

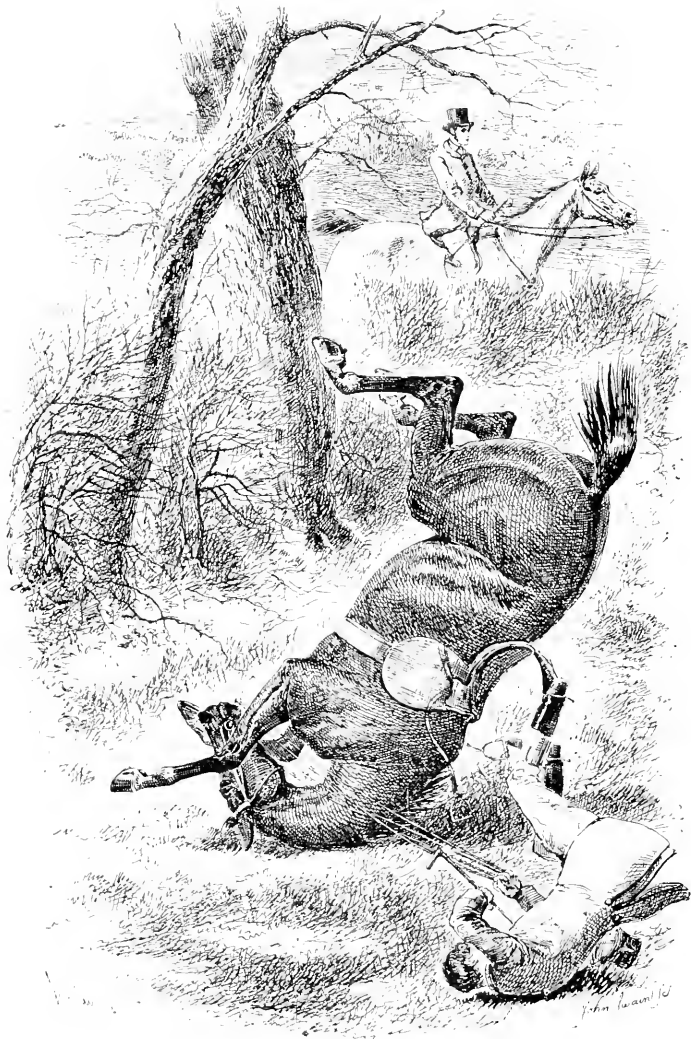
*[Faint, illegible handwriting or a very light stamp, possibly containing a name or date.]*





JOHN A. SEAVERN'S

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



OVERJUMPED HIMSELF, AND DOWN WE CAME A REGULAR BURSTER.

*Frontispiece.*

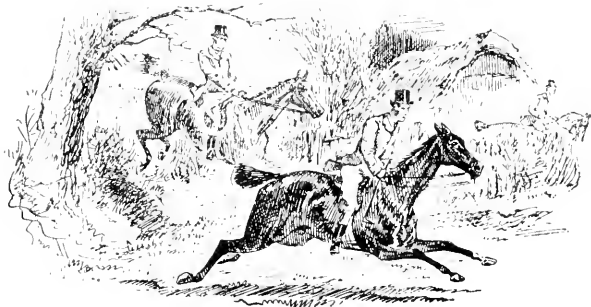
*Pages 16, 17.*

# RACECOURSE AND COVERT SIDE.

BY

ALFRED E. T. WATSON,

AUTHOR OF "SKETCHES IN THE HUNTING FIELD," ETC.



*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN STURGESS.*

LONDON:  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,  
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1883.

*(All rights reserved.)*

20-10102

5.

708

4

59

82

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED  
TO THE BEST OF FRIENDS,  
WILLIAM HESELTINE MUDFORD.





## PREFACE.



THE very favourable reception accorded to my "Sketches in the Hunting Field" has induced me to hope that another book of sketches and stories, on precisely the same lines, may have the good fortune to find friends. Of this I am the more sanguine as Mr. John Sturgess, who did so much for the success of the former volume, has again given me his most valuable assistance.

I have to thank the proprietor of *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* and the editor of *The Standard* for permission to reprint matter contributed to those journals.

A. E. T. W.

15, CHENISTON GARDENS, KENSINGTON, W.,  
*October, 1883.*



## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE NICEST LITTLE HORSE IN THE WORLD ... ..	1
AFTER THE CUBS ... ..	20
“THE MERRY HARRIERS” ... ..	34
“IT IS OUR OPENING DAY” ... ..	46
A MINCING LANE M. F. II. ... ..	58
RIDING TO HOUNDS ... ..	73
A SHARP SPORTSMAN ... ..	81
ROUGH SHOOTING ... ..	95
UPSET ... ..	102
ROOKS AND PIGEONS ... ..	139
THE SPOTTED HORSE’S STORY ... ..	163
AN OFF CHANCE ... ..	194
A VISIT TO A VETERAN: WILLIAM DAY AND FOXHALL	217
THE DERBY CENTENARY ... ..	228
THE LADIES’ DAY AT EPSOM ... ..	237
A GOODWOOD CUP DAY ... ..	246
A DAY WITH TOM CANNON ... ..	256
SPORT AND SPORTSMEN ON THE FRENCH COAST ...	271
BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE CIRCUS ... ..	284
BETTING ... ..	298
JOCKEYS ... ..	306



## RACECOURSE AND COVERT SIDE.



### THE NICEST LITTLE HORSE IN THE WORLD.

“I THINK we can do another bottle,” my friend Greenwood said, more decidedly than interrogatively, as he emptied the decanter into our glasses.

“It’s uncommonly good claret,” I answer, somewhat indefinitely; which, being interpreted, means that I should like another glass but am not sure I ought to have it. Greenwood shares my sentiments, and rings the bell. There in a warm corner is the bottle of Pontet Canet; it is tapped with the care it merits, and placed on the little table, which, dinner being over, we have drawn up before the fire. A warm, crisp biscuit is also produced—Greenwood’s man had less doubt about that other bottle than we had—and our glasses being filled we settle down to

the discussion of the good wine. I like Greenwood extremely—I don't remember ever liking him more; and I am certain he likes me. I feel, in fact, on good terms with everybody, even Chippenham. The things he said about my last book were harsh and ridiculous. It wasn't criticism. But then, perhaps his digestion was not all that it might have been, and I forgive him.

The room is so comfortable, the chair so easy, the fire warm without being scorching; the cigarettes are within easy reach when, the claret having been discussed, we are inclined to smoke, and the lamp on the bracket throws a mild light on the portrait of old Rosalind, the good mare over whom I landed a nice stake in the County Steeplechase just when I wanted it more badly than usual (if so slight a difference is worth naming), and who carried me so smoothly and comfortably on many subsequent occasions, when she had grown a bit too slow for successful exploits between the flags.

The music of Mrs. Greenwood's piano comes softly and pleasantly through the curtained door, and her sister Ethel sings well enough to make listening to her a pleasure. A charming girl she is, too; unaffected and clever. Old Fan, the fox-terrier, strolls into the room, looks up into

my face to see if I am a friend, decides that I am, and curls herself up by my side; and being devotedly attached to dogs, I consider this very polite of Fan.

“Fill your glass, my dear fellow. It is good wine, isn't it?” says Greenwood, breaking in upon my pleasant reflections.

“Excellent!” I reply, and I mean it. “Really good Pontet Canet has a richness, delicacy, and character of its own, which seems to me infinitely superior to the great majority of those full-bodied wines that give so many men the gout.”

“I thought you'd like it; and you'll like that little horse you're going to ride to-morrow, I'm sure,” Greenwood continued, filling his own glass.

“It's very good of you to mount me, for I had simply nothing to bring,” I reply. “Have you had him long? Oh no! You bought him at the last Selwood sale, didn't you?”

“Yes. Quite by chance I went there, but it was a very lucky chance,” Greenwood answered.

“Was he cheap?” I inquired.

“Cheap for the horse he is. I gave £180 for him. Couldn't resist it! When I saw that fellow who rides them round take him over the course, I determined money shouldn't stop me.

Over the gate, so smoothly he scarcely seemed to rise at it at all; then over the ditch and bank, just like handing a lady downstairs, and took the water in his stride, without seeming to look at it," was Greenwood's enthusiastic description.

"He's sound, of course, or you wouldn't have bought him?" (I was going to say "or at least you'd have found it out before this;" but the other way of putting it sounded better, and every man likes to be credited with a knowledge of horseflesh, while, as a matter of fact, Greenwood was pretty shrewd.) "And is he quiet? I heard of one horse that was sold there with the character of being quiet in the saddle, because they said they didn't know much about him. He was a demon in the stable, kicked to pieces any sort of trap that he was harnessed to, and, as every horse *must* be quiet somewhere or other, they gave him the benefit of the doubt, and said he was quiet to ride. But he wasn't."

Greenwood smiled and shook his head.

"No, my dear fellow; he's not one of that sort. He's the nicest little horse in the world."

"Can he gallop?" I asked.

"Gallop as fast as you can clap your hands, and all day long."

"And jump?"

"Jump any mortal thing you send him at."



“Have you ridden him much?” I ask.

“Pretty well; but some of the old ones come out and take their turns, you know. One I’m going to ride to-morrow is an old favourite; but I wanted you to have a good go while you were down here. Fill your glass, and there are the cigarettes.”

“I’m afraid I’m taking your horse; but I took you at your word, and you told me not to bring anything if I would leave it to you to mount me,” I remark, not feeling quite comfortable about robbing Greenwood of his treasure.

“Quite right of you. I’m well horsed at present, and am glad you are going to have the new one, because you’ll appreciate him. My wife will go with us, and just follow over a few fields on her cob, but she won’t worry you——”

“My dear fellow, you know——” I break in, but he continues.

“Yes, of course; but a woman isn’t always a pleasant companion out hunting. She is fond of going with her uncle, and he has been accustomed to look after her. She likes to come back early, you know, and so doesn’t get too far away from home. But don’t you fear about your little horse. The further he goes the more he likes it. I don’t believe you could tire him; and he’ll pull at you coming home—

I don't mean really pull, you know, but go up into his bridle, as if he hadn't well started," Greenwood says.

"Didn't they try a steeplechase with him, or a hurdle race, or something? Why don't you have a shot at it?" I inquire.

"Perhaps I may some day, though you know what sort of 'hunters' one meets in hunters' races. I don't know that he ever did run, but he seems to me to go faster and to get away from his fences quicker than lots of horses that do win races, though he jumps so easily. However, you'll see how he goes to-morrow, and we'll have another talk about it."

"It might be worth while, you know; and if he turned up at Sandown or somewhere, without a reputation, the ring would lay odds against him, and we could send him down to a training stable and see what he was worth," I continue. "However, we'll think about that later on."

"Yes; and it may be well worth thinking of," Greenwood responded. "Have a glass of sherry, or try that Madeira? A cigarette now or presently? You needn't think about your nerves with a horse like that to ride, you know. No?—sure? Very well, then, we'll have a song. Go to bed, Fan, you lazy dog! Sure you're finished? Then we'll go to the drawing-room."

Thither we went, and, as Mrs. Greenwood played and her sister sang, wondered, as men have often done, how we could possibly be so material as to remain behind, drink claret, and talk horse, while an entertainment so infinitely more delightful was awaiting us elsewhere. A four-handed game at billiards, wherein the ladies played particularly well, and we not quite up to our form, terminated a delightful evening.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Fan was waiting to accompany me for a stroll before breakfast next morning, and we sauntered to the gate, looked up and down the road, passed through the houses, and generally took advantage of a country morning—a precious boon to those who dwell habitually in London—before breakfast. Why is that meal so much more pleasant in the country than in London? Metropolitans pamper their appetites with the dainties which Piccadilly produces so cunningly, but the homely fare of the country is beyond comparison more welcome.

There may be some curious reason for this, or it may be simply that for human lungs air is more healthy than smoke; but the fact remains. Greenwood and I were thoroughly fit, however, and in the best of humours he mounted the dog-cart to drive to the meet—

some six miles off—his wife by his side and myself behind.

We were, somehow or other, a bit late—a good bit, to speak freely—though honestly I do not think that other bottle of Pontet Canet had anything to do with it. We sped along at a good pace, however, things looking promising over head and under foot; and I was naturally eager to see the paragon destined to carry me.

Pretty Mrs. Greenwood made bright remarks about things in general, till presently she inquired of her husband—

“Have you told Mr. Rapier about the horse?”

“Yes, indeed,” I broke in. “I’m quite unhappy at depriving Herbert of his mount. He’s most enthusiastic about him. He says it’s the nicest little horse in the world; and that’s going a good long way, isn’t it?”

“Y-es,” Mrs. Greenwood replied, with a good deal of hesitation, I thought. “But he’s a bit awkward to mount, isn’t he, dear?”

“Oh, it’s nothing!” Greenwood replied. “You may just as well look pretty slippy about getting up, but he means no harm; there couldn’t be a better tempered horse. It’s habit, you know; he reaches round a bit at you.”

Of course there is no absolute perfection to be found, either equine or human, and the nicest

little horse in the world must have some weak spot, or some spot, at least, weaker than the rest.

“And then it’s a good thing to get on the grass as soon as possible, isn’t it, dear?” the lady observed to her husband.

“Yes,” Greenwood casually replied; “he—er—jumps about a little sometimes. Playful, you know—eager to get off, that’s all; and it’s as well to take it out of him as soon as possible.”

I didn’t quite like this trifling admission.

“Kicker?” I inquired.

“No; he doesn’t kick——” Greenwood began.

“Bucks a bit, you know, Mr. Rapier—just at first,” his wife put in. “But the day he ran away——”

“He never ran away, my dear!” interposed he.

“Well, that you couldn’t quite stop him, you know;—he was not bitted properly.”

“Oh, I dare say it will be all right. Does he do anything else?” I asked, with waning enthusiasm for the paragon.

“No; he’s a beautiful little horse to ride, and he’ll carry you like a bird. Don’t check him at his fences, by-the-by. He jumps bold—wants holding together; but he was a bit

awkward with me one day when I interfered with him. Doesn't like to be baulked, you know."

"Yes; I see," I answered, unavoidably contrasting the eulogies of the night before with the somewhat dubious commendation now being passed on the animal. "Does he pull?"

"Not in the least—wonderfully light mouth; that's why I said be careful not to check him," was the response.

A wonderfully light-mouthed horse that is not to be checked, and is to be held together, and has a disposition to turn awkward, cannot be regarded as a model animal. It is difficult to hit on the precise medium, especially if the creature does not chance to be in its best temper at the time. A horse that jumps bold, again, is not the most welcome to a modest rider; and what with the "reaching round a bit"—which, if it means anything, means kicking—while being mounted, and the bucking a little when the rider is in the saddle, I begin thinking of other quiet horses from Selwood, and trying to remember whether it was three ribs or merely a collar-bone that I heard of another specimen of them breaking for his rider.

"You'll like him very much when you've got used to him, I'm sure," Mrs. Greenwood cheerily added; but I was not so sure by any

manner of means, and sat for some time in solemn reflection on what Greenwood had said the night before.

He touched the mare in the shafts with the point of his whip, and we rounded the corner to the Green Man, where the meet had been.

“We are late! Look! they’ve all gone. There’s uncle beckoning—I hope he isn’t angry—and there are the horses. The new one’s a beautiful creature, isn’t he?” Mrs. Greenwood said; and I looked along the road to see her uncle on his cob waving his arm to us.

A handsome grey mare with a side saddle, and two horses equipped for masculine riders, were being led about. I did not know which was “the new one,” but speedily concluded that the animal which held up its head, pricked its ears, and gazed at us was mine, and concerning him I felt, to be candid, the reverse of comfortable.

I jumped down, however, helped Mrs. Greenwood to descend, and shook hands with her uncle, who was slightly put out at our delay, and explained that the hounds had been gone five minutes at least to draw the Crooked Lane Spinney, where they were certain to find a fox; so that if we were not very sharp we should miss them.

“Now, don’t you wait, my dear fellow; pray don’t,” Greenwood said, as I stood by while Mrs. Greenwood’s horse was being led up and the gear overhauled.

Of course I expostulated, and said they wouldn’t be a minute, and we had better all go on together; but a throat-lash wanted loosening and the girths tightening, and they both urged me to be off lest the hounds should get away.

“Just down the green lane there and through the gate to the right, and you’ll see them, I expect. Do get on!” my host said; and at that moment it occurred to me that if I was to be spilt, the affair had better come off when they were not all watching the performance, so, murmuring that if they thought I’d better I would, to the horses I made my way.

When I came to look at him closely, the nicest little horse in the world really did not look unamiable. I rather liked him, in fact, but was not therefore unduly familiar.

“Kicks a bit, doesn’t he?” I asked the boy.

“No, sir,” he replied, as, of course, he was bound to reply; but I did not propose to give him the opportunity of kicking me. The boy was too small to put me up, and I should not quite have liked to ask him had he been bigger, perhaps; but I got my foot in the stirrup,



measured the distance, and was up with exceptional rapidity. I never got on a horse so quickly in my life, and, determined not to give him time to buck if he had any malicious intention of the sort, I sat as tight as I knew how and set him going down the green lane. To do him justice, he went kindly and well, pulling, too, sufficiently to show that apprehensions of upsetting him by an injudicious touch of the reins were unfounded.

And I was none too soon. As I neared the spinney and saw part of the field, a burst of music came from among the trees, and the men towards whom I was progressing started off, while "Tally-ho! gone away!" resounded from the other side of the covert.

I looked back, and was not quite certain whether I saw my friends coming on as we sped round the corner of the spinney. To check the little horse, who was going so beautifully, was out of the question, however, and on we sped over a big grass field and through a gate at the other end of it, then abruptly to the right and on to what was luckily a low and thin hedge. "Don't check him, and hold him together," were my instructions, and I endeavoured to fulfil them, though I had begun to feel that there was no reason for special caution, and to

wonder what Greenwood could have done to get up the back of so good a little horse.

To the fence we came, and I steadied him, in anticipation of his jumping big, according to the warning. Instead, however, he slid over "so smoothly he scarcely seemed to rise at it," as Greenwood had said the night before, when describing his performance at the gate.

"It only shows," I thought, "that when properly handled a horse will, as a rule, go properly." For this is the kind of reflection one may have, though it does not sound well to mention it.

To the ridge and furrow he accommodated himself perfectly, jumped a gap in the calmest and kindest manner, and galloped on over the meadow—hounds were running with the scent breast high—as Greenwood had said, "like a bird." Is he getting away with me? Can I hold him? I thought, and laid hold of the reins, but he came back without the slightest fuss, and I began to confess that he merited the character he had received over the Pontet Canet.

A slight check occurred in the plough beyond, and I had time to look round. Nothing was to be seen of Greenwood, which I could not understand, for he ought to have been pounding on

behind. His wife and her uncle would probably turn up at the corner of some road or other, for he knew the country as well as the foxes; but I was just wondering what could have become of my host when Dairymaid hit it off by the poplars in the hedge, the little horse jumped into his bridle, and once more we were away.

For an hour and ten minutes over a charming country we pursued that good fox, and then he saved his brush in a drain, where he was left to fight another day. After trying two or three other draws, we had a rattling gallop after a second fox; and about four o'clock, when he seemed to be lost and I was some fifteen miles from home, I pulled up and turned my horse's head homewards.

No horse could have gone better. Whether he had a sufficient turn of speed to win a race was perhaps another matter, but as a hunter for a steady-going man, I could well understand his master describing him as the nicest little horse in the world. He travelled home, moreover, as Greenwood had said he would do, "as if he hadn't well started," though we had gone far and fast; and if his master did not like him, nothing but the trifling difficulty of knowing how to put my hand on the money would have prevented me from buying him.

I was debating ways and means when we reached the house and trotted into the stable-yard.

“Your master back?” I asked the groom who came to take my horse.

“Yes, sir; he came home early,” the lad answered; and I proceeded to the house, where, in the drawing-room, was Greenwood, reclining in an easy chair, his wife looking on with affectionate solicitude, and her sister Ethel also watching tenderly.

“Where *did* you get to? I’ve been expecting you to turn up all day!” I exclaimed.

Greenwood smiled rather faintly.

“I had a bit of a spill—— Oh, it’s nothing; I’m not hurt,” he said. “Just shaken, you know.”

“But how was it?” I inquired. “I’m so sorry; for it doesn’t seem fair for me to have had such good fun by myself. How did it happen? You were riding an old favourite, too, were not you?”

“Well—I hadn’t my own saddle, and in the hurry of getting off, as we were late, you know, I was careless, I suppose. I didn’t remember what I was on, and he was in a bad temper—I never knew him so before: it amazed me—but he got away and overjumped himself, and down

we came a regular burster. I'm glad you were not riding him; very glad it happened as it did," Greenwood exclaimed.

"But you were on one of your old favourites, were not you?" I asked again.

"Well, no; he was not the horse that I—— It was my fault, you know. I ought to have shown you; though I am very glad I did not."

A light broke in upon me as he spoke.

"My dear fellow! Did I take your horse? I believe I did! I'm awfully sorry. I hadn't an idea——" I began.

"Of course not. It didn't in the least matter; in fact, I'm very glad as it turned out. It didn't signify what you rode, but I thought the new one would have carried you best," he went on, moving in his chair as he spoke, and giving vent to a little exclamation of pain or discomfort.

"But, really, I *am* sorry!" I continued. "Now that I think of it, I don't know why I imagined the horse I got on was the one you meant for me. Your back was to me, as you were looking after Mrs. Greenwood's horse, and I jumped up and galloped off, so that he shouldn't have time to play the fool."

Mrs. Greenwood smiled kindly, which I

thought very nice of her, though I was certainly in no way to blame, if blame there were attaching to any one; but, then, when their husbands are damaged, wives are not always logical.

“It’s just as well to find out what the horse is without having any harm done,” she said. “I never quite liked him, in spite of his good looks; but Herbert was so enthusiastic about the way he went at Selwood. I’m sure he behaved like a perfect brute to-day. He would not stand still for a moment, and then, after giving Herbert a lot of trouble, he bolted and came down at a fence. It frightened me dreadfully; but there’s no harm done beyond a bit of a sprain, and when he’s quite well again, I shall tell him that it served him right,” she gently added.

Ethel smiled sympathy on all, and Greenwood expressed himself fit to go and dress for dinner, once more declaring his satisfaction at the circumstance that I had made the innocent mistake of getting into the wrong saddle.

Even the Pontet Canet could not revive the sentiments that had been uttered the night before. Greenwood confessed that he was sadly disappointed; and at Tattersall’s shortly after-

wards the animal was sold for less than a third of what he gave for it. One of the worst deals he ever made was for "the nicest little horse in the world," and I am sincerely glad that I never got on his back.

## AFTER THE CUBS.

“THE hounds will be at Hatcham Pond at five o'clock sharp,” my friend the commodore says, as I climb into the dog-cart at his door after a cheery evening ; “and if you look in as you pass, at a quarter to five, I'll be ready.”

“You will?—on the word of a British sailor?” I ask ; and replying in the negative to his inquiry as to whether I should like to hear him swear, I drive off to my cottage, to get as much rest as is possible under the circumstances, having ordered my mare to be sent round at a quarter-past four.

These are early hours for the unaccustomed riser, and the night spent under such circumstances is likely to be a disturbed one. I wake with a start and an impression that I have overslept myself, strike a light, look at my watch, and find that it is a little more than half-past one. A couple of hours' more sleep may safely be taken ; but at the expiration of twenty minutes or so again I open my eyes, and have a vision of



my friend peering through the darkness at his lodge-gates and indulging in a variation of those verbal exercises which I declined to hear last night.

The clock strikes two, and again I am relieved, to undergo a similar fright at five minutes past three, and then, out of a desire to be calm and not flurry about it, overdo it by some ten minutes, put on the wrong boots, begin to button the right gaiter on the left leg, and hastily eating a mouthful of bread and swallowing a tumbler of qualified milk, slam the door behind me, having forgotten to pick up my gloves from the table. Thus the ill-regulated and over-anxious mind comports itself.

The mare is not there, so I run round to the stable to find her attendant giving her the finishing touches, and in a very few seconds we are on our way to see what the young entry have to say to the Wessex cubs. Mist is the prevailing feature of the morning. It rolls and hovers over the fields in dense clouds, distorting the surface of the country and giving familiar landmarks an aspect quite different from their daily appearance.

The harvest is not yet in, and though work cannot begin so early, from one wicket-gate a couple of labourers appear, and another old man

is trudging wearily down the road. Lights gleam in the windows of one cottage as I pass along the village street, and so on down a hill, towards the bottom of which a dense cloud obscures everything. The mare pricks her ears observantly as she trots on, and we nearly miss a gap where, by going across the fields, a half-mile is saved. Very cautiously we travel here, for there is a drain in the lower part of this field, and a roll in the water would be a bad beginning; but the mare knows her way, glides easily over the cutting, and through another gap we reach the road leading to the Grange, where the commodore lives.

Here is the gate, and into the stable-yard we clatter without seeing a sign of life. It is the hour, but where is the man? My "Halloa" is answered from the stable, however, and the door being opened, I see that my friend and his groom are performing ceremonies similar to those which I went through half an hour since.

"I want to see how the new one goes," the commodore says, as a handsome little bay is led out. "He's never seen the hounds, and if he takes to them kindly I hope he'll be well acquainted with them before the season is over. By Jove, how misty it is! Along here!" and we are soon upon the way to Hatcham Pond.

A hare bounds from the hedge and crosses the road just in front of us; dim forms are distinctly made out in one field as we trot onwards, but otherwise the country is still and silent until we turn off to the right and find ourselves approaching the pond, some twenty acres of water, on the surface of which a few water-lilies and a good deal of mist are discernible, the little boating or summer-house being faintly reflected on the dark surface.

A couple of men on foot and a groom mounted on a grand grey horse are the only living objects besides ourselves, but an inquiry assures us that "they'll be here directly;" and the words are hardly spoken when down the road on the other side of the pond we see the pink coats of the huntsman and whips, with the hounds around them—a handsome show. Sir Henry, in a black coat, is at the gate leading into the field; a couple of men in tweed coats and gaiters, mounted on good-looking hunters; a farmer on a rough cob; a young fellow on a polo pony and a boy in a pair of his very big brother's leggings on a smaller and coarser variety of the breed; the local vet. on a well-bred screw; and a resplendent youth in brilliant pink, buckskin breeches, and the shiniest of boots, riding a decent sort of lightweight hunter, make up the mounted group.

This is not the first day of cub-hunting, and on Monday, when the sport began, a goodly muster of something over two score turned out; but when once a start has been given to the cubbing, outside support is faintly rendered. Meantime three or four dilatory sportsmen have joined the little assemblage, and we push on over the meadow, each horse leaving his track behind him on the dew-laden grass. The hounds deploy to the right, through a bridle-gate into the wood; Charlie the huntsman, who has dismounted and surrendered his horse to a friend, accompanying his charges. The first whip pauses at one end of the cover, and we follow Sir Henry over the field, through a gate, and into a second meadow by the woodside, where we wait in patience.

The horses have pricked up their ears and shown every token of satisfaction on being introduced to their old friends again, and even the commodore's new steed, which has never seen a hound before or galloped behind one, perceptibly brightens. Poor Whyte-Melville expressed an opinion that very few horses like jumping, yet there is certainly something or other about the hunting-field that they do like. One would think it must be associated in their recollection with tiring gallops, heavy ploughs, stiff fences, some whip, a little spur, not a few hard knocks,

perhaps a few rather nasty falls, and, after a long day's work, heaving sides and throbbing nostrils, a tedious journey home in the dark along a hard road; yet from the demeanour of the old hunters when they see their companions, the hounds, there can be no sort of question that they are glad to meet them again. My mare is by no means distinguished for good looks, or, on the road, for any desire to exert herself, but she has pulled herself together at sight of the hounds, and, hearing a burst of music from the cover, arches her neck, paws excitedly, and becomes a new creature. The good-looking grey—Sir Henry's second horse: he has a couple out, in order to give all his favourites a turn—plunges eagerly forward; and the very steady hunter bestridden by our friend in pink shakes her head wildly, whereupon the beautifully attired rider works her right into the corner of the field, and in tones of very timid command exclaims, "Whoa, then; be quiet, will you?" though the excellent creature has never been within a measurable distance of inquietude.

The music dies away, and nothing is heard but Charlie's voice, encouraging his hounds. Presently one of the new entry emerges from the wood, and trotting up to Sir Henry's horse, looks inquiringly into the master's face. What

can all this mean? the puppy is wondering, and he has come to seek information from one whom he has noticed holds authority over his brethren. Another hound joins the young one, and both are speedily sent to their work again.

“Get in, Pilgrim; you’re an old hound, and ought to know better,” the master says; and the voices of their companions again ringing out merrily, Pilgrim and his inexperienced friend bound through the fence and are lost to sight.

“There he is! Look!” the boy on the pony presently cries, pointing to the fence, along which we see a well-grown cub stealing, and presently, the undergrowth being dense, he jumps down into the ditch and runs some twenty yards before, catching sight of a horse, he slips through the fence again, and vanishes. The pack come tumbling out of the wood at or near the place where the cub came through, and with eager voices dash about the ditch and field near the side of the covert, till a delighted and convincing cry, rapidly swelling, shows that they have hit it off again, and a full chorus resounds as the pursuers dash after their prey. Then, again, all is silent, and we sit still awaiting events.

“Oh, come, I must have a jump!” one of the group, a cheery young fellow, suddenly exclaims. “Come on; let’s go and see how things

are the other side," and he turns his horse's head to a wide ditch, with a low fence on the take-off side, which separates the field where we are from the stubble beyond.

"Come on!" he says persuasively, but his friend declines, and no doubt wisely. The too volatile youth who cannot curb his impetuosity takes his horse by the head and sends him at the jump; the growth on the landing side deceives the animal, which drops his hind legs in the ditch and comes back, depositing his rider out of sight, while the good horse, with a hard struggle, recovers himself and clambers out. Out, too, climbs our friend, dripping and muddy, but not a whit crest-fallen—indeed, he laughs gaily as he takes his horse from a boy who has got across in an easier place and caught the truant steed.

"What a horrid mess I'm in! Never mind! Come up, horse!" he cries, and putting him at the ditch again, lands this time well over back again. This little episode has caused our swell friend's horse to whisk her tail a little, and low-toned entreaties to her to "Be quiet; hold still, can't you?" come from the corner where the pink-clad rider, an anachronism here this morning, is still in retreat.

"Look out! There he goes!" suddenly exclaims one of the farmers, and he points to

the stubble behind us, across which the cub is galloping at a steady pace, with his brush well out behind him. Sir Henry's keen eye has noted it at the same time, and a few notes on his horn soon bring the pack tumbling out of the wood, when, with quick sharp yelps of delight, Actor, one of the young entry, hits off the scent and races on over the stubble. The second whip, on a rawish young horse, rides at a little ditch, in the middle of the field before us, at which his horse rises with a spring that would have cleared an agricultural show water-jump; and the commodore's young one, following on, gives a very accurate imitation of the performance.

"That was a jump and a half!" I remark, as we go at a steady gallop up the hill leading to Sibdown Hall.

"Never mind. He'll learn to do better in time," the commodore replies, as he pats the little horse's neck and pulls up among the group, somewhat increased in number by this time, that is waiting for the next move, for the cub is in the wood before us.

The mist has gradually cleared away, and now—it is just half-past six—the sun shines out brilliantly, making the dew drops sparkle, and casting in deep colours the shadows of the trees among which we are gathered. Whether



it is the effect of the sun itself or the thought of what it means to the backward harvest, I cannot tell, but the farmers' faces do certainly appear to brighten. Even our friend in pink seems happier, and he feels sufficiently at ease to ask a question.

“Do you know how many brace of do—hounds are out this morning?” he inquires of the commodore; but before his curiosity can be satisfied, some one has ridden by and caused his horse to move. An earnest “Whoa, can't you, then!” follows, and his steed occupies all his attention.

Charlie's voice and an occasional note from a hound come from inside the cover. Outside, doings with the partridges and prospects of the pheasants—a gorgeous cock has just flown over our heads and started the conversation—are being discussed, while one of the late comers, a local humourist, seeks for an opportunity of retailing his newest anecdote.

“Did you hear what Ryves said to Barker? It's a capital story! You know Ryves' barley in that field by the Priory Farm is very poor this year—thin, no growth about it; and Barker was driving past in his cart just as Ryves came along the other side of the hedge. ‘You haven't got much of a show up here?’ Barker said.

‘No, I haven’t,’ said Ryves. ‘No; an uncommon poor show, I should call it.’ ‘And do you know why?’ says Ryves. ‘No; I can’t say that I do,’ Barker answers. ‘Well, then, I’ll just tell you,’ Ryves says, and——”

A burst of music from the covert, a blast of Sir Henry’s horn, Charlie’s voice, and a halloa from the first whip, bring the story to a very abrupt termination. The men to the left of us are off at a gallop, and we follow, to the discomfiture of the story-teller; and what it was that Ryves said to Barker I never expect to hear. Down the hill we go, retracing, in fact, our steps from the wood into which the hounds were at first thrown, and here a somewhat curious sight presents itself. “Look there!” says one of the farmers, pointing high up among the branches of a lofty oak. We look, but see nothing. “What is it?” we ask. “Don’t you see? Look. Up there—just by where that pigeon flew. It’s the old vixen, as sure as you’re born!” And there she is, surely enough. A good sixty feet from the ground, peering down upon us from a thick bough, we note her crafty face and pointed nose. Seeing that she is observed, she climbs a little higher, makes herself quite comfortable, and looks at her foes as she quietly scratches her ear with a hind pad.

It is likely to be awkward for some of the family to all appearance, but she is not personally concerned, and the young people must take care of themselves. I remember a long correspondence on the subject of "foxes in trees," that once occupied a good many columns of a well-known sporting journal, and smile at this proof positive of the fact that foxes do frequent trees—if anybody with any experience of foxes really doubted it. But there is a grand hubbub at the other side of the cover. The ground has been a good deal foiled by hunting backwards and forwards; the master has told his men to "let him get away if he will," and away he has surely gone. The pack come streaming out, Sir Henry takes hold of his horse's head, and, with the field after him, away we go.

"I do believe we're in for a gallop!" some one cries.

"Looks like it, doesn't it? Come up, horse!" a figure in a very muddy coat responds—-it is the too ardent jumper of ditches—as he tempts fate again, and is this time aided by good fortune, while less eager spirits gallop for the gateway.

Straight ahead are stubble and plough, and we go at a pace that promises to soon make some of the horses, not yet in good con-

dition, lose the vigour of their strides. The commodore's young one, however, gallops well within himself in the wake of Sir Henry's big grey, until, our leader coming to a huge ditch—a regular gulf—which we have not sufficient ambition to attempt, we and the majority of the followers turn off to the left, where a welcome gateway is to be seen. The polo pony and his rider disappear in the depths of this yawning chasm—the Wessex ditches are ditches indeed!—and the wearer of the muddy coat we leave fighting with his horse on the wrong side of the obstacle. Sir Henry remarked, when, on his mounting the grey, I expressed admiration of the animal's looks, that it required a “good strong horse and a bold jumper” to get safely over this country; and there is no sort of doubt about it.

Fortunately the hounds make a bend to the left, the gallant cub being headed by some men harvesting in the field by the side of Lady Wood, for which haven we had supposed he was pointing.

“I wonder where our swell friend in pink is?” somebody says.

“In a corner, somewhere or other, saying ‘whoa’ to his horse,” somebody else replies, as we speed on.



FIGHTING WITH HIS HORSE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE OBSTACLE.



“There he goes!” the quick-eyed boy on the pony cries, for the lad, his big leggings turned wrong side before, has suddenly cropped up from somewhere unknown, and there he does go, the poor cub, brush dragging behind him. Young hounds must be blooded, for we could well wish that so good a fox might have lived to run another day. The end is nigh, however, and the forty-three young pheasants that have been “lost” are no doubt practically avenged. Rustic sees him first, and loudly proclaims the fact, which is vociferously acknowledged by the rest; but Warbler, one of the young ones, tears past his older companion, and after a short race is first into his fox.

“He did that well!” some one observes, and the master in high delight replies that Warbler ought to be a good one, for he springs from two of the best hounds in the county.

The final ceremony then proceeds. It is half-past ten o’clock, and we congratulate ourselves on a real good morning’s sport after the cubs.

## “THE MERRY HARRIERS.”

SOME readers will sympathize with me, and I am afraid others will not, when I say that I never felt quite comfortable out with “the merry harriers.” The odds are all too heavy against the hare. To run Master Jack or Miss Puss to death may be—no doubt is—more merciful than employing those hideous traps which keep their victims in terror and torture for weary hours; but it seems to me that the one way to kill a hare is to shoot him, in the head if possible, when he is bowling along at fourteen miles an hour. Those who are called “lovers of the leash” will not agree with this, and I know that a good hare can often hold his own, by speed and stratagem, against his long-tailed pursuers; but I repeat a hare never seems to me so well killed as when you hit him clean in the head as he is careering along at such speed that, his limbs losing power, he turns over and over like a sort of Catherine wheel, and falls motionless and dead just at the moment when the well-trained retriever has reached the spot to pick



him up. To slay the fox is legitimate. He kills other creatures, and must stand his chance of being killed himself; and you know that he will in all probability make a good fight for his life. The timid hare is another sort of animal altogether, and preparations for her capture by a pack of harriers always appear to me excessive. The end does not justify the means; and the piteous cry of a hare when her enemies are upon her is not a thing to be dwelt upon.

Men keep harriers for different reasons—to promote the interests of sport generally, to promote the amusements of their neighbours, to promote themselves; and it was the latter reason which induced my acquaintance, Cobb—he might not like me to take the liberty of calling myself his friend—to start a pack.

Cobb wanted to get into the House of Commons. He was rich; he would have been agreeable if he had only known the way. Since he had left London and settled in Downshire he had done everything he could to please everybody, whereby, it is almost needless to say, he had mortally and eternally offended several people. He had subscribed to everything, and had got up new subscriptions himself for the sake of subscribing. He had even sung at the local penny readings—perhaps it was

that which put the finishing stroke to his destruction ; for when the election came on he was beaten in a canter by a hated Tory rival, who seemed to be friends with the voters at once, without going through what Cobb found to be the tedious and often disappointing business of making friends.

But Cobb knew that another turn would come, and instead of despairing, he set himself to consider what he could do to please his neighbours.

“ Why don't you get some harriers ? That's the way to come across people, and you find lots of chances of being civil, and pleasing the fellows who hunt with you. I think a pack's a capital idea,” his friend Wetherby said to him one evening, a few months after the election, as they sat smoking after dinner.

“ I hate the beastly, long-legged brutes ; and it must be frightfully expensive. I'm told they feed them on legs of mutton,” Cobb answered. “ A pack would cost a fortune, surely ? ”

“ The mutton is a delusion, I assure you ; and as for long legs, a well-shaped harrier certainly does not run to excess in that direction,” Wetherby replied.

Still Cobb did not respond to the notion.

“ They're nasty snappish beasts, too. I just

pulled the ears of that great yellow brute Dyke is so fond of, and the brute deuced nearly had my finger off,” Cobb objected; and then his friend began to see the wrong tack upon which the prospective master of harriers was sailing.

“But Dyke has not got any harriers. That yellow dog of his that you’re speaking of is a greyhound.”

“Well, it catches hares, that’s all I know, because he’s sent them to me—generally when he has wanted to borrow a pony,” Cobb answered, not quite convinced; and then his friend proceeded to explain to him the difference between the greyhound and the harrier, and between the methods by which they fulfil their respective destinies. Furthermore, Wetherby, who had his own reasons for being useful to Cobb, explained that a very good pack were to be bought just then, that they could be had for a couple of hundred pounds, that five hundred would start the affair easily, and the only thing the master would have to do was to sign cheques, a feat which Cobb could always perform successfully.

