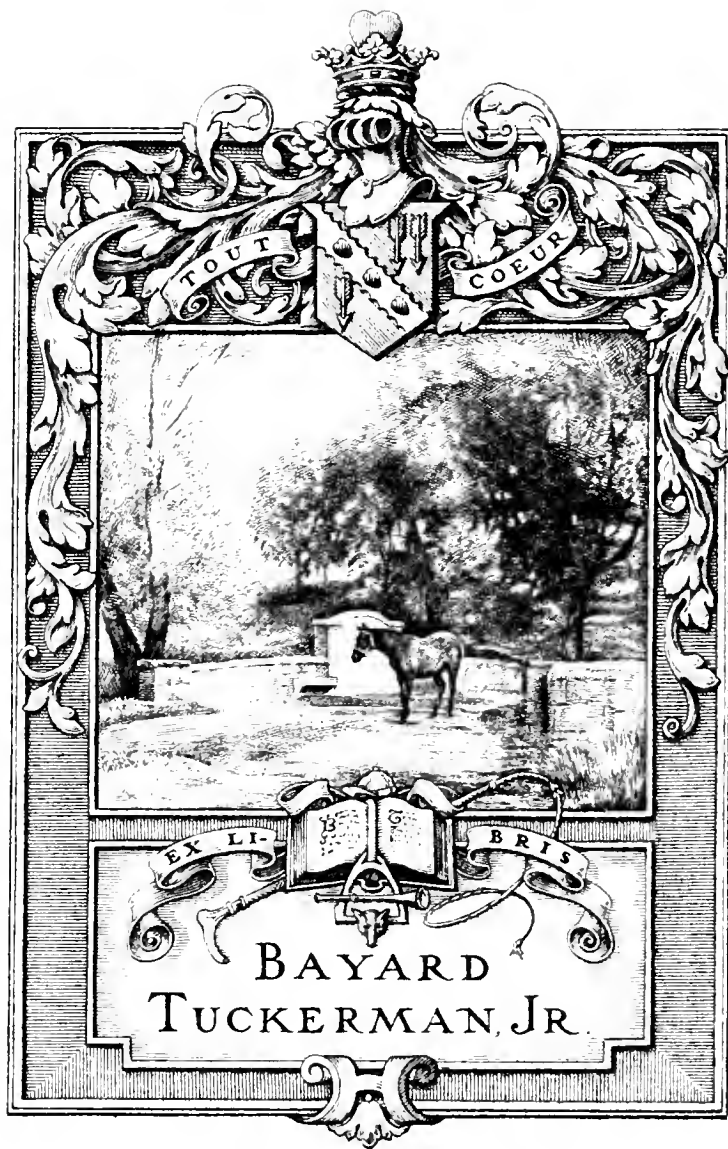




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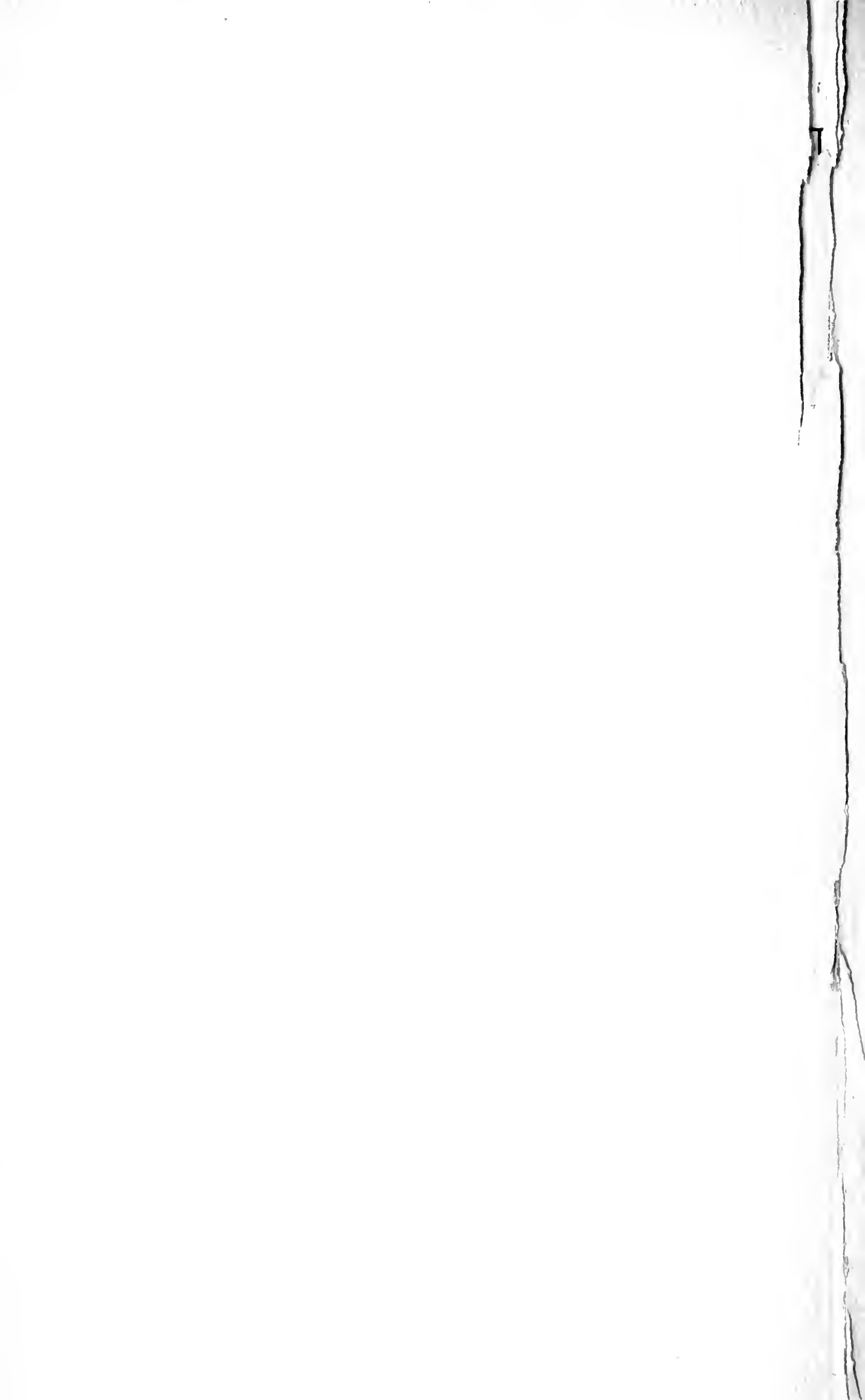
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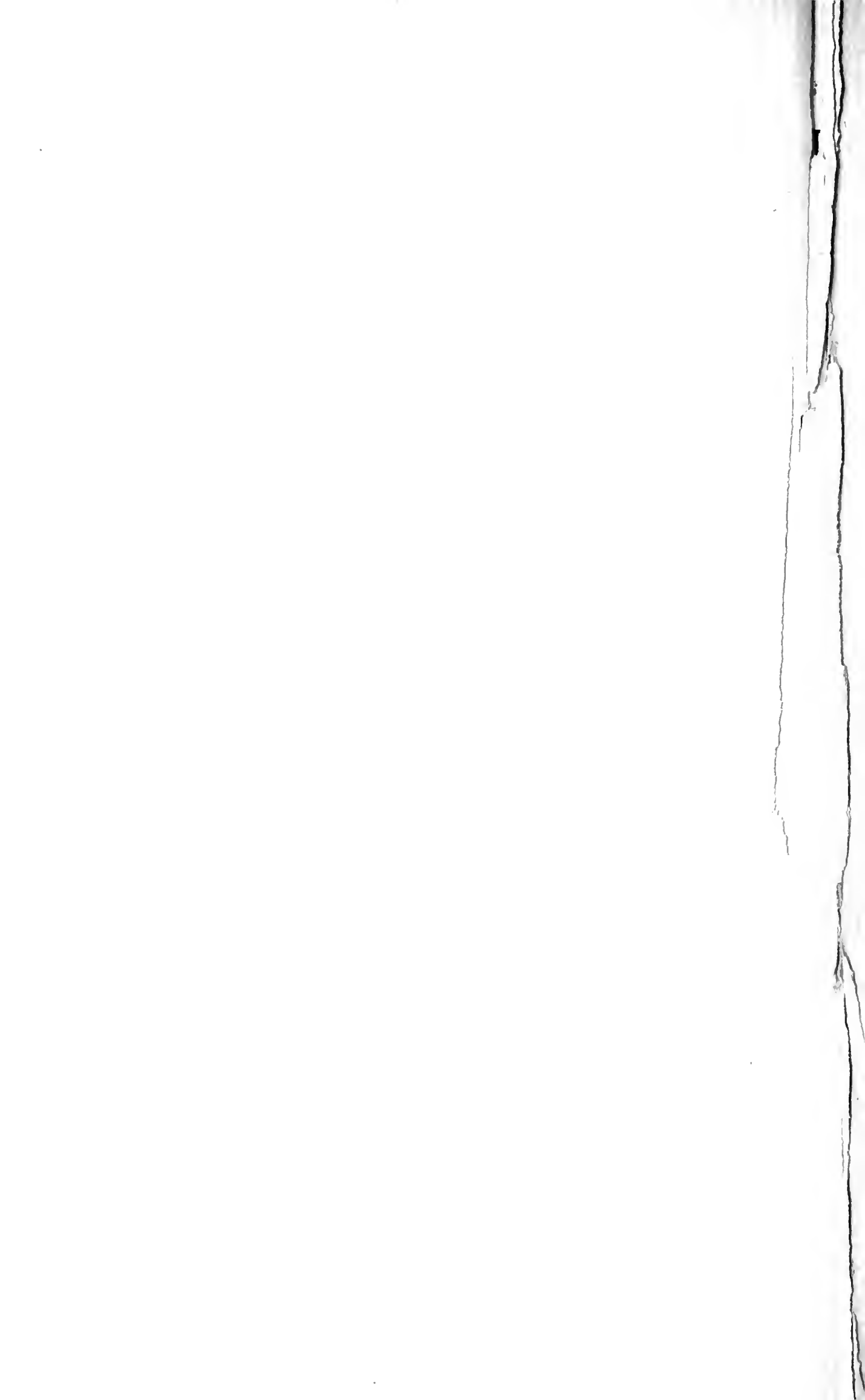
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1900

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To
MY WIFE



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BY WAY OF A START

Sporting Sketches

CHAPTER I

BY WAY OF A START

WHEN a man commences to write a book, sporting or otherwise, he ought to have an object in view. I have two objects in view. The first is to please a generous public who have encouraged me along the path I have chosen; the second, to endeavour to show, however inadequately, that the sportsman in pursuit of his pleasures gets far more than he bargains for.

The racing man may find his pleasures enhanced by the surroundings a bountiful Nature has provided. The angler has many pleasures apart from his sport. The sportsman, out for a quiet week's shooting, will find many things to interest him apart

from his pursuit of game. These 'Sporting Sketches,' and they are sketchy chapters, deal with the surroundings of sport as well as sport itself. I have the pleasure of knowing some good sportsmen in various parts of the world, and have found them keen observers of the numerous attractions surrounding their favourite pastimes.

By way of a start, I may say I have never been able to discover the terrible iniquities some people always associate with sport, and why in the name of goodness should racing be singled out as the acme of sporting wickedness. Racing needs no defence from me; the many noble names associated with it are a sufficient guarantee that it is the sport of gentlemen. It would ill become me to pose as an advocate of racing, for it stands in no need of any champion; it is 'the sport of kings' and 'the king of sports.' It has held an honourable position for years, and I doubt if it has ever been more honoured than in the year nineteen hundred.

I have invariably found, during a somewhat chequered career, that when a man

runs down any particular sport to which he has a pet aversion he seldom knows anything about it. I once heard a preacher who was launching his oratorical thunder against horse-racing, say, 'What is racing? What does it mean? You do not know? I will tell you.' And this is what that learned divine told an expectant congregation: 'Horse-racing means cruelly ill-treating noble animals, given for our use and not for our abuse, for the purposes of gain.'

I honestly confess that I was astonished, and the astonishment gave place to burning indignation, followed by amazement, that any clergyman was possessed of such crass ignorance, and capable of uttering such barefaced—stories. Probably no horses have a more luxurious existence than race-horses, and many a man would consider himself 'well done' in life if he had as 'fat a billet' as the average thoroughbred.

We are a great nation, and it is our sporting proclivities that make us greater than other nations. The best sportsmen make the best soldiers,—there can be no doubt about that. It was the sporting spirit, dominant in our

race throughout the world, that made men rush with impetuosity into the ranks of the Empire's defenders at the recent call to arms.

What but the spirit of sport made our soldiers play football at Ladysmith with shells from the Boer cannon hurtling around them? What but the bravery fostered by sport made the gallant gunners 'field' pieces of burst shells, and cry out, 'How's that, umpire?' with a hail of bullets all amongst them, and comrades going to their last account on every side? I think the recent stirring times have proved to the hilt that sporting men are ever to the fore where there is danger to be encountered, battles to be won, the honour of our Empire to be maintained. Scurrilous abuse cannot affect such men or the sport they love.

I know from experience something of the sport-loving Australians. I knew when the war tocsins sounded there would be a response from the land of the Southern Cross. I did not live amongst the sportsmen of Australia for eleven years for nothing. I knew the pulse of that grand country's sons,

and that it beat in unison with our own. And where on the face of the earth will you find better sportsmen than the Empire's sons in Australia? This young child of an old parent has shown what it can do. At cricket, racing, and rowing, Australia has shown us the way, given us the lead. Her soldier sons have proved their skill at feats of arms. I have known Australians travel thousands of miles to see a cricket match, or a horse-race. Are they the worse for their sporting proclivities? No, a thousand times no. The love of sport is, I firmly believe, so embedded in the British race that it will never be rooted out. It blossoms in the most extraordinary way, and often in the most unlooked-for places.

This, reader, is by way of a start. I am practising 'sketches' on you; bear with me a while longer.

When and how does a man first imbibe the love of sport? It is born with many people, I think, because some children's surroundings are certainly not calculated to promote the growth of sport.

My sporting proclivities commenced at an

early age; it may be a sample of how other people fall in love with sport.

I possessed a black retriever dog, a lady dog called Bess. She was an intelligent dog; most dogs are. I have a distinct recollection, when I was a mere child, of being dangerously ill, and when I recovered somewhat, old Bess would sit near me for hours and *look at pictures*. She took a most intelligent interest in them, and I have been told she actually turned over the pages with her tongue until she came to that marvellous story, 'Old Mother Hubbard.' When Mrs Hubbard was represented as going to the cupboard to give the poor dog a bone, Bess thumped vigorously on the floor with her tail, utterly regardless of the fact that the cupboard was bare and so the poor dog got none. I also recollect Bess tackling a huge mastiff out of pure love of sport—dogs have it badly developed—and my father rushing to her assistance. When he had hauled off the mastiff—he was big enough to have made a decent meal of Bess—she looked at him as much as to say, 'Bad form to spoil sport I call it.' Various tufts of black curly hair

lying around merely received disdainful whiffs from her.

Bess was my first horse. She pulled me round the garden in an improvised sulky,—made out of a soap box and a pair of perambulator wheels by our man,—who seemed to me at that period to be capable of fashioning all things on earth, or under the earth. The garden was square, *ergo*, the curves were sharp. Bess loved those curves. She made a dash at 'em, something like Archer used to do at the rails at Tattenham Corner. Strange to say when I first saw Archer come round that corner I thought of old Bess and fancied the crack jockey would be 'left' as I was many a time. The *modus operandi* of Bess was as follows. We started at the top of the first walk, a shade down hill. Speed gradually increased. As we neared the corner, Bess made for the rails, the cart made for 'Epsom Downs Station'—racing men will at once recognise the precarious position of the occupant of the soap box. There was a sound something like a man trying to skate on gravel. The wheel 'on

the rail' left the ground and I was hurled into the nearest flower bed.

Did Bess stop? Not a bit of it. She careered madly round with the cart banging and clanging until she arrived at the starting post. Then she calmly lay down in the shafts and panted for more.

From these small beginnings a desperate love of sport was begotten. It followed me to school, which was no great distance from Altcar, and made me brave the wrath of a desperate master in order to see Master M'Grath win a Waterloo Cup. I cannot be sure which—his third, I think. This same feeling made me captain of the school eleven, before I left, and caused me to enjoy half a dozen fellows sitting on various parts of my body at football—Rugby. When I went to business at Manchester, it caused me to sneak off to see the Manchester Cup. It made me throw up business and try farming which I delighted in. But even at farming the love of sport was too strong, for my uncle said, 'You'll never make a farmer.'

'Why?' I asked in astonishment, as I thought I was just cut out for it.

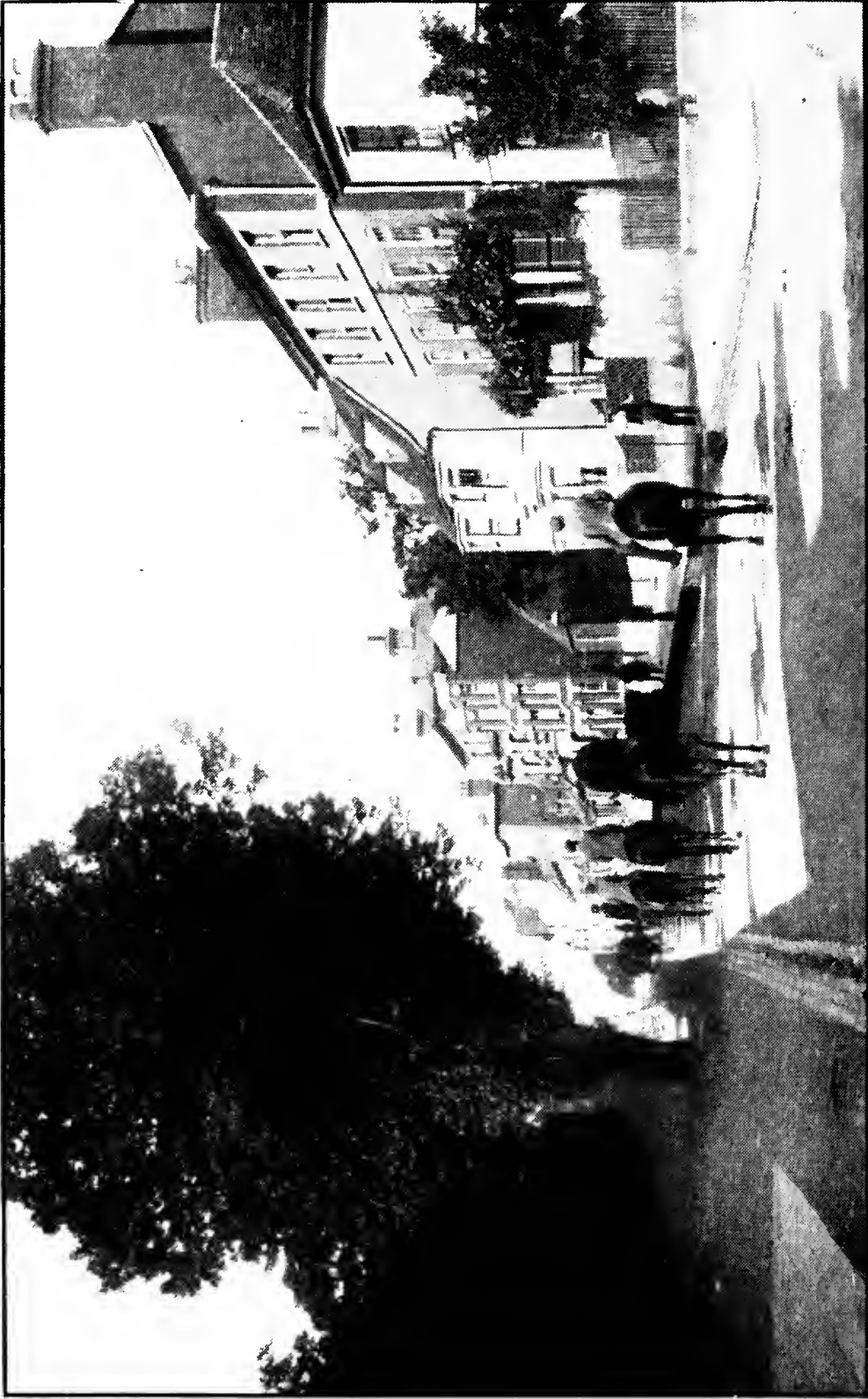
‘Because you appear to think farming consists mainly of riding horses and shooting rabbits—and other things.’

So I left Derbyshire and migrated to Nottinghamshire. This was a sporting move again. I was fairly in the heart of a sporting country, and Lincoln handicaps, and Croxton Park races, and Nottingham handicaps, on the old forest course, were standing dishes. Boating on the Trent, fishing, occasional shooting, visits to the Dukeries and Rufford, Ollerton, Worksop, Tuxford, Retford, Southwell, etc.; glorious days they were. These were some of my early surroundings which helped to foster my passion for sport. Then came Australia and eleven years’ racing there, not alluding to divers other sports. I have merely mentioned these incidents in order to show how easily a man graduates in sport. I do not wish to force personalities upon my readers, but as my own case illustrated the impression I intended to convey, when I said sport was born in some people, I give the experience for what it is worth. If these ‘Sporting Sketches’ create a love of sport in any man’s mind who is not yet built

that way, I shall be proud of securing such a convert.

And now, having made a start, come with me to Newmarket and let us see a few of the surroundings of racing at the headquarters of the Turf.

HIGH STREET, NEWMARKET



HIGH STREET, NEWMARKET.

CHAPTER II

HIGH STREET, NEWMARKET

IT is surprising what a number of men who attend race-meetings—not racing men, there is a wide difference—have never been to Newmarket.

A friend from New South Wales said to me not long ago, 'I like your books on colonial life best because I know all the places you mention and can recognise many of your characters.' Many who read these sketches will probably know more about Newmarket than myself, but they may find something to interest them in the sights and scenes with which they are familiar. To those not acquainted with Newmarket I will try to convey a faint impression of the headquarters of racing and its surroundings.

There is something about Newmarket which cannot be described in print, to give any

adequate idea of the feelings engendered by a stay in the town. There is also something in the atmosphere of the place which I am at a loss to account for. The moment you arrive at Liverpool Street Station, and make your way to the Newmarket train, the atmosphere, even here, commences to change; there is a 'raciness' in the air which cannot be mistaken. As you sit comfortably back in the carriage, you feel it is a Newmarket carriage, although it differs in no way from the ordinary compartment. The examiner, as he looks at your ticket, says cheerfully, 'Nice morning, sir, no change at Cambridge, right through to Newmarket.' He seems to recognise that you are bound for Newmarket, although it is not the terminus. The train rushes along, and a glance at Bishop's Stortford is obtained as we whirl past and then a stoppage at Cambridge. From there we proceed at a sedate pace past Six Mile Bottom and Dullingham. Once on the platform at Newmarket the indescribable atmosphere becomes intensified. Any man with a love of sport in him could immediately tell this was a place devoted to horses, even if the magic name of Newmarket was not

to be seen. At Newmarket one breathes a real thoroughbred atmosphere. No sooner do you pass out of the station than you realise what training grounds at headquarters are. On the way to the town the impression that Newmarket is wholly and solely given up to horses is intensified.

High Street, Newmarket, is a wonderful place on race days, and other days.

The time is say between seven and eight in the morning. A sweet spring morning, the air pure and refreshing, the sky clear, and the birds twittering in the trees.

A string of fifteen or twenty horses, walking in Indian file, may be seen going up the hill toward the racecourse, just passing Lord Wolverton's new house. They are all clothed and hooded and the initials of their owner, with coronet above, are skilfully and artistically worked on the corners, almost where the cloth covers the border line between the thigh and the gaskin. Each horse is ridden by a lad. These 'lads' vary in age. I have known a 'head lad' verging upon seventy, and there are lads of tender years, but not of tender consciences, or possessed of infantile manners or modes of

speech. These lads do not sit still ; they move the body with the motion of the horse, and their legs, some short, others long, seem endowed with perpetual motion. A 'flank movement' is the favourite one, urging the mount on with imaginary spurs, a digging in of the heel which makes no impression. These lads, perched up aloft, regard pedestrians with a patronising air. They scorn men who use their legs for walking purposes. Following this string of thoroughbreds is the trainer, mounted on a sturdy cob between fourteen and fifteen hands high—a cob with good action, steady, and yet full of life. Trainers' cobs always appear to me different from other cobs. Probably it is the influence of the Newmarket atmosphere before mentioned. The trainer is a smart man, well dressed, carefully groomed, and taking a pride in the personal appearance of himself and his horses.

Riding by the trainer's side is one of his patrons, who has run down to Newmarket to see the horses work, and have a gallop on the Heath.

As they near the top of the hill, a rider on a smart cob, lighter built than the trainer's,

comes cantering behind them and pulls up as he reaches 'the end of the string.'

It's a famous jockey going out to 'ride work,' to breathe fresh air, and inhale health with his exercise.

Farther down the street another string of horses may be seen wending their way, and later on ladies and gentlemen on horseback are hurrying to the famous training grounds.

The string first noticed has arrived at the Heath, and the horses are now walking round in a circle. Three or four of the lads dismount, and prepare for a morning gallop, a pipe opener on the glorious Heath. The jockey dismounts from his cob, and gets up on one of the race-horses. Three of them move away down the track, and in a short time they may be seen coming along at a racing pace. Near the road are groups of spectators watching the work of the horses with interest. The newspaper correspondents are there taking accurate note of the morning's work, and their keen eyes see everything that goes on. Scores, nay, hundreds of horses, are to be seen at work on the Heath every morning.

What a magnificent training ground it is. The splendid going, the wide expanse of country, the pure fresh air, the singing of the larks, the thud of galloping hoofs, all tend to make Newmarket the first and foremost training ground in the world, both for business and pleasure. How enjoyable are these mornings on the Heath. Small wonder it is that rich men who love sport are devoted to Newmarket. Not that Newmarket is a poor man's paradise by any means, but for a man with an ample supply of cash, and who is fond of racing, a house here is regarded as absolutely necessary. All day long the High Street affords ample evidence that the place is devoted to the thoroughbred. Horses are constantly passing up and down, either being led, or ridden. Some are on their way to the station to be boxed for a race-meeting, where it is hoped they will 'earn their oats.' Others are being quietly exercised in this manner. A well-known stallion passes and attracts attention. He has done with hard work on the turf, and a life of comfort is before him. True he is the 'Lord of the Harem,' but he has no

more trouble with his numerous wives than an Oriental potentate, if as much.

At night, when no race-meeting is on, Newmarket is quiet, and it's a case of 'early to bed, early to rise,' with many of the people. Being so handy to London, when racing is taking place, crowds of people come down daily by the specials.

High Street on a race day is a busy place. Down the centre of the street stand the cars cabs and carriages waiting for a load to the stands. The bulk of the people prefer to walk as there is a capital footroad all the way.

Groups of people stand about the post office and the entrance to the lane leading to the telegraph office. Ten minutes in Newmarket telegraph office on a race morning, or night, is a revelation. Hundreds of telegrams are despatched giving tips for the various races. Stable lads, tipsters, touts, and people whose occupation it would be difficult to guess, throng the telegraph office to send away the very latest intelligence to anxiously-expectant clients. Some of these men try to serve their clients well, others

select horses for races at random and trust to their luck. I should be afraid to estimate how many of these tipsters there are in Newmarket, some hundreds, I have no doubt. The majority of stable-lads appear to be graduating in the tipster line.

It is a coarse but somewhat humorous crowd surrounding the post office and blocking up the footpath. There is a good deal of chaff bandied about, and some of the language used is manufactured on the premises. The Newmarket loafer has a wonderful faculty for inventing strange words. In fact it's about the only thing he can invent, except fictitious tales about prominent race-horses; in that he is an adept.

The 'loafer' all over the world has certain distinguishing characteristics. He always considers himself in a position to advise other people, but if he follows his own advice, it is evident he derives very little benefit therefrom. The shabbier the individual the more wonderful is the information he has to impart. Possessed of so much knowledge 'direct from the stable,' it is marvellous how self-denying these men are. They appear

to fast often and drink much, and to consider the apparel does not proclaim the man. They can guarantee to make other men's fortunes, but not their own. They are great philanthropists, because they give away so much information that they have none left for themselves.

'Give me a couple of bob and I'll tell you a certainty.'

I was looking at the pictures in Clarence Hailey's window when a seedy individual thus addressed me.

I always take it as a compliment to the guileless innocence of my appearance when anything of this kind happens.

'My good man,' I replied, 'you underestimate the value of your information. Two bob for a certainty, really I cannot think of robbing you. Try again.'

He looked puzzled. He seemed to have doubts about my innocence, and it troubled me.

'Are you quite sure it's a certainty?' I asked.

'Yes,' he replied, brightening up. 'So help me never, I had it from ——,' mentioning a well-known jockey.

‘Friend of yours, I suppose?’

‘Known him ever since he’s been in the saddle.’

‘And you are positive it is a certainty?’
I repeated.

Words failed him, and he waved his hands to indicate there had never been such a good thing before.

‘Then, my friend,’ I said, ‘I strongly advise you to pawn your ——,’ mentioning the usual garment in such cases, ‘and back it.’

He expressed his opinion of me in a most eloquent flow of language, and used many words which were strange and new to me.

The ordinary hanger-on of racing seldom frequents Newmarket. He feels out of his element there. The surroundings are not to his liking. The opportunities are not such as he desires.

Newmarket is in every sense of the term the headquarters of the turf. In the town itself, in the vicinity of High Street, are many houses owned by noblemen and gentlemen of wealth and position in the land, while the surrounding country boasts of large mansions and big estates.

I strongly advise any Australians who are fond of racing, and there are thousands of them, when they visit England to go to Newmarket. I do not mean go to Newmarket races only, but to Newmarket when no races are on. It is a revelation; there is no other sight like it.

In a sense it is a marvellous sight, fascinating and magnetising, drawing the sportsman like a loadstone. The mere name of Newmarket means more than I can express to a man fond of racing. Its history and associations afford the most interesting reading. The history of Newmarket is a history of horse-racing England. There is nothing particularly attractive about the town, but it has no need of attractiveness to make it interesting. Its inhabitants are devoted to horses, and nearly every name recalls some past racing scene in the world of sport. Of racing at Newmarket I will write in the following chapter.

RACING AT NEWMARKET

CHAPTER III

RACING AT NEWMARKET

As I have already stated, there are many men who attend race-meetings who have never been to Newmarket, but there are racing men who prefer Newmarket to any other course. There is much in a name, and Newmarket has so many associations gathered round it that the mere mention of 'headquarters' has an irresistible fascination for hundreds of racing men.

The ordinary visitor to Newmarket races has many discomforts to put up with. Somehow he feels he is in the way, that he is not wanted or merely tolerated as a necessary evil to provide for expenses. The inhabitants regard him as their lawful prey, but this is the case in most towns at race times. The racing man must have an ample supply of cash if he wishes to do a race week at Newmarket properly.

Despite the many discomforts, there is some indefinable charm about racing at Newmarket that cannot be experienced elsewhere. To me it's a racecourse which cannot be beaten. There is something peculiarly satisfactory to the senses as one gazes over the Heath in every direction, seeing nothing but green undulating land, with hardly a tree or shrub to obstruct the view. The effect is strangely soothing for a racecourse. It is the vastness of the Heath which produces the same satisfaction that a good sailor experiences on watching the great expanses of the sea.

In bleak, cold weather Newmarket is a dreary place, and the wind howls and whistles round the stands, and tears across the course in unrestricted, boundless, unobstructed freedom. A man need possess a strong constitution to withstand the cold blasts of Newmarket Heath.

There is, however, another aspect, the sunny side of the Heath, which is bad to beat. There is no more delightful place on a balmy summer's day, when the sky overhead is blue, the grass glowing green beneath, the sun shedding

warmth and light around, the air soothing calm and refreshing. Then the famous Heath is at its best, and the racing is seen to advantage. The accommodation at Newmarket would be considered unworthy of the great reputation of the course by visitors who had been accustomed to the luxuries of Flemington or Randwick, the headquarters of the Victorian and Australian Jockey Clubs. Compared with many English courses they do not appear adequate. Conservatism is deeply rooted at Newmarket in the hearts of the members of the Jockey Club. Tattersall's ring is not so bad, but the stand in it resembles a hay shed with seats in, or, to be more correct, broad stairs on which the patient sufferer, who has paid a guinea for admission, can wipe off with his handkerchief, his coat, or nether garment, the marks left by climbing feet. It is not pleasant to rise from the contemplation of a race to be reminded that there is the impression of a muddy boot on a certain portion of the anatomy, which leads the casual spectator to suppose you have been kicked. Dan Leno suggested that a comrade in the 'Forty Thieves' should receive 'the order of

the boot.' Perhaps he got the idea at Newmarket. If a bookmaker stands on a piece of paper in the ring at Newmarket he is at once threatened with dire pains and penalties. I sometimes wonder why slippers are not provided for them at the entrance, so that at least one end of them should be noiseless.

The Jockey Club stand does not impress one with feelings of awe, and aristocratic shins must 'sorely' object to knocking against cane-bottomed chairs. At no other spot in this fair land can be found so much aristocracy compressed into so small a space as in the Jockey Club enclosure at Newmarket.

The ten-shilling stand is provided for people who are thankful for small mercies, and the stand lower down is for folk who disdain to ask for any mercies at all, and would not get them if they did.

The place, emphatically the place (not within the meaning of the Act) at Newmarket is the paddock, or the birdcage, or the saddling enclosure, or the parade, or whatever you like to call it.

There are two ways of proceeding from Tattersall's ring to the paddock, three, if you

care to take the risk of being summarily ejected if caught using the third route.

You can pass out of the ring, and stumble down half a dozen or more steps, and be precipitated into the outer world, or you can pass through the underground passage which, if skilfully navigated, is the nearest way. This passage reminds me of the priest-haunted subways in Rome, or the main entrance to a catacomb, fashioned on a new, but hardly improved plan.

Once in the paddock, the lover of racing is repaid for all his sufferings. He may have received the 'order of the boot,' he may have been bumped and had his pet corn crushed in the subway, but in the paddock such minor discomforts are forgotten. It is not so much the paddock, as what can be seen there, which is the attraction.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales seldom looks happier, or more free from the cares of state, than when smoking a cigar in the paddock, he passes into a loose box to take a private look at the Guineas favourite. Dukes are plentiful and earls and lords are abundant. Baronets and knights are as frequently met as

mere ordinary folk. Here we see a duchess, perhaps Her Grace of Devonshire, there a countess, and that beautiful woman is the wife of Prince — — It may be a foreign title, but she looks every inch a princess. There are young scions of noble houses consulting with level-headed men who have grown old in the racing world. There are wealthy commoners, rich beyond the dreams of avarice. The ladies are dressed in the height of fashion, but with a subdued charm about their costumes not noticeable at Ascot or Goodwood. At Newmarket they have a more racing air, for the headquarters of the Turf never resembles a fashionable overcrowded garden-party. There are trainers and jockeys hurrying to and fro, with an occasional word here and there to some acquaintance or patron.

There are small knots of men discussing the chances of the horses, and 'the man who is in the know' is not absent even from this sacred ground.

And the horses seem to look better at Newmarket than elsewhere. They appear to have caught the same indescribable feeling I have before alluded to. As they walk

round in a circle before an admiring crowd, they look quiet and reflective, thinking possibly of the race they have to run in the Guineas, which is the next race on the card.

It is a scene full of life and animation, and yet, for a racecourse, devoid of bustle or great excitement. In the paddock we have breathing space, and discover that Newmarket is not so bad after all.

