs the Club ever had, over its stiffest country, the second time the hounds killed in Bagby's barnyard, was a mere delusion and a snare, and that in reality the hounds never killed at all.

Nor does Mr. Leffington know, for the others would never spoil the sport by telling him, that John Rexford and Gwen had made it all up on the train that Sunday morning and agreed to take in poor Richard. But whatever anyone says it must be admitted that Mr. Leffington was a consummate artist in his way.

WHEN THE MARQUIS CAME INTO HIS OWN

THERE was a 'southerly wind and a cloudy sky, and the ground was moist with dew,' but there would be no hunting in Fairfax County that morning. The hounds complained bitterly behind closed kennel doors, they could feel the scent in the air, and blanketed hunters kicked in their stalls and neighed. Something most untoward must have happened, when on a day like that, the hills did not echo and re-echo with the sound of the huntsman's horn, but all was quiet as night.

There was hardly a sign of life except where one old pensioner hound nosed about in a field near the stable, fancying he had got up a rabbit and gave a short yelp now and then.

In truth something unusual had happened, for in another part of the stable a Torchlight foal had been born. And Torchlight foals are not born every day, even in Virginia. So that day there would be no hunting, though a fox should come bark at the door, and instead Fullerton, the "vet,"

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old black Ephram, the Master and others, watched silently the little fellow, and occasionally nodded to each other with knowing looks when he moved. And in turn the little foal's mother watched them all, raising her head now and then, to roll her eyes in warning, if the "vet" stooped down to touch her babe, or give it something to drink. Then Fullerton, whom she had known for years, would speak softly to her, tell her that all was well, and with a sigh she would put her head back in the straw.

For quite a time it was thought the foal would not live, and the "vet" moved about noiselessly, while old Ephram tiptoed here and there as if in the presence of death, but little by little as Fullerton watched, the Marquis, as he was called later on, began to improve. First he opened his eyes in an odd wondering sort of way and stretched his legs a bit. Then the "vet" drew a long breath and asked for the "makings",—he reckoned he'd smoke a little,—which was a sure sign that his work was successfully done, so that Fullerton knew that the Marquis would live and he smiled to himself with pleasure.

"Do you think he will jump?" he asked, and the "vet" looked at him with one eye-brow raised.

"A Torchlight jump?" he inquired, with a quizzical smile on his lips. "Can a duck swim?" and old Ephram chortled with glee for an hour.

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But Fullerton and the others had forgotten the dam in thinking so much of the foal, and when they remembered, it was a little too late, since they found her dead in the stall. Perhaps it was that,—for she had been a great mare in her day, and had won two score ribbons or more,—that brought Fullerton and the Marquis closer together, but it is certain that Fullerton raised him on a bottle and figuratively walked the floor, until the Marquis was old and strong enough to fight his battles alone. Therefore the Marquis was much to be excused for a great many things, since he had no mother, and all the advice he got was from Fullerton, who was only a man after all, and not even a horse as it were.

The Marquis was a delicate colt for more than a year or two, for he seemed to grow in all the wrong places at once. His back was far too long, though he got most of his growth in his legs, which were longer and far more wobbly than anything ever seen. But he had a nice small head and muzzle, and showed his breeding there.

When the word went around, as it does everywhere in the South, slow but sure, that a Torchlight had been foaled, men who were riding or driving past, would pull up and stop for a look at the latest addition to Fullerton's thoroughbred stock. But they usually shook their heads

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doubtfully, or laughed, when they saw the Marquis. "Run all to legs and no conformation at all," they expressed it, though if the Marquis heard, he did not cease nibbling his grass, and no one could possibly have told that he ground his teeth in a rage, or was furiously angry within. For the Marquis had always a very quick temper, especially when ridiculed. Fullerton found that out one day when he was playfully teasing him, sticking his thumb in his ribs, for the Marquis caught him through the arm with his teeth, and Fullerton never did it again. After that he understood better how the Marquis felt, since the county had come to think it an excellent joke on him too, his having this strange looking colt on his hands. Indeed Fullerton had rather bragged, before the Marquis was born, that he anticipated the greatest colt of the year.

If Fullerton had been a different sort of man it might have turned him against the Marquis, but since he was not, it made him kinder instead, and the colt never forgot.

As the Marquis grew older, nature seemed to do little or nothing to aid him and the way people laughed was annoying, for there was the Yorkshire Lad, foaled only a day or two later, that the county was still talking about,—a fine breedy colt, everyone said, with a short coupled back and

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quarters to match, that would speak for themselves in the field or over a steeplechase course. *He* was a picture to gaze at, the Yorkshire Lad, with an aristocratic bearing, and a certain distinguished manner of throwing his head in the air, for he seemed to possess all those showy qualities, that count for so much, which the Marquis peculiarly lacked. But Fullerton was a man who knew a horse, almost better than any other, and he regarded the Yorkshire Lad as a colt without bottom and an abominable quitter at heart.

And so the Marquis grew up unnoticed, except by Fullerton who was hunting all day long, and had little spare time to waste on the Marquis's education. In fact the county forgot his very existence, and eagerly watched the Yorkshire Lad, who stood sixteen hands without shoes, and was schooled each morning over made jumps at the end of the lunging line.

Just turned three he did six feet two without effort, and the countryside fairly rang with his praises, and prophesied records to follow. Fullerton watched anxiously with the others and was invariably obliged to admit that the colt had a promising look, and that his sleek, well groomed coat made the Marquis's seem like a rug. For the furry hair on the latter's back and quarters was covered with short little bits of straw, and as

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for his legs, the hair grown long at the fet-locks, they resembled a Cochin China's more than anything else.

Still, what did that matter, Fullerton persuaded himself, appearances didn't count. Down there horses weren't park hacks to be ridden in "Rotten Row," but gentlemen's hunters, that could gallop and jump to the tune of forty couples. What if the Yorkshire Lad had jumped six feet two, at the end of a lunging line! Loose bars! that knocked down at the slightest touch of a horse's knees. Poof! Hadn't the Marquis jumped four board fences, one right after the other, only for a mouthful of green grass he saw growing near the crest of a hill? *Those* fences didn't knock down. Almost any horse in the county, whether a jumper or not, had learned, that over Fullerton's farm, the fences were made of new timber and wired up to stay, and that if one was so unfortunate as to strike above the knee, it turned one over like a clown in the circus, and it was a Godsend for both horse and rider, when they fell, if it had rained the night before, or the frost was out of the ground. The Marquis had been in the field once when the hounds had struck a line across there, and it was evident then that every horse was saving himself when he saw those fences ahead, and

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galloped a trifle more slowly, with his hocks gathered well underneath.

Soon now it would be time for the colts to be hunting, a short canter and try out to begin with, over small hurdles, that would not be strain enough to hurt them,—for the Marquis now, and the others, were just past three years old.

