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# THE RACING WORLD

## AND ITS INHABITANTS

"A NEAR THING."

From a picture painted by Miss M. Dorothy Hardy.

# THE RACING WORLD

## AND ITS INHABITANTS

EDITED BY

ALFRED E. T. WATSON

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# PREFACE

In these days, when books issue from the press in such profusion, something more than a mere excuse is required from anyone who ventures to add to the number. The justification I beg leave to put forward for publishing *The Racing World and its Inhabitants* is that, so far as I am aware, no similar book has ever been produced.

Various persons connected with the Turf in different ways have, indeed, figured as authors. Holcroft the dramatist, who, as a lad, was employed in a training stable, wrote about his early life; Samuel Chifney, the famous jockey, had compiled a small treatise on his profession four years prior to the publication in 1804 of his better-known *Genius Genuine*; and nearly a century later another member of the same calling, H. Custance, who thrice rode the winner of the Derby, followed suit. Trainers have exercised their pens, notably John Kent, a devoted servant of Lord George

Bentinck, the autocrat of the race-course in his day; John Porter, whose *Kingsclere* is rich in interest to all who care for Turf history; and William Day, who was encouraged by the success of his *Racehorse in Training* to write three or four other books. Among prominent owners, the late Sir John Astley, and Sir George Chetwynd, both in their day Stewards of the Jockey Club, have penned their reminiscences.

But though books about the Turf are numerous, I do not think that one has ever been written on the lines of the present volume, in which men professionally connected with racing in various capacities, and enthusiasts who have occupied themselves with the sport as devotedly as if it were their profession, discuss the branches of the subject with which they are most familiar. The Trainer, the Jockey, the Breeder, the Judge, the Starter, the Handicapper, the Bookmaker, the Tout, and the Tipster, men who earn their daily bread on race-courses, here give detailed descriptions of the business which occupies their lives; the Owner, that venturesome personage the Backer, and the Race-goer, write of what they know so well.

It may certainly be claimed for this book—reprinted from the *Badminton Magazine*—that it

is authentic. It shows how the sport is carried on : the *dramatis personæ* take spectators into their confidence, behind the scenes, as it were; and it is hoped that these chapters will appeal both to lovers of the Turf, who may like to see to what extent their theories and ideas are sustained or contradicted, and also to readers to whom the Racing World is unknown territory, and its inhabitants creatures of mystery.

ALFRED E. T. WATSON.

11 Albert Court,
Kensington Gore,
*April*, 1904.

# CONTENTS


| | | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|---|
| I. | At Large . . . . | By Alfred E. T. Watson . | 3 |
| II. | Trainers and Training . | „ A Trainer . . . | 27 |
| III. | Owners and Owning . | „ An Owner . . . | 57 |
| IV. | Breeders and Breeding . | „ A Breeder . . . | 85 |
| V. | Jockeys and Jockeyship . | „ A Jockey . . . | 103 |
| VI. | Judges and Judging . | „ A Judge . . . | 127 |
| VII. | Starters and Starting . | „ A Starter . . . | 145 |
| VIII. | Backers and Backing . | „ A Backer . . . | 163 |
| IX. | Bookmakers and Bookmaking . . . . | „ A Bookmaker . . | 189 |
| X. | Handicappers and Handicapping . . . . | „ A Handicapper . . | 213 |
| XI. | Touts and Touting . . | „ A Tout . . . | 241 |
| XII. | Racegoers and Racegoing | „ A Racegoer . . | 263 |
| XIII. | Tipsters and Tipping . | „ A Tipster . . . | 291 |

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


A Near Thing. From a Picture painted by Miss M. Dorothy Hardy . . . . . *Frontispiece*

A Reminiscence of Danebury. Reproduced from the Picture by W. Sextie, by kind permission of Mr. Tom Cannon . . . . . *Face page* 27

Diamond Jubilee. From a Photograph by Clarence Hailey, Newmarket . . . . . ,, 57

None the Wiser, with Foal by Hampton. From a Photograph by Clarence Hailey, Newmarket. . ,, 85

Flying Dutchman. Reproduced from Herring's Picture at the Durdans, by kind permission of the Earl of Rosebery . . . . . ,, 103

Off . . . . . ,, 127

A Sweepstakes. Newmarket Spring Meeting, 1793. From the Painting by J. N. Sartorius . . . ,, 145

Shotover. Reproduced from the Picture by W. Sextie, by kind permission of Mr. Tom Cannon . ,, 213

# AT LARGE

BY ALFRED E. T. WATSON

# I

# AT LARGE

BY ALFRED E. T. WATSON

THE RACING WORLD! where hope is ever springing afresh, to be in the majority of cases overtaken by disappointment; where the unexpected continually happens, and, not seldom, what has seemed to be the practically impossible; where the ruling power is a half-merry, half-malicious little sprite called Luck. And its inhabitants! Surely nowhere else can be found so strange a conglomeration—kings and beggars, Prime Ministers and bootblacks, the owner of the Derby winner and the wretched hanger-on who risks his life amid a bewildering throng of ramshackle vehicles to earn a copper if he can by opening the door of a broken-down fly.

A bulky volume might well be written under the title of "Royalty and Racing"; there would certainly be no lack of material. Readers

need not fear that I am going to be archaic. The twelve chapters which will make up the present series of papers are to be devoted to actuality ; but I must express, in two brief lines, a regret that Samuel Pepys did not go racing and tell us something in detail about the proceedings of the monarch who gave the name to the Rowley Mile. On May 22nd, 1668, the Diarist records that "the King and the Duke of York and Court are this day at Newmarket at a great horse race, and propose great pleasure for two or three days." Five years previously the King had been there, and in 1669 we find again, "I hear that to-morrow the King and the Duke of York set out for Newmarket by three in the morning to some foot and horse races ; to be abroad ten or twelve days." Macaulay tells how thirty years later, in 1698, the French Ambassador "was invited to accompany William to Newmarket, where the largest and most splendid Spring Meeting ever known was to assemble." The attraction may be supposed to have been great, for the risks of the journey were not trifling. Macaulay gives an account of these risks, but adds that they "did not deter men of rank and fashion from making the joyous pilgrimage to Newmarket. Half the Dukes in the kingdom were there ; most of the chief Ministers of State

swelled the crowd ; nor was the Opposition unrepresented. Montagu stole two or three days from the Treasury, and Orford from the Admiralty ; Godolphin was there, looking after his horses and his bets, and probably went away a richer man than he came"—an astute inhabitant of the contemporary racing world.

I will not linger over a retrospect of the curious and varied sights that have been seen by those who have stood upon the top of the immemorial ditch. Nowadays the superstitious take off their hats to it as they speed by in the train : the act is supposed to propitiate the little sprite I have mentioned, and some of his devotees would on no account omit their reverence. I well recollect the anxiety of old John Day to make his obeisance, when his eyes were dim and he feared he might pass the famous landmark with covered head. He anxiously enquired whether it was not close at hand, whether we were not there, whether—alarming thought!—we had not passed it ; and, warned at the critical moment, his hat was duly raised. The late Duke of Beaufort also did not fail thus to greet the ditch ; many times I have seen him smilingly salute, not because he believed in the superstition, but because it was the custom.

That is enough about the last century, and very

little shall be said about anything prior to the time of the present owner of the Royal colours—"purple body with gold braid, scarlet sleeves, black velvet cap with gold fringe"—who has twice won the Derby, has won a great many other races, and, like other owners of lower rank, lost a very great many more, highly improper as such defeats appeared to another monarch—the Shah of Persia. "Where was the King's horse?" that potentate enquired, with no little concern, when Ladas carried off the great Epsom race amid a storm of enthusiasm which was not altogether pleasing to the dusky ruler. "The King had no horse running," he was told; and he unbent, much relieved. In the absence of the King's horse, the Prime Minister's was the one that ought to win; no disrespect had been committed to the Throne, and all was well.

During the last half-century there have been ten Prime Ministers (including Earl Russell who held office for 242 days), and three of them have been ardent and energetic inhabitants of the racing world. A fourth, Lord Beaconsfield, has at least written about racing; and if the present Duke of Devonshire had chosen to accept his opportunities, there would have been a fourth racing Prime Minister. The Stanleys were always such notable sportsmen that it seems altogether in accordance

with the fitness of things that the family should have given names to the Derby and the Oaks. Lord Palmerston was a keen inhabitant of the world we are discussing, and William Day in his Reminiscences gives a graphic little sketch of him. When at Broadlands, his seat in Hampshire, he "used to ride over to Danebury to see his horses, mounted on a thoroughbred hack, with his groom on another, and starting from his own front door would gallop all the way till he reached his destination. Indeed, on arriving at Danebury he would go round the yard once or twice, gradually reducing the pace until he could pull up. This may seem ludicrous, but it is no exaggeration—I have seen him do it myself. He used to wear dark trousers, and a dress coat of the same hue, the latter unbuttoned, and, of course, flying open ; this gave him a strange appearance when riding so fast." "I have won my Derby," was his reply to a congratulation on his accession to the premiership. In another recently published book of Reminiscences the author records how Lord Palmerston arrived at a reception on the evening of a Derby day so full of the race that he would talk of nothing else, though the French and Turkish Ambassadors—the latter could scarcely have been much edified—were eager to discuss other subjects.

Of Lord Rosebery one can happily speak in the present tense, and no successes are more popular than those of the pretty primrose and rose hoops.

Soldiers are among the staunchest followers of racing, and sailors have contributed notable adherents, with chief among them the late Admiral Rous, Dictator. Not seldom I have had the pleasure of greeting on a racecourse that gallant veteran, Admiral Sir Harry Keppel ; and one of the most familiar figures on Newmarket Heath is Admiral Hedworth Lambton, on his hack, watching work in the mornings. Whilst he was doing such admirable service at Ladysmith, bearers of the white, green sleeves, rose cap, were in training at the headquarters of the Turf. The Church—that, too, is not without representatives. When a bygone Vernon Harcourt was Archbishop of York it is said that he was accustomed to walk in the grounds of the palace which adjoins the Knavesmire on days when racing was in progress, that gradually he approached nearer and nearer to a gate from which a view of the course could be obtained, and that if he did not take considerable interest in the horses that galloped past him, appearances were deceptive. The breeder of that great mare, Apology, was a Lincolnshire parson, and frequently at meetings near London I have the

pleasure of meeting a friend who is rector of a Surrey parish—a hardworking clergyman, who, when he can spare the time, delights in a day's racing.

A few years ago a dignitary of the Church, the then holder of a great historical office, who was a friend of my mother, did me the honour of saying he would like to make my acquaintance. I asked him to luncheon at one of my clubs ; and as I was waiting for him wondered not a little what we should talk about. Several ecclesiastical questions were prominent, but I was rather fearful that if we discussed them I might say something indiscreet. However, we sat down, and my guest opened the conversation. "What a good thing that Nursery at Derby was for Lourdes yesterday !" he began ; "I felt certain the horse could not be beaten as soon as I glanced down the weights." My dignitary was an inhabitant of the racing world, and a very keen one !

The Bar—many exceedingly notable members must certainly be included. I think that, when writing about the late Lord Chief Justice, I have before now stated that he told me one year he had seventeen bets on the Cesarewitch, and lost every one of them ! One Derby Day he was about to sit down to lunch in the Club Stand at Epsom,

but before doing so, seeing me on the other side of the table, came over to ask me what I thought would run into a place? That Surefoot would win both of us were persuaded—how incorrectly need not now be said. I had an idea that Rathbeal and Ossory had the best chances, and on mentioning the latter Sir Charles Russell, as he then was, at once set off to search for John Porter and ascertain his views on the subject. A nice little "place bet" seemed to him more important than his meal. That the present Lord Brampton takes a remarkably intelligent interest in racing I happen to know, for more than once I have driven down with him to the distant winning posts at Newmarket in a friend's fly; and I also have reason to be aware that Lord James, who might have been Lord Chancellor but that he had too noble a nature to allow his ambition to overcome his convictions, has watched races with a very shrewd appreciation of what was going on. The late Sir Frank Lockwood delighted in racing, and that he did not disdain an occasional bet I know from the fact that I have at times had the pleasure of doing little commissions for him, though, to go into detail, I believe these were to amuse and very modestly enrich a lady of his family.

Those whom I have just named are personages

of some note, though, of course, none of them may be as great a man as a certain politician and would-be philosopher who scorns the Turf and everything connected with it, and not long since expressed his conviction that "the great bulk of the supporters of the Ring" would be equally eager to bet on spavined snails as on racehorses. That we who go racing can take any delight in the make and shape, the exquisite symmetry, of the thoroughbred horse; that we can be gratified by looking at him as he walks round, trained to the hour, his muscles showing beneath his satin skin; that we really admire the grace, smoothness, and restrained vigour of his action as he canters to the post; that we can really enjoy gazing at him as he puts his heart into his work, full of indomitable courage, responding to the skilful, well-timed call of his jockey in a hard-fought finish, this censor—discussing a subject of which he knows nothing—does not believe. Spavined snails would do equally well for us poor creatures who, by the mistaken bounteousness of Providence, are privileged to breathe the same air which fills his highly superior lungs. We can only apologise to him for having been born and for the dreadfully low tastes which we have acquired.

He will not agree with me—I do not suppose

there is any subject upon which we should agree except the probable accuracy of the multiplication table—but I believe it none the less true that bets are sometimes made from other motives than a mere sordid desire to make money without working for it. A man may, and frequently does, bet simply from an anxiety to vindicate his judgment. There is a great satisfaction to many people in being able to say "I told you so!" when something has fallen out as they anticipated; and the expression is emphasised when they have backed up their conviction with a wager. And on the subject of betting I am reminded of the utterance of another legal luminary, a Judge of the King's Bench Division, who, in the course of a trial not long since, with what he supposed to be penetrating wisdom, the result of that wide knowledge of the world which all judges, of course, possess, solemnly cautioned all and sundry "never to take a cheque from a bookmaker." In the course of the last five and twenty years I have taken a great many cheques from members of the Ring, and, oddly enough, every single one of them has proved an exception to the rule which his lordship so astutely laid down. During this period I have frequently written warnings against the folly of betting, and have given what I believe to be the

soundest reasons why sensible men should abstain from it; but to preach is one thing, to practise quite another; and I have sedulously failed to follow my own recommendations. If I had all the money I have lost betting, deducting what I have won, the balance in my favour—well, it is not to be thought of without a sigh! These personal details I introduce merely to show that assuredly I have no particular reason to love the Ring; but of all the innumerable cheques I have received from many drawers I have never found a single one that was not as good as a Bank of England note—if the Judge, from the altitude of his inspired knowledge, will excuse me for saying so. And more than this, I have never, with one exception—a man who went under some years since, as he deserved to go—found a bookmaker who was not scrupulously exact and honest. There may be dishonest men in the Ring; if so, I have not come across them. The difficulty is to win money, not to be paid when you win it; and a bookmaker's cheque, in my experience, is just exactly what this curiously ill-informed Judge says it is not. Let every man have the reputation that is due to him, whether he be a bookmaker who pays his debts, or a judge who talks indiscreetly about things he does not understand.

We have seen that "the Army, the Navy, the Church, and the Bar," contribute inhabitants to the racing world; and indeed it is hard to find any section of the community from which they do not spring. The most unlikely people go racing, or "follow" it, which means, I suppose, take an interest in it without being able to go. By how many thousands of people has the name of Sceptre been mentioned during the past three years, for example? The racing world is a vastly bigger place than it is supposed to be by most of those who live outside it, and notably by such persons as the well-meaning little group who have drafted a Bill to institute all sorts of reforms. They wish to put down betting, an aspiration equally desirable and impossible, and are anxious to start their crusade by making penal the publication of the odds in daily newspapers, and preventing the passage of letters and telegrams on the subject of racing. This matter has been much discussed, and I will here only touch upon it briefly, to say that the would-be reformers are attempting what cannot be done, and what, if it could be, would result in infinitely more harm than good. The state of the odds, as I have before remarked, and apologise for repetition only the observation fits into the present place, is a matter of great interest to large numbers of people

who have never had a bet in their lives. They like to know what, for instance, is the expert's opinion as to the chances of his Majesty's horses entered for the Derby ; or in what estimation other animals belonging to friends, or to notable personages, are held. Betting is not illegal, and it is too eccentric an idea to pretend that the publication of the fact that bets have been made can properly be regarded as an illegality. Even supposing that the state of the odds could be excluded from the newspapers, anyone who wished for information about "the market" would know where to obtain it—only the chances are that the odds would vary more, and probably be less fair ; which, however, would be a matter between the layers and takers of them. Incidentally it may be observed that there is the less reason why these good people should trouble themselves, because the ante-post betting diminishes greatly from year to year; there are fewer races on which people bet in advance, and the volume of the wagering so decreases that nowadays a comparatively small bet revolutionises the market. As to opening letters to see if there is anything about betting in them, surely the public would never stand such an outrage on the privacy of correspondence ; though the inquisitive local postmistress and her young lady assistants

would be provided with plenty of amusement about the affairs of neighbours as to which they felt a little inquisitive. The invention of a cipher, moreover, is such a common and simple thing, that people would be betting when the authorities thought they were buying potatoes or enquiring about the health of their aunts.

Is it an honest world ? It varies as other worlds do, but on the whole I verily believe it does not suffer by comparison, especially when one considers the temptations and opportunities which arise : on one side a little array of wealthy men, many of whom are practically exuding gold ; on the other side a very large array of exceedingly needy persons who have been attracted by the belief that there is something to be gained by a little exercise of wit and cunning, many of these latter being quite unscrupulous, and others ready to sail as near to the wind as they can do with the chance of saving some shreds of reputation.

A wide difference exists between the observance of the spirit and the letter of the law. Mr. A. has a promising two-year-old. It is not nearly ready, but it has to be introduced to a racecourse ; to run it would sharpen it up ; it has an engagement, and may just as well be sent to learn something of its business. The animal runs, its eyes

are opened, it gathers what "jumping off" means, gets accustomed to colours, and presumably benefits. Sir B. C. also has a colt, and has tried it to be smart. If it runs for an engagement without making any show, a good price may be obtainable about it in a race on which its owner has his eye a little later on. The jockey is told "not to knock it about if it can't win"—this being a formula which may mean one thing or another according to the manner in which it is expressed. In one case the affair is honest, in the other it is quite otherwise.

Information! That is what most of the inhabitants of the racing world are continually seeking, and it is wonderful in what out-of-the-way quarters they look for it. They see a race run, a public trial, conveying an obvious lesson, and frequently pay very little attention to it; but if the same animals had been tried at home, and news of the gallop had leaked out, they would be delighted with the idea that this time they really knew something. It is an absurdly credulous world. I have known men, popular owners of horses, on the most friendly terms with other owners, who should, and in point of fact really do, know everything that is to be known about some forthcoming race in which they are interested. They have the

most solid grounds on which to make up their minds ; and yet they are ready to listen to, and to be greatly influenced by, the almost certainly ill-based opinion of any hanger-on who supposes that he has made a discovery.

I rather think I have told this story elsewhere, but it is so illustrative of the sort of thing which frequently happens that I must take my chance of its being new to the reader. A few years ago a relation of mine, with whom I lived a good deal, had a very moderate horse running at Newmarket. According to the estimate of it formed by trainer and owner and everyone connected with the stable, it had no sort of chance. There were only four runners ; two of them were very likely to beat it, the third seemed certain to do so, and long odds were laid on this one. I had a few sovereigns on the stable representative, on the very "off chance," not quite liking the way the favourite walked—it struck me as being rather lame ; and there must have been something the matter with him, for he was badly beaten, and to the great astonishment of those who knew most about the matter our horse won. A racecourse acquaintance, who had no idea that I was at all behind the scenes, turned to me triumphantly and asked me if I had backed it ? I replied that I had done so for

a very small stake, but I had not at all expected to win.

"Why, it was a real good thing!" he exclaimed; "I knew it would win, and had a dash."

"I don't think it was very much fancied—in fact, I happen to know that the stable did not back it at all," I humbly replied.

"Don't you believe it!" he said; "it couldn't be beat. I was told about it by the fishmonger at Bishop Stortford."

Why the fishmonger at Bishop Stortford should be supposed to know, I cannot tell; but the trial was right, the horse never won again, and if this unlikely tipster continued to back it, it must have cost him the equivalent of a great deal of fish.

I do not suppose that the excellent people who desire to extinguish the racing world have the least idea of the amount of employment it affords and the extent to which it causes the circulation of money. The foal is born. It provides occupation for the stud groom and his assistants; part of its life is passed in a box, which means work for builders, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, blacksmiths, &c. The veterinary surgeon may be called in at any period of the animal's life. In time it will want a little corn, and so the farmer

benefits, as very likely do various vendors of patent foods; and from its early days the saddler has something to do with it in the provision of bits and bridles. It is sent to Newmarket, Doncaster, Ascot, or elsewhere for sale; here the railway companies come in, and the printer has his little turn in preparing catalogues and advertisements. It is purchased and sent to a trainer; saddles, bridles, rugs, clothing are required; the very best hay procurable is necessary; it has its own boy (who in some stables receives 25*s.* a week), and presently a jockey is wanted, who must be equipped with jacket and cap, boots and breeches; as also with whips and spurs, which are sometimes useful and frequently the reverse. Railway companies again, hotel keepers, proprietors of stabling and their assistants make money out of the animal. A race meeting is a harvest for cabmen in the town where the sport takes place. Letters of lodgings and provision merchants take their toll; the care of the racecourse and stands necessitates the employment of all sorts of men; when the horse has run it has to be sent home again—indeed, most of the railway companies derive a huge revenue from racing, to the advantage of their shareholders. The sporting Press is largely sustained by racing, and there are few papers and

periodicals whose editors do not deal more or less extensively with the subject. Books on racing are numerous, so that paper-makers, printers, binders, and others secure their share. Stands, weighing-rooms, stables have to be erected, hurdles to be made, fences built and maintained—how many miles of rails, I wonder, have been put up by carpenters on the fifty racecourses (I believe this is as nearly as possible the number now in use) which are scattered about England? And this means a considerable trade in wood. It is difficult to say where the expenditure which has its origin in racing actually ends, and what members of the community, far outside the limits of those who can be regarded as inhabitants of the racing world, do not derive incomes or have their incomes increased by the Turf. It certainly makes a very important addition to the revenue of the Post Office, especially of the telegraph department, and so to the tradesmen and their various assistants who cater for the service: though it is not to be denied that many of these telegrams are very unfortunate in their effects, being sent by touts and tipsters to hungry and credulous victims who are induced to lose money which they cannot afford. I do not mean to say that all Turf advisers come into this category, for some of them are no doubt good judges, who

keep their eyes open and are able to form a tolerably shrewd opinion of what is likely to happen ; but these are the exceptions.