It has been repeatedly asserted that to see racing at Newmarket properly a man must be mounted on a good hack. I do not deny that a hack may come in useful, but the racing can be seen without the hack if a man will use his legs. The various winning posts are somewhat confusing to a stranger, and, of course, the race card gives no information worthy of the name. Looking from the stand down the famous Rowley mile there is the first five furlongs of the Abingdon mile finish, the Peel course finish, the Ditch mile finish, the Abingdon mile finish, and the Rowley mile finish in front of the Jockey Club enclosure. There is a general exodus

from the stand to see these various finishes, except by the men who are there merely for betting purposes. It is a grand sight to see a big field of horses coming down the Rowley mile. The course is wide, and they spread right across at the starting post, and then when the flag falls they sweep down upon the stands. The Two Thousand is one of the prettiest of races from a racing standpoint, and so is the Cambridgeshire, but there is more of the picturesque about a Royal Hunt Cup. The objection to the Cesarewitch is that the horse cannot be seen for the first part of the journey, but the excitement as they come round the Ditch mile corner makes up for it. Then there is the July course, at the other side of the Devil's Ditch, and the old Cambridgeshire course, which finishes at the top of the town. Anyone walking about on the July course at Newmarket, on say Guineas Day, would feel he was out in the country, and miles away from the roar of the crowd.

There can be no doubt about it, Newmarket racecourse is a delightful place,

notwithstanding its many inconveniences, which could be easily done away with. When the races are over there is a rush for the station. The various cab drivers and brake drivers have been mulcted in a heavy sum at the gates, as they came down to the course, so they take it out of the public who desire a lift back to town. There is much yelling and shouting, and dire confusion in the vehicle ranks. The people, however, get away quickly, and after the departure of the last special Newmarket town is comparatively quiet. I have on the night of a big race day at Newmarket walked down the top of the town end of High Street, at nine o'clock or thereabout and not met half a dozen people between that place and Lowther House, nearly half way. A few belated revellers may be met towards eleven or half-past, but, as a rule, there is very little noise in Newmarket on a race night. To do Newmarket races properly there ought to be no rushing backward and forward to London. That takes the heart out of a man, and spoils his pleasure. Newmarket is a place where

racing ought to be taken leisurely. Then there are the morning gallops to attract attention, which cannot be seen when the journey home at night is undertaken. My advice is, if you want a week's racing at Newmarket, go and stay there from Monday evening until Saturday. Stay at comfortable private rooms; if you possess a friend who can recommend you to any so much the better. I was lucky in this respect on many occasions. After a day's racing on the Heath, a good dinner, and a pleasant rest and smoke in peace and quietness, are things to be appreciated. We hear much of the joys and comforts of hotels. They are preferable for people who like crowds off a race-course as well as on it. Perhaps a bustling life has made me appreciate stillness and restfulness in a greater degree than is usual. Knocking about the world makes a man appreciate the blessings of home. In the cosy easiness of an arm-chair it is pleasant to talk over the day's racing, and the memories it arouses, with some bosom friend.

To enjoy Newmarket racing thoroughly

a clear head at night must be the herald in advance of a clear head in the morning. A splitting headache, or a touch of seediness, is not a fitting accompaniment to the sound of galloping hoofs on the famous Heath.

ON THE HEATH AT ASCOT

CHAPTER IV

ON THE HEATH AT ASCOT

WE are now on a well-horsed coach, bowling along between Hounslow and Staines, on a perfect road, level as a die, and with a first-class whip on the box seat. We are driving to Ascot, the Royal Heath. A famous road this, on which the Exeter coaches in years gone by travelled from London at a high rate of speed. In a few minutes we are passing Hounslow Heath, where highwaymen demanded toll from travellers in 'good King George's glorious days.' Hounslow Heath, where many an unfortunate has been executed on the gibbet, a barbarism of a bygone age. Hounslow Heath, where were encamped 'the soldiers of the Queen' the night before the last Jubilee procession. That was a grand sight, and one I may never see again. Some thousands of horses were tethered there that night in long rows

between the tents, and thousands of cavalymen were burnishing bits and stirrups for the great day. The artillery had unhorsed their guns and were resting after a hard day's march. The Heath was the scene of an enormous camp.

The barracks are on the right, and many a soldier serving in South Africa has thought of the days he spent on Hounslow Heath. Alas! many who have trod it, or ridden over it at a furious gallop, will never see it again.

But Hounslow Heath is quickly left behind, and we spin over the little bridge which spans the water coming down from Curtis & Harvey's powder mills. On the left a tall church spire rears skywards. It is the new tower and spire of Feltham Church, whose splendid peal of bells were presented by the late (law) Sergeant Spink, and strange to relate the first night they pealed forth their music on the still air news came that the generous donor had just passed away, and the pealing stopped. It was a dramatic incident in the quietude of village life. We are not alone on this well-kept road by any means. Scores of car-

riages and traps are passed, all bound for Ascot.

During the previous week this road has been alive with caravans and carts. Houses on wheels, tenanted by swarthy gipsies, whose good-humoured cunning faces are lighted up with the hope of a rich harvest on the Royal Heath. Huge vans rumble along, carrying provisions for the hungry throng, like some vast commissariat transport ahead of an advancing army. Tramps innumerable, begging a bite and a sup on the way. Carriages with a week's forage stored inside for the horses, and the driver giving a lift to a couple of mates who are going to 'make a bit' somehow. These things have gone on ahead, our coach passes carriages and brakes filled with gaily-dressed people.

A pretty little village this ; a typical village. There is the village green with its duck pond, an old inn signpost standing erect and battered. A curious ancient church built in various styles until its original architecture has been lost. Added to, pulled down, patched up, there it stands, a monument of other days. In front of the porch are 'the peacocks,'

two huge yew trees, cut and trimmed in the well-known peacock shape one sees at Haddon Hall, and on various parts of the Duke of Rutland's estate. Some hundreds of years old are these trees, and the legend goes that they were planted in memory of two rich old ladies, who were too proud to marry—as proud as peacocks. There is the Vicarage close by, a charming residence.

Further on the road runs alongside the enormous waterworks, in course of excavation and embanking, for one of London's districts. A mighty piece of work is this. A good four miles round and taking about as many millions of money to complete it. The work is being carried on by Aird & Son, the well-known builders. I have driven all round it and seen what a stupendous undertaking it is.

Staines is reached and we halt for a few minutes. Then on again through Egham, and presently we are dashing down a steep hill with the trees standing high on either side, and again we halt at the Wheat Sheaf at Virginia Water. A charming place with the big lake at the back in which may be caught some excellent fish by permission of

the ranger of Windsor Park. On again and we are soon at Ascot. Our driver handles his team skilfully along the village road, and we pass the grand stand entrances and turn through the gate to the Heath.

The first sight of Ascot Heath at the race-meeting conveys the impression there is a vast fair on, and a huge encampment of gipsies and other wanderers. We drive into one of the carriage enclosures and 'there you are, don't you know,' for the remainder of the day.

It is a glorious June day, not bleak and cold as it was a couple of years ago, when ladies who were wise 'did Ascot in furs.' Now it is a brilliant day and the gathering is in keeping with it. The Heath is crowded with a motley kaleidoscopic throng, ever changing, ever varying in colour, with the movements of the crowd. The grass is not a dazzling green, it is a dullish brown, and stunted furze bushes abound. The course is 'hard as iron,' and anticipated breakdowns of famous horses are looked upon as an annual occurrence. The legs of the thoroughbred and Ascot course do not agree, and the legs invariably get the worst

of it and give way. The vast majority of folk present, however, are not there to consider horses' legs, they are more concerned about their own, as they steer in and out between the carriages, and dodge the attentions of horses' heels.

If Newmarket is the headquarters of racing proper, Ascot is the headquarters of picnic racing. Ascot in my humble opinion beats Derby Day at Epsom hollow. The picnic on the Heath is far more enjoyable than the 'rough and tumble' on the Downs. I have never seen a picture like that of Ascot Heath during race week anywhere, either on this side the world, or the other. Flemington on Melbourne Cup Day is the nearest approach to it in Australia. The surroundings of racing at Ascot are far more interesting to the majority of people than the racing itself. The scene from the top of a coach is full of life, movement and colour. Opposite are the stands, the Royal enclosure and the paddock.

It is a brilliant sight to see the lawns, just before the horses come in sight over the brow of the hill in the race for the Royal Hunt Cup. For weeks past the costumes of the ladies who are present have occupied the minds and

employed the fingers of the most skilful hands in Paris and London. They are superb, beyond compare, they are Ascot dresses and they are the acme of perfection. It is the height of the London season, the summit has been reached. After Ascot the turn is taken which leads to the grouse moors, the partridges and the pheasants. Therefore it behoves every leader of fashion, every society beauty, anyone who aspires to be anything at all in the great social world, to rise and also to dress to the occasion. It is the height of the season and the height of fashion. The climax is reached; art can do no more for them this year.

And the occupants of the Royal enclosure are worthy of the skill, time and expense that has been lavishly bestowed upon their costumes. Where can such a galaxy of beauty be seen as in the Royal enclosure at Ascot? If the dresses are dazzling, so are the wearers. The whole of the year some people may despise dress and allude to it sneeringly. They cannot do so at Ascot.

We must, however, leave the aristocracy of the lawn and paddock, and mix with the

democracy of the Heath. Some extraordinary costumes may be discovered amidst the caravans and tents on Ascot Heath. They cannot be described. When many of the wearers of these wondrous garments are gathered together they present the appearance of an ancient patchwork quilt. All the colours of the rainbow, and more, many more; colours a rainbow has never put on are there.

You may have ten fortunes told in as many consecutive minutes. You cross a brown hand with silver, only one, the other is occupied with a fat little baby whose face is as brown as the hand. You look into a pair of black eyes which are full of roguishness, and yet not bold or unkindly. You see a mass of black hair, surmounted by a gaudy hat, or a brilliant-coloured shawl, a pair of earrings glisten in dark-skinned lobes, and a set of white, gleaming teeth enhance the value of a mischievous smile. You hear your fortune told, and you are satisfied, for you have been informed of many things which under the circumstances can never possibly come true.

If it is luncheon time, there is no occasion to waste anything. Barn-door fowls could not pick up a handful of corn cleaner than the wanderers on Ascot Heath lay hold upon stray morsels thrown from coaches and carriages. The gigantic constable, who is on guard below, keeps an eye on anything valuable, for some of the surrounding gentry are light fingered and slippery—his turn comes later on, when he can take his bite and sup in peace. Niggers regale us with melodies born in music-halls; there is a lightning calculator at work, a handy sort of man when you are reckoning up the odds. The collector of stray bottles dives under coaches and carriages and appears again with his lawful prey. That man with the sack is collecting fragments of food; 'all is fish' that comes to his bag, whether it be meat, bread, lettuces, unpicked chicken bones, lobsters' claws, or upset pickles. This is the bagman's stew, and he loves it. At the rear of the carriage enclosures are the banners of the bookmakers' brigade. I mean the outside bookies, not the members of the ring, who fare sumptuously and are wondrously

garbed; they are penned in an enclosure, the gentlemen with the banners revel in freedom. One banner informs a gaping crowd that Bill Snarler the prize-fighter holds the bag and will pay first past the post. He does not say how he will pay, whether in coin or blows.

Another banner relates that 'this is your old friend Bloggs;' he refrains from mentioning to what circumstances he bases his claims for friendship. 'The Brummagum twins' claim attention, and we wonder if they pay double over the winner. 'The old soldier' hangs out his banner; he had to fight his way through an infuriated mob when the favourite won. 'The Middies' are respectably got up. The middy with the bag points to the chalked up list of prices which look tempting. An innocent selects a twenty to one chance. The middy rubs out the two, with marvellous dexterity inserts one, and yells out to his partner, 'Ten bob to one, take 'em down.' It is no use arguing with him as to the impropriety, not to say cheating method of his proceeding. He is a man above argument. Judging from his flow of language, he is a man

exuberated with his own verbosity. I have watched these men and learned much from them. In order to dispel lingering doubts, let me add that I never practise what they preach.

Behind the banner bookmakers are rows of caravans, lanes of refreshment tents, and horse enclosures. The notice of the War Department ought to be drawn to these tents full of horses. It would give them a lesson in cramming, I mean so many horses into so much space. A man on guard informed me that there was less danger when they were packed tightly together. 'You see, sir, they haven't room to kick.' I had to acknowledge the truth of his remark, and went away feeling that any rebuke of the system would fall flat. It is surprising the horses never get mixed up. I did hear the following yarn :—

A gentleman was driving a pair home, and when he pulled up at an hotel, he said to his groom,—

'Bates, there's something wrong with that near side horse.'

'Yes, sir, there is, sir.'

‘What the deuce is up with him? Doesn’t seem like the same horse he was going down.’

‘No, sir. You’re quite right, sir. He’s *not* the same horse. He was the only one left in the tent, and I put him in on spec.’

‘Then whose horse is he?’

‘D—— if I know, sir.’

‘Then where’s my horse?’

Same reply.

There are many advantages of this kind at Ascot.

It is one thing to get on to the famous Heath, quite another thing to get off. Endeavouring to drive off Ascot Heath after the races is like joining a procession that has no pretensions to keeping in order, or any particular line of route. The easiest method of evacuating the battlefield is to flash pieces of silver under the noses of certain men, who always seem capable of forcing a passage. I acknowledge the process produces much irritation on the part of persons who do not flash silver, but this cannot be avoided.

By judiciously distributing shillings you have the satisfaction of knowing you may possibly have done some good to persons less well off

than yourself, and there is also the satisfaction of beating other people, and getting away well ahead of their dust. Dust is a mighty factor on Ascot roads. If you have no shillings to distribute you remain in the ruck.

THE PRETTIEST RACE IN ENGLAND



VICTOR WILD CANTERING UP THE COURSE.

CHAPTER V

THE PRETTIEST RACE IN ENGLAND

THERE may be an inclination to disagree with me when I allude to the Royal Hunt Cup at Ascot as the prettiest race in England. I have seen nearly every race of importance run for in England, and must award the palm for attractiveness, as a mere racing spectacle, to the Royal Hunt Cup.

In connection with this race the surroundings of sport are much in evidence. The Royal Hunt Cup run on any other course would be an ordinary race of seven furlongs, one hundred and sixty-six yards, to be accurate. It is the course and the surroundings which make the Ascot Royal Hunt Cup such a pretty race. I have already attempted to describe the scene on the Heath. Imagine for one moment this scene five or ten minutes before the time set down for the race for the Royal Hunt Cup.

Everyone on the Heath is on the tiptoe of expectation. Every coign of vantage is occupied. The coaches are crowded, the box seats of carriages are used as grand stands. Chairs and improvised platforms are requisitioned, caravans are let out—the roof portion. On both sides of the course a vast crowd lines the rails six and seven deep. The stands are filled, the lawns packed, the Royal enclosure uncomfortably filled, the paddock well-nigh deserted. There is a rush to be ‘on’ in Tattersall’s ring, a last endeavour to back the winner.

A field of twenty-five horses file out of the paddock and gallop down the course. One horse takes the lead, then three more, then half a dozen in a bunch, followed by a rush of the remainder with one whipper-in, who is taking it easily on account of his big weight. A pretty sight indeed with the bright new jackets flashing in the sun. They disappear over the brow of the hill, amidst the trees, and their reappearance is anxiously awaited.

There is a delay at the post. At last, ‘Here they come.’ No, it is a false alarm, a bright colour comes in sight, but only for a moment. There has been a break away, and the ‘scarlet

and black' comes as far as the top of the hill. The horse is quickly wheeled round and disappears again. Another wait and a white cap is seen. Again a false alarm, for it suddenly vanishes. It must be a start this time. The horses are not to be seen, but something tells the waiting multitude that the flag has at last been lowered. Some moments of anxious expectation, and then over the brow of the hill, a few dots of red, white, blue, green, brown, yellow, purple, orange and lilac, are seen. Dots only for a fraction of a second, and then the colours show up conspicuously as the jackets come in sight. These colours are supplemented by the horses, and the twenty-five thoroughbreds, racing at top speed, appear in full view over the hill.

It is a glorious sight, a picture once seen never forgotten. The dark background of trees, the line of dull brownish green on the top of the rise, the brilliant colours of the riders, the thousands of people looking down the long, straight course, all tend to make up a picture without a rival in the racing world.

And the race itself is generally worthy of its surroundings. The Royal Hunt Cup is one of

the most popular handicaps in the year. It is not an easy race to win, but it is a race over which much money can be won, often at liberal odds. It is a race run over a trying course, almost uphill from start to finish. There is a shade of relief from the 'collar,' after the brow of the hill is reached, but later on, when the finish is near at hand, there is a stiff pinch to try the mettle of the gamest thoroughbred.

I recollect Cradle, Julius Cæsar, and Mandarin in succession, then that memorable Cup won by Peter, and in 1884 Acrostic, just before I sailed for New South Wales. Then a big blank until I returned home, when Cloraine, Quarrel, Knight of the Thistle, Jacquemont, and Refractor won it, also in succession.

As the horses reach the dip there are anxious eyes looking for the favourite and his nearest attendant in the betting market. Such horses as Victor Wild and Eager rouse the enthusiasm of the sport-loving public. A good horse with a big weight is always sure of a grand reception at Ascot or anywhere else. Victor Wild was a popular idol. He was cheered as he went down to the post, and cheered all the

way as he gallantly struggled up the hill. It was the same with Eager.

Coming out of the dip it is seen the favourite has a good position. The 'yellow and black' of his rider stands out prominently in the centre of the course. On his right are the familiar primrose and rose hoops. In the front is a lightly-weighted outsider with something between a brown and a purple jacket, or both, close to him. It is a real good race. Of the twenty-five runners, not five are hopelessly beaten. There is plenty of room for them right across the course, and they are spread out wide. There is something sneaking along close on the rails, and a horse going well far away on the outside. The centre divisions are in closer order, and all appear to wish to take the same bee-line for home.

There is a jockey sitting patiently on a horse that is going well, and lying about sixth or seventh.

Perhaps it is Morny Cannon; it looks like him from here. Yes, it must be 'Morny' with that graceful seat, those steadying hands, judging the pace as well as his father did before him; no slight praise this, let me tell you. No wonder

the Cannons can ride, for was not 'Tom,' their father, the most finished of horsemen, a perfect miracle on the back of a timid two-year-old.

'Look at Cannon, see him, Bill, he's steady-ing the old horse for a run home. Here goes another half quid on him;' and the speaker, whose appearance is not suggestive of a superfluity of that handy coin, disappears in the direction of the bookmakers with the banners.

There is a jockey crouching low down on his horse's withers, with his body bent almost level with the neck of his mount, his face nearly hidden from view, so low down is it on the opposite side from the occupant of the coach.

He wears a light blue jacket, and the top of a black cap can be distinguished. It is 'Tod' Sloan in his crouching attitude. 'Tod' at the height of his fame. The little American who has followers by the hundred, whose name is bitter in the bookmaker's mouth, as he says, 'Here six to four, Toddy,' and before the jockey's names go up, 'I'll lay two to one, Sloan.' Generous man. There may be twelve runners, but such is Tod's fame, that two to one is considered a liberal offer.

It is not an elegant way of riding; it reminds

one of juvenile days, when the pony became an obstructionist, and the lad on its back was precipitated forward, and affectionately clutched him round the neck with both arms. Morny Cannon's style is our style; after all there is something in grace and elegance. It is brought prominently to notice when comparing 'Morny' and 'Tod.'

Yes, Cannon is nursing his mount, and there is Sam Loates keeping an eagle eye on him. Near at hand is Rickaby, the most dapper of men, and Tom Loates and Madden are not far away. There is Charlie Wood come to 'jockey life' again surely, and that youngster with somewhat of 'Morny's' style is his brother, Kempton Cannon. Bradford and Finlay, Nat Robinson and Seth Chandley, Allsopp and Purkiss, and some others fairly well known.

It is going to be a good race, a ding-dong finish, we can all see that. At least ten horses have good chances as they reach the first carriage enclosure down the course. They are struggling up the hill now, and the pace is hot. There is no time to lose, and Cannon knows it is now or never. He makes a move forward, but cannot shake off Sam Loates, Rickaby and Charlie

Wood, while 'brother Tom' and Allsopp are handy. Sailing away in front is 'Tod' Sloan, crouching down low on his mount, but not quite still now; by his movements he is getting a trifle uneasy. 'Tod' likes to get in front and keep there; it saves such a lot of trouble.

On this occasion he is destined not to keep in front to the end, the light blue falls back and 'Tod' has to taste the bitterness of defeat. He does not like it, but even 'Tod' cannot have matters all his own way.

'Sloan's beaten!'

A thousand voices herald the fact that the Royal Hunt Cup is not for the American or popular Lord William Beresford. There is no more thought of Sloan now; he is beaten, and the winner must be looked for elsewhere.

Who will it be? Who will land the Royal Hunt Cup? 'the prettiest race in England.' The struggle is not over yet. Five horses are fighting it out, neck and neck, and there is no flinching on the part of them or their riders.

It is a hard tussle and shows the pluck of the thoroughbred, the stuff he is made off, the blood that will tell, and has left its

mark all over the world. The jockeys know their mounts and strain every nerve to win. The horse has the strength, it must be guided aright, husbanded, until the final and critical moment, when the rider can assist him in this last pinch, and perchance snatch the victory.

A great sight, a glorious sight, a specimen of pluck and endurance seldom seen. It is racing in the truest sense of the word, racing for honour and fame and the spoils of war. There is nothing mean or paltry about it, or those thousands of people would not watch these five men and five horses struggling as though their lives depended on the result, with such breathless attention and compressed excitement.

So intense is the strain that there is comparative silence and the thud of the horses' hoofs can be heard.

First one colour in front, then another. A gain of a couple of yards, a loss of a dozen inches, an advantage of a head or a neck, a desperate effort to recover a lost half length. The jockeys' faces firm and set, the horses' heads stretched out towards the win-

ning post. Behind the struggling five a batch of ten, then five more, and the 'tail,' and beyond that the crowd surging up the course, and the trees rustling in the breeze over the brow of the hill near the starting post.

The Royal Hunt Cup, and a right royal hunt it is for the horses following the leading five, from which the winner and the placed horses must come.

The suspense is ended at last, a momentary advantage is gained and a horse and rider prove their superiority just in the nick of time, and a head and neck are seen by the judge and part of the second horse, with the third close up and number four and five beaten out of places, but by no means disgraced.

The Royal Hunt Cup, the prettiest race in England, is over for another year, and Ascot can now give place to a different scene.

**MANCHESTER CUPS AND LIVER-
POOL NATIONALS**

CHAPTER VI

MANCHESTER CUPS AND LIVERPOOL NATIONALS

A QUARTER of a century. A looking backwards indeed. It is suggestive of coming grey hairs; mine arrived some time ago, and even now are precious and scarce. Not that I am particularly ancient, having been born at Manchester on December 21st 1857, according to 'Men of Mark,' and 'Who's Who.' These are handy tomes to possess in case a man forgets his identity. Only twenty-five years, but a long vista to turn round and contemplate. A great change occasionally takes place in twenty-five minutes, so it is only natural to expect twenty-five years to contain some excitement. I have made fairly good use of those twenty-five years from a seeing-the-world point of view, but constant movement does not seem to produce wealth. Having

'dumped down' again in the dear old land, perhaps some remnants of fortune may stagger my way.

Having been born in Manchester I naturally have fond recollections of the grimy city. There was no ship canal then and the river Irwell, which always reminds me of an indigo vat in the colour of its water, went on its unclean way in peace. Whiffs from the Irwell occasionally attended divine service in the cathedral. Manchester was the first city to have a monument of Oliver Cromwell erected in its midst. It stands somewhere between the cathedral and the Irwell—between church and state—the state of the river. It is a heavy statue and was erected in 1875. The 'Man of Huntingdon' is cast in bronze, and stands on a roughly-hewn rock. One hand rests on a drawn sword, the other hand is extended as though he wished to shake hands with some pal who holds his memory dear.

Regarding the Manchester ship canal alluded to, the project was mooted as far back as 1823. The Liverpool people did not 'cotton' to it. Here is a protest:—

‘A humble petition of the Liverpool Corporation to the Manchester projectors of the Grand Ship Canal :—

‘Oh, ye lords of the loom,
Pray avert our sad doom,
We humbly beseech on our knees ;
We do not complain
That *you* drink your *Champagne*,
But leave us our *Port* if you please.

‘Your sea scheme abandon
For railroads the land on,
And to save us from utter perdition.
Cut your throat if ye like,
But don’t cut the dyke,
And this is our humble petition.’

Poets flourished then, it seems, even in Liverpool. Both Liverpool and Manchester are great northern sporting centres. The Liverpool Grand National and Manchester Cup are two important events. At Manchester, races were held on Kersal Moor in 1814. Pertaining to the races in the aforesaid year, two remarkable instances of sudden death occurred to visitors upon their homeward journey. On the Wednesday a farmer and his wife were returning upon a double-carrying horse ; passing Ardwick Green, the wife asked

the husband to stop a moment, and she instantly died in an apoplectic fit. On the Thursday evening a resident of Greengate, Salford, stopped at the door of the Old Half Moon, Chapel Walks, and called for a glass of gin; whilst the host went into the house to get change for a shilling, the guest suddenly expired as he sat on horseback. Thus writes the chronicler, one R. W. Procter, but he omits to relate whether or not the gin was the immediate cause of death. These instances may come in useful to Price Hughes, or some other pulpit orator of his class, as illustrating what happens after attending a race-meeting. I make no excuse for rambling about Manchester; it seems to come as natural as being born there.

In 1873, that is more than a quarter of a century, I saw my first Manchester Cup. It was won by Indian Ocean, a six-year-old, carrying 8 st. 12 lbs., and there were only eight runners. I will not be certain, but I think he ran in blinkers, for I have some recollection of his running with his head 'in a bag.' It looked like it to my then somewhat inexperienced eyes. That year Disturbance had won the National at Aintree in a field of twenty-eight

runners, and he too was a six-year-old. Rather a contrast in the fields. Twenty-eight for the great steeplechase, eight for the Manchester Cup, but it is surprising now what a large entry is always obtained for the Liverpool event. Mr H. Chaplin had that year, I believe, about £20,000 to £1000 about Ryshworth for the National, a horse he bought from Mr Savile.

In 1875, I have a distinct recollection of the Manchester Cup, for it was an extraordinary race. There were sixteen runners, and if memory serves me right, Marie Stuart was a hot favourite. Near London Road Station at that time was an inn called The Feathers. It was a house with a peculiar reputation, ghost-haunted in fact. Strange sounds were heard there at certain hours, and the enterprising landlord did a good trade, inquirers being anxious to drink the spectre's health. I recollect going there one night with a friend, whose sporting proclivities were well known.

‘I'll bet you drinks there's no ghost.’

‘Done,’ said I, ‘provided you take sounds and not sights as evidence.’

We entered The Feathers, and sat down. Two men were arguing about the Manchester

Cup. Their discourse was of a fiery nature, and we asked them to quench their thirst. They did not refuse, and the argument was lost in a gurgling sound. It was, however, resumed, and we became impressed with the fact that in the opinion of the little man with the lisp, there was only one horse in the Cup, and that was Innishowen.

‘Never heard of him,’ said my friend when we were outside.

I had not heard of him, but on the course I thought I would risk a bit at fifty to one Innishowen rather than take about six to four Marie Stuart. I think I might have got a hundred to one with trying. ‘Thammy Mordan’ rode Innishowen, and Tom Osborne was on Marie Stuart.

I shall never forget the scene when Innishowen just beat Marie Stuart. The crowd howled with rage, and Tom Osborne came in for a far from polite reception. Marie Stuart beaten, that grand mare who had won the Oaks and the Leger a couple of years before. They could not believe it. The bookmakers, however, were only too pleased to believe it, and paid, when there was any-

thing to pay, over Innishowen, and looked pleasant. I heard afterwards, though I cannot vouch for the truth of it, that the host of The Feathers had a finger in the Innishowen pie and that the little man we heard talking there was 'Thammy Mordan.' Perhaps 'Thammy' was the ghost, at all events he 'made the ghost walk' for some of us when the bookies paid over Innishowen. In succession I saw Umpire, a real good horse, Attalus, Lartington, Isonomy, Valour, Wallenstein, Primrose II. and Florence win. The last seven I went from Newark to see land one of my favourite races. What a glorious win that was of Isonomy's with Tom Cannon in the saddle. He was a five-year-old, carrying 9 st. 12 lb., and there was a big field, twenty-one runners. Cannon rode a magnificent race, and when the top weight came out, and it was all over, such a volley of cheering burst forth which reminded people of Derby Day shouts of victory. The Abbot, who ran third in the Leger to Robert the Devil and Cipolata, was hopelessly beaten. Isonomy was one of the best horses I ever saw. The same year he won the Ascot Gold Cup for the second time, beating Chippen-

dale and Zut, and he then went to the stud.

Valour's Manchester Cup is indelibly impressed upon my memory, on account of the great struggle between two good horses, and the two crack jockeys of the day. Archer rode Valour, Wood was on Peter. Peter was a hot favourite. Valour stood at thirty-three to one, 'a long price aboüe Archer,' as I have written elsewhere. It was a sore blow for Sir John Astley when Peter just lost. Sir John had won the Chester Cup with Windsor, and bought Peter for between five and six thousand pounds with the winnings. Peter was a peculiar-tempered horse, but over a mile or so one of the fastest I ever saw. It was evidently Sir John's intention to win the Manchester Cup with Peter and then buy Barcaldine with the winnings as he had done Peter after Chester. Had Sir John got Barcaldine he would have owned one of the best horses that ever looked through a bridle. Peter however ran second to Valour, the rest of the field were not in it. The temptation to back Archer at thirty-three to one was irresistible, more especially as I knew he fancied

he had more than an outside chance. Valour was not announced as an arrival in the morning paper I had seen, but there he was in the saddling paddock. 'Thirty-three to one, Archer.' A sound seldom heard in the ring in those days. A tempting bait truly, because you never knew what Archer could really do when put to it. He rode a marvellous race and fairly beat Wood at the finish. At Ascot, following close on, he won that memorable Royal Hunt Cup on Peter, when Sir John's beautiful, but wayward, horse stopped to kick. What an exhibition of patience Archer displayed on Peter that day. It completely took the wind out of the sails of the people who called him a 'savage' on a horse. A jockey must have extraordinary control over himself when he can coax and cajole a horse into a good humour, when the field is scurrying away from him, in a race under a mile. The wonderful turn of speed Peter had was shown in this race when he overhauled the whole of the other nineteen runners and won.

Mention of Ryshworth and the Grand National won by Disturbance brings to mind Mr J. M. Richardson's riding of the winner.

He fairly frightened Ryshworth, who ran like a bit of a coward. Mr Richardson won the following year on Reugney. The Grand National excites almost as much interest at Manchester as at Liverpool, and another race which Cottonopolis favours is the Chester Cup.

Of all the jumping races the Grand National Steeplechase is first and foremost. It takes a good horse to win it, even with luck, and I should not like to call any horse an inferior animal who got safely over Aintree. Regal, who won in 1876, was a downright good horse, and I have a great respect for old Liberator, who tried more than once to win it.

Liberator was ridden by Mr Garrett Moore, and Lord Marcus Beresford owned Jackal who ran second. Jackal was a real good servant to Lord Marcus and won him, amongst other races, the Grand International Steeplechase at Sandown Park. The light blue jacket and black cap was often carried to victory then, and was frequently donned by Lord Marcus himself. Of recent date, Lord William Beresford's advent on the hurdle and steeplechase courses has not been attended with much

success, but he has made up for it on the flat, where Sloan has ridden so many winners in the familiar light blue and black cap.

Empress and Woodbrook followed up the success of Mr Garrett Moore on Liberator, and here the Beasleys were to the fore. Three better steeplechase riders it would be difficult to find than Garrett Moore and the brothers Beasley. Seaman was a rather lucky winner. Zædone, ridden by Count Kinsky, I think, won in 1883, and the year I went 'down under' to the colonies Voluptuary won. Recent winners, The Soarer, Manifesto and Drogheda, are fresh in the memory of all. One of the best horses that ever won in my time is Manifesto, whose victory last year, carrying 12 st. 7 lb., following upon that of 1897, carrying 11 st. 3 lb., proves him a sterling good horse—the best. I never wish to see a better steeplechaser than Manifesto, and probably I never shall. I did not think Gentle Ida would beat him over the Aintree course, and it would not have been a fair test of their respective merits to run a race four miles on the flat. Flat racing is no test for a steeplechaser, although a fast horse on the flat, provided he fences well, undeniably increases

his chances at Liverpool. Irish horses always seem more capable jumpers than those of any other country. For the Liverpool Grand National, however, a horse must have pace, be a thorough stayer, fence well, and be as near thoroughbred as possible; if he be thoroughbred all the better. It is surprising how a non-stayer on the flat will often develop into a stayer over a country. A season at the illegitimate game often improves a race-horse when he comes to race on the flat again. The Melbourne Cup winners, Malua, sire of Maluma, and Sheet Anchor, were both good jumpers, and Malua could win at six furlongs as easily as at two miles. Many a sprinter has developed into a stayer through being put over the sticks. If a horse can be turned into a stayer by such means it stands to reason he can be so developed on the flat. The reason we have not more stayers is because horses' sprinting powers are fully developed, but their staying powers are allowed to lie dormant. So far as I have been able to judge, the average stayer has been produced because he was found to be deficient in sprinting powers, or because, when he has been considered a six-

furlong horse, he has happened to run over a mile, and when that distance has been increased, it has suddenly been discovered that the farther he goes the better he likes it.

THE LAYERS OF ODDS

CHAPTER VII

THE LAYERS OF ODDS

THE much maligned bookmaker; what would racing men do without him? That many bookmakers are much maligned men I know full well. The misdeeds of the few cast a reflection upon the many. I know many bookmakers; in Australia I was acquainted with most of the prominent members of the ring. Every city of importance in the colonies has its Tattersall's Club, and comfortable, commodious clubs they are.

Bookmakers receive rough handling occasionally from men who know nothing whatever about them, or their calling. Many simple-minded people take it for granted that when a man is a bookmaker he is a bad lot. My own experience has taught me that few men are more generous than the members of the ring. I never knew an

appeal made to them which did not receive support. A collection in the ring always means a big sum. Strange to say, although the bookmakers' calling is certainly not a retiring one, the most generous members of the ring do the most good by stealth.

I see no reason why a bookmaker's calling should not be considered as honourable as any other. The amount of confidence between layer and backer in the ring is marvellous. In no other business transactions is the same amount of confidence displayed between man and man. Hundreds of thousands of pounds change hands in the ring without any 'paper' passing. 'Five thousand to five hundred, Mr Plucky,' says the bookmaker, and down it goes. Mr Plucky makes a note of the wager in his book. If the horse wins Mr Plucky receives five thousand on Monday; if the horse loses the bookmaker receives a 'monkey' from Mr Plucky. Can anything be simpler? It is positively childish, nay, it would be considered almost a criminal imbecility for an ordinary man of business to work on such methods. The sceptic smiles knowingly and

remarks with his facetious leer, 'But suppose Mr Bookmaker declines to pay, or Mr Plucky does not part?' Does the sceptic always pay when he receives his bill? Oh, dear no, he hurries across the road, dives down an underground railway burrow, scales an omnibus, jumps into a motor cab as a last resource, in order to avoid his butcher or his tailor. Apart from his method of transacting business the bookmaker is a forgiving man. He still smiles blandly upon the backer who has been 'hard hit' and 'asks for time.' In nine cases out of ten an extension of time brings forth good results.