Even the Marquis was getting used to the saddle and bridle and the feeling of weight, for old Ephram often rode him, but Fullerton had never been on his back, and only the old stud groom knew what power and courage was there. Indeed Fullerton, against his better nature, had kept putting off day by day, the time when he must ride the Marquis out in the face of a hunting field, though continually he argued with himself that it did not matter, since what real difference should it make to an honest, hard riding man, if his mount could but carry him higher and faster than any other horse in the field.

The fall hunting had begun now as the leaves dropped off the trees, and lay brittle on the ground below. There was a sharp winter thrill in the air and when a farm dog barked in the distance, or a wagon wheel crunched, it sounded much as it does when the snow is packed on the ground. Twice the Yorkshire Lad,—with Carroll up, in pink,—went cantering by on the way to the

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meet, and each time as they passed, the man halloed, and the colt flung up his head and snorted in a particularly arrogant manner.

The last time, Fullerton was just saddling his old hunter Playmate, outside the stable door, when he heard Carroll call. He waved his arm in return, and dropped the girth he held in his hand, while he watched the Yorkshire Lad increase his speed, and go galloping down the road, for Carroll had touched him gently with his near spur in order to show off his stride.

Fullerton watched them out of sight, then slowly shook his head, and glanced at the Marquis who stood in the corner of the paddock fence, painfully trying to appear unconcerned, as he nipped at the Playmate's hocks. Fullerton would have given a good deal then to have owned a colt that could have made Carroll on his Yorkshire Lad sit tight and follow him straight-away as the crow flies, but there was little hope of that, for the Marquis, he had come to agree with the rest, was a failure,—he had been damned from the start. He shrugged his shoulders as the man and horse disappeared from sight, and with his head beneath the upraised flap of the Playmate's saddle, he reached for the trailing end of the girth, and buckled and fastened it there, while the Playmate groaned and swelled himself out to

make it more difficult, merely as a matter of form. Then old Ephram as usual dipped his brush in a bucket of water and gave a last touch to the mane, and Fullerton, his foot in the stirrup, mounted, touched the Playmate ever so lightly with his spurred heel, and rode him into the yard.

It was the same thing over again, Fullerton riding out on the Playmate, and the latter pretending to buck, with absurd pretensions to youth. But this time something unusual had happened, for the Playmate had gone dead lame. Fullerton pulled him up abruptly the moment he felt him wince and called for Ephram to come out. Then he quickly dismounted, lifted up the Playmate's off forefoot, and drew a nail from the frog.

"Bring out the Ranger," he said. "I mean't to save him today," but Ephram shook his head.

"The Ranger, sah, am in town, habin' new shoes put on," and it seemed then if ever, that the Marquis's hour had come.

Fullerton did not think of the Marquis at once, and only swore softly to himself but somehow he happened to catch his eye, which made him start and ponder, then cross over and take down a bar. In another minute he had slipped the Playmate's bridle, the one with the white brow band, over the Marquis's ears, and buckled the saddle on. Then he mounted and without hesitation turned

the Marquis's head for the gap in the fence, and struck him hard with both spurs.

The Marquis took it swiftly, almost from where he stood, and when they landed over, Fullerton pulled him up sharply, and measured the length of the jump with his eye.

"Ephram," he called, "did you know this colt could jump?" but Ephram only rolled the whites of his eyes.

"The vet done say, 'Ken a duck swim?' " he grinned, and burst into spasms of laughter.

The Marquis made the turn into the road at a gallop, the direction the Yorkshire Lad had gone, and Fullerton sat close to the saddle and took a fresh grip on the lines. But Fullerton found that the Marquis kept himself well in hand, for his stride was forceful and long, and covered, it seemed, just twice that of any horse he had ever ridden before. And to the Marquis, Fullerton's weight was nothing at all, he sat so still, and his touch on the bit was so perfectly steady and strong.

When the others saw Fullerton approaching down the road, at the pace he was going then, the huntsman had just blown his horn, as a final warning, and they strained their eyes to see what it was that Fullerton rode, for as the Master said afterward, it looked like a Teddy Bear. The

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Marquis however, would not have minded, for the fire was in his eyes; he had heard the horn and seen the hounds, and at last his hour had come, for a Torchlight, chestnut colt, is not as you and I, who live and breath by rote.

First of all it is to be remembered that the Marquis was born and bred a Torchlight,—and that is something to be considered, when speaking of horses down there, and too there was the Yorkshire Lad beside him, which was sufficient alone to make all the gall of his sporting ancestors rise at once, and he trembled and switched his tail in the air. Hounds often in the distance had passed him and he had heard their voices afar, as well as the song of the horn, but this was something quite new. Now they all moved jogging slowly along the road together, horses crowding and jostling each other, with the hounds following the huntsman's lead. Then they went single file into some woods and came out on the other side in the open, where miles of low rolling country stretched below them invitingly.

The hounds were eagerly at work near the Marquis, with the ringing voice of the huntsman urging them on. Deep in the shadowy wood instantaneous flashes of white and brown, or waving excited tails, caught the light now and then, and there echoed the short eager cries of the hounds.

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The Yorkshire Lad was nervously alert, though he had hunted a number of times before. His tail shook like a reed in the wind, his sharp cut nostrils dilated swiftly, and he pawed the hard ground with one forefoot. The colts stood side by side, and it was plain to Fullerton that people discussed them. The Yorkshire Lad was half a hand taller and his coat shone like a new silver dollar, but Fullerton knew that that wouldn't count if the Marquis could outjump and outgallop the other.

Fullerton shut his knees on the saddle in a way that made the Marquis catch his breath, which coming fast, turned, in the sharp frosty air, to a vaporous cloud, while his small furry ears pointed this way and that and his heart beat with longing against the leg of Fullerton's boot. Then one hound began to give tongue, and before Fullerton could change his position, a big red fox, went directly under the Marquis's legs, and the whole pack burst forth like the shriek of a sudden squall, and came swiftly towards them.

In a moment Fullerton had wheeled him, leaned low over his withers and sent home both spurs. The Marquis, whose great strength lay in his quarters, literally stood in the air,—Torchlight colts *will* rear you know,—and with one long stride, passed the Yorkshire Lad, who was boring

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his head to the ground. Now came all the boasted strength of his ancestors pounding through his veins, and after the first few minutes as the Marquis held his own, Fullerton felt more than half convinced that he had done the colt a rank injustice, and that the latter could gallop like that for hours or leap a five foot wall, and he scorned to look back for the Yorkshire Lad but rode in the first flight with the best. He picked out the highest panel of a stiff white-washed board fence, and as they came safely over, the Marquis squealed and he heard the men laughing behind him. But the Yorkshire Lad followed him closely and there was little to choose between the two.