I sat down to write a few introductory remarks to the series of papers which make up this book, but the subject has expanded far beyond the space I intended to occupy. How extraordinarily interesting it would be to lovers of the Turf if they had a really accurate description of the manner in which racing was carried on, say, a hundred years ago ! No such book is procurable, so far as I am aware, and with regard to racing as it is practised at the present day a great many mistaken notions are current. I have thought, therefore, that a detailed account of "The Racing World and its Inhabitants," as it exists at the present time, would be of value to-day, and would remain a serviceable source of information to those who in the future would like to know how the sport was conducted at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this belief I have been fortunate enough in securing the assistance of a number of unquestionable authorities, who have written the following chapters.

With very few exceptions it has been the rule of the *Badminton Magazine*, in which these chapters appeared, to publish authors' names. Names, how-

ever, will not here be given. Two or three of my writers tell me they greatly prefer that their identity should not be revealed; in one or two other cases the articles were compiled from notes and conversations, and those who are really responsible for them do not wish to give their names as actual authors.

# TRAINERS AND TRAINING

BY A TRAINER

A REMINISCENCE OF DANEBURY.

Reproduced from the picture by W. Sextie, by kind permission of Mr. Tom Cannon.

## II

# TRAINERS AND TRAINING

BY A TRAINER

As is the case with most other careers, I suppose, the life of a trainer has its pleasant and unpleasant sides. It is, to begin with, no doubt a very healthy life, necessitating as it does early rising and plenty of fresh air ; indeed, under certain circumstances, it might be described as quite an ideal existence. It must be assumed that the trainer is fond of horses, that all his tastes lie chiefly in that direction, and very likely he takes as much interest in his charges as if they were his own. Perhaps the early morning ride over the downs or the heath, on which writers on the subject are apt to dwell, may not be quite so enjoyable to him, to whom it is a matter of routine and daily duty, as it seems to the friend or companion who enjoys it now and then in fair weather when the leaves are out,

and whose mind is not anxiously fixed upon matters of business. But on the other hand the trainer has a special satisfaction, which no one but the owner can share, in watching his horses gradually come to hand, and in seeing them make the progress and development which are to lead, as he hopes, to their brilliant successes on the racecourse—where, by the way, he finds himself an extraordinarily popular personage when he chances to arrive at a meeting with two or three animals whose prospects look good. I suffered from a slight attack of influenza not long since, and had no idea what concern my health had caused a great many people, some of whom I scarcely knew by sight, until they came anxiously to inquire about it—usually following up their questions with regard to me with others about the health of my horses.

It is, I repeat, a pleasant life—when things go right ; but then very often they go in the other direction, which makes all the difference, and indeed the trainer is a lucky man if nothing is wrong, for so many little things, and some big things, are constantly arising to disturb him. Some horse to which he has been paying particular attention undoubtedly goes short, if he be not actually lame ; and he wonders what is the

matter with another one's leg, whether it is a blow or a slight sprain? Another of his string, who certainly ought to have won a recent race, made a very poor show, and he can only conclude that the animal, so useful at home, will not do his best on a racecourse. And then not seldom he has a grievance against the handicappers. A good, game, generous mare, who can always be trusted to give her running, has at least 7 lb. more than she should have for an approaching race, and in the same event he sees something entered that, unless he was altogether mistaken, was certainly not "out" a few days before, but is here weighted as if it had been beaten on its merits. Then perhaps he is listening every morning to the most promising animal in his stable, trying to persuade himself that there is not the suspicion of a "noise." Anxiety is never absent, especially if he has a famous horse in his charge.

The trainer wants good horses, of course; you cannot win races with bad ones, at any rate races worth winning; and I may perhaps add that it is his chronic condition to want a few more than he has—perhaps, it may be, just a few more than he ought to have. The horses are all-important; but scarcely less so, as far as his comfort is concerned, is his employer, and I have no hesitation

in saying that the most satisfactory master is the master who knows most about racing. He understands what you are doing and why you do it, and in a great measure, too, he shares your responsibility. Not a few owners of racehorses know nothing about them to start with, seem quite unable to learn, and for some mysterious reason always appear to have a bevy of friends who are equally ignorant of Turf affairs, whilst often supposing that they are authorities who should be listened to with attention and respect. They gather their ideas from the sporting papers, frequently quite misunderstanding what they read ; and then, again, the papers are not all of them by any means trustworthy. I often think that if racing reporters never betted their conclusions would be of greater value, for when a man has lost money on a horse which he expected to see win, he is a little too apt to think that if the jockey is not at fault the trainer must be. In such a case the owner and his friends, unable to judge for themselves, read what is said about the horse, and the result is often very unpleasant. Some admirable articles are written about racing, but some scribes are prejudiced, ignorant, and stupid.

I hope I do not seem to be complaining, and

I should not do so, because my own experiences have on the whole been very fortunate. I am thinking rather about my brethren ; for there are some owners whom it is absolutely impossible to please. A trainer has a horse which perhaps runs a good second for an important race, the fact going a long way to prove, at any rate, that the animal is fit and well ; perhaps it is a short race and the horse did not get a fair start ; but it did not win, and the owner of the class I am thinking of is convinced that the failure must be due to the trainer. Perhaps it wins, but even then this sort of owner is not contented. You did not express sufficient confidence ; you ought to have told him that it could not be beaten ; he only had £50 on, and if you had really given him the encouragement you should have done, he would have had a monkey. Perhaps, again, you are really confident next time, and, though it may not be very discreet of you, do not hesitate to express your confidence and tell him that you think he may bet without fear. He does so, and the horse wins. Is he satisfied this time ? Not at all ! He can't make out why he only got 5 to 4. He had expected 5 to 1, indeed he and his friends—the same friends—had fancied before

the race that 100 to 15 would have been about the price; but every one on the course seemed to know all about the horse, he tells you; the inference being that you had backed it for a great deal of money yourself and had told all your friends to back it before he could get his money on. A suspicious employer is one of the trainer's special bugbears. It would be a delight to send him the sort of letter you compose in your head, asking him to be good enough to remove his horses with as little delay as possible; and sometimes, goaded to desperation, you even sit down to write it; but the letter does not get to the post, for the forage bills are dreadfully heavy, the rent has to be paid, and a tribe of hungry boys at 25*s.* a week is a continual drain on your banking account; so that you have to endure this amongst your other troubles.

One of the most interesting periods of a trainer's career is when the yearlings come to him and he has to take careful stock of the material provided, always hoping, it need scarcely be said, that there may be a treasure among them whose name, now unknown, if indeed the youngster has been named, will become famous. Some have probably been bought at

auction, in which case his advice has usually been asked, and he is of course particularly anxious that these should turn out well, as their failures may reflect on him. Others may have been bred by the owner, and if he be one of the owners just discussed, the trainer looks with dismay upon some shapeless three-cornered little brute from whom he knows the owner will expect great things because it is out of some favourite mare—who has been sent, very likely, to one of the most unsuitable horses that could have been chosen for her ; but, having bred it according to his own theory (if it be a theory at all : very likely the existence of the animal is merely due to chance, the owner having the mare, and some friend whom he liked to oblige having the horse), your employer thinks it *must* do great things, and you dare not frankly tell him that if you ever get it through a little selling race he will have been far more fortunate than could reasonably be expected.

One of the great requisites of a trainer is a really good head lad, who is a most important person in an establishment, for a variety of reasons. He can alleviate heaps of small worries. I am inclined to say that a thoughtful, conscientious, competent

head lad is really the first essential, especially as the trainer will necessarily be a great deal from home, and must have someone he can really depend upon to be responsible for the conduct of affairs during his absence. The head lad will see, for instance, that the yearlings are kindly and patiently treated. When they arrive the chances are they will be perfectly good-tempered. Young horses usually are so. Some of them may have peculiarities of disposition, but as a very general rule vice is made in the stable. I think it may be claimed to the credit of the trainers of to-day that there is not now half the vice there used to be, and this I attribute to the fact that, as a rule, young horses are more kindly treated than they were in former times. Some of them are nervous, and nervousness may be changed into vice by harsh and injudicious treatment. I have known horses that were perfectly good-tempered when they arrived and had no objection to being handled, but in the course of time when you go up to them in the stable they begin to flinch, and then you know, or at any rate most strongly suspect, that the fault is with the boys. The young things would not have taken to flinching for nothing. Patience and consideration must be insisted on, and here it is that your head lad comes in, whilst he will also be useful in keep-

ing his eye on the tackle, advising you when the granary is low and more stock is required, and drawing your attention to numberless little things that may have escaped your notice.

That you will very often be wrong in your estimate of the young horses sent to your stable is inevitable. Some, you will soon perceive, are really hopeless, and on the other hand others with whom you are at first inclined to be greatly pleased are tolerably certain to turn out costly failures, as their breeding and appearance will naturally have suggested that they should be heavily engaged. Others, again, grow, improve, and develop in a wonderful way. I once had two really superb chestnut colts that were the delight of all beholders, and a smaller bay of the same age that few people looked at a second time. For the chestnuts brilliant careers were confidently anticipated, for when I came to get at them I found that they had speed and action as well as good looks. When they were roughly jumped off now and then the little bay stuck to them in a way which surprised me, though I attributed it to the circumstance that he was rather more forward in condition ; but in time I tried them, setting the two to give him 12lb. He beat them so very easily that I tried a little

later on at even weights, and he beat them again without any trouble ; and though both the chestnuts won races, the bay was always vastly their superior, and made a great name for himself.

Although it can scarcely be said that competent opinions differ very radically with regard to make and shape, nevertheless in looking over yearlings I have sometimes greatly liked horses which other men, for whose judgment I entertain the highest respect, have not liked at all, and *vice versâ*—perhaps I may add that sometimes I have been right and sometimes wrong. A few years ago the long, low horse was considered best, perhaps because it only seemed natural that he should cover most ground in his stride. St. Simon, however, did much to alter the views that had been so generally entertained. He was anything but long and low, yet as to his merit, and that of some of his sons and daughters who have resembled him, it need not be said there is no sort of question. A good shoulder is one of the first necessities, for it is tested in so many ways ; yet nevertheless some good horses have been short in the fore-hand. Uprightness in front is a fault of a rather serious character for various reasons ; and yet again some good horses have been marked by this defect. I am told

that Bay Middleton was one of the most upright ever seen, that anyone who had suggested the possibility of his coming down the hill at Epsom would have been scorned as a person ignorant of the first elements of judgment ; but he won the Derby with the utmost ease. Pilgrimage I barely recollect, but I have seen a picture of her, in the possession of her excellent trainer, my friend Joseph Cannon, which I am assured is an exact likeness, and she was incredibly upright ; all the same, as the *Calendar* shows, she ran a good second for the Oaks, beaten a bare length, though it is true that she broke down on that occasion. Horses with straight pasterns are the most likely to go wrong from sprain, especially of course when the ground is hard. I was brought up to believe that one of the first things to look for in a horse were good back ribs, and was greatly astonished one day to hear a very distinguished owner, and an undoubted judge, remarking that he had no objection to a little slackness in the back ribs, as he had often found such a conformation was an accompaniment of speed. From this it will be perceived that horses go in all shapes, or nearly in all, for it is indispensable that they must stand straight and true. I once had in my charge an animal whose only defect

was a slightly twisted fore-leg ; in all other respects I liked him so much that I advised his purchase in spite of this slight malformation. He won a good many races, but that weak point prevented him from being a really good animal ; it always seemed to interfere with him just at the finish, when he was taking on an exceptionally hard task. The mechanism of a horse's legs is so elaborate and delicate, there are such varieties of ways in which they can go wrong, that the wonder rather is so many horses keep sound than that so many others fail to do so.

Perhaps something should be said about the routine of a trainer's life. Rising early in the summer, at five or before—rather later at other times of the year—he proceeds to his stables to interview his head lad, who has already fed the horses, to learn from him how they have done during the night, and if any are unhappily not fit for work ; for horses are very exasperating animals in this way : the bad ones rarely seem to hurt themselves, it is the good ones that get cast in their boxes, or for some mysterious reason are found to have a heated joint or to have done some mischief. The string then start for the Downs, whipped in by the trainer on his hack, conversing with his head lad on various stable topics ; and here again it

will be seen of what great service the head lad can be, especially when the trainer has been away from home. The team first go through a bout of walking, trotting, or cantering, for about three-quarters of an hour, before settling down in earnest to their work. The trainer generally stands at a spot a short distance from where he intends the horses to pull up, while the head lad takes the string to the place where they jump off, and despatches them, after telling the boys the pace they are to go and the distance they are to cover, matters which have been previously arranged. I have sometimes been asked how I know when a horse is fit and what is wanted to make him so, and this is a question rather difficult to answer, as it is all a matter of experience. One knows that before winning a race, of whatever distance, a horse must do a certain amount of galloping ; and the trainer's business is complicated by the fact that different horses, having different constitutions, require different preparations. Thoroughly to understand these differences of constitution is one of the trainer's chief objects, for what suits some will not suit others. It used, I believe, to be invariably the case before a long-distance race to send the horse over the full distance of the approaching contest two or three times a week, and in certain

cases this no doubt was, and is, necessary. Such a course of preparation does not, however, by any means agree with every horse, and not a few races are won nowadays by animals that have scarcely ever galloped the full distance they will have to cover in the race. Horses must gallop fast at times to get thoroughly fit, but it is a bad thing to make their regular work too arduous, and if I am fortunate enough to have a really good horse, I like him to be led by something a good bit his inferior, so that the superior animal feels that he could at any time overtake the leader without an effort. Of course, a horse that is not speedy enough to win good-class races may be quite speedy enough to lead a good gallop.

It is necessary to jump the two-year-olds off now and then, in order to get them accustomed to the business of starting, and if the boys wear silk jackets so much the better, as young horses are very observant, and it is well to accustom them to racing attire. A forward yearling may be occasionally tried; I do not mean on several occasions, but you may now and then have one that you think a gallop will not hurt. This was frequently done in former years, but seldom nowadays in my experience, and it is very rarely judicious. I have, indeed, known some horses

entirely spoiled by the process. Before writing this article I looked through the Badminton "Racing," and there find that the yearling Peter, the well-known son of Hermit and Lady Masham, was tried on Christmas Day, 1877, with Wanderer, an old horse, over three furlongs, and beat him a head, and that in the following March he had come on 17lb. and could give Wanderer 7lb. Ecossais was also tried in December as a yearling, and found to be collaterally as good as Prince Charlie at 3 stone; while Lord Lyon, on September 10, 1864, the Saturday before Doncaster, was tried with a two-year-old named Jezebel, when the yearling, in receipt of only 7lb., was beaten by no more than a head. Lord Lyon, Peter, and Ecossais, as Turf history shows, made great names for themselves; but, so far as my experience goes, I am sure they must have been very exceptional animals, and nothing is said in the book about horses that have been ruined by such tasks set them in their immaturity.

A young horse's life should be made in all respects as agreeable to him as possible, and it is most important to see that his bit and tackle in no way worry or injure him. If all goes well, within a week of being taken up, after being saddled and driven with a long pair of reins—the familiar

spectacle one sees on all training grounds—the boys may get on their backs. A few years since a much longer time elapsed before the youngsters were mounted, and in some establishments there is still greater delay ; but I speak of my own practice, which I have found to answer. How necessary good hands and a firm seat are, will readily be understood. The best tempered of yearlings will sometimes buck, kick, and jump about, especially on a cold morning ; and if a horse found that he could get rid of his boy, he would be very apt to amuse himself by repeating the process. After having been trotted and wheeled about, the pupils by degrees are sent for short canters with an old horse in front—a hack will very well answer the purpose at the beginning—and they then commence to go in a string at a gradually increased pace, the hack being replaced by a racehorse.

Before being regularly tried the young ones should have had a few rough spins together, being allowed to come at a good pace for about half a mile, and of course of late years it has become necessary to practice them at the starting gate. You are able to form ideas as to their ability from these little spins, ideas which may turn out to be right or wrong when they are really seriously "asked a question" with an old horse. It is usual

to try the more forward youngsters early in March with a fair plater on the weight-for-age scale ; that is to say, if my readers do not happen to be acquainted with it, a three-year-old should give a two-year-old in March 2st. 4lb. over 5 furlongs. A certain amount of discretion is allowable ; that is to say, if you have good reason to form a very high estimate of a two-year-old, the old horse may be asked to concede him a little less ; but as early as March the big two-year-olds from whom you hope most will probably not be ready to try. Now it is that you not seldom find your judgment to have been wrong, as the good-actioned, free-going youngster that seemed likely to distinguish himself may distress you by beginning to sprawl when he has gone half-way, the inference being that he does not stay ; though you will probably search diligently for an excuse, and at any rate determine to put the matter to a later test.

When horses do not run up to their trials the explanation may be that the trial was wrong, and this is most likely to happen when some of the horses are ridden by jockeys and some by stable boys. A racing nobleman of the last generation—or perhaps I should say the last but one—used to declare, or so I have read, that there was not 3lb. between the best jockey and

a good stable boy, and at the present time some trainers of the highest skill—I think I may mention my friend John Porter among them—do not think there is *very* much between the fair average rider and the "cracks." I am inclined to rate jockeyship rather more highly than some of my brethren ; but even if there be only 3lb., that 3lb. often makes a vast difference in a result, and when jockeys and lads ride together these few pounds lead to confusion. A gallop with stable boys up will tell you a good deal if only they get off well together—your head lad will see to this—and come along at a good pace ; and you will be able, as you watch them approach you to finish, to tell what little allowances you should make in certain cases—at least, whether you do this accurately or not will lead to the estimate being right or wrong. But it is best, of course, if possible, to try with good jockeys up—the difficulty is to get them together if you do not train at Newmarket—for one reason, amongst others, because their experience will enable them to tell you what the horses have been doing in the gallop.

The custom of trying by the watch has lately come somewhat into vogue in England, and as the American trainers who chiefly use it have had

undoubted successes, they must find it serviceable. I am inclined to think, all the same, that our visitors try with other horses more than they used to do ; also, however, "clocking" their gallops. But some trainers have good eyes and race-glasses which make excellent substitutes for clocks ; they can judge how fast their horses are going in a gallop with an accuracy which is the result of constant observation. Some again are fond of galloping a set distance by the clock, and it may be a useful guide to know whether a young horse can cover, say, 5 furlongs in 64 seconds, or to find out in a similar way whether an older horse is retaining his speed ; but in my opinion you get more satisfactory tests by putting horses together. As to this estimate of 64 seconds, it may be misleading, as a vast deal depends on the easiness or severity of the course, the state of the going, the wind, and other considerations.

I have digressed from the account I was giving about the routine of the trainer's life, and must apologise, seeking to be excused on the ground that writing is a new occupation to me, and there is really so much to be said that I have difficulty in saying it in the space which the Editor has paid me the compliment of asking me to fill. We left the horses, I think, after their

morning's work. They should then be allowed to have their heads down to nibble the grass—and it is extraordinary how soon they get to know that galloping is over and how settled down they become ; often the most fractious animal grows quite placid and walks home in a manner altogether different from that in which he came out. The thing is to induce them to look on the training ground as a place of recreation, and not as a place where their energies are constantly being severely taxed ; and it is also most desirable to vary the locality to which they are taken as much as possible, so that they do not work over the same ground day after day and week after week.

They are taken slowly back to their stable, led by a slow walker, so as to allow the young ones to move leisurely instead of being hurried along in order to keep up with the one in front ; and before being put in their stalls and boxes they should be allowed a roll in the sand bath, a recreation which they enjoy enormously, so much so that some of them have often to be dragged off in order to allow their turn to those who are waiting and pawing anxiously in anticipation of their chance. One of my horses has to have his saddle removed on the edge of the sand, as

he is so anxious for his roll that he is down on the grass before he reaches the bath.

They are then taken in, wiped over, fresh water is put in their troughs, and a supply of hay. The feeds they had given them at an early hour have in the meantime been removed, and each manger is carefully sponged out with water mixed with a disinfectant, for inhaling ; this often, I believe, stops a cold which may have been coming on. As soon as the horses are comfortable the lads go to their breakfast, which is ready waiting for them, and it is extraordinary what an amount some of these little fellows can put away, owing, no doubt, to their early blow on the Downs.

At 10 a.m. the second lot come out ; these are the "spares"—horses that are not wanted for some time. They go out for about an hour and a half's walking and quiet cantering, and are done up and fed about twelve o'clock, the first lot having been fed an hour previously. When the "spares" have been made comfortable the lads go to their dinner about 12.30, and after this they sleep or read or play until 4 p.m., when they are called to their horses by the head lad, and, if the weather be favourable, lead out their charges for a quarter of an hour or so to pick

grass. The horses are then taken in and find that the remains of their dinner, if there were any remains, which you greatly hope there have not been, are cleared away and a fresh feed has been put in their mangers; and they are well dressed for about half an hour. It need hardly be said that absolutely the best hay and oats that can possibly be obtained are indispensable. The trainer may grow a plentiful crop of hay on his farm, but unless it be of the very best quality it is unsuitable for a racehorse.

At about half-past five the trainer, accompanied by his head lad, goes round the stables and carefully inspects every horse, feeling his legs, &c., earnestly hoping not to find that heat in the joints which is usually the forerunner of evil. Once more the head lad may prove his value by mentioning any little things he has observed; and he receives instructions as to any treatment which particular horses may require. After stables the trainer returns to his house and has a busy and anxious time with the *Calendar*. Much depends upon whether the owners for whom he works enter their own horses and strike them out, merely telling him to get them ready for certain races, or whether the exceedingly difficult duty of "placing" is left to him; and

sometimes of course these matters are arranged by discussion or correspondence. It need hardly be said how much of trouble, worry, and responsibility is saved if an owner manages his own animals. The ignorant owner of whom we talked a few pages back is rarely satisfied. You believe that perhaps some of his horses might with luck just get through a selling race, and you know also that if you suggest such a thing he will be exceedingly offended. He wants them put into good-class handicaps, and there you have to enter them, knowing perfectly well that they have not the remotest chance of winning, however favourably they are weighted, and that if they do not win he and his friends aforesaid will not entertain the slightest doubt that the fault is due to their not being properly trained. It is indeed a thankless business in these circumstances, and I think owners should remember that it is not only when successful that the trainer likes a pat on the back. When things go wrong, as they have such an uncomfortable habit of doing, he particularly requires a cheering word to soften the disappointment which he, as well as the owner, must feel keenly after the many weeks of anxiety he has spent in the superintendence of his charge, the hopes and fears as to whether he will be able to

get the animal to the post absolutely to his liking. Very probably the horse has been beaten by a combination of misfortunes—a bad start, getting shut in, bumped, or being badly ridden ; and if it ought to have won, his disappointment is the more intense, as the handicapper will put him up for a creditable performance. And perhaps, though the handicapper has not noticed, the trainer, critically watching the race, has seen one or more animals figuring in the rear who he knows cannot possibly have been "out." Handicappers thus have a very heavy responsibility, but for every reason the temptation to run "a bye" must be resisted.