Bookmakers make very few mistakes, and most of them are strictly honourable. Only last season a prominent bookmaker in London, to whom I sent a wire to back three horses, sent me a reply in return as follows: 'Wire too late for first race, other two on.' At that time the first horse had *lost*, the other two won. Again, I asked the price of a certain horse. 'A hundred to seven,' was the reply by letter. In my hurry I wired, 'Accept a hundred to nine.' The answer came back, 'Mistake, have booked you a

hundred to seven.' Such dealings inspire confidence. Bookmakers' accounts are always neatly and clearly made out. There is the 'You win' and 'You lose' column. The bets and the results are inserted, and then a balance struck at the end of the week. There are bookmakers and bookmakers, as a glance round Tattersall's ring will show. The methods are the same, but the manners vary. There is the gentlemanly bookmaker, and the coarse, bloated layer of odds. The 'upper ten' of the ring are as divided from the 'lower five' as the residents of Belgravia are from those of Whitechapel.

Take two instances by way of comparison. Both men are betting in Tattersall's ring. Number one is standing near the rails, in the ring at Newmarket, leaning over towards the Jockey Club enclosure, and booking wagers with the magnates of the Turf. He is not a tall man, but his face would arrest attention anywhere. It is a keen, eager, alert face, very expressive, and yet inscrutable as to what it expresses. It is a determined face, and also the face of a man who has absolute control over, and confidence in, him-

self. He has greyish eyes, which although piercing, are not unkindly, and are also humorous. He has a sharp way of speaking, but although the tones of the voice are clear cut they are by no means snappy. It is the voice of a man who means what he says, whose word is as good as his bond. He is somewhat restless, and other bookmakers appear to regard him with respect. His movements are watched, but not much can be gleaned thereby. His clothes are neat, but quite plain, and he wears a small bow tie over his clean white shirt. A light, loose overcoat affords him ample space for his hands in the capacious pockets, when they are not otherwise employed. You would never by any possible chance see this man drinking in the ring, much less eating, and seldom smoking. All his faculties, and they are wonderfully keen, are concentrated upon the business in hand. Hundreds of thousands of pounds pass through his books in the course of a racing season, the bond between him and his clients being 'honour.' On settling day he will pay over many thousands, and receive many more. There is no hesita-

tion about his transactions. What he loses he pays, and not until then does he trouble to collect what he has won. He is a man who, despite his inner knowledge of the seamy side of men's natures, has much faith in humankind. The dark side of life has not blinded his eyes. He does not condemn the many for the faults of the few. His confidence is seldom misplaced. This man is a leader of the ring, and he would have taken a foremost place had he chosen any other walk of life. He is a man who makes his calling honourable, and inspires confidence and trust in those around him.

Half way down the ring is another man of a different stamp. There is nothing refined about him, very much the reverse. He is about the same height as the man I have alluded to, but cast in a very different mould. He is repulsively fat, both in face and body. He has big hanging cheeks, and his chin descends in half circles, like seats in a theatre, on to his chest. Is he at all sensitive about this superfluity of fat? Certainly not; his ponderous body is bulged out to its fullest extent, in order to display a huge gold watch-

chain, with a massive American coin hanging therefrom. This chain requires much support ; some day it is not improbable it may be called upon to support him, or assist in doing so. In his shirt there is a massive diamond stud, which glistens sparkingly at the extraordinary position in which it is placed. The owner of the chain and the stud has a voice. Once when crossing the Bay of Biscay I awoke in the middle of the night and fancied the world was coming to an end, or making a vigorous attempt in that direction. It was a terrible booming sound which made the ship vibrate. Then it occurred to me it was a fog signal. The voice of the man with the chain and stud called the sound to mind again. His voice was not only loud, it was distinctly aggressive. It bellowed forth challenge and defiance. It shouted odds which were seldom laid when asked for, and when demanded the backer was greeted with a volley of abuse. And yet this man, with all his faults, paid honourably when he lost, and made no bones about it. Ignorant he certainly was, and therefore more to be pitied than blamed.

There is a brief respite between the races, and for a few moments the turmoil ceases, but only to break out with renewed force.

‘Here you are, five to one this horse, eight to one that, ten to one another. Here, twenty to one some of ’em, and I’ll give you a run for your money.’ The numbers are not up. But the enterprising bookie is desirous of gaining early patronage.

‘He’ll soon tire of that game,’ says another of the fraternity.

Tire or not his exertions bring business, and he is kept going until the numbers go up. Then he pauses to see how the book stands, glancing over his clerk’s shoulder as he rapidly balances it up. In a few moments he is at it again, and judging from the odds being laid he has gauged the market correctly.

‘This and the next. Here, I’ll lay the double, this and the next: ‘Twenty-five to one you don’t pick it.’

It sounds tempting, because one horse in the first race ought to be a hot favourite and looks ‘a pretty good thing.’ There is a probability of not more than half a dozen going to the post for the first race of the double,

but a glance at the card will reveal the fact that there will no doubt be a score starters for the second event. Still there is a desperate fascination about getting 'a leg in.' If the first pick of the double wins, the backer carefully peruses his ticket, if he has one, and makes sure it is safe. Seeing is hardly believing, so delighted is he with his good fortune. He rushes up to some friend and says gleefully, 'I've got a leg in, come and have a drink.' Then the second race is run and the double does not come off, but still the grim satisfaction remains that he had 'a leg in.' It is a fascinating form of wagering which brings much grist to the mill of the bookmaker.

One bookmaker, a sterling good man, has a book on 'the playful double' and 'the big four.' There are men I am told who try the 'big four.' A benevolent Government provides proper accommodation for these gentlemen in their old age.

Bookmaking has undergone changes during the last quarter of a century. Big volumes, open weeks before a race is to be run, are the exception, not the rule. During the winter

we seldom hear of a bet on the Derby of any magnitude, and yet this has not diminished the interest in the race. In former days books were opened on important events before the entries came out.

The reason for the change to post betting is I think apparent. Backers of horses have become more wary and sensible; and have at last recognised the fact that ten to one with a run is better than twenty to one with a chance of being 'scratched.' I am not at all sure that the old system was the best. I think it shows an enhanced interest in racing, for the sport itself, when men wait to back a horse at the post. It seems to me much of the gambling element has been eliminated, and more of the wagering for the pleasurable excitement of seeing a good horse run imported into racing by post betting. I do not call dabbling in stocks and shares sport; that is gambling pure and simple. The feverish restlessness of the man who seizes his newspaper, and, in his terrible thirst for knowledge, attempts to read the market quotations upside down, has no charm for me. I think it is good for racing that we have a rest for some months from the market

quotations, which promote a spirit of gambling. There *is* a difference between backing a horse, and gambling on a horse, although some people are so dense they will not see it. The man who backs a horse to enhance his pleasure in seeing it run is no gambler. A gambler is a man who loses more than he can afford to pay, or squanders his fortune like a fool. I do not think it admits of much doubt that the man who squanders a fortune *is* a fool. I know men who love racing, because they are passionately fond of horses, who are steady-going business men, and yet delight in having a pound or two on their fancy—just to back their opinion. There is nothing of the gambling element about such men.

So long as there is horse-racing there will be betting, and as racing is never likely to become extinct bookmakers will continue to flourish.

The respectable bookmakers are as necessary to the Turf as any class of men connected with it. They represent the members of the Stock Exchange of the Turf, and for the life of me I cannot see why they should not be considered as honourable or respectable as the members of that body. What difference is there in backing

brewery shares, or any other shares, for a rise, to backing a horse for him to 'come' in the market, as far as the transaction is concerned? Both are done with the object of making money.

There are many men amongst the ranks of bookmakers who would have made good statesmen, excellent churchmen, and prosperous tradesmen, had their chances in life thrown them in any of these directions.

FOLLOWERS OF THE GAME

CHAPTER VIII

FOLLOWERS OF THE GAME

A 'FOLLOWER of the game' sees a good deal of racing, wins money and loses it, and manages to flourish in a manner remarkable to the ordinary mortal. He comes up smiling season after season, and may be seen on racecourses from the North to the South of England. He travels in special trains, generally first-class, and if there is a dining car on, you may reckon with tolerable certainty upon seeing him enjoying his meal, and selecting the best viands for his consumption. He is a regular frequenter of Tattersall's, and generally has a bundle of notes to bet with. Minus the notes he appears to have a good credit in the ring. As there are different classes of bookmakers, so there are different followers of the game.

The gentlemanly backer of horses may be placed in the first class, the hand to mouth

follower of the game in the third—like the Midland railway system, there is no second class. Both men follow the game, but their methods and habits are different.

To take the gentlemanly backer first. He is a cool customer, and is seldom seen excited; he has witnessed too many tight finishes for him to lose his head over a desperate race. One cannot but admire his nerve, although it comes natural to him to stand steady, like an old soldier who has faced many enemies.

I have stood in the ring and watched these men many times. Climatic influences have no effect upon them. The professional backer in Australia resembles his 'brother' in England in every respect, except in dress, or to be more correct, the texture of his garments, for both are neat and presentable.

They do not always back the favourite, but they have a wonderful knack of 'following the money,' when it emanates from the right quarter. No sooner do they get the cue—where it comes from is a mystery—than they proceed to back a certain horse. They almost invariably get better odds than are to be obtained at the fall of the flag. Many

of them book their wagers. They do their business quietly.

One of the fraternity walks up to a bookmaker and some confidential whispering takes place. The backer makes an entry on his race-card, the bookmaker informs his clerk of the transaction, and it is booked. If the backer is well known, as many of these men are, half a dozen people will be craning their heads over the clerk's shoulder to see which horse has been backed. Having made the discovery, they dart off to secure the odds, only to find 'the whisper' has gone round and the price is lower. Remarkably quick, quiet and methodical are the gentlemanly backers. There appears to be some kind of 'wireless telegraphy' between them, and they are working in various parts of the ring at the same time. Five or ten minutes later half a dozen of them may be seen together, not comparing notes, oh, dear no, that would be giving the 'show' away. They appear to be discussing politics, no, not politics, their language and gestures are too moderate for politicians; perhaps it is the weather or the details of private life they are talking over, anything except the business in hand.

Then they separate, and we watch one of them as he takes his place on the stand and waits for the race. He appears quite unconcerned. Certainly he looks at the horses as they go down to the post, but he does not appear to be paying particular attention to any one horse. He is not one of those men who, immediately the starters have galloped past, rush into the ring for the purpose of showing people what good judges they are, how much they know about the game, and do not have a wager on. He has no occasion to rush. He has transacted his business, and is quite satisfied to hear six to four called out against the horse he has secured five to one about. There is a faint suspicion of a smile on his face as he watches the men who wish to appear knowing. He understands all about them, and would be exceedingly sorry if they were non-existent, for these men generally lose their money, and make the bookmakers a trifle more generous in the matter of odds.

When the flag falls, the gentleman backer does not shout, 'They're off,' nor does he put up his glasses and focus them wrongly, and by the time they are useful to the sight, put

them away as a nuisance. He has glasses, generally powerful, and a rapid glance shows him exactly how his horse is placed, then he waits for further developments.

He hears the shout of 'Timothy wins' complacently, perhaps he may glance at the shouter, if he happens to be near him, in a pitying sort of way, as much as to say, 'So you've backed Timothy. I'm sorry for you;' for he knows the money makes the noise in this case. Timothy looks like winning, but the gentleman backer has his eyes on a yellow jacket and green cap, and thinks it is longish odds. Timothy is lengths behind this horse, which he has backed, at the finish. Gradually the yellow jacket creeps forward, and the backer feels confident of success. He knows the money is on and that he is 'having a run' for his investment. The yellow and green wins and he glances at his book to see how much he has won, not that he is unaware of the amount, but it is pleasant to contemplate a good wager, well won. If the horse he has backed loses, it appears to make very little difference to him; it acts as an incentive to get it back, and a bit more, over

the next race. This man, and his fellow backers, seldom drink, and it is the exception to find them round the bars during the racing. Like the layers of odds, they require all their wits about them, for they are waging war with clever opponents.

It was in 1884 I went to Australia, and I see in the ring now in England, at many meetings, backers of horses who were following the game at that time. How they manage to live, and live well, by such an occupation, is one of these things no man can understand. There they are, however, and there can be no disputing that fact.

There is another follower of the game, the man who is here, there and everywhere. Occasionally, after a mild success, he may be found in Tattersall's enclosure, always considered sacred, erroneously in some instances, to men with money. Perhaps he is not in the ring so much on his own account as for the benefit of others who have paid for his admission. He is there for the purpose of gaining information as to which horses are being backed, and imparting it to his friends in the next ring, and in turn they give it

to friends in the 'silver ring.' He is an active man. It is amusing to watch him. He is not at all particular how he obtains his information, but get it he must. He wriggles about like an eel, and is quite as slippery. He can carve a passage through a crowd in the most skilful manner. He dodges people and has eyes all over his head. It must be a great advantage to be able to look several ways at the same time. If he fastens on to a man there is great difficulty in shaking him off.

When he obtains the information required he makes a dash for the rails. His friends are glaring through the bars at the opposite side very much in the same way Herr Julius Seeth's lions look through the 'silver grid' at the Hippodrome, only with this difference, the men yearn for the correct tip, the lions yearn for the blood of the wondering audience, so near and yet so far.

Having given the information, he leans upon the rails and takes his breath. He has need to recover his wind, because recent exertions have told upon him. The halt, however, is only momentary, for in a few

seconds he darts away again to do 'a little bit on his own.'

Another day we find him in the outer ring, and instead of giving information he is thirsting for knowledge. He is still active; a restless disposition has long been born in him. Force of habit accelerates his movements. He does not look quite so contented in this ring; his dignity has suffered.

He feels like the man who, having lived in a mansion, has been compelled, from a variety of circumstances, to dwell in a weekly tenement.

Later on, however, he has a lower fall still, for he is discovered in the 'silver ring' in quite a forlorn condition. A month afterwards he is elevated to the dignity of Tattersall's again, but it is a mere flash in the pan; he is not even 'the comet of a season,' for the very next week he is relegated to the flat, and has no ring wherewith to bless himself.

There is plenty of room for him on the flat. His restless spirit has ample roaming ground. It is not the green turf he loves, however, and he pines for the asphalt, or

the sole-teasing gravel of the ring. Perhaps he is troubled with rheumatism and the grass has a baneful effect upon him, or he may be so accustomed to the hard pavements of Fleet Street and its numerous courts that the yielding turf shocks his sensibilities. Whatever the cause, he is uneasy and prowls around the rings again like a caged lion, only he is anxious to get inside, and the lion to get out.

How does such a man make a living as a follower of the game? It is hard to understand, and yet there he is bobbing up serenely year after year, looking none the worse, except for a little ordinary wear and tear.

He is more frequently to be found on the racecourses near London; he is indigenous to the soil. Occasionally he is transplanted to Doncaster, or some race-meeting even farther north. He is not unacquainted with the floors of railway carriages, and has a playful trick of crawling under the seat when the train slows down. He is a humorous, if vulgar, 'dog,' and because he has produced laughter from the passengers, they affection-

ately screen his body with their legs so that he will not be painfully rooted out and cast forth on to the platform. He goes to the races in this manner; many people risk the chance of returning in a similar way. He is not happy at Doncaster; it is too far north for him, besides, he despises anything in the shape of butterscotch; it is far too innocent a luxury for him.

On the return journey, strange to relate, he is under no necessity to crawl under the seat. He has made a rise somehow, perhaps had a stray ticket given him, and is amply supplied with provisions. His partiality for any food of a greasy nature is remarkable, and it is not pleasant to be smacked familiarly on the back by a man who has been dabbling in the oil trade.

His spirits rise as he nears London, and he looks affectionately at the chimney pots, and the grime and smoke, as he nears King's Cross. These are the beauties of town life which he appreciates. He is like the child from a London slum who, when taken into the country was asked, 'Is it not beautiful?' and replied, 'Yussir,' and then, in a tone of

regret, 'but there's no 'ouses.' This follower of the game sees none of the beauties which surround the sport. It is pure business with him. He loves the roar and the turmoil, the pushing through crowds, the continual strife to gain a few shillings. And yet in pursuit of his living, such as it is, he must get fresh air even against his will. Without knowing it, and he would resent it if he did know, racing benefits his body, if not his mind. Not that racing is responsible for neglecting his mind, because he has very little intelligence, except a low cunning instinct to work upon. When this follower of the game has had many years' experience he is no better off, probably worse, than when he commenced. During these years, however, he has made a living, or existed somehow, and he is satisfied. He is a happy-go-lucky sort of fellow, and cares not whether the pound of to-day may be turned into the shilling of to-morrow. He is no worse than hundreds of men who have never set foot on a racecourse, nay, he is better, much better, because his occupation, such as it is, forces him to be tolerably healthy. He may be a vagabond, but he is to a certain extent

a fumigated vagabond, and there is not much infection about him.

It is an odd sort of existence this particular follower of the game lives, and nothing would induce him to change it. Why should he change it? He would probably go from bad to worse, and become a plague spot in some overcrowded slum, a menace to the people around him. He may not be a desirable person, but to drive him off the racecourse would make him still more undesirable. Therefore, it may be as well, for the benefit of the community at large, to let him alone, and allow him to 'follow the game.' He has found an outlet for his peculiar talents, and when he does any mischief it is to himself.

SOLD AGAIN

CHAPTER IX

SOLD AGAIN

IMAGINE for one moment we have skipped from London to Sydney ; it is easily done on paper.

It is noon, and Pitt Street, between Market Street and Park Street, is lively. There are many horsey-looking men about, and round Tattersall's Club, and Adams's Hotel opposite, stand numerous jockeys and their acquaintances.

Horses are constantly passing in and out of a narrow entrance which leads to one of the horse marts, or bazaars. It may be called Smith's Bazaar as well as any other ; I do not feel called upon to give preference to one over another, and there are three within the distance named.

There is a curious crowd of men in the open space at the top of the yard ; they appear to

be from various parts of the colony, but have a strange similarity of features and expressions.

Men from 'up country' are there on the look-out for bargains, or perchance to get rid of a doubtful horse. There appears to be a demand for all sorts of animals at a wide range in price, varying from a sovereign up to twenty pounds or more.

The following may be taken as an occasional sample of the scenes which take place here:—

'On the look-out for something?' said a mild-mannered man, vainly trying to appear blissfully innocent, and only partially succeeding.

The man addressed looks like a buyer; he has been looking about in the stalls examining the lots for sale.

'Don't see anything to suit me,' he replies.

'What sort of a horse do you want?'

'Something quiet and used to the trams,' he replied.

They had fearful steam trams in Sydney then, which put motors and traction engines entirely in the background as horse terrifiers.

'My pal Bill Betts has a real useful nag for sale. Come and have a look at him. I

daresay he'll sell him for a fair price before the auction.'

The intending buyer walks up the yard with the pal of Bill Betts. Bill is a tall, wiry man and has come down from the country with a horse he has no further use for. He is not dressed in Bush style, but has donned the garments of more civilised life.

'Oh, here you are, Tom; who's your mate?'

'I don't know his name, but he's on the look-out for a horse, and I thought, perhaps, you'd sell Dandy before the auction commenced,' said Tom Hart.

'My name is James Green,' said the buyer.

'Glad to make your acquaintance,' said Bill Betts. 'I have a horse for sale. He's a good horse, and he may suit you. He's in here.'

The stall was somewhat dark as they entered and inspected the animal. It was a dark bay, standing about 15.3, and a goodly horse to look upon. Looks are, however, deceiving in horses as well as in men. Dandy was not quite the amiable, docile creature he appeared to be, but he was standing in a quiet attitude in the stall.

James Green walked up to Dandy and felt

him all over. There appeared to be nothing wrong with Dandy's legs so far as he could judge.

'Bring him out,' said Green; 'it is too dark in here.'

The horse was brought out, and a group of hangers-on crept round him.

Bill Betts seemed a trifle anxious as to Dandy's future proceedings, but he held him firmly by the bridle and hoped for the best. His practised eye had noted in James Green a man who was easy going, and likely to take things for granted, if put to him in the proper light.

James Green singled himself out from the circle, and commenced a tour round Dandy. When he approached the rear, Bill Betts grew momentarily uncomfortable. He heaved a sigh of profound relief when James Green landed safely round Dandy's hind-quarters. It was evidently one of Dandy's quiet days, and his owner felt grateful, but had no compunction about selling him.

Instead of livening Dandy up for sale, he had been engaged for a whole week in taming him down, and it had evidently had a good effect.

The people forming the circle were passing remarks about Dandy's appearance, some complimentary, others the reverse. They were not prospective buyers, so Bill Betts wasted no words on them.

Having completed his inspection by daylight, James Green signified that Dandy might retire again.

'He seems quiet enough,' said James Green.

'Quiet! I should say he was. He never moved a muscle with all those people round him,' said Bill.

'And he's sound?'

'Oh, yes, perfectly sound.'

'And stands trams, and all sorts of noises?'

queried Green.

'He'll stand anything,' said Bill, vaguely.

'What's his price?'

'Fifteen pounds, and he's cheap,' said Bill.

Dandy certainly looked worth the money and James Green said,—

'Too much, and I've had no trial with him.'

'I'd give you a trial with pleasure,' said Bill Betts, 'but I am leaving Sydney and cannot wait for the money. If you like you can take him for twelve pounds, if not I'll put him up.'

James Green hesitated a moment or two, and then said,—

‘I’ll have him.’

The bargain was concluded, the money paid, and the health of Dandy duly drank.

Bill Betts and his mate walked away from the yard, and when they were safely in George Street, Bill burst out laughing and said,—

‘I wonder how he’ll get him home?’

‘I should like to see him when he catches sight of a tram,’ roared Tom. ‘Can’t we manage it?’

‘No, we must get away by the next train,’ said Bill.

James Green took his purchase out of the yard and walked him up Pitt Street.

‘I’ll see whether he will stand trams,’ he said to himself.

He turned up Park Street and walked the horse towards Elizabeth Street. He had not long to wait. With a puff and a snort a vile-looking engine came in sight. Dandy stood on his hind legs and pawed the air. James Green tugged at the bridle and succeeded in bringing his purchase down again. Dandy became furious, and circled round in a wild

delirious whirl. He scattered the traffic considerably and eventually made a dart for the pavement. He succeeded in twisting the reins round a verandah post as he twirled about, but James Green hung on like grim death. The verandah was in front of a tobacconist's shop. The infuriated occupant rushed out, and seizing a stick, from a bundle at the door, flourished it at Dandy, and uttered sounds in a foreign tongue.

This increased the hubbub and brought the guardians of the peace to the spot.

The first constable who arrived muttered to himself, and then ordered James Green to take the brute away or he'd lame somebody. The constable had hardly got the words out of his mouth when Dandy whisked round again and narrowly missed upsetting him.

'Take the brute away,' roared the constable.

'That's what I'm trying to do,' howled Green.

'Don't give me any of your cheek; take him away,' shouted the constable.

It was now about 98 in the shade, and James Green felt very melting. With grim

determination he endeavoured to get Dandy away from the verandah post.

He succeeded, but not before this very quiet animal had kicked the contents of the tobacconist's stick basket all over the pavement.

This happened in a few minutes. It was hot work while it lasted, and James Green had no time for serious meditation.

Dandy was cooling down when another infernal machine, in the guise of a tram engine, hove in sight. It was an engine alone, and it spluttered and fizzed and whistled as it passed the end of the street.

Dandy gave an exhibition that would have done credit to a circus-horse. He pulled James Green rapidly down the street, amidst the jeers of an excited populace, and pursued by two constables with red faces and lurid tempers.

Happily for James Green, Dandy pulled him round the corner into Pitt Street, and they both proceeded to the horse bazaar in a limp condition.

'Been trying him?' said an ostler, as the sweat-begrimed owner led his purchase up the yard.

‘D—— him!’ growled Green.

‘Not satisfied with him?’ asked the ostler, with well-feigned amazement.

‘I’ve been had, swindled. The brute’s no good. Where’s the man who sold him?’

‘Gone,’ said the ostler.

‘Where?’ queried Green.

‘Don’t know. He lives out back somewhere.’

‘He said the horse would stand anything. The brute’s never seen a tram in his life,’ said the infuriated Green.

‘Looks as though he had,’ said the ostler, with a grin.

‘Sell him, sell him again for what he’ll fetch. D—— him, give him away,’ roared Green.

‘I’ll see the auctioneer,’ said the ostler.

Eventually Dandy came into the sale yard and stood quietly before the auctioneer’s box, the ostler holding him by the bridle. The horse and man appeared to know one another; perhaps they had met before.

James Green, utterly disgusted at being ‘sold,’ did not wait to see Dandy sold. He adjourned for the refreshment of which he stood much in need.

Dandy was knocked down to the bid of the ostler for six pounds ten.

‘That’s not so bad,’ he said to himself, as he led Dandy away, ‘five pounds ten profit *this time*. Oh, he’s a cute customer, is Bill Betts; that’s the third time I’ve had Dandy through my hands within a month. He’s a useful horse, a very useful horse, and always knocked down at a profit.’

James Green returned for the proceeds of the sale.

‘Only six pounds ten,’ he said in disgust. ‘Why, I gave twelve pounds for him an hour ago.’

‘Very likely,’ said the ostler, ‘but look how you have knocked him about in the time. I wouldn’t have believed a man could take it out of a horse so quickly. You’ve spoilt his temper.’

‘Spoilt his temper! knocked him about!’ said Green, savagely. ‘That’s what he’s done to me. The beast nearly killed me.’

‘The last man as bought him and took him away from here got fined two pounds and costs for obstructing the public roadway,’ said the ostler; and then added mysteriously, ‘Did any policemen see you?’

‘Yes, two. They ordered me to take him away.’

‘Then why didn’t you?’ said the ostler.

James Green was becoming exasperated and said,—

‘You darned fool, don’t you see I was trying to take him away all the time.’

‘How did you get here?’

‘The brute dragged me down the street.’

‘Dandy knows his way here,’ laughed the ostler.

‘Do you mean to say that horse has been sold here before?’

‘Of course. Why, Dandy’s a regular customer,’ grinned the ostler. ‘I’m getting quite fond of him.’

‘Who’s bought him?’ said James Green, feeling a grim satisfaction in anticipating another riot in the street, and determined to be a spectator on this occasion.

‘I’ve bought him,’ said the ostler.

‘You!’ exclaimed the perspiring Green.

‘Bought him for Bill Betts,’ said the ostler.

‘The man who sold him to me?’ roared Green.

‘Make a less row there or go out of the yard,’ came from the auctioneer.

James Green shook his fist at the man in the box and yelled, ‘It’s a put up job. I’ve been had.’

‘You’re not the first, mister, take it easy,’ said a little man at his elbow. ‘I bought him a fortnight ago.’

James Green clutched the little man and hurled him against the ostler.

Immediately there was a disturbance. The little man’s friends went for James Green, and he was hustled out of the yard in such a manner that another struggle with Dandy would have been as child’s play to it. He crept in stealthily later on, much battered and bruised, and asked mildly for his money at the auctioneer’s office.

‘You are the man who created the disturbance in my yard,’ said the auctioneer. ‘I’ll teach you better manners.’

He caught James Green by the collar and held him until the ostler went for a policeman.

Meanwhile the little man who had been assaulted came into the office.

Despite his protests the constable took James Green to the police station. It was one of the constables who had witnessed the struggle with Dandy.

The *Evening News* reported that one James Green, a dilapidated-looking object, had three charges preferred against him for creating an obstruction, to the danger and annoyance of passengers, in Park Street; for riotous conduct in Smith's Bazaar; and for assaulting Moses Simon. He was fined one pound and costs in each case, four pounds sixteen shillings in all, and severely censured by the police magistrate.

Beyond Penrith two men were sitting in a room in a small homestead. 'Here, Tom, read this,' said Bill Betts, handing him the *News* with the foregoing paragraph in.

Tom read it, and laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. 'Dandy must have given him a treat,' he said in a choking voice.

SOME CLOSE FINISHES

CHAPTER X

SOME CLOSE FINISHES

THERE is no excitement to equal that of a desperate finish to a race. It is unlike anything else, and cannot be compared with anything else. In the space of a few brief seconds such a multitude of various feelings are crowded that to describe the exact sensation experienced is impossible ; it must be felt to be understood. The unfortunate individual who has never seen an exciting finish has much to regret, and he can take it from me he has missed something that helps to make life worth living. I have seen many great finishes, during the quarter of a century already alluded to, and will attempt, however feebly, to describe some of those I remember vividly. As we were in Australia in the previous chapter, it may be as well to remain there for a brief period.

Most racing men in England recollect

Paris III. running, and the son of Grand-master—Enone rather astonished people by his pace, more especially as he was an aged gelding. Paris, when trained at Randwick, Sydney, was the 'watch breaker' of the track.

There was always a buzzing of excitement when the 'little un' came on to the course, and the way he did his gallops was good to see. In 1894 Paris won his second Caulfield Cup, and was then an aged gelding. I shall never forget that race. The finish was one of the best I ever saw. At the distance Bruin was in front, but Devon caught him in about fifty yards, and held a lead until Tim Swiveller and Paris came at him. The excitement of that moment, six years ago nearly, is very present to me as I write.

It may seem strange that such an incident should be so clear to me, but there is nothing like a close finish for stamping an impression on the memory. The scene on the stand at Caulfield, the roars of the crowd on the flat, the surging of the people on the lawn, the excitement amongst the old hands in the club enclosure, are all vividly before me.

‘Devon wins, Devon wins.’ ‘Tim Swiveller, Tim Swiveller.’ ‘Paris, Paris, Paris wins.’

The green and yellow of Devon’s jockey was slightly in front, the black and cardinal of Bruin, the brown and rose of Tim Swiveller, and the scarlet jacket and Maltese cross of Paris, were all close together. The colours flashed, the horses and jockeys strained every nerve. The ring roared for Devon, he was a fifty to one chance, and Tim Swiveller would also have suited them well, as he was at thirty-three’s. Bruin figured at seven’s and Paris at twice that odds.

There were twenty-nine runners, but twenty-five of them at this particular moment did not enter into calculations.

Bruin gained ground again, and no effort on the part of the jockeys appeared capable of separating the four horses; they were ‘glued’ together. Devon was just in front as they neared the judges’ box. Paris had run straight and beaten Tim Swiveller, who swerved, and there was only Devon to catch. A fifty to one chance leading by a neck—a fourteen to one chance putting in a brilliant run. Jack Fielder was on Paris; he had wasted hard to

ride him, and looked pale and shrunken. His face was generally rosy, and his expression cheerful, but now it seemed stern, white and fierce. Bruin was beaten for certain, so was Tim Swiveller; would Paris catch Devon? They flashed past the post.

‘What’s won?’ ‘Paris,’ shouted the men from New South Wales. ‘Devon,’ shouted the Tasmanians and the bookmakers. And so the two names were bandied about until the numbers went up with Paris first, and he had only beaten the outsider by ‘half a head,’ the judges’ verdict, not mine. The cheering was tremendous, for it was acknowledged a wonderful feat for Paris to carry 9 st. 4 lb. to victory. I little thought when I saw that finish I should see Paris almost distance his field at Northampton with Morny Cannon in the saddle. A wonderful little horse, one of the gamest I ever saw, and he deserves the rest and peace he has so well earned, at Havilah, New South Wales. It is a good example the owner of Paris has set the ‘men of mark’ in the racing world. Paris is a gelding, but he was not cast aside when he had done his work. He was not sold into

slavery. As I saw him standing in his box in Mr F. W. Day's stables at Newmarket, I thought of all the great races that little bit of horseflesh had run, many of which he had won. He had a rough coat on him, for he had been turned out, but it did not hide the symmetry of his form, and as he turned his head, with the white blaze down his face, to look at us, there was the same old head that had just been in front of Devon in that memorable Caulfield Cup.

‘How well the old fellow looks,’ I said.

‘Does he not, and he is as sound as a bell,’ said Mr Day. ‘There is lots of racing in him yet, but he is going home.’

‘Going home!’ I echoed.

‘Yes, I have orders to that effect; he is going to end his days at Havilah in New South Wales,’ replied Mr Day.

Fourteen thousand miles across the ocean was Paris going to end his days in peace. He was not to be shot as useless, or sold to drag a cab, or to be turned out in a paddock to starve. He was retiring on a pension well-earned. The owner of Paris has set an object lesson to all. ·Learn it by heart.

Flemington, Melbourne, Victoria, and the date, November 7th, 1893. What a crowd, what a scene. There is no racecourse I have ever been on can show a parallel to Flemington on Cup Day. Carnage had won the Derby. Carnage who came to Cobham, was seen, and conquered the foreigners who speedily snapped him up. Carnage was second favourite for the Cup. There were thirty runners, a field seldom seen in England for a two-mile race. Why? The Jockey Club have lately answered the question by insisting upon the distance of races being increased. Let them go farther in this direction; there is ample room for it. It was a great race for the Melbourne Cup of '93. A fellow pressman said to me just before the race,—

‘I think your pet fancy will win.’

Carnage was my pet fancy, and the son of Nordenfeldt—Mersey ought to have been any man's fancy. Carnage was a three-year-old, carrying 7 st. 7 lb. He made the bulk of the running, and below the distance was going strongly in front and looked all over a winner. Suddenly Tarcoola, an outsider

at thirty-three to one, shot out from the centre of the field like a rocket, and passed the Derby winner in a few strides. The surprise of the vast crowd was so great that there was a moment's silence. Tarcoola, could it be possible, and beating Carnage! Tarcoola, whose owner had parted with him in disgust, after vainly striving to win a fortune with him. And the outsider having shot to the front remained there. 'Toby' Moran rode Carnage for all he was worth, but his strength was spent. James Gough had ridden him in the Derby, but could not quite get down to the weight in the Cup. Then a horse, whose jockey had a scarlet jacket, with white striped sleeves, came with a late but tremendous rush. It was Jeweller who had started favourite for the Caulfield Cup a fortnight before, and had finished nowhere. Jeweller, by Splendor—Souvenir, dropping from the clouds, and overhauling the leaders at a terrific pace. He was ridden by W. Delaney, who had a spell in England last year. Loyalty was not far behind, and his owner, Dan O'Brien, once owner of Carbine and Trenton, fancied he

would run well. Tarcoola, however, kept going and beat Carnage by a bare half-length, with Jeweller only a head away. It was a great finish, worthy of such a great race.

Another slashing finish I well remember was that between Marvel and St Blaise for the Doncaster Handicap at Randwick in 1892. Marvel was a wonderful black horse owned by Mr George Hill, and he once beat Carbine over a mile. Marvel carried 10 st. 4 lb. and St Blaise 8 st. 5 lb., and the distance was a mile. It was a tremendous finish. At the distance St Blaise looked all over a winner, but Harris sat down on Marvel, and drove him along under the whip. Inch by inch the black horse with his tremendous weight drew closer to the bright bay. It was marvellous to see the heavy-weight carrying his great burden with comparative ease. The half distance was passed and then Marvel drew level with St Blaise. A final effort on the part of Mat Harris and the wonderful horse he rode, and Marvel beat St Blaise by a short neck. Marvel was one of the best horses I ever saw in Australia.

Scores of great finishes come to mind as I write, such as those between Carbine, Abercorn, Melos, Lochiel, Highborn, and other champions of the Australian turf, but space forbids me mentioning all.