By degrees Cobb quite began to like the idea, the more so when he was assured that he need not ride a yard further than he cared about riding, and that he would not be called upon

to jump anything, for the excellent reason that there was nothing to jump, except occasional sheep hurdles, which he could take or leave as he liked; and Cobb, who had been to the Horse Show at the Agricultural Hall, at once decided that he should always adopt the latter alternative, and leave them without hesitation.

Cobb was not at all sure that he should not look remarkably well in boots and breeches, and at the hunt breakfasts he felt certain that he should shine. At the Vestry Hall in the evening oratory is dry work; but when champagne glasses hold a fair quantity, and the servants are instructed to let no glass be empty, a man whose political principles, in opposition to those of the speaker, are not very firmly fixed is apt to have them washed away, temporarily, perhaps, but for a period sufficiently long to enable him to enunciate some "Hear, hears!" with a conviction which to sanguine orators sounds permanent. Then the hunt could breakfast at other men's houses, and in the cases of those who were not of liberal disposition he could arrange so that they should not lose anything by their hospitality. And a master of hounds was somebody, even if the hounds were not foxhounds. Cobb went to bed impressed with the idea that Wetherby was one of the

cleverest fellows going, and dreamed confusedly of hares, greyhounds, harriers, and the Speaker all mixed up together.

All was speedily arranged. The old kennels were good enough for the present; a whip who could hunt the hounds came with the pack and brought a junior with him; Wetherby undertook to provide horse-flesh; and Cobb strolled into his tailor's shop and tried to look as if he were making an every-day request when he ordered a couple of pairs of breeches. As to the material of which they should be composed he was not clear, but hit on a happy compromise by ordering one of cord, one of tweed, and a pair of buckskins; and then he wanted a coat.

“A pink, sir?” asked the tailor, wondering what it all meant.

“Well—a sort of red—like that, you know,” he answered carelessly, pointing to a highly coloured picture, which showed a gentleman in gorgeous array, mounted on a horse with a flowing tail, a very arched neck, and no shoulders.

The coat came home, but somehow or other Wetherby heard about it; and though at the opening breakfast the *menu* was headed by a picture of a man in pink jumping a five-barred gate, the master was dressed in orthodox green.

The *menu* began with oysters, which are per-

missible enough at half-past ten in the morning, and went on to turtle soup, which is not, and to numerous other delicacies; while salvoes of champagne corks sounded oddly when one reflected on all the eloquence the host had lavished on the support of Local Option. Then Wetherby rose to propose the master's health; and he said that any eulogy on the sportsmanlike spirit which Mr. Cobb, the worthy master (applause), had displayed would be out of place on that occasion, and at that table. Every true Englishman was a sportsman at heart, and he need scarcely emphasize the fact that their host and the Master of the South Downshire Harriers was a true Englishman. (Applause.) Their host was a representative man; and he hoped that the day would come ere long when the claim to be representative might be more truly his; but on that he would not dwell. (Slight applause.) Certain he was that their friend, James Cobb, who had undertaken to hunt the country, was the right man in the right place, and he would ask them to unite with him in drinking the health of a sportsman and a gentleman, who in honouring himself honoured them. (Loud applause.)

What Wetherby meant by the last phrase of his speech he could not clearly explain to me as

we marched out of the room, down the stairs, and went in search of our horses, most of which were being led about, for the early comers had occupied all the stalls. Wetherby said it was the sort of thing one had to say at such a time, and asked whether it did not sound all right; and I admitted that it was worthy of the occasion. Mr. Cobb, however, responded to the effect that he would not detain them with a long speech. (Cordial applause.) He would only say that when he heard a pack of harriers would be welcome to his friends he had gone and got some, and he hoped he should use the dogs to their satisfaction.

The short address was well received; young gentlemen who had breakfasted too much already topped up with a glass of sherry; soon we were all in the saddle inspecting the hounds, which were brought up as we arrived, and poor Cobb grew sadly confused as his friends favourably criticised the make and shape of various animals, discussing points in them which Cobb never knew they possessed. His final discomfiture was brought about when a visitor from the garrison town, by way of saying something civil, asked how that lemon and white one was bred? Thereupon, affecting not to hear, Cobb trotted off on his steady-going hack, which had already

been for a turn this morning, uniformly placid as his disposition was.

Cobb had a practical head, and did not propose to break the neck by which it was attached to his body. When, therefore, the harrier business was first talked of he sent for his groom, and after discussing the question of horses, ended by asking him what wages he was receiving.

“Sixty pounds, sir,” replied the man.

“Well, then, I’ll give you eighty; but mind—if I come off, you go!” Cobb replied.

Therefore, lest the sight of a hound should awake some dormant feeling of gaiety in the old hack, he was sent for a spin over the downs, and throughout the day the master was attended by his man or by his shadow.

Another thing, too, was perplexing Cobb at the time, but Wetherby was happily at hand.

“I say—I say—I know there’s no—no brush to give away if we catch one—there’s nothing of that sort, is there? Have I got to do anything in particular, as master?” Cobb asked frankly, but with some hesitation and in a low tone. He had received from his followers the deference due to the master, and all having gone so well up to now, he did not want to begin and make a mess of it. Wetherby explained what happens when a hare is killed; and very soon the downs



were reached and the pack thrown into a turnip field.

Hares seemed the reverse of plentiful; plough, stubble, turnips, and fallow were tried in vain; but Cobb was happy.

“Splendid sport, isn’t it? Magnificent day we’re having, aren’t we? I knew what hounds they were, and I wasn’t wrong, though I’ve never been out with them—not with this lot—before,” Cobb rode about saying to people when they had been out some two hours without a sign of a hare. He was enjoying himself thoroughly, and regarded the mere absence of anything to hunt as an unimportant detail not worthy of mention; and on second thoughts where hares are concerned I am after all not so sure that Cobb was wrong.

At length we have approached Barnley Mead, and Farmer Ringwood knows that there’s a hare somewhere about his bit of furze some half-mile off; so for that we make, over there beyond that line of hurdles. And the hurdles are not generally popular. Young men who at breakfast time were shrugging their shoulders and declaring that harriers were so dreadfully slow that there was no fun, that it was not hunting, and that they had only shown up to “give old Cobb a turn, because he wasn’t half a bad fellow,” waited one after

another to see who was going first ; while one youth, taking in the position of affairs, remarked with the most guileless innocence, " I fancy this is the shortest way ? " and straightway pulled aside out of the line altogether.

Before we reach Ringwood's furze, however, up jumps an old hare and off he goes up the hill, past a boy scaring crows, who frightens him farther up the incline, and away we scurry. Cobb has by this time settled down in the saddle, and as he goes at a gentle gallop he waves his arms and legs about like a windmill in a breeze, till a bit of a jolt in a furrow suddenly checks his ardour, straightens his smiling features in a moment, and makes him lay hard hold of his horse's mouth.

The pack struggle over and through a hedge into a cottage garden, and there is a stalwart, middle-aged woman standing in a doorway and laying about her with a broom, while a little boy holds on to her gown and yells lustily.

" Nasty, dirty dogs rushing like wild beasts over a body's garden, and frightening the children out of their seven senses ! " she cried, as she swept at one hound and gave another a side blow with her broom. " You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Cobb, so you ought, and you a family man, too ! "

I do not suppose that at the moment Cobb thought of all the high-sounding things that had been said about him at breakfast a few hours before, or that he contrasted the different ways people had of looking at things. In the morning he had been eulogized as a gentleman and a sportsman ; the reporters of the local papers had been hard at it to get in all the adjectives, and a leading article with more or less appropriate references to the Quorn, the Pytchley, Melton Mowbray, and the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular was inevitable ; yet early in the afternoon he was being soundly abused before the whole field, simply, if you came to look at it, because a blundering hare wouldn't run straight. And the angry lady's husband had a vote which counted as much as anybody else's.

The pack meantime had divided, and having had enough of it I went home, leaving Cobb to make his peace as best he could.

I believe that since these occurrences he has sold his harriers, and declares that if he can't get into the House on his own legs, he won't try to ride there on horseback.

## “IT IS OUR OPENING DAY.”

FROST! There is no doubt about it. In this variable climate (and surely it is growing more variable than it used to be?) one does not know if—in spite of the almanack which declares that it is October, a month that should have some characteristic weather of its own—there is to be a week of Indian summer or of what, about Christmas time, is regarded as “seasonable weather.” It is late in October, truly enough, as late as can be—the 31st, in fact; but still a man does not expect to see his window-panes impenetrable to sight, and to note, when at last the blinds are drawn up, and the glass begins to thaw a little, a real, white, wintry frost, which awakens a dire suspicion that on this, “our opening day,” there may be no possibility of riding. Such hard luck cannot be awaiting us on this the morning of the first meet which has been so eagerly anticipated?

We have been after the cubs, but this is to real hunting what the rehearsal is to the per-

formance of the drama. There have been found even semi-enthusiasts ready to vote cub-hunting dull; and for the average sportsman it is easy to understand why such an opinion should be held.

Hunting is, in fact, an elastic term, and with many is taken to include the pleasures of a cheery breakfast; the meeting with friends; a good deal of that “ coffee housing ” which is the abomination of men intent upon the business of the day; the provocation of an appetite for dinner; a subject of conversation, and other advantages, besides the mere chase of the fox. For those again who regard fox-hunting simply as for an excuse for a gallop across the country, the pursuit of the cubs has few charms, notwithstanding that at times a straight-going cub gives a good hunting run. A man who goes after cubs knows that he is not likely to meet many of the friends who make the field lively in the regular season, and the rider who is bent on steeple-chasing is aware that there are reasons why his taste cannot be gratified. The ground is usually hard. The fences which, in a few weeks’ time, can be crashed and brushed through so easily by a resolute man mounted on a good horse, are now blind, dense, and often impenetrable; for the leaves have not all fallen and the sticks are

not dry. The horseman is forced to place more trust in chance than a wise man cares to do; and besides this the horses cannot well be already in condition for going. Most of the work is done in covert, where the ability of a good hunter would be almost lost, and such opportunities as cub-hunting affords towards getting horses fit for the work before them are generally turned over to the groom.

The real enthusiast, however, recognizes the value and feels the delight of these mornings with the cubs and the young entry. The necessity for rising so as to be out while the dew is on the grass, and before the autumn sun has dried up the scent, does not in the least daunt him.

Followers of a well-known Essex pack declare that hounds would have met at midnight if the moon had served; for the master and the faithful few were always to be heard, if not seen, at the covert side, before daybreak, in order that no chance of sport might be lost. To such as these the trotting up and down rides in dense woodlands or over the brambles and bushes of gorses and spinnies are not at all dull work. They do not pine for a gallop across the open, and are more than content to watch the dawning symptoms of intelligence in the young entry

as Ravager and Woodman begin to display unmistakable proofs of that keenness and courage which is inherent in the blood of their race.

But now the rehearsal is all over. Horses, if they have been wisely treated, are gradually getting into form. Not only have the young entry been taught by the huntsman and by their elder brethren what is required of them, but the cubs have been so rattled and the woodlands so routed, that the foxes as well as the hounds have an inkling of the work before them; the quarry has learnt that security is not to be found in the recess of the thick undergrowth, and that his enemies penetrate so thickly into the heart of the whole wood that, on the whole, flight across the open is the best thing for safety. All is in order, except the weather, upon which all depends.

There, at any rate, are the boots and breeches, and, hoping for the best, I make a hunting toilet, and go downstairs to find my kindly host inspecting the state of grass and gravel before the house. It is likely to be hard on the north side of the hills—we are in Wiltshire, if the reader pleases, eager to see what the descendants of those stout foxes that gave Assheton Smith so many glorious gallops will do for us—it is

agreed, and many anxious glances are cast at the sky, the barometer, the gravel, and other indications.

But, after all, there is a sun, and he has not had time to assert himself by half-past eight. When he rises in his splendour, the grass softens and the gravel-walks give way, and by the time that the horses are announced, it is, at least for a show meet, as perfect a day as could have been made to order. Even one night of frost seems to have had its effect upon the trees, never more beautiful in their autumn foliage than at this time, and in this delightful country, though, I think, as we ride to breakfast, a little more sombre in colour than they were yesterday afternoon. To breakfast, for of course breakfast is the feature of our opening day, it being well understood that the hunting world in general is to breakfast under strange but hospitable roofs before the campaign against the foxes is begun; and here to the left, as we trot along the road, is the most characteristic of English scenes. A huge but compact and picturesque red-brick house, with many gables and windows and a capacious porch. A broad park runs in front of it, separated from the residence by a well trimmed lawn and garden, with a broad gravel walk; and in the park are the hounds, the great-great-



grandchildren of Rifleman, Reginald, Squire Osbaldiston's Ferryman, Ranter, and his son Royalist, with—not to be diffuse, for to make a catalogue of hounds interesting even to enthusiasts it is indispensable that the hounds themselves should be visible—the offspring of the Belvoir Bertram and Nelson from the same stock. The hunt servants are in attendance, and a number of the sturdy farmers who form the backbone of fox-hunting, are grouped about.

A thin stream is setting in towards the house, and this, having dismounted, we join. Happily for one who does not possess the pen of a Francatelli, a sketch in the hunting field does not necessarily include the details of the dining-room, and the list of birds, beasts, and fishes cunningly dressed need not be given. Business is meant this morning, and as a consequence seats have been judiciously removed, so that the various old and young gentlemen who are prone to finish their breakfasts and then begin an exhaustive summary of the last few years' sport, are not tempted to remain and take those final glasses of sherry, which are not conducive to steady riding. Our mission to-day is to see the hounds eat fox, and not to eat ourselves. Still, when hunting men get together, they will talk. One man has been to Rome, and talks of gallops

over the Campagna; another has hunted at Pau; and some one tells of a remarkable subscription pack that was formed and hunted, after a fashion, in Belgium some years ago. The subscribers of five hundred francs enjoyed the privilege of wearing red coats, carrying horns and blowing them. Subscribers of three hundred francs might wear red facings to green coats, and might carry horns, but were never to sound them; while inferior grades of the hunt, who paid less than three hundred, were forbidden to wear either red or green, and were on no account permitted to take with them instruments of music. It was, moreover, enacted that no contributor of a small sum was to ride before a contributor of a large sum; and if the rich sportsman who gave five hundred chose to go slowly, the hunt was seriously delayed.

The riding men talk chiefly of their horses, and the hunting men of the hounds; for the same pleasure which the sportsman gains from seeing his dog quartering the field, pointing with infinite patience and steadiness, and obeying with a quickness which is half anticipation, is yielded to the huntsman who carefully observes the intelligence of the hound as he seeks to outwit his natural enemy. To those who have not watched attentively it seems absurd to speak of

a hound reflecting, drawing deductions, abandoning one idea and adopting another, and finally giving up to seek the advice of his friend the huntsman; but hounds do all this.

The room, however, begins to empty, and a move is made towards the busy scene on the grass, where mounted and dismounted men patrol to and fro, and a number of carriages add liveliness to the picture. The master is in the saddle, and it is time to find our horses and follow the procession, especially as the legend of a fox in the neighbouring field has been discussed in the hall. The horses are fresh as we pass through the park, cross the road, and get on to the downs beyond. The steeplechaser, ridden by a famous jockey, begins to kick, which much amuses his rider, and would amuse me if I had time to look on, but a horse galloping by sets my animal off, and I am over a stubble field and about half a mile of down uncomfortably dotted with rabbit holes before I can get an effectual pull.

It was about here that the fox is reported to have been seen, but though for one moment our hopes are raised, nothing comes of it. He is not at home, and does not appear to have been here lately, so the hounds are trotted off to a wood on the brow of a neighbouring down. As we file

into a ride the aspect of things is picturesque but not promising.

“Too many leaves on the ground for scent,” an old sportsman shrewdly opines. And they are beech leaves, too, which for some reason or other seem to favour the foxes more than the hounds.

But stop! That's like business, we rejoice to think, as a challenge is generally acknowledged by the pack, and there is the fox, surely enough, a cub, but a well-grown one, stealing along through the underwood. Here, too, comes a hound, but just at the moment a halloa is heard from the other end of the woods, and we pound away down the drive. This, I am told, is Assheton Copse, so called because it was a favourite spot with Assheton Smith (whose mausoleum is visible through the trees in the valley below us), and it ought to hold foxes. As a matter of fact it holds too many, for there is apparently a third about now, and we wait irresolutely near where some hurdles have been put up in the copse. Some of the pedestrians have climbed up here, several women among them, and all of a sudden another halloa resounds through the trees, and the fox appears, heading for these hurdles, over which he lightly slips, one excited female, with a baby in her arms more-

over, making a wild grab at his brush as he takes his fence! Perhaps it is as well for the integrity of her fingers that she missed him.

Here are the hounds, and this looks like their fox, for he is a bit done, and has evidently been hustled about; but it is—so far as can be made out, unless ours has doubled back curiously—after another that we presently get away, when at last a shrill “Tally-ho!” revives our hopes of some fun. Away we tear, down the hillside. It is a good galloping country, with scarcely a fence to be seen, and the man who can go quickest has the best of it. Down one hillside we go, along the bottom, and up another hill by a turn that takes us back again to Assheton Copse; and there not a hound will speak to him.

Evidently a fresh draw is the best thing to be tried, and hopes are entertained of something being found in a little covert at the bottom of a particularly steep hill, down which we steer with a good deal of caution, for it is uncommonly upright in places. It is just the sort of place for a fox, and welcome notes soon proclaim that somebody is at home. They are on the line this time surely enough, and away they go over the down at a grand pace. Horses and men that have been alike longing for a gallop can

now be gratified, for—especially the few who did not get well away through being in a bad place, and so have something to make up—here we go just as hard as horses can lay their legs to the ground. Those who are not gluttons for fencing, and who are willing to chance an occasional rabbit hole, are in their glory, and it is probable that some of the horses, if not their riders, find a check welcome when hounds throw up in a hedgerow bounding a slip of covert. As we crossed this stubble hares and rabbits scuttled away in all directions, for they were as plentiful as sparrows in a barn-yard. Some of the hares (Beacon Hill and other coursing grounds are quite close) have thought it judicious to “lay low” as Brer Rabbit puts it, and get up suddenly almost under the feet of one’s horse, and I saw four rabbits having a race for safety—a handkerchief would have covered the “field.”

Into a convenient hole the fox has certainly slipped, and there is nothing for it but to go and find another, or try to do so. “Try” it is. Foxes are about, but we linger in vain hopes of seeing one induced to quit his woodland retreats. There is no scent, for we have noted that, where we have seen the fox pass not a couple of minutes before, the hounds cannot speak to it. Mounted figures winding down the hillside show

that some have already given up all hopes of sport, and we come reluctantly to the conclusion that it is no use waiting.

“If you are ready we will do what the fox ought to have done, steal quietly away,” my host suggests, and we turn our horses’ heads from the scene of action.

## A MINCING LANE M. F. H.

IN these days, when information about an event is stale a couple of hours after the event has occurred, there is a not altogether unpleasing novelty in being without news. One hears of things too quickly. That little telegraphic machine in the hall of the club clicks out the latest details long before the speedily issued edition of the evening papers can pour forth their intelligence, and the cynical observer may derive no little satisfaction from noting the demeanour of those who study the matter printed on the endless tapes. A big race has been run at half-past three, and very soon after that hour the sanguine speculator takes up his station by the little glass hive to see what sort of honey the busy bees at the other end are going to provide for him. He has been favoured with one of those guides to misfortune, a "tip" for the Great Covertshire Handicap, and in a few moments the news will be here. Yes! the instrument is about to speak! MR. BRIG—. What is this? Oh! "Mr. Bright denounces



the Irish landlords for——” Never mind Mr. Bright, who is always denouncing somebody; how about Christabel for the Great Covertshire? Here it is at last. Now for the 20 to 1 chance! “G R E A T C O V E R T S H I R E”—how slowly this machine works!—“H A N D I C A P” the instrument prints off. What will be the next letter? If it is anything but a “C,” what a dreadful sell it will be after that plunge! Now then, what is it? “c”—Yes! “H”—Yes! hurrah! “A”—no; something wrong here—misprint? These machines are very delicately constructed—“R L E S.” But this is not Christabel? How curious!—“S T U A R T.” “Charles Stuart 1, Il Demonio 2, The Starling 3. Ah! did not start, of course. It might be worse—but stay: what is this? “Also ran, Lamprey, Polka, Cinnamon, Christabel, and Heliotrope.” Confound it!

By this sort of thing a man is kept at high pressure, and there is certainly not a little to be said in favour of an inconvenient residence in a quiet country place where it is necessary to ride six or eight miles to the nearest town if one wants to send a telegram or find a railway book-stall.

To such a spot I betook myself last autumn, and was trotting back through Sawbury Park,

about half-past one o'clock on an afternoon in mid-September, when to my surprise I saw a red coat in the distance. What an astonishing run the cub must have given them ! I thought. The hounds were to have met at Dunlow, miles away, and that, moreover, at half-past five in the morning. It being so, and I had the master's own authority for the statement as to the pack, what were they doing here at this time ?

“Is Mr. Hatfield here ?” I inquired of the wearer of the red coat, as I cantered up, and found him seated on his horse in the road by the plantation, just through the park gate. I wanted to see Hatfield, and knew that he, the hunt secretary and most regular of attendants, would be out.

“I dunno him,” was the reply ; and I scanned the speaker. One does not want or expect a servant out cub-hunting to be particularly smart. He need not have a pretty new pink coat, and a pair of absolutely spotless breeches ; but it is possible to be neat without being smart, to be clean and tidy in the midst of wholesome dirt, and these possibilities were far from being exemplified in the person of this whip—for such he was. An ill-fitting saddle and badly put on bridle decked a carelessly-groomed horse. Rusty stirrup-irons held ragged boots, and altogether

the figure bore as little resemblance to one of the business-like looking servants of the Wessex Hunt as could well be imagined. I rode on, wondering what curious change could have come o'er the spirit of the scene, and joined a knot of horsemen on the grass by the roadside. There was not a familiar face among them, and I was about to speak when a discontented voice broke in with, "I want to know what old Poult's come here for? That's all;" and the speaker paused for a reply.

"He's come here because the hounds brought him," a man, apparently a brother-farmer, mounted on a hairy-heeled cart mare, answered.

"And Toppler brought the hounds!" replied No. 1. "I tell you I saw the fox go away with three couple of hounds after him before we left Hess's farm. Toppler's chancing it, and he's chanced it wrong."

The colloquy had, however, answered my unasked question. These were Mr. Poult's hounds—Squire Poult he preferred to be called—and they hunted the district adjoining the Wessex country. I had heard of the pack but had never seen it, and here was an unexpected opportunity. Leaving the irate farmers to discuss the whereabouts of the cub and the proceedings of the three couple of hounds that seemed, so far as

I could gather, to have been left to ramble at their own sweet will, I opened the tall white gate and rode across a grass field into the covert. One hound, a big handsome dog, was enjoying a bath in the muddy bottom of a ditch ; a group of four or five horsemen was congregated in a ride, a labourer holding Toppler's horse ; and Miss Poult, a good-looking girl, accompanied by an attractive friend, were on their cobs a little way off.

Occasionally a hound wandered listlessly through the undergrowth ; the sun cast shadows on the grass ; the cheery encouragement that should spur young hounds on to their task was altogether wanting. The only creatures that could possibly enjoy this kind of sport were the cubs—and there did not seem to be any. I was just recalling stories that I had heard about the eccentric proceedings of Squire Poult's hounds when I caught sight of a red coat some distance off in the trees, and rode towards it. Probably this was the huntsman, Toppler ? It was ; and Toppler was about to blow his horn. I watched him raising it to his lips as I approached, and, as I drew nearer, wondered that no sound was emitted. His head was held back at an eccentric angle ; the sun gleamed on the metal. Stay, it was not metal at all ; it

was glass—a medicine bottle. Toppler was not going to blow his horn, but to have a drink!

A closer inspection of Toppler strongly supported the idea that the instrument I had seen was that upon which Squire Poult's huntsman performed with dangerous regularity.

Voices the other side of the hedge divert attention from Toppler, and getting through a gap, I find the farmer on the hairy-heeled mare still arguing with his companion as to what induced the three couple of hounds to leave Hess's farm. Squire Poult, to whom indirect appeals are constantly addressed, is sitting near them, apparently waiting to act upon the decision at which, upon very vague and conjectural premises, the opponents may presently arrive.

At length, Toppler having mounted his white horse and reached the group, the motion to return to Hess's farm appears likely to be carried. It is a quarter to two; I have ordered lunch—nearer three than a couple of miles off—at two o'clock, and I turn my mare's head and trot off homewards, wondering wherein the sport or amusement of hunting with Squire Poult's hounds might be supposed to consist.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some time after this experience of cub-hunt-

ing—not much hunting, and still less cub—my friend Hyde sent me—a sojourner as I was in the land—a cheery invitation to dine and hunt next morning, to come as early as possible, so that we could have a look for some birds in the afternoon, and to bring a horse or not as I liked. I rode over in good time on the estimable beast that does willing service as hack or hunter, and the pursuit and bagging of a few brace of partridges, a couple of hares, and half a dozen rabbits occupied a long afternoon. We dined, three friends reinforcing the party, and as we smoked after dinner I suddenly recalled to mind that the hounds met at Bridgeby, a long fifteen miles away.

“By-the-by, we shall have to start early,” I said. “Bridgeby is a long way off.”

“Yes,” Hyde answered, with a shade of hesitating confusion in his voice; “but we are not going with the Wessex. Poults meets at the White Doe, just the other side of Coltsford.”

Now, Hyde, without anything even distantly approaching to swagger or pretence, was one of the most critical of sportsmen, and I had seen quite enough of Squire Poults’s hounds to wonder greatly what this might mean.

Presently, however, Hyde retired to dig up a box of special cigars; and Sutcliffe, one of our

friends, expressed doubts as to the nature of the sport we were likely to find on the morrow.

“Poult is an admirable sportsman in Mincing Lane, but only an indifferent woolstapler in the country,” Sutcliffe cheerily remarked. “Rum fellow he is, too! I was bobbing along with the hounds the other day, and was well forward—no credit to me, for there was no pace. All of a sudden somebody behind me called out, ‘If you want to ride there, sir, perhaps you would like to take the hounds home and keep them!’ It was Poult, and he was in a rage because I happened to be before him. Considering that he calls the hounds his, and expects everybody to subscribe, that is rather going it, I think.”

“But he’s very considerate sometimes, you’ll admit? He was to Birchington, for instance,” Stuart, another guest, broke in. “When Birchington came down to these parts he turned up at a meet one day, beautiful to behold. Poult did not like the look of him at first, and disliked still more the patronizing tone in which Birchington admired the hounds. But when he trusted that he might forward a cheque, Poult thought him one of the best got-up, most sterling sportsmen he had ever seen. We did have a gallop that day, and Birchington, who fondly supposed that the ditches were a good bit

narrower than they were—it was early in the season, and the undergrowth was awfully deceptive—rode at one, a regular sepulchre, and got well in, wrong side up. You know the sort of benediction Poult would have uttered if one of us had come to grief while he was pounding down the lane, but the stranger was different. What do you think he did? Actually pulled up and told us to come to the rescue. ‘Stop, sir, stop!’ he yelled out to Hyde and me: ‘stop and help the gentleman out. He hasn’t paid his subscription yet.’”

“He ought to have delayed payment till he was sure of the ditches,” I suggested; “but Hyde is so keen—” and I was about to express wonder at finding him among the followers of that indifferent “votary of Diana,” Mr. Toppler, when Sutcliffe broke in with—

“Yes; it is not so much the fox as the grey pony that Hyde goes to hunt;” and then I remembered that Miss Poult, a very pretty girl, had been riding a grey pony in the morning when I saw the hunt, and out of regard for my friend’s prospective father-in-law no more was said about Poult when the cigars had been found.

It was not with any very sanguine anticipations of sport that I reached the meet at eleven o’clock next morning. About a dozen men were







THE HOUNDS SHOWED A CURIOUS DISINCLINATION TO FOLLOW THEIR HUNTSMAN.

there, but no sign of a hound; and it was past the half-hour when Toppler, looking more than usually dilapidated, came up with the pack. That the hounds were a very good-looking lot every one must have admitted; but looks are not everything.

After a time Poult gave the word to open proceedings, and Toppler rode through a gate into the field which separated us from a covert. The hounds, however, showed a curious disinclination to follow their huntsman, and loitered about the road and ditches, or from a station near the gate surveyed affairs, keeping one eye on Toppler and the other on my badly turned-out acquaintance, who was acting as whip. Toppler blew his horn, and the pack, still keeping a cautious distance, formed a semi-circle round him. Sutcliffe was chuckling to himself, and I asked the reason of his mirth.

“Why, you see,” he replied, “sometimes Poult hunts the hounds himself and Toppler is whip, and sometimes Toppler hunts them. He’s an awful brute with hounds, and they don’t understand quite, I suppose, in what capacity they are to regard him. Look at that old hound’s face. Could anything say plainer, ‘That’s the fellow who gave me such a oner the other day when I had not done anything

wrong. I'm not going to chance it again'? Look there! What a fool the fellow is!"

Sutcliffe's exclamation was drawn from him when Dairymaid, apparently awakening to the truth that some one ought to make a move, had trotted up to the now irate Toppler, and had been rewarded for her obedience by a cut from his whip, which quickly sent her back to her companions.

At length hounds were coaxed and driven into covert, but either there was no fox there or they could not find him, so after a tedious delay and a wrangle as to where it would be best to try next, we trotted off to a spinney about a mile away, where no better luck awaited us. Hyde was happy enough with Lucy Poul, and Sutcliffe's keen sense of the ludicrous kept him amused. I found it extremely dull, however, and in the course of a third move, finding myself in the neighbourhood of my friend the commodore's house, I turned my horse's head and trotted off to look him up, with a view to some lunch.

Many comic incidents that had taken place with Poul's hounds were related as we strolled out for a cigarette afterwards, and I never expected to see the willing and well-bred, but misdirected, creatures again, which only shows

how little one apprehends what is going to happen. Suddenly, in the midst of our pacing up and down, the commodore stopped, directed my attention to some moving objects in the distance away to the right, and by degrees we made out the hunt approaching. Strictly speaking, they were out of their own country, but they were, of course, at liberty to follow their fox wherever he led them, and here they came. We made out some hounds, and as they drew nearer I detected the object of pursuit stealing over the ground a couple of fields in advance, heading almost in our direction.

“Look!” I said. “There’s the fox. Do you see?”

“Yes, I see it; but—by Jove! look, just look at it!” cried the commodore, bursting into a fit of laughter. “Poult will be the death of me! Do look at the procession!”

I did so, and saw, first of all -

THE HARE.

Item, a couple of hounds.

Item, Poult, M. F. H.

Item, three jealous friends in attendance.

Item, two or three couple more hounds.

Item, the field in general, Sutcliffe well up, Toppler in the ruck.

Item, the balance of the pack, straggling

loosely and following on at long and distant intervals.

We watch the disappearing sportsmen till our attention is called by a clucking and fluttering in the poultry yard.

“That’s it. I knew how it would be! There’s one of those wretched hounds chasing my chickens about!” the commodore exclaimed, hurrying off; and, indeed, we found two four-legged truants from Poult’s kennels misconducting themselves as the commodore had surmised. These, being driven off with execrations, set off on private business of their own, and we resumed our chat till interrupted by the appearance of a horseman trotting up the drive. It was Stuart, who had followed my example of coming to look up our friend.

“Did you kill your fox?” the commodore asked, with a twinkle in his eyes, as, Stuart having given his horse over to a groom, we entered the house.

“I don’t believe it was a fox they were running at all; I believe it was a hare. But, oddly enough, they did kill a fox, chopped it in the wood there, and I never saw such a thing in my life. The hounds wouldn’t touch it. That drunken old rascal, Toppler, yelled to them in vain. One old fellow had a sniff at the fox,

and walked away; and of course Toppler gave him one to take with him and help to remind him that he ought to like it. Another hound just pulled a bit off and dropped it, and a few of them had a wrangle over a leg for the sake of the row. Just then an old hare—I'm nearly certain it was the beast we'd been hunting for the last half-hour—jumped up, and, if you'll believe me, half the pack set off in hot pursuit, with the others following the lead. Old Poult and Toppler—who was getting very drunk; he carries a couple of medicine bottles full of rum about with him—will have to eat their fox between them, if they want it eaten."

"Poult can't have much fun, I should think. Why does he keep hounds?" I inquire.

"It is simple enough," Stuart answers. "Poult would be nobody in the neighbourhood, but the master of Squire Poult's hounds is to some extent a personage. It only shows how the brutes will deteriorate, for there's hardly a better bred pack in the country. However, I only hope Hyde will marry Lucy Poult, who's a deuced nice little girl, and try to teach his father-in-law what a pack of hounds are supposed to do. Yes; and if Toppler drinks himself to death during the wedding festivities, it will be an excellent thing for the hunt."

Meantime, if anybody wants a day's sport he will do well to avoid a Mincing Lane M. F. H. Not, let it be added, that good sportsmen do not come from the city. Men who not only ride but who ride to hounds are plentiful there; but Poult M. F. H. is not one of the number.



## RIDING TO HOUNDS.

“RIDING to hounds” may mean anything or nothing—that is to say, the rider may surmount and overcome dangers which he would not meet in an ordinary steeplechase, or he may jog along as calmly and quietly as he would do in Rotten Row. All depends upon how the man means to ride; and very likely he does not mean to ride at all, as horsemen understand the phrase. To go out hunting is one thing; to risk collar bones and ribs, to say nothing of more uncomfortable fractures, by jumping ugly places is quite another. Let it be supposed that the fox has been viewed away, and that hounds are running; what in reality happens? It is not the case, as fond mothers suppose, that the whole field race with one another for the privilege of first jumping a five-barred gate, a flowing river, or anything short of a haystack that may be before them.

The huntsman gets to his hounds, the master is in his place, and the whip, whose shrill scream

has lately resounded, knows his duty ; but what of the field? Some ten per cent. ride straight on at the hedge and ditch in front of them ; a couple jump an awkward stile ; half a dozen believe that hounds will swing round to the right, and following one wary sportsman, who gives rise to this supposition, they charge a flight of rails in that direction, which the fourth man breaks, leaving a very simple jump for the fifth man, who had been looking out for such a casualty ; and for the sixth, who did not intend to brave it at all, unless the way was cleared for him. Seeing how things are, a few from the main body gallop across the field to take advantage of the broken rail, and a few more hesitating spirits have made up their minds to ride boldly—as boldly as may be—at the fence, over which one of them falls, another refusal unseats the rider, and a loose horse careers away.

A sixteen-stone farmer has turned into the road to the left, and is pounding along down it with a trotting and cantering contingent at his horse's heels, while nearly half the field are following each other over a gap which they jump in divers fashions. Some ride at it neatly enough, others go at a very sober trot, and there are those who walk their horses up the bank, and, with an amount of deliberation irritating to men

behind who are anxious to get on, cautiously steer their mounts over the ditch beyond. It is not thus that a picked field ride in Leicestershire, but in what are called "the provinces" the sketch given is a fair one.

The question why, this being so, hunting is so widely popular, has occupied the pens of many writers. Mr. Anthony Trollope wrote an essay on "The Man who Hunts and Doesn't Like it," describing the earnest but ineffectual attempts which he makes to like it when the season he has professed to long for comes round to him. Trollope hunted and liked it, notwithstanding that his short sight often brought him to grief.

"Now I think I've finished!" he is reported to have said once as he clambered out of a ditch in Essex, and picked up his spectacles, preparatory to the taking of measures for the extraction of his horse.

"Finished what?" a friend, who had pulled up to see that there were no ill effects from the cropper, inquired.

"Why," Trollope replied, "it seemed to be my destiny to feel the bottom of every ditch in the Roothings, and I've been into so many that this *must* be the last."

He pictures, however, the man who does not like it. The subject of his essay has liked it

extremely all the summer. A new pair of top boots is a pretty toy, and more decorative in a gentleman's dressing-room than any other kind of garment. "It is again," Mr. Trollope declares, "pleasant for such a man to talk of his horses, especially to young women with whom, perhaps, the ascertained fact of the winter employment does give him some credit." To pose as a hunting man amuses him and flatters his vanity; but there are compensating disadvantages. He must feel that he is not the thing he gives himself out to be, and, feeling this, can hardly help experiencing a certain shame; nor can hunting talk be wholly agreeable to a man who does not really ride to hounds, though he sees the pack he nominally hunts with at the meet, trots down roads and lanes, or over a few fields with them when they are going to draw a covert, and may by luck casually come across them in the course of the day.

This man hates riding to hounds in the proper sense of the term, and for the proceedings of the pack, apart from their function as leaders of the field, he cares nothing. He is, indeed, too anxious to watch the hounds, for there is always the risk of finding his way into a field, and not being so easily able to find his way out again. Such a man was criticised by an old Duke of

Beaufort, who was a keen and practical sportsman, but who did not like jumping, and had the courage to refrain sedulously. He used to say of a neighbour of his, who was not so constant, "Jones is an ass. Look at him now. There he is, and he can't get out. Jones does not like jumping, but he jumps a little, and I see him pounded every day. I never jump at all, and I'm always free to go where I like." Jones ought never to have jumped, for if a hunting man be firm neither in his seat nor his intentions, the prospect of his coming to grief is well-nigh a certainty.

Some men love the sport while they hate the fences, and of these there is one very notable example, whose name will at once occur to many readers. Mr. Jorrocks was an enthusiast. "Oh, how that beautiful word 'fox' gladdens my 'eart and warms the declinin' embers of my age!" the fat little grocer said; and he meant it. The horse and the hound were made for each other, and Nature threw in the fox as a connecting link between the two, was the opinion of the master of the Handley Cross Hounds. Mr. Jorrocks dreamed of the chase, as he told his hearers on a famous occasion. He saw foxes in visions sitting on his counterpane, and his nightmares were that he was pursuing one, that he could see him crawling along a hedgerow,

but that, having got out his horn, he could not sound it.

But Mr. Jorrocks had a strong objection to the fences. A fall was an awful thing, he declared in the course of his lecture; and, having pictured a great sixteen-hand horse lying on one like a blanket, "sendin' one's werry soul out o' one's nostrils. Dreadful thought! Vere's the brandy?" was the conclusion of his speech. It is the jumping of the fences which adds the zest to riding to hounds with many sportsmen; but with Mr. Jorrocks—it is hard to leave this admirably drawn character when once he has been mentioned—riding to hounds was delightful in spite of, not because of, the jumping. "Paid sixpence for catching my horse" is a common item in his diary, and a caught horse implies a cropper. Jorrocks unmistakably "funked."

John Leech has immortalized one of his mishaps, where he stands on the bank, his whip twisted in the reins of Artaxerxes, and "Gently, old fellow, gently, Artaxerxes, my bouy!" having failed, cries "Come hup, I say, you hugly brute!" as he endeavours to beguile or frighten the clumsy creature over the fence, on the far side of which in imagination he sees "a plough or 'arrow turned teeth huppermost."

Happy is the man who enjoys all that is

implied in the phrase riding to hounds, and has the time and the means for gratifying his fancy. To see hounds work is one of his delights. It may not be strictly true, that wherever hounds can go mounted men can follow; for a few feet of water more or less makes little difference to a dog that swims, while it may make all the difference to a horse that jumps, and there are sometimes ways through a fence for hounds which are not practicable for riders.