I presume that I am expected to say a few words about the much-discussed gate. I accepted it loyally and have done my best, though certainly I claim no credit for that, seeing that it was the only way to win races ; but the more I see of the gate the less I like it. Perhaps I am a little embittered by failures for which there can be no sort of doubt the gate has been responsible —and this is, I am sure, the general experience. Young horses, at least as a general rule, can be trained to it, but some of them afterwards most assuredly share the sentiment I have just expressed —the more they see of it the less they like it,

and the more awkward at it they become. Of course there were bad starts with the flag, and on the whole it took longer to get horses off, though with the gate, as everyone knows, delays are often tedious. With the flag, however, if a horse was left he did sometimes make up his ground, and with the gate he seldom or never does so. I suppose it has, as they say, "come to stay," and we must make the best of it, but it adds greatly to the uncertainty of results, and I agree with the remark I read the other day, that it renders some good horses absolutely useless for racing purposes.

In conclusion, I have to add a few words about the trainer's duties on the racecourse. He will have engaged stabling if, as at most places, there is none on the course—an enormous convenience if there be, as there is now at some of the more modern meetings. His travelling lad will come to him on his arrival, give him full details of the horses' well-being, and receive instructions as to their treatment ; and, of course, the trainer will visit and inspect them carefully at the earliest possible moment. It need scarcely be said that he will not be guided by the race card or the newspapers as to the weights they are to carry. These he will himself have calculated and checked

with scrupulous pains, though he will doubtless have the figures well set in his mind, for he has been estimating the animals' chances; and he or the owner will have engaged the jockeys—not seldom a troublesome business. A £10,000 race was lately as nearly as possible lost because the saddle slipped—I am referring to Epsom Lad's Eclipse Stakes—and this fact contains a lesson, which, however, no trainer should need. He must saddle the horse, or superintend that most important operation, with the keenest attention to detail, and, putting the jockey up, give him (hoping that he will obey) instructions how the animal is to be ridden, a subject to which he will have been devoting much reflection, for often a great deal depends upon what rivals you have to beat. He will be energetically touted by all sorts and conditions of men: some to whom, for various reasons—such as that he knows them to be intimate friends of the owner, who would like them to be "on"—he will be inclined to speak frankly; others, who have no shadow of claim to the information they pertinaciously seek. With these latter he should have the wit to deal—he can say nothing, at greater or less length, with such politeness as the situation demands. Some gentlemen touts, if they may be so de-

scribed, are absolutely shameless, and some of the ladies who nowadays go racing, and have made a trainer's acquaintance, seem to suppose that his first duty is to enable them to win bets. If his horse is successful, and with a sigh of relief he sees it first past the post, knowing that all else is right, he will hear and read that he is a model of skill, knowledge, and astuteness. If it be beaten by a better animal—who has, perhaps, been "readied" for the event, and weighted accordingly—he must expect to be told that he is thick-headed, old-fashioned, has no knowledge of his business, and that it is folly to send horses to him; then what I began by saying about the trainer's life being a pleasant one does not apply.

# OWNERS AND OWNING

BY AN OWNER

Photo. Clarence Hailey, Newmarket

DIAMOND JUBILEE.

## III

# OWNERS AND OWNING

### BY AN OWNER

In the estimation of many people there is something magnificent in the idea of owning racehorses. Owners, however, are of very various sorts. There is the small publican who with two or three friends has formed a syndicate to buy a broken-down plater, which the local vet. believes he can get on his legs again ; he "owns," our humble friend of the beer shop, and on the other hand there is the lord of countless acres who carries on the historical breeding stud which he has inherited, and whose colours, constantly seen, have long been famous in the annals of the Turf. Incidentally there is the aspiring *nouveau riche* who races because it brings him into contact with gentlemen, and will, he hopes, lead to his social advancement ; not to mention the millionaire who would rather give 3,000 than 300 guineas for a

yearling, for the reason that his outlay will be chronicled in the papers and get him talked about. There is the professional owner, again, who makes a business of racing and often does well ; though some of the tribe are apt to sail very close to the wind, to run dangerous risks, and if they do not get into trouble with the Stewards, occasionally find the situation extremely threatening and awkward when explanations of past performances are required.

I belong to none of these categories—for it is of myself that I have been persuaded to write, on the ground that actual experiences are likely to convey information, and possibly to afford some useful hints to other aspirants to ownership ; and though the personal pronoun which will have to come in pretty frequently has an ugly look, I can only apologise for it, and rejoice that it affords no clue to identity ; for I confess that if I thought there was danger of being known I should have evaded my present task, which indeed looms formidably.

Well !—it is difficult to begin, to get into one's stride, as it were—I had always taken what may be called a keen outside interest in racing, and knew with more or less intimacy several men who ran horses. It had never seemed likely that I

should join the band, but rather unexpectedly I found myself in circumstances which enabled me to do so. One of my oldest friends had raced prominently years ago, and with him I discussed the subject. I did not expect to acquire a fortune on the Turf, I told him ; I had no absurd ideas of that kind ; if I could make both ends meet, and have my fun for nothing, I should not be dissatisfied, though of course I might have luck as well as other people ; and I thought this all extremely modest. Really and truly I had a notion that with a carefully chosen stable, and a resolution only to bet on my own horses, which I had heard and read was the judicious course, I might, at any rate in most years, make the sport pay ; but my friend did not seem to share this view. Luck, he admitted, had much to do with success on the Turf, but he thought that on the whole, if all went well, I might reasonably hope that my racing would not cost me more than some £1,500 or £2,000 a year—which struck me as an altogether unduly pessimistic view.

There was a trainer whom I knew, liked, and trusted ; he had, I was aware, a good many empty stalls and boxes, wanted horses—but that is the chronic condition of most trainers, however many they have—and, as I expected, he welcomed my

suggestion to train with him. The July sales were approaching, and I determined to begin the formation of my string at Newmarket, devoting myself meantime to a study of the literature of the horse, and particularly to what to look for in a yearling. A sloping shoulder was, I gathered, a leading requisite, depth through the heart, length from hip to hock, hind-legs well under, an honest eye, plenty of bone, good feet ; I fancied myself fully equipped with knowledge which would serve at the ring side, but at the same time I determined to do nothing entirely by myself—to be guided by my trainer's advice. One colt I remember well fulfilled all the requisites I have enumerated, and my only fear was that everybody would naturally be eager to obtain such an animal. I led my trainer to view the discovery I had made—all by myself—but one very hasty glance was enough for him. The good points which I had observed were there, but the animal's hocks, he declared, were hopeless. For the future I made hocks a special study, noting the coarse, the curby, the sickle-shaped, and the rest ; but another youngster, with excellent hocks amongst other good points, had, I was told, a badly twisted fore-leg, which I had certainly not noticed ; another did not stand truly ; and, in short, I soon found how sadly superficial was my knowledge,

and how little real and serviceable information my careful studies had yielded.

At Newmarket and at Doncaster afterwards I bought nine, which averaged a little over 600 guineas. I gave them names—Messrs. Weatherby told me I could not have two of these, both of which I had thought particularly happy ones—registered my colours, paid a cheque into Old Burlington Street to start my account, and awaited results.

It was at Kempton a month or so after Doncaster that, a selling race having been run, my trainer found me in the paddock and told me that the winner was just the sort of horse I wanted. Perhaps a little superciliously, I assured him that I did not want it at all—I had no desire to win selling races, and indeed my aspirations were high. I would enter for the great events, would run at Ascot, Goodwood—Newmarket, of course—and at other leading meetings, not altogether scorning the principal handicaps, but competing almost exclusively in races which have some "class" about them. My trainer, however, explained that I ought to have something to lead the young ones in their work and to try with next spring; and, recognising the necessity, which had not previously occurred to me, I bought the winner for 440 guineas.

Going down to look at my horses and speculate on what they would do next year was always a pleasure during the autumn and winter, and one day at the station I met the old friend who had given me his idea about the probable expense of racing. He asked me how many I had bought, and I told him nine, adding "There ought to be *one* good one in the lot, at any rate!" "I hope so indeed," he replied, not at all unkindly, but still in a sort of doubtful tone, which showed that he did not share my conviction.

As to entries, I recognised that this was a matter in which I needed guidance, and it was arranged that my trainer should send me suggestions, which of course I could follow or amend —that is to say, alter—as I thought best. By degrees I learned something—I was about to say a good deal—about "placing"; but, anxious to do a little on my own initiative, I naturally made blunders, forgetting to claim breeding allowances, claiming them incorrectly, and on one occasion, not noticing that the winner was to be sold for a hundred sovereigns, put the hope of the flock into a selling race.

This animal was one about whom there really did appear good cause to be sanguine. I had given over 1,000 guineas each for two; this was the

lower priced of the pair, a beautiful chestnut colt that everyone agreed seemed to be an exceptional bargain. This colt had been praised warmly in the papers, and to all appearance was as good as he looked. He was greatly admired by all who saw him in the stable and at exercise alike, the only fault the most captious could ever find with him being that he was perhaps a little on the leg. No horse could have moved better, with an effortless, stealing action that suggested staying as well as speed, and so lightly that it seemed as if he could gallop over eggs without breaking them. He soon, moreover, gave evidence of ability to go, for when in course of time he and the rest were jumped off in batches, to teach them the elements of their business, in a few strides he was always well in front. Again and again as I watched him I congratulated myself that he was liberally entered. All of the nine might not win races, I recognised; one indeed, a good-looking brown colt, was always lame after even gentle exercise; and the highest priced of all, a big chestnut filly, grew up oddly behind and I was told would take a very long time to come to hand under the most favourable circumstances. But my chestnut colt was my peculiar pride; it was a delight to hear the eulogies of friends who came

to see him, to read complimentary remarks about him in the training reports, and to observe the evident admiration of my trainer, who undoubtedly believed that we possessed a jewel. I longed to see him run, so much so that a proposal to keep him for Ascot did not at all please me ; I was too impatient, and wanted him to come out in the Newmarket Two Year Old Plate, the day after the Two Thousand, for which I was gratified to hear he could be got ready.

My plater ran—the colours were out for the first time at Nottingham in a little handicap, and he performed fairly well, finishing near enough to the leaders to show that he was in form ; and the time had now come for really finding out something about the seven that were doing work. Of these, three seemed considerably superior to the rest, and it was the remaining four that we decided to gallop with the plater at weight for age, 32lb. I had not any illusion about them, though I thought they would do better than they did. The three-year-old won with the utmost ease, the second beaten three lengths, the third about as far behind, the other two many lengths away ; and as regards these last, their capacity, I grieved to learn, was so nearly what the trainer had come to expect, that by his advice I decided

to get rid of them as soon as possible. The two were sold for £10 each to go to Belgium; what they did in the dominions of King Leopold I never heard, but if they won races the others must have been very bad.

"It is disappointing!" I remarked. "Let me see, the four cost well over 2,000, and I suppose they are not worth 400?"

"I'm afraid not," was the reply, and on being asked to appraise the value, he said he feared they would not bring more than half as much.

It *was* disappointing! I had thought that *one* of the lot might perhaps go wrong, that another, possibly two of them, might not turn out well, but then I should have half a dozen to take round to the big meetings; and as for the selling races that I had despised—I well remembered my reply when it was suggested that I should buy the plater—the difficulty now was to find races of the sort small enough for the two that my modest trial horse had so easily beaten. One ran at Warwick and was claimed for £150, the other failed twice, and after the second attempt was put up at Sandown to be sold for what he would fetch, which was 33 guineas; so that my trainer's estimate of £200 for the lot was singularly near the mark.

But there still remained the Treasure, and the

other two of fair promise; and as I related my misfortunes to men of experience, I found that they by no means shared my idea of my wretched luck. If out of nine I had three that could win races, possibly four—there was the big backward filly, with whom, however, my trainer did not seem pleased, though he expressed himself cautiously—and one good one among them, I was distinctly lucky, I was told, and everyone with whom I discussed the subject had numerous instances to give me of men with long strings who could not win a race of any sort.

At last—it was on the 22nd of April—the Treasure and his two companions were tried. I had wished the gallop to be at even weights with the chestnut, the three-year-old to give the other two 21lb. Surely such a horse could beat the plater at evens? But this was overruled. He was to receive a stone, we finally settled, the other two to run at weight for age—it would encourage them to get their heads in front, and it was a bad thing to ask young horses to do too much. I got good jockeys to ride, in order that they might tell us how the horses really went; the chestnut wore my colours, and as they cantered to the start I was convinced that I had never seen a handsomer horse or a better mover; nor was this my opinion alone.

A friend, C. H., who was a really fine judge and managed one of the chief stables of the period, came with me to see the gallop, and, though not as a rule by any means enthusiastic, declared that he felt sure I had got a good horse. We were soon to know!

How well I recollect that morning! I sat on my pony trembling so much with excitement that I could not hold my glasses steady—my Treasure might win the Derby next year—it would be luck indeed to do so at a first attempt, but still, why not?

The head lad had gone down to start them with his handkerchief.

"They are well away together!" my friend observed; I really could not see whether they were or were not. In a few moments I did focus them, however, and was delighted with what I made out. My plater was always a rather scratchy mover, though he got over the ground with his short strides, but by his side the Treasure swept along, his head in his chest, the two neck and neck. At their quarters was another chestnut, a filly, and well up with her a bay colt. Rather more than a furlong from the winning-post the two latter changed places; but the leaders sped on together. I thought I knew what was about to

happen. The Treasure would be just shaken up and would gallop on ; the plater would try to quicken and drop back ; so I was convinced, and waited eagerly for the chestnut to leave his companion, when the jockey on the Treasure began to move his arms. To my intense dismay there was no response. The creature sprawled, swerved first to the left and then to the right, his rider took up his whip and hit him once, twice, with the result that he wobbled more badly still ; the plater stuck to it, the bay colt coming on inch by inch, till as they passed us he was a neck ahead, the Treasure absolutely last, half a length or so behind the filly, who was a good six lengths in the rear of the second.

"That *can't* be right!" was my aggrieved comment as after a minute's pause we turned to canter after the four that were pulling up.

"Doesn't stay, my dear fellow," was my friend C. H.'s verdict.

"It *can't* be right!" I repeated ; but the trainer could only say that he was sadly disappointed ; he hoped it was not right, but feared that it must be.

"He seemed to run green. Is he really ready to show what he can do?" I asked, hoping against hope.

"He's pretty straight ; I'm afraid I can't make

him much better," was the reply, and by this time we had reached the quartet.

"He went well for close on half a mile," the Treasure's jockey told us. "Oh, yes, it was a very good start. He does not stay."

I looked at him, and certainly he blew very little. I could not delude myself into the idea that he was too backward to show his capacity ; but though I could not guess what was wrong, I felt there *must* be something—at least I tried so to persuade myself.

My friend made the excuse that he had to go and find his own horses, and left us together. It was not a moment for cheery conversation.

"What do you think?" I feebly inquired.

"Well, sir," my trainer replied, "it looks as if he does not get the course"—perhaps I should have said that it was five furlongs, but I suppose this will have been understood. "He's been doing well, and I don't see any real excuse!"

There was none, I knew in my heart ; but, reluct nt to believe the worst, I suggested trying him again ten days or so hence, and we did so. The plater gave him twenty-one pounds this time and beat him very nearly as far, one of my friend C. H.'s lot, just bought after

winning a selling race, finishing a good three lengths in front of my prospective Derby winner.

It seemed too cruel, and if I had not been so horribly upset I should have felt furiously indignant when my trainer proposed, as the best thing to be done, putting the *ex*-Treasure into a selling race at Epsom, where "the easy course would suit him." I hated the idea. "Was there no chance of his coming on?" I asked, but could gain no sort of consolation. We would keep him a little longer, at any rate, and see, I decided; and so he was kept, ran for one of the engagements, and finished "down the course" after showing a little flash of speed. We galloped a third time, and then put him into a selling race at Brighton. That I thought he had won. He got away with a long lead, was lengths in front till near the distance, when —how well I knew his habits!—he began to roll, was caught and passed, beaten a head for second place, and claimed. He never won on the flat, but carried off a few hurdle races—my Treasure that I had seen, in my mind's eye, battling successfully with the best, and, after stocking my sideboard with Cups and swelling my banking account with stakes, retiring to the stud at a fee of 200 guineas!

Let me remark that one of the chief follies owners commit is a refusal to see what is before their eyes and to accept what they know to be the truth. A horse is obviously bad ; if it were another man's property they would have no sort of doubt about it, but being theirs they hope against hope and try to believe, on no reasonable ground, that the creature will make phenomenal improvement. "Get rid of bad horses as soon as possible," is sound advice.

This, then, was the situation : out of my nine two-year-olds I had four left, a filly that might never come to hand (and in fact never did), an infirm colt that it was really absurd to keep in training, and two others, both rather "moderate" than "useful." Truly my old friend had been wise when he hesitated to confirm my jubilant belief that I must have at least one good one ! His estimate that I might have my fun for £1,500 to £2,000 a year I had regarded as absurdly pessimistic ; but how did things look now ? I had expended 6,075 guineas in horseflesh, less 403 for the five I had got rid of ; there was the filly, worth something, at any rate 500 or 600 guineas, for the paddocks if she never ran, and the two others that seemed to have cost, if one looked at it that way, a good deal

over 2,000 guineas each, and might be worth nearly half as much between them. In addition to this, there were, of course, entries, and they had been liberal; training expenses, clothing, and the other little items which all mount up. Besides, I had no horses; that was the annoying part of it. I had planned to go round to the principal meetings, expecting to have one or two running at each, but as things were I could not get over the Treasure, and I felt it would afford me very little satisfaction to go and see other people's horses running with mine not amongst them, as I had hoped they would be. I was half inclined to cut the whole business and go abroad to try to forget it; but it seemed cowardly to accept defeat so soon, and just then an opportunity of recruiting my diminutive lot presented itself.

One of the three other men who trained in my stable was obliged to go to India with his regiment. He had only half a dozen horses, among them a decidedly useful three-year-old and a couple of two-year-olds that looked like winning races; and he offered them to me at a price to be agreed upon between the trainer and my friend C. H., the latter being, indeed, an intimate friend of both of us. I took the three

for 2,200 guineas, and so had something to look at when I went down to the stable.

My bay colt, who had won the trial, was in a £1,000 race at a meeting near London, and I hesitated whether to run him or not ; but looking through the *Calendar* saw two or three that were certain to beat him, and, besides, there were several others about which I knew nothing. It seemed no good to run, therefore, and I wrote out a telegram to tell my trainer not to send him. That evening at the Club a man came up to me in the smoking-room and asked if mine had any chance next day.

"I am not running," I replied. "He is a very moderate animal, and would have no chance against two or three that are likely to be sent."

"I see from the evening paper that yours has arrived," the inquirer observed ; but I told him it must be a mistake, as I had wired that morning to say that the colt was not to be sent. But it suddenly occurred to me, had I wired ? I had written out a telegram but couldn't remember sending it ; and putting my hand in my pocket found the message among my papers.

I went to the meeting next day, and in the paddock came across my trainer, to whom I explained what had happened.

"Well," he said, "as he is here I should think you might just as well run him. He is very well, the race will do him no harm—do him good, in fact—and they must learn their business some time."

"Has he any chance?" I asked—"I'm afraid not."

"Oh, no, sir!" he answered; "he's not likely to win; but we'll get a good jockey for him who won't knock him about, and we shall be able to see how he shapes."

Only five went to the post—a red-hot favourite, on whom 5 to 2 was freely laid, another said to have a sort of chance, backed from 8 to 1 to 9 to 2, and three outsiders. 10 to 1 bar two was offered, but I imagine not taken by anyone about mine. He got nicely away when the flag fell, however, and the favourite failed to strike the ground quickly, nor indeed was the latter ever really in the race. The 9 to 2 chance and my bay drew away together, the gap between them and the other three steadily increasing. At the distance mine was going comfortably, and the jockey on the other was uneasy. Soon the boy on my opponent got up his whip, but mine easily held his own and passed the post a very easy winner by half a length. My first win! A moment of

intense jubilation, though in the delight of the moment I could not help recalling the Treasure, and thinking how he would have won races if only he had been as much better than the rest as we had once so fondly imagined. It is very absurd, of course; but somehow or other one looks on the owner of unsuccessful animals as rather a stupid sort of person, while the owner of winners seems to be decidedly clever and shrewd, to know a great deal about racing, though in fact his cleverness and knowledge are not in the least degree affected by victories or defeats with which he himself can only have so very little to do. Congratulations are decidedly pleasant, however, especially added to the belief that you may have a good horse; and the only disagreeable little feature about my success was some comments, which I was evidently intended to overhear, from my acquaintance at the Club, who had wanted to know things the night before. He, standing near to me in the enclosure, asked a companion, in a way that was evidently designed for my edification, why it was supposed to be clever not to tell the truth about your horses. Nothing, of course, would have persuaded him that I had not intended my colt to run, and that furthermore I had not fancied and backed him; though, in truth, neither

I nor the trainer, nor anyone else to my knowledge, had a shilling on the winner. Subsequent running, indeed, suggested that in that we had been wise, for the odds-on favourite speedily retrieved his character. Something was said about this having been a "jockeys' race," the connections of the favourite having gone for the second, for whom, if the good horse did not win, the affair had seemed a certainty ; but how this may have been I cannot say. Inspired by victory, I sent my bay to fulfil two other engagements, but he was never near winning either of them, though he carried off a nursery late in the year and a few small races subsequently.