Three of the best races I ever saw in England were those between Bend Or and Robert the Devil in the Derby, Master Kildare and Leoville in the City and Surburban, and Valour and Peter in the Manchester Cup, and Archer rode the winner on each occasion. That race between Master Kildare and Leoville was simply marvellous, and Archer seldom shone to more advantage. I am almost inclined to place this race before that he rode on Bend Or. Still there was more of the sensational element about Bend Or's win. Robert the Devil looked a certain winner as they came out of the dip, and so thought Rossiter, there could be no doubt about that. But one never knew what Archer would be up to, and the famous yellow jacket was creeping nearer and nearer, but very few people expected it would get up and win. The scene at the finish will never be forgotten. How Archer rode with desperation, and fairly lifted

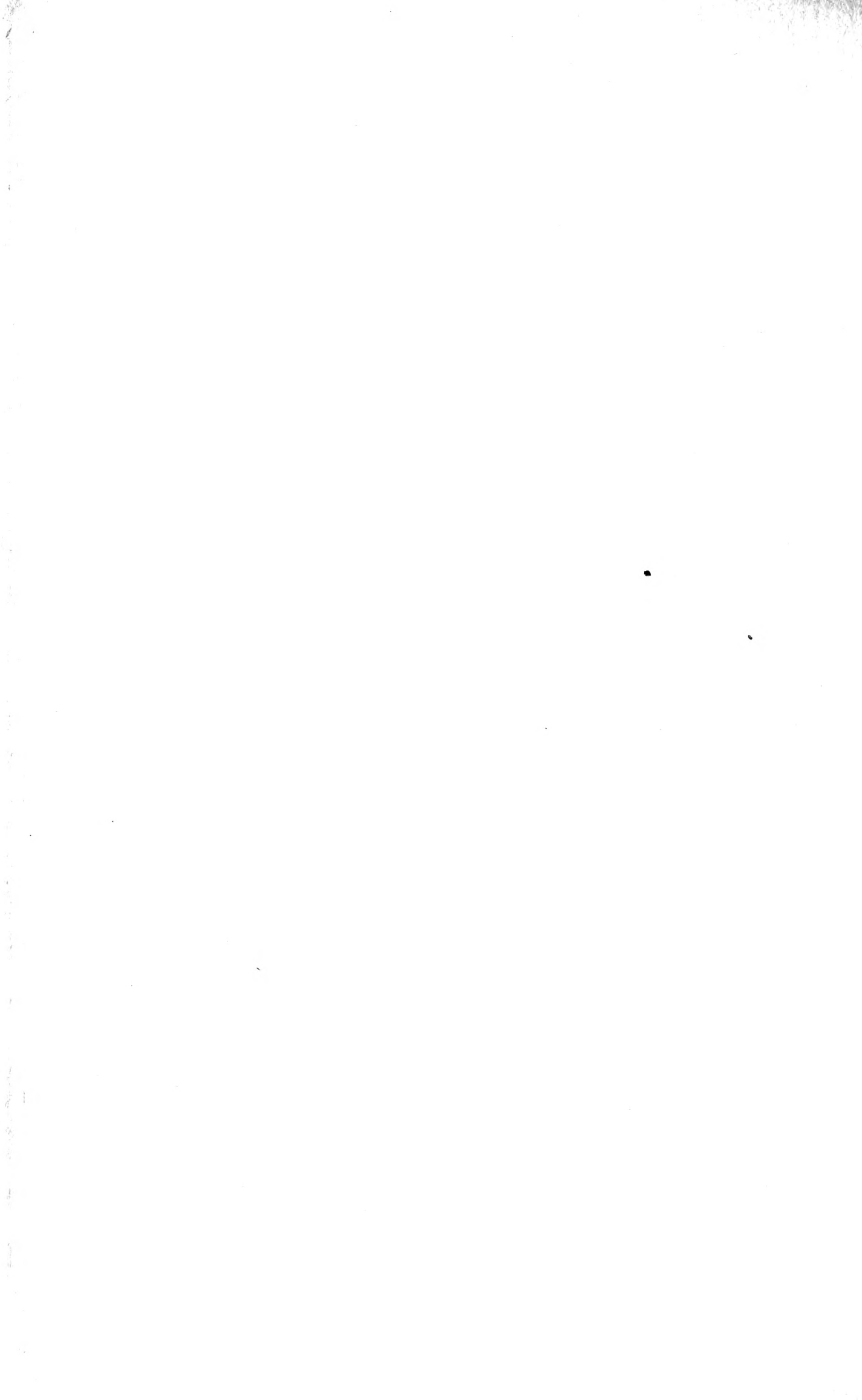
Bend Or past Robert the Devil on the post. It was a tremendous effort on the part of the jockey, but Archer was accustomed to such exertions, and he had more nerve than Rossiter. The defeat of Robert the Devil blighted poor Rossiter's career, and it sadly came to an end. I was not sixteen when Fordham won that great race on Sabinus in the Cambridgeshire, but a finish like that can never be forgotten. Allbrook made most of the running, and he was owned by Lord Allington. He had a light weight, and it seemed impossible for him to lose. Chaloner on Sterling, however, was on the premises, and Fordham on Sabinus was on the rails. It was such a finish that no one could tell which horse had won, but Sabinus won on the post by a short head. It was one of the best races Fordham ever rode.

Another great race for the Cambridgeshire was when La Merveille won, beating a rank outsider in Caxtonian. In this race Fordham rode Out of Bounds and some people thought he ought to have won. La Merveille's victory did not make the impression that of Sabinus did. I recollect a great race for

the Brocklesby Stakes at Lincoln. I was at Newark at the time and we drove to Lincoln. Wandering Nun, owned by Mr Chaplin, whose colours were so popular at Lincoln, beat Sir George Chetwynd's Althotas by a head or so. That same year Fordham won the Two Thousand on Petronel, and again he rode a magnificent race, just beating Webb on Muncaster. This was also the year Bend Or beat Robert the Devil in the Derby. I last saw old Petronel alive at Cobham, and his hide is now on the floor of the dining-room of the stud groom's house. It is impossible in the space of one article to write of the many close finishes seen, but I think I have given sufficient instances to show how enthralling is a slashing race, as the judges' box is approached, and what an impression a tight finish makes on the memory. A lad who has once seen a terrific struggle on the racecourse seldom forgets it. My eldest son recollects with clearness a race he saw at Randwick, Sydney, when he was but six years old, and I shall never forget him jumping on the seat of the stand and shouting, 'Ma wins! Ma wins!

That's ma's horse,' and the laughter and pats on the back he received. His mother had drawn the horse in a sweep, and had told him what the colours were. It may be thought very sad, and awfully wrong of me to have taken the lad to a racecourse, but I have not discovered any harm arising from this early introduction to the Turf. My own impression is that it is much better to let a lad know the world, and see what there is to be seen, than to bottle him up in a stifling atmosphere of sham morality. Depend upon it the 'tight rein' in youth causes the 'kicking over the traces' later on. It is not fair to a lad to rush him into school life after closely 'stabling' him at home; and do not forget that a boy devoid of mischief and fun is as unnatural as a two-year-old without playfulness, or those little tricks of his own which so try the patience of his trainer.

BLOGGS AND HIS MOTOR CAR





'BLOGGS AND HIS MOTOR.'

CHAPTER XI

BLOGGS AND HIS MOTOR CAR

BLOGGS. Charles Edward Bloggs. Give a man his full name, as well as his due. Bloggs had a mania for trying new inventions. He was, taking him all round, a very fair sportsman, and he had a passion for good horses until one fatal day he became stricken with motor-car infatuation. This new invention appealed to C. E. Bloggs. Sundry of his friends called him Civil Engineer Bloggs, but Charles Edward protested, and said he was so named because his father always had a sincere admiration for the Young Pretender. When Bloggs interviewed the motor car he became convinced, horses, as methods of conveyance, were doomed.

It was of no use trying to convince Bloggs that his grandfather had said the same thing

about railway engines, and that, despite the pessimistic forecast of his ancestor, horses still continued to flourish, and to be of utility, in this steam-ridden, electric age.

‘That is entirely different,’ replied Bloggs. ‘You do not use railway engines on roads. The motor is quite a different thing. It will entirely abolish horses for road purposes, and I am going to buy one of the latest inventions.’

C. E. Bloggs having made up his mind to buy a motor car, travelled some hundreds of miles in search of one to suit his requirements.

He had tried a motor cab in London, and honestly confessed he did not like the sensation when it broke away from the driver’s control, dashed along the Embankment, and tried to empty him into the Thames.

A motor car however was a very different matter, and he meant to steer it himself and make certain of being able to control it.

After some weeks of arduous toil he found the very thing to suit him.

The motor he selected was somewhat like a waggonette with the shafts cut off and

with the front seat jammed on top of a peculiar-looking metal arrangement like a rain-water tank. The car was painted black and yellow, and warranted up to twenty-five miles an hour with ease.

‘No horse can do twenty-five miles an hour,’ said Bloggs. ‘I tell you horses are doomed.’

Bloggs was instructed in motor driving. He found there was much to learn. During the first week he only had twelve accidents, and was merely fined two pounds and costs, through the agency of a police court, and the exertions of a traffic inspector. It cost him eleven pounds to repair the machine, and he commenced to think at this rate a horse might possibly be cheaper.

He did better during the second week of his tuition. He had learned how to grasp the working of the motor car, and also the handles. Being of a sporting turn of mind, he contemplated issuing a challenge for Mr C. E. Bloggs’s motor car ‘Safe and Sure’ to run any other man’s motor car fifty miles on the flat for any amount within reason. He was dissuaded from doing this rash act

by the maker of the car, who had reasons of his own for the course he took.

Bloggs gave it another week and then felt confident and perfect. He took the motor car home and stabled it.

‘No feeding required here,’ he said to his man, James Cross, who happened to be sweet on horses and dead against motors. ‘No expense for fodder, James.’

‘No, sir,’ said James, doubtfully, examining the wonderful affair curiously.

‘Splendid invention,’ said Bloggs, enthusiastically.

‘It do stink above a bit, sir,’ said James, sniffing.

‘I perceive a slight odour,’ said Bloggs, ‘but you will find all that will disappear when it has cooled down.’

‘What am I to do with it?’ asked James.

‘Clean it down. I am going to Windsor races to-morrow. I have some friends going with me,’ said Bloggs.

‘Sorry for ’em,’ thought James, and then added aloud,—

‘You’re sure it will stand washing?’

‘Of course it will. Don’t ask such ridiculous questions,’ said Bloggs.

Five friends turned up next morning to ‘motor car’ to Windsor with Bloggs.

‘Four inside and two on the front,’ said Bloggs. ‘I think we shall be very comfortable.’

James, the groom, stood looking on dubiously as they prepared to start.

One of the friends, who had to take an inside berth, seeing the groom’s countenance, said in a whisper,—

‘Are you sure it’s all right, James?’

‘So far as I know. I washed it last night,’ replied James.

‘How does it go? Have you tried it?’

‘No, sir. I’m a married man, and have three children.’

‘Dear me. Do you think there is any danger?’

‘Master says no, sir; but if I’d my choice I’d sooner take my chance of being shot by them Boers.’

‘Come, jump in,’ said Bloggs, and with sundry misgivings his friend did so.

‘Are we all ready?’ asked Bloggs. ‘Right away.’

Bloggs turned the wheel and the motor car backed and then jerked forward sharply, and came to a sudden halt. The occupants were hurled against each other, and took some sorting before they resumed their seats.

‘Just like a fresh horse at starting,’ said Bloggs, cheerfully. ‘It’s all right now.’

The motor started and made for the opposite side of the road.

‘Now then, mind where you’re going,’ yelled a man wheeling a barrow.

‘Be careful, Bloggs, be careful,’ said his friend on the box-seat.

‘We’re all right now,’ said Bloggs; ‘sit still.’

The motor went along the road at a rapid rate.

‘Bloggs,’ said an inside passenger, ‘I don’t like the motion, it makes me feel sea sick.’

‘Smells like the bally lamp-room of a ship,’ said another.

‘What a deuce of a row,’ said a third.

‘Bloggs, if you have no particular objection, I’d rather walk.’

Bloggs had no time to reply to the solicitations of his friends, he was too busy at the wheel.

His friend on the box-seat noticed Bloggs was somewhat uneasy and fumbled about with the steering gear in an experimental kind of way.

He had accepted the invitation to a motor ride under the impression that his friend Bloggs was an adept in the management of such cars. He commenced to have serious doubts on that head. The closer he watched Bloggs the more firmly he became convinced his friend had forgotten something vital connected with the car.

Bloggs was perspiring, and had a nervous look about his eyes. His friend fancied he detected an inclination on the part of Bloggs to go overboard and leave the car and its occupants to their fate.

‘What’s the matter, Bloggs? Can I help you?’ he howled in a loud voice, which sounded like a whisper amidst the roar and rattle of the car.

‘Nothing is the matter,’ said Bloggs. ‘This beats driving hollow.’

His friend groaned.

Bloggs felt a tug at his coat in the rear, and a hoarse voice said,—

‘It’s d——d hot in here. There’s something wrong with her boiler. Pull up or she’ll burst.’

‘Boiler!’ yelled Bloggs. ‘She hasn’t got a boiler.’

‘Do you mean to say you’ve left her boiler behind?’

‘She never had one. Motors don’t have boilers, you ass,’ roared Bloggs, still twirling and whirling the wheel about.

‘Then what the deuce makes it so hot in here?’

‘It’s a warm day, a very warm day,’ explained Bloggs.

‘But all the warmth is under the seat,’ expostulated his friend. ‘You can’t hold the atmosphere responsible for par-boiling my extremities.’

‘Look out. Sit still,’ shouted Bloggs, shaving a cart narrowly, and receiving a violent volley of language from the driver.

‘That’s just what we cannot do, it’s too hot,’ said the suffering friend.

‘Pull up at Staines,’ said his friend on the box-seat.

Bloggs only wished he could act upon

this advice, but he had been vainly trying to check the speed of the motor for the last quarter of an hour.

‘Wait until we get to Windsor; we shall not be long at this pace,’ said Bloggs.

‘Why not stop at Staines?’ persisted his friend.

‘Hang Staines! Beastly hole,’ said Bloggs.

‘When did you change your opinion? You were always partial to Staines.’

‘Never,’ said Bloggs. ‘Never. Windsor, not Staines. We’ll go down by Runnymede. We shall have more room.’

‘What do you want more room for?’

‘We can put on a spurt,’ said Bloggs.

Put on a spurt. This was pleasant. The motor was bounding and leaping, jolting and thumping, groaning and hissing, and the fumes were increasing rapidly. The four gentlemen inside looked like shipwrecked mariners. They clung to each other with a ‘save me’ expression on their faces. They offered Bloggs untold wealth to pull up and let them walk.

Bloggs was inexorable. They had started

on the job and must go through with it. Bloggs had his work cut out. Passing through a village he had just time to note that the inhabitants were shutting the doors and windows of their houses, and that the people on the street all had pocket handkerchiefs held to their noses.

Bloggs did not like this, but he had no time to stop and remonstrate.

Passing the police station at Staines furious signals were made for Bloggs to moderate the speed of his motor, but when he continued on his career, heedless of the guardians of law and order, their martial ardour was roused, and the order to 'boot and saddle' was sounded. Bloggs, his motor, and the wretched occupants, jolted and fumed through the main street of Staines, scattering the traffic, scaring pedestrians, running over howling dogs, and pursued by execrations from the multitude. Happily Bloggs had not lost control of the steering gear, and he successfully performed some wonderful feats of navigation, considering the pace at which they were travelling.

'For (jolt) God's (jolt) sake (jolt), Bloggs

(jolt), stop' (whack), came in banged-out jerks from an inside friend.

'C-a-n'-t,' said Bloggs.

'She's running away,' said the box-seat friend, wishing he was cooped up in Lady-smith, or engaged in the comparatively calm occupation of climbing a kopje.

'Bolted?' gasped another awe-stricken passenger. 'Take hold of her head, Bloggs.

'D——n it, I can't. She's not a horse.'

'Would to heaven she were.'

At that moment Bloggs would willingly have exchanged the motor and its entire contents for a decent respectable ass, and to swop the lot for a mule he would have reckoned he had secured a bargain.

Clattering through the main street of Staines were the mounted police in hot pursuit.

How Bloggs steered over the bridge successfully he never knew. The motor dashed past the gasworks at top speed, she rounded the turn before reaching Egham, narrowly escaped being capsized over the little bridge leading to Runnymede, and crashed along the uneven lane.

Open ground loomed in front. Bloggs breathed more freely.

‘She’ll be exhausted soon,’ gasped Bloggs.

‘I am now,’ said his friend.

‘Can’t we shut off steam?’ from inside.

‘She’s got no steam,’ from Bloggs.

‘What is it?’

‘Oil.’

‘Phew!’

‘Yes, it is a bit that way.’

‘How long is she primed for?’

‘Twelve hours.’

There was no hope, they were utterly lost.

Twelve hours at this pace would land them in the sea. They must strike the coast line somewhere.

There was a solitary fisherman in a punt spinning for ‘Jack’ in the Thames.

He shouted to them and wished them a pleasant journey.

Bloggs swore.

In the far distance a cloud of dust rose in the rear; from this cloud emerged the forms of the mounted police.

‘We are pursued,’ said an inside friend.

‘You’ll be had up for furious driving, Bloggs.’

‘You’ll be fined for cruelty to a motor car, and serve you right, Bloggs.’

These taunts infuriated Bloggs, and he made another desperate effort to pull up as they neared the Bells of Ouseley.

Opposite this noted riverside house, the road slopes gently down towards the river, which at this point is not particularly deep.

By some mischance Bloggs got the steering gear mixed, and the motor car switched round and hurried down the bank. Before the occupants could cry aloud for help, or make their wills, or say one fond good-bye, the runaway backed into the Thames, heaved up behind, and shot the occupants into her liquid depth. To the accompaniment of an exploded battery, and the noise of a dislocating motor, six men struggled forth from the gravelly bed of the Thames.

They looked like welchers who had met with their just deserts.

The police were waiting to receive them.

Bloggs explained, and they all adjourned to the Bells to get dry, and wet.

Offers were made to pull the motor car out of the river.

‘No,’ said Bloggs. ‘Let her drown.’

‘Hear, hear,’ from five partially dried men.

Charles Edward Bloggs drives a horse again, and it is not safe to allude to motor cars in his presence.

A TRAINER'S HOME LIFE

CHAPTER XII

A TRAINER'S HOME LIFE

A TRAINER'S is a busy life, full of anxiety and demands upon his time, and yet a happy life. I know many trainers in various parts of the world, and I never found one who did not take a pride and a pleasure in his occupation. Trainers have their ups and downs like other men, and a long run of bad luck causes despondency; but they never wish to follow any other business. The systems of training horses are much the same all the world over, although almost every trainer has some particular method which he clings to with pertinacity. The life of a trainer is full of interest, and constant study of horses and their ways expands their minds in other directions. It is not possible for any man, directly brought in contact with horses, to be other than observant. The nature of his occupation tends

to a close insight into many things. I know trainers, whose education has been neglected, who have far more common sense and acute powers of penetration than men with the right to place a college degree after their names.

A trainer in Australia has not quite so much to contend against as in England. The climate of Australia is more even, and not subject to the sudden changes of northern latitudes. Sydney, for nine months out of the twelve, has a perfect climate in ordinary seasons, and the same may be said of most of the other large cities in Australia. I lived almost four years in Brisbane, Queensland, and although hot in summer, it is by no means a trying climate. Melbourne is delightful the greater part of the year, and as for Tasmania, it is a perfect little paradise.

The best trainers have been amongst horses all their lives, as probably had their fathers before them. 'What is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh' is applicable to them in a marked degree. There is something about a trainer which distinguishes him from other men, and his occupation is often stamped upon his person.

Trainers have widely different ideas of dress, although upon other matters there is not such a divergence of opinions. The swell trainer of to-day, when he appears in the paddock, has a 'band-box' appearance about him. His attire is faultless. He has a shiny top hat brushed with every care, his clothes are of fashionable cut, his boots made on the smart approved pattern, his tie quite the latest thing; his collar erect and firm, and white as the driven snow, his hands carefully gloved, a flower in the buttonhole of his light overcoat, and, to add a finishing touch to the whole, he has an expensive stick negligently dangling on one arm.

Not far away is another trainer, quite as skilful, if not more so. He is neatly dressed it is true but not with elaborate attention to detail. Everything about him is clean and neat. His clothes are plain, but fit him well. He has a 'hard hitter' on his head, and smiles at the idea of a shiny tile. He has no gloves on, and only uses such articles when the weather is cold, or when driving or riding. His tie is black, and his collar clean easy and comfortable. His face is shaved, his hair iron

grey, and there is a shrewd yet kindly look about him.

A little farther on and we come across another stamp of trainer. He has not paid the attention to outward appearance which the modern swell trainer deems necessary. He has a billy-cock hat on, a warmish coat, a silk scarf round his neck. His legs are clothed in breeches and gaiters, buttoned down the front. He has a race glass slung over his shoulder. He has a beard and moustache, and a pleasant face when lighted up by a smile. A quiet retiring man who knows his business, and has plenty of patrons. A man whose judgment is seldom at fault, who would probably more than hold his own with the modern trainer in the fashionable attire. English trainers are as a rule neat in appearance, but no matter how they may be dressed the bulk of them are easily recognisable as men having much to do with horses.

The trainer has many things to think about all the year round, and cannot relax his vigilance with safety to the horses in his charge. The inner life of a trainer's home cannot be

judged by his work on the track when training his horses.

On the track he is very much the same as on the racecourse. He superintends the horses, and issues orders how much or how little work each one has to be given ; whether the gallops are to be fast, medium pace, or slow. Some horses have long slow work, others are 'stripped' and sent at top speed over a mile. A batch of youngsters are led in steady work by an old schoolmaster used to such an occupation. Then the trials have to be attended to, and these are ticklish affairs requiring a considerable amount of skill and *finesse*. Personally, after witnessing some hundreds of trials, I think I may safely say the trainer is an adept in keeping the bulk of the knowledge gained by such trials to himself. The trials may be public, and the result, so far as the finishing of the horse at the end of the gallop be correctly given, and the comments made thereon to the point, but I know in many instances the trainer's version differs widely from other versions as to the real merit of the spin. A trainer told me not many months ago, that he was almost sure to win a race with a certain

horse. I pointed out that the general opinion appeared to be the horse had very little chance, and that judging by the price the bookmakers were not in the least afraid of it winning. 'If you asked any of "the lads" in the stable they would probably tell you he had no chance,' said the trainer.

'But surely they know something about his chance,' I said.

'Wait and see,' he replied.

After dinner we went round to see the horses 'done up' for the night.

The 'head lad' was with us, and when we came to the horse alluded to I said, with the trainer's knowledge that I was going to put the question, 'What do you think of his chance in ——?' naming the race.

He looked at the trainer who said, 'Well, what do you think of his chance?'

'He cannot have much of a show from the way he gallops. He went awfully slow this morning,' said the 'head lad.'

'What did I tell you,' said the trainer, when we were smoking a cigar inside.

'How did you manage it?' I asked.

Having confidence in me he told me how he managed it.

I could not help laughing ; it was so simple and yet so clever. I have only to add that the horse won, starting at a very long price, and the stable landed a heavy stake. There was nothing wrong in all this.

The trainer merely kept his knowledge for the benefit of his patrons and their friends. He told me it was necessary to use great caution in a stable because there was so much tampering with the lads from outside, and that he knew some of the lads in his stable sent telegrams away giving tips. He further said he did not see how it could be put a stop to.

In the course of conversation, I said,—

‘Suppose the representative of an influential paper had asked you about that trial?’

‘I have never been asked about a trial yet,’ he replied, and added with a smile, ‘seeing is believing, you know.’ Then after a pause, ‘I saw the representative of one paper, a man I know well, on the morning of the race, and told him he might do worse than put a pound on my horse.’

‘And what did he say?’ I asked.

‘He laughed and said he would put a pound on each way because I had told him, but added, that he did not think the horse had a ghost of a chance.’

When trainers themselves are sometimes deceived by trials, no wonder outsiders make mistakes.

A trainer’s work at home never appears to be finished. I was surprised when staying with one of the cleverest trainers of our day, to find what a multifarious number of things he had to do. I arrived in the afternoon. He met me at the station with his trap. We drove to his house, and in the space of an hour after my arrival he left the room five or six times to attend to people who called to see him. The afternoon post came in, and his letters were opened and marked with memos when necessary. After dinner he went round the stables and personally examined every horse; there were over forty of them. He made inquiries when necessary of the lad in attendance. As I happened to be with him the rugs were taken off most of the horses as

we entered the box. He had thoughtfully given these orders beforehand.

'Thank you, that will do, Jones. Good-night.'

'Good-night, sir,' and we passed into the next box.

The horses' legs were felt carefully, any little irregularity in the box did not escape his watchful eye. A slight movement of the hand pointed out the mistake to the lad at once.

The last mail was delivered as we returned to the house. More letters were opened. There were packages containing samples of corn, and circulars from a variety of people. There were communications from owners which had to be answered without delay. A couple of telegrams came later on. We went to bed soon after ten. In the morning we were out betimes and on the training ground, where the work occupied some considerable time.

All the morning, on our return home, the trainer was occupied with correspondence, accounts and a variety of other matters. I was reading the London paper and watching

him at his work, when tired of the news of the day. He was tidy and methodical and seemed to have a place for everything, and to know exactly where anything he happened to require was placed.

He was several times interrupted by callers, and without any ruffling of temper went to see them returning and resuming his work where he had left off.

Occasionally he would look up and say a few words, or hand me a circular saying,—

‘What do you think of that?’

‘Do you read all these things?’ I asked, being in the habit of throwing them into a capacious wastepaper basket myself.

‘Yes, the bulk of them. I have often got a useful hint from one of these circulars,’ he replied.

In the afternoon I drove several miles with him in order to pay a visit.

In the evening he gave me some idea of the amount of book-keeping required in a large training establishment. It paralysed me, to use a strong word. Hundreds of items are put down that I never thought of, but which I could see at a glance were absolutely

necessary to the keeping of correct accounts. A trainer's hand is always in his pocket to pay for something connected with his stable. If owners are 'long winded' yet the trainer's bills have to be met regularly. I do not think owners wilfully put trainers to inconvenience, but they often treat them as we are apt to think the ordinary man treats his tailor.

With all his cares and worries, and they are heavy and numerous, the trainer is a cheerful man, a man of shrewd observation, from whom it is easy to learn much. He commands respect and admiration for such sterling possessions as patience and perseverance in which he excels.

The disappointments of a trainer's life are many, and his joys and successes ought to be, and are at times, proportionately great.

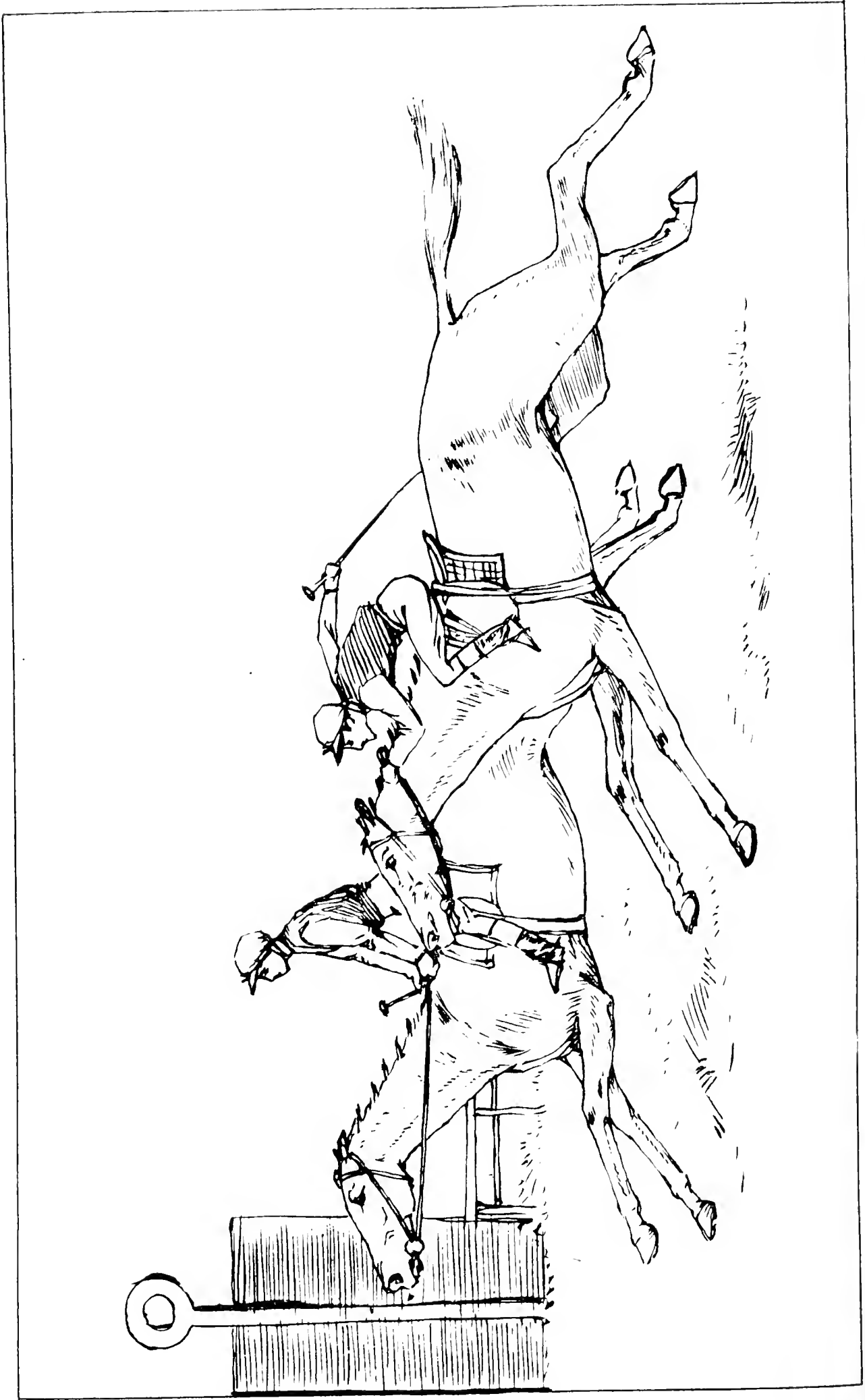
When his horses are down with sickness is probably his most trying time, and such a calamity in the spring may ruin the fortunes of a stable for a whole season.

Owners are not always considerate on such occasions and do not make sufficient allowances for the trainer. At such times the

trainer has very little rest either day or night, and when he happens to sleep his dreams are not pleasant, and his rest is disturbed by his active brain.

A conscientious trainer has not an easy life. He is a hard-worked man, but he thoroughly enjoys his work, and rejoices in his successes and bravely bears up against his defeats. His life is full of change and excitement. He travels much and comes in contact with many different kinds of people. There is a good deal of wear and tear about his business, but a man is never so happy as when his time is fully occupied. Idleness is a bad master, but activity brings its due reward, and of an active life few men see more than trainers.

JOCKEYS AND JOCKEYSHIP



CHAPTER XIII

JOCKEYS AND JOCKEYSHIP

THE art of jockeyship is not easily learned. 'The artfulness of jockeys,' you ought to have written, said a friend who happened to see my manuscript. Perhaps he is right. Jockeys are artful, but hardly in the sense he meant it. They are artful because much of their work is produced by art, although in this instance it is not directly opposed to nature. Race riding is an art, and a fine art. There is much that is graceful in good jockeyship, and the best riders do not neglect this part of their profession. Styles of riding differ as much as the men who ride. Being taught in a good school is everything as regards a jockey's style. My experience of jockeys is that few men are more in love with their profession. 'What is your favourite hobby?' asked a medical man, and

I replied, 'Writing sporting novels.' 'You are a lucky man to make your hobby your living,' he answered. Nine jockeys out of ten would probably say their favourite occupation was riding. It is a life of pleasurable excitement, but like the life of a trainer, it has its ups and downs. There is something exceedingly exhilarating in cantering a horse over a wide stretch of downs, or in taking a gallop across Newmarket Heath, but this is a mere trifle compared with the feelings aroused in riding a race.

Coolness is an absolute essential in a jockey, and it is born of long practice and experience. There are cool boys riding races, but they are few and far between, and the matured man is to be preferred.

Australian jockeys do not differ so much from the English riders in their style as the Americans. At the present time perhaps the most perfect master of style is Mornington Cannon. Tom Cannon, his father, was one of the most accomplished horsemen I ever saw, and 'Morny' possesses much of his style, and all his good qualities. To look at Cannon on a horse, Flying Fox for instance,

is to realise what the art of jockeyship means.

The jockey in Australia who rode in the best style was Tom Hales, and his seat in the saddle was very like that of Cannon. In appearance they are very different. Cannon has a fresh face, rather full for a jockey, and with a somewhat boyish expression of fun in it. His eyes are bright and merry, and he looks the personification of good temper. He has a well-shaped body, and does not look 'shrunken' or withered, as too many jockeys do. Mornington Cannon 'off the Turf' has very little of the professional jockey about him. Tom Hales, who has given up riding for some years, is the exact opposite of Cannon in appearance. He has suffered much from asthma and it has told the tale in his face which is somewhat drawn, and his cheeks sunken. He has a heavy moustache which relieves his features, and although his colour is occasionally high it is not the rosy hue of the best of health. His eyes are bright and clear and denote the indomitable spirit within. His frame is slight and, compared with Cannon, he is thin. Both men have

however much in common. They ride somewhat similar races. They have wonderful hands, cool heads, are fine judges of pace, and know exactly how to finish, and what the horse they are riding is capable of doing when the pinch comes. In manner they are not unlike, although Hales is more reserved, but age no doubt is responsible for this; he has not the youth of 'Morny' Cannon, a youth that will cling to him I believe for years. Cannon's is one of those faces that have the happy knack of retaining youth even when the grey hairs appear. Tom Hales, on the contrary, aged quickly during the latter years I knew him; the integrity of the two men has never been doubted, and they bear unsullied names. Each in his hemisphere sets an example to young jockeys they would do well to follow. There is very little to choose between Watts and Cannon in style, or the art of riding, and in my humble opinion they are two of the most perfect horsemen I have ever seen. I am not dealing with jockeys dead and gone, but with the living. There are many men, alas no more, who have performed wonders in the saddle, and whose

names and deeds are familiar to thousands of people who never saw them ride.

The American style of riding came into prominence with the advent of J. T. Sloan in this country. His marvellous success for a time turned the heads of backers, and sorely troubled the pockets of bookmakers. Whatever may be the merits of Sloan as a horseman, his style is anything but artistic. Despite the success of the American style of riding, I am convinced it is not the proper way to sit a horse. Most racing men are familiar with the sight of Sloan perched on the horse's withers, his knees well nigh on a level with the horse's neck, and his body bent double, crouching forward, his face not far from the horse's ears. The best illustration of the style I can give is to imagine a lad on a pony which has suddenly stopped short at a hurdle. The lad is shot forward, and saves a fall by clinging to the pony's neck, his body being in almost a similar position to Sloan's when riding. I do not wish to convey the impression that Sloan is not a clever jockey. He is clever, and has ridden some fine finishes. One of the best I ever saw

him ride was at Chester when he beat O'Donovan Rossa, on Chevening. It was a marvellous bit of jockeyship. It is the style, not the jockey, I do not like. It seems to me impossible that a jockey riding as Sloan, and other Americans do, can have as much control over a horse as such riders as Watts, Cannon, Loates, or any of our best jockeys. I feel sure in the long run our style will prove the more successful, as it certainly is the more elegant and artistic.

The life of a jockey is full of variety, and his opportunities are many for acquiring a stock of knowledge and experiences that would afford interesting reading. How much jockeys could tell, if they were not judicious enough to keep silent. A talkative jockey is the exception, not the rule, and yet they are by no means lacking in conversational powers.