Oh the glory of the music to Fullerton's soul, as the scent began to burn, and the hounds ran with noses high. The bigger the fences the better,—*that* would show the difference between them,—for the Yorkshire Lad had the wasp of a waist that would test his endurance soon, and the Marquis had the pluck of the devil, and a barrel that not every girth would go around. Sometimes the Yorkshire Lad's breath came hot on his quarters, or sometimes they raced side by side, while the men on their backs spared their weight when they could, and studied the country beyond.

Now comes the song of the hounds "There he goes, there he goes, there he goes," and the Mar-

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quis breathes deep and rises gallantly at an ugly stone wall, and once over goes hock-deep in a soft spot in a plowed field, where the water has run down from above. But he struggles out, laboring painfully as he gallops across the heavy furrows, just in time to see the Yorkshire Lad's tail in the air disappearing over a post and rail, and down the side of a hill. Then Fullerton tries to check him in order to save his wind, but the Marquis will have none of it,—he has wind and plenty to spare! “There he goes, there he goes, there he goes,” the cry hangs in his ears, and he cunningly takes the post and rail where a bar is cracked, lest he should come to grief, and goes plunging down the hill.

A stream of icy water flows rapidly at the bottom, and he does not hesitate, for he sees the Yorkshire Lad climb dripping out on the other side, but holds his nose above the water and struggles to keep his feet on the shifting sandy bottom. It takes all of his strength and cunning to scale the slippery bank, but he's safely up at last and hears the hounds again.

“There he goes, there he goes, there he goes,” he cocks his ears forward and harks to the joyous refrain. Now the Yorkshire Lad is barely a field ahead and is showing the effect of the pace. Fullerton does not urge the Marquis now, indeed he

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is holding him back, for a well bred colt might break his heart and no one would know 'til he dropped. But the Marquis fights for his head, gets control of the bit, and before Fullerton can take him up, his bootleg is rubbing the Yorkshire Lad's soapy shoulder, and the Marquis is leading again.

"Hark to 'em, hark to 'em, hark to 'em," the Master shouts, just as his raw-boned flea-bitten grey strikes her knees on the top of the wall, and though she scrapes over, nearly goes down when she finds a nasty two-foot drop. The Marquis rises at it prettily, nose and nose with the Yorkshire Lad, head up, with his hocks well under him,—for it's a treacherous down-hill landing, and they are going like mad, the hounds never at fault. No time to check, it's a breast high scent, but there is a difference now in the voices of the hounds; it's deeper and stronger than ever it was before and echoes back from two or three fields beyond. "We've got him, we've got him, we've got him," the music seems to say, and the Marquis jumps at the change in the sound, and fights with the Yorkshire Lad for the right to lead the way.

"Hark to 'em, hark to 'em, hark to 'em," again the Master shouts, and the gray gallops bravely ahead, forgetting the bruise on her knees,

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and with the rush of the Yorkshire Lad's breath past his ears, he doubles the length of his stride.

"We've got him, we've got him, we've got him," comes from the field beyond but it ends in a deep throaty scream that announces the finish is near. There's one more jump that's all, the Marquis is near it now, and Fullerton rises in his stirrups as he glances back at the Yorkshire Lad, and halloes. It's a ragged stone wall with an ox-rail before, and a "rider" or two laid along the top; a wicked thing at the end of a day, for any horse to jump, not to mention a colt.

The Marquis's nostrils are quivering and showing the red within, his ears are no longer erect, and the way he gallops is dead; but his eyes still burn, and his tail sweeps out, for his is Torchlight blood, and there is ever the pounding behind him of the Yorkshire Lad's hoofs on the turf.

The Master once over and safely away, turns expectantly in his saddle to watch, as the Marquis approaches the wall, and the Master is not disappointed, for the Marquis makes one final effort, gets well over, and then, his hind feet, barely caressing the top, kicks himself away. But the Yorkshire Lad who comes under whip and spur, is roaring hoarsely, flecked with blood and foam, and he falls when he strikes the wall.

That was all. In another moment the hounds

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killed, and a tremendous dog fox it was, as you may see for yourself if you wish, since the brush still hangs in the Marquis's stall, though this happened years ago. Indeed little was ever heard again of the Yorkshire Lad, but the Marquis's name became law, among horses or men who hunted.

And even to this day when the hounds are in full cry, though there be younger blood in the field, Fullerton on the Marquis usually leads the way.

BRUTUS, COW PONY

WHEN No. 2, the big black transport on which Brutus sailed (odd name for a horse, you say; yes, that's what the Colonel said, but that comes later), was only a few days out of Cape Town, the first shot was fired and the war began. As No. 2 finally steamed into the harbor and docked, Brutus fidgeting excitedly deep down in the hold with the other horses of the 19th Lancers, could hear the bells in the engine room as they clanged for "Slow," the swish and slap of the sea against the ship's side, and then the gurgling churn of the waters as the vibrating engines reversed and held her. Overhead he heard orders shouted and the steady trample of men as the regiments formed aft and went down the gangplank, two abreast.

Then came the thing he hated worst in the world, which he had gone through on embarking and the sudden whirl to a giddy height, and the swift drop made him dizzy. Horse after horse

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preceded him, and then came his turn. He braced himself, feet apart, the whistle blew shrilly, the cables ran creaking through the blocks and he felt himself lifted high in midair above the ship's deck by the great derrick, swung out over the dock, where he turned slowly in the air, kicking viciously, with squeal upon squeal of sheer wounded dignity and rage, and then gently lowered until, scrambling, he found his feet and stood quivering once more on terra firma.

He was piebald, marked with brown and white, and stood little more than fourteen hands, but a horse was a horse now since the British government had suddenly waked up and put a tag on everything with four legs in sight.

He was an American cow pony, and by contrast was almost pitiful as he stood near an officer's big English bred charger, while the soldiers, resting on their arms surrounded him laughing. He eyed them viciously, with his back rounded like a cat's and his ears laid back threateningly. Then quickly the soldiers fell back and Brutus saw an officer pushing his way through the crowd until he stood barely a safe distance from his heels. The officer was adjusting his monocle and trying to read what was printed on the white square of paper plastered on the pony's quarter. Brutus heard him muttering:—

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“Brutus, No. 214! Good Gawd! and for Troop A, too!”

Brutus felt the sting of the words and the insolent manner. It was a good thing for this fool, he thought, with a little thrill of pride, that Jack was a fugitive from justice safe across the Texan border. He'd shot a man more than once for less than an insult to his pony.

Then he raised his head and saw a tall, lank sunburned man in a sombrero talking to the English officer. Brutus felt a wave of homesickness when he saw the hat, but when he heard the other's voice it cheered him. He cocked his ears forward and listened.

“If you don't want the pony I'll buy him,” the man said eyeing Brutus with a knowing look. Brutus moved a step nearer.