Of the three that I had bought last two continued to do well, and the three-year-old I put into a couple of fair class handicaps. By this time I had come to learn a little about weights, and, seeking confirmation of my opinion, asked the trainer what we were likely to get. Somewhere about 7st. 2lb. was his idea, and this was very near my own estimate ; so that our satisfaction was great when the *Calendar* appeared and we found that he had been let in with 6st. 7lb. The trainer was by no means a sanguine man, but he admitted that the colt most certainly had a "great chance," and the manner in which he

said it meant more than the words. When I talked to him about backing it, moreover, he asked me to put him on a pony each way, and as he rarely had more than £5 on a horse this was a great proof of confidence. We secured an excellent jockey, and the horse being game, good-tempered, and easy to ride, the more I considered the affair the more I became convinced that it was really a good thing. I had £250 on each way at 100 to 7, and the prophets and public so entirely shared our views of the situation that on the morning of the race mine was a good favourite at 100 to 30.

I met the trainer in the paddock, asked him, of course, how the colt was, heard that it could not have been doing better, but, to my astonishment, was further told that he was "very much afraid Fishhook would beat us." I laughed the idea to scorn.

"Why," I said, "he's been running in selling races in the North! I should have thought our horse could have given him 21lb. and lost him, and he has to give us 3lb.!"—for Fishhook was in at 6st. 10lb.

"He's been entered for some selling races, but I don't think he ever ran in one," was the reply. "He belongs to a very artful division, and I'm

told they think he's sure to win. I am afraid he is very dangerous, sir!"

Going into the ring, I found my colt easy at fives, and Fishhook quite as good a favourite. Very soon the latter became a better favourite still, while mine drifted out. At the close it was impossible to obtain an offer against Fishhook, mine was freely on offer at 100 to 14, and Fishhook, returned at 7 to 4, beat me in a canter by three lengths. It was a horrible disappointment, for I had made sure of winning, and had taken particular care to let all my friends know how sanguine I was about it. Moreover, it seemed to make my colt much worse than we had supposed; but the trainer did not share this view. We had beaten all the others easily enough, he pointed out; Fishhook was evidently a vastly better animal than had appeared; no one, indeed, could say how good he was. In fact, there was no doubt he had been very carefully "readied" for this event, and the *coup* had come off.

I had the pleasure of hearing myself discussed in a railway carriage on the way to a meeting a few days afterwards, where the two-year-old I had lately bought was running. My friend C. H. was with me, and was much more amused at the conversation than I was. The chances of the

two-year-old, who had run once before in good company fairly well, were debated, and it seemed to be agreed that he was very likely to win if he was "out"; but the horses belonging to me and my brother in the North were said to be very dangerous to meddle with. I had no brother in the North—nor in the South for the matter of that—but there was a man of the same name as mine who owned horses, and their form was no doubt curiously varied. He, it seems, had been allotted to me as a brother, and one of my critics incidentally observed, referring to the handicap in which, as just described, I had run second, that he saw my jockey "nearly pull the horse's blooming head off," and he also happened to know that I was "going for the favourite"—and most likely laying my own too, another of them suggested. I felt myself growing hot with indignation, and saw my friend with difficulty suppressing his chuckles. It is very easy to lose one's character racing! My Club acquaintance was evidently convinced that I was a liar, and these roughs in the railway carriage that I was a rogue.

It is, of course, impossible in the limited space I have been asked to fill to continue the story into subsequent years. My lame colt never saw a racecourse, and I gave it to a friend. The big

filly ran twice unsuccessfully, and was sold for 600 guineas—less than half she cost—at the end of the season. One of the two-year-olds I had last bought scrambled through a selling race, and brought me in £300. Of my thirteen, at the end of the year five remained, the other eight having returned me 1,303 guineas, which, deducted from the 8,275 I had laid out, left the quintet costing 6,972 guineas—much more than twice their value.

I am asked to give as much information as I can in the way of figures, but this is not very easy, because, comparing my own bills with those which friends have shown me for the purpose of this article, I find that items differ vastly ; and then, of course, there is the question of entries. My Treasure, whom I had engaged so freely, ran me into over £700 in forfeits. Travelling is one of the items which seems to cost different trainers different amounts when the same journeys are undertaken and just the same accommodation provided. To send a horse to a meeting and get him home again ought to average about £12, and some of my friends, I am aware, are charged a great deal more. In round figures, if a horse be moderately entered, and fulfils about eight engagements in the season, he will cost his owner, including training ex-

penses, plating, clothing, travelling, about £500 a year. It is very easy indeed to spend considerably more, and not very easy, unless one stints entries, and is careful in striking out when minor forfeits become due, to spend very much less ; and these questions of entries and forfeits are always perplexing. I have often left horses in engagements in the hope that, for some reason or other, those that were sure to beat mine would go out—to find that they did nothing of the sort ; and in misdirected fits of economy I have struck horses out of races which they could not have lost if I had been less hasty. But this is the inevitable experience of every owner. By degrees I naturally learnt something of placing, and always entered my own horses ; frequently, however, perhaps I should say generally, talking over with my trainer what was best to do, letting him see what I proposed, and inviting suggestions. And the same with trials. I like to fix my own weights, and hear what he has to say about them.

I have had good years and bad years, disappointments—though none so keen, I think, as my early Treasure—and successes, expected and unexpected. In my first year I won six races, the best of them being the "jockeys' race," if so it was, which credited me with £945. The three-year-olds took

two handicaps worth £957 together, my plater won a little handicap worth £197, and in two others was beaten a head and a neck. The other two-year-old I had bought from my soldier associate won £235, and the selling race was of £200. That was £2,534 in stakes, and I was considered to have done extraordinarily well. My expenses for the (roughly speaking) year and a half that I had been racing were nearer £6,000 than £5,000, and there was the price of the horses to be added. By betting I had won about £1,200, so that it will be seen that "doing extraordinarily well" does not mean making money—only of course the start may be the most expensive part of the business, as, beginning with yearlings as I did, for a time there is nothing coming in. Not seldom nothing comes in later!

Disappointment usually predominates over success; and yet on the whole there is something peculiarly fascinating in the owning of horses. I suppose the desire is born in one. I have been racing for about thirteen years, and so far as, being a bad hand at figures, I can make out I am between £9,000 and £10,000 poorer in consequence; but—this is the aspiration always before one—I may land a happy *coup* some day and get home!

# BREEDERS AND BREEDING

BY A BREEDER

Photo. Clarence Hailey, Newmarket.

NONE THE WISER, WITH FOAL BY HAMPTON.

## IV

# BREEDERS AND BREEDING

### BY A BREEDER

There are few more interesting or absorbing studies than the breeding of any high-class animals, and to the lover of horses a stud farm for the raising of thoroughbred stock presents an ever-varying round of excitement and gratification, though not, it need hardly be said, without the attendant and frequent disappointments common to most things, and I am inclined to think peculiarly so to this. If a man goes in for racing, how much greater his pleasure must be if a horse of his own breeding wins good stakes than if he secures them by means of one he has purchased, very likely not even on his own initiative, notwithstanding that he may doubtless derive keen satisfaction from his perception in selecting a winner if he does depend upon his own eyes and experience. But, as a rule, the best horses on the

Turf have been bred by their owners ; and this is, I think, because the youngsters have generally been brought up in a more natural and less artificial manner than those destined to be submitted to public auction, though at the same time it must be noted that the owners who breed for their own racing are, as a rule, wealthy men, who own the best mares and mate them with the highest-class sires ; and it should be remembered that it is seldom that a high-class mare comes into the market, except at the death of the owner. In my small way I have been fairly successful as a breeder, and I hold strong ideas that young horses (of course having the best of crushed oats and hay) should have much more liberty than they usually enjoy under present conditions. Mine have had a shed or box to shelter or sleep in, but have been out in all weathers ; one, indeed, actually preferred—and her preference was duly respected, in the belief that she knew best what was good for her—to sleep under a big hedge, even in deep snow, notwithstanding that she had a good box to retire to. This filly was never trained till three years old, and won several races. My friends, I must admit, tell me that my methods are too extreme ; some, indeed, are almost horrified ; but I can only say that I have found these methods successful.

No doubt a good deal may depend upon an animal's constitution, however, albeit I hold that constitution is strengthened by absence of over pampering.

Shade on a stud farm is most desirable, but in my opinion one of the most important things of all is the water supply, which must be absolutely pure and good, emanating either from chalk or lime. Good short sweet pasture is what horses delight in, and it must not have been overdone with horses—it should have been grazed by cattle. I know the case of a Master of Hounds who kept a large stud of horses, and who used the manure from them year after year on his hay meadows. In course of time his horses absolutely refused to eat the produce of these fields. So it was grazed by his herd of Alderneys, and fresh land was mown for the hay for the hunters.

It is, I think, reasonable to expect that a high-class mare on the Turf will produce a better animal than a moderate performer, a notion, however, that is far from being universally entertained by breeders, many of whom regard only breeding and make and shape, caring nothing for how the mares have run when in training ; and it is true enough that some notable horses—*e.g.*, Victor Wild—have been the produce of moderate

mares. I should myself like to breed for preference from a mare who has won races, but has not been trained too long or too severely, and whose dam has won races—as, for instance, Rock Sand's ; but here again we have notable exceptions to this theory in the cases of Beeswing, Alice Hawthorn, Lily Agnes, and Mowerina—names that will be remembered as long as the thoroughbred horse exists—all of whom were severely run, yet produced winners of classic events. As to the mare herself, I should select a long, low wide mare, with, of course, quality and good breeding, rather than a large mare, and should choose a stallion of suitable blood and conformation. Some sires seem to get everything to race, whilst others are failures at the stud ; some, again, may get one good horse and then prove a consistent disappointment—facts which tend to emphasise the luck and, it may be said, accident of producing racehorses. Many sires are put to the stud at absurdly high fees, consequently are shunned by breeders ; when their fees are reduced their performances are more or less forgotten, the horses are out of fashion, and their opportunity has gone, possibly to be revived by a good performer, but more probably never to return. It would be much better for owners if they would demand a fair fee and give the horse a

chance, as was done in the cases of Freemason, Marco, and others, instead of asking an unreasonable sum, and then having to reduce it: examples will occur to the reader if he has paid any attention to the subject; it is invidious to name them. Many good animals have been sold to go abroad before they have had any real opportunity of showing their merit as sires. I may mention Musket, the sire of Petronel, who got Son of a Gun, an animal with possibilities, who is now in Ireland. Musket was a horse whose stoutness and gallant deeds on the Turf made a profound impression upon me, and he was without doubt one of the finest stayers of the last century. When he went to the stud he stood at Bonehill, near Tamworth, having as a companion lord of the harem Pero Gomez. Musket was a dark brown horse, about 16½ hands, and, as near as I can say from memory, not remarkable for very much bone, but with hard, sinewy legs. Pero Gomez was about the same height as Musket, but with more bone, and upright in his pasterns. I had a nice little French-bred mare named Pensée, who had run second to the beautiful-actioned Sornette in a Queen's Plate at Epsom, and I determined to send her to Musket. This was in the year 1875. She had a brown filly foal, a very nice one indeed,

which, of course, I was most anxious to see, as I was away from home at the time. When it was a few days old it unfortunately took a fancy to licking a newly-painted door and died of lead poisoning ; a cruel disappointment to me, which I mention to show how much care and supervision is necessary in the treatment of young horses.

Undoubtedly one of the most interesting and exciting moments that occur in the life of a breeder of (what he hopes will be) racehorses is when he takes his first peep at a newly-born foal, the mating of whose sire and dam has occupied his thoughts for many days and occasioned careful study and research. Perhaps he may find that the foal is a poor feeble little creature, possibly deformed, with sickle hocks, or some other obvious source of weakness and suggestion of failure—though if he be a man of experience he will not too readily give up hope. One I specially call to mind, a remarkably well-bred foal, by St. Simon, in fact, who looked an impossible caricature of an infant thoroughbred. The first impulse of the anything but proud owner, if he had not seen much of foals, would have been to give orders for the immediate destruction of the little creature and try to forget it as speedily as possible ; but the manager of the stud where the foal was born was undismayed, the hope that it

would come right was justified and it won races. It is said that Ormonde was much such another as this when a few days old, incredible as the fact will appear to many. Truly, young racehorses are born in all shapes, and the manner in which they alter is marvellous. If, on the contrary, our breeder finds an extra good foal with a bright eye and good carriage, he will be more than satisfied and bless his luck. It is the uncertainty of breeding that adds to its fascinations and allurements. Many people consider that they can better judge what sort of animal the foal may turn out during its earliest days than during the next year or two of its life, but this depends on the foal—and the judge.

To return to the question of a stud farm. As I am writing in that most comfortable and charmingly situated hostelry "The Swan" Hotel at Tenbury, I look out upon beautiful grass land, sound and well watered, bounded on one side by the lovely river Teme and on the other by the Ludlow road, and cannot help thinking that this would make a perfect little stud farm ; indeed, I tried to take it myself but could not do so. Success or failure depends in no slight degree upon the nature and situation of breeding paddocks, and, as already remarked, I personally lay great stress upon the quality of the water used for young blood stock.

On some very poor land that I rented near Newmarket the water was obtained from the chalk, and here I bred two very fine colts, with great bone. One, a three-year-old now and unbroken, is in my possession. He is an immensely powerful horse, standing about 16·2 on short legs, and with enormous bone. He is by The Deemster out of quite a small mare, Foolscap, by Fullerton. His occupation is to be between the flags, and on this head I may mention an instance to prove that a long and exacting course of steeplechasing does not by any means necessarily destroy a mare's capacity for producing useful young ones. For many years I owned a mare called Orange Blossom, by Honiton out of Confection by Plum Pudding, a long low animal barely 15·2, but one of the gamest of the game. She won many steeplechases carrying very heavy weights. She did not come into my possession until she was twelve years old, was then put to the stud, bred twelve foals in succession, and was shot at the age of twenty-six. I do not think there is another mare with such a record, starting to breed so late in life. All her produce were sound, nearly all won races of some sort ; only one was trained for the flat, viz., Newcourt, who won the Northumberland Plate twice, and was twice sold for £2,000. Orange Blossom must have possessed

great vitality ; but perhaps if she had been trained as a young mare (she never ran till six years old) she might not have been so regular and prolific a breeder.

I should not advocate breeding from a very old sire or an old mare, or one that had been hard trained when young ; but we find exceptions to every rule, and The Roe, dam of that good stayer The Cob, who would have won another Cesarewitch for the late Duke of Beaufort had he been ridden with any approach to the orders his jockey received, was twenty-four years old when The Cob was foaled. I think many breeders are too apt to overlook conformation of the sire in mating their mares, and when the young one arrives much will depend upon the way he is treated. Young horses from their foalhood upwards should be handled with quietness and firmness, and not petted or made too much of. Those that have been petted are almost invariably the hardest to break, and frequently are possessed of a will of their own which leads to much subsequent trouble. It is most probable that after Persimmon had won the Derby his brother Diamond Jubilee was in this way spoilt, which would go a long way to account for his wayward conduct at times, though no doubt he was a brilliant racehorse at his best. It is the old story of

"familiarity breeds contempt." The Americans must bring up their horses very quietly, or is it the long sea voyage that makes them so docile in the stable? If one goes round a stud of high-class American horses, as I have several times been round those at Newmarket, one cannot help being struck with their extreme quietness. You can handle them as you like—their gentleness is remarkable.

Now as to my ideas as to the treatment of stallions. If possible they should be ridden out at exercise every day and kept in hard muscular condition; it makes them healthy and quiet, and they are more likely to breed better foals and more of them than those that are kept fat. If they cannot be ridden for any reason—as, for instance, because of unsoundness caused by accident, as was the case with Rightaway whom I had for some seasons—let them be exercised for two or three hours daily; or, better still, if you have the convenience turn them out in a large paddock, as is done with Orme, and several others to my knowledge; but every breeder has not a suitable paddock for this purpose. Orme has one fenced in by a high wall.

Another theory which I hold is that foals should not be brought into the world too early. This is

also Mr. John Porter's conviction, and his long experience is surely not to be lightly regarded. I also entertain the same ideas as he does in my dislike for early two-year-old racing—how often do we see the winner of the Brocklesby, or some other important two-year-old race, finish in the autumn nowhere in a nursery with less than 7 stone? As long as racing goes on, however, the small and early ones must have occupation found for them, I suppose, and it would be useless to complain; but something might be done to mitigate the supply of the small and early.

The subject I am treating is such a vast one, there is so much to be said in a limited space, that I must perforce turn abruptly from one point to another, and a matter not to be omitted is reference to the great mistake of keeping too many mares at one stud. One or two establishments occur to me where the produce have deteriorated in an alarming manner from overstocking, and also from keeping for breeding purposes fillies that have been unsold and could only be regarded as worthless. We have had notable cases of late years. A most important factor to the success of any undertaking is a good manager, who should be to a great extent allowed a free hand, and who has the courage of his opinions. He may make mistakes and get rid of a mare that

might have bred winners ; but this must be left to his judgment, and he would not breed feeble little weeds that are of no real use, and injure the reputation of the English thoroughbred. A good stud groom who is trustworthy and experienced is also a first essential to success.

In writing about feeding mares and young stock I should have said that where the soil is suitable for its production lucerne should be grown, as it comes in early and is much relished by horses. Gorse, too, cut young and properly crushed, is a most wholesome diet, and it may not be generally known is an excellent and easily applied vermifuge. A question that I have often endeavoured to solve is the effect of a foster mother on the colt. What set me thinking about this matter was that Blink Bonny, who had bred the mighty Blair Athol, died after giving birth to his own brother Breadalbane, who was brought up by a cart mare. Now Blair Athol was a game horse, which could not be said of Breadalbane, and the latter's stock were soft. Was "Madam" to be blamed for this ? I have often wondered. Perhaps some other breeder who has devoted attention to the matter could enlighten us upon this subject.

It requires much experience of foals to say what their colour will be. Foals at birth are very often

of a curious hue. I can call to mind a fluffy-looking drab creature that developed into a good, handsome bay ; but the animal which will eventually become a grey, and in time, with age, a white horse, may as a foal be a rusty brown. It is only when the coat of a foal is cast that an opinion as to his colour can with any certainty be expressed ; and so when early entries have to be made a youngster is often described as " bay or brown," and we have even seen a " grey, roan, or chestnut." I once bought a bay horse as a yearling and found that he was described in the Stud Book as a chestnut. On pointing out to his owner that his colour was unmistakable, and could by no means be described as chestnut, he replied that when he registered the animal in the Stud Book as a foal it was most distinctly as set down. In looking up the early Stud Books one reads of duns. I cannot recall a dun racehorse during the last thirty-five years, but the dun colour was, I believe, invariable in the indigenous or wild horse ; and it is so in Asia now. I have seen many piebald or skewbald horses, but never one in the Stud Book, nor do I think that there ever has been a thoroughbred of this colour. Grey horses are not common on the Turf, but we do see some, and if we examine their pedigrees it is

quite easy to trace the source from which the colour is inherited. It may be a long while back—possibly to Stumps by Wicket. Personally, I love a grey racehorse, and he has the advantage that one can always see him in a race, but I never saw a real flyer of this colour.[1] I have always had a special fancy for odd-coloured horses, and should like to win the Derby (with anything, but preferably) with a dun or a piebald—this, however, is an ambition that is not likely to be gratified.

The period of a foal's life that may be said to be most precarious is when it is about nine days old. Then great care must be taken that neither the dam nor the foal catch cold. In my humble opinion fresh air is the best thing, and shutting up in a box the worst thing. Of course,

[1] Perhaps not a "real flyer," for my Breeder may take a very high standard of what that means; but there have been some good grey horses of late years. Strathconan and many of his grey sons and daughters won races of all sorts; Eastern Emperor, for example, carried the late Duke of Beaufort's light blue and white hoops successfully in the Royal Hunt Cup and the Chester Cup. Le Sancy was also a really good horse, though it is true that when third to Seabreeze and Ayrshire for the £10,000 Lancashire Plate—£10,222 10*s.* 10*d.* it was worth, to be quite accurate—he had an advantage in the weights. His offspring, mostly greys, have done and are doing admirably in France, so much so that when his owner consented to receive a few strange mares he fixed the fee at £480, and some breeders would gladly have paid this high price had the son of Atlantic and Gem of Gems lived. Holocauste was a Le Sancy.—Ed.

I should not allow them to go out if the weather were very wet and inclement, nor should I allow the foal out too long ; I should let it rest an hour or two, especially in hot weather when the flies are troublesome. I have often wondered when seeing foals gallop if they really go faster when they are older : some of the young ones have wonderful speed, and they will also perform the most extraordinary feats of jumping. I remember seeing a foal that I bred gallop in a mad way from one end of a long meadow to the other, her dam galloping beside her. The paddock was bounded by a high hedge with a drop into a road ; this the foal jumped, the mare followed, and to my great surprise neither was hurt ; yet this was a fence that no one would have jumped out hunting. Why the little creature should have performed these antics passeth comprehension, but it was not injured in any way by the adventure.

# JOCKEYS AND JOCKEYSHIP

BY A JOCKEY

FLYING DUTCHMAN.

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THE EARL OF ROSEBERY.

V

# JOCKEYS AND JOCKEYSHIP

BY A JOCKEY

The great difficulty is getting away—starting—at least it is one of the great difficulties, for I expect I shall find a lot of others later on. If people are used to it perhaps it is a very simple thing to sit down and just talk about a subject they are supposed to know something about, while what they say is taken down in type-writing; and when I am told that my remarks won't want much putting into shape afterwards, I can only observe that I don't fancy you know! However, I will do my best for the series, and though I think you might have got someone else to do this much better than I can, that is not my fault.

Of course, one side of a jockey's life is pleasant enough—very pleasant if he is in luck. There is a great satisfaction in winning races:

everybody is very nice and friendly, you read complimentary things about yourself in the papers, and if you are in the front rank you earn a good income. About the pay of a Lord Chancellor? I don't know what he gets. £10,000 a year? It would be a bad look-out for a young jockey if he started in life with the idea that he was going to do that, and was likely to feel disappointed if he didn't. In a few cases, a very few cases I should think, it has been done, but people exaggerate a good deal what jockeys make, or so I judge from what I sometimes read in the papers. Very often, indeed, they only receive their three guineas for a mount, or five if they win. There is a lot of riding in a hundred races; say you win twenty of them—and not many jockeys keep up such an average—that is only £350. Trials? Yes, two guineas. Retainers, of course, count heavily in a few cases, in the case of a few jockeys I mean, but that you know as well as I do, for I remember poor Prince Soltykoff commissioning you to offer a jockey £5,000 a year for first call. Five thousand has been paid in one or two other instances, in two at any rate, but these are altogether exceptions. There are presents, too. If you win a big race

the owner as a rule behaves more or less generously—as a rule, not always: some owners think it is a bad thing to spoil jockeys, and avoid extravagance "on principle"; only "on principle," they say, and of course if a gentleman is not of a liberal disposition such principles are very agreeable and convenient for him. Expenses? No, there is not any profit to be made out of those, at least I find not, for few people guess what it costs to travel about as we have to do. You must stay comfortably at a good hotel, and landlords do not reduce their prices much in race weeks.