A leading jockey, more especially if he is inclined to put on flesh, has much to contend against. Self-denial must be constantly practised; a relapse in this respect will play havoc with him during the racing season. His body must be studied in every possible

way, not his tastes or his appetite. He must deny himself nearly all the luxuries of the table for nine months out of the twelve, and during the remaining three he must exercise care in order not to put on flesh too rapidly. It ought always to be borne in mind, both with men and horses, that it is much easier to put on flesh than to take it off.

The training of a jockey requires much care, and the faults contracted in youth are hard to throw off later on. In a large racing establishment the apprentice has to depend upon himself to a great extent. This is the case with all boys in schools where there are numerous scholars. A natural love of horses ought to be born in every jockey, it must be so, if he is to rise to the highest eminence. A horse is not a machine ; he requires to be studied, and his habits to be thoroughly understood. The jockey who has mastered the art of race riding is as clever in his line as the most skilful engineer. He knows every part of a horse's anatomy which is essential for him to understand as a jockey.

Quick decision every successful jockey must possess in a marked degree. There is no time

for hesitation when riding in a six-furlong race, or less. The jockey has to make up his mind what to do, how to do it, and when to act, in a few seconds. He knows if he makes a mistake he will have no time to repair his error. Hesitation means defeat. In the hundreds of races I have seen run, the marvellous faculty for promptly arriving at a decision has always appealed to me in jockeys. To seize opportunities exactly at the moment they offer wins many a battle, and jockeys are extraordinarily quick in this respect. They are always on the alert, and their thoughts move rapidly. They seem to take in the situation at a glance, and to know not only what the horse they are riding can accomplish, but what chances the other runners possess. They have to concentrate the whole of their faculties on the business in hand.

Although the best jockeys make large fortunes, I think they earn them. Thousands a year for several years soon mount up to a tidy sum. 'It is a precious easy way of earning a living.' 'Jockeys are overpaid,' and such like remarks we hear. It is not an easy way of earning a living, although it may

appear to be so to the uninitiated. A jockey's life is full of many hardships, although these hardships are well gilded with gold. There may be more reason in the remark that jockeys are overpaid, but are they? A man's work, skill or proficiency in any particular line is worth what it will bring. Some men are underpaid, others we may consider overpaid. If a jockey's services are estimated at so many thousands a year, I do not think it is anyone's business to growl at his being overpaid. The grumbling ought to be for those who are underpaid, if such a wonder as an underpaid jockey exists.

The earnings of jockeys of a bygone age are often compared with the fees paid to riders at the present day. Comparisons might be drawn between wages earned fifty years ago and now in every business or profession. It is not alone jockeys whose services have increased to such an enormous extent in value.

Apart from everything else the jockeys' profession is surrounded with considerable risk. How risky race riding is may be gathered from the marvellous hairbreadth escapes jockeys have at times. I have seen jockeys killed, and

injured for life, and I have also seen some escapes from death that would have been considered impossible. I once saw a jockey thrown from his horse, and a field of nearly a score horses galloped right over him. He walked down the course uninjured. On another occasion I saw a jockey, whose horse fell near the rails, extricate himself from his perilous position and roll under the rails, a second or two before two more horses came down on the top of the one that had fallen. A jockey riding in a steeplechase at Randwick, Sydney, had one of the most remarkable escapes I ever saw. His horse struck a fence in the straight, turned a complete summersault, and landed flat on its back, with the rider under him. Everyone thought the man had been instantly killed. It seemed impossible for him to have escaped. He was carried on a stretcher into the accident-room. Half an hour later I spoke to him in the paddock, and in answer to my inquiries he said,—

‘It gave me a bit of a shaking and stunned me, but I am all right now.’

He rode in a steeplechase a few days later.

Very few jockeys escape without a fall, or

accident of same kind, in the course of their careers.

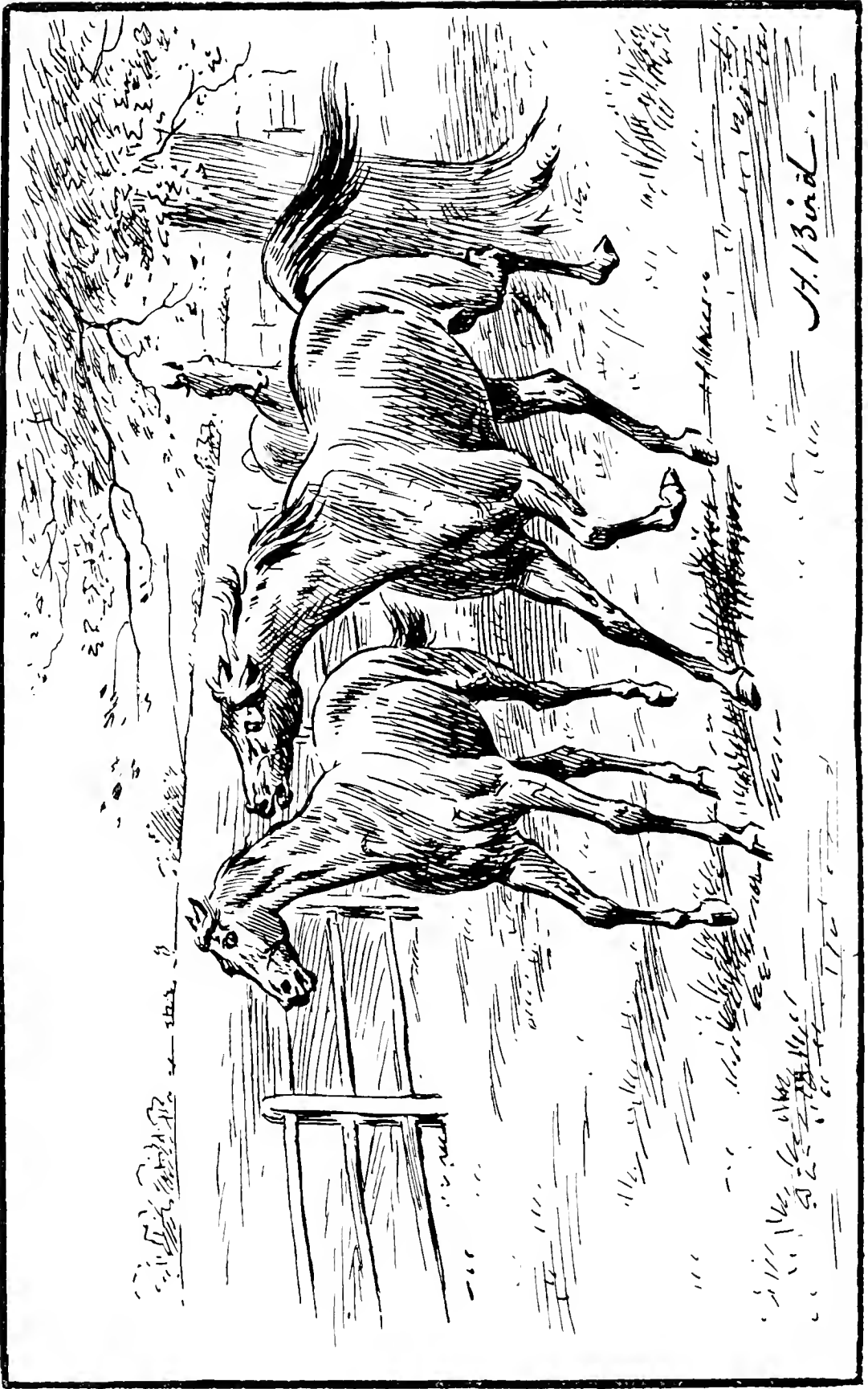
As to the integrity of jockeys I will not enter. My own opinion, based on personal testimony, is, that in the majority of cases when a horse's running is considered doubtful, the jockey has ridden according to instructions. That jockeys have 'pulled' horses admits of no doubt, but the serious cases are not so frequent as many of the public think. Horses are often at fault when jockeys and owners are blamed.

I once asked a crack jockey at Flemington, Melbourne, the following question,—

'Have you ever been instructed not to win on a horse?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'and I have had to ride to orders or my mounts would have been few and far between, but let me tell you I hate it. When I get up on a horse I want to win and beat all the other fellows, and you'll find, if you take the trouble to ask them, every jockey will tell you the same tale.'

HORSES AT REST AND PLAY



'HORSES AT REST AND PLAY.'

CHAPTER XIV

HORSES AT REST AND PLAY

FOR many years it has fallen to my lot to describe horses, more particularly thoroughbreds, at work, and it has been a congenial task. Apart from the active lives of horses, many people know very little about them when at play or at rest. There is, however, much to interest a keen observer and lover of horses, when they are comfortably 'at home' to visitors, either in the stable or the field. The real nature of a horse will show itself in the quietude of his box and in his playfulness in the open field. I have already stated that racing is not a cruel sport, far from it. The race-horse has a happy life compared with other horses. He is never troubled with that abomination the bearing rein; he has no heavy loads to drag; he is not supposed to trot so many miles an hour, dragging

a clumsy vehicle behind him, weighted with twenty or thirty stone of humanity, sitting wedged in the seats in solid blocks. He is not subject to insults from irate and incompetent grooms, who call his eyes, his hide, his body, and his head, unmentionable names. He is not unmercifully flogged when the load is too heavy to bear, nor is he half-starved, or compelled to stand in the rain and cold, during the hours his driver waits for a job. On the whole, and taken as a whole, the race-horse has a decidedly easy life. He has to exert his strength and speed to the utmost at intervals, but from a long and close study of him I am certain he relishes the sport.

Take a celebrated race-horse when he retires from the Turf to the stud, and compare his life with that of any other animal. The comparison is enormously in his favour. A residence is specially built for him. Probably it would be considered a mansion by thousands of homeless wanderers with souls to be saved and bodies to be starved. It is such an imposing structure that the average cottager would be proud to call it 'home.'

It is well lighted, and erected on the most approved sanitary principles. Plans have been skilfully prepared for it, and architecture has not been neglected. In all probability, if his victories have been numerous and great, a stone tablet is let into the wall near the entrance, on which are engraved the names of the races he has won and the amount realised. The sum would be considered a large fortune even by a man earning a thousand a year. To millions of people who earn a thousand shillings a year, or less, it would be considered untold wealth. Between thirty and forty thousand pounds is a fortune to most people.

The interior of 'my lord's' house is in keeping with the exterior. The fittings are costly, the painting and decorating has been attended to, the sides of his roomy box lined with beautifully - polished wood. There is not a speck of dirt to be seen, and a cobweb would endeavour to be blown down in an anxious endeavour to escape from such uncongenial surroundings. His bedding is as clean as a newly-washed sheet, not a straw seems out of place. For 'my lord' has a

'valet,' who is expert, and attends to his every want.

And 'my lord' himself, what of him? How old is he? Six, thank you. Probably he has a score more years before him in which to live a life of pleasure luxury and ease, his every want anticipated, and a special vet. to attend to the state of his precious health at stated intervals whether necessary or otherwise. Six years old, and his racing career ended. Four years of active work, which he has thoroughly enjoyed, and which has prepared him constitutionally to live to a good old age. Truly his lot is a happy one, his lines have been cast in pleasant places. I am quite aware there is another side to the picture, and that many a good race-horse has ended his days in an ignominious manner. I am also aware that many men who were born rich have died poor, also that other men, and animals, who have worked hard in the earlier stages of their lives, have not reaped the due reward of their labours in old age. This is the way of the human, and also the animal, world, and will be until the end of time. A well-bred race-horse, a comparative failure on

the Turf, may have a chance given him later on, and be retired to the stud. A 'blue-blooded' youth, who has proved an out and out bad lot, may yet die in hoary old age surrounded by wealth and luxury which he has not earned.

There is no more charming sight than to watch yearlings play in their paddocks. They gambol and are as full of tricks as schoolboys. There is no end to their fun, and I verily believe they have games of their own.

For instance, there are four yearlings in the paddock. It is a spacious paddock, in which they can extend themselves at full gallop, without danger of straining themselves by having to pull up suddenly at a fence before they are fairly 'going.'

They are standing quietly in a corner, under the shade of a large tree. One colt is playfully nibbling at his nearest companion, who snaps, also playfully, in return. The other two are observing them. Presently a consultation is held. The four heads are almost close together and some game is evidently being proposed. Having decided upon the par-

ticular sport to be indulged in, one yearling whips suddenly round and goes off at full gallop, the other three give him a moderate start and then after him they go at top speed. The yearling in front takes every advantage of his start.

He gallops straight across the paddock to a certain point. Having reached it he whips round and tears off home again to the starting-point. The other three do not turn until they reach the same spot, but when they do spin round there is a desperate race for the tree. They evidently knew what they were about when number one was given a start for they catch him before he can reach the goal. Then all four pull up under the tree again, and by the motion of their heads and necks which are constantly in movement, appear to argue out the merits of the race. The result is not conclusive, for they start off again, on this occasion going round the paddock. The loser has no start this time because the distance is farther, and the result proves he is a better stayer than his companions, and also that they were aware of the fact, for he comes 'home' first. Tired of sprinting they

play tricks on each other. There is a good deal of bumping and pushing and playful kicks and squeals. A few moments' rest and then a further consultation. Off starts number one again, and does not discover until he is half-way across the paddock that his companions are still under the tree. Recognising that he has been 'had,' he turns round and gallops back, but knowing what they may expect from a justly indignant comrade, they rush off at his approach. He allows them to depart without giving chase, but occupies as much space as he possibly can under the shady tree, and awaits their return in a warlike attitude.

The three turn round and look at him. The sun is shining fiercely and they miss the shade of the tree. After a confabulation in which they have evidently been selecting one of the trio to test the force of number one's indignation, the yearling upon which the choice has fallen advances at a trot, the other two behind at a respectful distance.

The reception accorded the advance guard is not encouraging, and he beats a retreat. The other two determine to support him and the three make a dash for the tree. They are

repulsed and scatter in different directions. In due course an arrangement is arrived at, by signals made from a distance, and the quartette rest under the shade of the tree again in peace and amity.

Or stroll over a farm and observe the horses at play. There is the old mare, whose foal is not many days old, and who is resting from her arduous labours. She is a heavy-looking mare, with big, strong, thick legs, and the hair hanging in masses over her hoofs. She has a great broad chest, and tremendous quarters. Her movements are sedate, not to say clumsy. The foal at her side is quite a different sort of youngster from the four we have just left. He is active enough and jumps about; but his legs are already thick, and he shows signs of ponderousness. He regards life from a heavier standpoint than the more highly-bred quartette. Nature is truly wonderful, and trains these dumb creatures from their youth to fit the positions they will be called upon to fill. I am afraid as much cannot be said for modern systems of education. The foal of a heavy cart mare has no desire to attempt to attain a speed beyond

his capacity; he even regards the foal of the hackney mare near at hand as a cut above him, and the hackney foal would regard the four thoroughbred yearlings in an almost similar way, although with a shade more familiarity. There are grades in horses, as in men, from the thoroughbred down to the heavy cart horse, as from the titled noble to the labourer. Nature however provides a very different education from our school boards. She does not attempt 'to make a bee out of a bull's foot,' or 'a silk purse out of a sow's ear.'

The home of the old mare is vastly different from that of 'my lord.' There is no 'blazoned scroll of fame' outside her stable door, and the old stone walls are weather-beaten and worn. There are no pointed gables, and no architectural experiments to be seen. Inside the walls were once white, now they are any colour, according to the time the dirt has been accumulating in different places. Here the cobwebs hang unmolested, and if by chance they happen to be swept down, ancient spiders with corpulent bodies, and aldermanic movements, in vain protest against such outrage. The old mare has not even the satisfaction

of the habitation to herself. Her home is divided into stalls, and on the right is a younger scion of a heavy race, who has a nasty habit of banging his feet on the stones in the dead of night with such force that the ancient stable vibrates with the shock. On the left is a son of the old mare, who, being of considerable height and long in the neck, contrives to reach over and abstract his mother's hay from the rack. The old mare does not object; it is useless. She is philosophically resigned to her lot and lies down on her straw, underneath which are cobbly stones, and blinks her eyes and nods her head until sleep, the reward of honest toil, comes over her.

It must not be imagined she is discontented with her lot. Far from it. She shows by a willing and ready obedience she is thankful to her master and his man. Is the man as thankful to his master? On a warm night the old mare delights in being 'turned out.' There is no need to lead her to the meadow, she knows the way well enough. Out at the yard gate she passes and leisurely walks down the lane. The man has taken a short cut through

the rick yard and is at the gate before her. He opens it and she passes through at a clumsy trot. Once in the meadow she sniffs the air, shakes herself, and then not quite satisfied has a ponderous roll. These preparations ended she commences her evening meal. The man, after contemplating her a few moments goes home, and changing into his best Sunday garments tramps a couple of miles to hear a political agitator, who is a being much beneath his contempt if he only had the sense to see it.

EPSOM DOWNS VACANT

CHAPTER XV

EPSOM DOWNS VACANT

THOUSANDS of people who have seen the Derby, year after year, decided on Epsom Downs, have never seen those same Downs vacant. According to the latest edition of a remarkably prolific dictionary—I had no idea there were so many words in our language—vacant, amongst other meanings, is ‘especially devoid of occupants.’

On Derby Day the difficulty would be to find a spot on Epsom Downs devoid of occupants. The sights on Derby Day have been frequently and graphically described. The many varied descriptions which appear year after year is an illustration of the versatility of sporting journalists, who can discover something new in a scene which always presents much sameness.

Epsom Downs vacant has been neglected at

the expense of Epsom Downs occupied. There is something weirdly fascinating about these Downs vacant, as they were when I stood on the rise above Tattenham Corner, and looked over the scene spread out before me. There was not a human being to be seen on that vast stretch of Downs, probably a somewhat unusual occurrence.

In order to fully appreciate the task set a horse and a jockey to win the Derby, it is necessary to look at the course when Epsom Downs is vacant.

It is all very well for men to boast of having witnessed so many Derbys run for, or to profess a perfect knowledge of the course from observing races from the stands, or hill. These gentlemen have not an accurate conception of the difficulties of the Derby course, although I grant they may have a well-nigh perfect notion of the various races they have witnessed. Being present at the Derby does not necessarily mean having a good view of the race or the course. The bulk of the people have not the faintest idea what has won until the numbers go up, and even then it is necessary for them to ascertain the name of the victorious horse.

To see Epsom Downs vacant is a marvellous change from the crowded thousands of Derby Day. Instead of the constant roar of voices, the varied yells and cries, the rattle of carriages, the dull tramping of many feet, there is perfect stillness.

It was a beautiful day when I stood on Epsom Downs and looked over the landscape. It is a fine country spreading around the famous racecourse. Within easy distance are such places as Woodcote Park, Perrot's Park, Tadworth Park, Banstead Downs, Sutton, Ewell and Ashted, which enclose the Downs almost in a ring fence. But it was the vacant Downs which brought so many thoughts to mind of bygone races on the famous course.

The stillness seemed to be again broken by the sound of galloping hoofs, and the roar of the vast crowd.

How fresh and green the Downs looked, and the course from Tattenham Corner seemed to undulate like a switchback track. No one who has not inspected Tattenham Corner when the Downs are vacant can have any idea of its nature, or the full sweep of that extremely tricky, not to say dangerous, turn. It is

rounded off like the half-circle of some huge circus ring. On the left, as the jockeys ride, are the rails, those famous rails which we have heard so much of, and whose fame has extended to the uttermost parts of the earth. Rails which have actually become historical, rising to a dignity and eminence far beyond their mere timber-carrying capacity. No rails will ever rise to the dignity of Tattenham Corner rails. Their position is not assailable. The present rails may succumb to force of circumstances, or weather, and be replaced, but for ever and ever, so long as the Derby is run over Epsom Downs, they will be *par excellence*, the rails. They are not much to look at, but the mere sight of them suggests closer investigation. There is a desire to anticipate the impossible, to try and discover the exact rails which had the honour of seeing Archer's leg above them as he shaved the corner. Also the spot where 'a dash' was made for the rails, and perhaps a minute inspection would disclose the nail that ripped up the trouser leg of a famous jockey as he swept round on a horse going at a speed of a mile in something under a minute and a half, at this particular spot.

You lean over the rails with a caressing movement. They are, it is true, very like mere ordinary rails, but different; as like as two old oak chairs, yet different, because one has been sat on by Charles I., and the other is a sham, and has been made to imitate the royal seat. The Tattenham Corner rails are as historically different from other rails as the two oak chairs are utterly unlike, and yet alike, in point of interest. These rails have witnessed some curious sights, and seen many hopes shattered, for at this famous corner many a Derby has been lost and won. The great difference it makes to a horse's chance, holding a good inside position at Tattenham Corner, can be understood thoroughly when leaning over the rails on a quiet day. Pass under the rails and stand in the centre of the course, and the peculiarities of the wide green track come out wonderfully clear and distinct. The advantage a jockey has, who knows the course well, is at once apparent. It is not a course to be taken in a haphazard fashion, but one to be studied and carefully thought out. If a horse be not adapted to the Derby course, the course can be almost adapted to him by a clever

jockey, after Tattenham Corner has been safely rounded. The corner itself admits of no separate treatment; if a jockey is not 'on the rails' he loses ground, and lost ground takes a lot of making up, more than some people imagine. A horse, as a rule, that loses half a dozen lengths or more at Tattenham Corner, and finishes third, would probably have headed the winner had his position been as favourable round the turn. The actual value of a loss or gain at Tattenham Corner cannot be accurately estimated from the stands.

Epsom Downs is not considered an ideal training ground, and perhaps it is not, but there are many worse, a great deal worse. I ventured on one occasion, through the medium of a popular London paper, to suggest that such places as Kempton, Sandown, etc., could be easily adapted for training horses. A correspondent replied that no horse can be properly trained on a flat course. If ever he owns race-horses he ought to train them on Epsom Downs, where he will find much variety in the nature of the land. Horses can be trained on flat courses, and there is no reason why the proprietary courses should not be

utilised for training purposes. Nearly every racecourse in Australia is also a training ground, and the plan acts admirably. What can be done in the colonies can be done here. Training tracks can easily be made on these courses, and trials could take place on the course proper, without using the actual racing ground near the rails. This is a subject I will not discuss further, but it is worthy of attention. As to horses not being trained on the flat, all I can say is, nearly every horse in Australia is trained on a perfectly flat course. The Melbourne cup winner, The Grafter, was trained on a flat course. He is trained at Epsom now and has not won a race since he came to England. Perhaps the change from the flat to the hilly course has not suited him.

Apart from its prominence as a racecourse and training ground, Epsom Downs is a delightful place for a stroll. The air is invigorating and the sense of freedom encouraged. I am not at all surprised at Lord Rosebery selecting The Durdans as a residence, and if rumour be correct, he prefers his picturesque Epsom house to some of his more

palatial mansions. A true lover of sport must appreciate such an historical ground as Epsom Downs. I confess I enjoyed Epsom Downs vacant far more than I have done amidst the crowded race scenes. It is a curious sensation to stand on the hill and look down across the course upon the empty stands and rings and paddock.

Imagination readily supplies the missing crowds, and there is a sigh of relief that they can be dismissed again from the mind so easily. The country surrounding Epsom Downs is picturesque and affords many attractions to lovers of sport, both on account of its natural charms and its racing and sporting associations. The Warren House is a large old place, which was probably used in Charles the Second's time as a country residence by that gay and festive monarch.

Can it be the same Warren alluded to by 'Nimrod' when he wrote, 'We allude to the place called The Warren, in which the Derby and Oaks horses are saddled and mounted. It is a small but picturesque bit of ground, in the forest style, inclosed by a wall, and entered by all who choose to pay a shilling.'

I wonder what 'Nimrod' would think of the charges and arrangements at Epsom on these days. It would be interesting to have such an authority's views on the many improvements (?) which have been made since he wrote in the *Quarterly Review* more than sixty years ago. I am under the impression his remarks would be scathing, and that withering sarcasm would be used to describe many of the new arrangements. It sounds like romance, in these grab-all days, to read that the charge for admission to the saddling paddock in 'Nimrod's' time was the modest sum of one shilling. How many shillings it takes to 'do' Epsom races properly on Derby Day I should be sorry to estimate; a thousand of 'Nimrod's' shillings might, with a slice of luck, purchase a small den called a box, or, with a little pressure he might be prepared to double that amount. It would appear that there were more honest men in the days of 'Nimrod,' because a shilling admission to the paddock at the present time would mean that no decent man, much less a woman, would venture into that enclosure.

The Warren House, as it at present stands

by that name, is the property I believe of Mr B. Ellam, whose acquaintance I made when looking over some yearlings there—one, a smart filly by Kendal, I have not forgotten. The paddock in which they were paraded at the rear of the house might well have been 'The Warren' described by 'Nimrod,' minus the wall. There is an old well which, dating from Charles II., has that monarch's name on it I think, and it has never been dry. If history lieth not Charles II. was not always in as good order as his well, for he appears to have had an unquenchable thirst, judging by sundry pictures of the 'Merry Monarch.'

Epsom was I think rather a fashionable place in the days of Charles, for it appears to have attained celebrity by the discovery of a medicinal spring in 1618 which issued from a hillock to the south-east of the town near 'Ashted.' Epsom was long noted after the discovery of the Spa as a watering-place; but like other places of fashionable resort it gradually became neglected and deserted, and the public rooms, having fallen to ruin, were pulled down in 1804. Probably Charles fled to The

Warren when the Great Plague of London was raging. When the Great fire was burning we may, with some show of reason, imagine him acting as Nero did when Rome was burning, always provided that Charles II. was proficient on the violin.

The Warren is a delightful old house whose large rooms and tables suggest a hospitality which is not misplaced. A ramble of two or three miles up hill and down dale, amidst hedgerows decked with flowers, and plantations and wooded ground, dispelled any impression that Epsom racecourse was only just over the brow of yonder hill.

Any racing man who has not yet seen Epsom Downs vacant should not fail to do so. He will be better able to understand the race for the Derby, and probably be not so disposed to blame the jockeys who suffer defeat there.

WAR HORSES

CHAPTER XVI

WAR HORSES

THE war with the Boers has taught us many lessons, and one thing is certain, there is something radically wrong with our 'war horses.' They are the wrong horses in the wrong place, and when the changes and chances of the war come to be summed up, it will probably be found that lack of cavalry, and unsuitability of the horses for the work in which they were engaged, were amongst the main causes of our early reverses. Our soldiers are not to blame, the rank and file, and the officers who led them into action, fought like heroes, and upheld the noblest traditions of the British army. It is not within the purpose of this chapter on war horses to saddle blame upon individuals, or any particular body of individuals. The responsibility of providing horses for purposes

of war is a serious and arduous task, and only acknowledged experts are capable of carrying out the work satisfactorily.

I have not the faintest idea what the War Office Department, or any other department of the Government service, considers are the necessary qualifications to constitute a good serviceable war horse. There are standards for soldiers, and there may be for war horses, for all I know. Horses cannot be purchased on fixed lines, nor ought they to be bought on the 'jumble-sale' principle, as I am afraid is too often the case. I have carefully read all the accounts of the purchase of horses for war purposes that I have come across, and have gathered quite sufficient information from them to convince me our soldiers are mounted on an entirely wrong system. There does not appear to be any consideration of climate, or nature of country, when purchasing horses. A cavalry horse in England finds the change to Natal altogether out of his line. Race-horses when brought from Australia to England, and *vice versa*, have to be acclimatised before they show their true form. It is not reasonable to suppose that a cavalry mount from an English

barracks will, after a six-thousand-mile voyage, settle down to his work in South Africa as though no change had taken place in his surroundings. It is hard enough for men to do this, for horses it is well-nigh impossible.

We hear of raids being made upon tramway and 'bus companies, and of the buying of hundreds of their horses for the war. To look at a 'bus horse, or a pair of 'bus horses, pulling a heavy load up the steep incline to Waterloo Station, may provoke the remark from a casual spectator that 'these are the sort of horses to pull our guns in South Africa.' And such a remark is not unreasonable under the circumstances. It is, however, easier to make remarks than to prove the utility of the object of these remarks. The 'buses in London are well-horsed; I have never seen 'buses better horsed anywhere. The stamp of horse is right. He is powerfully built, has a strong back and loins, and hindquarters which look like 'moving mountains.' He has also the indispensable good forelegs, and has a broad chest, but not too broad, and well-set neck and shoulders, which give him great drawing powers. To watch two horses pull

a 'bus-load of about twenty-six people up the hill to Waterloo Station is an insight into the strength of the horse not seen every day. It must also be borne in mind that these horses can get over the ground at a fair pace, and that speed is not altogether sacrificed to strength. I am convinced that if such an untoward and awful event as a war in this country, or on the Continent, broke out that this stamp of horse would be excellent for our guns.

To transplant these horses to South Africa is quite another matter. After leading an arduous active life, they are suddenly put on board ship, taken six thousand miles, landed in a totally different climate, worked over quite different ground, unused to all their surroundings, their legs probably swollen, and their feet in bad condition from standing many days with uncertain foothold—can it be wondered that they are not a success, and probably turn out comparatively useless?

The cavalry mounts are selected, judging from printed information, somewhat at random. In a country like Natal it is ridiculous to expect ordinary cavalry horses to do their

work in the same manner as in England. How is it the Boers can move so quickly from place to place, and when they find a weak spot have reinforcements there in a marvellously short time? Because their horses are bred in the country and used to the ground. The English war horse is of very little practical use in such a country as Natal. He may be all right for a general to ride about on and calmly survey the scene, but for a rough-and-tumble cavalry charge, over broken ground, or for scouting purposes, over rocky country, he is entirely unsuited. Australian horses are far more suitable for use in South Africa, and thousands could be purchased and shipped there in a very short time. Indian horses are suitable, and many of these are Australian - bred animals. Hungarian horses are also suitable, and can be bought at a reasonable figure. The Australian horse is, however, probably the best that could possibly be used as a war horse in such a country as Natal. In the first place, he is as firm as iron on his legs, and has been used to galloping over ground baked as hard as bricks for the greater part of his existence. He is a

wiry horse, and has a good deal of thoroughbred blood in him. 'Blue blood,' perhaps more than any other quality, improves a soldier's horse. The strain of the thoroughbred gives courage and endurance. It enhances the value of any riding horse, but more especially for cavalry purposes. It is the thoroughbred blood in Australian horses makes them hardy. I have seen hundreds of horses in Australia suitable for cavalry mounts in a country like Natal.

There ought to be some systematic plan adopted for breeding horses for war purposes. I do not suppose it will be denied that ordinary horses require a considerable amount of time and patience expended upon them to fit them for military service. Horses intended for army use, and especially for cavalry and mounted infantry, ought to be bred for that express purpose, and ought to be reared, taught and handled for that purpose, and no other, from the day they are foaled. It can be done, and there will never be a properly mounted regiment until it is done. Huge breeding establishments for such a purpose could be established in our colonies. There is room

enough and to spare in Australia, Africa, New Zealand, and Canada, for such work. Thousands of acres of suitable land is available—had I said miles it would not have been wide of the mark. If we are empire builders, we must have the material to support the empire, and mounting our soldiers well is one of the chief props to uphold the fabric.

Australia could establish a mighty military horse-breeding establishment without much trouble. It could be done in New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada, and on a more limited scale in England and Ireland. If such an establishment had been in existence for some years in South Africa our soldiers would have been all mounted on horses bred and trained on their native soil. Why should not each Government be the supplier of its own war horses, and be independent of scouring the country to purchase here, there and everywhere, and because a certain number are required buy any horse that comes handy, whether suitable or otherwise? What has the purchasing of horses cost for the Boer War? How many thousands of pounds have been wasted in purchasing horses above their value?

What is the proportion of horses purchased that have turned out well-nigh useless, or succumbed to the effects of the voyage and change of climate?

‘But look at the enormous expense of such establishments as suggested.’ True, the expense would be great, but the results would amply compensate, and one war would clear a big profit to the Government. If we spend millions on cannons and battleships, guns and the latest firearms, ammunition and red tape, surely we can afford to mount our cavalry well and horse our guns in a proper manner. A cavalry regiment minus good horses is like a battleship with inferior engines. If a nation directs its energies to building an empire, expenditure must be a minor consideration, but at the same time care must be taken that the expense incurred is necessary and properly directed.

I feel perfectly certain that some such system as the establishment of great military horse-breeding studs in our colonies, and even here, would pay the Government who had them under control. Private enterprise in this direction might be even more successful. To

gain the full benefit of such military breeding-studs, however, the Government ought to pay and receive, and benefit the country thereby.

That some change in the selecting of war horses is needed admits of no doubt. Almost any change from the present system would be beneficial.

Mr W. Allison, the well-known special commissioner of the *Sportsman*, whose opinion is highly valued by thousands of his readers, has, at my request, kindly written the following lines on this interesting question :—

‘We hear a great deal about “Mobility” nowadays, and it is certain sustained mobility in war depends not merely on the number of horses a general has at his disposal, but on the breeding of those horses. The days when heavily-armoured knights charged one another on Shire horses are long since past, and it is certain that, for the experiences of the present, “blood” alone tells, and the more crosses of it the better. In other words, a common-bred horse, no matter how promising to look at, will never stand hard campaigning, and a thoroughbred weed would always work him to death.

‘ In the famous midnight charge of the House-

hold Cavalry at Kassassin, which was really a very trifling affair, the big black horses were so upset by their unwonted exertions that over seventy of them were in hospital next day. On the return from that campaign some of the transports had a stormy voyage, and in one of them, a very large proportion of R.H.A. horses, having once slipped down, lay and died, but a thoroughbred mare, by Rosicrucian, who was down half a dozen times in one night, always struggled up again, and lived to win a steeplechase in England a month or two after her arrival. This incident alone serves to show the superior courage and endurance of "blood."

'In India the "Walers" are found to be immeasurably the best troop horses, plain as many of them are to look at; and this is due to their being so well bred. They stay on when the commoners lose heart. This is equally the case whether they are used for cavalry or artillery. In the Delhi Camp of Exercise in 1885 or 1886, the guns drawn by "Walers" were always found to be there when wanted.

'Having regard to facts such as are

briefly indicated above, sensible men ought to do all in their power to prevent the propagation of the poisonous hackney blood both in this country and in Ireland. Nothing but thoroughbred stallions should be used for getting cavalry remounts, and any animal by a hackney stallion should at once be rejected, for it is a hundred to one that it will cut up soft and useless when the pinch comes. Unfortunately, the absurd craze for hackneys has already done very great damage, and the remount department of the War Office does not seem to possess among its officials a single judge keen enough to spot the taint of the hackney tar brush, which is commonly apparent enough. So, numbers of brutes cursed with this soft, bad blood, have been purchased for use in South Africa. We read of many horses dying from exhaustion during General French's advance to Kimberley, and I make no doubt these would be of hackney or other soft blood. On the other hand, it is recorded that an ambulance waggon kept well to the fore throughout, and this was drawn by "Walers."