But these are exceptions in ordinary countries, and none such are in the way of the man whom we now suppose to be riding to hounds. He knows his horse, he knows himself, and is so thoroughly at home that nothing diverts his attention from the leading hounds as he gallops easily along by the side of, but not too near, the body of the pack. Fences to him are like plums in a child's cake; the cake is all good, but the plums are best. He collects his horse and sends him steadily at timber, jumping sideways perhaps, for reasons well understood by himself; he pulls the high-couraged animal together and sends him with a rush at the fourteen-foot brook, hands him daintily over a stile, and at the ordinary hedge and ditch leaves his head fairly loose and trusts to his intelligence to do what is best for himself and his rider.

Five and twenty minutes of this, at nearly racing pace, makes his horse lean a little on the bridle, and a check is not unwelcome. "Duchess" goes off as if she had found out something, but her he doubts. She does not speak to it; if she did he would hardly believe her. But surely "Dainty" will hit it off? He has always had confidence in her, and as she goes feathering down the hedgerow she presently utters a reassuring note. That is it! On they go again, the little horse cleverly recovering from a slither at the landing side of a fence in a way which increases his rider's appreciation of the animal, and possibly of his own horsemanship. The pair may be left scurrying fairly over the country to take care of themselves. For sportsmen such as these there is, perhaps, no pleasure so great as riding to hounds.



## A SHARP SPORTSMAN.

SOME men are born "sharps." If they are needy and really want the money to obtain which they hover about the border line of dishonesty, they usually find their way before a sitting magistrate, or occupy the attention of a jury ; the odd thing is that numbers of wealthy men take a pride in performing acts which outspoken persons call by ugly names.

Such an one is Lord Fearstone. His father is rich, even for a peer. Fearstone has a liberal allowance ; he does not want money to spend, but he is never so happy as when, by the exercise of some cunning dodge, he can win a bet from some acquaintance. He is familiar with every "catch" that is invented, and is one of the most expert manipulators of the three-card trick, common to his brethren in morality on the lower sort of racecourses, that I ever saw. He will bet on everything except straightforward and legitimate sport. "Good

things" on the turf are his delight; but touts deceive, very often because they cannot help it, and good things, as some of us have paid to learn, do not invariably come off.

Fearstone rides about half as well as he thinks he does, and is, therefore, an undeniably fine horseman, an accomplishment which he is the better able to display to advantage because his cattle for the most part are very poor, and to make them do their work requires very special skill. Their owner endeavours to buy his horses from professional dealers for less than their real value; and this is an attempt in which cleverer men than Fearstone constantly fail. By this time he is slowly but surely learning that an animal honestly worth £200 is not always to be picked up for much under half that sum, though it is only fair to Fearstone's astuteness to confess that if he does not succeed in buying his mounts for less than their legitimate price, he is frequently able to sell them remuneratively to budding acquaintances.

I had never sought the honour of intimacy with Fearstone, partly because I did not like him, and partly because I could not afford it—the mental strain of keeping clear of his shrewdness and the expense of succumbing to it were equally distasteful to me; but I visited a good

deal at a house near Palbridge Towers, his father's place, and so could not help knowing a good deal about this ingenious youth.

One morning, early in the hunting season, hounds met at the White Mill, about five miles from the house where I was staying, and some four from the Towers, which we had to pass; and my host had agreed to call and pick up Fearstone and his friends in passing.

As it happened, I had been up early in the morning to get some birds which I wanted to send away; and this being done, and breakfast happily despatched, we mounted and set off. On reaching the Towers, we found the horses being led up and down, and their riders at the door lighting cigars and cigarettes preparatory to starting. Fearstone is a long, dark-haired, smooth-faced young man of five and twenty; and he was about to get into the saddle of a big bay mare with very queer fore legs, when he paused, and said casually, "Which way shall we go this morning?"

"Why, my dear fellow, what a question to ask!" said Flutterton, who was staying in the same house as myself, and had a tolerably intimate acquaintance with the country. "Which way should we go? Past the pike, through the old deer forest, and out again in the lane not

half a mile from the mill, *I* should say. It's like asking the way from St. James's Street to Hyde Park Corner."

"Well, I don't know," Fearstone replied, with an appearance of reflection; "it seems to me that along the road is the best way after all. That's how it struck me the other day, and we're so used to going the other way that it's difficult to decide."

"Difficult? Not in the least! What have you been having for breakfast? Why, it's more than half a mile further—near a mile, I should think, and bad going on the road," Flutterton rejoined.

"Well, I ought to know, oughtn't I?" Fearstone said.

"Yes; you ought, and you don't—that's the odd part of it," Flutterton argued. "You haven't had 'the boy' for breakfast, have you? I never heard such a thing!"

"I should be inclined to bet about it, all the same," Fearstone quietly said; "and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you a pony that, going round by the road, I touch the gate-post of the mill before you, you riding through the forest the usual way."

"Done—for a hundred, if you like!" Flutterton answered.

“You ought to lay me two to one,” Fearstone answered. “However, it does not matter, though you may be right after all.”

Flutterton asked me to ride with him, which I readily consented to do, because I had a strong idea that I saw the drift of Fearstone’s dodge; and our host, Brocklesby, also joined our party, leaving Fearstone and his friends to follow the road. We trotted to the lodge gates, and then turned our horses’ heads in different directions, our party pointing for a narrow lane straight in front of us, while the other turned to the right, down the highway.

“The first to touch the gate-posts of the mill for a hundred!” Fearstone said. “Any one else?”

“I’ll have it for a pony,” I replied.

“And I another hundred, if you like?” continues Brocklesby.

“Very well. Done. Are you ready? Then off!” cried Fearstone; and off we all started at a good round pace, my friends and self in the middle of the green lane, the others on the grass at each side of the road.

“It’s all right, isn’t it? What the deuce does he mean?” Flutterton inquired, as we scudded along.

“Quite right, I should think,” Brocklesby

said. "He's got some dodge on, but I can't think what it is."

"I think I know, and I think he's out in his reckoning," I observe, as we turn off through a well-used gap and speed along a broad track towards what is still known as the deer forest, though no deer have been in it for many years past.

"They've been putting up gates here, I see. What's that for?" Flutterton said, as we galloped on to the green ride, past a stout timber structure which would have been an effectual stopper had it been closed. "Lord Saxonhurst's going to stock the place again, I suppose?"

My horse, excited at the pace, had shot ahead, and my friends' horses followed his example to the best of their ability, so that conversation flagged as we made good our way along a mile of excellent going, turned into the road, and, no sign of the other party being visible, cantered leisurely along to the Mill, where we touched the posts according to agreement—friends who were there before us looking on and wondering what it meant—and waited the arrival of our opponents.

Fearstone was frankly astonished when he and his companions cantered up some minutes

later to find us quietly sitting on our horses watching for them.

“Ah! I was wrong—made a mistake!” Fearstone remarked rather sulkily, and one or two of his companions looked somewhat unsympathetic not to say secretly delighted, from which I inferred that their host had been exercising some of his arts upon them since they had been at the Towers.

“I can’t make out what you were driving at,” Flutterton innocently observed. But I had an idea about it all.

Fearstone knew that the gates which Flutterton had noticed had been lately put up, that they were always kept shut, and that they were too big to be jumped. He did not know, however, something else, namely, that while looking for my birds in the morning at a point where my friend’s estate adjoined the forest, I had been chatting to the earl’s steward, and had said I was going to hunt, which had put it into his head that hounds might cross the forest; and that thereupon he had told the keeper to see that the gates were left open. Fearstone had no doubt supposed that, as usual, the gates were closed, and that we should be stopped by them, in which case there would have been nothing for it but to return to the high-road, by the

time that he and his friends were a good mile ahead.

There is always a calm joy in knowing that Fearstone has over-reached himself. By degrees, of course, the story leaked out. I casually explained to one or two friends what a sad disappointment it must have been for his lordship if he had indeed calculated on those uncompromising portals being closed against us, and how easy it was to ride through an open gate. Rather less than no sympathy was expressed for him; indeed, how Fearstone was "had" was fashioned into an effective anecdote, the embellishments of which told little in favour of the trickster's acuteness. He hates "parting," and paid up with anything but good grace.

Such anecdotes are extremely popular, not only in Fearstone's native county but in his clubs. One of the most amusing evenings we ever had at the Mutton Chops was when Fearstone made a set at Wynnerly, who had just been elected, and with whom Fearstone was not previously acquainted. Wynnerly knows rather more about racing than the average professional follower of the sport, and Fearstone, hearing the little man say that he was going to Sandown next day, persuaded Wynnerly to lay him two points over the odds against the Mermaid, a



favourite for a big steeplechase which Fearstone had just bought out of a fashionable training stable.

To the barely suppressed annoyance of the Mermaid's owner we all pretended an anxiety to prevent Wynnerly from making the bet; but Fearstone adroitly got him into a corner by himself before the evening was over, and "persuaded" him to lay the money. The joke of the matter was that, as we all knew—with, of course, the exception of our friend "the sharp"—Wynnerly was the guide, philosopher, and friend of the principal man in the stable in question. The Mermaid had belonged to him, and had been sold because she was a very uncertain mare, and they had a much better at home. Wynnerly's hesitation was ingeniously assumed, and next day he won the race for his friend with the ease which the trial had foreshadowed, the Mermaid a bad third.

But perhaps the best story of Fearstone was an instance of his horse-dealing near home. In the village a couple of miles from his house lived a blacksmith who did a little dealing at times; and knowing that Fearstone was generally ready to buy, he rode up to the Towers one day on a useful sort of horse, when he knew his lordship was there. Fearstone came out, stood in the

porch while the smith trotted up and down the drive, looked at it and picked it to pieces, as men occasionally do when they have an idea of buying.

“Well, what do you want?” he presently asked.

“Well, my lord, the lowest price I can take is sixty pounds. I gave fifty-five, and had to get him home by rail; and I wouldn’t sell at all but that I want the money bad,” the man answered.

“I’ll give you thirty,” was Fearstone’s reply, it being his custom to offer half the sum he was asked.

“No, my lord, I couldn’t do that. I gave the money I say, and he’s cost me a couple of pounds more; only I’m hard pressed and must get money from somewhere,” was the answer.

Fearstone liked the horse, and wanted it, but thought he saw the chance of making a good thing out of his neighbour’s necessity.

“I don’t care about the horse, but I don’t mind making it guineas?” he said.

“No, my lord; I couldn’t take a shilling less than the money I say. I mentioned the real lowest price to begin with.”

“Then you’d better take it away,” Fearstone rejoined, turning into the house; and as he did not look back, the man trotted off.

A couple of days afterwards, word came up to the Towers that the blacksmith had another horse, and he was bidden to bring it up on the afternoon, which he did. It was a big upstanding bay, good-looking all round, just the class of horse that Fearstone liked, and he found it hard to assume the requisite expression of disapproval.

“A bit clumsy, and he’s rather bigger than I care about. What do you want for him?” Fearstone asked.

“Well, my lord, I needn’t tell you that he’s a different sort of horse from the one I showed you the other day. However, I’ve got to sell him, and I’ll take a hundred and twenty guineas,” the smith replied.

“I’ll give you sixty pounds,” was Fearstone’s answer.

“No, my lord, I couldn’t take that. Mr. Flutterton, who’s staying at the Hall, would give me a hundred, I believe. I’d keep him till I could get my price, but I must find some money at once.”

Fearstone got on his back and cantered him round a paddock off the drive, jumping him over a practice hurdle that was up there.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll give you eighty pounds—not a penny more,” he said, as he pulled up opposite the seller.

An argument followed, and in the end the horse was left in the stable, and the blacksmith walked off with a cheque for £90 in his pocket.

A few days afterwards Fearstone rode him hunting. He got well away, crossed a couple of fields, delighted with his bargain, when all of a sudden the horse stopped dead short, stuck out his forelegs, hung down his head, and looked as if he were going to die. Fearstone slipped off and gazed at his new purchase with curiosity and alarm. A vet. from a neighbouring town pulled up also, and getting out of his saddle examined the horse.

“What’s wrong with the brute?” Fearstone asked. “I never knew a horse do that before.”

The vet. pointed to the flanks. Instead of the regular respiration a sort of double beat was perceptible.

“He’s got heart disease, my lord. He needn’t die of it, but he’ll always be liable to stop like that,” the expert answered; while Fearstone looked at the unhappy beast, at the field just disappearing round the corner of a distant covert, and in all directions for his second horse. This animal was nowhere to be seen, and the vet. was not going to lose his run for nothing.

“I’m afraid I can’t be of any service, my lord. I’ll get on, I think,” he remarked; and in

a few seconds was over the fence beyond, galloping after the tail horseman.

Fearstone was out of it for the day, and his patient recovering a little after a time, he got on his back; and, trembling with rage, walked and trotted towards the deceptive blacksmith's shop. The man of metal was working merrily away at a blazing forge. He looked up quietly at his furious customer, who, it may be remarked, had all his horses shod at a farm on the estate.

"Look here, sir. This is a nice sort of brute you sold me for ninety pounds! What do you mean by letting me in for such a brute? He's got heart disease, stopped dead and nearly dropped after going half a mile! Ninety pounds! He's not worth ninety pence!" Fearstone cried.

The smith did not seem in the least astonished.

"Very sorry, my lord, I'm sure; but really I don't know much about the horse. I know that *was* a good one I offered your lordship the other day. I paid fifty-five golden sovereigns for him, as I told you, but I guessed there was something wrong about that one," he added, with a nod towards the big bay on which "the sharp" sat at the door of the forge. "I gave eight pounds for he!"

Fearstone's indignation rendered him speechless. But what was he to do? The man had in

no way warranted the brute ; he had not recommended it. Fearstone had paid the money guided by the light of his own judgment. He rode off—not very rapidly—vowing vengeance ; but there was no way in which that vengeance could be satisfied.

The smith, with a twinkle in the corner of his eye, told Flutterton the story, and so it got up to town.

Thus it appears that sharps may occasionally wound themselves.

## ROUGH SHOOTING.

WITHOUT for a moment decrying the sport peculiar to August, September, and October, the pursuit of grouse, partridge, and pheasant, it may be claimed that a day's rough shooting has charms of its own. It usually comes after Christmas, when the close season is approaching, and it behoves a man to make the most of the time left him ; and, what is perhaps more to the point, success specially depends upon a man's knowledge of woodcraft. If he be shooting partridges, he knows pretty well where the birds lie, even if he has no dogs to aid him ; they are marked down, and the sportsman has his chance at them. In covert shooting, again, he goes where he is told to go ; it is the duty of the keeper to so organize matters that—if he only aim straight—he must contribute handsomely to the result set down in the game-book. But in rough shooting—it always being understood that the men know and can trust each other not to do anything rash in the way of

firing into a possible companion—there is more independence. Each man fights more for his own hand, and his knowledge of the haunts and habits of birds and beasts is turned to good account.

Rough shooting for the most part resolves itself into rabbits. They probably constitute three-fourths of the bag in districts where they are plentiful; and the rabbit certainly is not game in the strict sense of the word. A brace of pheasants is an acceptable offering, but a couple of rabbits by themselves are regarded as a poor sort of gift; yet to the sportsman the bowling over of the bunny, as he flashes across the ride of the covert, is as satisfactory an achievement as the bringing down of the big cock pheasant which goes clattering overhead; though when the two lie side by side on the ground, the brilliant hues of the handsome bird make the soft ball of brown fur look insignificant by comparison. But in a day's rough shooting all is fish that comes to the net. It may be generally said, indeed, that it is the best day when there is most variety in the cart as evening closes and the last shot has been fired, particularly if a woodcock or two—for he, somehow or other, is usually accepted as the most sporting of birds—be among the slain.

The cock is the scarcest of game birds in



most parts of the kingdom. He stays with us a much shorter time than the rest, being rarely found till the end of October; and he is valued accordingly.

The keeper, some three or four beaters, and a couple of boys, are waiting for us at the cross-roads, attended by a regular pack of more or less nondescript dogs, some of which come well under the definition of mongrel. There is something moving close to the opposite hedge the other side of the field of turnips before us. Pigeons, we make them out to be, and slip over the gate and down along the fence, to get behind them.

There they are—there must be thirty of them at least—and we are creeping on cautiously, fearing lest they should take alarm, when, in the ploughed land about thirty yards to our right, up jump a covey of partridges just when and where they were least expected. Such a misfortune—from a shooter's point of view—happens with disagreeable frequency. If a man has his gun open, his flask out (though the use of flasks is to be deprecated when there is walking to be done), when he is arranging his boot-lace, or otherwise occupied, up the birds usually jump, he having been strictly on the *qui vive* for the last two hours.

We are in time, however, to get a brace, for the last bird in the covey falls to our friend's barrel, and a single bird gets up afterwards and offers a fair chance, though the reports frighten the pigeons, which are over the spinney and out of sight in a very few seconds. So over a fence and into a covert carpeted with dead leaves, the green rushes standing out in striking contrast to the brown patches of dried fern ; and just as we enter a rustle, followed by a flapping of wings, is heard, and a pheasant flies up. Up, also, goes the gun, instinctively ; but the bird is a hen, and is allowed to escape unmolested. From the leisurely way in which she flies it seems as if she knew that she was safe, her pace differing widely from the wild dash of the rocketeer coming down wind an incalculable number of miles an hour. It is only men who draw upon their imagination instead of their experience who believe that all pheasants are about as tame as barn-door fowls, and that when the birds are thoroughly frightened by the invasion of an army of beaters they are easy to kill. Those who have tried to catch them as they whirl over the top of a ride, across the narrow strip of sky-line left on either hand by straight growing trees, know better. The wood we have reached must be still fairly well stocked, but it is not

our intention to shoot many more, so we have placed no stops at the end of the covert, and the consequence is that most of the birds run through the undergrowth, refusing altogether to rise.

We get a majestic old bird, however, which rises with a loud cry of indignation and fright, and then a cry of "Hare forward," followed quickly by "Rabbit to the right—two of them!" directs attention to the ground. The bushes seem to move, but we can make out nothing, and are just in the act of jumping a small ditch when, as ill luck will have it, up springs a woodcock, and goes bobbing along straight down the ride in front. The effort to get our gun up causes us to slip on the miry, holding ground, and the further effort to recover our balance completes the misfortune. We come down sitting in the morass, while the cock gently pursues his journey. The incident, ludicrous enough to recall, is extremely annoying to experience, for the cock presented an exceptionally easy shot, and another pheasant is but slight consolation.

We are now at some patches of furze, however, which are certain to hold rabbits, and the dogs dart eagerly in, the beaters doing their share energetically. "There's one, sir! There

he is, just near your corner!" shouts the keeper. But bunny declines to come out till the place is too hot to hold him, and then darts across the road and through the fence into the wood in front. One must be extraordinarily quick to play this game with success, yet above all things it is necessary to take one's time, or rather to avoid flurry and excitement. The rabbit speeds along where the undergrowth is thin, and the first barrel rolls him over. Bang! bang! go the other guns; and when the patch of gorse has been traversed each beater and boy has a couple or so of rabbits to carry, and journeys to the cart which follows us become frequent, the dogs assisting by catching a few rabbits themselves.

The scene is repeated in the wood beyond, and before long the intelligence of the dogs is curiously shown. One of our party is given to looking for hypothetical rabbits and calling the dogs to help him. Several times they attend the summons, search the place he indicates, and find nothing, the consequence being that after a while they refuse to take any notice of his requests for assistance, while running eagerly to the halloa of another gun, who they have already learnt will not call them for nothing. The fusillade is now brisk, the rabbits are constantly darting across the ride, a hare occasionally lobs

along, and a cry of "Mark, cock!" followed by a report and a shout of triumph, tell the downfall of the long-billed migrant. A distant member of his family joins him in the keeper's pocket as we cross some marshy land beyond.

There is nearly always a snipe in a certain patch of rushes, we are told; several have been killed from it, but another bird always takes the place. And surely enough he gets up just on the spot indicated, and meets a fate which another of his tribe escapes, his sinuous flight saving him. Cries of "Ware hen!" "Rabbit gone in!" "Another hare somewhere near about here, sir!" now come in chorus, punctuated by the banging of guns.

Partridges we see, always, however, in the distance, they taking care to keep a good hundred yards between us. Not another is secured the whole day, though the square framework inside the cart is being covered with a goodly number of rabbits, their bigger and richer-coloured cousins, the hares, adding variety, while one side of the square formed by the game, as it is hung in the cart, consists entirely of pheasants. On our way home we pick up another snipe, which rises almost under our feet.

So ends a fair specimen of a day's rough shooting.

# UPSET.

A STEEPLECHASE STORY.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE NOMINATION.

A GARDEN-PARTY is perhaps more than any other sort of party dependent on the guests. At dinner, for instance, the presence of a dull neighbour may be mitigated by the *menu*, and a happy combination of good wine and well-dressed food soothes the irritation caused by the man who talks too much or the lady who talks too little. In a party made up for the purpose of going to the races a guest may occupy himself in losing his money and explaining how the failure is entirely attributable, not to his judgment, but to the horse, that did not win when it clearly ought to have done so. At a whist-party, again, a man has cards for amusement, besides the satisfaction of reflecting that he is not such a wretched bad player as his partner. Indeed, most

parties have a definitive and proclaimed object ; but a garden-party means simply much talk and a little tennis, and if one does not find the persons with whom one wants to talk, the result is a depression not to be relieved by casual claret-cup and impervious to sherry and cunningly-contrived sandwiches.

Every one who drove up to Selstead Towers, however, on a certain day at the beginning of September, felt that the visit would not be an infliction. For the most part the right people were sure to be there ; they were likewise sure to say the right thing ; and such little leaven of the wrong people as might have crept in would not be strong enough to do mischief. Sir Henry Selstead's return home was, in the first place, a matter for rejoicing, for no one in Wessex kept things going with greater spirit. There was no more pleasant house in the county ; and on this occasion the sun had for once determined to shine. "Dancing if wet" had been written in the corner of the At Home cards, and to the music of the band of the Royal Wessex Militia a dance had actually been performed with cheerfulness in the cleared dining-room during a heavy shower. Now the clouds had broken, the sun streamed out, and amid much shaking of hands, "So glad you've come," "I expected to

see you," "I could not think where you had got to," "Here you are at last!" and other familiar sentences, everybody who was anybody in that division of the county thronged the rooms and terraces and exchanged greetings. Cards had been sent as a matter of course to the officers of the regiment quartered at Coltsford, the 152nd Lancers, and a couple of those who had accepted, Crossley and Banks, were patrolling a side path, away from the throng of guests, in earnest conversation.

"Are you sure it's all right?" Crossley asks.

"Perfectly. The Wessex Hunt Race Meeting will take place on the 28th of October, and Sir Henry has undertaken to see that a cup is offered for the regiment. Added to a sweepstakes of 50 sovs. each, eh? That'll about suit? Shall I propose that?" Banks asks.

"No. Fifty's too much. You'll spoil it all if you are so keen about it," Crossley answers.

"You're so indifferent to making money yourself, aren't you?" Banks asks, with a sneer.

"No, I'm not; but I don't rush a good thing and make a mess of it; and it will be just as well if we drop recrimination until the thing's safely over. I suppose the horse is good enough?"

"You know what he did at Baldoyle, and you heard what Sir Thomas said about it. Besides,



what is there in the regiment to beat?" Banks replies.

"That's just the deuce of it—how to frame the conditions so that Lorrimer or some of the fellows doesn't borrow a brute for the occasion. It requires to be thought about."

"Then let's think, for it's worth it," is the answer; and the pair continue to pace the walk till presently joined by Sir Thomas Aston, who shares the deliberation.

Sir Thomas is a man typical of a class that seems to be little understood. A stout, robust, round-faced; genial-looking personage, with a hearty laugh and full-toned voice. Not knowing him you would think he must be a capital good fellow, a downright, straightforward, thorough Englishman. He is a rich man, holds a good position in his county; has been in the House. On further acquaintance you would discover, probably to your cost, that he was as sharp as a needle, utterly unscrupulous, loving trickery, and something approaching very nearly to what plain-spoken people call fraud, for the mere sake of getting the best of those with whom he was brought in contact. Sir Thomas's chief occupation was the turf, and if he could win a race and put some of his friends in a hole at the same time he was perfectly happy.

At the mess dinner at Coltsford Sir Thomas appeared that evening as the guest of Crossley, and at the moment when at least a couple of those at table were wondering how to introduce the subject best, trouble was saved them by a sudden utterance of young Purleigh.

“Do you know whether it’s true, Sir Thomas, that they’re going to give us a cup to run for?” he asked, as the table was cleared and the claret began to circulate.

Crossley and Banks slightly glanced at each other, as Sir Thomas replied, “Quite true. The Hunt are going to offer a cup value sixty guineas for a steeplechase for horses belonging to the regiment.”

“The worst of it is Eisenham, or some of you rich fellows, will be buying up Grand National winners, and won’t give us a chance,” Purleigh complained.

“The meaning of the thing is lost, then,” Banks answered. “I should be inclined to propose that the race be confined to chargers that were in the stables at twelve o’clock this morning, before we knew anything about it.”

“That’s it, Banks; and the sooner the entries are made the better. Let’s see where we are, Raughton. Have you a pencil and paper?” the Colonel said.

“Yes. Here we are,” Raughton replied. “Regimental Cup, value sixty guineas, added to a sweepstakes—— Shall we have a sweep? Ten each? Twenty each? A pony?”

“Ten’s enough, I should think,” Crossley observed, with much sedateness.

“No; why not a pony? It’s sure to be an open race,” Purleigh suggested.

“You know you’re going to cut us all down and sail in by yourself, Purl. However, let’s say twenty pounds,” Raughton answered. “Well, what do you say, Chief? Bay Bessie?”

“Yes. She’s my only hope,” the Colonel replied.

“She’s done it before, and may again,” Raughton said, heading the list with “Colonel Wraytlete’s Bay Bessie. Usual weights, I suppose—6 years, 12st. 7lb.? Cunninghame, what have you?—Equinox? Equinox, 5 years, 12st. 5lbs. I’ll put down Chatelaine for myself, though she can’t have a ghost of a chance.”

One or two refusals to enter followed from men who declared they had nothing that could raise a gallop, and presently Crossley was reached.

“What do you say, Crossley?” Raughton asked.

“I’m afraid you must pass me over, too,” was

the answer. "I should like to have a cut in very much, but my beasts can hardly do their work, let alone chasing."

"Oh, my dear fellow, you must name something. Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do;— I'll lend you that Irishman I bought the other day. I was going to enter it myself, but Sabretache will do equally well for me. Put down for Crossley, bay horse, Red Rover, 5 years. Is that all right?" Banks breaks in with much apparent innocence.

"Was he in the stable at twelve o'clock this morning?" Raughton asked.

"Yes, he's been there for the last week, though I've never given him a turn and don't know what he can do," Banks responded.

Crossley's protests that this would be destroying Banks's chance, as the new horse might turn out well, were met by insistence on the part of the owner of the Red Rover, and finally the Irishman was set down for Crossley. Purleigh entered Playfellow, a big upstanding grey, on which his master, as by courtesy he was called, spent a good many uncomfortable hours. Lorimer named one of a dangerous stud, St. Patrick. A couple of fairly good hunters, Witchcraft and Post Horn, swelled the list.

"Heath, anything for you?" Raughton in-

quired of a young fellow, a light weight with a figure that seemed to suggest the saddle.

“No. I suppose the Chief will give me the mount on Bay Bessie?” Heath replied.

“And who are you going to tell off to help you up this time?” Raughton inquired, with a merrily mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

“Don’t you chaff!” Heath answered good-naturedly; and seeing that something was meant, Cunninghame inquired what it was.

“It’s an old story of Heath in the early days of his martial career,” Raughton replied, smiling at the hero of the anecdote, who was occupied in peeling a walnut. “Heath was younger but not taller, and his chargers were among the tallest animals in the European cavalry. One day the Duke went to Aldershot to review the regiment of which our friend was an ornament. He gave the word to dismount, and the men were out of their saddles like eels.”

“I never saw an eel get out of a saddle,” Heath parenthetically observed; but Raughton took no notice, and continued.

“At least they all were except Heath, who, with prudent forethought, reflected that if he got down he would only have to get up again; and so, being an extremely artful youth, he

simply slipped over a little sideways and endeavoured to secrete himself behind the pommel. When the word 'Mount' was given, the accomplished young officer was mounted with astounding celerity, for obvious reasons, and the Duke was delighted;—wasn't he, Heath? He said he had never seen the movement better executed; and galloping past the troops, he took up his station just by Heath's side, and said, 'Excellent! We'll have it again, men!' The word was given, the saddles were emptied—poor Heath's, too, this time,—and then, when they ought to have been filled again on the word to mount, one remained vacant, and one officer was making hopeless endeavours to get his foot into a stirrup about on a level with his chin. In the end a trooper was told off to give the future Field Marshal a leg up!"

A laugh followed, and the walnut-shell which Heath had just emptied whizzed across the table towards the story-teller, who dodged the missile and resumed the work in hand.

"Napoleon for you, Herries?" Raughton asked, speaking to a young fellow at the end of the table, who was sitting with an expression of dreamy abstraction on his pleasant face—a face which, if not emphatically handsome, was eminently that of a gentleman. "It isn't a fat

cattle show, or else Napoleon would have a first-rate chance," Purleigh chimed in.

"Then I won't enter him, Purleigh," Herries replied, smilingly. "I have another, one of those my poor brother left me; but I know nothing about it, and am not even sure that it was here in time to be nominated."

"A bay mare, is it, with black points? She came in when I was in the stables this morning, about half-past ten, and looked very much like going," Raughton replied.

"And your brother was one of the best judges of a horse I ever met," the Colonel said. "She should be a good one if he chose her."

"What's her name?" Raughton asked, with pencil ready.

"She's five years old, and I know nothing more of her," Herries replied. "She must be christened." He reflected a moment, and then said, a flush suffusing his face, "Put her down 'Heartsease.'"

## CHAPTER II.

## TWO TRIALS.

THE sun, just rising on a certain morning in mid-October, displayed a picturesque autumn landscape, enlivened by two figures. A young man of some two and thirty leaned on a gate, holding the hand of a charming girl some ten years his junior. She was evidently prepared for the chill of the early morning, for thick boots made her little feet appear all the more delicate, and, in addition to a neatly-fitting coat, a thick scarf was arranged round her neck. Her companion was clad simply in a tweed coat, breeches, and butcher boots, to which latter a pair of spurs were fixed, and in his hand he held a cutting whip. It was indeed Clive Herries and Mabel Roydon. She is the first to speak.

“It seems dreadful to come out here by myself at this time, but if the race means all you think, I know I could not have contained myself indoors, and so I have slipped out as you said.”

“You are a darling to come; but then you are a darling always. I was half afraid, as I rode along, that you would miss the place; and



it was all the more delightful to see you. How is my estimable aunt?"

"Don't speak in such a bitter tone of her, dear. She is doing what she thinks best," Mabel answered.

"Yes! But to keep you away from me, whom you love, and who love you with all my soul, and try to force you upon a mean-spirited wretch old enough to be your father. Bad is the best if that is it," Clive replied savagely.

"But you know you have been wild and extravagant, and she does not believe in the change as I do. Yes, dear, I never doubt you for a moment. She does not intend to be severe or unkind to me, I am sure."

"Only she is without intending it, if that mends matters. Yes, extravagance has been my bane; if I had now half the money that I have wasted these last five years, I could take advantage of the chance and buy my step. As it is, the glorious chance must go, and I must wait in miserable suspense while you are persecuted!"

"Let us look on the brighter side! If you do win the race, you say it will give you money enough, don't you? Yet I dislike the idea of money gained in such a way," Mabel answered, looking up into his face.

“ So do I, darling ; but, after all, it’s fair and honest, and, besides, it is only getting my own back again—if it comes back ! Three thousand pounds would be salvation, and I do believe there is a hope, though I almost fear to think of it ; for I should get my step, and then I may claim you ! But, see, there are the horses by the three poplars over there. You have your glasses ? That’s right. I arranged this trial ground so that you could see if you could get away. We start from where they are now—can you make them out ? Over there, this side of that red-tiled farm on the hill, across those two grass fields and the plough, over the road, across a corner of the park, and so on down the hill close past you here, over the road again, then you will lose sight of us for just a moment, then round the clump of trees, and our winning-post is the ash in the middle of the grassland there. I must go, and dare not beg you to stop when it is over ; so good-bye, darling ; ” and after a tender farewell and many murmured hopes for success, Herries unfastened from the gate-post the reins of his hack and cantered down a green lane that led to the spot where two horses were being led about, and a third figure, mounted, sat motionless and expectant.

Mabel raised her field-glass and watched what

took place. Her lover slipped off his hack, and after looking carefully over one of the animals, a superb bay mare, was soon seated in the saddle. A little man, of an aspect it seemed impossible to disconnect from the idea of horses, was put up on to the other vacant saddle, and the two took up their station side by side. Meantime the third figure had drawn a handkerchief from his pocket and held the white signal fluttering in the air. Mabel understood the significance of the position; her heart beat fast as she noted the handkerchief flash downwards, and at the same moment the two horses bound forward and sweep over the pasture.

There can be no sort of question as to which is the handsomer of the two horses. The brown, a fairish sort of brute to look at, appears veritably mean by the side of the bay mare, and surely, Mabel thinks, no one could possibly find a fault in the rider! They near the first fence, a broad Wessex ditch, and fly it together, though Mabel fancies—and subsequent leaps strengthen the notion—that the brown is a little the quicker at his jumps, and seems to get away on the other side a thought more speedily than does the mare. Past the farm and across the grass the two continue their way, Herries leading well over the banked hedge into the plough, and he,

too, jumps in and out of the lane with what at a distance of nearly half a mile looks ridiculous ease; but the brown is on her track. Into the park, across the corner, and so down the hill towards the gate where she is standing, the two come thundering, and as they approach, Mabel puts aside her glasses and trusts to her eyes alone. Here they come, Clive with his teeth set and a look of stern determination on his face as they near the strongly made-up fence close to her, and half through, half over, this they swish still side by side, though the brown is certainly the quicker away. Now they are receding, and the glass is brought into use again. They have rounded the furthest point, and still side by side, though at increasing speed, they gallop out of sight, a rise in the ground hiding them from view; but when they reappear Clive is a good length in front, and the mare seems to be going well within herself. She is first at the post and rails into the winning-field, and on she comes at terrific speed; but as she lands the brown lands too, and the winning-post is only some two hundred yards in front. Clive sits down and presently lifts his whip; the rider of the brown likewise gives his horse one stroke, when it shoots forward to Clive's side, passes him, and is a good length in advance of the gallant bay as the ash-tree is reached.

Mabel can scarcely believe it. Victory seemed assured for her hero, and yet the race was over and she had seen how it ended. Clive had told her that the mare, one of those his dead brother had left him, had proved to be surprisingly good, able to gallop fast and long, and a wonderful jumper. She had appeared to do both; but the common-looking little brown was clearly her superior. The girl's heart was sad as she hurried back across the park to the large house that stood hidden by the trees near to which, that she might see, the trial ground had been chosen.

But it was with very different feelings that another spectator of the trial slipped from the hiding-place in the clump of trees near the finish and made his way down a narrow lane, at the bottom of which a country boy was holding a light dog-cart. Into this the stranger stepped, and started off at a pace which promised to complete the journey to Coltsford, some twelve miles distance, well under the hour. Within that time the cart was stopped at the stables belonging to the cavalry barracks, and the driver handing over his horse to a servant, bounded lightly upstairs to a room furnished in military fashion, where Crossley and Sir Thomas Aston were seated smoking cigarettes and varying the

performance by draughts from tall tumblers of brandy and soda.

“I thought so! Here is our amateur tout! Well, what’s the news?” Sir Thomas inquired.

“They ran the trial just as Stipling told us, and Herries was beaten easily. There was no doubt about it,” Banks—for it was he—replied.

“You don’t know where the other beast came from? What was he like? I suppose Herries can ride a bit?” Sir Thomas inquired.

“Oh, yes; he rides well enough, for a raw amateur, but Crossley can give him a good ten pounds, I have no doubt. I don’t know what the trial horse was—rather undersized, a fair sort of galloper, and a very neat jumper, but no kind of class,” Banks answered.

“And our friend had all the worst of it?” Crossley asked.

“Done all round—hadn’t a chance,” Banks responded. “I expected that he would have made a better business of it, for Nipper Herries, who left him the horse, was wonderfully keen and cunning; but it is as I tell you, and I might have saved myself the journey.”

“Better to make sure,” Crossley said, “and I think it is pretty sure now?” he continued to Sir Thomas.

“For once I really fancy it is!” Sir Thomas

answered, in his hearty, genial way. "We shall have to hail you speedily as Captain Crossley, I suppose?"

"Yes. I shall go for the gloves, and if Herries cannot purchase—and I know he is as near broke as he can be—I shall buy the vacant company. By the way, they say they are going to do away with purchase. Queer notion, is it not?"

"Can't be true," Banks rejoined. "You know what makes Herries so keen—and he is, I can tell you, though he keeps quiet about it—he——"

"Yes, I know," Crossley cut in. "He is engaged to his cousin, and her guardian refuses to give her consent until Herries has got his promotion, and if it does not come soon her aunt will make her marry Lord Sackbut; but tell us about the trial."

Banks, no whit ashamed of his morning's work, helped himself to a brandy and soda and related what he had seen. The race had been run at a good pace, both men rode well, but the bay mare never seemed to have a chance. Odd thing, by the way, had happened. A girl, dressed and looking like a gentlewoman, had suddenly appeared at a gate and watched the finish—a female tout.

The recital was the more agreeable to hearers and to speaker by reason of another trial that had taken place near to Coltsford a couple of days before. Red Rover, the animal which, to all outward appearance, and, as the regiment perfectly believed, Banks had offered to lend Crossley in a moment of casual amiability, had run three miles across country against Mainstay, and had confirmed the good opinion of friends, and the public reputation of the Daphne colt (for as such Red Rover had done good service on the flat) by gaining a clever victory over that sterling horse. That Mainstay was at her best had been since amply demonstrated by a creditable success at Warwick. In fact, the horse belonged to Sir Thomas, who had given his natural love of roguery full swing when Crossley, with much delicacy, sounded him as to the feasibility of arranging for a Regimental Cup, to be given at the much-talked-of Wessex Hunt Steeplechase, and, furthermore, as to the desirability of getting something in the stable ready to make it sure that the prize should fall into (what Crossley regarded as) the right hands.

The train had been cunningly laid, the little swindle arranged with much foresight and judgment; Sir Thomas's long experience, natural aptitude, and hearty appreciation of such a



business, being all brought to bear upon the scheme. If he could have let Crossley and Banks into a hole, he would gladly have done so, but the blot on the transaction, from his point of view, was that he must run straight so far as they were concerned. He had some horses of the highest class, and had been in some very big "plants" in his time, some of which had succeeded and others failed, but he had rarely entered into a swindle with such gusto as on the present occasion.

As for his brother rogues, Crossley and Banks, it was some comfort to Sir Thomas to know that they were both desperately hard-up, and that the few hundreds they might win now would only make them more eager to continue the game, which was tolerably certain to break them in the end. As already mentioned in the course of conversation, Banks's new horse, Red Rover, was in reality the Daphne colt, an animal that had done fairly well on the flat, took kindly to jumping, and was, of course, of infinitely superior class to anything that was likely to appear in a regimental steeplechase. With such an accomplished rider as Crossley the result seemed assured, and the various players at the game looked forward with an anxious expectation to the 28th.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE RACE.