“Livingston, you war correspondents have queer tastes,” the other replied sarcastically. “See the quarter-master,” Brutus gave a snort of pleasure and kicked sidewise at an inquisitive trooper who had come too near. At any rate, here was a man, one of his own kind, who knew a good cow pony when he saw one, even if it did look a little underfed and ridiculous and had its feelings hurt.

A few minutes later Brutus saw Livingston coming toward him.

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“I’ve got him!” he heard him shout to the officer and saw him wave a piece of paper in the air. Brutus was glad, of course, but it wouldn’t do to give in without a fight before all those snickering Tommies, and then Livingston would think better of him, too—that is, if he was the sort he looked to be, with those broad, stooping shoulders and the long, loose jointed arms and legs. He glared at Livingston and rounded his back a little more and laid his ears back a little further; then, as the man took a step nearer, he bared his teeth, but in an instant he felt the other astride his back and the knees almost squeezing the wind out of him.

Good! This was a man—in a flash he was off like a bolt of lightning, bucking, rearing and sun fishing, while the man on his back belted him about the head with his big felt hat and halloed. The soldiers watched them in open mouthed wonder until they disappeared from view.

Fifteen minutes later, gentle and contented, Brutus cantered quietly along the main street, while the man patted his neck and laughed good naturedly. The war had begun in earnest and the town was filled with horses and guns, the men in khaki, while every day another big transport arrived and disembarked more. Brutus had light work these days. It was only to canter every

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morning down to the cable office and wander about, unhitched, for an hour or more, while Livingston, inside, pleaded and threatened to get his message sent. He could stand it now all right, the amused snickers and whispered remarks of the other horses, for didn't he have a champion now, that tall, weatherbeaten man standing just inside the door with his hands on his hips, legs spread firmly apart, and now and then patting the big "44" in the worn leather holster at his side, as he said to the cable operator in a deliciously lazy drawl:—

"Well, so help me, if that cable isn't sent before I come back I'll make this office look like the Fourth of July."

Then, one day, horses and guns and men formed into organized fighting bodies, and little by little the town was emptied as the army marched into the sun parched veldt. Brutus, keen and alert, with the gaunt man in the white pith helmet, became a familiar sight, as he trotted or cantered untiringly beside the big troop horses of the advance guard of cavalry. At night, when the column halted, he was hobbled in the horse lines, but much to his disgust, with Troop A of the 19th Lancers, that had spurned him and cast him out. The war had become a grim reality, and the early morning treks into the withering veldt, enlivened

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only now and then by an occasional skirmish, were growing monotonous and beginning to tell on horses and men, though it could hardly be said to have altered Brutus much, unless the skin was drawn a little tighter over the cowlike hip bones or the eyes burned brighter.

Troop A had had a hard day, when one evening about dark, dust covered and weary, with five empty saddles and a wounded corporal, it found itself compelled to pitch camp many miles from the main body. There was little sleep that night for horses or men. Signal fires were burning, little patches of flame on the distant hills, and the camp watched them while awake. Hobbled in the horse lines, Brutus heard the words passed along that the Boers had cut them off from the main body and that they were hemmed in. Brutus dozed; it was nothing new to him. He'd been hemmed in before, once by United States troops, when he belonged to a Sioux, and again by Indians when he was rounding up cattle for the "XX." It rather annoyed him, the silly chatter the troop horses kept up, especially that of the dapple gray. The gray was speaking.

"It's all rot, you know, knocking us about like this. Government should know better."

"Right-o, my beauty," chimed in the sergeant-

major's chestnut, "but h'i s'y, some one had to do it, didn't they?"

"I beg your pardon, " the gray replied, with a toss. "Please do not address me as 'your beauty,' and remember that I am the first lieutenant's gray." Brutus sniffed. That gray made him tired.

"Say, pardner," he said, "can't you cut that out? I want to go to sleep." The gray eyed him haughtily.

"You were addressing me?" he said interrogatingly.

"I was," answered Brutus firmly, with a glint in his eye. The gray ignored him and swished his tail at a persistent fly.

"S'y, you're the haughty one, ain't you?" the chestnut pursued; "'e seems a decent enough little chap." The gray ground his teeth—they needed filing.

"Oh, yes; no doubt you think so, but he strikes me as an extremely common horse." A "Krag" cracked in the distance and a bullet whizzed out of the darkness through the horse lines.

"There now," the gray pursued wrathfully, "what do you think of that? It's trek, trek, trek all day in the blistering sun through the God-forsaken country, then tied up every night to be shot at. Beastly bad management somewhere,

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I call it." Brutus threw up his head with a snort that startled the horses half way down the line.

"My friend," he remarked, "were you ever in Arizona, when the thermometer was 130, with a wounded cow puncher on your back and six howling red devils chasing you for seventy miles, without a drop to drink?"

"Arizona? Never heard of it. Is it in the colonies?" the gray condescended. Brutus drew in a deep breath that swelled out his sides and turned away with a sigh . . .

"Go to sleep," was all he said.

But there was no more sleep for any one. The little troop of one hundred men was surrounded, and the neighboring hills afforded safe means for attack for the Boers. The shots were popping through the darkness with unpleasant regularity, and even the tiny spurts of flame were visible, the enemy had come in so close. The pickets were falling back one by one and the camp was alive and anxious. The horses were made more secure and the troop stood waiting, every nerve on edge. This attack was not by a mere detachment of Boers, it must be the main body itself. Brutus too felt the strain, though he did not jump or squeal every time a bullet passed unpleasantly near.

When the first early light came it found the

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troop still fighting bravely, but it had lost twenty men and as many more were wounded. The horses too had suffered, and one poor thing near Brutus dropped down with a moan, shot through the head. The troop too was losing heart and replied to the constant firing almost listlessly. Toward afternoon the attack ceased and the dusk came on in peace, but all knew, horses and men, that the Boers were only resting and would begin again at nightfall.

It was silent now, and the deadly stillness was almost worse than the noise. Then Brutus heard voices near him. Two men were standing only a few feet away. One of them was Livingston and the other was the ranking officer of the troop. Brutus pushed his way toward them and reached his hot nose to Livingston's hand.

"There's only one way," the latter was saying; "that's for some one to cut through their lines to-night to our main division."

"We could do it," Brutus thought, and edged a step nearer.

"It can't be done," the officer replied; "they'd down you a hundred yards from camp."

"I can try; it's only fifty miles, and the pony could do it in five hours. These others," Livingston said, waving his hand toward the listening

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horses, "would break their necks." And Brutus bobbed his head approvingly.

"You're a non-combatant. If they caught you out there those chaps would hang you," the officer said.

"The New York Call wouldn't allow it," the other smiled, "and I'm the only one who can do it."