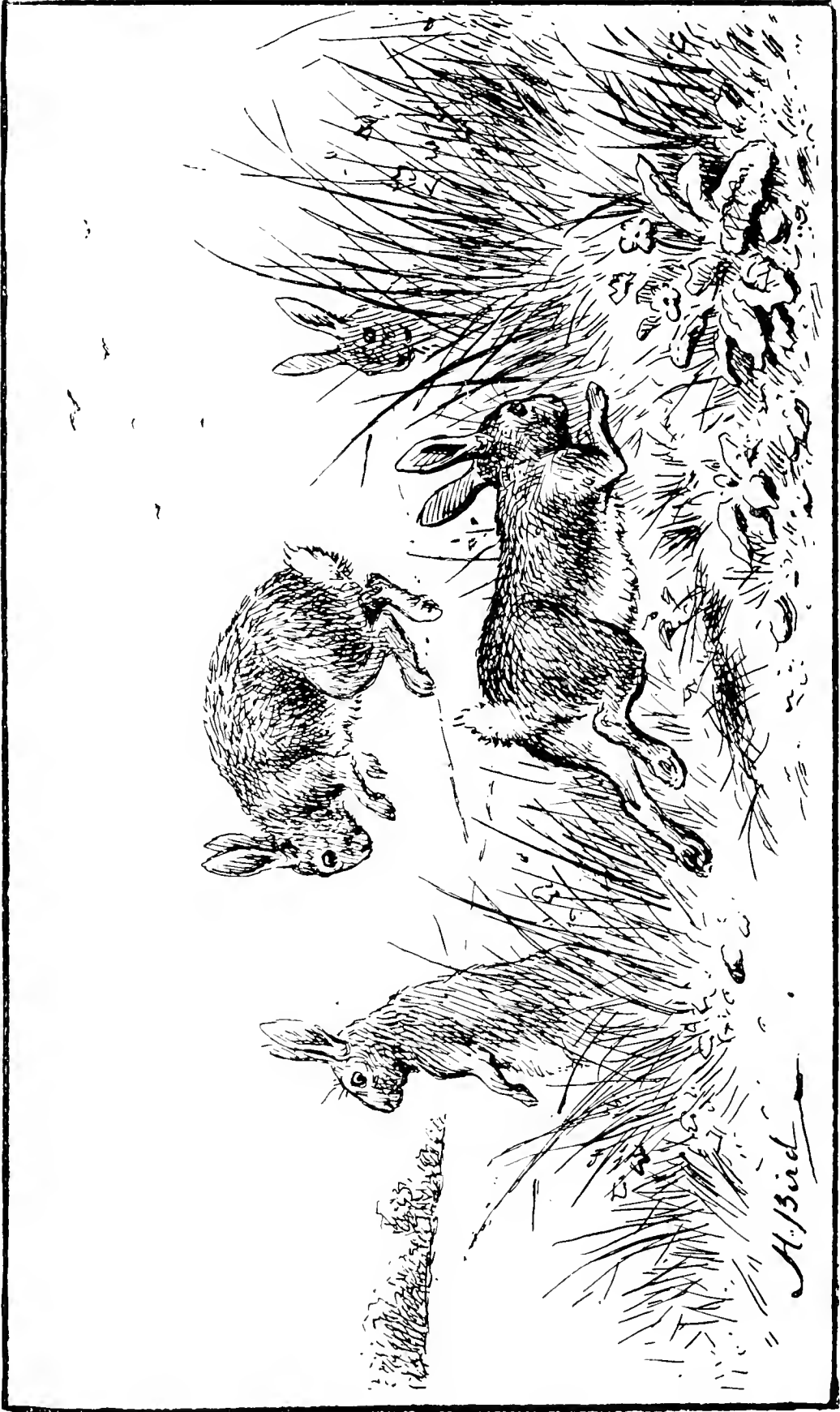
'For countries like South Africa, hard, wiry,

little horses are essential, and many of the right sort can be found in Hungary. These are not more than fifteen hands, and are light and mean looking, but they are full of thoroughbred blood, and have as much endurance as Cossack ponies. In the southwest of France, too, horses of somewhat similar character are to be found in large numbers, and are regularly bought for the light cavalry. So far as blood goes, they trace mainly to Algerian sources, but are by thoroughbred sires in France. In Germany, Austria and France, the governments pay special attention to the breeding of remounts, and only approved thoroughbred horses are used as sires. The idea of using hackneys would be rightly regarded as preposterous. A considerable number of French horses were secured by the Boers before the war. Useful cobs have been sent over from the Argentine Republic, and they have the recommendation that they are accustomed to live on nothing but grass and are well broken, but it may be questioned whether they are well bred enough to stand any severe test. Probably later on we shall

find remounts and mules largely bred in South Africa, but be that as it may, whoever breeds "war horses," and in whatever part of the world, will find that the British thoroughbred is the main factor in the enterprise.

W. ALLISON.'

SHOOTING BEFORE BREAKFAST



'SHOOTING BEFORE BREAKFAST.'

CHAPTER XVII

SHOOTING BEFORE BREAKFAST

IT is early morning, and the sun is shining with subdued rays through the old-fashioned bedroom windows. I am in one of the Derbyshire farmhouses, and after dreaming of far-away countries, awake to the pleasing sensation of being in the old land again.

How welcome is the sun when he bids good-morning, and extends a cordial invitation to the early riser to commence a quiet day's sport with the gun.

Drawing up the blind, and opening the old-fashioned window, which pushes outwards, the twittering sparrows rustle in the ivy, and presently a furious battle is taking place amongst the feathered tribe. One bird breaks cover, and the others start in pursuit, and away they dart across the lawn to the trees

opposite, where the encounter is renewed. In the paddock, divided from the garden by a sunk wall fence, are sheep quietly nibbling the grass, and from the poultry house on wheels lower down comes forth the brightly plumaged Indian gamecock, and preening his feathers, and flapping his wings, crows loud and lustily, heralding the break of another day. He struts round proudly, and calls the laggards who have not yet left their comfortable perches.

The rooks are cawing in the old trees near the Hall, and the larks are already high in the air, offering praise in quivering, ringing music, which sounds sweet in the calm of the early morn.

There is a glistening dew upon the grass, the fields are bathed with a silvery hue, and as the mists rise the valley is covered with a spreading cloth which, as it lifts, gradually disappears from sight, leaving only faint traces behind. It is a glorious morning, and the air flowing in through the open window is too inviting to be resisted.

It is fifteen years since I looked over the landscape before me, but how well I re-

member the haunts of the rabbits, and the nooks where the trout hide in the little brook which trickles past the great hill into the Dove beyond. Mentally I compare it with the Australian scenes I have left behind, and the contrast is remarkable.

Hastily dressing and going downstairs, I find the old sheep dog asleep under the kitchen table. He raises his head and gives a faint growl, then recognising me, wags his tail, stretches himself and yawns a welcome.

The gun and the cartridges are handy; they have been left out over night, and incredulous smiles had greeted my remark the evening before that I should be the first up in the morning.

The dairy, or what was formerly the dairy, when cheese was made in the house, before the factories altered the ancient custom, and the repaired High Peak railway took the milk to Manchester to feed her working thousands, was close handy, and opening the door the sight of milk was too tempting to be resisted. A drink for the Gods. Not a blue livery-looking concoction, ashamed of false representation when called milk, but a white, creamy liquid,

sweet and pure, wholesome and refreshing. A 'snack' of bread and cheese, and a pint of milk, are not bad things to lay in stock before an early morning ramble with the gun. Old 'Rover' follows me out at the door. In his puppy days he did a little rabbiting on his own account. He carefully concealed his depredations, and stray cats were credited with his misdeeds. 'Rover' was a descendant of a long line of sheep dogs that had been in the family for a century or more. Two of his sons were in the milking yard ready to round up the cows, which however did not need much reminding that milking time was near as they came leisurely up to the gate.

Across the yard, through the gate, and down the meadow towards the brook at the foot of the hill. In the old days there were always rabbits on the brow of a hill, round by the stone wall fence, where thick brushwood sloped down into the hollow.

Cautiously walking down by the stone wall, brushing the dew off the grass, and leaving a faint track behind, I peered round the corner.

There, on the flat green patch, about a

dozen yards from the brow of the hill, were four rabbits nibbling a morning meal. So they had not deserted this spot. I had travelled many thousands of miles in distant lands, but here all was unchanged and unchanging, and the years might come and go and still there would be the self-same peaceful scene.

I actually forgot the rabbits in their surroundings. It seemed a shame to rouse them, and then have a shot at them before they reached cover. I watched them skipping and jumping about. A loose stone from the wall fell as I leaned on it, and the rabbits were all alert. With a stamp of his hind feet one old buck vanished in a twinkling. Another followed him half-way, and then stopped to make inquiries. The other two were younger, and rather bolder, because they had not been shot over many times. One of them sat up on his haunches, and pricking his ears looked round with wide eyes, which appeared capable of seeing a long distance. The other waited for the result of his inspection, and when he came down from his elevation, and commenced to nibble again, took it

for granted all was safe, and joined him at breakfast.

They were rudely disturbed. I stepped round the corner, and there was a stampede. Bang, bang. One rabbit fell flat, and another rolled over and over and then disappeared from view down the bank into the undergrowth. I picked up number one, well satisfied with my shots, and scrambled down the rocky bank in search of number two. There were plenty of brambles, blackberries and wild roses, and scratches were numerous, but little thought about. I was eager to secure the spoil, and I had no dog. Something kicking in a mass of dead leaves and long rank grass. There he was safe enough, and I soon made an end of him. I scrambled up the hill again, and pulling out a stone in the wall put the rabbits in; they would be safe there until I returned, and there was a big hill to climb on the other side of the brook. I suddenly remembered that a few yards further on there was an old disused gravel pit, and that rabbits were wont to be seen sporting around there.

Slipping a couple of cartridges in the gun

I walked quietly to the spot. There was a rabbit there, but he was too sharp for me and I missed him.

Down the slope I went and across the brook, making use of the numerous large stones to avoid the water. A charming little brook this, wending its way along a pebbly bed in the midst of some of the most beautiful sylvan scenery in Derbyshire. A brook whose banks were a paradise for wild flowers, and where overhanging trees, the roots, hollowed under by the lapping of the water, became the resting place of many a fine trout. There is the wild convolvulus twisting and twining amidst the brambles and thorns, and the fragrant wild rose gently swaying in the soft breeze, and not yet deprived of its morning bath of dew. Below there is a clump of the meadow crane's bill, which revels in moisture, and is partial to this particular stream. It has richly coloured, bluey-purple flowers, and its leaves are a deep green in summer, changing in autumn to crimson, orange and purple, in a numberless variety of tints. The primroses abound here in May, and the delicate tint of the flowers char-

mingly mingles with the deep green foliage of the leaves. There is the wild hyacinth, which is sometimes called the blue-bell, but differs from that flower considerably. The wild yellow iris, and an occasional water-lily, may be found. The exquisite scent of the honeysuckle shames all modern perfumes. The brilliant yellow of the marsh mallow hides the more retiring form of the modest daisy. The marsh thistle is an objectionable plant to handle, but you can sit down upon it, by mistake, with less damaging results than upon the original of the Scottish emblem. I was forgetting the water-cress, for which this brook is famous, and a handful gathered fresh is a fine appetiser. What has all this to do with rabbit shooting? a great deal; it is one of the surroundings of sport, and one of the charms of carrying a gun and looking for your game.

The man who stands in a hot corner and has his game driven over, or past him, sees very little of the surroundings of the sport, with the exception of the luncheon. I am a free lance in sport, as in most other walks of life, and believe in a man enjoying himself

in his own way. Because I prefer a quiet shot at game, or rabbits, which take finding, I am not idiotic enough to declaim against the man who prefers making a big bag, or a record. That is his way of enjoying the sport but not mine. The great charm of an early morning ramble with a gun lies not so much in the sport as in the beauty of the scenery, the harmonies of Nature, the pictures painted in living colours by an unseen hand, the grand the glorious feeling, inhaled with every breath, that it is good to be alive, that there is something to live for, and that we are not all born croakers and grumblers, discontented misanthropic men, who see no good in anything or anybody.

Climbing up the steep hillside the rabbits bound away in all directions. I only require another couple, so there is no occasion for extra exertion. I remembered an old dell full of large rocks piled up in curious fashion, and overgrown with moss and surrounded with bramble, briar and hedge. It is over yonder on the left. Rabbits were in former years fond of that haunt, and perchance they may still resort there. A wall runs down the hillside

from the plantation at the top to the stream at the bottom. In places it has fallen and been roughly piled up again. It has an uneven top like the zig-zag outline of a map of a rough coast line. I have seen sheep buried under this wall in the snow which has drifted them before it, and then covered them, until they were dug out and extricated from their unpleasant positions.

Looking over the wall, having taken off my hat, I see a black rabbit sitting on the edge of one of the rocks, and there is a large hole between two other rocks not far behind him. He looks like a black soldier on sentry duty, and perhaps he is, for sundry brown rabbits are feeding on the grass below in perfect security. A rabbit appears to scent danger when he cannot see the cause. The black sentinel was at once on the alert. I wondered how he got there, and the reason for his blackness. He must have thrown back to some remote ancestor who had 'black blood' in his veins. He was a tempting, succulent-looking rabbit, and I knew he was a full-grown young one. I wanted to bag him just to try how he tasted with onion sauce. It occurred to me

his flavour might be different to the ordinary rabbit. He slipped down below and then I had him. The shot rang out clear, the black ball rolled over, and a stampede of brown coats and white-tufted tails took place. Those little white patches all disappeared into the earth. The black rabbit was well developed, and I may add that he boiled even whiter than his brown mates. Just as I picked him up another rabbit scampered across the open gap in front of the dell, but he was gone before I had time to fire. I had not long to wait, however, and having secured another to join the darkie, I went back for the couple I had left in the wall.

As I returned to the house the cows were streaming out of the milking yard, and the rattle of the cans could be heard as the milk was taken away. There was the healthy smell of kine and new milk in the air. I have an undying pity for the man who can call the smell of a farmyard 'horrible'; and yet this same man can enjoy his meals in a London restaurant. I may not be an expert in scents, but I award the palm for inferiority of perfume, and also for strength, to the restaurant.

Shooting before breakfast is delightful, and a better appetiser for a morning meal I do not know. An early morning among the rabbits is a healthy form of recreation, and the surroundings of the sport are charming to all lovers of nature.

AN OLD HOUSE AND 'AN OLD
SPORT'

CHAPTER XVIII

AN OLD HOUSE AND 'AN OLD SPORT'

ALTHOUGH the fascinations of the racecourse are irresistible, there is much delight to be found in a fishing ramble along the banks of a river wending its way through scenery of great beauty and varied character.

Such a river is the Dove, another such the Derwent, and also the famous Trent. The Thames has attractions almost unsurpassed, but its nooks and haunts are public property to vast numbers of anglers, and it does not possess the quietude of the Dove or the Derwent.

Again let me take you to another old farmhouse nestling in one of Derbyshire's loveliest valleys, watered by the Dove, that most romantic of streams. A house in which my father was born, in which for seven generations the family resided, according to the author

of *The Old Halls, Families and Manors of Derbyshire*. 'For about two hundred years have they held these lands under the noble house of Cavendish.' Well do I remember the place from boyhood's days, when I was much interested in the sheep washing which took place in a deep pool in the Dove, below the house, and thought it rare sport to ride on the back of one of the massive farm-horses when he went to be shod at the village of Longnor up on the hill, just over the river, and therefore in Staffordshire. That whiff at the man's pipe which made me feel inclined to reel off 'Bonny's' broad back onto the grass, and lie there until a merciful release came to me. The climbs up the hill to the 'top barn,' or onto the Cardel Low to look round the sheep. The Sunday evening stroll round the high lands with two bright brave men who have gone to their account, but whose lives have left something behind which can never be forgotten. One, my father, snatched away at a few days' notice in the prime of his manhood, in the fulness of health and noble countenance, clean in body and mind, generous to a fault, living to earn that he might give, whose

form often seems by my side, whose voice still rings in my ears, after all these years. The other, his brother, brave and manly, quick at repartee, with a wonderful memory, a trusted tenant, and I think I may say friend of more than one member of the house of Cavendish. He lived to a good age, but died all too soon. My father toiled amidst the smoke and grime of Manchester, but he loved the old farmhouse where he was born, every stick and stone of it, and the beautiful, peaceful valley, and many's the time he has tramped the eight or ten miles from Buxton, having run down from Manchester to look at the old place and the familiar scenes. I am writing this in no spirit of family pride, although I believe it is good for a man to take a pride in his lineage. I cannot refrain from quoting a brief article signed 'Cincinnatus' which appeared in the *High Peak News* just before my cousin left the home of our ancestors. I do not know who wrote it, and I certainly did not inspire it, as I was in Australia at the time, but after reading Mr Rider Haggard's *A Farmer's Year*, it encourages me to print it here.

Mr Haggard's book has afforded me much pleasure. A true sportsman, fond of the country and country life, which every man worthy of the name of sportsman ought to be, will read every page in it, and not find even mere details wearisome. The writer alluded to states, 'The Goulds, as a family, are among the very oldest of the Duke of Devonshire's tenantry, and indeed the family have lived at Pilsbury Grange from the time of the Stuart Kings, if not longer.'

I would call particular attention to the following:—

'In a prolonged occupation like this, there is something that appeals, or should appeal, to some of the better feelings of humanity; it is an instance of that "staying power," which is one of the reasons of the greatness of our people and nation.'

(These words are *à propos* at such a time as this.)

'To have shown such persistence, such perseverance, such clinging affection to an old homestead, would be enough, as we think, to entitle the family to a good deal of consideration in quarters where power is located. A farm

which has been occupied by father and son, generation following generation, for centuries, through the varying fortunes which arise in so long a period, becomes a kind of agricultural shrine; and the thought occurs to every mind that a landlord would himself take no mean pride, no lukewarm interest in preserving so long and faithful a record of tenancy. This is at all events the sort of feeling which permeates the people at large in any part of a country, whose past is a history containing much that is noble, much that is the admiration of other lands. It is, consequently, with a feeling that is very faintly described by the word surprise, that the district has received the news that very soon Pilsbury Grange will know the Gould family no more. A long association of generations, ay, of centuries, is coming to an abrupt and unnecessary termination, and so link after link with the past, on a great estate, is disappearing. "Had Lord Edward Cavendish been living, this would not have occurred"; so the people say. The aged Duke of Devonshire' (not the present Duke), 'has, as we may well believe, no ken of what is taking place; no one can expect

that he should keep in his fingers the threads of a vast estate, at more than four score years of age; yet had he been ten years younger, the case would have been very different, so the people believe. As the matter stands, the late Mr Gilbert Gould has not been three months in his grave, when his farm, the ancient home of his family, is let, and about to be transferred to others—to another family. All this may be business, perhaps, from some people's point of view; but there is no feeling in it, no sympathy, no sentiment, no kindly consideration for an old family, no respect for an ancient tie. It has in it nothing which the world reverences, nothing that wins the hearts of the people, nothing which commands respect and admiration. It is, in fact, sheer cast-iron utilitarianism; and if this is what things are coming to in agriculture, we may well look forward with feelings to which satisfaction is a stranger, in reference to the relations of landlord and tenant.'

Comment on my part would be out of place. My unknown friend has done more than any feeble effort of mine could have accomplished.

It is from this old house I wish you to accompany me for a stroll, with rod and line, along the banks of the Dove. I will endeavour, however inadequately, to give a pen-and-ink sporting sketch of a bit of quiet trout fishing; for trout fishing is sport, and the right sort of sport too, and, for his size, a trout beats a salmon hollow. The surroundings of this sport, upon which I am constantly laying stress, are very beautiful, nay more, occasionally sublime, and far beyond my descriptive powers. Where a painter would fail how shall a prosaic pen succeed?

We start at the old footbridge at the bottom of Sheen Hill. There is only a rail on one side, but it is firm and affords good foothold. If you are driving, the river is fordable, and you can wash the wheels and the horse's legs, in the rippling Dove. A great sloping field comes down from the main road on the top, on the left; on the right stands Broad Meadow farmhouse, and between winds a steep road which is seldom used for vehicular traffic. The road might have been washed out by the force of water, for the top of the wall on the left-hand

side is level with the pasture land in places. A two-mile stroll down this river brings us to Hartington, from which the present Duke of Devonshire took his title when Marquis of Hartington. Accompanying me is a keen old sportsman named Fosberry. Old John Fosberry lived in Hartington in a small shop, or rather over it. He was a character in his way. I verily believe he knew where every trout in the Dove had his haunt, from Crowdy Cote to Mayfield and beyond. Tall, slim, active for his age, old John Fosberry's was a figure known for miles around the Dove valley. Even then he was a capital shot, and when the sound of a gun reached us in the old house, I fancy I hear my uncle say, 'Old John's at the rabbits again. He's a regular old poacher. Drat him!' He was, however, a welcome poacher, and after his shoot, 'he always came home to tea.'

Many a long ramble have I had with old John Fosberry. He taught me how to handle a rod and tempt the quick-eyed trout from his lair. I never became expert at it, and he used to say,—

'Fly fishing is it! Catching flies is more in your line.'

But I enjoyed it nevertheless, and the scenery, the many wonders of nature he pointed out to me, filled me with awe at his knowledge.

'Where did you pick it all up?' I asked him.

'Didn't pick it up. Had the best teacher in the world.'

'Who?'

'Nature, my lad, nature. No school fees to pay. You never want to play truant. You want to run to school instead of running away. There's no rule of three that puzzles me, and practice don't drive you mad.'

True every word of it. That 'old sport' taught me *how* to learn from the master he loved and knew so well.

'Hooked him.'

I had not seen a motion of his hand, but there was a faint splash and a stir in the water.

'I've got him. A pounder, you bet, perhaps more. Get the net.'

There was a steep bit of bank, and over-

hanging trees, which made it an awkward landing place. The struggle was longer than might have been expected. The trout is a game fish, and dies game. There is no sulking about him, but sometimes he rests to gain strength.

‘Well under him.’

I was stooping down and vainly endeavouring to reach the river, but my arms were too short, and the net handle not long enough.

‘Slither down,’ said John.

I pushed further down the bank, heedless of scratches and nettle stings.

I managed to secure the trout for him, and handed up the net while I hung on to the branch of a willow.

It was a ‘pounder,’ as he had said, and skipped about on the grass.

We sat down and contemplated him. In those days there was no necessity to hurry.

My companion explained the beauties of that trout to me. I had no idea a fish possessed so many good points. Having dilated upon his colour, spots on the belly, eyes, length, weight and condition, he said,—

'And for breakfast, with a little bit of parsley just grated over him, he'll be perfect.'

John Fosberry had a flask. It was a useful flask, and contained more than a drop. It was said of John that if he lost his flask his nose would be sure to take him to the place where it was hidden. This is a libel on a good man's memory. His flask never by any possible chance was lost, and I never knew it to be empty. When we arrived at a small village, or a wayside inn, this flask was always carefully attended to. I observed that no one ever asked how much of the 'crater' should be put in, and no coin of the realm ever passed, but an inspection of the basket disclosed the fact that a brace of trout were missing. John called it 'swopping,' and I accepted the definition.

The Charles Cotton Hotel at Hartington in those days was a very good place. It was so excellent an hostelry that some of the villagers preferred it to their own habitations, at least they were generally to be found there. The much-respected churchwarden was often within and his old white pony without. It was a legend in the district that this ancient

steed could open every gate on the parish roadways, and there were many of these obstructions then.

My sporting friend was well known there, and I commenced to learn the names of curious and wonderful 'fishing drinks' at an early age.

After a brief halt at the Charles Cotton, we wandered towards Beresford Dale, and many a time and oft have I scrambled up to Charles Cotton's cave and sat on the step of Isaac Walton's fishing cottage.

Beresford Dale is a lovely place. The Dove winds its way between high rocks and occasionally laps round them, and the water work of countless ages has hollowed them, until they hang over the river and seem to balance on the bank, nature juggling with them and never making a mistake.

THREE RIVERS FOR SPORT

CHAPTER XIX

THREE RIVERS FOR SPORT

SUCH a ramble as I am now describing may, and I trust will, prove interesting. In Beresford Dale we generally had luncheon, an important part of a fishing jaunt. John Fosberry had a really marvellous way of stowing eatables, and divers other things, in his fishing basket. It was a basket of many mysteries, and its contents would have filled a page of miscellaneous lots in an auctioneer's catalogue.

It was glorious to sit on the grass with the clear stream in front, rippling over shiny pebbles, darting round small islands, bearing on its surface large green leaves, and shimmering in the sunlight. My companion told me stories of Isaac Walton, Charles Cotton, and other local celebrities, or frequenters of the dales.

‘That house I live in I have heard it related was one of Walton’s haunts,’ said John. ‘I think it must have been, for I have found marks on the wall and on the glass which indicate as much.’

Then he would talk with evident admiration of Walton and anglers generally, but never a word about his own skill, and he was one of the most ‘complete’ of anglers.

Beresford Dale leads into Dove Dale, which had not then been brought within such easy distance of the railway.

There are few more beautiful dales than Dove Dale, with its strangely-shaped rocks, its hidden caves, its grass-covered slopes and nut-bearing trees. Some of the steep land on either side is farmed, and sheep and sometimes cattle may be seen near the top. The river winds in and out. It is not very wide, not deep, may be crossed without much wetting in many places, and glides serenely along amidst a scene of beauty seldom surpassed. I have seen the vast, majestic, awe-inspiring, bold, striking beauties of Australian landscapes. The Blue Mountains of New South Wales are wondrously

grand in scenery, and vast peaks rear upwards to the sky, extending in broken order for many miles, until lost in the far distance. They abound with grand waterfalls and lovely dells, redolent of pure white lilies in the moist warm air. Grand, massive, wondrous are these scenes, but they have not the quiet charm of a Dove Dale, which would be lost in their immensity. There is a peculiar sense of perfect rest and peace in such scenes in England, which is lacking in the wilder grandeur of other countries.

At Reynard's Cave an old woman lived in the summer months, and I have seen her there as late as November. She was a curious old crone, and earned her living by assisting tourists to climb to her rocky dwelling by means of a long rope.

She had a great regard for old John, who encouraged her smoking propensities by providing her with tobacco. I believe this ancient lady is dead; she must have been a great age twenty-five years ago. To see John Fosberry wading in his fishing boots in the centre of the river, and to watch him

dexterously throw his flies, all of which he made himself, was a lesson in the art of cajoling trout seldom equalled. His eyes seemed to pierce the water and the banks on either side. I have seen him cast his fly, and no sooner has it lightly tipped the water than there was a silvery sparkle, and a splash, and a fish hooked. At the end of the Dale we come to the stepping-stones, and I cross over to the opposite side in order to reach the Isaac Walton Hotel, for I know that is our destination.

Towering up on the left is the cone-shaped hill called Thorpe Cloud, which is like a Natal kopje, only a kopje is about twice the height and studded with rocks and boulders. Many of the readers of these lines have probably seen Thorpe Cloud and will understand some of the obstacles our soldiers in South Africa have had to contend with. Thorpe Cloud entrenched by the Boers would be a formidable place to storm, but not one-tenth as hard a job as our brave men had to take Spion Kop. I have scrambled up Thorpe Cloud many times, and it is no easy task under ordinary circumstances. I can

well imagine what it would be like with a storm of shot and shell to face.

Old John carefully carries his tackle up the hill to the Isaac Walton, with my assistance as usual.

At that time Mr Prince was the host. The last occasion of my visit there, Mr Prince's son was at the head of affairs, his father having died at a good old age. Since then the son has left and taken Ashbourne Hall, which has been turned into a large modern hotel.

Mr Prince showed me a photograph of twelve and a half brace of trout he caught in the Dove, and he is an expert angler, and renowned for his skill in using the most tempting flies at the right time.

There was good old port at the Isaac Walton twenty-five years ago, and three years back I tasted some that had been in the cellars more than that quarter of a century. It was carefully brought up in a basket, the bottle all cobwebbed and crusted with age, and that it was the genuine article a sample glass proved.

John Fosberry loved all these dales and

their quaint inns and farmhouses around, and he took me into many a nook and corner, more than a quarter of a century ago, that I have been hunting in vain to find. Many old landmarks have vanished, improved off the face of the earth. Below the Isaac Walton, flowing through rich meadows, is the Manifold, which runs into the Dove about here. The Manifold is famous for trout, most of the river being preserved by Mr Hanbury of Ilam Hall.

I have fished in the Manifold years ago and not been apprehended as a poacher. Wherever my old companion went there was no danger. He appeared to have an undisputed right to fish anywhere. Keepers chatted amicably with him and asked him what sort of sport he had had. They never suggested we were trespassing or acting unlawfully in pursuit of trout. I do not believe the most hard-hearted secretary of a fishing club would have interfered with old John. Yet there was nothing supplicating about him, rather the reverse. He addressed people in an abrupt manner and awed keepers into respectful silence by the

austerity of his look. He acted more like a lord of the soil than an acreless sportsman whose clothes had seen better days, and whose tackle had no late improvements, except of his own invention. There was, however, a sport-loving bond of fellowship between them which gave us a free pass everywhere. He seemed as free to roam as the wild things around us. He was not a model man either in dress, manners or looks, but had that 'something' irresistible about him which only a close contact with nature and love of sport can bestow.

Having 'done ourselves' well at the Isaac Walton, we follow the windings of the Dove to Hanging Bridge, which crosses the river and forms part of the broad white road leading from Ashbourne to Leek. Here I leave old John Fosberry in the hope he has proved as pleasant a companion to you, reader, as he was to me in my young days.

It is the privilege of a writer to be able to transfer his readers from one place to another without any exertion on their part.

We are at Edensor, the pretty village in Chatsworth Park. It is a picturesque

spot, and many a happy time have I spent there. I recollect a water-spout bursting at the top of the village, and flooding the road to such an extent that there were ruts a couple of feet deep hollowed out at the side. Some of the villagers thought the end of the world had come, or a second deluge, and well they might. Large heaps of gravel and sand were washed through the big gates into the Park.

There was an old gamekeeper of the duke's lived in a sweet little cottage in the village. He had ample room, and let apartments during the summer and autumn. He was a fine specimen of the old-fashioned gamekeeper, and a thorough sportsman to the backbone. His name was James Redfearn, and he has probably long ere this joined the great majority. With him I went fishing in the river which runs through Chatsworth Park. There were heaps of trout in the river, also grayling and other fish. There was a deep pool below the bridge which spans the river, and from which a fine view of Chatsworth House can be obtained. Here have I seen him catch many brace of trout with flies, and also with

wasp grubs. He also taught me how to handle a rod and line, but I am afraid I have forgotten much of his instruction. Anyhow, it was great sport to me to see him haul out the 'little beauties,' and we generally secured a fair basket. Taking wasp grubs is a ticklish job, but James did it well. I recollect going with him to the base of an old tree of large dimensions. We had a horn lantern, a spade, sundry pieces of white close netting, and divers other things. I was shrouded like the belle of a harem, and held the lantern while my companion delved for wasp grubs. I do not think the wasps approved of these 'midnight' raids, for they made a disturbance, and dashed furiously against the lantern. The succulent wasp grub, I found, had much charm for the fish.

The beauties of Chatsworth Park are sufficient to inspire a poet. The Derwent is almost as charming a river as the Dove. Who that has fished the Derwent forgets The Rutland Arms at Bakewell, or The Peacock at Rowsley? The Rutland Arms was at one time kept by Mr Greaves, who married a sister of Sir Joseph Paxton. Sir Joseph was in his early days a

gardener's lad at Chatsworth, but rose to fame by designing the Crystal Palace, which on a large scale resembles the huge conservatory he also designed in Chatsworth House grounds. These are some of the surroundings of sport on the Dove and the Derwent. The Trent is a different river altogether, as a row from Nottingham to Newark will disclose. There are plenty of fish in the Trent, and also in the canal which goes past Newark town, beneath the ancient castle walls, where the loyal citizens fought for Charles against Cromwell. The damage done by the Roundheads' cannon balls can still be seen in the outer wall. Hoveringham and Hazleford ferries are well-known halting-places on the banks of the Trent, and at the latter place I have had many a bit of good sport with young James M'George, nephew of Tom M'George the starter. Alas! they are both no more.

I can see now the long line of enthusiastic anglers seated on the banks of the canal above Newark, eagerly engaged in a fishing match. I will not repeat snatches of their language as we carelessly caught an oar in their lines.

We often rowed from Newark to Farndon,

past Averham Weir, and sometimes risked going over the weir, and following the river past Kelham Hall. A fine, noble river the Trent—a mere stream compared with some great waters, but a beautiful river, full of life and interest to a lover of sport.

It is a changing, varying river right up to Trent Bridge, Nottingham. The famous cricket-ground, where so many great matches have been played, lies handy, and it has also been the scene of great athletic gatherings and football matches. A steam launch on the Trent is useful; but below Newark the river is tricky, and there are several shallows which have to be avoided by keeping in the channels.

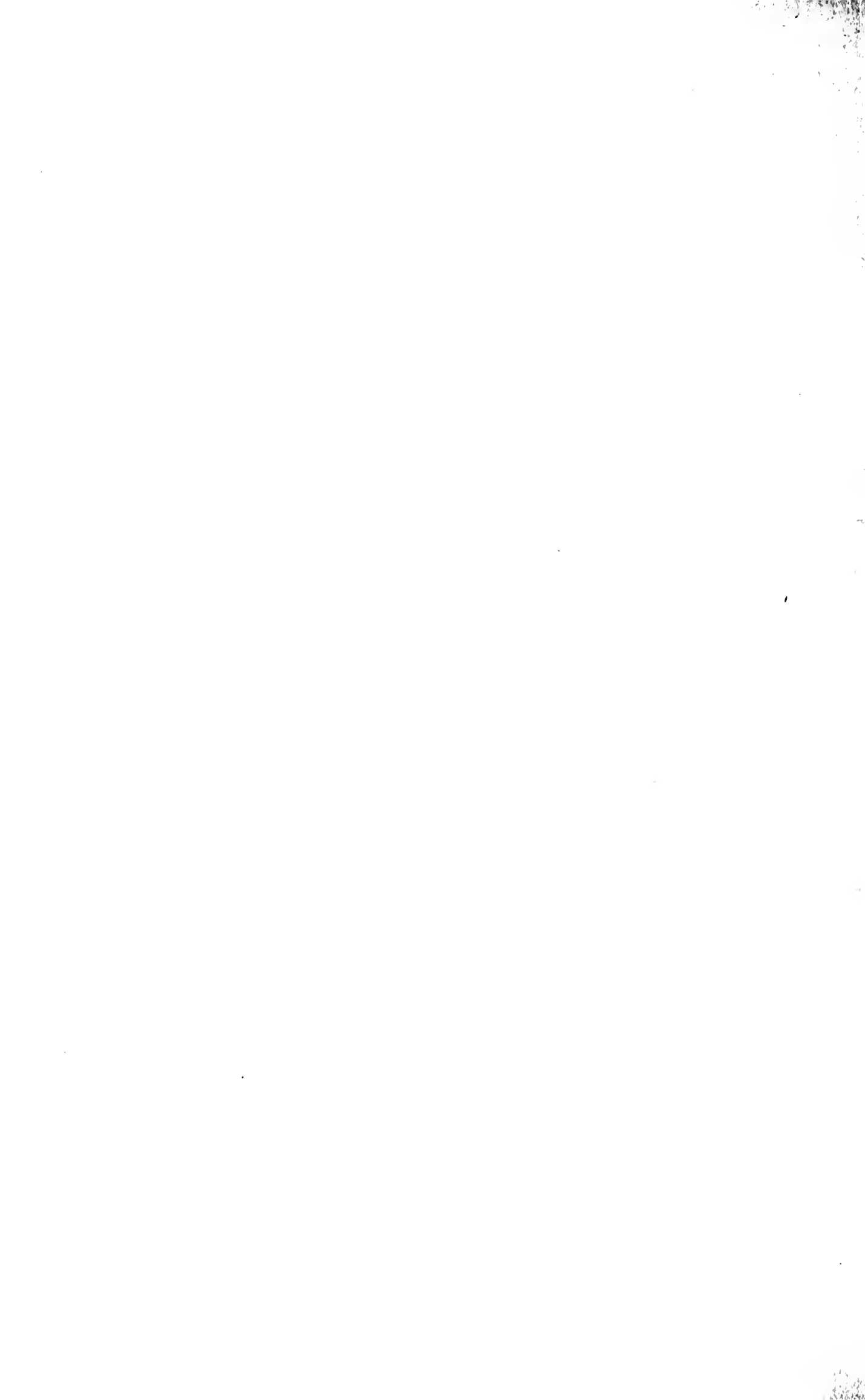
To any sportsman anxious for scenery and angling combined, I recommend the Dove, the Derwent and the Trent as three rivers well worth sampling.