THE promise of a fine day on the morning set apart for the race was warmly welcomed, and, moreover, was handsomely kept. The first contest was put down for 1.30, and before one the course at Mowington was thronged. The farmers for many miles around, in all sorts of vehicles drawn by all sorts of cattle, were plentifully represented, while their wives and daughters attended, for the most part gorgeously clad. Red coats were familiar objects, for the garrison at Coltsford had gone racing with one accord, and five or six drags gave character to the miscellaneous array of carriages. Mounted men mingled with the throng by the rails, or, to be more accurate, by the ropes, which marked off the finish, and an improvised grand stand was well filled.

Prominent among the drags was Sir Henry Selstead's coach, and on the box by her ladyship's side was seated Mabel Roydon. But for the anxiety this would have been an altogether delightful excursion for Mabel, the more so as her aunt was not present. That lady had been

called on business to London, and, hearing that, Lady Selstead, one of the kindest women in the world, every one's friend, and something more than a friend to Mabel, had begged that the girl might spend a week at the Towers. What to do with Mabel had been a perplexing point, and the invitation was gladly accepted on her behalf; for Lady Selstead had very judiciously omitted to mention anything whatever about steeple-chases, regimental cups, or to add that a letter was to be sent to Clive Herries to say that she and Sir Henry would be delighted to see him at the Towers whenever he could manage to call and dine.

In truth, Mabel had told all her hopes and fears to her friend, whose tender heart was deeply moved, for threescore years of life had not in the least blunted her sympathies or deadened her ever-ready benevolence. Such comfort as she could bestow had been heartily accorded, and Mabel felt her confidence partially revive in this pleasant and kindly companionship; though ever and anon the thought of that dreadful little brown horse which would not be shaken off came to disturb her.

Luncheon was in progress here and on the neighbouring drags, and Sir Henry's hospitality was warmly appreciated, as the popping of in-

numerable corks, and the activity of the servants diving for clean plates, and producing fresh chickens and game pies from well-filled baskets, showed with sufficient clearness. The Lancers' drag was also surrounded by a swarm of friends, who were disturbed in their feasting and chaff by the appearance of the numbers for the first race, chalked in huge letters on a blackboard which did duty for the telegraph.

The ring was small in numbers, but what was wanting in numerical strength was amply atoned for by strength of lung, though how the vigorous pencillers could form any opinion as to the merits of "horses *bona fide* the property of farmers hunting with the Wessex Hounds" does not appear. This and the second race, for Hunt Servants attached to any pack of hounds in Wessex or Storfordshire, were duly run, however; and the next event on the card may be transcribed:—

A Cup, value Sixty Guineas, added to a Sweepstakes of Twenty Sors. each, for horses the property of officers in the 152nd Lancers, and to be ridden by officers of the regiment; 4 yrs., 12st.; 5 yrs., 12st. 5lb.; 6 yrs. and aged, 12st. 7lb. About three miles.

1. Bay Bessie, 6 yrs..... scarlet
2. Equinox, 5 yrs..... black, gold seams
3. Chatelaine, aged ..... pink, white sleeves and cap
4. Red Rover, 5 yrs..... white, red cap
5. Sabretache, 6 yrs..... straw

6. Playfellow, 6 yrs. .... *dark blue, black cap*
7. St. Patrick, aged ..... *green*
8. Witchcraft, 6 yrs. .... *cardinal red*
9. Post Horn, aged ..... *white, red belt and cap*
10. Heartsease, 5 yrs. .... *light blue, white cap*
11. The Countess, 5 yrs. .... *black and cherry stripes, cherry cap.*

Owners were up except in the cases of Nos. 1, 9, and 11. Heath rode Bay Bessie, and the owners of the other two not being able to get down to near the weight, could not ride their own horses.

To the disgust and surprise of Sir Thomas Aston, Red Rover was installed a hot favourite at 6 and 5 to 4. The Countess and St. Patrick were next in demand at 5 to 2 and 3 to 1, and 5 to 1 was taken freely about Bay Bessie, who, it was known, would stand up and get the course, though, wanting a turn of speed, she might very likely be beaten if a good galloper was handy at the finish. That the most fervent good wishes and injunctions to be careful had been uttered from the box of Sir Henry's coach, as Clive said good-bye before starting off to dress, need scarcely be said.

Lady Selstead's hopes for his success had been spoken almost as heartily as Mabel's, and in the height of his anxiety Clive could not help thinking what a dear good woman she was. His face was troubled, nevertheless, for besides the

difficulty of winning the race, the difficulty of winning any money on it had to be encountered. He had taken £120 to £20 in the ring, but at the idea that any one was backing Heartsease, the offers contracted, and that with remarkable rapidity.

As a matter of fact Sir Thomas, by way of a blind, had whispered it about pretty freely that Heartsease was a good thing, and had invented a glowing but purely imaginative account of a trial in which Clive's mare had greatly distinguished herself, hoping thereby to expand the price of Red Rover. Besides, when Heartsease was hopelessly beaten, it would add an additional pleasure to Red Rover's victory to watch the long faces of his friends as he lamented to them that "in races of this sort one could never tell what might happen."

Sir Thomas wanted to make a good thing out of it; but in spite of the "tip" he had tried to circulate, it was soon hard to get an offer of anything over even money about the favourite. The worst of it was that he could not persuade Crossley to pull the horse, as he and Banks had hastened to get on themselves, and the market was too precarious to make a revolution anything like a certainty. While puzzling out the best thing to be done, Sir Thomas came across Clive,

and at once asked him if he wanted to back his horse.

“They’ll lay me no price,” Clive answered. “Considering how the favourite and two or three others are backed, there ought to be some odds forthcoming.”

For a moment the wily Aston reflected. If Herries wanted to back his horse might it not be better than it seemed? But he was quickly convinced again. No doubt the trial which Banks had watched was run against some old chaser, and, though beaten, Herries might reflect—with the sanguine vanity of youth—that even though defeated the performance was good enough to give him a chance in a regimental race; for, of course, he could not know what kind of a horse he had to meet in Red Rover, even if this Heartsease could hold her own with animals like the Countess and St. Patrick, or a decent jumper like Bay Bessie. Laying against Heartsease must certainly be safe, Aston thought, and determined to be liberal.

“Well, what do you want to do? I’ll lay you £900 to £100, for I tell you frankly I don’t think you’ll win it. Bay Bessie is the stamp of horse I like to stand in a race of the sort, a beast that has been at the game before and is certain to get through,” Sir Thomas said.

“And how about the favourite?” Clive inquired with what struck Aston as being a suspicious glance.

“Too flashy. On the flat or over hurdles he might do, but three miles is a long way, and the going is rather heavy, I fancy. But are we going to do anything about Heartsease? Look here, I’ll lay you £1000 to £100,” Sir Thomas exclaimed.

“Yes. I don’t mind taking that,” Clive answered, noting down the bet.

“Again, if you like?”

“Very well.”

“Any more?” Sir Thomas continued.

But Clive paused. This was getting into long figures, and he feared to go too deeply, while Sir Thomas, who felt that he was in reality coining money, was eager to proceed.

“See! For once I’ll lay you £1200 to £100; twice if you like?”

Clive, however, was not to be tempted too far, and closed his book with £3200 to £300, together with £120 to £20, and £50 to £10, taken in the ring, a more than sufficient plunge if things went badly, and a highly satisfactory one if the Fates were propitious; and he strolled off to look at his mare before dressing and weighing out.



In the dressing-room he found Heath and Crossley, comporting themselves with the quiet air of accustomed hands, and little Purleigh full of chaff and jocularity, just a trifle forced, perhaps. Purleigh had begun by going into training in quite professional style, and indulging himself about twice a week to an extent that more than undid the benefit derived from a couple of days of the strictest care. On reaching the course Purleigh had stopped at Sir Henry's drag and had just one glass of champagne, and just half a glass more. This suited him so well that he had gone on to the regimental drag, and, in spite of protest, had a couple of glasses there; and fellows chaffed in such an absurd way about it that he had left the place.

Passing by Sir Henry's coach again he stopped to speak to some men, and a servant, who had just opened a fresh bottle, handed him a glass of it. This he took quite casually and half emptied in a thoughtless manner, when, before he knew what was being done, his glass was replenished. This was very annoying, and in the first flush of irritation he emptied the glass, refused more with much decision; whereupon, feeling that this was not the proper kind of preparation for a steeplechase—on a brute of a horse like Playfellow, too—concluded that a

glass of sherry was necessary to put things straight.

After this it is not to be wondered at that in passing through the ring he took £200 to £50 about his horse twice, and was noisily cheerful until hoisted upon Playfellow's back, when the demeanour of the big grey, excited by the unaccustomed crowd, made Purleigh wish with much sincerity that he had left the champagne alone, and still more sincerely that he had never got on the back of a monster that did not know how to stand still, and fought for its head, and generally made itself horribly offensive.

At length, however, the eleven were all mounted, and they file out of the extemporized paddock and on to the course. Playfellow, feeling a very uncertain hand on the reins, pulls and bores, and very nearly unships her rider, a contrast to Red Rover, who is inclined to be skittish, but who yields obedience to a firm, light, restraining hand. If Purleigh had dared to use his whip, or dig in his spurs, he would have almost accepted another £200 to £50; but the only thing he can do is to determine to sell the beast at the earliest possible moment, and to hope that he will fall into bad hands.

Heartsease seems to bear her light blue burden proudly, and Lady Selstead's kindly whisper that

they look splendid is certainly justified ; but poor Mabel thinks of the little brown horse, and dreads the upshot. The mare, however, thanks to Sir Thomas's tip, has advanced in favouritism ; and an ingenuous youth, standing near the baronet on the regimental drag, exclaims in admiration that Heartsease can't be beat, and warmly thanks Aston for the hint ; whereat the latter smiles delightedly. Some one, he thinks, is singeing his fingers, and they will soon be burnt ; for Red Rover is wonderfully fit and good-looking, though publicly Sir Thomas declares the horse to be "light," "shelly," "under-sized," "over-done," and full of faults.

Mabel watches the procession cantering to the starting-post, where the Hunt secretary is ready with the flag, and at the first attempt the eleven are despatched upon the journey fraught with such momentous issues. First away is Purleigh, not because he wants to make the running, but because Playfellow is smitten with a desire to gallop ; and how the pair of them led the way over the first fence, a hedge and ditch, one of the pair at any rate never understood. Over they got, Purleigh wondering whether he had taken too much champagne or whether he had not taken enough ; and so the dark blue jacket bobbed over the plough. Post Horn led

the field, Red Rover and Heartsease lying well up, and Crossley's eyes seemed everywhere, albeit they were always on his horse or his horse's path when necessary. The second fence was a row of rails which Playfellow jumped lamely after something so near a refusal that Purleigh landed on his horse's neck ; but the rest were all together and all jumped in good form, as Mabel noted through her glasses. Here St. Patrick overpowered his jockey and ran out, luckily without interfering with the rest, who came together down to a regular Wessex ditch, and Purleigh, still leading, remembered what a horrid place it was. He had come to it once out shooting, and playfully asked if anybody had a boat—and here he was galloping at it!

A very undecided hand on the reins quickly let Playfellow know that he need not jump if he did not care about it, and being a flashy animal without much substance he decided that he would not put himself out of the way. A half-nervous dig of the left spur upset Playfellow's calculation so much that instead of stopping abruptly on the edge of the ditch he slipped in, and so horse and rider disappeared from view. How they came to the surface of the earth again, and how Purleigh graphically described the courageous vigour with which he





BRINGING THE MARE ON TO HER NOSE.

“drove the brute hard at it” need not be recapitulated.

The course was for the most part natural country, but a few jumps were made, and these the field was now approaching. Thick hedges with ditches before them were the next fences, and at the first of these an ugly accident was nearly happening. Mabel almost screamed as she saw The Countess swerve and cannon against Heartsease as he landed, knocking Clive’s foot out of the stirrup, and bringing the mare on to her nose. They were within an ace of falling, but saved themselves cleverly.

“Well done!” cried Sir Henry, who had taken up his station on the drag behind his wife and Mabel. “Herries won’t lose the race if riding can save it. See! Beautifully done!” he continued, as Clive, having steadied himself and his mount, kicked back his foot into the stirrup at the moment when they were rising at the next fence.

To Mabel the whole race was such an exciting struggle that she scarcely realized what was going forward; but she saw that in the midst of the throng Clive’s light blue jacket was borne to the water-jump, and that he got away well on the other side. So far as her eyes could see, none of her lover’s opponents had that peculiar

knack of slipping away from a fence with gallop apparently undisturbed as the little brown horse had done; but though a pink, a green, and a straw jacket had disappeared, and Playfellow was being trotted and walked home over the fields, the race was still open. Black and gold seams, Equinox, was hopelessly in the rear, and Post Horn seemed to be retiring to join him, while The Countess led, followed by Bay Bessie, Red Rover, Heartsease, and Witchcraft. To Mabel the moments seemed hours, though the pace had improved, and red, white, and cherry caps went up and down as the fences were reached and jumped.

Coming to the rails a second time, The Countess rose feebly and landed in a heap, but four of the now diminished field struggled on, Witchcraft well ahead. Round they come, and there are now only two fences and the run in, and Mabel's heart beats desperately hard. Clive is last of the four. Why does he not whip his horse and pass his enemies? Mabel, inexperienced in race-riding, anxiously wonders, and the hand which Lady Selstead has held out to her is tightly grasped by the girl's trembling fingers. Over the last fence but one, and Clive jumps it level with Bay Bessie, behind Witchcraft and Red Rover, and immediately after the



last named seems to shoot out and take a strong lead.

“Oh, he cannot win!” Mabel exclaims in an agony of fear.

But there is reassurance in Sir Henry’s answer.

“Yes, yes, dear. He’s riding with splendid patience. See!”

What Mabel saw did not comfort her. The four neared the last fence and Red Rover’s jockey did just what she longed to see Clive do, take up his whip. If Heartsease would but struggle now he should have rest and peace and comfort to the end of his life, she thought. But to her surprise the crowd raised a cry “The favourite’s beat!” and Sir Thomas Aston behind her, uttered an exclamation of rage and disappointment. Red Rover was indeed first over the last fence, but at the moment of landing he was passed by Bay Bessie, with Heartsease at her girths. Crossley, sitting down in the saddle, was riding hard, and Red Rover kept his place for a few seconds, while Witchcraft dropped back, yet Crossley’s white jacket could never reach the scarlet or the blue. Scarlet plods on, but it is evident enough to the experienced eye that the lead of a neck is held on sufferance. When some fifty yards from the winning-post

Clive gives his mare her head, and without a touch of the whip he lands her an easy winner.

Mabel scarcely knows whether to laugh or cry, and is prevented from doing either by a whisper from Lady Selstead, which brings her to herself, and both ladies look down with surprise at Sir Thomas Aston, who certainly has a most remarkable way of acknowledging gratitude.

“My dear Sir Thomas, I’m awfully obliged to you for telling me about Heartsease. I’ve won a hundred,” a smiling youth gleefully exclaimed.

“Yes, awfully kind. I backed it too, and so did Harvey, I know,” a second youth, also smiling, added.

But the genial Sir Thomas turned from them with a scowl, and said something very fierce and disagreeable, which made them marvel exceedingly.

Congratulations and thanks were, indeed, showered from all sides upon the irate Aston for his tip, the speakers little knowing the motive which had made him speak, and how utterly the result which he had predicted was opposed to his anticipations. To pay and look pleasant are the duties of a loser. Sir Thomas could pay; looking pleasant was beyond him.

“And yet Mabel tells me you were badly

beaten in your trial?" Lady Selstead says, inquiringly, to Clive, when presently, with a delight which he takes ineffectual pains to conceal, he strolls up to Sir Henry's drag. "How strange that was!"

"Not very strange, Lady Selstead," Clive answers, with a smile; "I was beaten in my trial, it is true enough, but by one of the very best horses in the country. His owner was a great friend of my poor brother, and lent me the horse to try Heartsease with. When I tell you that the little brown horse which Mabel thought so poorly of is Opportunity, who is almost as good at even weights as the Grand National winner, you will see that my defeat was far from unpromising, for we made a bit of a fight of it. Opportunity is not much to look at, but he is a marvellous jumper, and can gallop at a wonderful pace as well."

Mabel did not quite understand. Sir Henry, however, though not a racing man, knew of Opportunity's reputation.

"Yes; that was good enough to go on, indeed, if you got near him in your trial," he said. "They say he would very nearly have won at Liverpool if he had gone for it. Your friend is lucky to have two such chasers in his stable as the winner and Opportunity."

“Yes, indeed,” Clive answered. “He could have won with either; but the little brown horse had 3lb. more to carry than the other.”

Some men in the regiment now approached the drag to offer congratulations, and hoped that Herries had backed his horse. Thanks to Sir Thomas Aston, this was all right, and Clive had won the comfortable sum of £3590.

It was not a pleasant meeting between Aston, Crossley, and Banks when the race was over. To Aston, indeed, it really mattered little, for he could afford the loss, though the thanks of “friends,” to whom he had prophesied Heartsease as the winner, were gall and wormwood to him. Crossley, however, brought himself to very nearly the end of his military career; but he had bought experience.

How a grand wedding at Selstead Towers transformed Mabel Roydon into the wife of Captain Herries before the Christmas festivities (kept up heartily in the good, old-fashioned county) were over, it is not necessary to write in detail. As regards the Regimental Cup, the most artfully-contrived machinations were Upset.

## ROOKS AND PIGEONS.



### CHAPTER I.

“’Osses? Capper? Capper don’t know no more about ’osses than——” Farmer Stubson paused, for he was not good at similes, and having vainly looked for inspiration into the mug of beer on the table before him, took a long drink, and contemptuously resumed his pipe.

“Oh! he don’t, don’t he?” Farmer Rutters rejoined. “Did he find the winner of the Southdown Cup? Yes, did he! Did he find the winner of the Wessex Stakes? Yes, did he! Was he right about Goodwood this year—right through a’most? Yes, was he!”

“And didn’t he give thirty pounds for old Chipps’ mare, when she was broken down, and any one could see with half an eye she wasn’t worth shoeing? Yes, didn’t he! I tell ’ee he don’t know no more about ’osses than——”

The simile hadn't come yet, and again Stubson took refuge in his beer mug.

“But I must say that he's been strangely lucky, has Mr. Capper,” Garrett, the weak-voiced, sharp-nosed little barber joined in. “Strangely lucky he's been in his betting. You are not here much, Mr. Stubson, and you have not seen the wonderful hits he's made. There was Port-hole for the Corinthian Stakes, that nobody thought had a chance, and he came in and won from us all round. Then there was May Blossom again; that was wonderful judgment, and it's quite sure that in general he's right. He may not understand horses in private life, but he does seem to know them that'll win races;” and the little man rubbed his hands deprecatingly, as if in apology for differing from the burly farmer.

Stubson grunted, and, emptying his mug, knocked upon the table for some one to come in and replenish it.

The scene was the parlour of the Fox and Hounds, Chipbury — called Chipry by the inhabitants—a good many more years ago than some people like to remember, and it was growing late in the afternoon of the day when the Royal Southern Steeplechase was being run at Birdingley, some thirty miles from Chipbury,

the farmers of which little town, though not of a particularly sporting character as sport was then understood, liked to risk a sovereign or two on the races run by horses of which they had some sort of knowledge. Most of the seven or eight occupants of the room had mildly speculated, incited thereto by a young farmer named Capper, who had, as a pretty general rule, got much the best of it.

News in those days did not travel very fast, and the result of the race came to Chipbury in rather a round-about way. The mail from Birdwood passed a village some three or four miles from the scene of this story, and Scarlet, the guard, brought information, which was given to a boy, waiting on a pony to ride over to Chipbury and let the sportsmen know what had happened.

“What’s the time? Five o’clock? Gets dark early—doesn’t it?” jolly old Driller said. “What’s that? I hear a horse—it can’t be the boy already.”

The little barber looked out of the window.

“It’s some of the redcoats coming,” he answered, peering out into the dusk. “Why, it’s young Mr. Swaynton from the Manor, and the young gentleman with him that’s stopping there on a visit. Dear me! They’re coming here!”

As soon as the words were spoken Swaynton and his friend pulled up at the door, and were received by old Lomax, the landlord, with the ceremony due to the squire's son and his guest. The soiled state of their pinks, breeches and boots showed that they had been hard at work in a deep-going country.

“ Good day, Lomax. My friend's horse has cast a shoe. Will you send him round to the forge, and we'll wait ? ” Swaynton said.

“ Yes, sir, directly. Will you step into my room, sir ? ”

“ Oh no, thanks, Lomax. We won't disturb you ; we'll go into the parlour. What will you have, Charlie ? A mug of ale for me, please—two mugs ; ” and the young men turned aside into the cheery room, the occupants of which were barely discernible for the smoke they raised.

“ My duty to you, sir. Glad to see you down again. Will you come to the fire, sir ? ” Driller said, moving his chair back, and displaying a sturdy pair of butcher boots, with a suitable continuation of cord breeches, showing that he too had been out with the hounds.

“ No, thanks, Driller. We're not cold ; we've been riding. I thought I saw you, but you left us early.”



“Yes, sir. Just joined in as you drew the cover back of my farm, and then came down to sit a bit and hear the news.”

“What is the news? It’s some time since I’ve been down, you know? What’s going on?” Swaynton asked.

“Well, sir, you know the Royal Southern Cup’s been run for to-day, and we’re waiting for the winner of that,” Rutters answered.

“What’s going to win it?” Swaynton’s friend, Charlie Summers, joined in.

“Why, sir, we’ve always fancied Ladybird, but a man that’s generally right—wonderful right he is, to be sure—has a fancy for Bombshell, and we’re afraid that Bombshell may have done it. News’ll come in a few minutes. Wonderful right he is,” Rutters added, for Stubson had grunted at the statement.

“And you’ve been backing Ladybird? I should think you are not far wrong. Bombshell is Fielding’s horse, isn’t it?” Swaynton continued, turning to his friend.

“Yes. I don’t fancy you have much to fear from Bombshell,” Summers said, turning to the group of smokers round the hospitable-looking hearth. “Lord Fielding told me last week he did not think his chance was a very good one if Ladybird and Earl Marshall stood up.”

“Who is the local prophet who’s generally right?” Swaynton asked.

“It’s Capper, sir; has the Quarry Farm; you’ll know, sir. It’s one of Lord Stanmore’s, away by the Three Oaks, on the London Road,” Rutters said.

“And where does he get his wonderful information from?” Swaynton inquired.

“That’s what we don’t know, sir; but right he is in general, sure enough. Sometimes he makes a mistake, like the rest of us. He didn’t hit off the Derby this year, and we got something back over the Chester Cup; but in general, specially in races down South, he’s wonderful right!” the little barber chimed in.

“And he don’t know no more about ’osses than—— Pooh!” Stubson added, with a look across at Rutters, giving up the search for a simile in a good round grunt of contempt.

“That’s the facts, though,” Rutters exclaimed, taking up his friend’s challenge. “How does it fall out? Scarce a day of a big race passes but in comes Capper. ‘Well,’ he says, ‘what about the Cup, or the Stakes?’ ‘So-and-so,’ we say. ‘Why shouldn’t Bombshell (or what it might be) win? That’s the one I shall back, and I’ll hold him against any other, or I’ll take three to one (or whatever it is) against him.’

Well, it doesn't often happen that he's wrong, though he sometimes may be."

"He's a young scamp, a young rascal, that's what he is! and if Lomax lets that darter o' his take up with the like o' Capper, I'm done with him," Stubson burst out. "What did he do for Frank Parker—as good a lad as ever stepped? He won his money, and he led him on till the lad hadn't a shilling to bless himself with, and now he's trying for the lad's sweetheart. Capper's a——"

"Be quiet, can't you?" Stubson's neighbour muttered, as pretty little Kitty Lomax bustled into the room with a tray of mugs. "Don't let the girl hear."

Stubson's unusual eloquence resolved itself into grunts again, and Kitty, whose eyes were less bright and her cheeks less rosy than of yore, went with rather a sad smile about her work, and left the room.

"I thought it was a match between Frank Parker and Miss Kitty," Swaynton said. "Has it gone wrong?"

"Wrong as it can be!" Stubson replied, "and it's Capper that's done it. It was him that led Frank Parker on, telling him he'd show him how to make his three hundred pounds into three thousand, and now the lad's ruined, and

it's strange to me if Capper isn't the richer for it. No! I won't hush, I'll say what I think, and show me the man that'll stop me! It's him as done it, and Lomax says he'll have no beggars round his daughter, and wants to force Capper on the girl that hates the sight of him. No, I don't care; I will speak!"

The old farmer, who had got very red in the face with excitement, puffed hard at his pipe, oblivious of the fact that it had gone out. Swaynton, who was near the candle, handed him a spill, and for a moment there was silence in the room.

"So Mr. Capper is thriving and poor Frank Parker has come to grief? I'm sorry to hear it. How do you suppose Capper gets his information?"

"We can't for the life of us make it out," the little barber answered. "It's the strangest thing that ever was known, the way he's always right. As soon as ever the race is run he seems to know what's won it—that's another strange thing about it. It's only at the last minute, like, that he makes up his mind, and comes in—always on the afternoon of the day—two or three hours before the news reaches us—he comes in, and he's got it."

"I suppose there isn't time for a man to

ride the distance from the course?" Summers asked.

"No; oh no! Goodwood is forty miles away, Birdingley is nigh on thirty; no horse could do it," the little barber answered, half delighting in the mystery, and not anxious for any simple explanation.

Summers smiled, and quietly asked, "Is he a pigeon fancier? A bird, perhaps, might bring the news if a horse could not?"

But heads were shaken at the idea.

"Not he! That's not it. He couldn't train pigeons to fly and we know nothing about it. We should see them about the place, sure enough. It's out of the way, the farm is, but not far enough out for him to try that without us knowing of it. There isn't a pigeon on the farm, barring a wild one, perhaps, in a tree," answered Rutters, who had a half-sneaking sort of regard for Capper's cleverness in spite of his bad behaviour to Frank Parker and his persecution of Kitty Lomax.

"Well, I fancy he's wrong to-day. Ladybird or Earl Marshall seem to have the race between them. What does he go for—Bombshell?"

"Yes, that's his choice; and there's the pony. Now we shall know?" the barber cried.

The quick trot of a pony ceased at the door.

A boy jumped off, and brought into the room a scrap of folded paper, which he gave to Rutters.

“Now we shall see who’s right!” he said, as he opened it. His countenance fell as he read the words. “He’s done it again! There it is, sure enough. ‘Royal Southern Steeplechase.—Bombshell, 1; Ladybird, 2; The Pilot, 3.’”

## CHAPTER II.

CHRISTMAS came and went. Spring and summer followed its example without making very much change in the position of affairs in Chipbury. The farmers grumbled as much at that time as they do now; it is the prerogative of the farmer to grumble; but there was less cause for complaint then than there is at the present day. Little Garrett had discovered an infallible system for winning on the turf, and had very nearly succeeded in breaking himself by following it, owing, of course, to some most unhappy mischance that never could occur again. Capper had prospered so much that men grew shy of betting with him, and though sometimes he made a bad shot on one horse in a race, it was usually found

he more than saved himself on the winner; but the secret of his luck, if secret there were, no one had penetrated.

His love affairs did not succeed, in spite of old Lomax's aid; for Kitty disdained Capper, and though poor Frank Parker was in a bad way, from which there seemed little chance of his emerging, Kitty in her heart remained faithful, notwithstanding that the lovers never met; for dearly as Frank loved Kitty, now that things had gone wrong with him, and he saw no prospect of righting them, he did not feel justified in asking Kitty to bind herself to his bad luck.

As Stubson had truly said, it was Capper who had ruined Frank. Nothing was easier, according to Capper's showing, than to make ten pounds into fifty on the turf. He had not done so himself at this period owing to just such another totally unprecedented run of bad luck as that which had upset the little barber's system. But it was easy all the same, he declared; and Frank, who was desperately anxious to get on in the world, to take a farm and make a home for Kitty, listened and credited what he heard. Capper was to advise and share profits; but the beginning of the campaign was not successful, the continuation was no better—for Frank, at any rate—and the remainder of his little fortune

was devoted to that terribly difficult business, getting the lost money back.

When things had looked prosperously for Frank, old Lomax had been willing enough to see him at the Fox and Hounds; but the old man had no notion, he declared, of a fool who couldn't keep his money when he had got it. So cold words and snubs had been all the consolation Frank received for his losses, and he sauntered miserably about the village, earning a pound when he could, and living hardly enough.

It happened that young Swaynton had been at the Goodwood Cup this year himself, but the next day he was at Chipbury, and had seen Capper bring off another *coup*, which had made Rutters, who believed that for once he had a certainty, whistle with dismal emphasis, and had inflicted another blow on Garrett's system.

In time the Royal Southern Steeplechase day came round again, and was of all the more interest to Chipbury because a local magnate, the Earl of Spiretown, owned one of the favourites, Star of the West. Between this mare, Jupiter, and Primrose the race was supposed to rest, and as it was getting on towards five o'clock in the afternoon, a group, very similar in its constitution to that which



had assembled the previous year, were gathered together in the parlour of the Fox and Hounds.

Poor little Kitty had evidently been having a rough time of it, for her father had been talking to her on the subject of Capper's claims, in the reverse of an amiable fashion, and her eyes were red, the twitching of her lips giving additional evidence of the reason why.

Stubson was in his usual corner, declaring for Star of the West, and abusing Primrose.

"He can't gallop no faster than a——" Again the old farmer was aground for a simile, a difficulty which he got over in his accustomed style.

Suddenly the sound of a horse's feet galloping on the grass by the roadside struck the ears of the assembled company, and little Garrett was up in a moment to see what had happened and who was coming.

"Why, it's young Mr. Swaynton! Here he comes," he exclaimed, as Swaynton pulled up at the door and handed his mount to the care of the ostler who clumped round from the stable-yard.

"I thought perhaps you would have gone to the Cross Roads to-day, sir," Rutters said. "It's too far for me."

"No, I have not been hunting to-day. I've

been—on business,” Swaynton said, hesitating for a moment, and then cutting his explanation short. “Any news to-day?”

“No, sir. We’re waiting to hear about the Steeplechase; but the news can’t reach us for a good hour and a half.”

“What’s to win?” Swaynton asked. “What do you think about it, Stubson?”

“Here’s the man that can make a good guess at it, I’ll lay,” Garrett cried suddenly. “Here’s Capper.”

And a tax-cart pulling up at the door, Capper descended, leaving the driver to continue on his way.

Stubson, who hated Capper, grunted with angry contempt, but most of the others looked with some interest on the young man who came in.

Capper was some two or three and thirty, with black hair, deeply-set eyes close together, and a rather saturnine expression of face, most disagreeable to see, perhaps, when the sneering smile, which was a characteristic expression, came to his thin lips.

“Well, I can guess what you’re talking about,” Capper began.

“I dare say you can; and I dare say you can guess something else better than we



"HERE'S THE MAN THAT CAN MAKE A GOOD GUESS AT IT."



can," Smithers, a man of about Capper's age, rejoined.

"Aye, Capper, what do you think about it this time? Star of the West for ever, eh?" Rutters exclaimed.

"I'm not quite so sure about Star of the West," Capper answered. "I don't see what he's done that's so wonderful after all. His trial with May Queen wasn't such a startler, even if what they say is true. I'm not so sweet on her myself."

Swaynton, who had been noting what took place quietly, but with some interest, observed as he lit a fresh cigar, "May Queen is a very good mare, I fancy."

"And so's Jupiter a good horse! Why should not Jupiter win? Or Primrose?—not very speedy, but slow and sure. I should say Jupiter myself," Capper said.

"I almost think that I should be inclined to say Star of the West. Burton rides, and that's in her favour. Jupiter, I should say, was not the horse to travel successfully over that difficult country," Swaynton urged.

"Well, sir, are you ready to back your opinion? That's the way to show a man's in earnest. I'm always ready to back mine, and that's Jupiter. Will you do anything about it,

sir?" Capper asked. "I'll take Jupiter against Star of the West."

"I'm not so fond of the Star, but I certainly don't think Jupiter can win," Swaynton answered, "though very likely he started favourite."

"It was six to four against him yesterday. Will you lay it, sir? In tens, if you like," Capper demanded.

"I've no objection—60 to 40?" Swaynton quietly answered.

Capper's eyes gleamed as a sudden thought struck him.

"In hundreds, if you like," he cried, leaning forward over the table towards Swaynton; and the bare mention of such a bet drew amazement from the assembly.

"Don't do it, sir, don't do it! You'll lose your money! Oh, dear! oh, dear!" little Garrett exclaimed.

"Why not? Hold your tongue! The gentleman can take care of himself without your help, I suppose," Capper answered in angry excitement.

"Why not? Because you ain't worth it," Stubson burst out. "That's why not."

"Then, Mr. Stubson, since you're so wise, we'll have it money down. As it happens, I am worth it, and in the bank too, and something

more besides, perhaps. Here, Lomax, some pen and ink! Let's have this down, and done with. Six hundred to four hundred against Jupiter, you bet, and I'll lay you a hundred even on Jupiter against Star of the West?"

"If you care to do it. Very well!" Swaynton replied; and with a sneering glance at Stubson, Capper drew from his pocket-book a folded blank cheque, and signing it for the sum he had risked, handed it to Lomax's custody.

Swaynton, as the only son of a wealthy baronet, was too well known to leave any doubt as to his ability to pay this, for Chipbury, unprecedented bet.

"You seem more cocksure about it than ever to-day, and yet I'm inclined to have a bet on, for I think Mr. Swaynton's a good judge. I've lost five-and-twenty pound to you this year; and, dang it! I'll go for man or mouse. I'll take Star of the West against Jupiter!" Rutters cried.

"For five and twenty? Done with you," Capper said, booking the bet with a trembling hand, which almost prevented him from writing.

"And I should like to be in the same boat with you, gentlemen," little Garrett cried. "Oh, dear, dear! I don't know whether I ought to, and it's dead against the system. It's the

third favourite I've got to back this time, and I don't know which that is. Say a couple of pounds—say three—no, let's make it five. Oh, dear, dear me! Yes, let's make it five. Oh, dear!" and the little man wiped his forehead, to which excitement had brought perspiration. "You can't be always right!" he added.

"No; but I think I'm right this time," Capper answered, gulping down a glass of brandy which he had ordered, and lighting a cigar at the candle near him. "Jupiter's the horse I'm for to-day."

At this moment an unexpected occurrence took place. Frank Parker opened the door and walked in, amidst a chorus of welcome and wonder, for the young fellow had been wonderfully popular, and his cheery face—not so cheery now as it used to be—had been much missed. Swaynton made room for him, however, and it was evident, indeed, that he had been expecting Frank. He and Capper exchanged a very curt nod of acknowledgment, for there had been no open quarrel between them; and then Frank had to explain where he had been and what he had been doing; and last, but not least, what he would take to drink. But drink usually implied the summoning of Kitty, and much as he wanted to see her, he yet somehow or other hoped that



she would not come in, and contented himself with a pull out of Stubson's heartily proffered mug.

"Dear, dear me! If that Star of the West don't win—and Jupiter does!" poor Garrett exclaimed. "I half wish I hadn't done it! It's very foolish, and yet I should be sorry if I hadn't. The boy 'll be here soon. I wonder what he'll bring!"

"Mr. Capper has a very strong fancy for Jupiter, Parker, and the rest of us prefer Star of the West's chance," Swaynton explained.

"Yes, sir; I've given it all up myself. It didn't pay, I found," Frank said, with a sigh.

And there was silence in the room for a few moments, Swaynton smoking quietly, Frank gazing thoughtfully into the fire, and Capper looking fixedly at the pocket-book in which he had inscribed the bets, while Garrett went out to the door to hear the first sound of the pony's hoofs. And he had not long to wait. Down the road the hoofs came tapping, the boy pulled up at the door, and in another moment the expected paper was in Rutters's hand.

"Now we shall know our fate. Oh, dear! oh, dear! If it should be Jupiter!" Garrett cried in an agony of excitement.

The others leaned forward, and even Swaynton took the cigar from his mouth as Rutters tore open the important missive.

“We’re right, hurrah!” he cried. “‘Star of the West, 1; Dairymaid, 2; Primrose, 3. Stalker, The Buck, Vixen, Jupiter, His Grace, and Merry Heart also ran.’”

Capper turned deadly white, and with a husky voice he cried—

“It can’t be! It *can’t* be, I tell you!”

“I fail to see the impossibility, Mr. Capper; in fact, it’s precisely what I expected. I never believed Jupiter could stay over that severe course,” Swaynton quietly rejoined.

“I expect you’ll find it right enough, Capper. Scarlet isn’t likely to have made a mistake,” said Rutters.

Grinding out an oath between his teeth, Capper burst out of the room, leaving the company there in a high state of delight. At length they had their revenge, and even Swaynton’s face had a quiet smile of elation as he said to Frank Parker, “You see the luck changes at last if you only wait long enough.”

\* \* \* \*

A day or two afterwards, when dinner was over at the Hall, the ladies had left, and the

men, quitting their places, had pulled their chairs round a little table drawn up before the huge fireplace, and decorated with decanters containing a Madeira the like of which was not to be bought for money, young Swaynton explained the mystery, for the story, without the explanation, was already known.

“I’ll tell you how it came about. It was you, Charlie,” he said to Summers, “who put me on the track, though I was put off it again when the men said that no pigeons could be trained at Capper’s farm without its being known to the village. That’s true enough; but pigeons were at the bottom of the secret all the same. It happens, though you mayn’t know it, that the Three Oaks on the London Road, close to Capper’s farm, are on the direct road from Goodwood and Birdingley to Spirebury; and as soon as a big race was run at either of these meetings a pigeon was flown, with the name of the winner tied round its leg, to an agency kept at Spirebury by Hunter, whom some of us know. I happened to hear some time ago—a couple of years, I suppose it must be—that very often Hunter’s birds, after travelling well enough for several years, had grown uncertain. Very often they did not arrive at all, and of late he has always had a couple sent. As a rule, after big races

only one arrived ; and when I heard of Capper's mysterious faculty for finding winners—always, as the little barber said, on the afternoon of the race—my suspicions were aroused.

“On the afternoon of a day in the Goodwood week I discovered the plot. I sent my man Harvey to watch Capper's farm. Capper was posted on a ladder by the chimney, his brother was in a big tree not far off, and another fellow was sitting astride of a tree nearer the road. Suddenly the brother discharged his gun, and down came a pigeon. He slid down, his brother after him ; they picked up the bird, examined it, and in a minute were in their cart driving down to the Fox and Hounds, where Capper declared his “fancy” and rooked his friends. The wretched bird had to run the gauntlet of three guns, and the chances were one of them would account for him.”

“Still I don't quite see——” one of the guests broke in.

“But you will see in a moment,” Swaynton continued. “I told Hunter how things were, and begged him, after the big steeplechase, to send his birds as usual, with the wrong name on the tissue paper. He promised to do so, and said, moreover, that he would send birds peculiarly marked, in order that the little scheme

might be additionally sure. The Cappers and their man were posted as usual on the day. I was watching——”

“I scarcely like that!” old Sir Herbert interrupted, shaking his head. But his son was not convinced that he had done ill.