That is all very well—the money, I mean—but it is not all cantering to the post on a sunny afternoon after a friendly chat with owner and trainer who tell you you are sure to win, and then jumping off and doing what is expected of you, winning comfortably without any trouble, trotting home on your hack to a good dinner with cheery friends, with no anxiety and only a little curiosity as to the amount of the cheque you will receive for your success.

That is one side of the picture, but there is quite another one, and perhaps this does not include any dinner at all. You often read that some jockey is lucky in being able to ride a

nice weight, and the idea seems to be that he escapes wasting, which is one of the principal bugbears. This is not at all correct. Some owner is constantly wanting him to ride a few pounds lighter than he can go to scale in the ordinary way. A jockey, say, can do 7st. 8lb. when in good condition, and a horse belonging to a stable for which he rides is in a handicap late in the year at 7st. 4lb. The owner will say to him, perhaps, "I think I have a great chance. So-and-so has just got about what I expected, but he is well in because he has come on a good deal lately. There's nothing to spare, though; I ought not to give any weight away. Do you think you can manage it?" Well, perhaps it is a big race. Of course you are anxious to win, and you say you will try. You must remember that the jockey is in good hard condition to start with, and getting weight off then is not the same thing as getting it off at the beginning of the season when you have not been taking care.

Of course I have had some hard times in this way. Last autumn, for instance, I was asked to ride, for a stable I wanted to do everything I could for, some pounds lighter than I could go to scale comfortably. For more than a week in advance of

the race I was thinking about my weight and avoiding anything that would make me heavier. Then two days before the time I arrived at the meeting, got up next morning at seven, had coffee and toast for breakfast, and went to morning work ; rode a trial and three gallops—just as I was going home someone asked me to get on a horse and bring it a mile. Back home, and walked a good ten miles in sweaters after a cold bath, and then on to the course, where I rode in four races—and won two of them. When I weighed I found I was still three pounds over, so I had another strong eight mile walk and "dined" on the lean of a small mutton chop, a biscuit, and a claret glass-full of weak whisky and water. Up next morning again, riding work, another hard ten miles, and after riding also in two races—the great event. When I went to the scales I found that I had got down to within one pound of the weight.

I was second, just beaten, and that entirely because of the ground—in one boggy bit my horse came almost to a standstill, it was so deep. With fair luck I should have won, but I didn't, and, it was rather galling when a friend of the owner came up to me and said, "If you'd managed to get that other pound off you'd just have done it!" He spoke as if he thought I had not been trying to

get down, imagined that I had been over-eating myself and lolling about in an armchair between meals, drinking brandy and soda, I suppose ; and I expect he had never known what it was to be hungry—ravenous, with nice food which you mustn't touch within reach. One of the papers said that I had lost my strength trying to get down, and so could not half do justice to the horse, and was foolish to try ; so you see you get blamed both ways. This is the other side of the picture I was telling you about.

The papers ? Yes. Some of them are very good and give wonderfully true accounts of things, and of course the jockeys help, and tell the reporters what has happened in a race—very often no one else could ; in the Cesarewitch, for example, and races like that out of sight of the stands for a long way, unless the jockeys gave details the reporters could not very well get them. But a lot of nonsense is written at times. I have ridden what I knew were good races—one does know—and have been blamed for coming too soon or too late, or for something or other, when I am sure I was right ; and I have been praised for doing wonderfully clever things when I have really ridden wretchedly bad races, got muddled, and without deserving it landed by a sort of a fluke—won by sheer luck. If

the papers make a fuss of you at some times, they are down on you at others, and it is extraordinary how soon a jockey who has been praised to the skies loses his reputation, and is told that he "can't ride for nuts" when he has had a run of bad luck. Very likely the failures have not been the least his fault. I mean the stable for which he rides chiefly has been out of form, horses coughing, perhaps, or, as happened last year, the going so bad that it has been impossible to get horses fit ; but the jockey has not been winning, and of course it must be his fault. Some of the papers add up his losing mounts, and seem quite pleased when the figures get big. That does not do you good next time, for confidence is a great thing, if only because it helps you to make up your mind what to do quickly and resolutely when you are in a fix.

I suppose it never occurs to anyone that jockeys are ever ill ? Day after day all through the season you see the same jockeys riding, hardly ever missing a meeting, never doing so, you might almost say ; and yet, you know, they aren't always fit and well. Other people feel out of sorts and think they won't go to business—a bit of a change will do them good ; and so they take a little holiday and come back and say they are all the better for it, as very likely they may be. The jockey never thinks he will have a

bit of a holiday, or at least if he thinks he will he knows he won't. He is at Lingfield on one day, at Chester the next, and after riding in the last race there on Thursday rides in the first at Kempton on Friday. From Doncaster to Warwick, Warwick to Ayr, Ayr to Windsor—that is the sort of week's work you sometimes have. A lot of travelling, and then there is the weather. You hear people talk of the sort of day they wouldn't turn a dog out in ; but the jockey has to turn out half a dozen times in the afternoon, to reach the post as wet as if he had been in a river (you may not like the look of the waterproof leggings that some of us have lately taken to wearing, but you criticise appearances from a dry corner of the stand) and then to wait at the post in a bitter wind perhaps for the best part of half an hour—a long way the worst part, you would be inclined to consider it—before you get off. Then back to the dressing-room and a dry pair of breeches which get as bad as the others in three minutes. I'm not complaining, you know. It's all in the day's work. I am only showing that there are two sides to that beautiful picture of the luxurious jockey making a heap of money in such a pleasant and easy fashion.

It is not so easy to talk about what you call the technical part of the business. If you asked

me why I did anything particular that you noticed in a certain race I would try to tell you, but it is a large subject, so many different things happen, and it is hard to pick subjects to discuss. Got on capitally so far? I'm very glad you think so, but at present I am reminded of being in that boggy bit of ground I told you of.

The American seat? I dare say we used to ride too long, and there are advantages in short stirrups; but I do not believe in the neck business, and if you have noticed I think you will have seen that the jockeys who used to be most American have gradually got more upright again. A great deal depends on the horse. Some horses jump off and go straight with their jockey's hands a few inches from the bit, but you cannot urge your horse sitting like that, or perching like that, and the majority of horses want riding. Those that you have to catch hold of and drive can't be properly ridden if you are on their necks. Coming straight through is no doubt the simplest and easiest way of riding a race, though you must have an idea of pace or your horse is tolerably sure to be all abroad just when you want him to be balanced and collected. Coming through, you may say, depends on the animal, the weight, and the course. You can't

wait on fast courses, such as Epsom and Brighton for example, at least you can't unless you wait in front—that is the only chance of taking a steady. The new seat is, for one thing, however, good for the boys, because they can't keep sticking their heels into a horse all the way. Horses get very sick of that.

As for the time to make your effort—to win your race, your horse tells you. If he sighs, leave him, don't ride him for two or three strides and he will get a breath ; then you can take hold of him and send him along again. It eases a horse to change his legs, and in long-distance races you can help him by making him do so ; but in five-furlong races there isn't time, and it may be that if he changes near to the winning-post and so loses a little bit it will make just the difference between winning and being beaten a head. In heavy ground horses generally change their legs of their own accord. These are trifles, or comparative trifles —for a head one way or the other is a trifle except that it makes all the difference at the finish—in which experienced jockeys naturally have a pull over the boys.

Getting the rails is usually a good thing, because on the rails is the shortest way home.

Here again—riding round turns, I mean—is a thing where practice tells. If you are on a long-striding horse, it may be wise to let him swing out. He loses a little, but would be tolerably certain to lose more if you pulled and hauled at him to keep him close. You must always steady a bit at a turn, indeed on some courses the corners are so sharp that you have almost to pull up ; and this eases a horse. That is why some horses stay a mile well at certain places, though the Rowley Mile would be too far for them. It is a sort of instinct with a jockey to try for the rails, but a good many races are lost every year by this trying, all the same. If a chance comes, take it ; only it is a bad thing to be waiting for chances that may not come. You may be just behind, the leaders getting beaten, your horse with much more in him, and you are hoping that the jockey in front of you on the rails (right-handed) will give you just room to get through—if he only would you are sure of beating him easily ; but, of course, he isn't going to if he can help it. This is one of the awkward places you sometimes get into. The leader seems to be swerving the least bit from the rails, and you sit and hope. There is just sufficient space to squeeze through be-

tween the horses on your left. What will you do? Rapidity of decision is one of the things a jockey wants. The boy on the rails does seem to be almost making room, but whilst you wait for him to make a little more something else comes up on your left—his jockey has a clear course, and so can go faster than you can. This new-comer does not keep straight—horses hang when they are tired—forces the others to close up, and shuts the gap you could have got through. The leader on the rails meantime, instead of bearing to the left, bears to the right again, there is no room, and you are past the post, beaten, on a horse that would have won with ease if you had not been hampered. Perhaps you decide to pull out and come round, find that one of the others has a little more in him than you had supposed and gets the best of you, and you notice that the leader bearing to the left, hanging from distress it may be, would have given you room on the rails if you had waited a second more. Steadying your horse to come round has just lost you the race. This is the sort of puzzle that constantly occurs in race-riding, and you are lucky if you do the right thing.

You necessarily want to know what the other

horses are about in a race ; and especially if you are in front, believing that you have won, to be quite sure that nothing is coming with a rush to beat you on the post. All the same, some jockeys look about them a great deal too much—possibly they have an idea that there is danger from a certain animal that they have been told is sure to win—and you often see them keep looking round, over their left shoulders perhaps, when the danger is really coming, and comes, from the right. I could give you lots of instances of all these things that I am talking about, only I don't want to mention names and seem to be criticising other jockeys—who often beat me. One thing certain is that it interferes with a horse to keep turning round in the saddle. There is really no reason in it either. If you keep your horse going and anything comes alongside, you can do your best to shake him off when he gets up to you—you don't want to look behind you for him. Why jockeys do it is often because they don't want to win too far ; but if a jockey is well in front, keeps looking back till he is a few lengths from the post, and then eases when he sees he is quite safe, the handicapper and people who are watching the race can judge quite well what he has in hand, and it makes no difference whether he has won by two lengths or five or six.

I am rather shy of expressing opinions about the rules which the authorities make. As to the 5lb. apprentice allowance, however, since you ask me, I can only say that I think it spoils the big races. I mean this : it seems a pity that a good horse like Zinfandel, with a good horse's weight, should have been deprived of the Cesarewitch, not because he was beaten by a better animal on the handicap, but because the owner or trainer of a lightly-weighted old horse had the luck to engage a small boy who carried 5lb. less than Grey Tick was in at. In the smaller handicaps it doesn't seem to matter so much, and it is a good thing that the boys should have practice and ride in public. A good apprentice is, of course, a capital thing for a trainer, who lets him out to the best advantage, and often gets big fees for the lad's services. Sometimes the master gives the boy a share of what he earns, sometimes he keeps it all for himself, and perhaps it is rather hard that an apprentice should be making a good income and receiving none of it, or only at best a very little. But the trainer has taught the boy to ride, and has found him opportunities of riding by which he has been able to make himself known, so that all the profit does not go quite one way. Some owners, too, are considerate in this direction, and put a "pony," or whatever it may

be, in the bank for an apprentice who wins a race for them.

The gate? Yes, of course we had to come to that! Well, it has its advantages and its disadvantages, but it is no use trying to say which go for most, because the gate isn't likely to be done away with now that it has come, and we should certainly make a mess of things if we went back. We have got used to the machine, too, and have come to understand it. Many horses won't face it, but it is only fair to the gate to say that many would not face the flag. I've had some very rough times with horses that refused to go near their field. The worst thing about the machine is that horses have to start from a stand, and some of them simply cannot do this. It may be make and shape—I do not know the reason, only the fact; but when the barrier goes up there are some horses that are always four or five lengths behind when the others have gone a hundred yards. On certain courses this puts them out of the race at once, and if they can't stay, and so find time in a long race to make up, they are no use for racing. Other horses—but these are altogether exceptions—are galloping at once from a stand. Sundridge, for instance, is wonderfully quick in this way. He is in his stride and at speed the moment he moves.

It is natural that jockeys, especially if they are on horses that can't get off from a stand, should try to be just moving when the barrier flies up. You can hardly ever do this now, but we used to get a chance on occasions before starters were as well accustomed to the machine as they are at present, and it made a lot of difference. It was just this : to be on the move when the others were still, meant that when you had gone three strides you were three-quarters of a length in front. This is a very great advantage, especially at such places as Epsom and Brighton—they don't catch you.

A jockey has of course to be discreet. Sometimes he will be thanked and his advice appreciated, for instance, if he suggests some little thing, such as running a horse in a hood ; at other times he will be sarcastically told that if he minds his own business and obeys the instructions given to him he will be doing all that is required. Of course it is true that the trainer who sees the horse galloping at home and out should know whether blinkers are worth trying ; but an experienced jockey notices a lot of little things in a race, and at times his ideas may be worth consideration. I personally like to calculate the weight I have to ride, looking back to see whether there are penalties or allowances, and so on. It is perhaps not strictly speaking my

business, to this extent at any rate that the jockey is not, of course, in any way responsible for mistakes. He is told what his horse has to carry, and is weighed accordingly ; but it chances that on one or two occasions I have found a penalty omitted or a claim for allowance wrongly made, and have avoided probable disqualification by mentioning the matter. Very few jockeys do this, however, and it is only now and then that I look into it. As to objections, the jockey usually advises the owner or his representative to object if there seems any good ground, and the jockey generally makes the objection himself.

About trials, I would rather have all jockeys or all boys, for naturally the jockey is likely to have a bit the best of lads that have had little practice, even at home, in riding races ; but a clever trainer sees a lot and knows how to make allowances for what he sees. In the stable where I served my apprenticeship the trainer used to allow 7lb. if a jockey rode in a trial with boys on the other horses. If I won a length and a half or so, and a boy was on the second, he set it down that the two horses were much about the same. If the boy beat me a length he would consider that the winner had something like 10lb. instead of only about 3lb. or 4lb. in hand, the idea in this case

being, you see, that a jockey would probably have got close on 7lb. more out of the horse. It was rather a sliding scale, for it had to be considered what sort of boys were riding ; I mean now and then there were some who rode pretty well. However, our trials certainly used to work out pretty correctly.

One of the difficulties a jockey finds is knowing when to disobey orders. As a rule, he should do what he is told as nearly as he possibly can—I need hardly say that ; but he ought to have a little discretion allowed him, and this is again where experience comes in. Suppose you are told to "lie up with the leaders." You are on a horse that stays, and you know the trainer has assumed that there will be a fair pace ; but the leaders may go muddling along, you know that one or two are sure to beat you for speed if you only race for a quarter of a mile, and you will do well in such a case to go to the front. Or you may be told to lie up with the leader, and notice that he has got the better of his boy, and is going a great deal too fast—you don't, of course, then want to be at his quarters. Define "hands"? I'm afraid I can't. I suppose hands are a gift. Some horses will go comfortably with one or two jockeys and pull at others ; I imagine that hands come in here. You

can't simply by strength stop a horse that wants to go. He is a great deal stronger than you are. The whip? Absolutely necessary in many cases, only mischievous in others, and a good lot of others, too. If you hit a horse in the middle of his stride, when he is tiring and going loosely and uncollectedly, you stop him at once—he curls up. You must have your horse balanced and collected before you ask him to make his final effort, or you certainly won't get there.

About nursing a horse, the business is rather difficult to explain, for so much depends upon the circumstances of the case. Put roughly, and taking the thing generally, I should say that when the barrier goes up you allow the majority of the field to go gradually three or four lengths away from you—you do not pull your horse back, but let the others stride out. The great art of nursing is sitting absolutely still, and letting the others come back to you—not going after them. If it is a really good run race, you will find that by degrees they will drop out one after another, till at length you have perhaps only a solitary leader left. By a little manœuvring you can place your horse at this one's heels, then quietly pull to one side or the other, and make your effort about fifty yards from the winning-post.

I have read of the famous owner, Lord Exeter I think it was, who thought there was not 3lb. between the best jockey and a stable boy ; but if there wasn't a lot in jockeyship there would be a lot more jockeys. You see the same few coming to the front year after year, and that must be significant, don't you think ? These few get the best of the riding, as a rule, no doubt ; but they are all sure to be connected with stables that turn out bad horses as well as good ones, that perhaps have very few good ones some years, and something often goes wrong with the few : the stable is out of form and can't win anything.

As to the advice I should give to a young jockey, I think I should want to see how he framed ; much would depend upon that. It used to be impressed upon me not to be in too great a hurry to get home. The winning-post is generally a good deal farther off than the young jockey thinks, and he is apt to try to reach it too soon ; but this advice would have to be understood. There is not much time to linger about in a race ; and if some races are thrown away because jockeys come too soon, it is quite easy to lose one by coming too late. One thing I should advise him is never to try

to be too clever, and to win a head when he could win a length and a half. This sort of thing is not as common as it used to be ; but many races have been lost that way. I have reason, perhaps, to know ! You may think that you have exactly measured your run, but some horses, old ones particularly, don't answer quite as readily as you expect them to do ; a swerve, or a stumble, or a change of leg, may make all the difference, and perhaps one of the others has got a bit more in him than you thought.

Here we seem to be at the winning-post, and I really think that I am "all out."

# JUDGES AND JUDGING

BY A JUDGE

OFF !

## VI

# JUDGES AND JUDGING

### BY A JUDGE

A good many years ago I happened to be in London at the end of May, and learned from the papers—quite casually, for my ignorance of racing fixtures was supreme—that the Derby was fixed for next day. I had never seen a race, and it occurred to me that I might as well take the opportunity as I chanced to have nothing particular to do ; so I went to Epsom. My recollection of the day is rather confused, and I do not suppose that I found it very entertaining, for on returning home I remember saying, "Well, I have seen the Derby, and I don't suppose I shall ever see it again."

How little one knows what is going to be! I forget the exact phraseology of the proverb about the unexpected always happening, but certainly my own humble career is an example. If any one had told me just after my visit to Epsom that the

business of my life would be conducted on race-courses I should have regarded the suggestion as too absurd for words. But circumstances dominated me. I was related to a judge—I mean, of course, an occupant of the box, not the bench—and he had felt it desirable to have an assistant ; indeed, I believe that the suggestion originated with the Stewards of the Jockey Club. Sir John Astley was at this time senior Steward, and he found a man, but not by any means the right one ; for this understudy was a wildly enthusiastic personage who entirely lost his head in the excitement of the struggle, uttered wild yells as the horses approached, and flung his hat into the air in recognition of the winner's triumph. He was indeed just precisely the reverse of the man who was wanted, and as my relative did not know where to look, I offered my services if he thought they would be useful. Thus I learned the duties of the office, and in course of time succeeded to the position, about the last in the world I had ever expected to occupy.

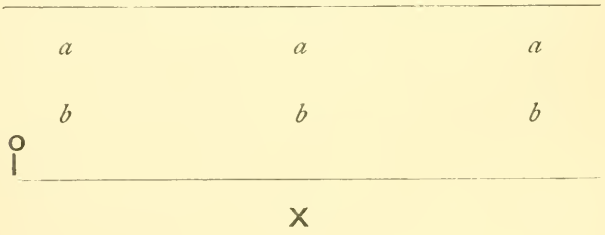
So now I am a judge,[1] and nothing could have been wider of the mark than the observation I made on returning from my first Derby. If asked the chief requisites for the business, I should say an

[1] I cannot refrain from adding in the words of Mr. W. S. Gilbert, " And a good judge, too ! "—Ed.

overwhelming sense of responsibility, an unshakeable nerve, and absolute freedom from any tendency to excitement. A horse may just win a race by the barest margin, the shortest of short heads, a matter of inches, but on his success tens of thousands of pounds depend, as well as the prestige of victory ; for though a horse that is beaten a very short head at even weights is practically the equal of his conqueror, reputation is based upon absolute victory. A moment's carelessness or confusion and the stream of wealth may be wrongly diverted, the honour snatched from those to whom it belongs and awarded to those who have no claim to it. There are occasions when bystanders, usually I suspect with a strong interest in a certain animal, declare after a close finish that they are sure some horse—the one they have backed—"just got up in the last stride," and that the wrong number has been hoisted ; but angles are extraordinarily deceptive, and the judge has no angle to deceive him. Sometimes an owner has stood by my box, and when heads, or possibly even necks, have divided the leaders, has informed me "Mine's won!" But, grateful as perhaps I should feel for such kind assistance in the performance of my duties, I do not accept his opinion unless it agrees with my own.

I have just referred to the deceptiveness of angles,

which is far greater than would be realised by anyone who has not specially studied the subject. Why is it, I have been asked, that the inside horses, the horses nearest to the spectator, seem to be going so much faster than those beyond? They certainly do so, and that is doubtless one reason why the interested observer often feels convinced that his horse has come with a rush and got up, as just remarked. I will endeavour to illustrate what I mean by a little diagram.




*a* and *b* are horses, X is the spectator. As he looks to his right at the approaching animals *a* will seem to be in front of *b*; they come opposite to him and *b* appears to have drawn exactly level; they pass, and he is convinced that *b*, "going twice as fast," is clearly leading. Very likely *b* will look to be a good length in front when in reality from my box I perceive that *a* has won by a neck; if they continue exactly level and pass me so inseparably that it is a dead-heat, our

friend (having perhaps backed *b*) will be positively certain that my verdict is utterly wrong.[1] If anyone wishes to ascertain how hard it is for a person not in a line with the winning post to say what has won, a test can readily be applied. Run gently, or even walk, up the middle of the Rowley Mile, and try to put a stick in the ground exactly in a line with the two posts. Then go into the box and see where the stick has been placed, and it is tolerably certain that it will be an astonishingly long way out. I have heard that it was the late George Fordham who first suggested that this test should be tried. A comment had been made on the difficulty of knowing just where the winning post was when riding a race; some ignorant person expressed doubts about any such difficulty existing, and he was invited to try. It has been calculated, I may here observe, that there is one dead-heat in every sixty races. Who made the calculation, and over how long a period the researches on which the figures are based

[1] Angles deceive the most experienced men. Thus the late Duke of Beaufort, watching the Two Thousand Guineas in 1880, had no sort of doubt that Muncaster had beaten his colt Petronel. "A couple of strides further and I should just have won!" he remarked, turning away. "But you have won, Duke!" a friend, looking over at the judge's box, replied, and the owner's astonishment was great to see that his colt's number was hoisted.—Ed.

extended, I do not know, but on the whole I am inclined to think that the conclusion is fairly accurate.