Any racing men who are at Derby in the spring might with advantage take a walk by the banks of the Derwent, weather permitting, for Derby races are notorious for wet; or, better still in August when the country is lovely. To stay at Matlock Bath is the best way to 'do' Derby races properly, and a brief

residence here will make the sportsman long for more. There is good fishing in the river near Matlock, and it is a beautiful drive from there to Bakewell, and also to Dove Dale.

The change to such places from the crowded, noisy racecourse will be much appreciated.

**A SCHNAPPER FISHING
EXCURSION**



CHAPTER XX

A SCHNAPPER FISHING EXCURSION

FIFTEEN years ago the Queen's Hotel, Brisbane, Queensland, was kept by Mr M. Phillips, better known to his intimates as 'Mic.' He was a downright good sport, and always ready for racing, fishing, or shooting outings. Brisbane river runs close by the Queen's and on more than one occasion, during a flood, it has rushed into the hotel. There were several permanent residents at Mic's hotel in 1885, and we were on the whole a jovial jolly lot, fit for fun of any description.

Schnapper fishing is an exciting sport, and my first trip on a steamer for schnappering purposes is firmly impressed upon my mind.

The schnapper is somewhat on the same lines as a huge bream, but much larger than a bream could ever grow. He is a delicious eating fish, either baked, boiled, or fried.

Baked schnapper is a glorious dish. This is how Mic's sister, a first-class superintendent of the culinary department of the Queen's, prepared baked schnapper for our consumption. The fish was well cleaned and dried. Onions boiled were chopped up and mixed with bread crumbs, pepper and salt, and moistened with butter or milk, not egg; a tablespoonful of mixed herbs, thyme and marjoram were added, and chopped parsley. The fish was then stuffed and laid in a baking dish with plenty of dripping, covered with bread crumbs, and baked, being well basted to keep it moist. The fish was delicious when served very hot, and its white big flakes of flesh are unlike any English fish I have tasted.

I have, in the foregoing description, cooked the fish and eaten him before catching him. Schnapper fishing excursions are generally well patronised from Brisbane, and the fishing ground is down Moreton Bay. A small steamer is hired by a party, or perhaps the owner of the steamer runs the excursion himself and charges so much per head.

I strongly advise any gentleman at all

subject to sea-sickness to refrain from schnapper fishing.

The Queen's Hotel contingent were much in evidence at these schnapper fishings. In addition to the fishing there is much joviality, and the fun in the small saloon waxes fast and furious. A start is generally made at night, ten or eleven o'clock, and the 'happy fishing ground' is reached in the early morning. The steamer casts anchor, or drifts about as the case may be. The members of the party who have tried to snatch a few hours' sleep, and the other members who have done their level best to make this impossible, all crowd upon deck.

Fishing tackle is lying all over the place, and an occasional howl denotes the hooking of a man instead of a schnapper. On board the steamer we had a couple of 'new chums,' lately arrived from London *viâ* Sydney. They had come out in decent clothes, little knowing the results of hauling schnapper from the depths of Moreton Bay. It is not necessary to put on a 'dress suit' to go schnapper fishing, any old garments will do. The new chums came on deck, clean and

neat. They had actually clean collars on, the only two collars on the boat, and appeared somewhat surprised at the indigent condition of the other members of the party, as judged by their clothes. Before the day's fishing was over these 'new chums' were dilapidated wrecks, but they said they had never had such a time before, and I believed them.

Our host of the Queen's always took care 'his little lot' should not suffer from want of refreshment, and it is precious cold out in Moreton Bay sometimes.

When all the necessary preparations were made, the sides of the steamer were lined with fishermen, all in an attitude suggestive of seasickness, but they were merely leaning over the top rails and holding on to their weighted lines like grim death. Imagine a Margate boat in a rough sea and you have an idea of the scene.

There is generally a wager about catching the first schnapper, or a sweep got up for first, second and third. Size is not considered in this competition, but the fish must be a schnapper. There is no luring a schnapper

to the bait that I have ever discovered, but some men catch them where others fail ignominiously. As the steamer moves up and down on the dancing waves the effect upon the fishermen is peculiar. The old hands take it well, and it causes them no inconvenience, but there are others who look very uncomfortable and move about in an endeavour to gain their sea legs.

Where there is one schnapper caught there will probably be many, and these sea fish have their favourite haunts the same as the denizens of the rivers.

I have seen big schnapper pulled up as fast as the hooks were baited and the lines put out, and at other times the efforts to catch them have proved a dire failure.

There is much excitement over the first fish hooked, and as the lucky fisherman hauls in his capture everyone looks to see what sort of a fish he has on the end of his line. Over the side it comes and thumps on the deck, jumping and splashing about. A big fine fellow, about ten or twelve pounds, looking ferocious as he lies on the deck. There is a pinky hue about him, and he has

a big head with great staring eyes. He is the advance guard of many more schnapper, for fish are being pulled up on all sides. We are evidently in for a good time, and the deck of the steamer becomes slippery and slimy with the number of fish. They are all sizes, but there is seldom anything caught but schnapper. The catches become mixed up, and it is impossible for each man to keep his own fish together. They lie in heaps all about the deck, and there is a constant flapping which becomes monotonous. There is soon a hundred fish caught, and the steamer resembles a fish market when the lots are put up for sale. As you walk about the deck, fish round against your legs and leave schnapper marks on your trousers. Handling the bait and the fish does not tend to improve the appearance of the garments. The 'new chums' are gradually losing all thought of their clothes. One of them has taken his collar off and breathes more freely. Good fellows both, but not yet accustomed to dressing for comfort before elegance. Occasionally there is a sound of quarrelling. An inexperienced fisherman has managed to get his line round a companion's legs. There is a big

fish on the hook, and as it twists and twirls about, the line complications become more intricate.

The man caught in the line seizes the fish and endeavours to unhook it. It slips from his grasp and dashes its slimy scales in his face. The infuriated man kicks and pulls at the line, and the tangle becomes worse. The amusement of those around him does not tend to allay his wrath. He wishes to know what 'all you fools are grinning at.' Offers to assist him to extricate himself meet with a reply to go to a much warmer place than Moreton Bay, provided all the legends about the locality he indicates are true. The fish at last frees itself from the hook, and the hook, twirled round by the 'line-logged' fisherman, finds a resting-place in his leg.

This is the finishing touch, and acts like a spur upon the hooked man. He manages to get out his knife, and commences hacking at the line.

'That's not fair,' someone shouts. The man glares, but has no time for words; he is speechless with anger and pain.

Half an hour later he may be seen calmly talking to the man whose clumsiness caused all the trouble, and they are evidently on the most friendly terms again. The animosity arising from such incidents is not of long duration; it vanishes almost as soon as the cause is removed.

‘Oh, there is Mic, looking down the skylight.’

When Mic deserts the fishing to peer into the saloon, through the skylight, it is level betting there is mischief afloat.

Below, seated at the table, are three men playing ‘cut throat’ euchre, a favourite game of cards. Mic is as firm an adherent of euchre as any Queenslander, but he regards these players as neglecting their duty towards the schnapper.

Utterly unaware of their impending fate the three men play on.

Suddenly a couple of wet, sticky, medium-sized schnapper descend in their midst, and they start aback aghast.

‘Euchred,’ cries Mic, and the three men dart up the steps in pursuit.

It is by no means an uncommon practice

to hook a dead fish on to a line, lower it into the sea, and then ask a friend to 'hold on,' while you retire for a drink.

'Haul up, there's a fish on the end,' says the man who has been to refresh.

The line is pulled in and blank amazement is depicted upon the fisherman's countenance.

'He's been on so long you have drowned him,' is the comment.

On one occasion I recollect a man, who said he had 'never been had' when out schnapper fishing, pull up a big fish ready cleaned for cooking.

Between two and three hundred splendid fish are sometimes caught on one of these excursions, sometimes more, and occasionally less. The captain in charge knows the haunts of the schnapper well, and so do the bulk of those on board.

On the homeward journey songs and yarns of a sporting character pass away the time.

One well-known singer was asked to come up from the saloon where he had been playing cards to sing a song on deck. He readily

complied. The friend who came down for him said, 'Sing'—mentioning a song he knew would appeal to his companions. 'That is sure to fetch them.'

The unsuspecting friend mounts to the deck and commences his song. The first verse falls rather flat. He thinks the second is sure to fetch them, but the result is yawns and movements of uneasiness. The third verse he had never known to fail, but at its conclusion one of the audience ventured to say,—

'You've been "had," sonnie.'

'Had! what do you mean?' asks the vocalist.

'Tom sang that song before he went down below to ask you to come up. Did he give you a hint what to sing?'

There was a roar of laughter in which the victim of Tom's joke joined. The members of a schnapper party on their return home can always readily dispose of surplus fish to their friends. The schnapper is eagerly sought after, and much appreciated, and proves an acceptable gift.

These fishing excursions promote good fellowship as well as good sport, and are

much in favour during the season. The discomforts are never thought of by the enthusiastic fishermen who glory in a big catch of schnapper.

JOE AND BLINKERS

CHAPTER XXI

JOE AND BLINKERS

JOE BANKS stood looking over the gate leading into the stock-yard at Urandangie Station, in an outlying district in New South Wales. Joe was of a trustful nature and generally at peace with all mankind. There were very few things he could not do connected with horses and live stock generally. Fear was an unknown quantity to Joe, so was Euclid, Algebra, and education generally. Not that Joe Banks had been neglected by schoolmasters ; on the contrary, they paid him so much attention that he regarded them as men sent into the world for the purpose of tormenting children. He was not unwilling to learn, but his masters generally taught him incomprehensible things. Joe's grievance with lesson books was that there was nothing about horses in them.

From an early age Joe Banks understood

horses and they understood him. When he went to Urandangie Station, he was turned on to tame the most unruly horses on the place. That he mastered them goes without saying. He never left a horse until there was a thorough understanding that Joe Banks was 'boss.' A man who gives in to a horse will discover that animal will never surrender to him.

There was nothing in the stock-yard for Joe to look at, but he did not mind that, for he had gazed over a brown-baked, sun-scorched plain, for weeks at a stretch, in the vain endeavour to discover a green blade of grass. He had sat in a boundary rider's hut for hours, week after week, with no companion but his dog and his horse. He had seen sheep perish by the thousand and muttered 'poor beggars' and wished he could save them. He had seen the mad rush of thirst-stricken cattle into a muddy water hole and again said in sorrowful tones, 'poor devils,' as they died in a heap, blocking up the putrid water they had fought for, with their carcasses. Even for the rabbits, the scourge of the West, Joe had feelings of regret as he saw their bleached bones piled high up under the tree where they had died.

Not much of a life for a man to live. Perhaps not, but Joe Banks was as God had made him, and when the time came the Great Human Architect knew that such a structure as Joe Banks would not be found wanting.

This man, contemplating emptiness, as he leaned over the gate, had risked his life scores of times during his stay on Urandangie Station. He fought bush fires and enjoyed the fierce struggle with the flames. He swam flooded rivers side by side with his horse. He faced the riotous leaders of the shearers' strike alone and shamed them into submission.

Joe Banks took his pipe out of his mouth, put it in his waistcoat pocket half alight, and said, 'Damn it, I'll go!'

Some momentous decision had evidently been arrived at. He walked slowly away and sat down on the stump of a tree. He pulled a dirty piece of newspaper from his pocket, and, spreading it carefully on his knees, read,—

'More men are required for service in South Africa. The war is raging fiercely, and we must do all we can to help the mother country. The call to arms has been sounded in Australia,

and hundreds of her bravest sons are flocking to serve under the old flag. Laggards, hurry up, there is room for more.'

Joe Banks found that bit of paper blowing about, and it settled him.

The owner of Urandangie Station was not at all surprised when Joe made known his intention.

'I shall lose the best man I have,' he said, 'but I will not ask you to remain behind when so many good men are going to the war. You can have your pick of the horses.'

'Thank you,' said Joe. 'I'll take Blinkers.'

Harry Masters of Urandangie laughed.

'I'd have made a bet on that,' he said. 'You are welcome to him, and I hope he'll carry you through it all.'

Joe Banks shook his head, and Harry Masters looked at him curiously.

'It will be my last trip,' said Joe.

'Nonsense,' said Harry. 'We shall see you at Urandangie again.'

Blinkers was an old friend of Joe's. They had waged a desperate war in days gone by, and, as usual, Joe won. Blinkers gave in, and respected his master ever after.

There was no difficulty in Joe Banks joining the New South Wales Lancers. He became accustomed to military routine in a very short space of time. As for Blinkers, Joe said, in answer to questions,—

‘Try him.’

Blinkers was duly put through a severe ordeal and came out of it as well as his master.

Habits, acquired through long communings with Nature, made Joe Banks silent, and he seldom spoke unless addressed by a comrade in arms. No one, however, appeared to have any doubt about the new recruit being able to hold his own in a tight place.

On board ship Blinkers and his owner were the admiration of all. Blinkers appeared to think a life on the ocean wave one of the most delightful ways of passing time. He stood the voyage well, and landed with his master as fit as possible under the circumstances.

It was a relief to Joe Banks when the detachment of the New South Wales Lancers joined General French’s cavalry division. The new surroundings did not appear to upset either Joe Banks or Blinkers in the least.

They fell into the routine of cavalry life as though to the manner born.

They had not long to wait their chance.

A patrol of the Lancers was ordered out, and they had an adventure which proved the stuff of which both Joe Banks and Blinkers were made. No danger appeared to be at hand. They were riding quietly along, unaware that the rocks on either side contained a hidden, cautious enemy.

Suddenly reports rang out and puffs of smoke and flashes of fire were seen on either side. There was no time to lose or they would be caught in a trap. One saddle was already empty, and Joe Banks seized the bridle of the riderless horse. Another horse in front fell on to his knees, pitched his rider over his head, and then rolled over dead.

‘Here, take him,’ said Joe, pulling up and holding the riderless horse.

It was not until then Joe saw it was the officer in command, who said,—

‘Thanks. I’m not hit, are you?’

‘No,’ said Joe, with a slight gasp.

They were not out of the difficulty yet.

Well-mounted Boers were after them, and it was a race for life.

Another saddle empty and still they kept on. It was no use making a stand, they were so greatly outnumbered.

Blinkers appeared to think there was something wrong in all this hurry and bustle. He resented the idea of being brought these thousands of miles, and galloped at a break-neck pace over the rough stone-strewn ground.

Something of the horse's feelings were felt by his rider, who patted his neck and urged him onward.

The shots came fast from all sides; there appeared to be no end to the Boers.

Another horse down and a motionless rider. Joe heard him fall with a dull thud, and saw him double up and turn over with a struggling kick.

'Poor beggar,' said Joe to himself and rode on.

But there was a glistening in Joe Banks's eyes, and it was hard and glittering like an icy grip on a shivering tear. He watched the men riding in front of him and eased his horse slightly. Glancing again to right and

left he still saw puffs of smoke coming from behind the huge boulders.

Boers behind, Boers right and left. Joe thought of something he had read at school about 'the jaws of death.' He also commenced to think of divers other things connected with his childhood. His mother's voice seemed to sound in his ears.

'Near shave that,' as a bullet took off his hat, said Joe, and resumed his thinking. He was gradually dropping behind and Blinkers could not understand it. The glitter in Joe's eyes was still there, only more dangerous.

'Damn me if I'll stand this,' said Joe. 'I'll have a field day to myself.'

In a moment he stopped Blinkers, dismounted and turned the horse loose.

'Save yourself, old man,' he said, 'Hurry up. You'll soon catch 'em.'

Blinkers declined to move. He remained firm as a statue.

'All right,' said Joe, 'we'll fight it out together.'

Quick and sharp came the reports, and two Boer saddles were empty.

‘I’d like to make it half a dozen,’ said Joe to himself.

The advancing Boers came on at a great pace.

‘Another,’ said Joe, ‘and a fourth. Bush shooting is good practice.’

Blinkers fell forward on his knees and rolled over.

In a trice Joe was behind him, lying flat down, and again a Boer the less was the result of his shot.

Blinkers moved.

‘Not dead,’ said Joe. ‘A ruse to save me, I guess.’

The Boers were upon him now, eager for revenge.

Who was this devil who faced death so calmly, and emptied saddles so skilfully?—well, he should pay for it anyhow.

Shot after shot rang out from the Boers, but still Joe was alive.

They were upon him now. Joe raised himself, drew his revolver, and fired.

‘Six,’ he muttered.

Amidst the curses of those around him, he felt at last his hour had come. He had

sought death, why his Maker alone knew, and he had killed his half dozen.

He felt rough hands laid upon him and men hurriedly searching his clothes.

Was this dying, this feeling stealing over him? There wasn't much in it, he thought, and then he had accounted for six.

A big burly man stooped over him and peered into his face, evidently satisfied with his inspection and pronounced him dead.

Blinkers, keeping perfectly still during these operations, suddenly came to life. His hind hoof struck the stooping Boer in the face with the force of a sledge-hammer. The man fell back insensible—dead.

Blinkers was still now, a bullet in his brain to prevent further mistakes.

They left Joe Banks for dead and rode hurriedly away. Somehow Joe struggled back to life for a few brief, flickering moments. 'Poor old Blinkers,' he said gaspingly. 'This beats Urandangie hollow. Six of 'em to me, one to you, that's seven. We've done our bit, I think. I'll follow you and turn in.'

He pillowed his head on Blinkers's neck and lay still with his eyes looking upward into

the clear heavens above. Joe saw more there than he had done when leaning over the gate at Urandangie Station.

Slowly his eyes closed and he slept.

How long he slept he did not know, but he awoke with a mighty thirst upon him.

‘Bushed again,’ muttered Joe, incoherently, ‘and after all these years. Serves me right. Get up, Blinkers, old chap, we’ve got to find Urandangie somehow. Water. Well, it’s not the first time I’ve been short of water. You can’t stand it like I can, Blinkers. It’s rough on you, Blinkers, it is indeed, you ought to have been a camel.’

‘What a beastly pain all over me. Never mind, Harry Masters isn’t the man to desert a fellow, even if he is only a station hand.’

More sleep fell peacefully upon Joe Banks. It was a long sleep, but he will awake again some day.

When the New South Wales Lancers found their comrade he was lying on his back with his head still pillowed on Blinkers’s neck. His face bore a peaceful expression and looked noble, with the nobility of courage and a brave heart.

The body of the Boers Joe Banks had killed were found, and when the officer had counted them he said, 'Six to him and one to the horse.'

A thrill of admiration ran through the men as they stood bareheaded around their comrade.

'An object lesson for us all, lads,' said the officer, 'Joe and Blinkers.'

Sometimes when Harry Masters stands on the verandah of the homestead at Urandangie, he fancies he can see the form of Joe Banks leaning on the gate and looking into the stock-yard, and near him Blinkers, whose shade seems to haunt the place.

SOMETHING ABOUT DOGS

CHAPTER XXII

SOMETHING ABOUT DOGS

THERE are dogs *and* dogs. There is the well-behaved dog, who matriculates in a decent sober manner for the higher walk of life. He does not appeal to me, or find the soft place in my heart some other dogs do. There is likewise the dog who, not being quite so well behaved, has yet an air of respectability about him. He is admitted into decent society and knows his place. The general utility dog has a manner peculiarly his own, and has a knack of making friends and soliciting donations, which would not disgrace the persuasive powers of a bishop on a 'church restoration fund' tour. The mongrel dog is a blend of many ancestors which do not always harmonise except at night, but on the whole he is maligned. Nevertheless, the mongrel is often made much of and his good qualities are

many. Children are fond of him because he has a wholesale manner of distributing his favours with an eye to business. There are sporting dogs, and non-sporting dogs, and the former are to my mind not so highly placed above the other in intelligence as some people would have us believe.

Dogs have been my friends from childhood at which period the before-mentioned 'Bess' turned over pictures for me. I have dabbled in mastiffs, St Bernards, fox-terriers and other terriers, collies and farmers' sheep dogs, spaniels and retrievers—a very fair sample of the doggy kingdom. On one occasion I carried a mastiff pup from Redfern Station, Sydney, to my home in Surrey Hills. Six months later he was well-nigh able to carry me. I once possessed a fox-terrier who had a playful habit of pulling out the lines of the tennis poles, and then rolling himself up in the net, causing so many complications to ensue that he had to extricate himself from his difficulties by rending it asunder. He also had a peculiar affection for croquet balls, and his endeavours to carry one in his mouth seriously interfered with the usual placidity

of his countenance, and threatened dislocation of the jaws. For pure, unadulterated fun a fox-terrier is hard to beat. Dog stories are generally on a par with fish stories, but there is far more truth in them than may be imagined. In dealing with dogs the question is where to begin and where to leave off. The dog of the show bench has not much fascination for me. He has too much of the 'lardidar' about him, an over-got-up kind of canine, a sort of Regent Street swell let out for the day, and seems afraid to give vent to his feelings because it might ruffle his hair. A well-bred dog of any breed is a desirable possession, and it is an expensive hobby if gone into thoroughly.

Some dogs develop a love of sport which is strangely interesting. Sheep dogs have a tendency to poach. I have watched an old sheep dog steal quietly out of the yard, sneak down the wall side and make for a rabbit haunt. On his return he brought up the cows at milking time just to dispel any lurking suspicion there may have been about his proceedings. He was an artful dog this, not given to theft, but a rare old poacher. Take

him for a walk and he would not so much as look at a rabbit; he has even been known to reject rabbit pie; but let him go alone for a walk and the rapid development of his appetite for rabbit becomes apparent. It is so with the man poacher. Sad to relate, I have known poachers who had interested me, not the brute with a gun or a loaded knob-stick, but the harmless poacher who bags a rabbit or bird now and again for the cooking pot. I rather sympathise with these men, who, although poachers, cannot be classed as 'regulars.' I have known a poacher of this class develop into an excellent gamekeeper.

But to the dogs. Poaching dogs are a nuisance, the one I have instanced being an exception.

If any of my readers have 'deadly enmity' against any man, I advise them to give him a dog with the bump of humour fully developed. I once possessed such a dog. He was a mixture of retriever and other breeds. I admired him, but he was too costly and artful. His partiality for neighbours' gardens was amazing. He had one redeeming virtue, he never issued invitations to his large circle of

friends to hold garden parties on my property. He paid visits, but declined to receive visitors. The amount of ire a dog can arouse in one's neighbour is alarming. The provocation is great, I admit. To purloin a toothsome fowl and then proceed to devour it in the middle of a bed of begonias in full flower is not calculated to promote peaceful thoughts in the mind of the owner of the flowers. The climax came when my 'retriever and other breeds' slew a cat, a pet cat, and his life was demanded as the forfeit. I did not slay him. A friend called and said he'd take him off my hands. He did so. In a week he came back (not the dog) and used abusive language. I offered him a cigar and other soothing remedies. They were declined, and then I knew the matter was serious.

'Out with it,' I said.

'Well, it's about that dog you gave me.'

'Excuse me,' I said, 'you mean about the dog you offered to take off my hands.'

He waved away my objection with a lordly air, but he took a cigar and I knew peace was at hand.

'That dog is a perfect demon,' he went on.

‘What’s he done?’

‘What hasn’t he done, you mean,’ he replied. ‘The first night I got him home we lost him.’

‘You ought to have been thankful,’ I said.

‘He was brought back next morning in chains by two policemen, charged with forcibly breaking and entering a duck house and killing two of the occupants.’

‘What did you do?’ I asked.

My friend smiled as he said, ‘The old chap looked so sheepish I bought him off.’ Then gloom settled on his countenance again and he went on. ‘He repaid me with base ingratitude. The brute actually got into the cucumber frame, scratched a hole in it and slept there.’

‘What about the cucumbers?’ I asked.

‘Don’t expect any this season,’ he replied.

‘Is that all?’ I asked. ‘Do take a little refreshment.’

He did not refuse this time, and I saw the climax approaching.

‘No, it is *not* all. He ate Mary Ann’s young man’s hat the other night, and she has given notice. She said to my wife, “The

horrid beast. Poor James has caught the influenza. He had to walk home bareheaded, and I'm giving you notice, mum. I wouldn't live in the same parish with that dog.'"

'Have you come to an end of his iniquities?' I asked.

'Oh, dear, no. He killed a tame rabbit, and last night he nearly terrified my wife to death. We keep a green parrot in a cage in the hall, and somehow or another the dog was left inside when I locked up. We had just dozed off when there was the most terrific din in the hall. The parrot shrieked, and something was banging about all over the place. My wife smiled (?) and I rushed out of the room. The dog was racing up and down the hall with the parrot cage in his mouth. You have no idea the row he made. That dog must go.'

'Give him away,' I suggested.

'I'll try,' he replied and I believe he did, but of the result of the 'mixed' dog's last move I have not heard.

I am very fond of collie dogs. They require a lot of attention, but are worth it to look at. A playful collie is a perfect picture of

doggy fun. How he romps with the children, and puts terror into the heart of the gardener. To see a collie rolling over in a clean bundle of straw he looks like a woolly bundle, but when he emerges, shakes himself and puts his hair straight, what a splendid fellow he really is. The bright, keen, intelligent face, the ears alert at every sound, a picture of doggy beauty and energy. A collie when well trained is one of the best of companions. The 'tearaway' dog, although he performs a variety of antics out of sheer fun, is not a favourite with other people than his owner. Open the front gate and let 'tearaway' loose, and the probabilities are he will boisterously jump on the nearest approaching nursemaid, scatter her brood of children, and create a panic; or he will make friendly overtures to a well-groomed gentleman who has a horror of dogs and shows it. To watch 'tearaway' and this individual is a pantomimic display on the cheap. Repulsed in a frantic endeavour to embrace him, 'tearaway' circles round, and the dignified man gesticulates with his stick. The dog barks and enjoys the fun, which exasperates the man the more. The performance is maintained

for an indefinite time until 'tearaway' finds another victim.

It is not my intention to dilate upon the wonderful sagacity of sporting dogs. Far abler pens than mine have already accomplished this, but I thought, as a lover of dogs, a few words about them would not be out of place here. As companions for human beings they are indispensable, for they teach us much that it is good to learn. From them our children learn the meaning of obedience, and also the reward of obedience. A good dog is always obedient, so is a good child. Obedience may be said to all intents and purposes practically to rule the world.

As a faithful companion for children there is no equal to the dog in the animal kingdom. He is at once the policeman and the playmate; the terror of evil-doers and the friend of merry, happy, laughing childhood. There is very little a dog will not put up with from a child. Look at that little five-year-old lassie, romping on the lawn with the frolicsome collie. What a pretty picture. They roll and tumble together. The little maid pulls

his tail and he remonstrates, but without harming her. She holds his ears until a faint whimper denotes that the dog feels the strain. Does he resent this? Not a bit of it; he gambols around her and barks, and she runs after him, trips up and falls. She is inclined to cry. The dog approaches, stretches out on all fours, looking at her wistfully and sympathetically. The little girl puts her arms round his neck, and there finds solace and consolation. A footstep on the gravel path. The dog is all alert, a faint growl, a sharp bark, a 'hands-off' warning to the intruder. Satisfied there is no harm, play is resumed. Thus every child ought to be taught to love dumb animals. If they were, we should have less crime in our midst, and the lives of the rising generation would be healthier and more manly. It is surprising to me how little many children, or even grown-up people, know about animals. A man who can call dogs 'a nuisance' has lost something of the pleasures of life. There are such men; I have met them and pitied them. I do not wish to sermonise, or moralise, but this much I will say, it is good for every man to throw off self

and think of others around him, and I am perfectly certain a study of dumb animals, especially dogs, will have this desirable effect.

TOLL BARS AND OTHER GATES

CHAPTER XXIII

TOLL BARS AND OTHER GATES

THE surroundings of hunting are picturesque, full of instruction in Nature's art, and productive of much pleasure to the contemplative mind. The exploits of hunting men have been often described, and glowing accounts of famous runs with famous packs have made our ears tingle and our hearts beat with excitement, even when following the hounds 'on paper' seated by the glowing fireside. I have seen many famous packs at work, but with their doings I am not chiefly concerned now. In Derbyshire there are three noted packs—the Meynell fox-hounds, and the Dove Valley and the High Peak harriers. The High Peak harriers are hunted through a stiff country, probably the highest country in England. They meet at some curiously out-of-the-way places, where rough, uneven stone walls take the place of

hedges, and where a good jumper and a fearless rider are two necessary essentials.

The heading to this sketch is 'Toll Bars and other Gates.' At the present time a toll bar is about as scarce as an honest company promoter, although I believe both may be discovered by diligent search. Toll bars have been abolished, but some remains are still to be found. I have recollections of sundry and divers toll bars and other gates. There was a good deal of humour attaching to toll bars in the old days, more especially in out-of-the-way districts, 'far from the madding crowd.' I recollect one toll bar which commanded the approach to a favourite Derbyshire lane. I have passed through it scores of times on horseback, on foot, in a cart, in a trap, and on a snow plough, manufactured locally, and effective although primitive. The old fellow who kept watch and ward over this gate was a queer customer. He always seemed to me to be a remnant from some other world where people never changed their clothes, seldom washed, and knew not the meaning of brush and comb. I never remember this old toll-bar keeper having a change of clothes. Once when I

suggested to him it might be possible to find a tailor who would do him justice, he smiled—he had a heavenly smile, and so expansive that his whole face became submerged in it—and said, ‘I reckon, young sir, these togs will just about see me through.’ I believe they did, but at the time I fancied seeing him through them would not be a matter of difficulty in the course of a few weeks. Old Dick lived in a very small cottage, and he was an authority on gates. He had a strong admiration for his particular white toll gates, and he lavished all his cleansing abilities upon them and thought naught of his own personal appearance. He appeared to think the more untidy and unkempt he looked, the more white and clean his gates would be by contrast. Old Dick generally sat in the small porch of his cottage and accosted travellers as to the weather, the time o’ day, and so on. His vocabulary was limited, and the sight of a dictionary would have produced a natural irritation in him. Dick possessed a clock which had extraordinary merit in his eyes. A giddy rooster came out and crowed lustily at certain and uncertain hours. There was also a forlorn-looking female

who dodged out of a side box, like a sentry box, and glowered at the rooster. She reminded me of Ham's wife as depicted in the first Noah's Ark I ever possessed. When the rooster caught sight of this wooden-looking female he bolted round the corner, somewhere amongst the works of the clock, and he was not to blame.

Old Dick, had he been a racing man, would have backed his clock to keep time with any other clock in the universe.

'Carn't be 'alf past, 'cause th' cock's not crowed yet,' was Dick's answer to a remonstrance against his idea of time.

But to the gates. At night Dick closed them, and the way he 'hitched' them up was a work of art. He chained and locked them, but not in an ordinary way. Somehow he wound the chain round in such a manner that he could never find the right end. On a cold and frosty night, when he was called up to open the gate for a belated horseman, a conversation would take place after the following manner:—

Horseman.—'Hallo! Gate. Gate. Hurry up!'

There was no response from the interior of

the cottage outside. All was gloom, stillness and biting cold.

Horseman.—‘Hallo there!’ in a loud, angry tone. ‘Confound you, how long am I to wait?’

The little window of the cottage was slowly opened.

‘Anybody call?’ asked Dick.

‘Call! I’ve called loud enough to wake the dead.’

‘Uncommon fine night,’ said Dick, leaning out of the window and contemplating the surrounding country with an unruffled air.

‘It’s d——d cold. I’m perished,’ yelled the horseman.

‘Maybe it is a trifle that way,’ replied Dick. ‘I’ll put my old coat on.’

The window was shut again, and no sound came from within.

‘Hallo! Hang it, man, open the gate!’ came in angry tones from the horseman, who would have been a good two miles on his journey by this time.

The door opened, and old Dick appeared with a horn lantern. He always carried it, moonlight, or no light. It was his badge of office.

‘It do be a trifle cold,’ said Dick, putting down the lantern and fumbling with the chain.

‘Be quick, man. I’m frozen,’ says the horse-man.

‘This ’ere chain’s the most dodgasted chain I ever had,’ said Dick, holding up the lantern and regarding it remonstratingly.

The horseman dismounts and pulls angrily at the chain, saying,—

‘Toll bars ought to be abolished, and as for you, my man, you ought to be sent about your business.’

The stranger had made a mistake when he said, ‘toll bars ought to be abolished.’

To old Dick there was no more deadly sin than the mere suggestion of abolishing toll bars.

‘Abolish of ’em, would ye? Maybe as how you’d like to do away with roads,’ said Dick, who maintained that minus toll bars there would be no roads.

‘You have no business to chain up this gate.’

‘Haven’t I? Just you wait a minute,’ said Dick, starting off for his front door, the only door.

‘Here, hang the man. Where are you going?’ roars the exasperated traveller.

‘Just you wait a bit,’ growled Dick, shuffling into his cottage, and returning with a card of vast dimensions, which he flourished violently in the stranger’s face, frightening his horse, and causing general uproar and confusion.

‘What’s that, you old fool?’ howled the traveller.

‘That—that’s the law,’ said Dick, solemnly, and bringing his fist down with a whack on the card, startling the horse again.

‘D——n the law! Open the gate.’

‘It’s number seventeen,’ said Dick, ‘and it says—’

‘I don’t want to hear what the law says, or what you say. Open this gate.’

‘It states here,’ said Dick, not noticing there had been any interruption, ‘“Chain and lock the gates at—”’

‘Will you open this gate?’

‘That’s the law,’ said Dick, returning to the cottage again with his placard.

Meanwhile the traveller stamped and raved, and his horse became more and more restive. At last Dick returned and fumbled with the chain.

‘Well, well, well,’ said Dick, ‘I’ve forgotten the key.’ Back to the cottage he tramped.

At last the chain fell with a clatter.

‘Of all the old idiots I ever met you’re the worst,’ said the traveller, remounting.

‘Threepunnce,’ said Dick.

‘Open that gate.’

‘Threepunnce,’ said Dick.

‘That’s not the toll.’

‘I’ll fetch the law,’ said Dick, preparing to make tracks.

‘Never mind the law; take this and go to the deuce.’

The gate was at last opened and the traveller allowed to proceed.

Old Dick had a great ‘down’ on drovers. He generally allowed a portion of their cattle to go through, and then shut the gate until they paid up for the lot. Old Dick was one of a type fast vanishing from present-day life. He merely existed, but, according to his ideas, he was ahead of the times, but in reality he was completely ignorant of the ordinary occurrences of life. Strange to say, he had an excellent memory, and his hearing was wonderfully acute. He seldom made a mistake in the

sound of a horse's hoof, and knew from instinct by the rattle on the hard white road who was the owner of any vehicle coming along.

Another toll bar of a different kind I passed through hundreds of times was not very far from Ashbourn. The neat cottage is still standing, a lone sentry at the corner of the gateless road. It is white, at least glimpses of white can be seen peering out from the mass of roses and creepers with which it is covered. The small diamond-shaped panes of glass in the windows reflect the scarlet and green of the geraniums within (not pelargoniums), the old name sounds better. The slab of stone in front of the doorway is so white that one hardly cares to tread upon it. This old gate led from the Leek road, in the direction of Oakover Park, and from there on to Dovedale. Higher up the hill—a white winding broad road—is another small cottage, and the gate is still there, but no charge is made to pass through it, and I am doubtful if a dozen carts go down the little lane in as many months. This is one of those lanes occasionally come across in the country, which wander on and apparently lead to nowhere in

particular. The road is never repaired, and the high bank on the left-hand side gradually silts down and hides the track from view. It is a charming bit of lane, nevertheless, all the more interesting because it has evidently lost itself in the meadows beyond. I have sat on the bank in this lane for hours at a stretch, and never seen a human being. There was, however, plenty of life if one cared to look for it.