“My dear father, you must fight a rascal like this with his own weapons,” he replied. “However, I was watching, and I’m not ashamed of it, for Capper has ruined the most decent young fellow in the village, and has done much harm besides. I waited; presently the first gun went off, but the pigeon was out of range; he wheeled, however, and gave the second gun a better chance. Down he came. It was one of the birds marked as Hunter had explained it would be. I got on my horse and galloped to the Fox and Hounds. Capper arrived soon after, and was so confident about Jupiter’s win that I knew, whatever else had won, it could not be Jupiter. You know the rest. I bet enough to get back for Frank Parker the money out of which, in a way I need not explain at present, Capper had swindled him. I have returned him the money, and my father has put him into a farm; so that, besides putting an end to Mr. Capper’s source of income, we have rescued pretty Kitty Lomax from a

blackguard. That's the story. I have let my friend Capper know that his game is found out; he will not try it again, and he is painfully convinced of the fact that sometimes the pigeons turn the tables on the rooks."

## THE SPOTTED HORSE'S STORY.\*

*A CHRISTMAS COMEDY.*

“SEEN life, indeed?” said the Spotted Horse. “I should rather think so! You surely did not imagine that I had passed my entire existence in surveying humanity from a toy-shop window? I might make quite a pastoral poem about my youth: the pleasant, richly daisied summer fields in which I used to canter; the sweet, juicy grass, and bright purple clover; the warm straw-yard where I wintered—for I was well treated then, as became one with such blood in his veins as ran in mine. Ah, those were the days! before the racket and bustle of life began, when I had no care or anxiety, and, as I remember hearing some one sing, ‘Fillies was my only joy!’—not, grammatical, perhaps,

\* “The Spotted Horse’s Story” was one of a collection of tales written by Messrs. F. C. Burnand, G. A. Sala, the late Henry Kingsley, Joseph Hatton, Sir Charles Young, etc., to make up a Christmas number; the idea being that a number of toys fortuitously brought together related their histories.

but eminently expressive of my feelings on the subject. I was a very different-looking animal then, I can tell you. I had a coat to be proud of, and a groom who used to brush and smooth it, until it shone like—no, not like satin; for when did you ever see satin with the glossy sheen of a thorough-bred horse's coat? Shall I tell you about my first race at Newmarket? Jack Travers, a great friend of mine, was to ride, and lots depended on his winning, for his master had put a pony on for him, and if he pulled it off he would be able to marry pretty little Susan, the trainer's daughter. That was a great day when first I saw the racecourse lined on each side by a dense throng of unknown faces; and I must confess to having felt just a little bit scared at first; but when I heard Jack's encouraging voice, and felt his light hand on the bridle, I knew it was all right. Ah, how well we know the touch of a rider's hand on the reins, and the feel of his legs against our sides! Yes, he got his money and his wife—won in a canter by three lengths. Did I run for the Derby? No. I was entered, and backed at the long odds; but a splint began to show, and—and then my painful recollections commence. A little hunting, a little steeplechasing—I shall never forget the day I first broke down. Then I was patched



up, did a season in town—a cab—an omnibus—then my joints began by degrees to stiffen, until it was not a very great transformation when I awoke one morning after a long, strange dream to find that—— But let me draw a veil over these reflections. This is Christmas time, and you don't want to be bored with the depressing recollections of an old worn-out horse that has seen better days, and is obliged to come to town to be carpentered. There's lots to tell; but the fact is, I'm not, as Dr. Darwin is, very good at the 'development of speeches;' but—yes! I have it! There's an old manuscript somewhere in the box, containing an account of an incident in which I played rather a prominent part. Yes, there it is! The story is better told than I could tell, so here goes:—

December has recurred so often since the period at which December was first invented, that I do not propose to enter into a detailed account of its usual characteristics. Let me rather crave permission to introduce the family circle assembled in the breakfast-room of Verington Lodge. My father sits at the head of the table reading his letters, and making comments upon them, according to his habit, in a series of very expressive grunts. My dear mother faces

him, also engaged with her correspondence in the intervals of supplying large quantities of tea to an elderly gentleman on her right, a cousin of hers, whom we call Uncle John, and whose chief characteristic is his peculiar faculty for rendering himself miraculously unpleasant by saying the most annoying things in the most hearty and jovial tone of voice. Matilda and Jane, two young ladies connected with the family, are also present. Matilda wears a double eye-glass, through which she watches for and tries to see Uncle John's *facetiæ*: she is rather slow at catching them, but, having thoroughly realized one, she raises her head, and emits a short, sharp laugh, which it distresses me to hear. Jane had no special characteristic, except a strong propensity for blushing; and she looks down at her plate, and indulges herself at frequent intervals.

It is with some diffidence that I refer to the other occupant of the room. He—for to use the third person in some degree takes off the appearance of egotism from which my natural modesty shrinks—is a young man of some four and twenty years of age, who has now risen from the table and leans against the mantel-piece. His figure is tall and slight, his face pale, and fringed with an incipient growth, which holds out promise of

eventual whiskers. His chief characteristic has been called extreme mildness.

It is my mother who speaks.

“You really ought to go, Cecil; and I'm sure it is very kind indeed of the squire to write as he does, and ask you to Welwyn Grange. He is one of your father's oldest friends, and we are anxious that you should make his acquaintance.”

“Of course he ought to go,” said Uncle John; “see something of the world, and get a wife to stir him up.”

“I have yet to learn,” I replied, “that to ‘stir up’ her husband is among the duties of a wife; and I hope that no wife of mine would ever——”

“No wife of yours!” he broke in. “Why, how many wives does the boy want to have? He's a regular Shah of Persia! I'm ashamed of you, Cecil. But it's always the way with those mild-looking ones!”

Jane eagerly seizes the opportunity of blushing deeply.

“Indeed, I wish he would think of marrying and settling down,” says my mother fondly.

“He'll *think* about it, right enough,” Uncle John replies. “It's the pluck to carry it through that's wanting in his case. Do you think, now, that you could say ‘Bo’ to a goose, ‘if it were

necessary to address that unmeaning monosyllable to the bird in question? ”

Matilda gives vent to her usual modicum of mirth.

“The set at the squire’s is not one with which I should be at all in accord, my dear mother,” I explained. “They think of nothing there but hunting and racing, and other amusements in which I could take no part. I have met Hugh Welwyn, and know his tastes and habits.”

“Hunting! If you go in for that, you’ll have some practical illustrations of your favourite ‘Diversions of Purley,’ ” said Uncle John, adding something about getting “up early” in the morning.

Matilda saw it at once, and acted accordingly.

“I should certainly like him to go,” my mother remarked. “He has been out so little; and it is a great pity, when he possesses every requisite for social success—an extended knowledge of books—he is ready of conversation—a finished singer——”

“Yes, I much prefer his singing when he’s *finished*,” interpolated my dear uncle. But I ignored the interruption.

“One reason why I wished to be at home

during Christmas week was because I believe Professor Jerkins is coming to stay with our doctor ; and I am anxious that he should look over my specimens and read the manuscript of my new pamphlet," I said, wavering between a love of home and a desire to carry out the maternal wishes.

"I don't expect the professor will be down here," my uncle said, looking up from the country paper before him ; "and that leads me to think that you may have formed an incorrect idea of society at Welwyn Grange. I believe the professor will be down there next week."

"To lecture at the Mechanics' Institute, I presume?" I asked. "He spoke of doing so some time since."

"I don't know what he's going for ; but I am sure I've heard that he is to be at Welwyn," my uncle answered.

My father also expressed a wish that I should go ; and as Uncle John, without any exertion or personal inconvenience, could have made me thoroughly uncomfortable during the long stay which he proposed to make, a letter was despatched accepting the invitation, and I began to make preparations for departure.

It was on the 20th of December that I left home, and arrived in due course at Welwyn

Grange about seven o'clock, little thinking of the ordeal through which I had to pass before quitting the house. The squire came into the hall to receive me.

“Cecil, my dear boy, I am delighted to see you at last, and welcome you to the Grange!” he said, in the kindest possible manner. “I’m sorry that Hugh won’t be down; but he can’t help it, of course. All the men are hunting to-day, but they’ll be back very soon, and I hope you will find some friends amongst them. We dine at eight, so perhaps you’d like to see your room?”

I thought my finding friends was an exceedingly improbable contingency, but gladly hastened upstairs to dress as quickly as possible. It did not take long to complete my toilet; and on descending I found that the room had only one occupant, a young lady—if those prosaic words can lead to any description of the vision of loveliness which encountered my admiring eyes. Venus Aphrodite in sea-green muslin! Her face—but how can I hope even faintly to describe her, or the smile with which she graciously acknowledged my bow of salutation? I was searching for that right expression which is always so very difficult to find just at the moment when you want it most, when the squire entered the room, followed by several of

his guests. He addressed my divinity as Lucy, and asked if she had enjoyed her drive; but before he had time to introduce me, the announcement of dinner sent us trooping to the dining-room.

It would take too much space to give a detailed list of the party seated round the table. I had taken down a lady with abundant black hair and superabundant eyebrows, who seemed much surprised at my inability to furnish her with the information she sought upon a variety of topics, chiefly of an equestrian or sporting nature. On my other side was a sister of the squire's, a lady of uncertain age, abrupt habits, and Amazonian proportions, who being copiously decked with "bugles" and large beads of other varieties, rattled loudly whenever she turned to speak to me, as she did with much decision at frequent intervals. I am a nervous man. If people jerk they startle me, and the calm enjoyment of my dinner was seriously interfered with.

Nearly opposite to me was the divine Lucy, seated next to a good-natured-looking young man whose name I ascertained to be Forester; but amongst all the others there was none that I knew. The conversation, too, was for the most part as strange to me as the guests, the ladies taking an interest in matters of which I

was wholly ignorant; but what surprised me most was the way in which I was constantly begged, in terms which conveyed no definite images to my mind, to give information on subjects of which I had not the vaguest knowledge—my utter inability to answer apparently causing much surprise to my interrogators. Now and then, however, the squire made a comparatively intelligible remark, and a short, quick-eyed little man at the other end of the table occasionally spoke of a matter with which I had some acquaintance.

“Why do I call them ‘Female Failures?’” he said. “Because that is the best title I can think of to describe the class about which we are speaking. Depend upon it, whenever a woman tries to take the place of a man, and adopt the cant about ‘woman’s rights’—by which she means woman’s wrongs—it is a pretty sure sign that she has good reason to despair of holding her own with her own sex. As for a definition of the word ‘lady’—I prefer the term ‘gentlewoman’ myself—I should say, ‘a refined specimen of the superior variety of the human race.’”

“It is a singular fact with regard to the superiority of the female,” I gallantly added—glad to show that there were some subjects about



which I knew something—"that a scientific person who has recently experimented upon large numbers of *Papilio asterias*, and other sorts of butterflies, concludes that the *larvæ*, if underfed, are almost sure to develop into males, whereas if they are freely fed, they are certain to become females." The remark caused general attention to be directed to me; but I am quite at a loss to understand why two young gentlemen should have designated it "awfully good," and accepted it as a joke. "Even in oysters," I continued, "conchologists have, I believe, decided that the female is the larger and plumper. You are, of course, aware, by the way, that our native oysters are the best of all. Catullus terms the Hellespont *cæteris ostreosior oris*, but there can be no doubt that his countrymen gave our breeds a very decided preference."

I could in no wise account for the looks of blank astonishment which were levelled at me throughout the remainder of the meal, nor could I tell what induced Captain Pakenham, a young Hussar, to take the vacant chair by my side when the ladies had retired, and to slap me on the back with a vigour which brought tears to my eyes, and made me swallow a large piece of preserved ginger with dangerous suddenness.

"What *are* you driving at, old fellow?" he

asked in a tone of mystification.—“ You know my brother, Tom Pakenham, very well, I believe—indeed, I thought I’d met you myself at Stockbridge.—What’s the meaning of all this lark about the oysters and the butterflies, and the other fellow—Ca—what’s his name? Is it a wily conundrum, or something out of Æsop’s fables, or what? ”

I was silent, not at all understanding his hilarity.

“ What’s your little game? ” he continued.

“ I’m rather fond of chess,” I answered, thinking that he might not care for billiards, about which some of the others were talking. “ Do you play? ”

He gazed at me for a moment, and then began a conversation with his neighbour on a fresh subject, for I overheard casual sentences about some one who was “ awfully cropped at the Warwick Meeting—poor devil! seems quite to have lost his head sometimes.”

I had learned during dinner that the Professor was really expected, though I much wondered what could induce him to join such a party; and as I was not interested in some steeplechases which were to take place next day, I seized the earliest opportunity of making my way to the drawing-room.

On the celerity with which the evening glided by; on the manner in which my divinity enraptured me by her singing; and on the happiness I enjoyed as we turned over a book of prints together, I will not dilate. The squire's sister seemed less metallic, and everything brighter; and when I had retired to my room it was with the certainty that I should eternally adore Lucy, whose presence compensated ten thousand times for any slight drawbacks I might have to experience from uncongenial companions or any other cause.

As I descended the stairs next morning I found that the squire was awaiting me at the bottom.

“You'll want to be quiet this morning, Cecil, I know,” he said “and I thought that you and Forester and Pakenham would prefer breakfasting together in the Oak-room, and getting off in good time. Dacre is going too, by-the-way. He rides his own mare in the Handicap Sweepstakes.”

I did not catch the drift of his speech, and expressed my inability to do so.

“They will want to look over the course, you know, and I thought that you would like to accompany them,” he explained; and I was glad to consent, having taken rather a fancy to Forester.

We soon disposed of breakfast, and after getting into a dogcart, an hour's travelling brought us to the scene of action, where we dismounted and started off to walk over the ground, which was marked out by white flags stuck in the hedges.

“Good hunting fences, they seem,” Pakenham said, as we scrambled through a huge bush which it seemed impossible to me that any man could go at and live to tell the tale, supposing his horse were weak-minded enough to try it. “That's all right! This is rather nasty—awkward drop—don't you think so?” he asked me as we came to a large timber barricade.

I replied that I did not suppose a foot or so more or less made much difference in the long run.

“Not to you, perhaps,” he said.

And I agreed with him; for beyond a probable intensification of the chilly feeling, which always runs down my back when I see people doing anything exceptionally rash, I was not particularly interested. I only knew that I would cheerfully have settled down and dreamed away existence in the meadow where we stood, if there had been no other way of making an exit than jumping those posts and rails. The way in which one becomes habituated to strange

positions is indeed wonderful. How I should have accepted such an anecdote the day before I do not know, but now I only smiled feebly at the story which Packenham related of his brother's horse, Thunderbolt, whose approaching defeat the narrator had foreseen on a recent occasion by a proceeding on the animal's part which seemed to me simply marvellous. "We *did* get over the water-jump," Packenham explained; "*but then he dropped his hind legs*, and I felt that he was done with for that journey at any rate." That he was not done with for all subsequent journeys—except the long one to the grave—seemed to me a most valuable record of the progress of veterinary science.

"Over the bank, and then to the left down the hill, and round here to the brook," Forester continued.

And Dacre, a soft little man with flaxen hair and blue eyes, who looked more suitable for a Shetland pony than a racehorse, feebly expressed an opinion that the stream was a great deal too big, and he really didn't see how he was to get over more than half of it at a time.

"It is a big place," Packenham admitted. "It's what poor C—— used to say was 'like a family vault—when you once get in, you don't get out again in a hurry.'"

“More timber,” he continued, as we went on; “five feet of it, I should think.—You take it coolly enough,” he said, turning to me; “but it’s all the same to you, I suppose! Why, Tom says that the park palings you jumped at Heythorp was over six.”

I did not ask whether Tom was at present an inmate of Colney Hatch or Hanwell, or whether he was being treated privately for what must have been an extremely acute case of mania, unless Tom was given over to an unparalleled perversion of the truth; for it occurred to me that this was probably another of those technical jokes couched in foreign phraseology, so many of which had been lost upon me during the morning; and I only tried to smile as intelligently as I could while Packenham took another rather searching survey of my features before we moved on to inspect the remaining fences.

I was quite resigned by this time, and had hardly any astonishment left for Dacre’s story about a nasty bullfinch he had once come upon suddenly when out hunting, whose unaccountable proceedings had caused a series of disasters which placed the bird before me in an entirely new light. A fierce bullfinch perched upon a fence and setting a whole hunt at defiance

seemed rather a subject for a nightmare than for the garish light of day.

“Over the hurdle into the racecourse, and finish. It will be a good meeting; look how quickly the people are arriving, and there’s our carriage—just opposite the stand,” Pakenham said. “It’s time for us to dress for the Handicap, though, Dacre,” he added, looking at his watch. “See you fellows again presently;” and they turned aside, while Forester and I made our way up the course to join our party, prominent amongst which I was rejoiced to see Lucy, her sky-blue bonnet contrasting pleasantly with the stern-looking head-gear of her companion, the squire’s sister.

To be balanced precariously on one leg upon the tire of a wheel is not at all a comfortable position under ordinary circumstances; but as the carriage was full, and hung high, it was the best point of vantage I could find for talking to Lucy, and from there I saw the first race won by an animal which the squire pointed out to me as having “good hocks right under him”—a position in which I imagined all hocks, good, bad, or indifferent, might invariably be found by people who knew where to look for them and could derive any pleasure from the inspection—and “good arms,” a statement for which I was not prepared.

“It’s almost time to get ready. Will you come with me?” Forester said, as they began to clear the course for the second race.

My divinity had gone off to the stand with a number of the party while I was talking to the squire, and, not unwilling to penetrate into the mysteries of a racecourse, I strolled away with Forester.

Just as we reached the second fence, a hedge with a small ditch on each side of it, Dacre, attired in a sky-blue jacket, rode out of a shed near the track where his horse had been saddled. He cantered up, and as I gazed with astonishment at his easy fashion of managing the fidgety little mare he bestrode, the animal rose at the fence, just skimmed the top twigs and landed lightly near to us: her rider scarcely swinging in the saddle, and turning his head, almost before his mare’s feet touched the ground, towards a crowd which had assembled round a large, powerful, hot-looking, chestnut horse, which had rather upset the equanimity of his surroundings by launching out a mighty kick with his enormous hind legs.

“He is a beauty, a real beauty; and they say as good as he looks—though *you* know more about that than any one else, I suppose,” Forester remarked.



“Who is a beauty?” I inquired, not at all understanding the position.

“Why, the Professor,” he answered. “Haven’t you been to see him?”

“I have been to see him very often,” I replied. “He’s a great friend of mine, and I stay with him a good deal; but I’m surprised to hear you call him a beauty. He’s so bald, and though he says that the blue spectacles assist his sight, I don’t think they are, æsthetically, a favourable addition to his appearance.”

Forester appeared to be quite staggered.

“Blue spectacles and a bald head! My dear fellow, are you dreaming?” and he burst out laughing. “Excuse me,” he continued, “but the idea of a racehorse with blue spectacles and a bald head is *too* delicious!”

At this moment we were joined by Pakenham and Dacre.

“Mr. Forester,” I said with solemnity, “will you do me the great favour of explaining what you mean?”

“What *I* mean! My dear fellow, what do *you* mean? There’s your horse waiting for you—you’ve surely ridden him often enough before, haven’t you? You spoke of him familiarly enough last night, at any rate—and we shall be late if we don’t go and weigh out.”

“May I earnestly entreat you to answer me one question, Mr. Forester?” I said. “For whom do you take me for?”

“Why, for Charlie Cecil of the 14th, who won the Grand Annual at Chasingford last week, and who has come down here to ride Hugh Welwyn’s horse, the Professor, for the Welwyn Cup,” he replied.

I never knew to what an extent cold perspiration could pour down one’s back until that moment.

“Then there is a ghastly error somewhere,” I answered. “My name is Cecil Vernington. I never heard of the Grand Annual, nor of Chasingford; and the gentleman for whom I was asking last night is not a horse at all, but Gustavus Jerkins, Professor of Palæontology.”

Forester appeared wonder-stricken, and Dacre smiled; and I began to understand another of Uncle John’s jokes.

“I see now,” said Packenham, after a roar of laughter more hearty than polite. “I wondered where Charlie Cecil had been picking up all that about Catullus and the rest of it—I thought Catullus was a horse, and couldn’t remember where he’d run. What a lark! But, I say, what the deuce is to be done? You must ride

him now, at any rate, for we certainly can't get any one else?"

"It is quite impossible that I can ride a race, Captain Packenham," I replied. "I never did such a thing in my life. There can surely be no difficulty in finding a rider amongst the party—you, or Mr. Dacre?"

"We both have mounts, and so has Forester, and there's not another man at the Grange who can ride the weight."

"Hire a man—a jockey," I suggested.

"Impossible; professionals can't ride for the Cup," he answered.

"I don't see any difficulty about riding," Dacre said. "What's to prevent you? There's your horse, and the weight's all right, and you've been over the ground."

"Miss Lucy will break her heart," Packenham continued; "she said she would if you didn't win, and has been plunging on you to a ruinous extent: bales of gloves she's got on, and if you don't pull them off for her she'll never forgive you. I think that you've got a glorious opportunity. The Professor's an awfully easy horse to ride—you have nothing to do but sit still and let him have his head, and there you are!"

It was all very well to say "let him have his

head, and there you are." The question seemed to me rather where I should be if I endeavoured to interfere with his possession of that useful member. As for my having "nothing to do but to sit still," calling to remembrance the size of some of the obstacles we had to cross, I cannot put it more mildly than by saying that, under the circumstances, I did not see how it was to be done.

Packenham interrupted my reflections.

"Come on, old fellow, or we shall be late—in fact, we are rather so already," he said.

Quite incapable of resistance, I passively followed them into a dressing-room, where they supplied me with a pair of leathers and boots, and assisted me into one of Hugh Welwyn's crimson jackets and vivid racing caps. Almost oblivious of the world in general, I was seated with some difficulty in a swinging scale, while in my luckless lap was piled a confused heap of saddle, stirrup-irons, bridles, girths, and whip; and then, hoping that some of the colour from my jacket was reflected into a face which must have been more than pallid, if extreme anxiety has the effect which is usually attributed to it, I issued forth, and looked on with some trepidation—with a good deal of trepidation, if the truth must be told—while the gigantic

animal I was to bestride was being decked for the chase.

Meanwhile my friends had joyously accoutred themselves, and were soon engaged in superintending the toilets of their respective steeds previously to mounting. I watched Packenham's horse start with those two short strides which some animals take before getting into full swing ; and then, finding a groom near me, I gave him my leg after a fashion I had observed in Dacre, and scrambled to the saddle ; feeling more utterly abroad than I should fancy any one who has ever been brought in contact with horses can have done since Phaeton began to find things going wrong in his ill-advised journey.

Love is a very powerful divinity. He "conquers all things," "rules the court, the camp, the grove," "makes the world go round," and performs a variety of other difficult feats, not the least among which was his inducting me to my present position ; but had I only known what my sensations would have been when I was once insecurely seated on that small and exceedingly uncomfortable saddle, he would assuredly have been compelled to use every artifice he was acquainted with to keep me there, if I had only seen any reasonable likelihood of getting down again in safety. Our heads, however, were

facing up the course towards the stand, and my horse, shaking his bit and jerking at the reins, was exhibiting an anxiety to be off, with which I had no sympathy; but as I felt it would be quite useless for me to contend against his wishes on the subject, I only made one desperate effort to sit still, and gave his head!

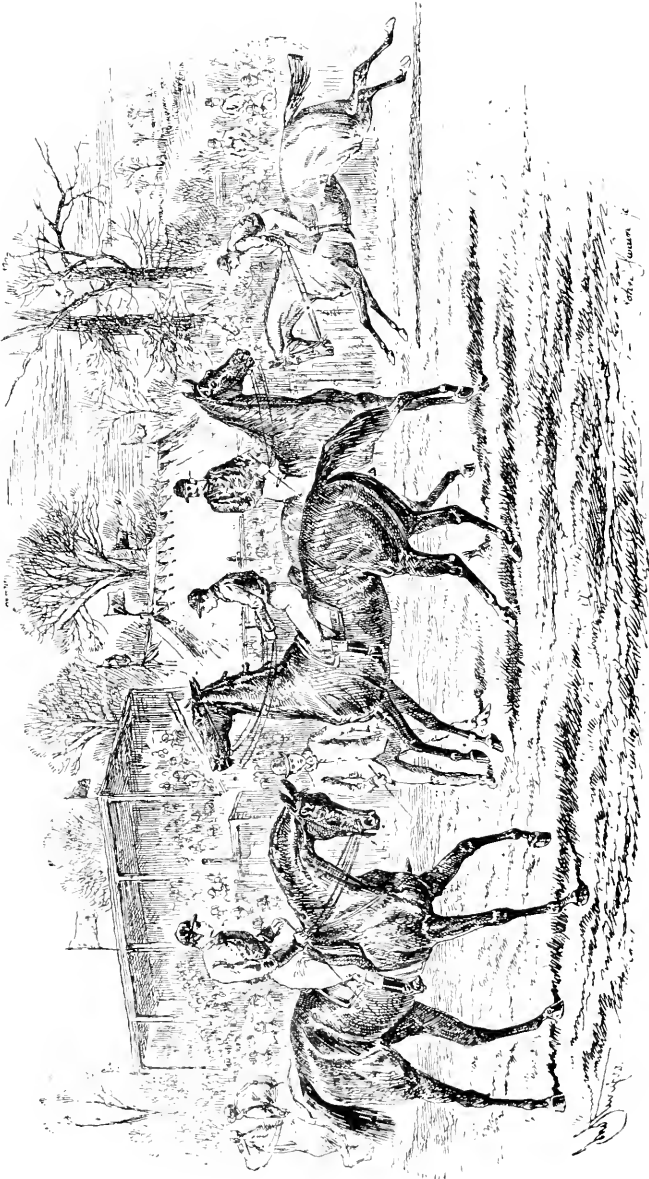
He took two springs in advance, and—stopped dead!

Stopped dead. Then made a few limping hops forward, and was still. Before I had realized the position, Packenham and Dacre, returning from their preliminary, and cantering down to the starting-post, came up to where I sat, contented but surprised.

“By Jove! stopped just as if he had been shot!” the former said to the groom, who came out into the course to see what was the matter.

The beast tried again to proceed, but the effort was vain.

“Broken down! No go, sir,” the man who had saddled him said in tones of deep regret. “I’ve been afraid of that leg for some time, but Mr. Hugh would have it that it was nothing. It’s all up, sir, this journey, at any rate. Just the way Mephistopheles went with me when I was riding him at Liverpool—shot his fetlock joint, he did.”



"BROKEN DOWN! NO GO, SIR."





I faintly murmured something about the danger of having firearms in a stable, and then followed an elaborate disquisition on a variety of subjects about which I was in a state of Egyptian darkness. "Frogs" and "thrushes" appeared to play an important part in the conversation, though I could no more understand their bearing on the matter than I could the aggressive behaviour of the "bullfinch," whose strange proceedings Dacre had narrated. I only gathered that the catastrophe was not unexampled, but quite failed to see how "coffin-bones" (whatever idea the latter extremely unpleasant title might convey to the stable mind) bore upon the matter. However, I was apparently expected to dismount; and though the news seemed too good to be true—the danger to have passed away too wonderfully—I got off with quite as much alacrity as was compatible with the dignity of a disappointed gentleman-rider; and so amongst the pitying comments of the crowd, and with as profound an expression of regret as I could conjure up on the spur of the moment, I followed my late terror's limping footsteps to the paddock.

I had never before so fully realized the pleasant sensation of being in my own clothes, as when, after discarding my unwonted habiliments, I made my way to the stand, and

received the condolences of Lucy and the rest on what they were pleased to term "such a very unfortunate accident," and was greeted by my host in my proper character. He had confounded me with Cecil of the 14th, a gentleman-rider of celebrity and a friend of Hugh Welwyn's, whose horse, the Professor, the gallant officer was to have ridden. A telegram had been waiting for Hugh for some time, and it afterwards appeared that it had been sent by Cecil, and contained expressions of his regret at being unable to come down and fulfil his engagement; but Hugh had not made his expected visit to the Grange, and so had not received it. My letter of acceptance had led the squire to believe that I was to appear at Welwyn on the 21st, instead of the 20th.

Miss Welwyn was more than kind, and Lucy, profuse in her regrets at the sad misfortune to the poor horse. She was just making a pretty little speech about my kindness in so readily undertaking to solve the difficulty, when the Cup horses, having started, came in sight; Dacre, on a little chestnut, which some one described as wiry, having it all his own way, Forester second, on a large bay horse. Pakenham, I afterwards found, had been left in the brook.

I was not sorry when, the last two races

having been run, it was time to mount the home-ward-going dog-cart; for the keen air to some extent stilled the flutter of my over-wrought brain. About one thing I was thoroughly determined—I would let Lucy know the sentiments with which she had inspired me. I had been acquainted with her but a short time, it was true, a very short time, if you will; but love does not keep count of hours by the reckoning of ordinary mortals, and as I jogged on with Forester for companion on the back seat, I could not refrain from confiding my hopes and fears to him. Under the impression that communion of enjoyment might conduce to an increase of sympathetic feelings on his part, I accepted a cigar from his case—a large, thick, dark-coloured cigar—and did not accidentally drop it into the road until after, what seemed to me, unaccustomed as I was to the use of tobacco, a very considerable lapse of time.—I scarcely ever remember enjoying anything less than that cigar.

I had observed by the familiarity of their intercourse that Forester knew Lucy well—indeed I had almost feared rivalry from him, and so was delighted to learn that, so far as he knew, her heart was disengaged.

There was a large party assembled at the Grange that evening, but nothing occurred of

interest in the matter which interested me most. Lucy seemed more radiant than ever, and I became more and more in love ; and the night's reflections only added fuel to the flame.

The sun shone brightly next morning as I left my room a little before breakfast time, and emerging into the keen, frosty air, found Forester engaged in jumping a young horse over some hurdles in a field near the gardens. He dismounted and surrendered the animal to a groom when I appeared. Joining me, we strolled together towards the house, and as we neared it, I was infinitely gratified to see Lucy and the Squire's sister entering one of the hot-houses at a little distance from us.

"There she is!" I said, enraptured. "Ah, Forester, see how the sun gleams in her golden hair!"

"In her—I beg your pardon?" he said inquiringly.

"Golden! It is golden, I maintain—the true, perfect shade of gold!" I answered.

"Well, I dare say it is, now you mention it," he replied musingly; "though I hardly think that I should have expressed it quite in that way myself."

"And you would not, perhaps, call her eyes blue—the watchet, azure hue of the cloudless

heavens?" I asked again, with triumphant enthusiasm.

"Her eyes the—— Well, 'pon my word! I really hardly think that I should," he replied. "I suppose lovers see these sort of things differently—that must be it."

"And how should *you* describe her?" I inquired. "What should you call her hair?"

"Well, the fact is, I always took her hair to be pretty nearly black, and her eyes much about the same colour," he answered.

"Her hair—her hair to be what?" I asked in amazement. "My Lucy's hair bla—— Why, what can you mean? Of whom are you speaking?"

"Why, of Miss Lucy," he replied, "the squire's sister. Isn't that the lady you were talking about?"

"Of Miss Lucy, the squ—— Why, Forester, what on earth do you mean?" I asked in alarm.

"That is the only Miss Lucy on the premises with whom I'm acquainted. Weren't you speaking of her? I thought, of course, you were. Every one always calls her Miss Lucy, though, as her sister's married, she is really Miss Welwyn. I wondered, too, when you said something about her being 'young and fresh' last night, because she hasn't been particularly

young for some time, I should imagine," he answered, looking at me with an expression of surprise on his face.

"And have you been paving the way—been saying to her the things——"

"That you asked me to say as we drove home yesterday?" he interrupted. "Of course I have. I told her just what I thought you wanted me to, and she seemed very pleased about it."

"Did she?—But surely," I urged, "it was by the name of Lucy that I heard you and the squire—I cannot have made a mistake!—I am certain, I could swear that you all——"

At this moment the two ladies emerged at the end of the greenhouse and came towards us, my Lucy looking sweet and charming beyond measure in her *piquante* morning dress.

"I'm much afraid that we have made another mistake, somewhere or other," Forester said just before they came into earshot. "I imagined that you meant Miss Lucy Welwyn, of course, for there is certainly no other Lucy here that I know of—except *that* one, by the way," and he pointed to my enchantress, "and she, I infinitely rejoice to say, has been my wife for the last six months."

Letters requiring my immediate return home

somehow arrived by the morning post; and as, after making a promise of returning speedily—which I had not the remotest intention of keeping—I drove to the station, the last thing I saw connected with Welwyn Grange was the Professor, standing in a straw-yard, surrounded by a bevy of men whose aspects bespoke their constant intercourse with the horse, and their familiarity with those sports in which, rather than participate, I would almost consent to marry the wrong Miss Lucy.

“That,” said the Spotted Horse in conclusion, “is my tale.”

## AN OFF CHANCE.

THE breakfast table in No. 2 private room of the Queen's Hotel, Beachington-on-Sea, was temptingly spread. A grand lobster, evidently not long a stranger to his ocean home, contrasted with the snowy tablecloth and the crisp green parsley, which set off his vividly red hue; the delicate pink of a dish of big prawns; the golden yolks of the poached eggs on the perfectly grilled ham gratified the eye and gave promise of other gratifications to come; while a couple of *entrée* dishes, whose silver covers were not opened, looked as if they had something appetizing beneath. Altogether the table was more like that of a well-appointed country house than an hotel, except that before the windows the sea sparkled on the other side of the broad roadway and esplanade; a pier ran out a long way into the water; and from the front of the building cries of "Card or London paper, sir?" from a host of boys, together with the aspect of some of the men who walked or drove along by



the sea, showed that a race meeting was on somewhere in the neighbourhood. It was, in fact, the Southdown Meeting, the last of the three which make up the Downshire fortnight.

The three occupants of the room for whom the breakfast was spread had done different justice—or injustice—to it. Wynnerly, the accomplished gentleman rider, had not dared do more than munch half a dozen prawns and a scrap of dry toast, for he had to ride 10 st. 7 lb. in the course of the day, and feared putting on weight; so he was consoling himself with a cigarette, and gazing out of the window. Sir Henry Atherton was busy with the *Standard*; for, though fond of racing, and the owner of some smart performers, whose wins he appreciated the more as for the most part he bred his own horses and delighted in the vindication of his judgment, he was also a landlord and a politician, and it behoved him to see what was happening at home and abroad. The third personage was young Flutterton, who was gradually buying experience at a somewhat expensive rate. He had taken Atherton's word for the excellence of the creamy ham and fresh eggs, and was deeply intent in a little silver-bound volume, ruled and figured on its pages in an unmistakable way—his betting-book, in fact.

“Is it very bad?” Wynnerly presently inquired, turning from the window, and glancing rather longingly at the breakfast table—for he had a healthy appetite, and hated wasting.

“Horrid!” Flutterton rejoined despondingly. “And real bad luck, too—wasn’t it? Do you see anything to-day?”

“No! It seems to me a brute of a card. We will ask Tom when he comes, but I can’t see anything. What do you think, Atherton?” Wynnerly said.

“Well, I can find two winners, if not three; but everybody else will be able to find them too. You would have to buy money very dearly, and then they might get upset. Ah! here’s Tom!” Atherton remarked, as a knock was heard at the door; and in reply to an invitation to enter, Tom Ball, the famous trainer and jockey, appeared.

Tom Ball’s clear-cut face had a great deal of character about it. Probably he would have made his way in any calling. The keen grey eye, the mouth, firm and good-humoured, spoke of patience and determination; two valuable qualities in most pursuits. His manner was easy and modest, as he took a chair in obedience to Atherton’s invitation, declined Wynnerly’s suggestion of breakfast, but did not refuse the

proffer of a *liqueur* from an oddly-shaped bottle, which stood on a side table amongst a heap of yesterday's cards, race glasses, gloves, and papers.

“ Well, Tom, how's the mare? and have you been through the card? Mr. Flutterton had a real stroke of bad luck yesterday.” Tom quietly smiled. “ Yes, bad luck, and not bad judgment,” Wynnerly said.

“ Yes, Tom,” Flutterton broke in. “ I know what you think about the folly of betting on every race, as I do generally, but this time my horse won. I took £1000 to £80 about The Admiral, on good advice. He won, as you know. I immediately plunged—put the whole thousand on Proserpine for the Cup, and only heard afterwards that The Admiral was disqualified for a cross—which I certainly did not see, though I watched the race carefully.”

“ No, Mr. Flutterton, and I didn't see it either,” Tom answered. “ Yes, that certainly was bad luck. And so you lost the thousand you hadn't won? ”

“ Yes; and as I hadn't been doing well before, I am in a hole. Do you see anything to-day? ”

“ Well, my mare, Furze Blossom, will win her race, but it's 7 to 4 on her now; and, of course, Silk Scarf will win the big two-year-

old race. I might win the Handicap, but mine's very uncertain. I can't recommend you to bet, though I've got a bit on, and fancy it a little."

"Just as likely to put his ears back and refuse to try a yard as to win in a canter, I suppose?" Atherton said.

"That's just it, Sir Henry. You never know what he means to do. Well," Tom continued, looking down the card, "anything might win these two selling races. They're a dreadfully uncertain lot, and I'm afraid we are pretty sure to be beaten for the Cup."

The "we" in question had special reference to a mare named Osprey, the property of Lord Tourneymeade, who had gone to the States to shoot big game, and left his little stud—which were trained by Tom Ball—under the direction of his friend, Wynnerly. She was a good mare, not harshly handicapped, but she had been a little "off" all the year, and was only just returning to her form.

"How is she?" Atherton asked. "And do you know what is going for the race?"

"She is getting on well enough, Sir Henry; but, of course, she isn't at her best yet. She might win, but I think Red Ronald's sure to beat her. He's a very improving horse—gets better

every day, it seems to me. In a fortnight's time we should have a better chance against him, for we are improving, too; but to-day I'm afraid he'll be too much for us."

"Past Master's not here, I suppose?" Wynnerly asked.

"No, or else he'd beat the lot," Tom replied. "That would be a good thing, Mr. Flutterton, or at least as good as they make them, which is never quite good enough to risk a great deal of money on," he continued, with a smile.

"Yes; and the worst of it is that brute Crossley will ride Red Ronald, of course. All my bad luck seems to be mixed up with that fellow, and, of course, he'll beat us, and I shall lose my hundred on Osprey to-day!" poor Flutterton said, lighting a cigarette, and conjuring up an amiable grin. "What asses we are to pay for those fellows' horses!" he went on, nodding towards a handsome pair of bays in a phaeton driven by a black-moustached individual, by whose side sat a dirty-looking, ill-dressed, bearded servant. "There's Capper, got a rattling good pair of horses, and he was yelling out in the ready-money ring a couple of years ago; and look! there's another bookmaker with the best pony in Beachington."

"Yes; and there's your friend Crossley

driving up in that fly. Do you know Captain Crossley, Tom?"

Tom made a sort of grimace.

"Don't know much of him, sir, and am not very anxious to improve the acquaintance. Is he going to ride Red Ronald? Well, I'm afraid he'll win. I don't see what's to beat him," he continued, looking again at the card.

"What about Mavis, Tom? You've got her, haven't you? They tell me she can go," Atherton inquired.

"No; I haven't got her now, Sir Henry. She's trained on our Downs, but she's in Tinkler's stable. She's useful, and she can stay, though before she came to me—I only had her for two or three months, and she never ran—they thought she could not go more than six furlongs. It's a mistake people often make about their horses, instead of trying them. I found out that she could go over a distance of ground, and we thought of her for the Metropolitan; but she wasn't well, and Lord Heathfield sold her."

"Has she got a chance?" Wynnerly asked. "She belongs to Stuart-Colville, in my regiment, you know," he remarked to Atherton.

"No, Captain Wynnerly; she can't win with 10 st. 12 lb. on her back," Tom replied de-

cisively. "We shall beat her, I've no doubt. She's here, and looking very well, too. She'll win a little race before long, next week, perhaps; but she's got 12 lb. too much this journey. With 10 st. she might have a look in."