That night at nine o'clock, when the first ping of a shot sounded from the hills, Brutus recognized a tall, stooping figure coming down the line, and gave a little whinny of pleasure as the man stopped and threw a cloth and saddle over his back and tightened the girths with his knee in the pony's stomach. The Lieutenant's gray looked around sharply. "Huh," he snorted. "I wonder what they're up to. No good, I'll be bound. Two of a kind, I say." Brutus lashed out with both heels, for hard words against one's master is a personal insult among horses. Then he felt the cold steel between his teeth as the bridle slipped over his ears, and a minute later was following Livingston, treading softly past the furthestmost picket.

"Good luck, sir, and God bless you!" he heard the picket whisper. Then he felt Livingston's weight in the saddle and the powerful grip of his

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knees, and he went forward, lifting his feet carefully, avoiding the rocks.

The night was black and silent and hot. Heavy clouds hung overhead, and now and then a large drop fell with a spatter on the saddle bow. Three hundred yards from camp a shot knocked up the loose dust almost under his nose, and then another and another. They were seen! He felt the sharp spurs in his side, heard the man's low voice in his ear and knew the fight for life had begun.

With his ears laid back from his outstretched head and his bony legs opening and shutting swiftly beneath him, Brutus was running as he had never run before. The shots were coming faster and faster, but Brutus had found his stride and the speeding blur in the dark made no easy target. Little spits of fire flashed from the darkness on every side simultaneously with the crack of the shots and the whiz of the bullets. Brutus was galloping madly. He didn't care to be killed so far from home with that sleek fed gray to joke about it when he was gone, and then there was the man on his back to think of. But the shots were fewer now and sounded from the rear. Then came the quiet regular beat of hoofs. They were through the lines and the Boers were after them.

Brutus would have chuckled but for the fact that they had a long way to go and he needed his

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wind. He hadn't had such sport since those braves had broken loose from the reservation. An occasional shot came unpleasantly near, then the last sound of hoof beats died away, and Brutus settled into his accustomed canter and mile after mile swept by monotonously. Once when he struck a rolling stone he and Livingston went down in a heap, but they were soon up and off again. It was awfully hot, he thought, as hot as Arizona, and such bad going—the rocks were so hard on one's hoofs.

He could keep this pace up for hours, he knew; he'd done it often before. There was the time the Sheriff and posse had tracked him and Jack Dunton the night they held up the Limited, but the spurs were urging him faster now and his legs were beginning to ache. He heard Livingston's voice.

"Half-past eleven. I said we'd do it in five hours; do you think we can, old boy?"

Brutus swung on doggedly, the dust making dim shadow in the night. He wished it would rain or something. Lord! How thirsty he was! A pony couldn't gallop like that forever without a drink of water. At least in Arizona there was a water hole now and then. His tongue rolled dry in his mouth, and he'd never felt like that inside before. His sides were bursting, and the sweat

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blinded his eyes. He wouldn't stand it much longer, he thought. No pony could, not if the Boers wiped out the whole blessed troop. It seemed hours before he again heard the other's voice.

"One o'clock, Brutus; it's tough, I know, but they've got me through the shoulder and it feels pretty bad."

Brutus plunged on. Shot through the shoulder and not a word of complaint. Well, if Livingston could ride five hours with a hole in his shoulder he needn't whimper, but he couldn't help it if he felt a little dizzy and lost the direction a bit. He wondered what the gray would say now. Oh, well it didn't much matter. Then he went down in a lump, and when he staggered to his feet the man was standing near him, grasping his wounded shoulder, his face showing white in the darkness and his teeth clinched on his lip. A moment later Brutus felt him crawl painfully into the saddle, the touch of his spurred heel and the nerve racking ride went on.

At fifteen minutes of two the furthestmost outpost of the British lines heard the muffled hoof beats of a wind blown horse, and staring into the blackness saw a piebald pony, laboring cruelly as it galloped, a man lying low on the pony's neck, one arm hanging limp. The picket challenged and

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the exhausted animal came to a stand, then sank to the ground with a gasping moan. A crowd of officers and soldiers stood over them, anxiously waiting for Livingston to speak. Brutus tried to raise his head. Was it all for nothing? Wouldn't he speak? Perhaps he was dead! It seemed interminably long before he saw Livingston move and heard a faint whisper come from his parched lips.

“Quick! Troop A, due North, Boers in force.”

Brutus closed his eyes. Ah! That felt good. They were sponging out his blistered mouth with cold water, and a big sergeant with a small cross on his breast was rubbing his aching legs with a strong smelling liniment and muttering between breaths, “Plucky little devil,” and “little thoroughbred.” Then he heard the clear notes of the bugle sounding “boots and saddles” all over the camp, and a few minutes later the trample of many horses the dull rumble of the gun carriages and the rattle of accoutrements as two regiments of horse and a light battery galloped out into the night, choking the camp with dust. It took them eight hours to reach Troop A, and they got there only just in time to prevent the Boers from rushing the half of the troop left alive.

Two nights after the reinforcements had gone, Troop A straggled wearily into camp, forty men

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short, with thirty wounded in the ambulances, and reported the engagement still going on. Brutus was hobbled in his old place in the horse lines of the troop. There were a good many vacant spaces now, but the tired horses snickered, made quite a fuss over him, and came as near as their ropes would allow.

“Bully for you,” shouted the sergeant-major’s chestnut. “We’re proud of you, we are.” Brutus was a plain pony and praise embarrassed him. He bobbed his head modestly and reached for a mouthful of hay.

“And, old chap,” said the gray, “I’ll take all that back, you know; you’re a well plucked one and I couldn’t have done better myself.” The chestnut snickered outright.

“You!” he scoffed, throwing up his tail disgustedly. “Why your bloomin’ bones ’ud be rottin’ in the sun by now!”

Brutus turned away, he didn’t care to hear their petty squabbling; he had done his duty and was glad. He heard voices in the distance, and looking down the lines saw several officers and Livingston strolling leisurely toward him.

“Here he is,” he heard the latter say.

“Not much to look at, but his heart is as big as his body.” All the troop horses stood rigidly at

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“Attention” as the regiment’s colonel stepped forward.

“Who’d believe it possible,” he said, his hand stroking Brutus’ nose.

“The plucky little chap. Brutus, you say he was called. Odd name for a horse. ‘The noblest of them all,’ ” the colonel mused. “By Jove, I wonder. Why, Livingston, you must ride almost twelve stone!” he exclaimed as they turned to go.

“Twelve stone three,” Brutus heard the other reply. The horses could hear the colonel talking as the men disappeared in the darkness.

“Now that’s the trouble,” he was saying, “with these big animals like that gray.” The gray stood over sixteen hands.

“They’re useless in this country. Government should”—The rest was lost in the night. The gray looked straight ahead, as if he had not heard, but the chestnut snickered delightedly.

“That’s one on you, old boy,” he chuckled, and gave the other a spiteful nip. Brutus smiled to himself.

“Good night,” he said pleasantly, “I guess I’ll turn in,” and with a grunt of contentment and good will toward all he stretched his still weary legs and lay down to sleep.