What hunting man has not had experience of farmers' gates? I have heard it said you can tell what sort of a farmer a man is by his gates and fences. Having had a good deal of experience in this line I beg to differ. The best farmer sometimes has the worst gates and fences, but although tumbled down, and ruined looking, they invariably answer their purpose.

'Splendid gates Bowker has to his meadows.'

'Yes, zur, that maybe so, but just look at his *thistles*.'

When a hunting man makes for a gate and finds it fastened in a manner peculiarly farmer-like, he is apt to use language calculated to frighten his horse. Imagine an old five-barred gate—it was five-barred once,

but put it down at four and a half bars now. How it holds together is mysterious, but hang it does on rusty hinges and a worn-out post. The wood has become dark with age and exposure ; it is black, brown, dark green, light green, yellowish and bronze green, and other colours too numerous to mention. It has the appearance of a gate that has had to put up with a good deal. No doubt in its early days it was highly respectable and swung on its hinges with alacrity. Several coats of paint were put on, then followed a tar period, then a period when it received no coats at all, excepting those the weather gave it, and this last coat resembled Joseph's, in that it was of many colours. The gate once possessed a decent latch which could be easily lifted with the handle of a hunting crop. Portions of the latch remain, but are only there on sufferance, supported by an odd nail or two of a rusty and shaky disposition. If a portion of the latch is moved the nail resents it and wriggles, and threatens to 'fall out' with the latch and the wood-work. This latch has been threatened with an eviction scores of times, but it still hangs on. The horseman who has ridden up hastily to take

a short cut finds this old gate far more troublesome than a bran-new structure. There is something about it he cannot quite comprehend. He could crush through it and smash it to 'smithereens,' but that would be unneighbourly, and your true hunting man is above all other things neighbourly. The gate is tied to the post with a piece of rope. This rope is in keeping with the gate. It has been roughly used and turned out ragged. It was tied in a kind of slip knot originally, but the knot has slipped and there is now no slip in the knot whatsoever.

A man who is in a hurry to go to bed, after a banquet, and has prepared a special knot to his boot laces, for the home coming, and who pulls the wrong end furiously, in the glorious hope that the whole thing will come undone, will know the sort of tangle that boot lace gets into, and will be able to comprehend the sort of knot this gate was tied with.

The horseman sees it is an impossible knot.

'Cut it,' is his first thought, but only for a moment. No, he will not cut it, so he turns his horse, puts him at the hedge, and goes 'through'; it is too big to go over. Of course

he leaves a gap behind, but it soon closes up and no harm is done.

The gate and the knot remain for weeks. When the farmer wishes to pass through the gate he climbs over it. When the sheep have to come that way the farm hand drives them through a gap in the hedge and then fills it up after them. He has too much regard for the knot to try and undo it.

Gates, especially country gates, seem to be erected to lean on, to sit on, or to swing on. There's a lot more pleasure to be had out of a beautiful landscape when your arms are comfortably spread out on the top of a gate, and your chin balances your head and gives a more correct range. A pipe smokes much better, to all appearances, under such circumstances. Gates are a perfect godsend to village gossips. They are the gates of parliament where the rights of the nearest duck pond are discussed, and the parson's demeanour to the inhabitants is commented upon. Where the squire and his lady are hauled over the coals, and where Hodge proclaims aloud that he is as good as his master, even better, if he has just arrived from the village inn. When their elders are not

leaning on the gates, the youngsters are there, and then the gates have a real swinging time of it.

The gate with a patent self-closing action is perhaps the most deserving of notice, for it attracts a vast amount of attention by slamming unoffending and unsuspecting people on the back, or other portions of the body. It looks like an ordinary gate. Push it open and proceed to walk through in the usual manner and it strikes you in the chest. Pull it towards you and pass through and it bangs you in the back. Try and shut it quietly and it slips from the hand and bangs to with a hideous clang. Hold it gently until within safe closing distance and it takes the end off a finger or two. Attempt to force a passage on horseback and the gate catches the hind quarters of your mount and the animal raises objections. Fasten it open and drive through, and the gate suddenly breaks away and scrapes the newly-painted wheel, or takes off a portion of the hind step. The patent self-closing gate is responsible for the nervousness of old ladies and the bruises upon children. It is an aggressive gate in every sense of the word.

The gate with the business end of nails

sticking out of the top ought to be burned. Such gates are better severely left alone, and I decline to comment upon them.

There is a good deal of romance about toll bars and other gates, if one had the patience to hunt up all the legends connected with them. Highwaymen are always represented as 'flying' toll-bar gates. They must have had fairly good horses these gents of the road. In 'Nimrod's' day sportsmen were in the habit of driving over toll-bar gates, but from all accounts the gates had the better of the transaction. I never saw anyone attempt to 'take' a toll-bar gate, but I have seen a good many gates as 'stiff' well taken by good riders. Think of all the love stories connected with gates, the paintings in which gates figure so conspicuously. Songs, many and oft, have been written about gates, and whenever moonlight, or 'the witching hour of night,' is mentioned in romance there is certain to be a gate somewhere about.

Gates are an excuse for resting, when on a country walk they make one pause and contemplate things, and if there were no gates, country life would be less romantic and interesting.

That some people are possessed with the idea gates were made to be banged. It appears to give intense relief to outraged feelings to bang gates. It is a kind of bang of defiance, a shaking off the dust of the feet, when a man swings the gate to behind him with a crash. I prefer the friendly gate which opens easily, closes quietly, and seems to hold out a welcome to the visitor. There are such gates, and many of us know them well.

There are gates through which we have passed brimful of hope and happiness; gates that have led us to the old porch of the church to the threshold of a new life, and the hope of a career in which others shall share our fortunes and our joys. Gates thrown open wide to receive the happy bride, gates through which love dancingly leads the way amidst the flower-strewn path, gates which do not close with a harsh clang, but stand open wide with a glad-some welcome in their wooden arms.

It is summer then and the gates are white and clear, bathed in the warm sunlight, glistening in new white coats, standing out bold and clear amidst the green of the trees and the bright grass on these well-trimmed

mounds, these beds smiling with flowers nodding their fragrant heads at the old time-worn stones above them.

It is winter now and the gates stand wide open again. They are the self-same gates, but aged and dull. They look grim and stained against the pure white of the snow-covered earth, the frost-bedecked firs, and the glistening icicles suspended from the wall. They are wide open, but there is no 'wooden-armed' welcome; it is a dull, sombre reception, for the gates are sad, and the bride, long gone, is returning alone. There is a black patch amidst the fallen snow, and it spreads out and winds slowly up the hill. It comes in sight again round the village smithy and it turns up to the gates.

The bride has returned. She passes through the gates, she enters the porch, she returns to the churchyard, but she does not pass out of the gates again. The black line winds away again and the gates are closed.

In the dull wintry night they look cold and chill, shutting in the dead.

But they will open again, these gates, and warm once more will be their 'wooden welcome.'

A SNOWY SKETCH

CHAPTER XXIV

A SNOWY SKETCH

FAST and furious swept the driven snow across the highest land in England. For many years there had been no such storm, so said the old farm hand at my side, as we struggled and fought with the bitter, biting blast. The cold made us gasp for breath, the icy flakes dashed into our faces, and stung our cheeks with quick, sharp blows. We were walking, or rather staggering, across the farm lands in the High Peak district. A dim mountainous outline could be discerned through the blinding whiteness. It was the huge stone embankment of the High Peak railway before it reaches Parsley Hay. It is a much improved line now, but in those days the trains ran in an uncertain way and the time-table had to be taken on trust. On the top of this huge pile of roughly-hewn stone an engine was puffing

and snorting, dragging some trucks, a passenger carriage, and a guard's van.

'Her'll be over sure,' said my companion, and we stopped to watch her. She seemed to make no headway, but plunged forward jerkingly, belching forth smoke and flame, scattering fiery sparks which danced with the half-frozen flakes.

'If her gets to Parsley Hay her'll be in luck.'

I thought so too, but fancied that mass of metal could defy the elements. Slowly the train moved on, passed safely over a none too safe bridge, and the end of the guard's van disappeared from view.

'Her'll do it now,' said the man. As we stood watching the train the snow had drifted against our legs until it almost reached the knees. We struggled on, carving a way for ourselves, and longing to see the bright beacon light in the old farmhouse lying snugly in the valley below.

We had a long way to go, and yet the journey had to be done or we should know what it was to sleep soundly in a white winding sheet. Little I heeded the furious

storm then, but it gives me a cold shudder as I think of it now. It has made me shiver beneath Queensland's broiling sun with the thermometer declaring it to be 'over a hundred' in the shade. Storm! it was a storm, and in the stormiest, wildest part of a terribly wild yet beautiful country.

Not a living thing could we see. The sheep had been safely housed, and it was lucky for them we had got at them in time. They would have been driven before the wind, sank under the wall, been buried in the snowdrift, and lost.

'Worst night I ever seed.'

It was three or thereabouts in the afternoon, but the dense snowfall, the dull leaden sky, the lowering masses of clouds made it resemble night.

'Give us yer 'and.'

We clasped hands, his, horny, hard, big and strong, mine a mere trifle in his firm grip. He was not a young man, and saw his sixty summers a year or two later, but he had a stout heart, a sound constitution, and limbs of iron. He was a farm labourer of the old stamp. That stamp has been rubbed out by

neglect, and the land will suffer for it some day. We trudged on. There was no shelter, there is none in that wild country. A stone wall with the drift covering it to the top stood in our way, and we had to climb over as best we could. We sank in deep, up to our shoulders, but we scrambled over somehow, and there was no drift to jump into on the other side.

It grew darker and darker, and I wondered if after all these years Joe had lost his way. He would never have 'let on' had such been the case, he would have tramped about all night to keep up the circulation. The wind howled and the snow came down with that peculiar deadening sound, and we marched on. There were sundry disused lime-kilns about, and it is no small matter to fall down a lime-kiln. We missed them somehow, luckily enough, for we had no idea where they were. Gradually we commenced to descend the steep hillside and got under the lee of the wind. Slipping and sliding, falling and stumbling, we reached the bottom. We could not see the road, but we knew we were on it and in the valley.

Plodding along we began to near the house, but it was so thick we could not see the light.

We reached the farmyard gate, and Joe, as he pushed it open a few inches and squeezed through, said,—

‘I’m glad we’re ’ome. You needn’t say nowt, but beggar me if oi didn’t think us were lost.’

What a relief to get in doors. A big fire roaring up the chimney, hospitable steaming glasses of grog on the table. No rocking to sleep that night. And next morning a white glittering world and nothing to be done except to shovel snow and carve a pathway as we walked along. That snow lasted several days, and it took quite a month before the last remnant, hidden in crevices of the rocks, had disappeared.

During the time the snow was on the ground there was ample opportunity to watch the ways of wild things, birds and animals, and contrast their proceedings with their mode of life in summer. The sparrow who is ever with us, and who twitters winter and summer, had a comfortable resting-place

on the ivy-clad walls. How he obtained food was a mystery.

Visitations to the back door, and even occasional expeditions into the kitchen in search of crumbs could hardly have been sufficient to keep him alive. I never saw a starved-to-death sparrow; they are as scarce as dead donkeys. I have seen other birds dead, lying beneath the bushes from which they have fallen, but never a sparrow.

The rabbits scratched furiously and long, and managed to reach stunted grass beneath the snow. I caught many a rabbit as he helplessly tried to flounder back to his burrow. The hares selected big tufts in the open fields, which were weighed down with snow, and had anyone been so minded they could easily have been knocked over with a stick. All the wild things seemed to have been tamed by the snow. They came nearer the haunts of man. They entered the garden and made havoc with any vegetables that happened to be there. Once I saw a rabbit in the farmyard stable, but only once, and he bolted at my approach. I should not have done the little brown-

coated chap any harm, but he regarded me as a natural enemy. Probably he was right, for later on I should have had no compunction in knocking him over with a gun.

Down by the river the water rats must have been frozen out, for never a one could I see, but the sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed vermin came back in the spring.

The few water-hens about did not mind it in the least. Moor-hens I ought perhaps to have written, but water-hen is more familiar. These moor-hens, with their heads of a reddish-brown, their plumage blackish-grey and white, looked quite pleased with the winter scene. They are evidently of a philosophical turn and take things just as they come, which would be a good thing for many of us if we followed their example.

The black denizens of the rookery at the back of the house were always up early and home late, and must have flown miles in search of food. Their home-coming in the evening was something to be remembered, and they held regular tea meetings, just about four o'clock, in the topmost branches of the trees. I noticed the ancient birds, the patriarchs of

the flock, made use of the old nests, and no doubt found them comfortable, the cold having killed all the other inhabitants. So amiable and free from care did these blackbirds seem that it was quite evident the 'rook pies' of the previous season were utterly forgotten.

The cows were in the shed, and when turned out to be watered were in a desperate hurry to be in again. There was a savoury smell of grains about, which tickled their noses and caused them to sniff and low in a most suggestive, 'come hurry up' manner. Cows have no idea of politeness. There is very little giving way about them. If two cows become jammed in the doorway, the remainder must wait until the matter of prestige has been settled between them. This question of prestige takes a considerable time. Cow number one desires to insert one horn in the eye or ear of her opponent. Cow number two resents by giving a most prodigious squeeze which causes the timber to strain and crack. It is of very little use trying to settle the difference between them; they must be allowed to squeeze until one gives way. The artful cow does not make for her own

stall, when she has effected an entrance into the shed. She dives into a neighbour's stall, and consumes her neighbour's food with a rapidity simply marvellous. Seeing the approach of the robbed cow, she turns away with an apologetic air as much as to say, 'Sorry I made a mistake. I must go and look after my little lot.'

I have noticed when there is no snow people talk most enthusiastically about snowballing. When the snow arrives they refrain from even hinting at such a thing and talk about violets, the delights of spring, or how much warmer it must be 'down South.' Snowballing is a nice, pleasant subject for conversation when you are toasting your feet before a fire. Snowballing, when you feel a thud on your left ear, and another at the back of your neck, with a chill creeping down the small of your back, is not a fit subject for conversation. It all depends upon the age of the snowballers whether they like it or otherwise. As a lad I gloried in it. Now my lads glory in it and I do the other thing. I have known snowballs placed in a pair of boots to keep warm, in fact, to melt with genial heat. I have even known snowballs to

fall down a chimney in a most alarming manner. They did not seem to agree with the fire. The next best (?) thing to a broken egg in your topcoat pocket is a snowball in a high state of thaw. There is a lot of fun to be got out of snowballing if you are at a respectable distance from the combatants.

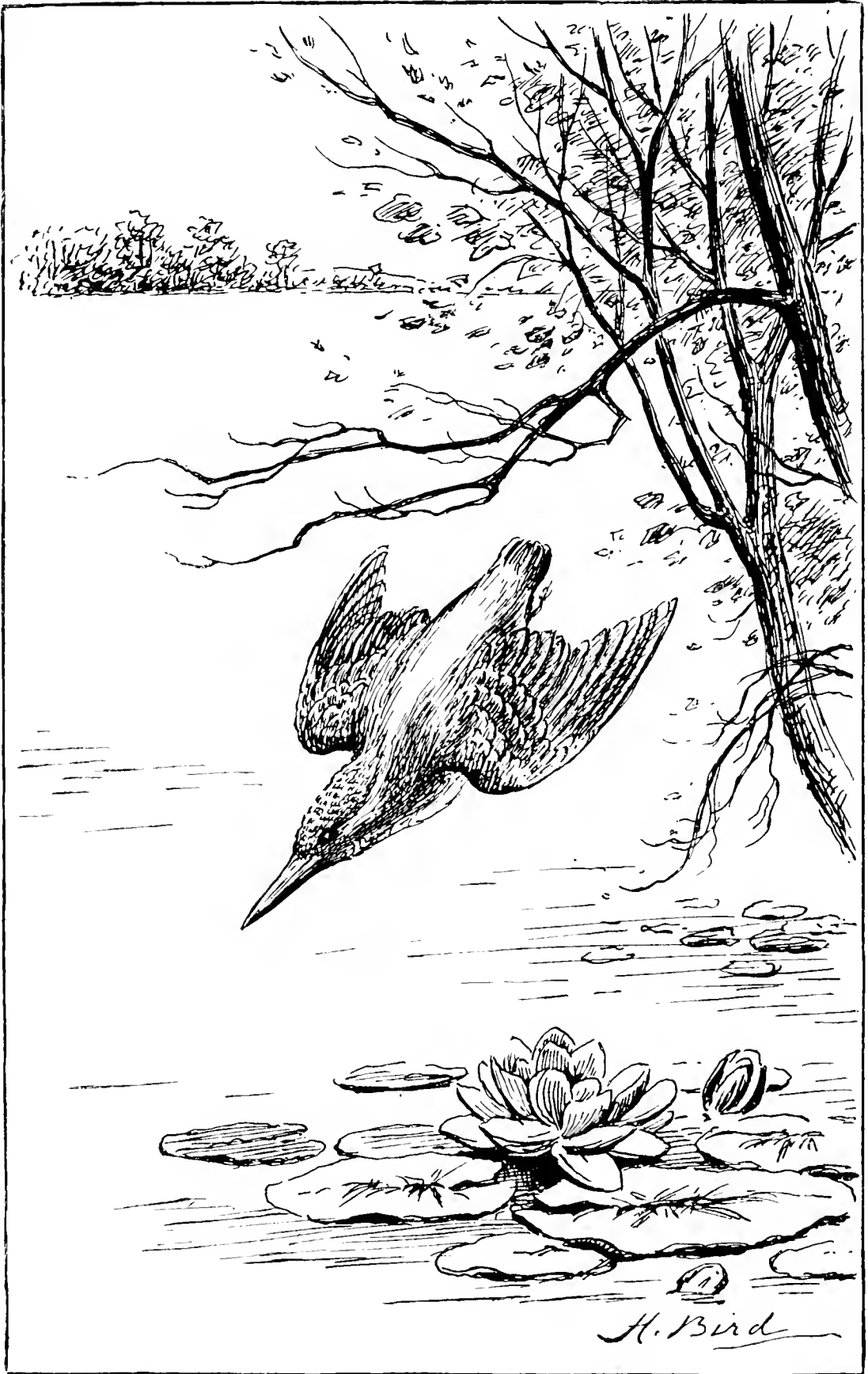
The insertion of a snowball in a lady's muff has been known to bring on hysteria. Later on the culprit who inserted the snowball suffered from 'whip sternia.'

Masters who are not very popular at school always sigh when the snow falls.

Snow has been responsible for many sporting sketches; this is merely another added to the list.

THE HAUNT OF THE
KINGFISHER





THE KINGFISHER.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HAUNT OF THE KINGFISHER

It is a glorious morning, one of those halting times when spring and summer meet, shake hands and part. When the flowers of spring still linger until the flowers of summer are ready to take their places. The air is refreshing, cool, invigorating, like a breath from a hidden spring emerging from its rocky channel. The sun is shining and gradually increasing in warmth. Nature seems responsive to its genial surroundings, and the hope of spring to be filled with the realisation of summer. A solitary ramble with a double-barrel breech-loader for a companion. A deadly weapon, but merely used for an occasional shot, an excuse for idling away the day. Down the meadows towards the river, brushing the buttercups and causing a yellow powder to scatter on the green grass, trampling underfoot the cow-

slips; the larks singing above, the birds in chorus all around, the perfume of many flowers in the air, the scent of the hawthorn not yet gone. Expand the lungs, breathe in new life with every breath, glance over the fair landscape with admiring eyes, step jauntily and with a glad heart. There are no smoky chimneys here, no sound of the railway, not the smallest rumble of a carriage or cart, no hurrying footsteps on a hard pavement, no street cries, no barrel organs, no poverty, no misery, all is joyous, for Nature is holding holiday and we are privileged to be present.

The echo of the gun breaks the stillness, and as the little brown ball, with its bobbing white tail, bounds away, there is no regret for a miss, although there was the temptation to kill. The echo rings through the valley and resounds from the hills. The grazing cows quietly raise their heads and then resume their succulent meal. Ten or a dozen sheep, startled for the moment, rush away towards the gap in the hedge, then suddenly stop, face round, and gaze at the cause of the disturbance. A stroll along the bank of the river, which is gliding over a bed of smooth-washed, many-

coloured stones, rippling in little eddies round miniature boulders, lapping gently the sides of the bank, dancing, reflecting shadows and waving branches on its surface.

Two miles, three, four along the bank, still carrying the gun just for companionship sake. Here is a shady spot, a smooth patch of grass beneath a mass of growth indescribable. Rest awhile and watch the surroundings of this fairy-like haunt. For some twenty or thirty yards the river flows beneath a waving mass of overhanging trees which darken its surface, making the water dull, and causing a pervading gloom. Beyond is the full glare of the sun, again the river flowing in the open. At this particular spot it appears to flow through a leafy tunnel. On the banks down to the water's edge the yellow iris, known as the water flag, nods gracefully. Its bright yellow flowers rise out from the large sheathing floral leaves which seem to support it as though in a vase. The yellow iris loves the river bank and it finds many genial companions there.

Gently dipping the stream is the water buttercup, resembling the field buttercup, but

when examined much difference may be found.

What is that modest little flower whose deep purple bloom peeps out from a mass of darkish green leaves? There are hundreds of these little purple eyes looking out, and a most exquisite perfume comes from the spot where they dwell. It is the 'sweet violet,' and never was a name better bestowed. The sweetness, the exquisite nature of the scent from these little flowers can only be fully realised when found in a dense mass in their wild state. As I put the gun down, it stirs the flowers and the shining barrels are almost hidden in the foliage. The movement sends forth a remonstrance from the violets in the form of an enhanced perfume which pervades the whole atmosphere. The deep purple violet has a mate in a reddish purple flower of the same name, and occasionally a white flower may be found, although it seems strange how it came there. A couple of feet lower down the bank nearer the water, the primrose holds up its head and gracefully bends on its long stalk over the green broad leaves of the plant.

More yellow, harmonies in yellow, it is the celandine, a plant which derives its name from the Greek word *Chelidon*. This word means a swallow, and there is a legend connected with the celandine that it flowers when the swallow comes and leaves when it departs. The legend, like many others, is incorrect, for the celandine flowers long before the arrival of the swallow. Again yellow, yellowy gold this time, and it is the marsh marigold. This plant has a peculiar irritant power. It acts like a pinch of snuff on the nostrils and it makes the fingers tingle. That modest little flower, beautiful beyond description, is the forget-me-not and near to its mate the brooklime, so much alike they are often taken for twins. The millionaire may have his orchids with pleasure, but it is the true lover of nature who finds the harmonious beauties in the flowers of the field. How many more there are I hardly care to count, but all those named were to be found in this favoured spot, and a few yards lower down I could see the water avens with its reddish bell flower, the comfrey, some purple, some yellow, whose flowers droop over tobacco-shaped leaves. And on the opposite side,

higher up the bank, rose the graceful foxglove with its beautiful old-fashioned, cup-shaped flowers in which the bee loves to crawl and bury himself for a moment, only to emerge again and buzz up to a higher storey. When he has sampled all the cups he still hovers round, loath to leave. Beneath there is the lily of the valley which everyone knows, but not everyone can find. And above the garden, upon which I lie idling, hang the branches of trees growing in the most erratic manner, with no regard to order or symmetry, revelling in wildness, shaping themselves in all kinds of fantastic forms, embracing each other, twining in and out, round and about, until it is almost as difficult to trace one to the roots as it is to unravel a ball of string which has been undone on the outside. Perfect quiet reigns around, only a murmur from the river, a faint whisper in the trees, or the twittering of the birds. A flutter in the branches near at hand and an olive-green, yellow, black and grey bird hops out from his leafy shade. It is a greenfinch, with his olive-green back and crown, his wings a of greyish-brown, edged with yellow, and his tail a mixture of black, grey and yellow. This

greenfinch is a bit of a mimic. Having very little idea of singing, he imitates other birds and does it fairly well. That bird on the far side of the river is a chaffinch and he has several colours—black, grey, chestnut, green, white, yellow, brown and his bill rather blue. What more could be desired? Quite a 'little Parisienne' in his way, so gaily decked is he.

A stone lies above the water in the river, and a bird with a small body and a tail of somewhat large dimensions hops on to it. When he moves he bobs his tail, uses it as a balancing pole, and it seems to come in handy. He is the water wagtail, the pied wagtail, a most amusing bird. He travels along by taking a few little perky hops, keeping his tail end well up. I watched him for some time, and his antics were as amusing as those of a music-hall comedian, only far more active and graceful. He nearly overbalanced once, but brought his tail down with such rapidity that he soon righted himself. He was death on small flies, midges and suchlike, for which I mentally thanked him. A little willow wren, dressed in olive-green, hopped about, and I could hear the

thrush, and the shrill cry of the blackbird. In the distance the cuckoo called, and that reminds me a young cuckoo in a nest is a most repulsive-looking object. In the hedge at the bottom of my garden last season I found a young cuckoo. Lifting the nest carefully out I took it into the house to show my wife who had never seen one before. The bird did not seem frightened, but he opened his mouth in such an extraordinary manner that we could quite understand how he took possession of a nest immediately he was large enough. Judging from the size of the cavity he displayed I should not be at all surprised if he devoured the other birds at a gulp. Most people are aware the cuckoo lays one egg in some other bird's nest and leaves the bird selected to hatch it. When the young cuckoo arrives he ousts all the other young ones and takes sole possession. He is fed and tended by his foster parents and flies away without returning thanks. The cuckoo is an ungrateful bird. I replaced the nest, and no doubt the bird will be 'cuckooing' around this spring. But this is a digression.

And what is this spot selected for a rest on

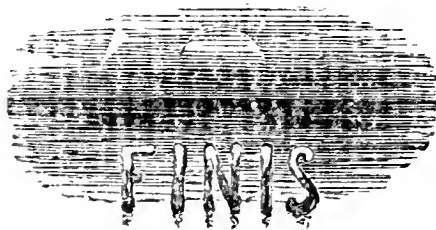
the bank, this cool retreat, where the sun only faintly struggles through, and the light is dim. It is the haunt of the kingfisher, a bird of much discernment, who chooses his hunting grounds in the most charming localities. A flash of brilliant blue flame seems to sweep along over the water and vanish into the shade. It is the kingfisher with his black and blue head and blue back. He has a white spot on his neck and chin, and a breast of chestnut hue, while his legs are red. He is perhaps the most brilliant in plumage of all our birds, and 'kingfisher blue' is a colour I have never yet seen successfully used. It is a marvellous blue, as much unlike any other blue in bird, painting, or dress, as the blue of the Blue Mountains of New South Wales is unlike any other blue in nature. The kingfisher's is a dazzling blue, a flashing, scintillating colour, a penetrating colour. It quite eclipses the peacock blue; it is more daring, striking and lasting.

As the kingfisher flashed along the water, he seemed like a brilliant comet, the search-light of bird life. His flight was straight, electric and unwavering. There was no hesi-

tation about him ; he was making for a given point and meant reaching it as quickly as possible. He flew into the shade and rested on a low overhanging branch, and I watched him. He was a rather solemn-looking bird when motionless, with a long, broad, pointed beak. He reminded me somewhat of the kookaburra or laughing jackass of Australia. The kingfisher snaps up a fish with the same lightning-like rapidity a laughing jackass secures a snake. The shape of the two birds when motionless is not dissimilar. I did not see him dive for a fish, but his colours were simply perfect, and as an occasional glimpse of sunshine touched him he seemed like a ball of blue fire. He does not like the sun, and a kingfisher's haunt is always shady and quiet, but full of beauty, as I have endeavoured to show. The kingfishers make their nest in a soft muddy hole close to the water, and fish bones are the main things used in its construction. The eggs are usually of a deep pink colour. The kingfisher's haunt is well worth finding, no matter in what part of the country, for he generally picks upon a charming spot. As I watched all these interesting birds and flowers

around me I forgot the gun, in fact everything, except that it was good to be alive, and that there was something worth living for far above money grubbing, and grasping, greedy, sordid piling up of wealth.

The haunt of the kingfisher is one of the surroundings of sport, and with it I come to the end of these brief sketches. I am fully aware of their many defects, but can only trust that the earnest endeavour to please will counterbalance them.



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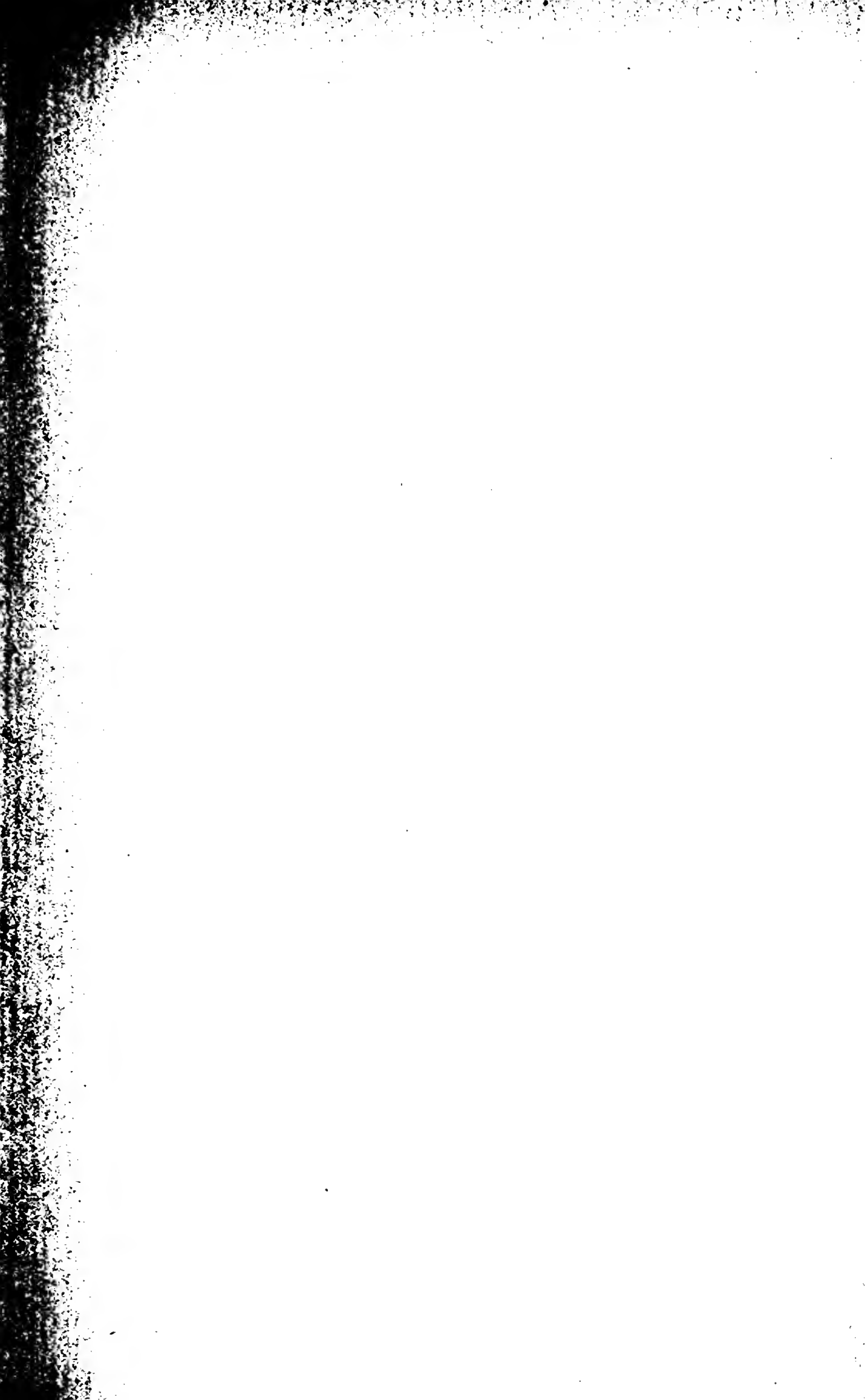
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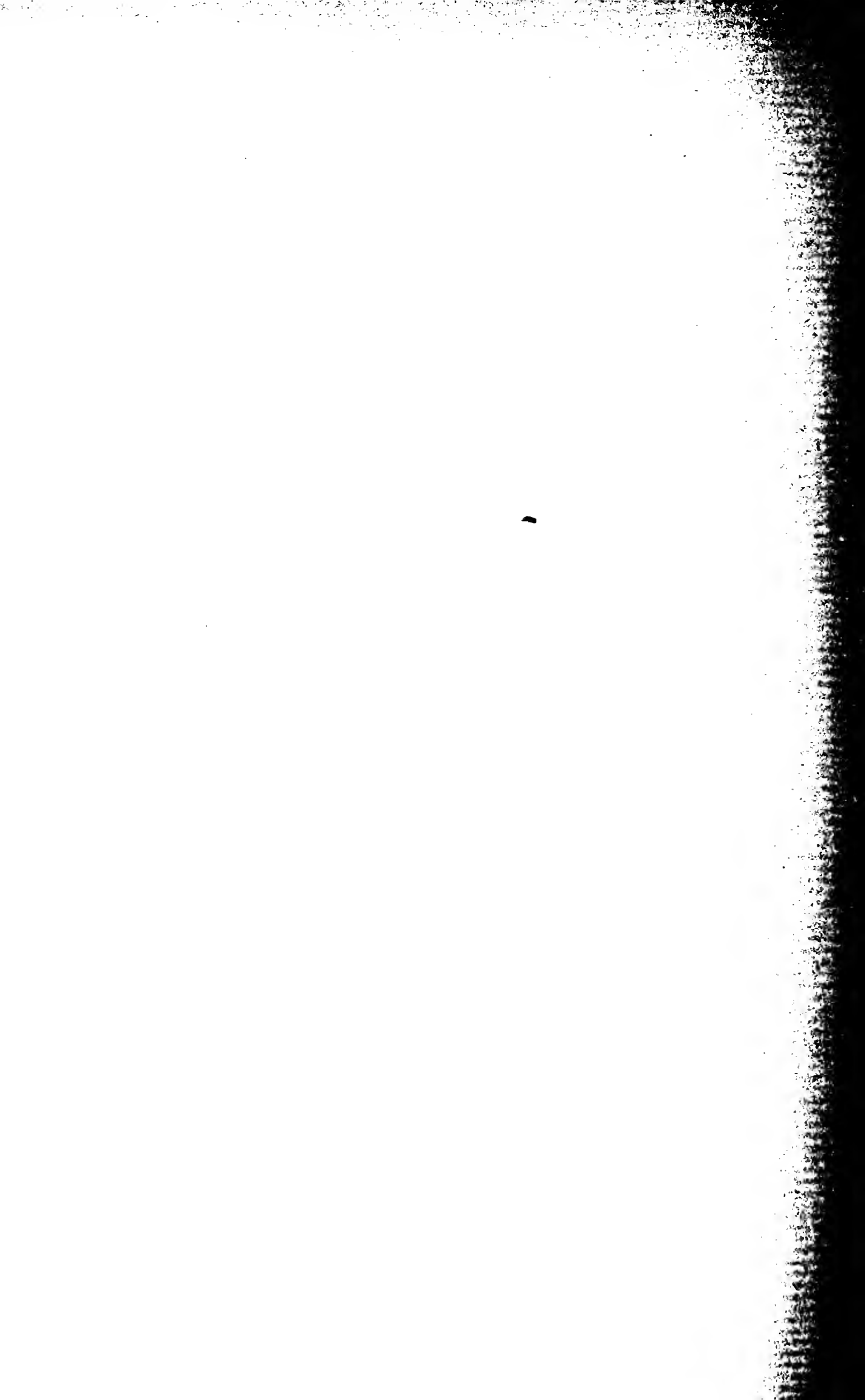
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