It is a chief duty of the judge to avoid the least unnecessary loss of time, to see that the winner's number is hoisted at the earliest possible moment, and in order to do this I find the best way, according to my experience, is to make a tabulated list of the runners so that the lightest colours come first, gradually shading off into the darkest. Before all else the table must be plainly written, and, of course, correct. I go to the weighing-room, ascertain which horses are going to run, and make the entries in my book. Taking an example at random, I will give a race at the July Meeting of 1903.

THE PRINCESS CUP.

*Last five furlongs B.M.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **20** | Sir J. Miller . . . | White, primrose sleeves and cap. |
| **18** | Mr. J. Cannon . . | White, pink sleeves, green cap. |
| **5** | Lord Bradford. . . | White, scarlet sleeves, black cap. |
| **3** | Sir J. B. Maple (1) . | White and gold stripes, claret cap. |
| **9** | Mr. Henning (2) . | White, green hoop on sleeves, green cap. |
| **11** | Mr. Keene (3) . . | White, blue spots. |
| **8** | Mr. E. L. Heinemann | Yellow, red collar and cuffs. |
| **22** | Mr. Pincus. . . . | Red, white braid, yellow cap. |
| **19** | Mr. Joicey . . . . | Pink, green sleeves. |
| **10** | Mr. Homan . . . | Maroon and gold stripes. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Mr. Luscombe . . | Mauve, straw sleeves, black cap. |
| **4** | Mr. Whitney . . . | Light blue, brown cap. |
| **21** | Mr. Musker . . . | Light blue, violet sleeves, grey cap. |
| **16** | Mr. Rose (4) . . . | Blue, black sleeves, red cap. |
| **14** | Lord Penrhyn . . . | Black and white stripes, red sleeves and cap. |

Head and one length.

The numbers, it will be understood, are those on the card, and being seated in the weighing-room while the jockeys are passing the scale impresses the colours on one's mind. Equipped with the book I then go to my box and see the horses canter to the post, in order to grow still more familiar with them—it is perhaps needless to add that if jockeys are carrying wrong colours, distinguishing caps, or if any deviation has been made from the colours printed on the card, a special note records the circumstance. Years ago there were fewer owners, and one became accustomed to their jackets; of late years the Turf has gained many recruits, and a judge must necessarily be familiar with all alike.

Then I wait till the signal is given that the field is off—everyone who goes racing knows the sound and movement that proclaim the start. Bells, and occasionally bugles, have long been used to announce the fall of the flag, or of late the raising of the barrier; Newmarket, last of all, followed

with an electric bell. As soon as the competitors are distinguishable I fix my glasses upon them and watch with all possible attention. Practice, I suppose, no doubt enables a judge to pick out the winner, as a general rule, while the horses are still some distance off, but general rules are not to be considered. It seems certain sometimes that one of two or three will win, when another that has not been included in the reckoning comes with a rush and just gets home. The judge must on no account follow his field all the way, for if he did the deceptive angles would assuredly perplex him. He watches the horses from the moment he can make out clearly what is happening, and so continues to watch till the leaders are five-and-twenty or thirty yards from him : then he puts down his glasses, gets the line between the two posts, and the nose that crosses that line first wins. He has no angle to bother and confuse him, and, in fact, after a little of the practice which accustoms him to the work, it is really difficult to make a mistake. According to whether the jacket carried by the winner be light or dark he knows just whereabouts in his list to look for the number ; his man is waiting instructions to put it in the frame to be hoisted, and he is told. "No. 3" it was in the race quoted, and a very close finish.

"No. 3" was accordingly displayed, then after a few seconds the frame was pulled down, the assistant instructed to put up "No. 9" and "No. 11" in the race in question, and nothing remained for the judge but to write out an account of the race, giving his decision—won by a head, a length between second and third—to add the number of the fourth, and to send it to Messrs. Weatherby for publication in the next issue of the *Racing Calendar*.

It is always desirable to name at any rate the fourth horse, for the obvious reason that there may be an objection or disqualification; and if it be convenient to give the places of one or two more so much the better. As the horses have been galloping towards him he may have seen—occasionally does see—some bumping or crossing, and is not at all surprised, it may be, to find that there is an objection to the winner. In such a case he is summoned to the stewards' room to give his evidence; usually the jockeys that were riding in the race are first questioned and the judge follows.

I am asked for some anecdotes or incidents in connection with the business, but my own humble career has really not afforded any. In bygone days racing was conducted with less order than it is at present, and there is a story of a judge at a

certain roughly arranged steeplechase meeting who had a disagreeable experience one afternoon. An energetic portion of the crowd had, it is said, backed a certain horse, and was determined that it should win. It seemed to be doing so as those runners that still stood up neared home, but at the last fence but one the animal fell and got away from its prostrate jockey. It appeared quite impossible that anything could happen to deprive the only competitor who was left standing of the sweets of victory, which would have been sours to supporters of the "good thing," and the only one trifle needed was the judge's verdict; but the backers of the fallen steed were not lacking in resource. Rushing to the judge's box they violently toppled it over face foremost, the unhappy judge lay prone and imprisoned, while the should-have-been winner cantered past the post ; but not having seen the race won, he could not bear testimony to what won it.

I do not suppose that any one really believes another story of a judge who, so the tale goes, vastly surprised spectators by putting up the number of the horse that carried a red jacket, when there seemed no sort of doubt that it had finished some distance behind the bearer of a green. Up, however, went the number of the red.

"What did that win by?" a friend of the man in the box asked him, as he descended to face a wondering crowd.

"Oh, a good neck," he replied, adding in a murmur to his friend, "*The first winner I've backed this week!*"

No! The anecdote is an amusing libel which I am sure nobody accepts as true. So also, I suppose, is the tale of a difficulty which is said to have overtaken some judges—three I believe do duty together—in the Argentine Republic. The three gentlemen in question had a great fancy for one of the runners—so the story goes—and had backed it freely; but though judges in one sense they were not so in another, for the certainty was beaten—certainties so often are—at least a length. What was to be done? They all wanted money, they had got a good price, and to pay instead of to receive was an inconvenience not to be contemplated. The horse had not won, but they would simply say it had and hoist its number, one of them suggested—it was really quite an inspiration—and up the number went accordingly. But the affair was not so simple as it had seemed. Argentina is a country where people carry revolvers, and where likewise they have a ready disposition to use them. A number of truculent sports-

men who had backed the real winner surrounded the judges' box—from which the three had not issued, having perhaps some little delicacy about facing the crowd—and simply stated that they were not going to be robbed. A mistake had been made and the race awarded to the wrong horse ; that mistake had to be rectified, or exceedingly awkward consequences, they hinted—with their hands in their pistol pockets—would at once ensue. Here was another dilemma for the trio. How could they escape it ? A glance at the threatening mob that continued to gather decided them. They must exhibit the right number and pretend to have made a mistake—simple, but at the same time rather awkward and very disagreeable. However, up went the number that should have gone up at first, and the three breathed with relief—for a moment. For other people, it appeared, besides themselves had fancied the second ; these had seen it given as the winner, with some surprise if with more satisfaction, and now, after having counted their gains, they were to be deprived of them because the judges pretended to have committed a blunder. Would they stand it ? Not for a moment ! Another crowd, backers of the second that had received the original verdict, in turn surrounded the box, and the

judges were told that this sort of thing was not to be endured. They had given a most excellent decision to begin with, and if they did not steadfastly abide by it there would be serious trouble in connection with powder and bullets. Danger awaited the luckless three in either case, supporters of the first and of the second horse alike had six-shooters and an angry inclination to shoot. What could they do? Suddenly one of the trio had another inspiration. They would call it a dead heat! Backers of both would then alike get something; so up went the "o," and beneath it the two numbers side by side.

That is the story as far as I have heard it; how it affected the ring and what the bookmakers said is not recorded; but I need not perhaps state my belief that the legend is altogether a baseless invention.

A judge story which is true is that which tells how the late Mr. Clark, an official who won the respect and esteem of all classes of racing men during his long and honourable connection with the Turf, nearly caused a state of confusion at Goodwood that would surely have been unprecedented. The horses had gone to the post for the Stewards' Cup. There is, as readers are doubtless aware, always a big field for this event, and

in the year in question the runners were exceptionally numerous—forty-three. That they would get off speedily seemed improbable, and the judge sat in his box contemplating the landscape before him. It was a very sultry afternoon; a shimmering heat seemed to rise from the earth; on the hillside opposite to him a flock of sheep were feeding and he watched them as they fed; gradually they seemed to fade away, and the next thing he remembered was being violently shaken by a policeman, who pointed to the rapidly advancing field now within forty or fifty yards of the box. The judge had barely time to pull himself together when the leaders flashed past the post.

It would have been a catastrophe indeed if Mr. Clark had continued to slumber while the horses galloped home, and certainly those who won on the race—I never had a bet in my life, so am ignorant of the sensation of winning—had cause to be grateful to that vigilant constable. Few people, I imagine, can realise what the owner of the winner would have felt if after going through weeks of anxiety and hope and fear, he had seen his horse defeat the field fairly and squarely and then heard that it was "no race." It would have been bad enough had the winner

of the first heat, as it were, won the second also, but when races are run over again very often the same horse does not finish first.

The Editor asks me to say something about the horses and jockeys of to-day and of a bygone period, but I must beg to be excused this task, for what I think is the sufficient reason that of horses I am really no judge and of horsemanship a far from confident one. I see, or imagine I see, when jockeys are not riding very hard, but I imagine that if tricks are played, if riders are not trying to win, they do not wait till they are close home, and, in fact, this is a subject that I think it would be wisest not to discuss. Of the horses I do not take special notice, my concern being with their riders, to see in what order and at what intervals the jackets pass my chair. I do not know one horse from another, and could not name from its appearance a single animal in training.

The Jockey Club always have their own judge, who receives a salary. The proprietors or clerks of courses elsewhere engage their judge at a daily fee—some half-score officials now hold licences to act. Once engaged for a meeting the engagement usually continues ; the judge looks in the *Calendar* and notes that he is announced to act.

At Newmarket, where there are several courses,

with a box, necessarily, at each, jockeys used sometimes to mistake the post and finish at the wrong place—the error is even now occasionally made. To obviate this, in the year 1863 it occurred to the late Mr. Clark that a flag over the box where he was officiating would be a good indication to the jockeys ; and he provided one accordingly. It was the year of the wedding of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and Mr. Clark chose the colours of the Danish flag, an act of devotion to the Princess. The red and white fluttered for many seasons, but a couple of years ago the little banner needed renewal. The lady who kindly set herself to provide the new flag had, as it happened, no red and white silk by her at the moment ; she took what she chanced to have, and visitors at Newmarket were astonished and by no means pleased to find the Boer colours hoisted over the judge's box. It had, of course, never occurred to the maker that she had utilised the colours of the enemy ; but the slip was promptly repaired, and now the Danish colours wave again.

# STARTERS AND STARTING

BY A STARTER

A SWEEPSTAKES. NEWMARKET SPRING MEETING, 1793.

## VII

# STARTERS AND STARTING

### BY A STARTER

Previous contributors to this series have, very properly, dwelt upon the importance of the offices they fill ; the trainer has noted that if a horse is not fit it cannot win races, the judge has pointed out that a moment's confusion or carelessness on his part may divert the legitimate spoils of victory, and so on. I am inclined to maintain, with no idea of magnifying my office, that the starter is by no means the least important personage in the racing hierarchy ; for it is no doubt true that races are not seldom lost at the starting-post—it may be owing to the fault of one of my brethren or myself, or it may arise from other causes which need not be specified. I am by no means of a suspicious nature, I hope, and know how much nonsense is talked about horses that are not " out " ; but supposing a jockey were not anxious to win a particular race, it

is rather at the starting post than before the stands and close to the judge's box that his lack of anxiety would probably be most apparent.

One of the subjects upon which I am asked by the Editor to dilate is, it perhaps need not be said, the starting machine, the innovation that during the last few years has superseded the old-fashioned flag which, when first introduced, was supposed to have brought the system of getting horses away as nearly as possible to perfection. I have an idea that the Editor is rather anti-gate, at least that he is by no means pro-gate ; but he asks me to express my opinion frankly on this much-vexed question, and I am therefore obliged to remark that I am on the whole decidedly in favour of the new machine. The one in use is, moreover, the best I have seen, the quickest to fly up. What it wants is to have the action perfected by electricity, so that the jockeys would be obliged to look at the webbing, and not to watch for any action or movement of mine to give them a preliminary hint that I am going to release them.

There are undoubtedly several things to be urged against it. Some horses will not have it at all, and I dread to see any of these entered for races at which I am officiating, knowing that trouble and delay are the inevitable consequences of their

appearance. Having once taken a dislike to the gate their hatred of it increases, and no wonder, seeing that they must associate it with a demand on them for severe exertion and almost inevitable punishment. Different trainers have no doubt different theories as to getting their horses used to the gate, and naturally some are more successful than others. Much, again, depends on the jockey. A horse ridden one day by a certain jockey will be quite tractable and docile ; another day the same horse with a different jockey will be all over the place. Because there is a machine at the starting-post, some people seem to think that horses will become machines also, but they will not. Another thing against it is that while all horses undoubtedly "strike off" better when they are moving, some animals are quite unable to "get going" from a stand—a fact, indeed, which appears to have been at one time well recognised, for prior to the introduction of the machine the Rule of Racing ran that "the horses must be started from a walk." There is no doubt danger from horses that kick, and that some of the jockeys are fully aware of this their demeanour at the post leaves no sort of doubt: they have less freedom than in the days of the flag, when, of course, they could get out of the way of a dangerous neighbour more easily ; nevertheless,

though it is true that horses cannot now move forward to escape from a kicker, the field are so close together that if an animal lets out he cannot do nearly so much harm as he often used to do. How many jockeys, I may ask, have been badly injured ?

But admitting all this, there are certain valuable advantages about the gate, and, by the way, one very curious thing in connection with its introduction, and this is that it has, in my opinion, suffered more at the hands of its friends than of its enemies. One or two of the writers who have been its main advocates are for some reason or other regarded with so much contempt and detestation by the majority of their brethren that I am sure the gate has not been fairly judged, simply and solely because these advocates have eulogised it. Others seem to have said : " So-and-so likes the gate and backs it up ; that's enough for me ! I dislike it and am going to run it down." I am really inclined to believe that if the chief backers-up of the gate had been against it, much less would have been heard in condemnation ; though of course owners and trainers of horses that have an incurable antipathy to it, or that begin slowly from it, will naturally be bitter. For one thing the more inexperienced boys have undoubtedly a vastly better chance with a barrier. In the days of the

flag, a wily jockey would not go unless he was ready, and he was never ready till he thought he had just a little bit the best of it. If one or two others were before him, and he felt that the start was imminent, he would call out, "No, no!" and swing round his horse. Some of the jockeys were at once so artful, and so apparently innocent and anxious, that they reduced this business to quite a fine art, and boys really had no chance with them. The trick had long been fully recognised by the authorities, and in the Rules of Racing it was expressly laid down that a jockey who was guilty of "wilfully turning his horse round" or of "hanging back" was to be reported to the Stewards; but, as I have said, they did this so cunningly that it was difficult to say when their action was intentional. Now, however, the runners are, all being well, in a line, standing still, and the younger jockeys can get off on equal terms.

The Stewards' orders are at present, in the altered state of affairs, that "horses must be started from a stand," and it is necessarily a difficult thing to get a number of highly strung animals, with their jockeys on the alert and eager to be off, to stand quite still in a line. Some horses can hardly be induced to remain motionless, but the starter must get them to stand so at least as nearly

as possible, and it is then his business to spring the barrier. The gate certainly gives the boys confidence, and confidence is an enormous help towards success.

I doubt if any racing official is, on the whole, more unjustly criticised than the starter, though, of course, it may be that any one who exercises any particular profession thinks that he is peculiarly ill-used and suffers from adverse comment more than anybody else. A man with a grievance is generally apt to be rather a nuisance, I am well aware, even in the case when his grievance is well founded ; but I can scarcely be expected to let slip this opportunity of making some remarks on the manner in which starters are, as I think readers will presently be willing to admit, often unjustly censured. Most of this criticism levelled at the starter comes from men who are watching (what they can see of) his proceedings from the stand ; and I have no hesitation in saying that they very rarely have the least idea of what has actually happened. Comparatively few people come down to look on at a start, for reasons that are sufficiently obvious and natural. Men want to see the finish, and the starting-post is, in most cases, a considerable distance from the stands, a visit to it involving a longish walk and consequent loss of time. I

have known several cases where experienced racing men who had been down near me have been good enough to say that a start was excellent, while those who have looked on through their glasses three-quarters of a mile away have declared the same start to be "rotten." Many people entirely forget, or do not realise, the angle at which they are looking at a start, and judge it unjustly accordingly.

Why they quite honestly, fully believing they are right, come to such conclusions can readily be explained. Two or three horses in a big field are tolerably sure to be more or less bad beginners; the whole lot may be absolutely level when the barrier is raised, but these two or three do not strike off with the rest, the critics through their glasses see that they are behind, assume that they have been more or less carelessly or clumsily left there, and the start is set down as a hopeless failure —on the part, the censors have no doubt, of the starter. Because the majority of horses get off so equally, anything a bit slow is conspicuous and is at once put down as "left."

But let us consider a few facts bearing on the case. It may be, for one thing, that a jockey is not ardently desirous of getting away first; his horse figures in the rear, and this is held to be a

proof of the starter's incompetence. Occasionally one or two horses will even swing round when the webbing flies up, and that again is supposed to be the starter's fault. If men would only come down to the starting-post and really see what happened, I should not mind any condemnation they might be pleased to level at me if starts were bad ; but I can only get the animals standing still in a line ; and because some strike the ground more quickly than others, some dwell, and some swerve, so that when the leaders have gone a hundred yards there is a big gap between them and the hindmost, it is cruelly hard that the starter should be blamed, as he so frequently is.

The starter's duties are so obvious that I do not think there is much to be said about them which is not almost universally known. In the old days the jockey who was first at the post took up the position he liked best—which of course, as a general rule, was on the rails—and the others sorted themselves as chance, luck, and impudence admitted. Now there is a draw for places. The clerk of the scales has a little bag of ivory discs with numbers on them, and when the jockeys are all weighed out each draws a number from the bag. A list is made of these and handed to the starter, supposing him to be in the weighing-room ; for

as a matter of practice he often does not return to the paddock, and then the list is given to one of the jockeys to take down to him. From this he reads out the places : " Morny Cannon 1, Madden 2, Maher 3, Lane 4," and so on, and the jockeys go to the positions indicated. If there be a very vicious horse, a determined kicker that is known to be likely to do damage if possible, the starter has the discretion to put him at the end where he will be least mischievous. Some liberty is allowed to the starter, who finds a certain licence in the Rule that he is to " give all orders necessary for securing a fair start," and again that " the horses shall (*so far as is practicable*) be drawn up before the start in an order to be determined by lots to be drawn by the jockeys at the time of weighing out." Then the trouble begins ! With more or less care and anxiety to help matters forward the jockeys range up to the gate, though I should add that with very few exceptions those now riding are a particularly well-conducted lot, and it is a rare thing to find any of them who are not more than willing to do their best ; and here again the boys find the benefit of the gate. Formerly some trainers were very rough on their lads. They were told to get off, knew that if they failed to do so they would in all probability be made to suffer for

what would be set down as their carelessness or stupidity, and were disinclined to obey the orders of the starter, dreading that they would fail to get away, and so incur the wrath of their masters. There are delays, as everyone knows, but seldom, if ever, anything like the delays that there used to be when the flag was employed. Fields were sometimes kept at the post, in very many instances wilfully, a jockey's design doubtless being to wear out the patience and destroy the chances of some animal that was known to be specially excitable. The gate has not, it may be admitted, done all that it was hoped it would do in the matter of saving time, but at least there are never—or practically never—such tedious waits as were once not infrequent. Our critics in the stand are no doubt often saying that such and such a brute that spoils the start time after time ought to be left behind, and I should very often dearly like so to leave it; but that is not a matter within the starter's discretion. At length the happy moment arrives, the lever is pulled, my assistant's flag is lowered, and away the horses go, one or two perhaps, as aforesaid, hanging back or swinging round; and then I know that probably some kind friend when I return to the paddock will say—having backed a loser—"They didn't get very

well away that time, did they ?" or I shall read in one of the papers, in a report possibly written by some scribe who has lost his money, that I have no idea of starting horses and ought to be keeping a greengrocer's shop.

I then write a report for the Stewards, saying at what time the race was started, the number of starters, and adding any remark, such as that certain animals for one reason or another were not well away ; the idea being to indicate anything that might have happened to put any of the field out of the race. I may as well quote the Rule, which runs : "The starter shall report to the Stewards the time at which each race was started, and shall also report by whom, or by what cause any delay was occasioned."

Certain quick-witted jockeys are, of course, always ready to try little devices which will give them an advantage, and they exhibit quite a genius for noting the moment when the starter is about to pull his lever ; it need scarcely be said that some of them have occasionally made mistakes in this respect, and, thinking that the webbing was about to fly up, have jumped into it ; and for this reason it would of course be an excellent thing if some of the suggested improvements could be introduced. No doubt before long electricity will

be utilised ; the starter will be able to touch a button at the end of a cord, which he could do without any obvious motion of the hand. When the flag was used, certain jockeys had a really marvellous gift of "getting off," knowing by a kind of instinct when there was going to be a start. I suppose they studied the official's face, habits, and actions, and could see when he was about to let them go. And there have been horses also that watched the flag and understood when they were to set off without any hint from their riders.

In the days of Mr. MacGeorge I fancy criticism was less rife. I am not for a moment saying that he was anything but the excellent starter tradition holds him to have been, but there were not so many tongues and pens ready to find fault. His methods are said to have been particularly rough and ready, though I do not suppose there is any truth in the old story which declares that on one occasion, when the field had been at the post for some time, he impatiently exclaimed, "Now, you that aren't trying, get behind, and let those that are have a chance of starting !"