“THOSE WHO RIDE STRAIGHT”

NORMAN and his wife and I have kept this story well. It is far too sacred to us to risk having it taken lightly, or in ridicule. It is just as much a part of our lives as anything else, perhaps more.

Not one of us three has ever doubted for an instant. If I exist, if Norman and his wife exist, then the following facts are true beyond controversy:

Trotter came from England to this country some ten years ago, settled down not far from here, and within a month everybody felt as if they had known him always. It doesn't take long to get acquainted in any hunting community, but besides that Trotter was one of those men you run across occasionally that both men and women like.

There was something about Trotter that radiated both strength and confidence. When any one felt worried or troubled they invariably sought out Trotter, and merely sitting near him and hearing him talk in his quiet, convincing way,

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seemed to strengthen one without doing him any harm.

But in the beginning the men liked him for his perfect seat on a horse and the way he took his liquor, and the women worshipped his British, blond, good looks and his smile, which didn't flirt, but could.

He had served over half the civilized world before he caught his fever on the “West Coast” and had to leave the army. That was how he happened to come among us, the fever, and the fact that some American cousins hunted with our pack.

It was a curious thing, this fever. At the most unexpected times, just when he seemed at his best, it would strike him and roll him out like a baby, though he stood six feet two in his stocking feet, and weighed in at one hundred and eighty-two.

“Just thirteen stone, y'know, and it takes a bit of flesh to carry me.”

I can hear him say it now, in his lazy drawl, clicking the stem of his pipe against his even white teeth.

Poor Trotter! Still I don't know why I should say poor Trotter. He got more out of life than most of us; that is, he—

But I'd better get on with the story.

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After Trotter had been with us about a week—he had bought the little green and white farmhouse about a mile from the kennels—Norman, the master, met him and invited him to ride with the pack.

The first day he came out we jumped a big dog fox in an open field, not a stone's throw from the kennels, hunted him across the Archer Farms and down through Blue Mountain Valley. You know the run, of course, straightaway, jump and jump again—some one down sure at McAdam's gate, and so on. Stiff country!

Well, after that Trotter's position was assured. He rode the master's Spread Eagle, an old ex-steeplechaser, not an easy horse to sit by any means. Naturally every one watched him—newcomer, British, and all that. If there were any flaws, we were out to pick them. But there weren't.

Trotter was lean as a ham-bone in spite of his weight, and if ever a man looked a picture in the saddle, he did. He sat straighter than most of us, who had dropped into rather sloppy habits—something between a Life Guard's and a fox-hunting seat that looked workmanlike and graceful.

Besides, what was more important, his hands were as light as a child's. The master himself

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said he had never seen better hands. Spread Eagle, with a mouth like a monkey-wrench, that always bolted when hounds went away, hadn't pulled an ounce.

A lot of things happened that first day Trotter came out, things we didn't realize then were happening.

The principal one was Alice. All the others followed as a sequence. I introduced Trotter to Alice myself, Alice being my first cousin. The hounds were just ahead of us down the road. I remember every detail.

She was riding on my right hand and he was a trifle beyond her.

“Alice,” I said, in my best manner, “allow me to present Mr. Trotter.”

You knew Alice. What a brick she was! The best fellow I ever knew. She could sit a horse, too, and nerve in the field—she used to make me ill at times.

“Howdy do,” says Alice, putting out her hand in that quick, deliberate way she had, head up, eye to eye.

Trotter's hand met hers, and their eyes, too, met.

I was watching carefully. I always liked to get Alice's estimate of a man. If she smiled, it

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was more than enough for me. Alice could tell if a man was sound as surely as she could a horse.

She smiled, and then I noticed the smile die away trembling on her lips, and the red pour into her cheeks. Alice almost never blushed. She took her hand from Trotter's slowly, and when I glanced quickly at him to see if he, too, had noticed, there was the oddest expression upon his face.

His eyes were quite wide and filled with wonder, like a child's. I know it was striking enough—the whole episode—to cause me to sing out in my unfortunate, blundering way:

“Hallo, you two met before?”

But Alice only urged her horse forward, and Trotter looked away and remained staring across the fields as if he were gazing into centuries of space. A few moments later the hounds were off and I had something else to think of besides Alice and Trotter, being mounted on a green three-year-old with a hot temper and just enough thoroughbred in him to make him want to rush his jumps.

A few hours later when we “killed,” and then rode back, I had nearly forgotten all about it. Trotter was very pleasant and amusing, and everybody tried to make him feel at home.

I don't know whether it was noticed or not—

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yes, I remember now, Mrs. Norman did, the master's wife, we spoke of it afterward—but Trotter never took his eyes off Alice the entire time. And Alice knew it, too, for she didn't open her lips, and the color kept coming and going in her cheeks.

When we were near home, Mrs. Norman, a great pal of Alice's, whispered in my ear.

“Alice's hit.”

“What d'ye mean?” I frowned, knowing well enough. Mrs. Norman snorted at my stupidity.

“She's hit, I tell you. Now, her—our troubles begin. She's held off pretty well so far. It had to come, though, some day.”

I was really annoyed. I was fond of Alice myself.

“Nonsense, you women are always looking for romance.”

Mrs. Norman is a discerning woman. She stopped fussing about being pretty, long ago, though she still is, and wears her hair sleeked back and rides hard. It's what her husband admires most about her, and she knows it.

She only nodded knowingly in reply. She was right.

Personally, I always thought Alice was one of the handsomest women I ever saw, but now she fairly seemed to blossom.

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Her hair was as black as Trotter's was light. Her coloring was deep, too, and her eyes big and expressive. In a habit there was no one in the field could approach her.

Some days later I saw her again. Met her on the soft road at the edge of the woods exercising her gray mare. We rode along together for a while without saying much. Alice and I knew each other too well to have to talk.

Finally she turned to me with a queer expression as if she wanted to say something, but was a trifle embarrassed or timid about beginning. It wasn't at all like Alice.

"Let's have it," I smiled, trying to give her a lead and help her over.

"Joe," she began, "did you ever, ever meet people you'd known—before."

That puzzled me.

"What are you driving at, Alice—ever meet people I'd known before? Why certainly, every day."

She shook her head.

"You don't understand. I mean known, known a very long time ago, in some other life or—something."

"Why, Alice," I exclaimed, "you surely don't believe in that sort of—"

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But that was all. She had touched the mare with her spur and later she wouldn't speak.

After that she and Trotter were inseparable and naturally I got to know him pretty well. One day he and I were sitting in front of the fire at the club. It was snowing again and hunting closed for two weeks past. Suddenly he turned to me. Right out of the blue he asked it.

“Ever been in Delhi?”

I hesitated.

“Delhi, where's that, India? Why?”

“Oh, I wondered. Where I first met Alice, y'know.”

I swung round.

“Alice!”

“Why, yes.”