"There's the fly, I think," Atherton said, looking out of the other window. "There'll be a crowd to-day, too. See the carriages going."

The band was playing outside, but its audience was chiefly made up of nursemaids and children, with a few ladies and elderly gentlemen in bath chairs. Every one seemed to be going to the races. Vehicles of all sorts, from the well-appointed drag, with its even team, to the ramshackle fly drawn by a broken-kneed creature on four shapeless legs, were all travelling in one direction, hampers, with the name of the local purveyor of good things painted in black letters on their sides, being frequent items of the load. Not the worse-horsed of the private phaetons and dog-carts belonged to the bookmaking fraternity, but the get-up of their grooms usually proclaimed their masters' status. Nearly every occupant of every carriage was provided with a card, a little book, and two or three papers, and they referred from card to book and book to paper, and compared notes with each other in a way which unmis-

takably bespoke their occupation—the finding of winners, which would be a sufficiently simple operation if horses were machines, always equally fit to work, and to be trusted implicitly to do one day precisely what they did six months before.

“Well, let’s be off!” Wynnerly said. “Have another *liqueur*, Tom. No! Quite sure? Hum—I suppose I’d better not; but I’m going to dine to-night, I can tell you! We’ll give you a seat, if you like, Tom? Come on, Flutterton. I’m afraid, old chap,” he continued, patting the unlucky sportsman on the back, “we can’t get you home to-day, and I know what a nuisance it is!”

Poor Flutterton put the best face he could upon it as the party drew on their gloves, slung their glasses over their shoulders, and collected the books, cards, and other materials for the day’s campaign. If something unexpected did not happen, it meant another visit to a little office he knew too well in the City, the master of which, more than civil if you met him on a racecourse, at the opera, where he had a box, at one or two card clubs, to which he had by some means gained admission—for in these places a gentleman seemed to have a sort of advantage over the rich man who was not a gentleman—



was quite a different person and much less easy to deal with east of the Griffin. Flutterton had been there already too often, and hated the idea of going again. He would never have risked a thousand pounds on a horse unless he had thought that he was playing with money which he had won, and 7 to 4 to a thousand pounds meant £1750, an amount that would have put two or three uncomfortable little matters that worried him a great deal pleasantly straight. It would have left him enough to buy a two-year-old on which he had set his heart, and unless things went wrong again—and he did not propose to risk large sums—he need not have been particular what price he paid for a couple of good hunters, good enough, perhaps, to pick up a steeplechase or two at unambitious meetings. When he saw The Admiral's blue jacket borne a good length first past the post, in precise conformity with the result of a trial, about which he had heard from perhaps the shrewdest man on the turf—an ex-trainer who had retired, bought some horses, and was well-nigh invincible when he had made up his mind to win a race—a glow of satisfaction had seemed to extend all over him. There was not a happier little man on the racecourse. He had not heard the cries of "Objection!" "Don't pay!" in the

ready-money ring, but had quietly gone away and lunched on a friendly drag, promised his sisters diamond rings, and thought over half a score of benevolent schemes for other people's gratification, if only Proserpine won the Cup; for he was a good little fellow, never so pleased as when he was pleasing somebody else. Then came the news. A friend strolled up to have some lunch, took his seat on the drag, and, as with good appetite he made his way through a plateful of pigeon pie, casually observed—

“A shame to disqualify The Admiral, wasn't it? I didn't see anything wrong in the race—did you?”

“To do what—to disqualify The Admiral!” he cried. “I've heard nothing of this! What are you talking about?”

“Why, Rose, who was on the second, Æsop, objected to The Admiral on the ground of a cross, and the objection is sustained—so the race goes to Æsop. I saw The Admiral swerve a bit from the whip, which that little butcher boy, Jarratt, took up quite unnecessarily; but I don't believe he interfered with Æsop in the least. However, it is settled. Thanks, I think I'll have some champagne,” and he went on with his lunch.

Disqualified! Then if Proserpine did not

win the Cup, Flutterton saw that he would be in a mess. But she was sure to win! They fancied Glee Singer, a three-year-old from a Northern stable, and he had heard wonderful stories of the horse's ability. Should he save his money? No! "Man or mouse," he thought. There was no doubt about the mare's speed and stamina, and supposing he risked more money, and then the American mare or an outsider were to win after all! No; he would stand it out and hope for the best. When in due course the horses paraded and cantered, Proserpine sweated and certainly went short in her canter. But she often did that, he thought; she would soon warm to her work. Still it was with rather a quaking at the heart that he waited. How Proserpine and Glee Singer came up the straight side by side, the three-year-old evidently having the best of it, and how the mare which carried his thousand was beaten three lengths, need not be described. Things had gone badly all the meeting. Crossley had assured him that one of his horses had no chance; thereupon, fearing only that, he had backed another, and Crossley's won any how—to the astonishment of his owner, as that astute and seldom-deceived personage vowed and declared; while another that Crossley assured

him could not be beaten had finished a bad third. These and other misfortunes had overtaken Flutterton, and with the morning here described, the last day of the fortnight, the only chance of "getting home" had come.

The carriage containing our friends was one of the rank making slow progress up the incline, a wheel track over the downs, to the course. Horses, hooded and sheeted, were heading for the paddock, and the usual crowd of card-sellers were as pertinacious as usual. In the paddock, owners, trainers, and the familiar body of turfites were in earnest converse, strolling about or looking at their animals; here and there in the crowd the crimson, white, or blue of a jockey's cap was to be seen; groups were formed round one or two of the favourites for the first race. There was really nothing to be discovered more than experience—as put into words by Tom Ball when he looked over the card at the hotel—could point out; that is to say, form pointed strongly to the winners of three races, and the rest were in the highest degree uncertain. A hot favourite won the selling race which came first on the card, and Tom Ball steered his own two-year-old, Furze Blossom, home without an effort for the race in which she was engaged.

The chance was so good that Flutterton had laid the odds, 5 to 2 on, and won £20, which was never in doubt. Tom's jacket fluttered in the wind always in a foremost place, and he came away, with his hands at his mare's withers, looking right and left to see whether any of the struggling field, all of which had been ridden hard almost before the distance was reached, were coming to challenge him. In the Handicap, his horse, ridden by one of his boys, had looked like winning in a canter, but had suddenly put back his ears and utterly refused to gallop, a circumstance which cost Flutterton half the £20 he had won.

The next race was for the Southdown Cup, and before the numbers went up the market had set. When presently they were hoisted it was seen that there were only three runners:—No. 3—Lord James Savage's b h Red Ronald, 11 st. 12 lb., white, blue belt, black cap (Captain Crossley); No. 7—Lord Tourneymeade's ch m Osprey, 11 st. 7 lb., red and green hoops (Mr. Herries); No. 15—Mr. Stuart-Colville's b m Mavis, 10 st. 12 lb., crimson, white cap (Captain Wynnerly).

“How's this? I thought Wynnerly was going to ride Osprey. I understood so when he went to dress. What's the meaning of it?”

Flutterton asked Sir Henry, as they read the 3, 7, 15, with the riders' names beneath, on the telegraph board. "Herries is going to ride, it seems?"

"I don't know; I quite thought so, too," Atherton answered.

"I'll take 6 to 4! 5 to 4 bar one! 10 to 1 bar two!" came from the ring. "Here, 6 to 4 bar one! 15 to 1 bar two! I'll take 7 to 4!" was soon the cry. Red Ronald was a hot favourite, and his appearance justified it. The mare, too, looked well, as Tom Ball stripped her, and with gentle hands and soothing words fitted the saddle on her back. A trifle big there was no doubt. Another gallop would certainly have improved her; but her powerful quarters, clean flat legs, and a general racing appearance about her, in conjunction with her lean, game-looking head, made her a dangerous animal to oppose.

"I thought Captain Wynnerly was going to ride her, Tom? Have they made a mistake on the board?" Atherton asked, as Tom put the finishing touches to her toilet.

"He and Mr. Herries have changed their minds about it. I don't quite know why, but it's as they like, and I'm afraid neither of them can win. Mr. Herries will ride her very well, though he's a bit behind Captain Wynnerly.

Has not had so much experience, you see," Tom answered.

"Has Mavis any chance. Why does Captain Wynnerly ride her?" Flutterton inquired.

"She's really got no chance at all. I suppose Mr. Herries fancied the moult on the mare, but I don't know why. Ah! Very likely he can't ride 10 st. 12 lb. easily—that's it, I expect. I should like to place them for a hundred!" Tom said.

"Yes; I suppose that would not be very difficult to do, eh?" Atherton replied; and at that moment Wynnerly, in the crimson jacket and white cap, joined the group.

"Look here, old chap, I think I know something," he said to Flutterton. "May I gamble for you to the extent of £150? It's only a chance; but if you don't like it I'll take it myself, for, in fact, I've done it."

"My dear fellow, if you think it good enough, you may be sure I do, though I have not an idea what you are playing at. Why are you riding for Colvile? Tom says you haven't a ghost of a chance. Isn't Crossley going straight? He daren't stop his horse; besides, I know they've all backed it," Flutterton, sorely puzzled, inquired.

"I'll take 5 to 2! 3 to 1 bar one! 20 to 1

bar two!" came from the ring as Herries strolled up, exchanged greetings with Atherton and the perplexed Flutterton, threw off his overcoat, and was put up into the saddle of Osprey. At the same moment Crossley rode by, nodding carelessly to Flutterton as he sat his fidgetty horse with easy grace—he could certainly ride.

"Where's my mare? Oh, there she is!" Wynnerly said. "I can't explain, my dear fellow," he continued to Flutterton, "perhaps, I'm wrong; but I have an idea."

"Crossley means business, doesn't he?"

"Yes, of course he does. They think the race is over; so does the ring, and perhaps they're right," Wynnerly said.

"But just tell me—is Mavis better than we think?"

"Not half an ounce, so far as I know. Tom is a far better judge than I am, and no doubt he is perfectly right about her. Well, good luck to us all!" he continued, and he moved towards the mare, exchanged a word with Colville and her trainer, and was on the course cantering after the others.

"What does it mean?" Flutterton asked, as he and his companion moved off to get good places from which to see the race. "It looks a







THE FLAG FELL, AND OFF WENT THE THREE HORSES.

certainty for Red Ronald—the party have backed him. Tom says Osprey has no chance, and Mavis less than none; and yet Wynnerly has got some game on.”

“I am as much in the dark as you are,” Atherton replied. “I thought at first that there must be something wrong about the entry of Red Ronald, something about the weights, or the description, and that they hoped to disqualify him. But that can’t be it. I’ve been over it, and when I mentioned it to Tom he said he was sure it was all right. There’s no one in the forfeit list connected with the horse. No. It’s too much for me. Look! There they go over the hill. That’s McGeorge’s trap, I suppose. Yes, there he is. They’re off!”

As he spoke, the flag fell, and off went the three horses, looking small in the distance on the opposite hill a little to the left of the stand—a steep declivity, with an abrupt rise on the other side, lay between the stands and the starting-post for the Cup course, which was over a distance of two miles, the field having to run over ground in shape something like the half of an oval.

“Wynnerly is making the running for Osprey,” Flutterton said, watching attentively.

“Yes, quite right; and he’s coming along at

a fine pace, too. See, he's a dozen lengths ahead!"

The other pair galloped on behind, side by side, and the ring showed that the race was being run very much as they had expected by continuing to offer to take the same odds about Red Ronald and lay against Osprey as before the start. It was, however, 12 to 1 bar two, in consequence of Wynnerly, whose skill was well known, being on Mavis.

"That red jacket's got a long lead," a man standing near our friends remarked to his neighbour, as he watched the race through his glasses.

"Plenty of time! They've got the length of the Derby course to run yet!" his neighbour answered; "I've got a great mind to have another 50 to 20, and I will, too. It *must* be a good thing for Ronald," he went on, as he carefully surveyed the runners.

"Mavis keeps well ahead," Atherton remarked, as, some mile having been covered, the field approached a steepish descent which led into the straight for home.

"They said that mare could not go a mile, but she runs as if she could!" one of the former speakers remarked. "Will they catch her?"

“Catch her!” replied his companion, who had just laid the other 50 to 20, contemptuously. “What do *you* think? It would be a start if a mare like that beat Red Ronald; and she hasn’t such a pull in the weights either.”

“I say! Just look at Wynnerly!” Atherton cried.

As the three runners reached the middle of the descent the rider of Mavis let go his mare’s head, and the lead of twelve lengths was nearly doubled. Crossley, on the favourite, glanced at his companion, Osprey. Both were going strong, but as they turned into the straight, some half mile from home, Wynnerly was many lengths to the good, a fact of which he assured himself by turning in his saddle and glancing at the other two. On the three galloped. Crossley again looked at the mare on his right, then at the leader. Osprey was going comfortably, and Herries seemed in no hurry to go on and catch the other, but Mavis was certainly not coming back to them, as Crossley had confidently anticipated she would, and he saw that there was no time to be lost. One stroke of the whip fell on Red Ronald’s side, he sprang forward, as did Osprey, untouched; but Mavis still gave no sign of coming back to her horses. The followers gained perceptibly, but all of a sudden a new

idea struck the spectators in the ring and stands, and was emphasized by a shout.

“They’ll never catch him!” half a dozen voices cried. “Go on, Ronald! Go on, Osprey!” came from the stand. “Go on, Mavis!” a bookmaker shouted in a voice heard over all. “Here! What about Mavis?” “Even money Mavis! Six to four Red Ronald,” comes from the ring. Wild excitement prevailed.

Flutterton, a sudden inspiration having dawned upon him, unconsciously moved his body, as he watched the race, in time to the leader’s stride. Crossley is riding his hardest, and rapidly overhauling the animal that has now so nearly approached the post. The white jacket is three lengths in front of the green and red hoops, but as they pass the stand, Wynnerly’s crimson, white cap is a good two lengths in front of the white jacket. Breathless attention on the part of some, who watch with eager faces; incoherent cries on the part of others, express the varied sentiments of the spectators. No! they will certainly never catch him; Red Ronald is within a length of the leader, half a dozen strides from the judge’s box, when Wynnerly, who has not yet touched his game mare, draws his whip. Two strokes swiftly fall on her flank, she answers by increasing her advantage,

and Red Ronald, who has been vigorously ridden from the distance, can barely hold his own.

In a moment more they are past the post, and No. 15 is hoisted. Wynnerly has run away with the race: Mavis has won by a length and a half, Red Ronald, second; Osprey, bad third, is the result of the race for the Southdown Cup.

Wynnerly, a very imperturbable young man, rode back to weigh in after this astonishing turn up with a perfectly calm face, looking as if he had expected to be beaten a hundred yards, and had been beaten accordingly. This ceremony over, he joined Flutterton, who was waiting for him in the weighing-room with a whirling brain, oscillating between hope and apprehension. Tom Ball was there looking much amused; Atherton, not quite knowing what to make of it; and Crossley, unaffectedly savage.

“Well, *that's* all right!” Wynnerly said, as he strolled away across the paddock with Flutterton, an overcoat over the white and cerise jacket he had put on to ride a subsequent race in. “Your £150 was on an average of 15 to 1.”

“I'm bewildered! I can't believe it yet! What made you think of that?” Flutterton said.

“I hardly know, but the idea came into my

head when I accidentally overheard Rushton, the trainer, talking to Crossley about the race. I was leaning against the window outside, and they were talking in that room behind—I couldn't help hearing, and I don't suppose they thought it was a secret. Rushton said there would be only three runners: that Mavis had no chance; and told him to keep with Osprey to the distance—they thought Mavis was only started to make a pace, I expect—and then he could come away and win as he liked. I knew Osprey couldn't win, so it occurred to me—I was thinking of Foxhall's Ascot Cup—that if Herries rode Osprey, and didn't hurry after me too much, I might have an off chance of getting home before they caught me. Sharp practice? Not particularly I think, for if Osprey *could* have won I wouldn't, of course, have done it. I got a lead, as you saw, and slipped them down the hill. You see I knew my mare could gallop; Tom and Tinkler both said she could stay, so I tried it on. I wanted you to get square, but I did not like to say anything to you before the race, as it was only an off chance."

Flutterton, who had lost £100 on Osprey, won a balance of over £2000 on the race, and it is almost unnecessary to say, has a higher opinion than ever of Wynnerly's astuteness.



## A VISIT TO A VETERAN : WILLIAM DAY AND FOXHALL.

GRATELEY Station on the London and South-Western Railway is far from being a cheery place to arrive at about six o'clock on a wintry evening ; but it was my destination on the last Saturday in October, and having bundled out of a railway carriage and looked up and down the platform, it was something to be welcomed by a dog. A good-looking fox terrier made his way to me as I alighted, and gave every indication of having expected my arrival, though why he should have done so is a mystery, as I had never seen him before. The fact remains, however, to be accounted for as lovers of dogs may be pleased to decide, that Tiger, as I afterwards found he was called, appeared to know by some sort of mysterious instinct that I was his master's guest. It was less strange that a porter should ask if I were looking for Mr. Day's servant, as I was gazing about the platform

expectantly, and only one trap was in waiting. Shipton was my destination, to fulfil a long-standing engagement to visit the famous trainer Mr. William Day, and in two minutes the white pony was bowling along the dusky Wiltshire road, with Tiger in close attendance.

Need it be said that the first question was, "How's the horse?" and that the horse in question was none other than the great Foxhall?

"Very well, indeed, thank you, sir. I 'do' him," my driver responded, with excusable pride.

"And you saw him win his races, I suppose?"

"Yes, indeed, I did, sir!" is the reply. "I was with him all the time."

"That's the stable, sir—Park House," Foxhall's friend and attendant presently says, after a couple of miles or so have been rattled over. "The master's house is about three-quarters of a mile further on, but we are going to move soon."

On we go until at length the village of Shipton appears in sight, and trotting merrily up the main street, we turn in at a gateway. The house stands a hundred yards or so back from the rustic street, and the shadow

of a statuette of a thoroughbred horse, which I see reflected on the blind, gives some sort of indication as to the tastes and occupations of the inmates. And the sound of wheels soon brings to the door my host, William Day, son of old John Day of sporting memory, and grandson of yet another John Day, who was famous in the horsey annals of his time, and whose grandson William, formerly of Woodyeates, has more than kept alive the fame of the family by his exploits in the saddle as jockey, in the stable as trainer, and in the paddock as owner of racehorses.

It is not my purpose to go into unnecessary details, but rather to recount some facts concerning, and opinions held by, the author of "The Racehorse in Training," who has often given such unmistakable proof of the soundness of his theories by the unprecedented success of Foxhall in the Cesarewitch and Cambridgeshire, not to mention the Grand Duke Michael Stakes amongst other instances; and so the pleasant dinner, at which my host's wife and three daughters were present, need not be lingered over on paper, as it was lingered over in fact. The cloth removed and the ladies gone, we drew round to the fire, and, as a matter of course, discussed that "noble animal," the horse.

“You are looking at the pictures, I see,” William Day observes. “That is Crucifix, with my father up and my brother John holding his hack. It is one of Harry Hall’s. That is Crucifix again, Herring’s work. Then, the other side is Promised Land. That is a horse called Wisdom, painted by Abraham Cooper; and the mare and foal are by Ferneley, who was considered a wonderfully clever man in his day.”

“Good horses, all of them. What do you think the best you ever knew?” I asked.

“This one—Foxhall,” his trainer replies; “and I remember Bay Middleton, Plenipotentiary, and West Australian, but I don’t think one of them could have beaten Foxhall.”

“I suppose Promised Land was a real good one.”

“Yes, I ought to have won the Derby on him, would have won had I made proper use of him, but I was over-persuaded by my father to wait with him. We cantered up the hill as usual, and Musjid won by his turn of speed. That Promised Land was the better horse of the two is, I think, pretty well shown by the fact that though a match had been made in the spring between him and Musjid, to come off in the autumn, for three thousand guineas a-side, Sir Joseph dared not run, and paid forfeit; and then,

again, Promised Land's easy win in the Goodwood Cup that year, when he was ridden in the right manner, goes to prove the truth of my opinion, though, as you say, Sir Joseph Hawley fancied Musjid after his trial with Gallus, and Wells declared he had never ridden a better than Musjid. He had never ridden Promised Land, and you know Musjid did not do much after the Derby?"

"No doubt the best horse often does not win unless he is ridden the best way," I remark.

"Quite so. There was a case in point two or three years ago at Doncaster. 'You had better have a bit on my horse, I'm going to win to-day,' one of the cleverest of our jockeys said to me. 'Well, the horse hasn't done much yet—has he?' I asked. 'No, he hasn't, for I have never quite had my way about riding him, but to-day I have leave to ride him as I think best, and I am certain we shall beat them all,' the jockey said; and he did. There is no harm in mentioning names—I am speaking of Jim Goater and Rayon d'Or."

"You wanted to get Cannon for Foxhall, didn't you?" I inquired.

"Yes. I'd rather have him than any jockey of the day," is the answer.

"And who do you think the best jockey you

ever saw?" I go on to ask. "I know you yourself pulled off an Ascot Cup very cleverly, but I won't ask about your own performances."

"Well," he smilingly answers, "I don't think there was ever a better than my father, and one reason was that he always made the best use of his horse, and oftener won that way than others could by waiting. There was none of that flashy style of winning by short heads that makes jockeys lose so many races nowadays. The public are caught by this sort of thing, but many races are thrown away. If the jockey wins, they talk of his wonderful finish, coming just in the nick of time, and if he is just beaten, they declare that no one else would have got within a head but So-and-So; while all the time, if he had ridden judiciously, he might have won easily by a length and a half, or maybe much further."

"Do you think jockeys were better horsemen in former days than now?" I go on to inquire.

"No. Of course Jim Robinson, and Buckle, and Butler, and the Chifneys, and my father rode some wonderful races, and my brother Sam, who won the St. Leger at nineteen, the youngest jockey that ever did (he was killed out hunting, when he was twenty-one), was a great deal

better than most; but I think Tom Cannon and some of the others are as good as they were."

"Well, it is pleasant to think that these races you have just won have been among the most steady and straightforward on record, and after public trials that let anybody who cared to know judge for himself what the horse could do. I have not any sympathy with a win when the horse has been pulled, and run unfit, and dodged about to hoodwink handicappers. You can't have felt quite comfortable about the Cambridgeshire, though—a three-year-old, with nine stone on his back, up that hill, and with a more than respectable field to beat, too?"

"I knew what a good horse he was, and was tolerably certain about it. I watched the race from the Red Post, and saw that my horse was lying in a good position and going well."

"Was it true that Watts hit the horse such a sounding stroke that he frightened Lucy Glitters and made her swerve on to Tristan? I have seen that stated," I interrupt to inquire.

"Not true at all, I should say," William Day answers. "I don't believe the boy hit him once. I did not see it, and there was certainly no mark of it on the horse, nothing but a touch of the spurs—naturally after such a close finish.

Watts flourished his whip about, but did not use it."

"You couldn't see the finish from the Red Post. What did you do?" I ask.

"Oh, I galloped up on my pony," he replies, with a smile, "and asked what had won. 'Foxhall!' somebody said; 'won by a head.' 'No, he didn't; he won by half a length.' 'I tell you it was a neck.' 'I saw it plain enough, and it was a head, and a very short one, too,' so they holloed out; but I said, 'Never mind. A short head's good enough for me if it's the right way;' and just then No. 4 went up, and there was no doubt about it."

"What did you do with the horse between the two races? I am curious to know, for the preparation for a mile and a two-mile-and-a-quarter race must be so different."

"Well, we came back from Newmarket on Friday, and walked on Saturday. On Sunday I never take my horses out, as you know. He did a canter on the Monday, half-speed gallops on Tuesday and Wednesday; on Thursday and Friday I sent him along a mile and a quarter at his best speed, and he galloped steadily the distance on Saturday. There was not much time, you see; but I knew he could stand as much work as was good for him—no fear of that."



“Of course he is at his best now?”

“Yes, as you will see to-morrow. It would not do to let him down too suddenly. He’s thoroughly fit, and that for the first time in his life. When he went to run for the Grand Duke Michael, an authority on training, or some one who is supposed to be one, complimented me on his condition, though I did not think he was then fit, and said he would be much improved by the Cesarewitch. When he was being saddled for that race, my friend came up, and thought he was a bit fine drawn and overdone. ‘He’ll be finer drawn by the Cambridgeshire,’ I told him, and ‘Ah, then you’ll make a mess of it!’ he said. Well, he won the Cesarewitch, and before the Cambridgeshire my friend arrived to look him over, and vowed he had not the ghost of a chance; but I thought he had, and you know the result.”

Next morning we all went to the little village church, and after luncheon to Park House. Alfred Day, my host’s youngest son, who bids fair to sustain to the full the reputation of his family, receives us, and in a moment I am in the comfortable box occupied by one of the very best horses that ever ran. He is having his toilet performed, and is told by his attendant to hold up his foot.

“Not that one, stupid! Have not I just done it? What are you thinking about to-day!” his friend says in a good-humoured tone of pretended reproach as we enter; and so Foxhall dutifully presents his other foot.

Fancy calling a three-year-old that has carried nine stone to victory up the Cambridgeshire hill “stupid!” But in this case familiarity has not by any means bred contempt, but rather confidence, esteem, and affection.

I look at the good horse in admiration. What shoulders! what quarters! what depth through the heart! Perhaps his enormous power behind is his most notable characteristic, but when one glances at his shoulders again one doubts whether it is so. It is not a pretty little head; but the kind, mild, generous eye gives it character and individuality. The neck, moreover, is far from being the graceful arched type that ladies admire. He is, indeed, distinctly ewe-necked, but one gradually falls in love with the horse, and his neck appears to suit him. The rich bay, so delightfully contrasted with his black points, seems just precisely the right colour for him. I gaze and admire.

“Isn’t he the least bit light below the knee?”

“Perhaps a little; but handle him. He’s as

quiet as a lamb," says his trainer ; and I pass my hand down his clean legs, of greater girth than they appear, by reason, it may be, of the formation of the knee ; stroke his amiable nose, and generally endeavour to impress upon the good honest horse—how grandly he came, when wanted, up that hill on the 25th of October!—that I am proud to make his acquaintance, overtures of friendship which he receives very kindly and seems to reciprocate. He is a foreigner, an alien, and twice he has lost me my money, but I love a good horse with all my heart, and for his prowess and his disposition alike Foxhall is a horse to arouse enthusiasm.

I turn away to inspect the others ; but after the big horse they seem poor, so I return to have one more look at him. One more stroke of that soft, solid neck, and I say *au revoir* to Foxhall.

## THE DERBY CENTENARY.

PERVERSELY enough, when every one wants it to be fine it is raining hard. That things could not go on like this, and that if they did the hundredth Derby would be rather a question of swimming than of galloping, was the generally expressed opinion as men came out of their clubs on the eve of the great day, and looked up and down the streets for hansom cabs. Many very bitter and cutting remarks were, indeed, made about the weather, and the morning, as if to revenge itself, opened in a sullen and dispiriting manner, suggestive of umbrellas and waterproofs, rather than of more light and airy Derby attire.

But, at half-past nine o'clock precisely, anxious eyes cast up to the sky detect favourable signs; the sun shows that he is still able to do his duty, and some one brightens up sufficiently to make a remark as to the connection between "rents in the clouds" and "castles in the air," *à propos* of the intended expedition coming off

as anticipated in consequence of the fine day ; and when the joke had been explained at some length it is accepted as passable under the circumstances. Presently the sun absolutely begins to shine, and it becomes probable that a really pleasant day may see the solution of the great and mystic problem, "What is going to win?"

Not, of course, that the question has not been answered conclusively many times before. In a thousand village roadside inns the health of the neighbouring "crack" has been drunk—for "the rustic cackle" of every bourg naturally points to the horse trained in the district as the winner. From over the sea and from all quarters come "commissions" in favour of different animals. On the Boulevards the question is discussed as eagerly as in London, and in a dozen clubs every evening for the last fortnight might have been found a dozen different men ready to prove to demonstration that each of a dozen horses must win. Armed with the latest editions of "Ruff," a small bucketful of brandy and soda, and a long cigar, these prophets were prepared to sum up the whole matter; and, further assisted by some private and particular information about some wonderful trial (concerning which very often owner and trainer are alike

ignorant), the seers end with a triumphant assertion that "there's no getting over form like that!"

The fine weather is the one thing wanting to make enjoyable the excursion to see these various certainties come off, and by the time we are under way it is bright and blue overhead, while even Surrey roads cannot be dusty after the late drenchings they have had. There is a stir in the streets, and loungers on the pavement turn and watch the traps, hansoms, drags, phaetons, and conveyances generally which have a racing look about them. A couple of postilions in blue jackets leave no mistake about their destination, and when Wandsworth is passed, signs and tokens of the Derby Day begin to grow frequent. The pleasant-looking name of a popular firm, renowned for luncheons, is painted on many a hamper that swings beneath many a carriage; a waggonette conveying a party of sportive creatures with pink veils round their hats is seen in the distance, and looks like an itinerant crop of rhododendrons; a tax-cart full of niggers betokens that minstrelsy will not be wanting; and when a gentleman who has been copiously refreshing himself at a public-house takes hold of the reins and drives incontinently into a ditch, turning his friends comfortably over

on to the top of the hedge, we begin to feel that we are indeed bound for the Derby. Family parties in vehicles of varying sorts are also frequent, and are remarkable for the fact that it seems to be a point of honour on the part of the lady occupants to bring as many babies as can be mustered for the occasion.

Whoever desires to read accounts of the fun of the road must, however, turn to the works of bygone chroniclers. Going to the Derby at the present time is a proceeding so decorous that it might even be termed dull, were it not that a drive through the delightful Surrey lanes is always pleasant at this time of year, when the verdure is at its freshest and greenest. The Young Ladies' Schools, moreover, which are an interesting feature of the way, seem to be in flourishing condition; and severe as the matrons sometimes look when the execution wrought by so many bright eyes on the passengers of a loaded coach is made too apparent by the demeanour of the victims, the girls would not be at the windows if they had not been allowed a holiday. It is a curious thing in the natural history of the sex that the most austere of maidens will smile if she happens to catch the respectful glance of a traveller to Epsom. Some bold young men disgrace themselves by beckon-

ing to the prettiest girls behind the windows, closing up and pointing to the vacant places by their sides, pantomimic invitations to come to the Derby being thus conveyed; but the girls shake their heads, blush, and look down; stern mistresses appear, and speak evidently in terms of reproof. The bold young men press their hands to their hearts, take out their pocket-handkerchiefs, and are dissolved in tears at the cruel refusals until they come to another bevy of beauty, when the invitation is repeated.

By this time checks are frequent and progress is slow. Some of the horses that have been dragging unmerciful loads give signs that they have gone just about as far as they can, but the grand stand is in sight, and in a very few minutes we are at the top of the ascent, with the familiar picture of Epsom Downs on the Derby Day spread out before us. The roar of the ring comes across the course, and frequent offers of 5 to 1 on the field prove that the race is regarded as an open one.

On the hill all our old friends are in their usual places. The Living Skeleton's ribs are as prominent as they were last year, and the "Fat Woman," as that lady is called in bold, blunt English, has laid on weight—that is to say, if the pictorial illustrations outside the show are to



be believed. The young gentlemen who dispose of their superfluous wealth by selling purses full of half-crowns for the ridiculously small sum of eighteenpence are hard at their benevolent occupation. The Indian Chief, with the White-chapel accent, who breaks stones with his fist, is busily employed; and several youths in dirty flannel "jerseys" are sparring with an earnestness which brings in a plentiful harvest of coppers. An indolent and languid generation has been considered by the "three shies a penny" fraternity, who have this year introduced the idea of quietly bowling over the cocoanuts with indiarubber balls, thus saving the exertion of throwing heavy sticks.

A drag laden with artists from the Italian Opera is on the hill, and the passengers are seemingly endeavouring to "cast" an opera appropriate to the subject, with the rider of the winning horse as tenor, the trainer's daughter as *prima donna*, the owner for bass, and an evil-minded bookmaker for first baritone. The great business of the day is, however, luncheon, a final recapitulation of the *pros* and *cons* about the favourites, a visit to the paddock, and taking up of positions for the race. Nobody cares what has won the first event, for on the hill the respective merits of the pigeon pie and lobster

salad are considered of more interest than anything else. What is going to win the Derby is the burning question of the moment.

A strange story goes round about one of Mr. "Acton's" horses, named Squirrel. A lady is said to have dreamed—and unquestionably did dream, for the story was current many days before the Derby—that she was alone on the Downs, and suddenly saw a squirrel run up the winning post. The lady told her friends, who had not been aware that there was a horse of that name in the race, and they, on discovering the fact, came to the conclusion that "there must be something in it."

A curious calculation in the doctrine of averages pointed to Zut as the winner, from the circumstance that, though there are many horses in training with monosyllabic titles, one has not come in first for the Derby for over fifty years. On the hill, however, the favourite was decidedly Victor Chief, and when presently the horses came out to parade the impression in his favour was greatly increased. "There's the Squirrel," somebody says—"dark blue, yellow cap. There's another of them, though, Sir Bevys. Who knows anything about him?" "He's one of the Rothschild lot, and they think he's rather a good horse, but Hayhoe hasn't

had anything to get a line with. Fordham's riding," somebody else replies. "Rather a good-looking horse, but Fordham's luck is all against him at the Derby," the first speaker remarks; "Victor Chief looks magnificent." A young gentleman who has been investing heavily on the Duke of Westminster's colt most cordially acquiesces, and turns up an oft-conned page in "Ruff's Guide" to show a friend what Victor Chief did with Peter last year, how his two-year-old form was superior to anything else, and to explain why he *must* win. The nigger minstrels cease their songs, feeling that an absurd interest in the speed of a number of horses has an attraction over melodious reminiscences of the "Old Kentucky Shore"; and the gipsies pause in their palmistry, for a roar proclaims the start.

In line, like a squadron of cavalry, the twenty-three runners get off. Victor Chief's backer shuts up and pockets his "Ruff" and pulls hard at an unlighted cigar as the cavalcade comes tearing round Tattenham Corner. Like a kaleidoscope, the riders sweep round, the daring jockey who shoots the rails looking very like falling over them; and, as they come into the straight, a roar for Victor Chief sets a good many pulses beating quickly. But the favourites

“shut up” one by one, disaster overtaking too credulous backers with lightning speed. A dark-blue jacket flashes past the post, a pink follows, and then comes the primrose and rose hoops. Up go the numbers 18, 13, 30. Sir Bevys has won, Palmbearer is second, and Lord Rosebery has landed his place bets about Visconti. At first it is thought that the Squirrel has brought about the dreaming prophecy, but it is his stable companion. Truly the proverb that declares “the way to find out the winner is to watch the judge’s board” is a very wise one.

So ends the one hundredth Derby.

## THE LADIES' DAY AT EPSOM.

JULIET spoke very rudely of the sun, terming him "garish," and generally disputing his claims to admiration; but then it is evident that Juliet was not going to the Oaks. It was certainly with anxious expectation that the luminary was watched on the eventful morning, and eager eyes read out from the papers the verdict as to what sort of weather the Americans had decided on providing for us. "Light, variable airs or southerly breezes. Warm; cloudy," was what had been predicted about the prospects of the Ladies' Day; and any adverse opinions which might occur to the home authorities were triumphantly refuted by this comfortable sentence. Whether young ladies would have felt equally certain that the prophet must be right if he had foretold storms and unsettled weather is quite another matter; but he omitted all mention of rain, and tender creatures, who had been looking forward to the Oaks, were quite prepared to applaud the excellence and accuracy of his

judgment. So it happened that in due course of time an enthusiastic young party were landed at Victoria Station, soon afterwards comfortably installed in a railway train bound for Epsom, and, after a short drive across the Heath, disembarked at the back of the grand stand.

When people can have their own way they are usually good-tempered, and from the height of a box in the west gallery there is plenty to admire in the scenery of the Surrey Downs if only one is in a humour to make the best of it. Flags flutter in the breeze, and the sun, about whose appearance there is now no sort of mistake, makes radiant the tops of the tents wherein the million—or that portion of it which has come to the races—is busily engaged in lunching already. Multitudes move to and fro, and the picture of the hill forms a striking contrast to another aspect of it, known to men who have hunted with the Surrey Union.

Across the almost deserted Heath on a morning when hounds meet at Epsom grand stand solitary horsemen in pink, with now and again pairs and trios in less striking colours perhaps, but at any rate in boots and breeches, are accustomed to canter; for in the coverts away to the left there is a very tolerable chance of finding a fox; and hunting men speculate as

to whether there is a litter of those merry, mischievous, funny little cubs which are so playful and pretty at this time of year, and which, if they escape catastrophes next September, when cub hunting is on, may hereafter afford a gallop over Surrey hills and vales.

It is for racing that we are here to-day, however, and a young lady of our party, indignant at the current supposition that girls know nothing of the sport, has adopted very strong views on a certain subject. She is exceedingly bitter and sarcastic about the fact that a certain American six-year-old was not allowed to start for the Derby, and considers the prohibition very mean on the part of English racing authorities. These deeply rooted opinions she proceeds to express to the most turfy man of the party, young Saddler, who imagines a reply to the effect that the horse is a six-year-old will be sufficient to put the case in a convincing light.

“That doesn't matter a bit!” is the astonishing answer.

“But,” he explains, “only three-year-olds run for the Derby.”

Had Saddler been told that the solar system was out of order, that something had gone wrong with the Gulf Stream, or that any other convulsion of nature had startled humanity, he

would have taken it calmly; but the idea of a six-year-old running for the Derby knocks the breath out of his body, and he is speechless when the pretty little satirist of the Jockey Club pronounces his explanation "only an excuse."

"You let the American horse run until he beat you, and then you wouldn't let him run any more; and even if there is some rule about it, you needn't have minded with a foreign horse."

By this time the bell has rung, and the course is cleared for the first race; but the Selling Welter Handicap, not having a very exciting appearance, an opportunity arises for passing over to the hill and investigating the nature of the various entertainments, which can only be carried on with so much blowing of whistles, beating of gongs, and general riot. The shows are few in number, considering that this is the Derby week, and that the Derby week is the great racing holiday of the year, when the holiday is, in fact, with many people of much greater importance than the racing. But if the showmen are few in number, they are admirable specimens of their profession, and are gifted with a full share of their proverbial wit and shrewdness.

Sad to say, the two principal shows do not



seem to be on good terms, which is the more unfortunate because they are placed side by side, and any sarcasm that may be uttered is sure to strike home. One of them has the Living Skeleton, the Fat Woman, the Giant, a thirteen-pound rat, and a curious collection of dogs; while the other has two Zulu women, captured at great expense; and it is the superiority of the human show, over the rival which includes animals, that points the darts of the proprietor. Yet another rival is in the field, however—a two-headed woman, with a perfectly preposterous number of arms, eyes, ears, and noses, and her proud owner announces, lest any sceptic should doubt, that he has “medical men kept inside ready to take their oaths that she’s genuine.” A photographer strives to induce people to be “taken” by displaying the highly coloured picture of a beautiful gentleman in baggy white trousers, seated on a lovely horse of the most prancing description, and clearly so much struck by an exhibition of photographs (obviously these) that he is bent on getting off and being portrayed as soon as ever his horse will give him an opportunity.

Another show is painful. Outside is Mr. Merryman, with painted face and clown’s attire; but poor little Mr. Merryman cannot be more

than seven years old, if he is so much, and he cuts his small jokes with an effort at cheerfulness that is strangely saddening. The child-clown is saying his lesson—a lesson learnt with study and application, as any one may tell, and he struggles bravely to do as he has been taught.