The official starter to the Jockey Club receives a salary for the eight meetings at Newmarket, and he has also to do duty at Ascot, Epsom, and Good-

wood. At other places the starter is engaged by the management, or the clerk of the course, sanctioned by the Stewards of the meeting ; and a hack is provided for him, which may be a pleasant animal to ride, or on the other hand may not. At some meetings he gets over a good deal of ground during the course of the racing, though, as already remarked, when two or three events start at or about the same spot, a long way from the stands, he does not always ride backwards and forwards, trusting to one of the jockeys to bring him the draw.

I am asked to add some stories, but this is trying me a little too high, for my memory is not very responsive. There is one anecdote of the characteristic idiot who, knowing nothing of horses, assumes an exhaustive knowledge of them. Some of the best animals in training were running at a certain meeting, but none of these was fortunate enough to meet with his approbation, and he descanted on their weak points to the admiring ladies who were with him listening to his pronouncements. At last he found a horse that came up to his estimate of what a thoroughbred should be. "Now that," he said, "is a creature that does credit to his breed ! He has strength as well as symmetry, good bone and admirably developed

muscle. That is the sort of horse that it really does one good to see. What animal is that, my boy?" he inquired of the lad who was walking round with his ideal. "Starter's 'ack, sir!" the boy replied. It was a fat old animal that wheezily and laboriously took me to and from the post.

There is a tale of a certain starter who entered into alliance with a certain rider to enable the latter to win races; but let me emphatically add that the scene here is laid in the East, where presumably, if morals are not freer, supervision is less strict than in this country. A starter could no doubt do a great deal towards ensuring success or failure in the days of the flag, but this particular rogue wanted to make things practically safe for his friend, and hit upon a rather ingenious device. It was understood between the pair that the flag was to fall at the *third* time of asking. The field got into a line, but however straight it may have been, the starter turned them back at the first attempt. Again they would endeavour to range themselves, and again he would pretend to see something that did not satisfy him and tell them that it would not do. The third time, however, there was to be no doubt. His friend jumped off as hard as he could go the moment he had turned his horse, when he was well on his way the flag

was tardily lowered, and the others were allowed to set off in hopeless pursuit.

In this country I am sure I may claim for my brethren and myself that we honestly and laboriously do our best to perform a very thankless and difficult task, and that I have justification for the use of these adjectives I think readers will be willing to admit for the reasons indicated on previous pages.

# BACKERS AND BACKING

BY A BACKER

## VIII

# BACKERS AND BACKING

### BY A BACKER

Let us, as an example of the proceedings of the ordinary backer of horses, follow Mr. Puntington and see what he is doing at Sandown this afternoon. He is a very fair specimen, has gone racing a great deal, has an extensive acquaintance among Turfites of all classes, and a good many friends. He is not much of a judge of horses, but has watched so many races that by the light of experience he is able to see what is going on in the course of the struggle ; and here he is wandering round the paddock to find out if there is anything likely to beat Mayblossom, who is sure to be a hot favourite for the first event on the card.

The quest takes some time ; the horses are being mounted, and as a jockey in a green jacket is given a leg up on Catullus, Puntington comes

face to face with the owner of the verdant banner —why "banner" I am not aware, but so the phrase frequently runs—whom he chances to know fairly well.

"Do you fancy yours?" Puntington asks. "I suppose they'll lay odds on Mayblossom?"

"I think mine's sure to run well," the other replies. "He has come on lately, and he goes with the boy who's riding him. Of course Mayblossom must be dangerous; but she has had a lot of it lately, and I am inclined to think that her penalty will stop her."

With a word of thanks Puntington goes to the ring and asks how they are betting. They are taking 5 to 4 about Mayblossom. Something else is being backed at 100 to 30; 5 to 1 bar two is on offer; and just then Puntington's keen ears catch a cry of "9 to 2 Catullus!" from the other end of the rails. "I'll have 50 to 10 Catullus," he says. The bet is booked, and before very long the horses are on their way home. Mayblossom shows a bold front at the distance, but Catullus is at her quarters. In the run home the weight tells on the favourite, and the green jacket is borne first past the post by a length and a half. That is all right! His owner was correct; the 7lb. extra just told at the finish, and Puntington has won £50.

Everyone may not be aware of the fact, though some people know it by experience, but £50 is often very hard to make and takes a great deal of getting. Need it be said that Puntington is not at all satisfied? Why didn't he have five ponies? The operation would have been just as simple, it is no more trouble to write down, and he would have won £125 instead of £50. Really and truly he has simply thrown away £75, that is what it comes to; at least he might have had what some of the Ring are fond of calling "five score," otherwise 100 to 20—indeed, why not have gone for a dash and taken 500 to 100? However, he has made £50, which, as a matter of fact, he rather wanted, and the thing is to run it up into something handsome.

Into the paddock again. The numbers are being fixed in the frame, and there emerges from the weighing-room the ardent and impulsive young Flightly, whom also Puntington knows well. Flightly has a big brown horse called Boanerges in the next race. His trainer is by his side, saddle and weight cloth on his arm, but Flightly catches sight of his friend and pauses to speak to him.

"You had better get in before the price shortens," he says. "I think it's a real good thing

for my old horse, and I'm betting. People fancy he doesn't get a mile, but really and truly I believe staying is his game."

"Thanks, old boy," Puntington replies. "I rather fancy Piccadilly. Are you sure to beat him?"

"Oh, he's a rotter! Of course he won last week, but I'm sure there was something wrong about that race. He's giving me 7lb., and I'm confident I could give him 10lb. You go and bet, and don't be afraid."

So Puntington pays another visit to the rails. They are taking 5 to 2 about Piccadilly, backing three or four others, and Puntington after being offered 7 to 1, tries another bookmaker, and is gratified to hear that he can have 100 to 12. He will do so, four times, giving his £50 a run; and, taking his place on the stand, he fixes his glasses on the field of thirteen who are ranging up behind the barrier. Flightly, rather hot and breathless, betting book in hand, comes and stands by his side. Nearly a page in his interesting little volume is covered with bets, and he is so excited that he adds them up three or four times, always making a different total. This is not the moment for common arithmetic. The barrier flies up. "He's got well away, at any rate," Flightly remarks. "I told

Jackson to come along with him." Jackson is obeying instructions. Boanerges is in front.

"Sorcery is going well!" a voice behind Puntington remarks.

"So is old Boanerges," some one else says.

"Yes, I'm not afraid of him," the first speaker replies. "He'll never get the mile." And Flightly turns round, glaring at the unconscious speaker as if resenting a personal insult.

"Ass!" he mutters to Puntington. "He'll see directly whether the old horse gets a mile or not!" But at that moment up goes Jackson's whip. "Sorcery wins!" the man who doubted the stamina of Boanerges exclaims. "No, by Jove, he doesn't! What's this thing coming on in red? Blushing Bride; and it's winning too! I never heard its name mentioned."

There is no doubt about it. Blushing Bride has the race in hand. Sorcery makes a good fight, Piccadilly comes with a rush that has been a second too long delayed, and is only just beaten, Boanerges dropping back rapidly and finishing in the ruck. Flightly says, "Damn!" and compresses his lips. It is a sentiment with which Puntington entirely agrees; and silently, for the reason that there is nothing to be said—the fact that Boanerges does not get a mile being now

abundantly obvious—the two descend the steps and wander back to the paddock.

Forty-eight pounds out of Puntington's £50 are gone ; but the day is young. There are four more races, and he need not listen to such an idiot as Flightly next time. Only five starters are announced for the next event, which seems fairly open, though his study of the sporting papers and Turf guides has induced him to believe that Red Letter has the best chance. Red Letter is favourite, and the odds against her slightly shorten as she canters to the post in good style. But Puntington also likes the looks of Aristæus, whose owner he does not know. He has some acquaintance with a friend of this owner, however, and learns from him that the colt is expected to run well. Seeking more detailed information, he learns that Aristæus's owner has a pony on ; but there is a great deal of money for the favourite ; Puntington thinks this is safest to stand and takes 70 to 40, being well satisfied with the situation when presently he hears that nothing over 11 to 8 is obtainable. It is a good race, but after a hard fight Aristæus wins rather cleverly by half a length.

"I was hesitating between the two," Puntington says to an acquaintance, as they stroll off towards

the paddock again. "I heard that Aristæus was very well and that his owner had a pony on."

"By Jove!" the other exclaims, "I wish I'd known that! He's a man who says very little, but that little always means a lot. If he tells you that a horse is well and that he has backed it—he bets very seldom and very small—that is quite good enough to go on. He's not the sort of fellow who talks about 'certainties' and 'good things.' But there really *is* a good thing for the next race. Myrtle Grove can't be beat, if they'll only let us back it."

The merits of Myrtle Grove are, however, fully recognised by those who have other horses engaged in the race, and the mare is allowed to walk over, while it is recognised that the Selling Handicap which follows is an almost insoluble problem. Puntington does not know what to do. "The heads," someone tells him, are backing Ethel, and he takes 50 to 15 about that. Then someone tells him Bagatelle will win, and he has a tenner on her. He is further advised "not to let Cockade run loose as he will do much better than people think," so he takes 100 to 12; and at the last moment people are tumbling over each other to back Blue Ridge, so that he thinks he *must* save on him, and can only get 50 to 20. He is not far

out, three out of the four he has backed run second, third, and fourth ; but in the very last stride Harpoon gets up and beats Blue Ridge the shortest short head that ever was seen. Until the number is exhibited most people believe that Blue Ridge has won, but the judge knows better. Up goes Harpoon's number, and down goes Puntington's £57.

He is £95 out on the day, and what makes it worse still is that he feels he ought not to have betted at all on the last race, having had no reason to fancy anything and having been led astray by winds of doctrine all blowing from doubtful quarters. There are only two races to get home on, moreover. An invincible two-year-old, with odds of 100 to 12 on him, no good to Puntington, beats two rags who are out for second money, and to get a bit of a line if possible, which it is not ; and there is another horse sure to be a hot favourite for the last race. The price will be cruelly short, he is aware, but an even 100 will just leave him a fiver to the good. When the numbers go up there are only four runners, and "I'll take 2 to 1 !" is the cry, one vociferous layer trying to drown the voices of his brethren by offers to take 5 to 2. What people call the "Getting Home Stakes" looks expensive ! Before

long, however, there is a little move for Blackthorn, who goes from 9 to 2 to 3 to 1, and the ring consequently offer to take 7 to 4. What shall he do? He is not altogether without caution, but thinks that at any rate he'll get a bit back. He will lay 70 to 40—twice?—yes! why not? If he lays 140 to 80 he will at any rate only be £15 out on the day, which is not very serious for him; so this he does.

But something is evidently wrong with the favourite. The creature looks fit and is ridden by a good jockey; still he is never going well, and the outsider of the party, against whom any odds in reason might have been had, beats the second favourite comfortably by a length and a half, Blackthorn a bad third. Puntington reiterates the remark which Flightly had made earlier in the afternoon, and takes his seat in the train trying to persuade himself that the £140 makes his losses on the day something under £235; and then he begins assiduously to study next day's programme with a view to seeing how he can get his money back, making the resolution for about the hundredth and eighteenth time that he will never again lay odds —which in all probability he will do once more at least in the course of the next twenty-four hours.

If backers made this resolution never to lay odds I think there is no doubt they would be richer, or at any rate not so poor, at the end of the year; though when I say "made a resolution," of course I mean if they made it and kept it, which is really a very different thing; the first part of the proceeding being so very much easier than the second. There are certain fixed rules with regard to the backing of horses which most men who go racing know well, and break on an average about four times in an afternoon. One of them is only to back one horse in a race, with perhaps, on occasions, a "saver" on the favourite, or on something else which they have cause to look on as particularly dangerous; and another, never to back a horse unless they have some really good reason—that is to say, what they believe to be a good reason—for fancying it. But the worst of these admirable rules is that they so often come out wrong in practice. It was in the *Badminton Magazine* that I read a story, two or three years ago, which is so pertinent to the subject that I am tempted to repeat it on the chance of the editor not striking it out. I have not by me the number in which it was published, but the gist of it was that a man went to Ascot having made up his mind that he would not fritter away ponies and fifties, with occasional

tenners in addition perhaps, because some friend told him that he oughtn't to let his animal run loose. This ingenious backer's idea was to wait for a really good thing and have a dash, and in furtherance of his judicious project he waited until the Thursday, resisting temptations to bet until the numbers went up for the Gold Cup. This was a certainty for the French horse, Perth II., on whom odds of 4 to 1 were being laid. The patient backer laid 400 to 100, anticipated the result with the utmost confidence, and saw the certainty finish fourth in a field of six, the race falling to the by no means remarkable handicap horse Merman, who according to all possible calculations a horse of Perth's class should have "lost." Our friend might have had a considerable amount of fun by betting his usual ponies and fifties, and at any rate it would have taken him some time to lose his £400. To get this back was now, however, his only ambition. There was another practical certainty an hour later —Caiman, in the Rous Memorial; and he laid 500 to 400 on this, in furtherance of the object so constantly pursued on a racecourse of "getting home." Caiman, however, also finished fourth, and there was another monkey gone; which tends to show that the system of waiting patiently for good things and having a dash is by no means

always remunerative—good things often looking so very bad after the race.

"Only bet in small sums, the losing of which will not seriously inconvenience you," seems the soundest of advice, but there are those who doubt whether it is so. In accordance with the eternal principles of arithmetic, these small sums have an ugly habit of mounting up, and the backer is apt to be careless about staking them. To adopt as a minimum some fixed amount which really makes a bit of a difference is advocated by other mentors, because if this be done a man does not bet without carefully making up his mind on what seem to him sound premises; and on the whole it may be said that the more seldom anyone bets the less he loses.

The question of price is all important, and one of the most remarkable things about racing is the accuracy with which prices can frequently be forecast by the experienced: "It is sure to be a hot favourite, they'll lay odds"; "You ought to get 4 or 5 to 1"; "They will back a lot, and I expect So-and-so will start about 100 to 14"—such are the remarks heard every day before betting on a race begins, and as often as not the situation is about correctly estimated; though of course, on the other hand, one is occasionally very wide of the

mark, and this is particularly annoying when one has undertaken a commission and can only return the owner about half the price he has confidently anticipated. It is even more annoying still when one does a commission at the best price obtainable and the animal backed afterwards drifts out to longer figures. This, indeed, is one of the problems before every race on which a man wants to bet—whether to get on early or to let things settle down, and for this there is no rule, every case being governed by circumstances.

If one knows that a horse is going to be backed for a great deal of money it is of course obviously advisable to lose no time. "The field a pony!" the ring opens out with when the numbers go up. A crowd of eager backers, all on the alert, rush to take evens, and the bookmaker's clerk immediately begins to compile a long list, his pencil going as fast as he can use it. In such a case, "I'll take 6 to 4!" is often followed pretty soon by "I'll take 2 to 1!" and only the backers who were in the first flight have got on at evens. Sometimes, however, as often as not perhaps, when even money is offered backers are not disposed to take it. The novice at the game, who has seen the speed with which a previous favourite has become an odds-on chance, may think it desirable to make his bet with

all possible speed, and having done so is convinced that he has done well ; but the more astute have an idea that the odds will lengthen, and they wait. "5 to 4 on the field" is presently offered without attracting custom ; 11 to 8 is tried ; then 6 to 4. Will one do better than that ? is now the question. "I'll take 35 to 20," you say to your favourite bookmaker. "Oh, very well, sir, to *you*," he replies ; and whilst you are writing it down you hear "2 to 1 on the field" from both sides of you. It is gratifying, on the other hand, to find that you have taken 100 to 30 about something that is firmly established at 7 to 4 ; but in my own case I have found, with curious persistence, that when I have hugged myself on getting the best of the market the horse has gone down—"the best of the market the worst of the settling" some cynical backers accept as a proverb. Money tells tales nevertheless, and when a horse "goes like a winner in the market," he very often goes like a winner also in the race, and indeed does win, more or less easily, at the finish ; but that there are exceptions to every rule need not be said. It is seldom that a horse drifts out and wins, but it does happen on occasions. Since I began writing this article Black Love at Sandown furnished a case in point. 2 to 1 was freely taken ; I thought I was rather clever

in getting 5 to 2, but the animal experienced a flood of disfavour ; 6 to 1 was easily obtainable in the course of a few minutes ; but he won comfortably.

How does the ordinary backer find winners, or, I should rather say, try to find winners ? If he be in the inner circle of racing he receives his *Calendar* on Thursday night in London or Friday morning in the country, and sets to work to study the programme ; not seldom finding that some horse on which he has been patiently waiting to have a dash has been struck out, or that something else that he has mentally handicapped at about 7st. 8lb. is in at 8st. 6lb. If he be not in the inner circle he waits to buy his *Lunar Month ;* and then the great question arises to what extent one can depend on the form ? Sometimes, of course, horses "run to an ounce"; the result is plainly mapped out for anyone with the most elementary knowledge of arithmetic ; but it is disappointing to work out the form, to find confirmation of it in two or three places, to conclude that the Sharp-set colt has no sort of chance, and to see him next day win in a canter; finding reason to suspect from the performance that this is the first time he has really been "out" for some weeks past.

In the train on the way to the races one con-

tinues to study the card, having previously seen what the various sporting writers in whom one has chief confidence have to say about the various events ; or perhaps the prospective backer makes up his own mind first of all about what appears likely to win, and then looks to see whether or not his favourite prophet agrees with him. Then, the course being reached, one is sure to meet a number of more or less knowledgable friends with whom one exchanges opinions, and here a vast deal depends upon whom that "half merry, half mischievous little sprite called Luck," to whom reference was made in the first article of this series, sends in one's way. I well remember one melancholy occasion when I had determined to have no bet on the Cesarewitch until the day of the race ; having that year, in previous handicaps, backed what seemed to be promising animals that for one reason or another were struck out, or after figuring as warm favourites in the early betting had retired to odds that looked hopeless. In spite of his weight I had made up my mind to back Sheen ; but on my way across the Jockey Club Stand I met the owner of another horse in the race, who asked me what I was going to do, shook his head when I told him, and with the kindest intentions in the world assured me that Sheen could not

possibly give his horse 30lb. Convinced by the argument I adopted his views, backed his horse (Partington), and watched it hopelessly beaten while Sheen won comfortably, starting at 100 to 3.

That is the exasperating sort of thing that constantly occurs, and assuming that the backer is a man of some knowledge and experience, I would lay it down as a rule that he should always stick to his own opinions and act upon them. I look back through old records and find innumerable instances of races on which I have lost, when, if I had followed my own judgment, I should have won. It is among the most exasperating things about racing to pick out a winner one's self and to be put off by what one hears, and it happens not only daily, but not seldom several times a day. It requires much strength of mind to avoid being influenced by the rumours of the course ; but I know two or three men who are judiciously inflexible and who benefit by their practice. Favourites win about four races out of nine throughout the year. Frequently these favourites start at odds on, and a favourite always starts at a false price for the reason that many men back it simply because it *is* favourite. A careful examination of any Turf guide will show that, taking one day with another, to back all the favourites is

inevitably to lose money ; so, obviously, to do this is to do wrong. If a man goes racing constantly and understands the game he will do far better, in the long run, if he makes up his mind for himself, instead of letting it be made up for him, even by the astutest of his friends.

Going to Goodwood a few years ago I was asked to mark a lady's card, and, having paid considerable attention to the day's racing, I did so. After the third race, while crossing the lawn, I met her in a great state of jubilation. She had backed all three winners, had won thirty pounds, and placed such reliance on my judgment that she had it all down on the animal I had marked for the fourth race. I myself, having listened to what I had heard from various kind friends, had backed seven or eight horses without touching a winner, and had backed two for the forthcoming race, leaving out, however, the animal I had marked in the train, which started at 6 to 1 and got home comfortably by half a length. This is a little experience which I expect a good many other backers could cap.

A friend of mine in the year 1885 was tremendously struck by the way in which Minting carried all before him. He knew Matthew Dawson's opinion of the colt, had a proper respect for his judgment,

and concluded that Minting was a great horse. Next year he backed him for the Two Thousand Guineas, carefully watched the race, saw the ease with which Ormonde won, and made up his mind that whenever the Duke of Westminster's horse appeared on a racecourse he would have £100 on him. This is a very sensible way of going to work. Pick out a really good horse and stick to him. Class generally vindicates itself in the long run. You can take a genuine interest in a really good animal. If he is beaten so much the worse and you lose, but it is less irritating to lose on him than on some third-class handicap horse who according to current gossip has won a trial and has a fabulous amount in hand. There is some comfort after a bad day in the reflection that one has at any rate acted sensibly, and that if the card had to be run through again you would do just what you have done; you have been wrong, but you have had sound reasons for it.

There is, I think, instruction to be gained from the account of Puntington's proceedings at the beginning of this chapter. He ought not to have had a bet at all on the Selling Handicap, in which, as we have seen, he backed four horses; and he made one of the most common mistakes, by which the ring daily benefits, in betting to "get home."

That business of "getting home" is one of the chief pitfalls in the backer's path. It is all very well to tell him that there will be plenty of racing next week and the week after. What he wants is to avoid having to pay on Monday—not to be a loser on the day ; and thus Puntington, instead of sticking to his tenners, with an occasional pony perhaps, went out of his depth and had £140 on a race. We all do it—at least most of us do—begin modestly and lose our heads when the luck is against us ; and I am the better qualified to warn backers against this disastrous course because I so frequently do it myself and know the folly of it. I was amused at a story a friend told me the other day of a modest backer of very humble rank who had mentally attached himself to a great stable. He had no sort of connection with it, had never spoken, or was in the least likely to speak, to any one who had, but it pleased him to imagine that he was intimately concerned ; he followed its fortunes as if he were so, and appeared to derive an immense amount of gratification from the process. He noted the mating of the mares with approval or displeasure, watched for news of the birth of foals, looked for any information he could obtain about the animals as yearlings, was elated or disappointed at what happened when they were

tried, and invested his modest stake on anything that ran.

A position in which our friend the backer greatly delights to find himself is the following: All the papers with very few exceptions "go for" one animal. A red-hot tip is abroad, and every other man he meets on the course tells him of the "good thing." A peculiarity of a certain class of racing man, very numerously represented, is that he is given to assume a knowledge which he does not possess, and some ingenious person or other is certain to pretend an acquaintance with the details of the trial—the Esperance colt is 7lb. to 10lb. in front of a smart animal that won the week before last, it is gradually whispered abroad. Our backer presently meets the owner of the much-discussed horse, a shrewd man who knows what he is talking about.

"You've got a 'sitter' this afternoon, I hear?" is the greeting.

"I hear so, too, but I wasn't aware of it until I heard!" is the reply. "I've even been told the trial; but the fact is the colt has not been tried at all. It's a big, overgrown baby, and won't be ready for a long time yet. He can have no sort of chance. Barleymow is sure to win, I think!" (I am, let me add, faithfully describing something that recently occurred.)