“Absurd,” was on the tip of my tongue, and then I thought better. He was staring into the fire.

“Oh, yes, it has all come back now. I had just returned with my company. We'd been chasing one of the hill tribes that had turned rogue. She hasn't changed, except to grow more beautiful.”

For a moment there was silence.

“Alice remembers of course.” I spoke as evenly as I could.

“Of course. She mentioned it first. Odd,

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isn't it? Says she recalls it all, Delhi, the old garrison, and everything."

I didn't think it worth while to protest, to say I knew Alice had never been there.

"We're going to be married, y'know," he went on. "Alice wouldn't mind my telling you."

He held out his hand to be shaken, smiling happily.

"Bully, isn't it? What a lucky chap I am. Alice—they don't come often like her. She's much too good for me, of course. Says she's not though. We'll hit it off first-rate, don't you think? You see, we've known and loved each other for ever so long."

I shook his hand vigorously, but my voice was husky. It was all very well to say, "poor Trotter, the fever again," but what about Alice?

She remembered.

No fever about Alice, just level-headed, square as a brick, horse sense. I was glad though they did not tell any one else about that silly business.

A month later they were married. Every one was delighted, even the women who had tried to get Trotter. We were all so fond of Alice.

He took her to the little green and white farmhouse, no bigger than a box stall, and the whole country went to call, and most of us spent half our time there, the women upstairs gossiping with

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Alice, and the men below smoking and listening to Trotter talk, for he was an intelligent chap and had been nearly everywhere worth going.

It was too good. We were all too lighthearted, too happy. It couldn't last. It ended, but not in the usual way. No, not the least bit in the usual way.

Alice died. Died the way she always hoped she would—in the field. She had no fear of death, no fear of anything I ever knew of. She used to say quite frankly she enjoyed life, but when the end came she wanted to go out with a good horse under her and the hounds in full cry.

In any one else it might have sounded cheap, but not in Alice. We all knew she meant it, and many is the time I have thought she'd have her wish. She rode overwell, overhard for a woman.

It wasn't far from where Trotter met Alice—the Archer Farms. The gray mare simply pecked badly at a big plank fence and went down. It didn't look like a nasty fall.

The mare was up in a flash and galloping off, but Alice lay still. That frightened me. Trotter and I reached her at almost the same time. She was unconscious, but in a moment she opened her eyes.

Trotter had her head on his arm and was gazing into her face. His lips moved, too, as if he were

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praying. I let the horses go and knelt by her side.

“Jim,” I heard her whisper to Trotter, “kiss me. The mare has rolled me out. It’s my back. Don’t worry, Jim; we understand, don’t we? It won’t seem so long, dear.”

And with that she was gone.

After that Trotter was never the same. He’d answer you in an absent-minded way, but his eyes looked vague and far-away. It always seemed as if he saw more than the rest of us. Perhaps he did.

That spring I used to sit with him often on the piazza of the little green and white farmhouse trying to cheer him up. But often I have thought that he hardly realized I was there, though he was always well mannered and considerate.

The following fall, hunting opened again. I tried to make Trotter come out, but he wouldn’t. I think he’d seen enough of hunting. He couldn’t seem to bear even the sound of the hounds. But he still kept his two half-bred hunters and the big thoroughbred mare.

Once or twice I rode with him, but found him preoccupied and distraught, so concluded he had lost all interest in the sport, which was bad. Later, I heard from several different people that he had been encountered riding hard at night; once when

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the moon was up, so Norman told me. It must have been near midnight. He had seen him going 'cross country, over the Archer Farms, at a gallop. Norman said he thought some one ought to stop him as that country was bad enough in broad daylight.

Norman is a hard-headed, matter of fact kind of man, the best M. F. H. in the State, not the sort to see things if they weren't there, or have delusions. But it was evident he was holding something back.

“What is it,” I demanded; “out with it.” Norman blinked disconcertedly.

“Oh, nothing, except, of course, it couldn't be, but there was someone riding with him.”

“Nonsense!”

Norman nodded.

“Of course, no woman would be such a fool. That's what I said to myself. It must have been only—”

“Woman!”

“Why, yes. That is, it looked like one. It was on the other side of Trotter, away from me, horses going nose and nose. You know, just as they used—”

He stopped suddenly.

A little shiver ran over me.

“Did it,” I choked. “Confound it, man,

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answer me; did she look like Alice?" I blurted out at last.

"Look like Alice? Look like Alice?" Norman hissed at me between clenched teeth. "It was Alice, I tell you. Ruth and I both saw."

He left me there staring vacantly at the door he'd slammed behind him.

I didn't see Norman again for several days after that. We rather avoided each other, I fancy. Then, one morning Mrs. Norman called me up and asked me there to dine that night. Norman laughed a little sheepishly when we met.

"Something must have got on my nerves the other day. What rot! Believed it, too, you know, hanged if I didn't. Have a cocktail?" Mrs. Norman accepted for me.

"Of course, we both will. What were you saying about nerves?"

But Norman was already making a great noise with ice and a shaker. Either he didn't hear or pretended not to.

After dinner we sat and sipped our coffee comfortably, while Norman discoursed on the trials and tribulations of an M. F. H. Once Mrs. Norman interrupted.

"We all ought to drop in on Jimmie this evening. We haven't been for ages. Shall we?"

The green and white farmhouse where Trotter

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lived was only a short half-mile away. Norman looked at me. I nodded, and he went out to order his old broken down thoroughbred put to the cart.

In front of Trotter's house his big black mare stood patiently, saddled and bridled, rubbing the crest of her head against a tree. The door was open.

When Trotter heard us drive up, he came to the door and stood there a moment silhouetted against the bright light within. He was in riding clothes and was either about to go out when we arrived, or had just come in. He seemed glad to see us, in fact we had never seen him gayer.

Trotter could make himself tremendously amusing when he chose. I think he was particularly fond of us three, we had known Alice so well.

He rattled on about nothing, his eyes bright, his cheeks a high color. Once without apparent reason he suddenly stopped, got up—went out into the hall and stood listening. When he returned he offered no explanation, and I hesitated asking any.

Alice had a beautiful voice, not trained, you know, but a nice, low-speaking voice, very tuneful and pure when she sang.

Often I have heard her in the early morning as she cantered along under my window, while I was

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hurrying into my boots, with her—"Tally-O, Oh John Peel's Tally-O! would awaken the dead or a fox from his lair in the morning! Get up, Cousin Ned. Time and hounds wait for no man."

And then a delicious care-free laugh rippling off in the distance and the swift *patter-pat* of the gray mare's hoofs as she felt the spur.

Trotter had set out the whisky and soda with a kind of nervous, worried hospitality, his eyes wandering inevitably back to the little silver clock on the mantelpiece. I think Mrs. Norman must have been noticing him more particularly than her husband or myself from what she told me afterward.