We pass on to the next door, where a lady and gentleman sword swallows are busily devouring whole armouries, if one may credit the picture outside, which give a gentleman frantically thrusting swords down the throat of the gifted creatures within, while gorgeously dressed spectators look on with combined horror and admiration. Another show—so low has the poor old business fallen in these incredulous days—contains a medium, who is ready to produce spirit writing, and who spells it “writeing.” Banjos, tambourines, drums, and trumpets are flying about the air, and the authenticity of the whole business is guaranteed by a gentleman who signs himself “Doctor Slade.”

While inspecting such novelties and wonders as these, time naturally flies, and a bell proclaims the clearing of the course for the great race of the day; and by the time we are back again in the stand, the police are making some way with their difficult task.

“Which is the Derby dog?” a young lady of the party innocently asks, as a retriever and a nondescript brown creature trot down past the stand, for the idea seems to be current that an animal is kept somewhere on the Downs for the express purpose of running up the course when it should be alike clear of dogs and men.

The portly police sergeant, on his well-trained horse, disposes of the stragglers, and the cry, “Here they come!” is uttered on the stand.

There are to be only eight runners for the Oaks, for of the nine coloured on the card No. 8 is an absentee. Led by the Duke of Westminster's Adventure, with Mr. Jennings's Japonica in attendance, Mr. Cookson's Coromandel II. next, and Lord Falmouth's Leap Year following, the runners for the Oaks approach, and Leap Year displays a good deal of what dealers call playfulness, and timid horsemen temper.

The favourite, Wheel of Fortune, is last but one, preceded by Philippine and followed by Amice, as they parade past the stand, and then they turn to canter, Wheel of Fortune's magnificent stride making those who have taken liberties with her on the off-chance repent their temerity. Philippine, however, comes in for her share of admiration. She is pronounced to be a

nice easy goer, and her trainer thinks he has a good chance. Odds of 5 to 2, and even 3 to 1, on the favourite are demanded, and the thought of the awful consequences that would ensue should Leap Year win instead of the "Wheel" strike terror to the hearts of daring ones who have plunged.

"They are fielding pretty hard, and I've laid the odds like fun," a nervous young gentleman with rather white lips remarks, as he distinguishes the roar of the betting-ring, and a strong eulogy on Philippine's good looks does not tend to increase his equanimity.

The red-hatted gentry on the hill grow frantic about this period, and offer any sort of odds against anything in their anxiety to do business; but suddenly discussion is interrupted by a roar that they are off. At a slow pace they traverse the far side of the course, pink and black hoops, Coromandel II., leading.

As they approach Tattenham Corner, the pace improves. Round the sharp turning they rush, Archer on Wheel of Fortune next the rails.

"It's all over!—no, it is not, though! Archer's riding!" one of the favourite's backers exclaims in dismay.

But though the race does not look like

a 3 to 1 certainty, Lord Falmouth's filly shakes off her opponents without difficulty, and gets easily home. Up go the numbers 9, 3, 1—Wheel of Fortune, Coromandel II., and Adventure. Public form, outraged by the Derby, is vindicated by the Oaks.

## A GOODWOOD CUP DAY.

FROM the appearance of Chichester on the morning of the Cup Day, it is plain that the great day has come. It might have seemed that on previous race mornings the Sussex city had exhausted itself in the way of carriages and horses; but the crowd in the station yard is denser than ever, and how vehicles farthest away from the exit gates are to get through the jostling, shouting crowd, is a sort of Chinese puzzle, which only a combination of luck and good coachmanship could solve. From both directions trains arrive, bringing their loads of passengers to swell the throng. The drivers see their chance, and all sorts of prices are asked for the journey up the hill. "Take you up by yourself for a five-pound note, sir, 'cos I see *you'd* like to go like a gentleman," says the driver of a hansom cab to a sallow youth, who is half-ashamed and half-delighted at the emphasis on the pronoun; but the youth gets in. There is a far greater number of private carriages than

usual, for though the actual racing is by no means better to-day than on the other three days of the meeting, the Cup Day has a *prestige* of its own.

In many pleasant country houses girls have awakened early (not perhaps without remembrance of the dress which has occupied so much thought, and is to form one of *the* toilettes on the lawn), and gazed eagerly at the sky to see whether dim clouds from the south-west threaten rain. All is well, we will hope. A fine blue sky and the promise of fine weather brighten bright eyes; and in due time John Coachman, who, at all times a stickler for tidiness, has turned out his horses and harness with exceptional care, drives his load with much dignity and very square arms through the unaccustomed crowd; for here are omnibuses, cabs, barouches, shandy-dans, waggons, tax-carts, phaetons, and, in fact, everything that goes on wheels, drawn by horses as various as the vehicles.

The Sussex peasant trudges along, if it happen that the hay is in, and the wheat on his master's farm not yet ready to be cut; for the early southern harvest is often reaped during Goodwood week, and here in many fields, as we drive past, the sheaves stand in array, the golden corn bows its plentiful head, and the labourer,

sickle in hand, pauses for a moment to wipe his brow and look at the passing throng.

Farmers in their tax-carts, with smiling wives and rosy-cheeked daughters, who would like to smile if they felt sure that it would be proper, swell the procession which winds along the shady roads—where overhanging branches brush the shoulders of men on drags—and toils tediously on in an apparently unending stream up the laborious hill to the course.

Perhaps the carriage in which we journey to the course passes through the Duke of Richmond's park, which looks delightfully fresh and green as we turn into the gates from the dusty road. Over the house the Royal standard is flying, and indeed in a group of the Duke of Richmond's visitors standing around the doorway, chatting and smoking, his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is a prominent figure. Here are the inevitable gipsies charging about on barebacked horses to offer their services as leaders up the terribly steep hill. How their horses are employed during the rest of the year when there is no racing at Goodwood is a mystery; but evidently, from the manner in which their masters stick on, gipsies must have constant practice in riding. Another way is to skirt the park, and pass by the side of the Birdless Grove,



and though this is a little further, there is not so severe a hill to surmount.

This is, of course, the great day for dress, and even before the racing begins the lawn is brilliant; delicate creams and ivories are popular, sometimes unrelieved and sometimes trimmed and decked with those new colours of which only milliners know the names, and about which, probably, milliners differ—crushed strawberry, salmon, venetian red, decided crimsons, and other ruby shades perhaps predominating. In certain cases ladies appear to have sought for characteristic dresses. Here is a pink with a flowing plaid sash, suggestive of the Highlands; there a dark brown with a cuirass of gold lace, significant of a Hussar regiment; an olive green, trimmed with a vivid Persian pattern, containing all hues; a black and red dress, the wearer of which has on red shoes with black tips, borrowed, it would seem, from the *opera bouffe* stage; an ivory white, with a peep of rich crimson at the bosom; a pink continued from the dress to the cheeks of the wearer, where what is intended to pass for the bloom of health is very unsymmetrically arranged.

Of what is called the fun of the fair there is little or none on the course. A poor melancholy dog does some tricks in a pathetic fashion. The

conjuror, who is always going to perform some marvellous and unprecedented feat when his kind friends have made up an amount which somehow is never quite reached, is eloquent on the subject of his prowess; and those energetic tipsters who grow red and frantic in their exertions to persuade the world in general to buy a guide to certain fortune for the ridiculously small sum of sixpence, are bawling themselves hoarse. They have all enjoyed the confidence of the noblest patrons of the turf, but have been a little unsteady, and come to consequent grief; but they are still behind the scenes—they know all that can be known, and if they do not sell you a card containing the name of the winner for the absurdly inadequate price mentioned they will forfeit ten pounds. The reasons why they abstain from putting their capital on the winner, and so freeing themselves from the pressing need for sixpences, they omit to mention.

Meantime the royal party has driven up. On the balcony above the lawn the Princess is smilingly talking to her friends; the Prince is probably strolling about under the beeches, where servants are busy laying the tables for the luncheon, which is one of the features of the day. A line of drags three deep is forming at the further end of the lawn, and on the course

the huntsman and whip of Lord March's hounds in the yellow coats, red cuffs and collars of the hunt, have taken their places.

One of the most peculiar spectacles which Goodwood presents, and one the most interesting for sensible racegoers who do not find the chief attraction in the ring, is gained by an ascent of Trundle Hill, at the end of the course, part of the way up which competitors sometimes go in a race before they can be stopped, when full of running. At the top the view over the wooded country, with the noble trees, its patches of woodlands, golden harvest fields and green meadows, with the waves of the Solent sparkling in the distance, is altogether delightful. The lawn seems like a bed of moving tulips, and the broad course, probably the best in England, a narrow green roadway between the dark border formed by the crowd in the rings and opposite.

A couple of races of no great importance are run, races with which social Goodwood, unless friends own competitors, have little to do. Luncheon time is coming, and with many anxious glances upwards from kindly hosts and hostesses, to say nothing of hungry guests, parties are arranging themselves round hospitable tablecloths. If on the beech leaves overhead the raindrops should begin to patter down lunch

is of course ruined. Into the champagne glasses they drip, and by no means improve the delicate flavour of the '74 Perrier Jouet; the Mayonnaise presently assumes a spotty appearance; leaves fall from the flowers which tasteful luxury provides in water glasses as at a dinner-table; a moisture not its own is given to the pigeon pie; and a sort of rain gravy forms in dishes of cold chicken; ladies pull up the hoods of their ulsters, men turn up their collars, umbrellas spring up all down the beeches like a growth of magical mushrooms.

But, happily, to-day all is bright and cheery, the latter quality being pleasantly superinduced by popping corks, and the only question to perplex speculative lunchers is what will win the Cup, which is on view on a bracket close to where the Princess of Wales is sitting in the royal balcony.

In the paddock a crowd, in which many ladies are prominent, makes locomotion difficult, and two or three big groups show where the favourites are being saddled. In due course up go the numbers. There are five runners, but it is generally understood that the race lies between a famous Newmarket five-year-old mare, carrying the chocolate jacket and yellow sleeves of a well-known owner, and a three-year-old

from a northern stable, an animal believed by his friends to be invincible. Lord Falmouth has a representative, and there is an American mare, her first appearance on any English racecourse.

Presently they emerge from the paddock and walk down the course, the ring hard at work laying short odds against the Newmarket mare and the north-country horse, which bears a dark-blue jacket with silver braid. The mare is sweating, and does not altogether please when first seen, nor does her somewhat dotty action in the preliminary canter prepossess one in her favour. She is always seen at her best, however, when extended, and her grand quarters look like carrying a heavy weight with ease. Her friends are cheerfully confident; Newmarket declares for her; while the north-country is all for the chestnut three-year-old. Lord Falmouth's mare switches her tail continually as she walks and canters, but she looks well; and the American is seen to be a handsome racing-like animal.

The stands are densely thronged as the five horses make their way to the starting-post. In the stewards' enclosure, men whose faces are familiar in London society, many well known in the Houses of Lords and Commons, are closely

packed. On the opposite side the rails are thickly lined, and Trundle Hill, at the end of the course, has swarms of people on it, reaching in groups half-way to the summit. The north-country horse is a decided favourite as the starter takes the field in hand. His red flag falls, the white advance flag is lowered, and the five are despatched on their journey. The American mare rushes to the front, and leads the field a merry dance down the straight, past the paddock, the stands, and the lawn; her level, easy stride seems to take so little out of her that many begin to wonder whether she may not win after all. So the field turn out into the country, sweep round the hill, and for a few seconds are lost to sight, the American chestnut still well in advance. But when they reappear at the top of the hill and enter the straight for home, good glasses show that the American has had quite enough of it. The favourites rush to the front, the chocolate, yellow sleeves and dark-blue, silver braid come on together, side by side with the magpie jacket; behind them the others, dropping further and further into the rear. The partisans of the mare and the horse shout their hardest, but for the mare shouts are unavailing. It is too pleasantly evident to backers of the northern colt, and too painfully plain to those

whose fortunes are bound up with Newmarket, that the race is for the former. The colt is going much the stronger of the two, and in another moment the whip of the mare's jockey is in the air. The dark-blue jacket forges ahead, with an increasing lead at every stride, and passes the post an easy winner. No. 8 is hoisted over the judge's box, followed by No. 1, the mare; Lord Falmouth third. As the horses pull up at the bottom of the hill, a dense crowd masses around them from the hill and the course, leaving a narrow lane for them to return through to the paddock, where loud cheers are raised for the good horse and his rider.

"A beautiful race, wasn't it?" a pretty girl on the lawn says enthusiastically to her companion, who has heavily supported the wrong one.

"Very!" he replies, not, however, with a very happy expression on his face.

## A DAY WITH TOM CANNON.

A MAN who loves horses can see few pleasanter sights, as he sits at a cheery and comfortable breakfast table, than a string of sheeted thoroughbreds file past the window; and such was the spectacle that met my eyes as I gazed out on the picturesque Hampshire road, opposite the house where dwells the best all-round horseman in England—Tom Cannon.

“The trap will be round directly. We’ll drive up to the downs this morning, and then we’ll ride up and see the jumpers this afternoon, if it isn’t too hard,” Cannon says, as he rises from his seat just beneath the picture of himself, in a white jacket and blue belt, on Robert the Devil, which hangs behind him—a reminiscence of the Leger of 1880, which, with Shotover’s Derby and Two Thousand, Pilgrim’s Two Thousand, the One Thousands of the same mare and of Repulse, the Oaks of Brigantine, not to mention victories on Isonomy, Marie Stuart, Foxhall, Thurio, Pageant, Kermesse, Geheimniss, and other heroes and heroines of



the turf, give to Tom Cannon's name a leading place in the history of English sport.

It does not take long to make a start, but as the horse's feet ring on the road the prospects of jumping in the afternoon, not to say of galloping this morning, seem very doubtful. But then I do not know the glorious downs on which these horses are trained, a splendid expanse of turf, including Stockbridge race-course and its surroundings, which, as I presently find, frost seem powerless to affect; and as we trot on in the waggonette we soon overtake and pass the long string which forms one of the contingents which the indefatigable young trainer has under his charge.

The cold touches up the thin-skinned youngsters, some of which seize the excuse afforded by the passing wheels to dance or kick a bit, as is so often the nature of the thoroughbred horse on the slightest provocation. They are soon quieted, however, and as we alight and walk up a steep hill, Tom Cannon devotes himself to the inspection of a sample of black oats, brought by Olding, his faithful lieutenant and *chargé d'affaires* when the master is away, donning his own scarlet and white hoops, Lord Rosebery's primrose and rose hoops, the white and blue spots, and the other jackets which are

usually associated with the Houghton establishment, and are so often seen nearing the winning-post well in the van.

As my friend examines the sample and discusses the effect of the thick-skinned white oat on the digestion of horses, I am puzzled to know whether the farmer or the veterinary surgeon predominates; but when presently we drive on to the downs, and Olding is directed to bid his forces canter the five furlongs up the hill, the trainer (though he in himself must include many requisites if he is to conduct his business to successful ends) comes prominently uppermost.

The "schoolmaster" leads the way, walks up to a certain spot and sets off, followed by his youthful companions, some of whom begin with a buck and a plunge, soon, however, settling down to their easy stride, snorting and exhaling the fresh, keen morning air as they go. Shrewd remarks on the breed and action of the different animals fall from the young trainer, and it is evident that he is intimately acquainted with the peculiarities of every horse under his charge. And then, as is natural, we fall to talking of the horse and his rider as we stroll about the downs, where Danebury and Stockbridge stands are the leading objects in the landscape.

Tom Cannon has little difficulty in keeping down to some 8 st. 7 lb., and can speedily get off a pound or two if requisite. He has, I need hardly say, a very great many more offers of mounts than he cares to or can accept, and his condemnation of the low handicap minimum, against which his relative, William Day, protests so forcibly and so unanswerably, is not in the slightest degree influenced by personal considerations. While recognizing the merit of many boys, Tom Cannon does not hold a favourable opinion of the average light-weight jockey.

“That unfortunate whip loses such a lot of races for the boys!” he says, “and more especially on young horses. No one knows what a number of two-year-olds are ruined by the whip and the spurs boys are always using. It’s cruel, and besides it does no good at all. See a two-year-old come out on the course, and go down to the post, listening and looking about him. He ran last week, and he was hided, and he was out the day before yesterday, and here he is once more, and he knows that he’s got to run and to be hided again. What’s the consequence? He’s too nervous to put out his full powers; and then when he goes back to his stable, timorous and trembling, he won’t eat,

and, what's worse, he won't drink; and so he goes off when he's never had a fair chance of coming on."

"And two or three false starts—not to say half a dozen or more—don't quiet his nerves?" I suggest.

"No, indeed they don't," the famous jockey rejoins. "As I sit on my light saddle I can feel their hearts against my legs, beat! beat! beat! bump! bump! bump! Then if a careless or clumsy boy is on them they get a bad start after all, and out comes that blessed whip, and so they go whipping and bumping all over the course. Spurs, too, hard at it, though they don't often touch the horse where they want to; and so they never give the poor thing fair play. Why, I make bold to say that if you examine a hundred horses that I have ridden in races you won't find a sign of a spur on three of them. You see the whole secret of the matter is this—races are not won entirely at the post. You've got to think of winning all the way from the start. You must nurse him on his journey; and if you want to nurse a horse to get him home, don't use your whip. He must jump into his bridle, of course, and keep there, but you don't want your heels rammed back into his flanks and your hands up with a short rein punishing his

mouth all the way. You can't reasonably expect a light, weedy two-year-old to carry you the whole course on his jaws."

"Then you think there was something in the Chifneys' loose rein theory?" I ask.

"I don't quite know how far they went, and I only speak from experience," Cannon replies. "You must not have your rein too loose, so that your horse has no guidance, doesn't know what he's to do, and runs all over the course. I don't mean that. But you must keep your hands well back, and if you can't hold him with a gentle pull, try a gentler still; it's just like trout-fishing, you want to be as delicate as that."

"And then comes the finish?" I suggest.

"Yes; and that's where many more races are thrown away," is the reply. "If you hit a horse too much and too soon he will simply come back. He shrinks at the whip—of course he does; he's a great deal too sensible not to do so. A flash young rider flourishes it about in the air and frightens his horse out of his stride before they have well reached the distance. If you want to hit your horse, the whip should be drawn quietly, and never more than seven, or at the outside eight, strides from home. Then the sudden application of the whip causes him to

make a sudden effort, and the great thing is to see if one or two strokes will not do it in the last three strides. A horse can tell, too, when you want him to make the final effort, and if he's game and fit, and you are doing your best for him, he'll go with you."

Olding, trotting up for directions, puts an end to the conversation, and most of the young ones are sent home, while three or four are directed to canter again; for while talking, the master's eyes have been noting attentively all that is going forward.

"Lots of horses," Cannon resumes, watching a handsome filly who goes along gaily, but, on the whole, steadily enough, "are spoilt by being badly bitted. That filly is an example. Nothing could hold her. When she came out she used to run all over the downs like a wolf just escaped from a menagerie. She had some dreadfully severe bits when she arrived, but I tried her in a plain snaffle, and as she did not seem to like that, I had a bit made of wood with some india-rubber rolled round. Now, you see, she goes as steadily as possible, barring an occasional kick or so;" and as he speaks up goes the filly's heels, as if to show she has not forgotten the art in question, but she makes no attempt to get away; and so the last division speed along up the hill,

while—for some of Tom Cannon's children are in the waggonette—we drive on to Danebury to let the youngsters see grandpapa Day; and, after a chat with the genial master of the famous place, to pay a visit to the "cemetery," where are the graves of Bay Middleton, the hero of Two Thousand and Derby in 1836, and Crucifix, by whom the Days swear, heroine of Two Thousand, One Thousand, and Oaks in 1840, the descendants from whose immortal blood thunder so often first past the winning-post. In the boxes and stalls, too, are some good-looking young ones, including a few of the sort which, having good blood and appearance to recommend them, in favourite training phrase "may be anything."

A cordial *au revoir* is uttered and acknowledged at Danebury, and by the time we have looked over some score of horses now kept at Tom Cannon's farm, under the supervision of Thomas, who steered Lord Lyon to victory in the Two Thousand of 1866, and have furthermore sauntered through the stalls at Houghton, I am ready for one of those luncheons which kindly Hampshire hospitality considers necessary, and the keen air of Hampshire downs makes welcome; while Mr. and Mrs. Cannon, far from being surprised at an abnormal appetite, seem to

think that a feast which would last a man for a couple of weeks in town signifies rather a weak and jaded digestion than otherwise.

Meantime the sun has come out gloriously, and doubts about the possibility of jumping this afternoon are entirely removed before our horses come round for a return to the downs, though when we are in the saddle we soon find that the ground is somewhat treacherous ; and this is made very disagreeably plain by the discovery that one of the foals in a paddock by which we pass has slipped up and severely strained himself. On the downs, however, the sun is bright, and except for a slight mist which prevents one from seeing at a distance, it is a beautiful January afternoon. The young ones are soon despatched on their afternoon's work, and then the trainer turns his attention to the jumpers, several of which are to go over the hurdles on the steeple-chase course here laid out.

Preliminary lessons are taken in the grove, close to Danebury, a plantation due to the forethought of old Alfred Sadler, who used to train here some half-century ago (in the annals of the Turf these grounds are second to no training ground in England), and who planted these trees, so that on the broad walks of the cover horses might be sheltered whichever way the



wind came. Here are the two first fences over which the tiro is conducted. A very low gorsed hurdle, with the trunk of a very small tree placed before it on the ground, so as to accustom the inexperienced jumper to the rail before his fences, which he will meet at later periods of his career; and a little beyond a second fence, just a bit higher, and with a slightly larger tree before it; while on the downs are a few low fences over which the pupils are inducted before being despatched on the regular routine of their respective classes, hurdle or steeplechase. These jumps are made side by side, that is to say, half the fence is hurdle, and the other half joining on to it is the ordinary hedge and rail, and in some cases ditch as well.

“They learn to *jump* here, and not to knock the hurdles down and run through them,” Cannon remarks. “You see, the hurdles are all spliced together and won’t give. They have to be cleared;” and by way of illustrating the fact he canters gently up and pops lightly over one of them, while I admire, as well I may, the wonderfully fine hands which guide the horse with such consummate ease.

That Tom Cannon’s seat in the saddle is altogether unrivalled for grace, and what may be called unity with his horse, is on all sides

cordially admitted; but still more extraordinary are those marvellous hands, which, resting behind the pommel of the saddle, and holding the reins with the gentlest possible touch on his horse's mouth, give the animal's head and neck the fullest liberty and yet keep it under the most complete control. How is the secret between man and horse communicated and so thoroughly understood? I have an uncomfortable feeling that if I got on that horse and tried to do the same thing he would pull at me, and my hands half the time would be upon his neck instead of well behind his withers, at the point which the veterinary surgeons, I believe, call the *trapezius dorsalis*. When the other horses came cantering round, if I were up in that saddle I have the best reason for supposing that my beast would want to join in, and would vigorously dispute the privilege of doing so; but though Cannon's horse is willing enough, to say the least of it, to go with the rest when he has the faintest hint that he may do so, that loose rein is an invincible restraint, and the animal obeys it with the most perfect complacence. What, I repeat, is the secret, and how is it acquired?

Meantime a detachment of the young ones have swept past us, and are now nearing the

brow of the hill, and some cloth and leather boots have been brought up for the horses that are to jump. These are new ones, and with the knowledge of a master saddler the trainer examines them. Nothing, it will be seen, is chanced at Houghton; but, on the contrary, each detail, however comparatively minute, is carefully regarded. Then the word is given.

“Take off the clothes of Antient Pistol and the other three jumpers, and let them go round over the four hurdles twice. Start over there by the trees, come on at a good canter—not too fast, but keep them well up into their bridles—pull up at the top of the hill, trot down, and start again in the same place as before.”

The clothes are removed, the boots carefully fitted on, lest a cut or overreach should do temporary mischief, and the quartette trot off into the haze; while we turn our horses' heads and take up our station by the third hurdle, at the foot of the gentle ascent.

“Where are they? I can't see them. Oh, yes; there they come, just by the first hurdle. The bay mare pitches a bit as she lands,” I observe, as they cross the second flight.

“Yes, she has rather loaded shoulders, you see. It's a pity. But look how splendidly the black jumps! If he could gallop as well, he'd

do," Cannon says; and at the moment they approach and pass us, and, following on, we reach them as they are pulling up.

"Once more round, and not too fast," is the order; and off they trot, break into a canter, then a hand gallop, and so repeat the distance.

"And now I think we'll send that mare over a couple of the steeplechase jumps, if she'll go," Cannon says. "Let's see; Hughie shall give her a lead. Look here, just go down with her and come away over those two jumps five or six lengths in advance—just once, and then pull up."

"She'll do it, won't she?" I ask. "She came at the hurdles straight enough."

"Yes; but this is different. She can see through them, and here's a great black thing, and she doesn't know what's on the other side. I shan't be surprised if she refuses; but if she does jump she'll have to clear it or come a cropper, for she can't brush through: it won't give. However, she's got to learn some time or other, and she may as well begin. There they come."

"And she means having it, too," I exclaim, as the chestnut horse came on and cleared it with a vigorous rush, the mare following on in his wake.



"AND SHE MEANS HAVING IT, TOO."



Nearing the fence, she pricked her ears, and seemed, as it were, to measure the distance with her eye; then, gathering herself together, she rose at the leap, cleared it in perfect style, and was away again on the other side after her chestnut leader without a perceptible pause.

“Capital! I hardly thought she’d have done it so neatly. There she goes again, too,” Cannon says, as the pair approach and fly over the second obstacle. “Yes, that’s first-rate. I like the way she looked at it and took in what she had to do. Yes, I’m in a better temper now after that!” at which Olding, who has just ridden up, smiles; for although he knows that his kindly master’s wrath is only a passing cloud, with no sort of mischief in it, there is a pleasure in finding that things are smooth.

It is getting chilly on the downs, and there is a touch of frost in the air as we turn our horses’ heads towards home; and there can be no sort of doubt that the keen air gives one an appetite, which agreeably destroys recollections of the fact that we lunched a comparatively short time ago. A trot home circulates the blood, and, though we are by no means starved with hunger, as Mrs. Cannon in her thoughtful hospitality fears must be the case, the good things my hostess has provided receive ample

justice, as do the beaded contents of the sturdy magnum of a remarkably sound vintage.

The only disagreeable experience I had at Houghton was the necessity of leaving it, and, as I patted the dogs and shook hands with my cordial host and hostess, before stepping into the waggonette which was to take me to an unpleasantly early train, it was with more than ordinary sincerity that I answered, "Indeed, I shall be more than glad," to their hearty invitation to come back again soon.



## SPORT AND SPORTSMEN ON THE FRENCH COAST.

So many fallacies have been exploded of late years that any one who utters what was once a well-understood truth has at first sight the appearance of being behind the age. The man who hints that Jezebel had her weak points, or that Nero was not a model of what a really admirable monarch should be, seems ignorant of the latest contributions to the history of those celebrities; and to chaff a Frenchman for his slight and usually mistaken ideas of sport is very far indeed from being a novelty. Yet what is a conscientious historian to do? To strike out a new line and endeavour to prove that M. de Grandecraavatte goes to work in the right way would give a writer original ground to traverse, but in his journey he would be entirely unsupported by facts. There are exceptions, of course, which all of us could name. Some Frenchmen are as well known in St. James's-

Street, at Hurlingham, in Scotland, at Newmarket, Ascot, Sandown, Cowes, in Leicestershire, and other familiar resorts, as some Englishmen are in Paris and round about it; but these are the few, and from a careful study of sport and sportsmen on the French coast during a race week, I can assert with perfect confidence that the ordinary Frenchman, in spite of all the introduction of various sports during the last few years, knows scarcely more about racing than middle-class Frenchmen—and Frenchwomen especially—know of true politeness and courteous behaviour.

The race week means more than racing. Though there are only three days of racing proper, the meeting extends from Friday to Tuesday, the grand day being Sunday; and the intermediate days are filled up with pigeon shooting, polo, various gaieties of a theatrical, musical, and social nature at the Casino, wild gambling with the race games, and the regatta together with the usual amusements of a French watering-place. So far as the slaughter of hapless pigeons goes, indeed, the “sports” began on Wednesday, excitement having been previously worked up by the erection on the Plage, the green space between the road and the sea, of stands, and an enclosed circle within which the

birds must die if they are to be counted as dead ; together with a further boundary to keep the populace some few hundreds of yards from the shooters, making liberal, but not always unnecessary, allowance for little divergences in aim. There are here, let it be granted, some few men who can knock pigeons down, and a very few who can actually kill them, and who shine at the least admirable of all British sports ; but there is here, also, M. Petitsinge, the quasi-sporting little Frenchman, an excellent specimen of a type which has never yet been by any means exhaustively treated.

M. Petitsinge's ambition is to be considered *un vrai sportmans*, and he, with others who are like unto him, are now in their element. He has plenty of money, which his father made out of a contract for brown-paper-soled boots for the army, and the heir is making it fly. Petitsinge has a share in several crocks that are running at the different meetings along the Normandy coast, and is the owner of three polo ponies that may be seen at exercise on the road to Arques or along the Plage. He does not ride them himself, and has not the faintest intention of doing anything so stupendously insane as playing polo ; but the presence of the little animals affords him an excuse for walking about the

Casino in spurs, with a cutting whip in his hand, and a circular patch of washleather let into the knees of his trousers. It is well known that an English *sportmans* always wears spurs at his *cercle*, and Petitsinge will not be outdone in fashion by any milor.

So he swaggers about, to the intense admiration of the majority of his countrywomen, for Petitsinge does not hide his light under a bushel, and likes to be prominent in every assembly; so that if it should please him to put down a few francs at the table where the *petits chevaux* are running their endless circles, he will elbow his way to the front, pushing Englishwomen roughly aside with as much ease and carelessness as his own countrywomen themselves display when they are too much in the background, and strangers have a better view.

At the Tir aux Pigeons Petitsinge is marvellous to behold. A huge tie spreads over his bosom, and he has changed the riding trousers for others cut rather tight at the knees and wide over the boots. He is in the sweepstakes, and anxiously awaits his turn as the wretched birds flutter a few feet above the trap, receive the two barrels, either fly away or fall struggling to the ground to be killed and retrieved by a dog, who looks a great deal too good for his

work. What has happened to these birds I do not know, but that they are a miserable and feeble race, if they have not been manipulated for the sake of giving the noble sportsmen a better chance, is unmistakable.

Petitsinge's turn is coming. Before him an Englishman steps out on to the planked path. He stands upright; the string is pulled, the trap flies open, the bird rises a few feet and falls within two yards of his late prison. Now comes Petitsinge. Observe his proceedings. He holds his gun in both hands and creeps cautiously from the tent, as though he were stalking wild animals. He stretches his little legs apart, one behind the other; ducks three or four times, as if about to jump in the air; sways his body backwards and forwards; raises his gun to his shoulder and lowers it again; tries a new position, and goes through a new set of tricks. Being able to do this sort of thing with an audience looking on is to Petitsinge the great charm of the *Tir aux Pigeons*; and here we arrive at the true reason why Frenchmen so rarely excel in any sport: they will not think about what they are doing so much as about how they look while they do it. The trap falls to pieces, another pigeon is released. Bang goes the first barrel, and bang goes the second,

the bewildered bird flies slowly right over the shooter's head, over the tent, turning down the Plage past the hotel, from the window of which I am looking on, and disappears into the country beyond. Petitsinge, however, has made a noise and a lot of smoke, and is not unhappy as he retires to explain at length to all who will listen how it happened that he came to miss.

If only to escape from the constant banging of guns the first day of the races is welcome, but for other reasons the novelty of a French racecourse has attractions. Racing in France is no light matter, to be carried out simply by the aid of the stewards and a few functionaries. The municipality, the *maire*, the officers of the various regiments, the *gendarmerie*, all come into play, and for a few sous the inquirer can purchase a paper headed "Police des Courses de Chevaux," including all that "Le Maire le Vert" has to say on the subject. The hippodrome, as the course is called, is at a village about a mile and a half distant from the favourite Normandy seaport of which I am writing. Trains stop at the very entrance, from which the masts of vessels in the port are picturesquely visible, and after passing the line of sentries, without which no function in France can be carried out, you find yourself on the

pretty little course. The principal stand or "tribune" is a canvas-roofed building, with a sort of lawn in front, and some distance behind it the ring is formed by a number of bookmakers, who are already beginning to be musical. At the farther corner of the enclosed space horses are being led about. The two courses, flat and steeplechase, run side by side before the stand, and opposite to it is the water jump, just three times as wide as my umbrella, with the hurdle which does duty for a fence on the ground close by. A big black retriever is jumping about in the puddle, and amusing the people in the few carriages drawn up by the posts opposite the stand. There is no crowd. The stands are tolerably tenanted, and there is a sprinkling of people along the rails, but no hustling and pushing, and the gendarmes in their cocked hats march about with nothing to do except look fierce and military.

The Tribune du Jury—*anglicè* the judges' box—is a small white and red striped structure, and four gentlemen ascend to the top of it. A cracked bell—M. le Maire will have to see to it before next year—rings out as well as it can. Although as regards power of lung the French bookmakers are to their English brethren as water is to British brandy, sounds come from

the ring. "Qui veut un cheval?" "Qui veut Baretta?" "Deux contre Baretta?" "Qui veut Figurine?" "Gagnant ou placé!" "Cinq contre Figurine!" is heard in different voices, an occasional appeal to "Messieurs" to come and take the odds, giving a specially French flavour to the discourse. Fancy an English bookmaker saying, "Five to four against Tristan, gentlemen," "Gentlemen, who will back Goldfield?" Middle-class French people can be polite when they want anything, at least the men can. I do not think any consideration could make a middle-class Frenchwoman behave decently unless she had something to gain by it. The upper and lower classes in France are courteous and what we call well-bred; the middle-class hardly ever.

Meantime the word has been given to a company of red-legged soldiers, who form and march in opposite directions, to clear the course—a very simple duty, for the necessity has already been intimated to the public by a device of M. le Maire, or of some former *maire*, whose example M. le Vert copies. A tricolour flag has been run up the mast near the Tribune du Jury, and good citizens, who know what is expected of them, have read that when this sign is given *la piste doit être évacuée*. Here come the



horses into the hippodrome, a second peal of the cracked bell announcing the event. They canter and go down to the starting-place a little beyond the stand, the red flag falls, the red jacket jumps off with the lead, retains it the first time round, is never headed, and comes in an easy winner. No. 7 goes up after an interval.

The flag descends the post, and this we know *indiquera que la public pourra circuler librement jusqu'à l'annonce d'une nouvelle course*. An outsider wins the Prix du Cercle du Casino, where some of us go and play *ecarté* when the *petits chevaux* and the *regattes* seem slow; and then comes the great event of the day, the Grand Criterium International for two-year-olds. They do not hurry themselves to put up the numbers, these French officials, and there is plenty of time to look about, to note the sheaves in the cornfields away beyond the farther side of the course, the toilettes of the ladies, who are now some of them sitting about the lawn gorgeously arrayed in colours—red predominating. Here, too, are the horses, 41 coloured on the card, including an English detachment. The Count de Lagrange has four in, and Jennings one, so here is a pretty puzzle to solve. Jockeys with unfamiliar colours beneath their

overcoats begin to appear, and among quaint sights is a priest with long black gown and clerical hat, and—a pair of race glasses hung across his shoulders. There is a sort of courage about the act that looks well.

“If you only wear trousers to cover your inclinations, sir, you might as well ride comfortably in boots and breeches,” a Church dignitary with a sympathy for sport once told his curate, who, without actually making a practice of hunting, generally knew where the hounds were, and rode in that direction. This French priest finds no harm in going to the races and wants to see them well when he is there, though the combination is doubtless strange.

There are the numbers—eighteen starters, and of the English division only one, the Duke of St. Albans' *pouliche*. That “difficult” sportsman, the Count de Lagrange, starts three out of the four he has entered, but does not provide the first favourite, the English animal being elevated to that position, though most of the papers “go” for one of the Count's. Petitsinge has had a tip, and is in mysterious conversation with an energetic compatriot about *l'handicap*, as he calls all races without distinction, as to the method by which the weights are adjusted ;

and one of the French sporting papers—there are many, *Le Sport*, *Le Sportsman*, *Le Jockey*, *Le Derby*, and others—has a long account of the importance of this Grand Criterium, and can only liken it to the famous Epsom race which christens one of the journals just mentioned; which, seeing that it is for two-year-olds, is not a very good shot. Nothing could be more amusing to a racing man than to hear the remarkable “explanations” which some of the gallant Frenchmen on the stand give the ladies who are with them as to the why and wherefore of the business which precedes a race, the weighing, etc., and I am sure that twenty-nine Frenchmen out of thirty who go to races know more about Chaldean manuscripts than about the elementary principles of handicapping.

Petitsinge, however, as I learn later on when preparations for a *Course de Haies à Réclamer*—a Selling Hurdle Race—are in progress, actually has views, which, briefly expressed, are to the effect that the present system of weighting horses is absurd, because they carry light weights to go a thousand mètres, little more than half a mile, and heavy weights to go three or four miles in a steeplechase, where there are *des obstacles*.

One good thing about this racecourse is that

the inequalities in the ground afford capital views from various parts, and as some of us stroll down to the post to take stock of the two-year-olds, we see what is to most of us a novel sight. "*Qui veut un cheval? Qui veut Musette II.? Qui veut Pétal? Sept contre Louis d'Or! Cinq contre Pétal! Que veut un cheval? Gagnant ou placé!*" These are offers made in a shrill voice, and coming nearer we see that the "bookmaker" is a respectably dressed old lady, with black bonnet and gown, spectacles, and a professional satchel by her side. There she is, this remarkable old dame, laying the odds all round in the most business-like manner; and a little beyond is a younger woman, who may be her daughter, engaged in the same occupation. To me this is certainly a novel experience, and I lay out a napoleon on the English filly with a very unusual feeling of half-hoping I may not win the old lady's money—as happens in the end, for the boy on Petal finishes in the middle of the ruck, and one of the Count de Lagrange's lands the comfortable odds of 12 to 1.

After this the rain came down as if it had not rained before this year, and gay toilettes suffered, for the canvas roofs of the stands, fine weather structures, were altogether insufficient

to keep out the storm. M. Delamarre's Reine Claude, the favourite, galloped or swam in first for the next race, a handicap, and as the odd-looking little hurdles, made of a sort of broom apparently, were being put up the exodus began. Of the second day's racing I cannot speak from experience, never having been able to overcome a prejudice against racing on Sunday, but I hear that the course, which lies low, was a regular quagmire in parts, and that an animal on which such of the English division as were there had wildly plunged, slipped up, and fell as he was winning in good style; also that a French mare, though she seemed over-weighted in the heavy going, won the steeplechase with considerable ease from her three opponents, thereby diverting sundry napoleons into the pockets of the bookmakers and, I hope, of the plucky old woman who laid the odds. I saw Petitsinge coming back in a clattering *calèche* with two big white horses, and from the little man's appearance I judged that he had been making an ass of himself. Perhaps the splendours of the fireworks revived him somewhat, for a very gorgeous display was given in the evening, and was applauded, the local *Gazette* relates, by "*tout ce que le high life qui se trouve ici a de plus distingué et de plus élégant.*"

## BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE CIRCUS.

“Yes, sir, it *is* a big show,” says Mr. Tanning, the proprietor, in answer to what is by no means a compliment but a simple statement of fact; “and you are right about the horses, as you will see if you care to look down the stables with me. Broken-down racers that have worn themselves out in drawing a cab won’t do for my circus. They’re all very well for the sawdust business, but they don’t suit here.”