At any rate, I recall Trotter standing in the middle of the room quite motionless, with the intense expression of countenance one has in trying to catch a faint and distant sound. Mrs. Norman was sitting near him with her eyes upturned to his, watching, a little frightened I think.

Norman did not seem to be taking it in, but the silence and the preoccupation of all must have disturbed him, for suddenly he reached out and noisily poured himself a drink, then lay back in his chair again.

"Hush!" says Trotter.

At that Norman sat upright. When he saw

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Trotter's queer staring eyes and our intent expression, the glass shook a little in his hand and the ice jingled.

“What is it, Jimmie?” Mrs. Norman's low voice questioned softly.

“Don't you hear? Hark!” He put out his hand as if afraid one of us would answer.

No one spoke. A gust of wind, without warning, half closed the hall door, then threw it back banging against the wall.

Trotter did not notice. Norman started and half rose from his chair. As he did so, it came faintly almost imperceptibly.

“T-a-l-l-y--O.”

One long silvery note, clear as a bell. It sounded a very long way off.

My blood froze and fear gripped me with icy fingers. Mrs. Norman swayed, and a stifled cry escaped her. Her husband sprang from his chair and crossed to her.

All was still again. Trotter remained standing there, a weird sight, straining his ears for the sound.

“T-a-l-l-y—O! John Peel's Tally-O! would awaken the dead or a fox from his lair in the morning.”

How well we knew that voice, soft, yet ringing clear and strong! I sprang for the door. Trotter

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grasped me roughly and stopped me. Then he threw back his handsome head, hand to his mouth—

“T-a-l-l-y—O! A-way!” he sang.

His big voice made the little room reverberate and the silent night without echoed and re-echoed.

Then distinctly came the swift *patter-pat patter-pat* of a galloping horse. Rapidly nearer and nearer it drew. It passed the house. I was shaking like a leaf.

“T-ally-O!”

Norman was holding his wife in his arms and shaking too.

“Tally-O!”

Trotter gave us one wild glance. In a flash he was out of the door. I was after him just as he reached the road, in time to see him throw himself lightly across the black mare’s back. He was gone!

Norman and his wife had run out and were standing by me peering into the night. With one accord we climbed into the break-cart and raced after him.

“Them,” I say, for none of us doubted longer. Once we caught, on the down wind, Trotter’s long-drawn deep-throated “T-a-l-l-y—O!”

A little later as the moon came from behind a cloud spreading a pale, queerish light over every-

“Those Who Ride Straight”

thing, we saw him in a field beyond riding hard, sitting deep in the saddle and spurring.

Mrs. Norman stood up in the cart and shrieked.

“Jimmie, come back!” But her husband pulled her down to the seat again.

The road was good where we drove and we kept apace. We were galloping past the Archer Farms.

Trotter rode in plain sight. His head was turned away, and he waved his hand and talked to some one near him. Suddenly the light began to fail. A large black cloud was passing over the moon. It was almost dark.

Call it what you will, a trick of the shadows, an optical delusion, but whatever it was, there was Alice and the gray mare not a dozen yards beyond, as real as Trotter himself.

Her fair face was turned toward him, and us, very white, very wonderful in the moonlight. We all saw her clearly. It was just before the fence where she fell. I tried to call, but my throat felt dry and withered and gave forth no sound.

The next instant it was inky black and the moon entirely gone.

I felt Mrs. Norman's head on my shoulder, fainting. Norman was hauling at the lines and

Hoof Beats

shouting, endeavoring to check our speed, for the cart rolled threateningly. At last he succeeded.

Simultaneously—we heard it like the crack of a rifle at midnight—the splintering of the stiff plank fence as Trotter's black mare struck it with her knees, and then the ensuing thud of her quarters on the ground as she spun over in the air.

I leaped out of the cart, climbed the fence which paralleled the road, and falling and stumbling groped my way across the rough plow. Behind me I could hear the others following, calling to me and keeping close to the edge of the field.

The moon shot out, shining brightly. Almost at my feet lay Trotter. The spot where Alice had fallen.

The mare was gone. He was stretched on his back, arms and legs outspread. He recognized me and smiled. I knelt down.

“Not badly hurt, old chap?” I whispered. His lips moved. I bent nearer.

“Good-by,” he said.

“No, no, Jim, you're not badly hurt,” I choked. “It's not the first time you've been nearly rolled out, you know.”

He managed to move his head a little and smiled—a beautiful smile.

“You don't understand.” I could barely hear him. “I'm through with this—Alice and I—”

“Those Who Ride Straight”

That was the last. His was the happiest face I ever saw.

We got him to the cart and I drove him home, while the others walked beside.

Few natives will pass the Archer Farms at night. As for us three, we seem to have had a glimpse into something quite beyond us. Still I do not doubt, nor do Norman and his wife. There is no horror about it now at all. We know that they are happy.

Every now and then Norman and his wife and I ride or drive past the Archer Farms, but never without an odd, indescribable sensation.

Once it was late at night, exactly such a night as that other, the moon dipping in and out, casting uncouth, shadowy figures across the light, mottled road. Mrs. Norman trembled a little, I remember, and Norman whistled unconcernedly—that is pretended to. As we reached the plow and the stout plank fence, the moon disappeared and left it dark. Our horse shied abruptly and stopped stock-still. There was a sharp, sudden blow of wind, and the willows at the sides of the road swayed and rustled, bending grimly toward us.

Then it came.

“T-a-l-l-y—O!”

Hoof Beats

Gently and as clear as the murmur of a mountain stream.

“T-a-l-l-y—O!” this time farther off, and in another tone, deep and long-drawn.

I could hear Norman grinding his teeth in some kind of mad excitement. Suddenly he sprang up in the cart and swung the whip over his head.

“Tally-O!” he shouted. The whip fell hissing across our horse’s quarters and we raced down the road swaying wildly.

The moon did not reappear and the fields at the side of the road were in pitchy darkness. But we could hear. There was the faint intermingling *patter-pat*, *patter-pat* of two galloping horses.

“Gone away!” I cried huskily, and Mrs. Norman tried to call.

At Norman’s gate we pulled up and went in. Lightly down the wind came a bright laugh we knew so well and a long-drawn view halloa.

“They’re huntin’, huntin’ still,” cried Norman, “and happy. You see there’s nothing to be afraid of, for those who ride straight like Alice and Jim.”

Mrs. Norman was weeping softly, her head upon her husband’s shoulder. He put his arm about her roughly and held her close.

“Those Who Ride Straight”

“Why, Ruth, you ought to be laughing instead. Don’t you understand?”

But I doubt if any of us three understood exactly, for as Norman often said when we talked it over, as we have again and again:

“It’s too big to understand, but we do realize this—we’ve seen more than our share, and we know that for the right ones the huntin’ still goes on.”

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HOOF BEATS

FROM

VIRGINIA

&

OTHER LANDS