We turn aside from the open space in the centre of the hall, where a gentleman is lying on his back kicking a ball about in the air, a performance which looks odd with trousers on the acrobatic legs; and a mysterious knot of other gentlemen, who are clowns in public life, are arranging some business which occasionally necessitates the striking of remarkable attitudes.

“There’s a horse!” Mr. Tanning says proudly, as we pass to the long rows of stabling. “That’s Mamcluke. I bought him out of the Emperor

of Germany's stables. He had been carrying one of the young princes, but he got thrown one day, and I had the chance of buying him. That one belonged to the Emperor of Russia—Sultan they call him; and the next—that chestnut—was given to me by King Victor Emmanuel. He gave me a horse, an elephant, and a lion the same day, and told me to call the horse Romo; it was the day he made his state entry into Rome. Ah! he was a king!" says my guide, reflectively. "He gave me this watch, too," and he shows a heavy gold watch with the royal cypher in big diamonds on the back, and on the face a wonderful collection of guides to the day of the month, of the week, of the year, and other conveniences, including a barometer.

"Does it tell you correctly?" I ask.

"Wonderfully true," Mr. Tanring answers. "With that and the lions and elephants I feel certain about the weather. Many a time they've saved my tents from being blown down."

"It never occurred to me to regard lions and elephants in the light of barometers," I humbly remark, fully aware that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in my philosophy. "How can you tell by them what the weather's going to be?"

"Surest sign in the world," he replies.

“They never make mistakes. When a storm or a spell of bad weather is coming the lions holloa and the elephants all huddle together. Yes, and I can tell, too, pretty well whether it’s settled bad weather or just a passing storm. If the lions holloa all together it’s going to be short. Sometimes they sit round in a circle with their tails all together, and set to making a desperate noise, and that means a short spell; but at other times one begins, and then another, or perhaps two of them sit down together and roar against each other, and then one, and then another two—that means that a rough time’s coming, and won’t soon pass over.”

Having digested this singular piece of information, we pass to the next stall.

“Now, there’s a curious horse,” the proprietor continues. “Washington his name is, a thoroughbred Claybank-Virginia. He’s marked just exactly the same as a terrier is. Where the terrier’s dark—look at his legs below the knee, and his muzzle—he’s marked too. Perfect shaped horse, too, isn’t he? That white’s Riche-lieu; look at his little head—small like a peacock’s! He’s taken prizes in almost all the cities I’ve been too, and he’s one of the best artists I have in the place.”

Mr. Tanning, in fact, regards his horses as



friends and fellow-artists. They know him, and he knows them.

“Come over, old man!” he says to another. “Bonfanti, that is. There’s a head and neck; he looks over at you like a goose! There’s Mars!” and Mars shows an eager desire to have some notice taken of him, gazing regretfully after his master as he passes by.

“There’s Mrs. Tanning’s horse, Jupiter. Splendid jumper! See those quarters, and shoulders the same. Here, boy, strip him. There’s power! That’s nothing,” he says, seeing that my attention is attracted to a mark on his shoulder. “Some of them got loose one night and bit him, but it’s well now. He’s a real nice fellow!” adds his master affectionately, as we leave the gallant horse.

“Now, here’s a strange thing,” Mr. Tanning goes on, as we come to a long row of spotted horses. “There are twenty-three of them—come from Western Bohemia. They’re all spotted, and the peculiarity about them is that at the bottom of the mountain the spots are quite small—see, like that! As you get higher up the mountain the spots come bigger, and up at the top they are marked with patches of dark colour. These skewbalds and piebalds come from Schleswig-Holstein. Those creams I got

from the Emperor Francis Joseph. Hanoverians they are. Soft things. No use, except for toys."

"Do you think there is anything in the colour of a horse?" I asked. "They say a good horse can't be a bad colour?"

"Well, I don't know," Mr. Tanring replies. "A light horse often has a light thin skin; the least thing scratches it. Just the same with a man. Take a sun-burnt gipsy fellow, and hit him on the head with a hammer and you won't hurt him much."

Thinking that so tough a man, so little susceptible to injury, would hardly perhaps be the best one to select to try such experiments on, I follow the proprietor of the big show to look at the famous carriage in which, before the performers begin their business, they are drawn round the ring; evidently one of the special treasures.

"That carriage," its owner proceeds, "was sent to President Lincoln soon after his election, but it was too fine for him—he didn't care for that sort of thing—so I bought it, took it from New York to Hamburg, when there was all that business about a Congress after the Franco-Prussian war. All the emperors and kings were there, you know, in state, but they were 'not in it.' Most of them came to look at it—that

carving in front's beautiful, you see, and it's a real fine carriage. Everybody acknowledged that Tanning had a better carriage than any monarch in Europe. The harness is splendid, too. See here! It nearly takes an elephant to carry it—strong horses I have to get, I can tell you. That harness was made for the Emperor Napoleon, just before he went to the campaign to Sedan. He never got back in time to take it up," says Mr. Tanning, dryly. "There's no nonsense about that carriage, and the servants are to match. All dressed in the best gold, bullion, silk, and velvet. Each man has more than £100 worth of clothes on as he stands behind, and the coachman on the box too."

"You seem to have had a pretty intimate acquaintance with crowned heads," I suggest, as another present from the late King of Italy is pointed out. "I suppose Victor Emmanuel was very fond of circuses?"

"Fond of circuses, sir? He was the best fellow in the world!" Mr. Tanning cries, and I take it to be as neat a response as I have heard for a long time.

From the circus proprietor's standpoint it is easy to comprehend that good fellows are estimated according to their appreciation of the entertainment he provides; and the king must

therefore have been estimable in the highest degree.

“Why,” my interesting informant continues, “I’ve often had the king in the morning when we were practising in the ring, with the whip in his hand—yes, and the princes holding gates for my wife to jump.”

“I’ve not the least doubt she jumped them very admirably,” I reply, and my companion more than admits it.

“Jump, sir?” he says. “I’d give a thousand pounds to any lady that would follow my wife. There! and that one’s coming near up to her,” he goes on, as we emerge from the stables and enter the body of the hall.

“Your daughter, isn’t it? Good-looking horse that chestnut. Does she usually ride it?” I ask.

“Never been on it before, and it’s never carried a lady, either,” he answers, as we approach the ring, where the young lady, on a compact little chestnut, is riding over some poles held to the sides of the enclosure.

“Don’t let his head loose, my dear! Hold him up and make him look like something. That’s it! Where’s the gate?”

A gate with three bars is brought into the ring, and over it the little horse bounds.

“That’s it! Don’t let his head go too loose, or else he’ll slummock all over the place. That’s it! Now then, where’s the big gate? Take it in, Johnny; lend a hand to hold it up.”

The brave girl glances at the sturdy piece of carpentry. There is no mistake about it. The gate is of at least the usual height, firmly made of good stout timber, the sort of thing that, if it has to be jumped, stops a very considerable majority of a hunting-field.

“All right, my dear! If he can jump one he can jump the other. Hold him well together; don’t let him slummock,” cries her father, as she canters round the ring preparatory to trying it. “Now then! Up!”

Over goes the gallant little horse, with more than a bit of a buck; but his rider’s seat is sure and her hands cunning, though the big jolt sends her hat off, and it hangs round her neck as she comes to the gate again, and clears it a second time.

“Now then, round the hurdles,” her father says; and I note that four good big gorse-covered hurdles have been arranged round the hall, after the fashion adopted at the Horse Show.

The little chestnut does not care about jumping any more, but his mistress has a will of her own, and, as he tries to bolt out towards

the stables, is on the alert and checks him promptly.

“Now, my dear. Keep your head up a bit when you jump. Let him go—not too fast. Bravo!” he cries, as the little horse swings over the jump, the rider scarcely swerving in the saddle; and “bravo” from this critic means a very great deal. “That’ll do, my dear,” he says kindly; and there is a proud twinkle in the father’s eye as he watches the brave girl ride off to the stables—as well there may be. “I’ve had most of the noted lady riders in my hippodrome, sir; but there are few of them good for much. They go bumping about on the horse, keeping tight hold of his head, or else letting him slummock all over the place.” (“Slummocking,” it will be observed, is an offence in Mr. Tanning’s eyes.) “No; it isn’t easy to jump such a gate in the circle, I can tell you. Where would the best steeplechase rider be, if he wasn’t trained to it? Why, over the side of the ring, horse and all. You’ve got to *bend* him at it,” he explains, holding an imaginary pair of reins in his hands, and illustrating the process. “It’s easier for a man, besides, with two spurs, a pair of knees and a couple of hands on him. But that girl can ride.”

“We Englishmen flatter ourselves that we

understand something about horses, you know, Mr. Tanning. What countrymen do you find best for your business ? ” I ask.

“Yes, I suppose Englishmen do know something about horses, though it’s dreadfully dispiriting work with some of them that come to see mine,” he answers. “I show a man sometimes one of my best horses, get him to notice the shape and points of the animal, go carefully over it, thinking that he’s taking it all in, and then he says, ‘Dear me, Mr. Tanning, what a lovely tail he’s got!’ I’d rather have a blow on the head than hear such a speech! As for training horses, there’s no one like the Germans; the best trainers, they are, for horses to dance, or to go at liberty, or any other sort of work. Germans seem to have more patience. But when the horses are once broke, and it comes to showing them, there’s no one like an Englishman or an American. The Germans are too slummocky. The Englishman goes into the ring with his head up, and puts the horse through his work; but the German goes round after the horse as though he were carrying a load of wood.”

“How did you come to know so much of all the kings and emperors ? ” I presently ask.

“Well, I’ll tell you,” replied my companion, “for it’s rather a strange story. I had my

circus over in France, and had got to about forty miles from Paris, when I heard there was to be a *fête* at a place they called St. Cloud. I thought this was a good chance for me, so after the performance and supper I started off with my secretary, driving a pair of horses, and reached St. Cloud about five o'clock in the morning. A real nice place it was for a circus, too; but I couldn't put up my tents without permission, and so I looked round to see who was about. Well, there was a stout, littlish gentleman coming along the road where I'd pulled up.

“ ‘Ask him if he knows where we ought to apply,’ I said to my friend. He could speak French and I couldn't.

“ ‘I can speak English,’ the gentleman said. ‘What can I do for you?’

“ ‘Well, sir,’ I answered, ‘I've got a circus and want to give a show here, if I can get permission.’

“ ‘I think that will be possible,’ the gentleman said. ‘Surely that's an American-built carriage?’ he went on. ‘Are the horses American, too?’

“ ‘Yes, sir,’ I told him, ‘and rare good trotters. They've come nearly forty miles, but they're not done yet as you shall see if you care about it.’



“ ‘Thank you, sir,’ says he. ‘I’m very much interested in horses ;’ and he jumped up and sat by my side while I sent them along.

“ ‘When he got down he gave me a card with something written on it, and told me where to take it, and he thought they’d give me leave, and so they did. We pitched in a beautiful place, and when the people were coming in I saw the gentleman standing among a group of officers.

“ ‘There’s the gentleman that got me permission. I’ll go and thank him. Perhaps he’d like to see the performance,’ I said.

“ ‘But the sentry shook his head and wouldn’t let me pass.

“ ‘I want to go and speak to that gentleman,’ I told him. ‘He was very kind to me, and I’ve got something to say to him.’

“ ‘Perhaps he didn’t understand, but another gentleman standing by says—

“ ‘You must not go there, sir.’

“ ‘Why not?’ I asked.

“ ‘Why, it’s the Emperor.’

“ ‘So it was, too, and I’d given him a ride, and been talking to him quite familiarly. But he saw me, and came to the circus, too, and gave me permission to play when I liked in Paris. I’m the only man that ever had leave to

put up a tent inside the walls of Paris. I often saw him after that, and he gave me a letter to King Victor Emmanuel, who was always very good to me. I've given a performance in the old Roman Amphitheatre, and there must have been 70,000 or 80,000 people there."

This, and very much more, Mr. Tanring relates in his own peculiarly graphic style as we stroll about the building. One most admirable feature about the circus is that *kindness* to the horses seems to be the rule. The proprietor declares that the more he sees of horses the more intelligent he finds them; and the manner in which the lion tamer has trained his elephants and lions is marvellous. The former huge creatures waltz about in pairs, stand on their heads with startling agility, and seem to understand every motion of their master's hand.

"But notice how the tamer comes out of the lions' den," says a friend who is with me. "He slips out very quickly, and there's one lion that always jumps after him as if it regretted having missed its opportunity of having man for supper."

So surely enough the lion does, with what seems like an angry snarl; but on asking their master whether the lion is anxious to eat him, he smiles quietly at the notion.

“Only a little trick I taught him,” he explains. “I always have one to do that, and if you notice you’ll see he doesn’t jump at the door, but a little above it. There’s another in the cage that has been taught to do it.”

How this courageous man gives his cue to the lion that is to jump, and makes the other understand that he is to be quiet, are some among the many mysteries of Tarring’s Hippodrome.

## BETTING.

THE method of throwing away money which is known as backing horses appears to be rather on the increase than otherwise, a circumstance which very distinctly proves that the world does not grow wiser as it grows older. Bookmakers spring from nothing, and thrive; there is scarcely a case on record of one of these personages who started with a little money and did not make it into a great deal; while, on the other hand, there are numerous cases of men who have started with a fortune and left it all—with possibly a few unpaid accounts—in the ring. In most things professionals beat amateurs, and this is particularly the case in gambling on the Turf, where one side is guided by a little knowledge and a large proportion of chance, while the other side has probably equal knowledge—for what it is worth—and a mathematical certainty. The fascination of the game is extreme, or so many men who should know better would not continue to play it.

Three words to a bookmaker, and the Monday following brings a cheque for just the sum you have desired to win—if only the words be properly chosen. “Four to one Fair Promise!” yells the bookmaker. “I’ll have four hundred to one,” remarks the backer, who fancies the colt by Hope, from Deception; and if the creature can just get his head in front at the critical moment, the mere utterance of the simple phrase is worth £400.

Only, as a very general rule, Fair Promise, after making a bold show at the distance, dies away to nothing, and finishes a bad third; in which case the simplicity of the operation, which had seemed so delightful at the time, becomes a fatal element. If a man can win money nowadays from the ring, there is very little doubt about his being paid. Backers make few bad debts if they can only find a winner, but *hoc opus, hic labor est*.

So-called “good things” are the ruin of speculators. Nowhere else is it more true than on the Turf that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The horse that is “good enough to win five Derbies out of six” is a cruel source of downfall when, as usually happens, it is on the sixth occasion that the backer plunges. A man is perhaps in the secrets of the stable. He

knows that a certain horse has been tried ; he even knows at what weight he met the others with which he was galloped, and how far he beat them. He is comforted, his money being "on," when the news leaks out in the papers, and the prophets extol the performance.

What he does not know is that another favourite has been tried ten pounds better, and that an outsider, of whose existence not half a dozen people had been aware, is far in advance of either. He gloats over the facts and the criticisms, he turns up previous running in his book, ingeniously explains away the bad performance, and exaggerates the good till the race is over, and he is put out of his misery. The "book," indeed, the "Turf Guide," is a constant source of disaster, for horses are not machines, that can be implicitly trusted to do a second, third, fourth, and seventeenth time what they have done before. The horse's health, the jockey's ability, the luck of the race—avoidance of getting badly off in a short race, having nothing to make running in a long one, the being shut in, or interfered with at critical moments, the nature of the course, the state of the ground—all tell on the result. So many totally unexpected accidents occur.

I call to mind one example of as great a

so-called "certainty" as the Turf seems to afford. The horse had never been better, all the conditions of the race suited him, he had the best rider, there was a small field, and the course was a straight one, where it seemed beyond the bounds of possibility that he could be shut in. To back him was, in familiar phrase, "to coin money." No one for a single second imagined—as proved to be the case—that he would twist a plate on his way to the post, so that a nail running into his foot entirely prevented him from galloping.

A frequent source of grief to men who back horses—though usually at the outset of their career, for they learn wisdom—is a belief in "systems." Some of these look so charmingly simple on paper that a fortune must be within the backer's grasp, he cannot but feel convinced. This is notably the case with the seductive idea of starting with a small stake, backing the favourite each time, and doubling losses till a favourite wins, as statistics prove he does rather more than once in three races. Infallible in theory, it fails lamentably in practice.

There are, of course, men who bet heavily year after year; but they are usually men whose private fortunes enable them to afford the luxury of supporting the ring; and it is a well

known fact that, with a few exceptions which point the rule, men who live by racing, owners of small studs and such like, are consistently moderate in their investments. It is notorious that one of the most successful owners and trainers of steeplechasers—a man with two or three stables full of horses—rarely or never exceeds an outlay of two sovereigns on his animals. A jockey of world-wide fame, who is also owner and trainer of one of the largest collections of horses in England, on rare occasions ventures £50, on what he has convinced himself is a comparatively certain chance; but as a very general custom he does not exceed a bet of £10. Yet another famous jockey, attached some years ago to one of the most successful of training stables, was accustomed to reply, when asked what he would like to have in the stable commission, that he should be glad to venture a couple of pounds. The fact that he did not make money, or rather that he did not manage to retain the money he made, was well known, and surprised his employers. “If he betted it would be comprehensible,” it was said; and, in fact, on the quiet he did bet heavily, and lost his liberal earnings and presents accordingly.

This may look very trivial to those who read



how one trainer (who had caused a horse to be pulled at Newmarket) won tens of thousands of pounds, and how (with an animal that had run no faster than an indifferent hack on its two or three previous essays) a fortune was made by another. A few men who have the wit to make money have likewise the wit to keep it ; but the figure of the rocket and the stick is applicable to many plungers who have landed *coups*. Men who have schemed to win, and succeeded in winning, great races, are driving cabs, possibly drawn by the crocks that have helped to ruin them. One well-known man, who made at least two fortunes, and who was talked of and envied as a wonderfully lucky owner, lost every penny he possessed, and became timekeeper on a line of omnibuses. Luck comes—and goes.

What, then, it may be asked, should be done by the race-goer, who likes to feel some greater interest in the race than the mere spectacle of the struggle can afford ? There is something to be said for the plan of supporting favourites ; because a horse is not likely to attain that favouritism unless it has done good work at home, and commanded the confidence of its stable. Favourites are, of course, made and worked up in the market on occasions for deceptive reasons ; but, as a rule, to “ follow the

money" is judicious. The searcher for winners will also probably have found that one or two of the sporting "prophets" write with knowledge and judgment. Some of them, on the other hand, do not; but he must take pains to find those who do, and note their advice. It will be well for him, perhaps, furthermore, to study "the book," and make himself acquainted with the form of the horse he is inclined to fancy. He should also consider whether it belongs to a stable that is worthy of confidence, presided over by an efficient trainer, and whether the jockey is a master of his craft. If he knows anything of horses, he should then carefully look it over in the paddock and during its preliminary canter, noting also how it goes in the market.

Having done all this, and convinced himself that the horse is likely to win, he will be in a position to advise his friends—men on a race-course usually take any advice that is confidently offered from any quarter—to back the animal. He had better not do so himself, as there are numerous chances against him of which he knows nothing. Should they take his advice, and win, he can congratulate himself on the benefit he has conferred; should they not show faith pecuniarily, he can reproach them with

their folly in missing the “good thing ;” while, should they lose, he will have no difficulty in finding numerous reasons to show that the defeat is an unexampled piece of bad luck, which, however, rather vindicates his judgment than otherwise.

## JOCKEYS.

WITH a considerable section of the public a leading jockey is one of the most important and popular of personages, to be named and welcomed with at least as much enthusiasm as opera-goers bestow upon a favourite *prima donna*. And there are, indeed, many points of similarity between the heroines of the stage and the heroes of the saddle. The rewards to be gained in each case are enormous; in each case, too, the natural and acquired gifts and abilities are rarely found in anything approaching to perfection, and those who attain to the front rank are few and far between. The prizes are open to the humblest; there is no Royal road to success, and proofs of merit must be constantly forthcoming. One of the most popular of *prime donne* played the fiddle at country fairs; others are known to have sprung from the poorest classes; and a jockey has usually been a stable-boy. There is no lack of young ladies with good voices, an adequate knowledge of

music, and fair dramatic ability ; and a morning spent on Newmarket Heath, not to speak of Kingsclere, Danebury, Malton, Lambourne, Stanton, Manton, and other much-frequented training grounds, shows that riding awkward horses is an art in which innumerable lads display considerable proficiency. Yet, though many of these lads have their chances, the top of the tree is a position seldom approached, much more seldom attained, and, with hundreds of diligent aspirants to fame, the popular jockeys of the day scarcely exceed half a dozen. That there "must be something in" the successful rider of races becomes therefore apparent, and a glance at incidents in the careers of jockeys, past and present, may help to show what that something is.

According to "The Druid," the history of jockeys began with John Singleton, who was born in 1715, and hired himself out to train and ride for the small wage of liberty to sleep in the stable and such food as he could get—a contrast indeed to his brethren of the present day, some of whom own strings of racehorses, while most of them live luxuriously (if only the tyrant weight will admit), and put by fortunes, if they care to save, amounting in one instance, unless popular rumour errs, to over £100,000—a hand-

some figure for a young man of some five or six and twenty, who began life in a stable-boy's jacket without a sixpence to call his own. Singleton's doings, however, are lost in the mists of stable history, but before he retired from the scene a figure appeared upon the race-course whose name still lingers—Sam Chifney, senior. There can be no doubt that the elder Chifney thoroughly understood his business and thought for himself, his system of finishing with a loose rein being at any rate original, though nowadays no one would think of adopting the method. Old Chifney had an excellent opinion of himself, and his sons Sam and Will, who followed in his footsteps, fully shared their father's high estimation of the Chifney family. The old man put on record his impression that "in 1773 I could ride horses in a better manner in a race to beat others than any person I ever knew in my time; and in 1775 I could train horses for running better than any person I ever saw."

To compare the skill of bygone jockeys with that exhibited by riders of the present day would of course be futile. It may be assumed that then, as now, the best men got the most out of their horses, and that they were ardent devotees of the sport is shown by many stories,

as of the famous Jim Robinson starting away to the Heath to watch Frank Buckle ride, and if his work were not completed promising half his plum-pudding on the following Sunday to the lad who would undertake to rack up his horse for him. Frank Buckle and Jim Robinson were quite at the head of their profession, and the criticisms of some of their races are interesting to sportsmen of the day. Sporting reports nowadays are usually done in a superficial manner, the writer contenting himself with the summary of bare facts; but details would often be valuable. In an old sporting magazine the reader will find it described how Buckle on Scotia in the Oaks of 1802 was "beaten three times between the Corner and home," but finally got up and won. A less accomplished rider would have made his effort with undue desperation and abandoned the contest; but Buckle knew the great secret of nursing his horse, and was also a proficient in what is known as "gammoning," that is, "appearing to be at work when in reality waiting, a practice very dangerous to opponents, who never knew when he had done with his horse." Buckle was regarded as a rich man, his earnings as a rider being calculated at £1200 a year. In spite of Robinson's admiration for Buckle, he is said to have formed

his style chiefly on Sam Chifney, for Buckle, Robinson declared, "hadn't Sam's fiddling," and a critic continues that "Sam's fingers on the reins, when a horse had a delicate mouth, went like the feet of a dancer on the tight-rope." But some of Robinson's own successes were astonishing enough, notably one contest in which the rider of the second fancied that he had the race in hand and firmly believed that he had actually been successful. Two strides before the post Robinson's antagonist was well ahead, and two strides beyond the post he was leading, but at that precise moment, when they flashed past the judge's box, Robinson won the race. This excellent jockey won the Derby six times, the Oaks and St. Leger both twice; but the St. Leger jockey *par excellence* was William Scott, a younger brother of John Scott the trainer, to whom nine victories on the Town Moor are credited.

Among the qualifications for success in this calling, a profound knowledge of the horse is naturally prominent, and this has not often been more marvellously displayed than by Harry Edwards in the case of Don John's last race. Lord Chesterfield and his trainer, John Scott, debated much whether it would be advisable to start the horse, and, "The Druid" says,



Edwards' veterinary law was finally invoked. "Pulling off his white kid gloves, he passed his hand down the horse's back sinews, and replied, "He'll pull through, and only just." The result, the Turf historian continues, "proved that he had not drawn his bow at a venture. He could hardly keep him on his legs from the Duke's Stand, and then both his back sinews went so completely that they were nearly an hour getting him home to the stables." The name of Frank Butler will recall memories to many racing men. The Oaks was Butler's most successful race, and in the ten years from 1843 to 1852 this jockey was victorious on no fewer than six occasions, while in the latter year he won the Derby for Mr. Bowes on Daniel O'Rourke, and in the next year for the same master on West Australian. "I only touched him once with the spur, and was glad enough to get him stopped," was Butler's remark afterwards; and on the grandson of Melbourne he won his second St. Leger.

The names of jockeys still to be found on the racecourse crop up contemporaneously with the name of Butler, though Aldcroft's rushes are no more, and Wells, a victim to the exigencies of training, has departed. The Grimshaws—Harry, who did such good work, though handicapped by

short sight (Gladiator's Derby and St. Leger to wit), and James, the popular—too popular—light-weight, a leading figure in the Marquis of Hastings' Turf career—have vanished from the scene, Harry having been killed in a road accident. S. Kenyon, again, whose mounts were once followed almost as Archer's are to-day, disappeared prematurely, and the name of Chaloner is no longer a power on the course. Still active survivors who figured in a comparatively bygone era are found in J. Osborne, J. Snowden, and last, not least, George Fordham.

This jockey's career is remarkable. After making an early appearance as the rider of a Chester Cup winner (carrying 4st. 10lb.), Fordham's name is to be found in the list of classic races as the rider of the winners of both One Thousand Guineas and Oaks, on Mr. W. S. Crawford's *Mayonnaise* and Lord Londesborough's *Summerside* (a daughter of *West Australian*), in 1859. His victories were forty-one in the year 1875, and for the next two years Fordham was an absentee. In 1878 he returned to the turf, rode fifty-eight winners, and next year made a good race for supremacy with Archer, who finished with 120 wins against George Fordham's 105. It is much in this

excellent jockey's favour that the tedious, painful, and dangerous sweating, which is the bane of so many riders' existence, is avoided, as Fordham can without trouble ride 7st. 8lbs. Like many other admirable horsemen, Fordham is far from being a model of grace and elegance in the saddle. He has indeed a very ungainly method of hunching up his shoulders as he sits on his saddle, but this detracts nothing from the credit that must be given to him, for possessing nearly all the requisites of a first-class jockey. He is a remarkable judge of pace; knows not only what his own horse is doing, but can tell what his opponents are doing likewise; and possesses that gift of patience which is one of the chief necessities for a great jockey. Constant racegoers would find it hard to name two occasions on which Fordham has lost his temper with his horse, though one occasion might be named—the July Cup at Newmarket. Fordham was on Peter, Archer on Charibert, and the former started favourite; but no persuasion could make the ill-tempered son of Hermit run up to his bit, and the jockey had not quite finished his persuasion when the judge's box was passed, three lengths behind Charibert. That Peter was a terribly ugly animal to manage is obvious, however, and no one knows better than this

rider how to deal gently and tenderly with a young horse. Shrewd common sense, moreover, marks Fordham's proceedings, and out of many instances the course he chose for Sir Bevys in the Derby of 1879 may be mentioned. From Tattenham Corner to the judge's box the track slopes from the Stand side; and knowing that after all the rain that had fallen the lower side of the course would be the heavier, Fordham kept on the upper ground, the better going there having, no doubt, much to do with the victory. On the different Newmarket courses experience and forethought often enable him to pull a race out of the fire, and though no rider more frequently practises the dangerous trick of winning by just a short head, when, in reality, he has plenty in hand, it is very rarely indeed that Fordham makes a mistake. All jockeys like to draw it fine, and some of the best occasionally draw it too fine by just that trifling fraction which makes such a vast difference when the numbers are hoisted by the judge.

But there is no getting away from the facts proved by plain figures, and Archer's average of wins and mounts during the last few years makes it hard for his detractors to explain his success. Many race-goers protest that Archer wins so often because he is so often on the

favourite, but frequently the favourite holds that position simply because Archer rides. The figures remain. If he not seldom has the best horse, having been secured by owners who feel sure of success if their animals are only well ridden, sometimes he has to ride horses which practically have no chance; but, putting all these considerations aside, figures show that for a long time past he has ridden about two winners on an average on five mounts. His successes this year are the more surprising, because he is debarred from riding in many races owing to the fact that he cannot go to scale under 8st. 6lb. or 7lb., a weight which he often has much difficulty in reaching. It is said that Frank Butler was killed by his exertions in reducing himself from the 8st. 10lb. he should have ridden to the 8st. 7lbs. he had to ride. Wells was picked up in a fainting condition more than once; and on more than one occasion Robinson (who could waste from 9st. 10lb. to 8st. in an exceptionally short time), was found lying insensible on a stone heap by the road-side, and was brought home in a cart. Mr. William Day's argument against light-weights, who cannot ride themselves by reason of their youth, inexperience, and want of strength, and who (by the retention of an absurdly low minimum)

keep the best horsemen from the saddle when they have become masters of their difficult craft, applies here with much appositeness. Archer's length of leg is a great assistance to him, and gives him remarkable power in the saddle; he seems sometimes, as it were, to sit back and drive his horse before him. It is a curious, and, under certain conditions, an extremely agreeable sight to watch the popular jockey coming up towards the judge's box, level, perhaps, with the leading horses, or it may be a little behind them. At that precise moment when the effort should be made, Archer's mount seems gradually to forge ahead, and steal to the front; a glance over his shoulder, which he can give without disturbing his seat in the saddle as shorter riders appear to do, shows him the state of the case as regards the other horses, and he either rides his animal with vigorous severity, or, if this be not necessary, maintains—if possible—a sufficient advantage to the end. Nothing is more scorned on the racecourse than to see a rider who has a lead of some lengths, and has evidently won the race, finishing desperately when there is nothing to finish against—an example of which was afforded by the rider of the famous Hungarian mare Kincsem, who won the Goodwood Cup some few years ago.

Archer seems, as a rule, quite severe enough with his horses, but that he can be gentle when occasion demands is proved by his handling of Peter, when he won the Royal Hunt Cup at Ascot. When, in accordance with his most awkward habit, Peter stopped to kick, a little way from the start, a quiet and soothing "Go on, old man!" set this wonderfully speedy horse going again. Another requisite of jockeyship is courage, and this Archer possesses in abundance, as his dashes on the rails round Tattenham Corner and such like dangerous places amply demonstrate. In Bend Or's Derby, for example, it is said that his left boot actually shaved a post, and when one thinks of the horrible effect of smashing a leg against a massive piece of wood when racing at this terrific pace, the daring which runs the risk so fine becomes apparent. "Getting the rails" is usually an advantage, as being the shortest way round the turning, but the jockey must know when to seek this advantage, and to avoid being shut in, as sometimes happens. Petronel would certainly have won the Liverpool Autumn Cup in 1880 but that his rider hugged the rails, and was afterwards unable to get through, Prestonpans and Philammon being in the way. The stout-hearted son of Musket pricked his ears gamely, and would

have taken speedy advantage of an opening had one been made ; but though going much stronger at the finish than the first and second, could only get into third place.

There is no better all-round horseman at present on the turf, and certainly no more graceful rider, than Tom Cannon, who is, indeed, a model of what a jockey should be, though at the same time he sacrifices nothing material to elegance. Like the rest of his most accomplished brethren, Cannon never wins by a length if a head will do ; but he is a consummate judge of pace, and never throws away a chance. Thus, when Robert the Devil won the Cesarewitch in a canter, carrying 8st. 6lb.—an unprecedented weight for a three-year-old to bear victoriously—Cannon was criticised by some persons for exposing the horse by winning so far. His explanation was that had he not won so easily he might not have won at all ; for the horse was going freely and at perfect ease, and to have pulled him out of his stride might have been to have stopped him altogether. Cannon always rides with his head, and his “finish” is especially fine. Inferior jockeys take hold of their reins and whirl their arms about in a way which surely must have the effect of confusing, and of stopping rather than aiding, the horse. Their



hands go as high as their heads, round and round over their horse's withers ; they have seen something of the sort done by riders of acknowledged merit, and try to reproduce it, without in the least understanding what it means. Cannon's finish, on the contrary, is not up and down, nor round and round, but a gliding motion of the hands, backwards and forwards, alternately supporting and encouraging the horse, while all the time his bit is touched with the utmost gentleness.

The only weakness ever urged against Cannon is that he treats his horses too gently, and does not sometimes get the "last ounce" out of them, as Archer invariably does ; but that is only—if it be the case at all—when riding a timorous young horse, and when the question arises if it is better to punish the animal severely on the off chance of winning or to avoid the risk of spoiling his temper, or "breaking his heart," so that he may not be taught to dread a race-course next time he is wanted. No man can punish a horse more severely when punishment is needful, but Cannon's theory is that a game, willing horse can be persuaded to do all that he can be frightened into doing.

The wonderful "hands" which serve him so well on a racecourse are naturally of equal service

to him in riding across country ; and no man in England goes better to hounds.

F. Webb is another sound horseman, who by reason of the low handicap minimum, and the consequently low maximum, has great difficulty in keeping himself down to riding weight. Webb's skill is particularly seen when he finds it necessary to hold his horse together, and come with a rush in the last few strides ; and, what is more, he knows the precise moment when the rush should be made.

Another successful jockey is Charles Wood, who is fortunate in being able to ride well under 8st. Wood has courage and judgment. The former won him the Derby on St. Blaise, the dash round the rails enabling him to get a forward place which he never lost. The number of winners he has ridden during the last three years speaks strongly in his favour ; for a stable boy may, by good luck and a flash of inspiration, win the Derby, but to maintain such an average of success as Wood can show, means consistent ability. Yet Wood rarely rides a brilliant race, to adopt familiar phraseology. He does not give striking evidences of horsemanship ; he is a steady capable jockey with much strength in the saddle, determination, and a long experience which stands him in good stead ; but he does not

seem to "pull races out of the fire," as some of his brethren do, and the art of nursing a beaten horse home which some few of his brethren manage so wonderfully is probably beyond him.

John Osborne, who comes of a northern family long connected with the turf, is to be mentioned with respect in any account of the jockeys of to-day. The father of the present John Osborne trained for Lord Zetland, Lord Londesborough, and other well-known owners in the north, and it was the old trainer who taught his son what he knows—and it is much—of horses and horsemanship.

The attributes of good jockeyship are many, and perhaps it would be correct to put patience almost at the head. This has rarely been exemplified more strikingly than in the case of Lord Clifden's St. Leger. It was especially desirable that the horse should win, in consequence of the constant rumours that had affected his market status, and when Osborne found himself, with the worst of a bad start, some hundred yards in the rear, he may well have felt the extreme painfulness of the situation; for the jockey's integrity is beyond all question, and yet thus to be left would have given some strength to the suspicions which had been in some mysterious way—how has never been explained

—called forth. Ninety-nine jockeys in a hundred would have lost their heads and flurried their horses, but this admirable rider knew the powers of the animal he bestrode, and waited till the others “came back to him;” one after another he passed, stole steadily but surely to the front, caught Queen Bertha, the Oaks winner of the year in the last few strides, and victoriously landed the brown and silver braid.

Snowden is another familiar Northern name, and James Snowden is an accomplished horseman. Lasting fame belongs to the rider who piloted the mighty Blair Athol home in the Derby and St. Leger of 1864, though in truth the jockey here had little to do but sit still, restrain the sweeping stride of the grand chestnut son of Stockwell, and let go his head when the post was nearly reached.

James Goater has ridden so many fine races in his time that he should not be omitted, though he has no longer the energy and vigour of a young man, and comes so slowly “from the slips,” that it does not encourage men who back horses to find him on the saddle for a five furlong race.

The two best lightweights of the day are S. Loates and E. Martin, both lads with old heads on young shoulders. The former, an apprentice

and pupil of Tom Cannon, is indebted to his master's teaching for probably the most rapid rise to favour ever made by a jockey. A natural aptitude for horsemanship young Loates must have possessed, and no teaching could entirely have given, greatly as it has developed, his natural coolness. Mornings spent on the Danebury Downs riding gallops and trials under his master's watchful eye bear their good fruit on the racecourse, and an occasional hint after races have been run has not been lost on the lad. Edward Martin is the son of a highly respected Newmarket trainer, himself formerly a jockey. Both Loates and Martin possess the gift of patience, the value of which has been emphasized; they are in no way flurried if they find Archer or Fordham beside them, and it is certain that the *prestige* of the great names wins many races for their bearers. So many boys, and men too, lose their heads at once if they find one of the popular jockeys of the day by their sides; then up goes the whip, the effort is made too soon, the finish is weak and uncertain, rather hindering than helping, and the older jockey, riding patiently, has an easy task to get home.

Courage, presence of mind, readiness of resource, perseverance, are indispensable to per-

fect horsemanship; and to these the jockey must add an intuitive knowledge of pace, and a thorough comprehension of a horse's powers. If the spectator watch Fordham, Cannon, or Archer, he will note how they glance at their field and gauge accurately, as the result so often shows, what each horse is doing. They know not only how their own horses are going, but how every dangerous animal in the race is going also. They understand to a second of time when the final efforts should be made, and with that inexplicable gift known technically as "hands," Cannon and Fordham are peculiarly successful in, as it were, persuading a beaten horse that he is not beaten, and reserving something for the dash home.

Sometimes it seems that a jockey makes his effort a little too late, that if he had "come" sooner he would just have won. Not long since Cannon pulled his mount together some ten or twelve strides from the winning post, rode his hardest, and just failed.

"It seemed to me," a student said to an acknowledged master of the art of horsemanship, "that Cannon came too late, and that he might have just won the race. Do you think he would have been beaten a head if he had come two strides sooner?"

“No; I am sure he would have been beaten half a length,” was the reply.

From what has been said, an idea of the delicacies and difficulties of horsemanship may be gained by those who have seen races unobservantly. Some veterinary science is highly necessary, and happily the tradition that integrity is needful still lingers in many quarters. All these good points are of necessity rarely found in lads of the class from which our jockeys are taken, and great as are the rewards of success, it is scarcely a matter for surprise that it is so seldom achieved.

THE END.





BY THE SAME AUTHOR.



## SKETCHES IN THE HUNTING-FIELD.

### OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“They show spirit and freshness as well as knowledge, and the author writes like a gentleman as well as like a sportsman.”—*Saturday Review*.

“Light and lively, and have the merit of being dashed off closely from the life with telling touches of humour. Mr. Watson has been fortunate, besides, in finding such an artist as Mr. Sturgess to illustrate his meaning . . . the pair go very smoothly in harness together.”—*Times*.

“A remarkably pleasant and interesting volume.”—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

“The whole volume is so pleasantly kindly, so frankly good-humoured and dashing, as to leave the reader with very agreeable feelings.”—*Vanity Fair*.

“One of the brightest collections of hunting sketches we have ever read.”—*Land and Water*.

“Dashing and hearty, free and fresh in style. . . . The spirited chapters of Mr. Watson find an able illustrator in Mr. Sturgess.”—*Daily Telegraph*.

“A series of more lively hunting sketches have not been written since the days of ‘Jorrocks.’ . . . The illustrations are full of life and vigour.”—*Bell's Life*.

“Written in a pleasing and polished style.”—*Field*.

“Bright and pleasant reading. For a country home library it will prove an invaluable addition.”—*County Gentleman*.

“Mr. Alfred Watson's lively little volume. . . . Mr. Sturgess's admirable illustrations.”—*World*.

“Mr. Sturgess draws horses better than almost any living artist; one fancies that one can hear the hoofs of some of them ringing as they go.”—*Standard*.