"The field a pony!" is the current offer when the numbers are hoisted, and business is at once brisk.

"Have you backed the good thing?" someone who is writing down a bet in his book asks our friend.

"No, I haven't, and I'm not going to. I'm told it isn't really fancied," our backer says.

"Don't you believe it!" says the suspicious punter; "they're up to their eyes in it. I *know!*"

"Well,' returns our backer, rather nettled at the air of contempt and of superior knowledge in the other, "the owner himself is my informant, and he thinks, I don't mind telling you, that Barleymow is sure not only to beat him, but to win."

The incredulous one shakes his head and looks at our friend with an expression of scorn: of course he really knows nothing, but he fancies he knows a lot, and meantime 75 to 40 is being freely taken, 4 to 1 bar one; our backer finds someone to lay him 9 to 2 against Barleymow, and presently the real facts begin to extend more or less on both sides of the rails, 6 to 4, 11 to 8, 5 to 4, 11 to 10 are taken, Barleymow creeps up to 9 to 4, 10 to 1 bar two; nobody will indeed make an offer against Barleymow during the last few moments, and he

wins easily from an outsider, the Esperance colt stopping to nothing from want of condition, and finishing a very bad third. To feel convinced that the strong favourite will not win, to have a confident belief that the second favourite will, to gather from the market that there is no money for any of the rest, that nothing is in the least fancied—when things are thus is the time when the backer really enjoys himself; and he needs such periods of enjoyment, for on the whole backing horses is a cruelly disappointing game.

# BOOKMAKERS AND BOOKMAKING

BY A BOOKMAKER

## IX

# BOOKMAKERS AND BOOKMAKING

### BY A BOOKMAKER

It has been said that the bookmaker, like the poet, must be born not made, and it is at any rate the fact that to succeed in this calling a man must possess special qualities, mental and physical. More than most others he lives by his wits, by keenness of observation, to see how things are going, and to note every change and turn of the market, and by a shrewd knowledge of men. One backer will, for instance, placidly take odds which it would be useless to offer to another, though, as a rule, it is no doubt wise of the bookmaker to offer a fair market price and so to avoid as much as possible the familiar discussion with punters who want 4 to 1 when you offer them 5 to 2, and take up a great deal of valuable time in attempts to bargain; the end often being that when they

would be glad to take 5 to 2 they have to put up with 7 to 4, supposing they are able to get it.

An old story describes how some inquirer who "wanted to know," and asked a member of the ring by what arithmetical processes books were made, received for answer, "I know nowt about 'rithmetic. I want to lay 6 to 4 on the field." He did himself injustice, however, for no doubt, without being aware of it, he must have known a good deal about 'rithmetic. Someone in a French play was surprised to learn that he had been talking prose all his life without knowing it, and much the same must have been the case with this bookmaker, who was a better mathematician than he suspected. Mental arithmetic is, indeed, the foundation of the bookmaker's business, for if he does not "bet to figures"—that is, keep his book as level as possible so that some horses will pay money to meet losses on others—he is likely at any time to get into a mess. In theory he ought not to lose, and would not do so if only backers could be persuaded to support every horse in a race ; but of course that is just exactly what they won't, and are not likely to, do ; the natural consequence being that the success of favourites against which he has laid a great deal of money is a more or less heavy blow to him, for the obvious reason that he

has not taken enough, or nearly enough, money about the rest of the field to provide what he has to disburse to pay those who have backed the winner.

A great many people suppose that the bookmaker has much the best of most deals on the course. This may have been so formerly, but is by no means now the case. On the contrary, at the present time the well-informed, acute backer has just the best of it. Bookmaking was a fortune ; it is at present hardly a living, and this has been the case for some five years past. The two American invasions took many thousands out of the rings—never to return. There was, for a while, a tendency to underrate the invaders for one thing—it took a long time to make us realise what clever people they were ; and for another, not a few of them were wealthy men who could afford to wait their turn if things did not go well, and to make up for past mishaps with a huge balance to the good. Also some who were hard hit simply went home again leaving their accounts unsettled, though in many instances they had previously won, and of course been paid.

Bad debts are perhaps the chief bugbear of the business. I may claim to be—the claim is, I am sure, one that the Editor of the *Badminton Magazine*

would freely support—among the best-known men in the ring, though not, perhaps, as regards the average amount of my bets, one of the magnates, that is to say, big wagers are with me the exception, and if a man wanted the odds to a monkey it is not to me that he would apply ; but I have, and often study ruefully, a good-sized volume in which, under every letter in the alphabet—and for some reason chiefly under the S's and the W's—are lists of bad debts, from small sums up to amounts of three figures and often with something over a " 1 " in front of them.

Nearly all betting rules are in favour of the backer of horses. Thus, for example, a fielder who did not pay a bet lost recently at a meeting near London was charged with welshing and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. Now, many backers do not pay. Are they imprisoned ? Not at all ! They run no risk of such a fate. I am not, it will, I hope, be understood, complaining that the welsher should suffer ; far from it, the more so as such men do injury to bookmakers who do pay by vaguely bringing discredit on the ring. Serve him right ; only, the thing is not fair all round. The bookmaker who does not pay gets his twelve months ; the backer who owes money stays away, perhaps, for a week or so, sometimes

pays a little on account, more frequently pays nothing at all, but goes racing, laying out his ready money with the men to whom he is not in debt. The worst punishment that can overtake him is that (after a tedious process) he may be warned off Newmarket Heath and all other racecourses—but I know a good many who disregard the warning, and are regularly found in their old haunts. The Committee of the Newmarket Rooms act very justly as a rule, and certainly always with every desire to be fair ; but their judgments seem to me—perhaps I am prejudiced—to lean generally in the direction of the backer. They are, however, useful as a species of debt-collecting agency. I mean that if a bookmaker pays a guinea and lodges a complaint—"has a man up"—an official warning is sent to the defaulter, and in most cases that induces him to make some sort of effort to get the complaint withdrawn, the effort, of course, usually taking the shape of payment of, at any rate, a part of his debt.

Bookmakers usually start poor, and not seldom remain so. Most of them—it is curious, by the way, to what an extent the business, and therefore the aptitude for it, runs in families—start betting outside the rings (when allowed) ; if

lucky, or good judges, or both, make their way in time to the half-crown ring, the ten-shilling, and lastly into the *sanctum sanctorum*—Tattersall's —I beg pardon, I should say the "reserved enclosure." To the uninitiated the amount of hard work attached to any of the branches of the travelling fielder is almost incredible. He is at it hard all day—the mental strain is far more severe than those who have not tried it could believe—often after travelling all night; and he must keep himself before the public.

Many backers have their favourite fielder, and if he is not "there" perhaps one or two good customers are lost. Your fielder must be as strong as a horse, must have the best of lungs, and be impervious to heat and cold. The backer may choose his day, and in bad weather take refuge in his shelter; not so the bookmaker. He has his place on the rails or elsewhere, and there, if he is to keep his connection, he must unfailingly be found at all times by all comers.

Many persons doubtless imagine, too, that the bookmaker's stock-in-trade costs nothing. A sixpenny note-book and a penny pencil are supposed to be all the equipment that is necessary for him. As a matter of fact his expenses,

extending over a full week in probably two or three—or four—counties, trains, cabs, hotel, carriages to the course, rings, collections for poor people—no one will deny that my brethren subscribe liberally to relieve distress—clerk, "runner," etc., will come to not short of some sixty pounds ; and after a busy week, if he hails from the "reserved enclosure," most of the Sunday following will find him and his staff hard at work getting the accounts posted for Monday's settling.

Curiosity exists as to how bookmakers know what prices to lay, and with all the will in the world to explain I find myself really unable to do so. Of course the bookmaker reads the sporting papers and is to a greater or less extent acquainted with the form of horses. He usually keeps his eyes open, too, remembers what animals have been backed, and perhaps failed on previous occasions, and what sort of people have backed them—people, it may be, who, as the saying goes, do not throw their money away ; and then again he hears a good deal from one quarter or another as to horses that are expected to win races. Sometimes an owner with whom he is on good terms will give him a useful hint. The prices seem to be, if I may say so, "in

the air." They appear also, in some mysterious way, to pervade the whole racecourse. I mean this : Years ago, a good many years now, I had not made my way to Tattersall's, and betted in rings that were frequently a long way from that enclosure ; but next day, in comparing the prices I had laid with those quoted in the papers, I was nearly always struck by their almost exact similarity. The laws of supply and demand regulate this as they do most other businesses. I remember reading somewhere of a man looking at the horses going to the post, and saying to a bookmaker, "Why, the favourite's lame, isn't he?" The fielder, not even glancing in the direction indicated, answered, "I should not know if I looked, but I shall soon know without looking." This struck the writer of the anecdote as odd, I suppose, or he would not have written it ; but really there was nothing in the least strange about it. If the favourite were lame there would be a general disposition to back something else, this other would consequently shorten in price, and, equally as a matter of course, the odds against the favourite would lengthen. Supply and demand!

What the bookmaker's clerk does everyone probably knows. It is his duty to write down

the bets his master lays, and this is no easy thing to do with the perfect accuracy which is so all-important; for one mistake practically involves two blunders: a bet is put down to some customer to whom it was not laid, and not put down to the backer who really took it. A dozen backers are often trying at the same time to attract the fielder's attention, especially if they want to support a horse whose price is shortening; some he lays, some he refuses; a regular babel sounds in the clerk's ears, and not seldom, too, questions are asked of him whilst his master is busy, and distract his attention. Under the circumstances it is marvellous how correctly the books are kept and the accounts made out; and it is well that it should be so, as mistakes often involve a vast deal of correspondence and worry. It is particularly annoying to the bookmaker when a customer claims a bet that is not on your list, maintains that it was certainly you who laid it, and finds out afterwards that, in spite of the positiveness of his assertion, it was really someone else. Many bookmakers deal through a settler who is supplied with a list of what he has to pay and to receive on behalf of the backer for whom he is settling; many more send cheques on demand,

which invariably arrive by the first post on Monday morning ; I myself find it more convenient to send my demand, if I have won, or, if I have lost, to wait till I receive my creditor's request for a cheque for whatever the amount may be according to his calculation. If we agree, as we do in forty-nine cases out of fifty, I send him his cheque by return of post.

The bookmaker's "runner" is, I suppose, more of a mystery to the casual race-goer than the bookmaker's clerk, who is always to the front—if I were a more polite writer perhaps I should rather say *en évidence*, though I am very doubtful about the accent, and do not quite see why I should say in questionable French what I can explain to the comprehension of readers in English. The runner is on the whole rather a nuisance than otherwise, little as he may suspect that such a verdict can possibly be passed on him ; but of course he is useful at times, or he would not be tolerated. Nearly every bookmaker has his runner, and pays him a pound a day and expenses, his expenses being a biggish item in the account. The runner's business is to keep his employer informed as to how things are going generally, and principally about sudden changes in the betting. There is, for instance, a hot favourite. I am

laying 5 to 2 bar one, 9 to 4 it may be to customers who are likely to be satisfied with it, and whom I do not for one reason or another very much care to propitiate, 11 to 4 to others (as the betting varies and suits my book) whom I desire to please. After these two, 4 to 1 bar one, perhaps 9 to 2 bar one, is on offer, 5 to 1 may be shouted, when suddenly there is a rush for the third favourite. The runner sees 500 to 100 taken, 1,800 to 400 snapped up, 200 to 50 accepted because 250 to 50 is refused, and with the perception of experience he understands that 100 to 30 will soon not be obtainable. He bolts across the ring to tell me of the demonstration. There is a lot of money for the animal that is being backed, and this, of course, means that his chance is very favourably regarded by men who are prepared to support their judgment. The runner is presumably a good man and has a certain amount of licence to act upon his discretion. A loud voice (from Nottingham) is shouting 3 to 1 against the third favourite—second favourite probably by this time—but as my runner makes his way he hears 4 to 1 bar two offered and takes 200 to 50 for me ; his idea being that there is a strong upward tendency about the animal, I may be laying 2 to 1 or something like it before

the start, and the four fifties will consequently ease my book. He may have done me a good service. On the other hand weight of money may restore the original favourite or there may be a demonstration for the second favourite, causing my 4 to 1 chance which I had backed without knowing it to remain at those odds or even to drift out further again. My runner's thoughtful assistance may simply cost me £50. It all depends. The man has acted with the best of all possible intentions. It will be perceived, however, how necessary it is to have a discreet and quick-witted runner for the work.

Some time since—that is a most convenient date—I had a strong fancy that a horse belonging to a well-known professional backer would win a certain race, and observing the owner come into the ring, I told off my runner to follow him and see what he was doing, that is to say, whether he was taking the odds about his own animal. My man executed his mission—or thought he had done so—and presently came to me.

"He's backed seven horses," he said.

"What! seven besides his own?" I asked, rather puzzled.

"He hasn't backed that at all—not a shilling!' was my information.

"Oh!" I thought. "Not to-day, then. *That's* all right!" and I launched out against the animal in question, which, however, won quite comfortably.

Next day I met the owner of the winner, and mentioned to him that his win had hit me rather hard. "I was told you backed seven others," I remarked.

"I did," he replied, "for other people. I had money to put on for them, and then I backed my own."

Naturally, too, he got a good price about it, having to do so much for those who had entrusted him with commissions. My man had not stuck to him long enough; but I could not blame him, for he seemed to have found out all there was to know.

The odds! On these practically everything depends for backer and bookmaker alike, and lots of stories are, needless to say, current on the subject.

"What price So-and-so?" says the punter.

"That's 2 to 1, sir," says the fielder.

"Oh, rubbish! Ridiculous! 2 to 1? That's absurd! You are a most pernicious pincher!" the backer replies.

"Well, sir," says the bookmaker, with an

affected air of humility, as if he rather regrets the shortness of the odds he had suggested and wants to make amends. "I'll tell you what I'll do! I'll lay you 150 to 80."

"Yes, that's much better. Very well, I'll have that!" and he books the bet, strolling off quite convinced that he has done something clever, and has undoubtedly taught the bookmaker a real lesson in liberality.

Here is another. There are only three runners.

"What price Three Stars?" asks the backer.

"That's 6 to 4, sir," is the reply.

"And what is the Blank filly?"

"That's 6 to 4, too, sir," the fielder answers.

"But how much the other, then?" the punter continues

"Well, sir, if you've got one to beat those two it's odds on it."

The punter takes 30 to 20, thinking, quite correctly, that backing horses is a curious game, hoping that he has got the best of it, but feeling on the whole just a little doubtful.

Slightly differing from, but nearly allied to, the runner is the "tick-tack man." Why these latter should nearly always come from Birmingham I do not in the least understand, and will not profess to explain. I can trace no conjunc-

tion between the manufacture of guns and hardware and the making of acrobatic signals on racecourses, but in stating the town—or is it now a city?—of their origin I am only giving a fact. The tick-tack man—who oddly enough is more to the fore in France, where the *pari-mutuel* is the chief means of speculation, than in England—is the personage who suddenly appears in the less crowded parts of the ring and goes through a performance something between the extension motions as taught by the drill sergeant, and the exercises advocated as so peculiarly beneficial to the general health by professors of what is known as Swedish treatment. The object of the display is to inform persons on the other side of the course or elsewhere within visual range as to the state of the odds. They meet together, these quaint creatures and their associates, every Sunday evening and arrange their codes for the ensuing week, jealously altering their signs and signals. A curious wagging motion of the hands may have signified for the last six days that the third horse on the list of starters was at even money. Next week the same gestures indicate that it is at 10 to 1. A thumb jerked over the right shoulder implies that the favourite is in strong demand; last week it meant that an

outsider was coming in for support which might arise from dangerous quarters. So the tick-tack man fulfils his function. He has nothing directly to do with me, and so I only note him as a curiosity to be watched when I have time to watch him, which means to catch a casual glimpse of him now and then.

The Editor's request is that I should "say something about welshers, about making a book, explain what a '£500 book' is, for example, and about the operation of skinning the lamb—without waxing too jubilant about the last."

Welshers: They are not so prevalent as they used to be; indeed, their proceedings grew such a scandal that a means of suppressing them—more or less—became indispensable. Nowadays a very few ply their calling at the busiest meetings, and I believe their chief method of evading trouble, when a backer who has paid ready money goes to them to receive his due, is to reply politely to the demand: "I will send you a cheque, sir, if you will kindly give me your address." The victim usually gives it, hoping for the best, and with the dissipation of his hopes the matter ends. Formerly these men were bolder, the rings were less carefully kept, and by no means so fierce a light beat upon the racecourse at large. Rogues

expended capital in the purchase of huge banners, bearing on them the names of well-known firms of bookmakers who advertised liberally; and on important days, an hour or more before racing began, these banners would be floating on the breeze. Stewards, if any could be found, were lax and unwilling to exert their powers; clerks of courses?—clerks of courses were odd creatures, with all sorts of interests to consider; the police did nothing without definite instructions. The firms thus libelled?—the rascals always had in their pay, and in immediate attendance, two or three stalwart fighting men who could readily summon reinforcements, and adverse criticism on their methods was a very dangerous game. On occasions strangers, *i.e.* comparative strangers, appear in the rings and usually advertise themselves as "wrong 'uns" by shouting over the odds.

Making a book for a particular horse is sometimes done when the fielder has strong reason to believe from information which has come to him that this horse will win. He declines to lay against it, perhaps giving would-be backers the excuse that he is "full," or that "it is his worst." Against all the other starters he lays as much as he can, and if only the horse for which the book is

made wins his race, it will be seen that he is in a very pleasant position.

Making a £500 book means so arranging that not more than that sum is laid against any one horse and has to be paid on its success, and fielding would be a delightful occupation if the little business always came off as one designs it to do. Too often, however—from my point of view—the result of the attempt is that I find I have £300 or £400 with which to pay the monkey, and this altogether changes the aspect of affairs.

"Skinning the lamb!" When the little beast can be submitted to this operation the result is succulent and altogether fascinating. The term signifies the pleasing state of the case which arises when you have laid against every horse in a race except two or three, and one of these forlorn outsiders is so very good as to win. You have a considerable number of bets to receive, you have not a shilling to pay. Everything is all one way—clear profit. Truly the lamb is an enchanting little creature, but he is very, very seldom caught for skinning purposes. I hope this is not too jubilant, but it is so agreeable to think about and to anticipate that one must be a little exuberant.

The ranks of bookmakers are often recruited by

bookmakers' clerks. These latter prove so useful that their employers take them into partnership, give them a share of the book, frequently no doubt to their mutual profit. Not a few fielders are really only agents. Some man with capital, or perhaps a syndicate, provides funds and starts a layer to make a book. I know two or three such fielders who have broken master after master. It is easy to be adventurous if you are dealing with another person's money and have a complacently elastic sort of conscience. On this subject I will only end with the obvious remark that it is exceedingly rash to give a man practically the run of your banking account unless you are absolutely certain of the sort of man with whom you are dealing.

A less laborious way of trying to get money by laying against racehorses, other than travelling and shouting in all weathers, is to open an office somewhere—many such offices, as readers are probably aware, are in some of the best streets of the West End, Piccadilly, Bond Street, Regent Street, &c.—and bet by letter, wire or telephone, either on the comparatively few races on which there is now ante-post speculation, the newspaper odds guiding these transactions, or S.P.—starting price—on the day of the race.

In France a bookmaker may not shout or take money prior to the event. In Belgium no one who is not a Belgian may make a book, and then he must live in the country. In Australia bookmakers are licensed and pay different charges for carrying on their calling, according to the prominence of the race-meeting.

Some people have lately advocated the introduction of the Totalisator or *pari-mutuel* into England.

The *pari-mutuel* is a machine for registering bets. The backers choose their horse, and by purchasing tickets at prices of from ten francs upwards stake on it what they choose. From the total a percentage is deducted, and the remainder of the pool divided among those who back the winner, in proportion to their outlay. This way of bookmaking was declared illegal at Wolverhampton about thirty-three years ago, and after appeal five men were sent to Stafford jail to do seven days' hard labour. I think the confiscated machine is still on view at Scotland Yard. An attempt was made to work this method of bookmaking on paper, but the idea came to nothing.

A few fielders, after acquiring a little spare cash and a liking for racing, buy a racehorse or two, and it is creditable to see the straight way in

which, as a very general rule, they run their usually not very important animals.

The bugbear of the bookmaker who has a few pounds—and a few children—is the Income Tax Commissioner, who knows nothing about bad debts and expenses, and wants about a shilling a pound on the gross takings. I do not know why these Income Tax Commissioners should be so amazingly deficient in something less than average common sense, but that is my experience of them !

# HANDICAPPERS AND HANDICAPPING

BY A HANDICAPPER

SHOTOVER.

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X

# HANDICAPPERS AND HANDICAPPING

BY A HANDICAPPER

The word "handicapping," derived, it may be, from hand in cap, in reference to an old mode of settling a bargain by taking pieces of money out of a cap, signifies, so far as concerns horse-racing, the allotment or imposition of different weight to the various horses entered in a race in such a manner that if perfectly accomplished all the horses starting will run a dead heat. This is a high ideal to be aimed at, and one that time has shown to be incapable of realisation, for the simple reason that whilst the person to whom the adjustment of the weights is entrusted is performing his task (granted it may be with all the skill, ability, and acumen of a practised hand), a thousand and one little obstacles are standing in the way and militating against his hope of accomplishing what must be the very acme of his aspirations. The state of the

racecourse, whether the turf be adamantine, hard, good-going, soft, or heavy, is an important factor over which he has no control, seeing that the very great majority of the weights are allotted many days before the racing takes place. Then the all-important question of jockeyship comes in, and no one can deny that this most important question must invariably play a very material and decisive part. That the apprentices' allowance of five pounds would prove such a gold mine to those in a position to secure the services of the ablest young jockeys in handicaps was not dreamed of by the most active adherents of the new rule ; but far be it from me to say that that rule has not been productive of good ; it has brought to the front young blood at a time above all others when it was sorely wanted, and will no doubt introduce to us other accomplished youngsters in the course of coming seasons.

But this is almost a digression from the subject, the pitfalls which surround the work of a handicapper. There are still to be considered the fitness or preparedness for the contest of the horses taking part in it ; possibly in some instances the intentions of the owners or trainers. Then again, the chances of some horses are jeopardised by bad behaviour, or from other causes at the start, details which

cannot enter into the calculations of the framer of the weights. Horses may fall, as they did at Epsom in the year 1902, or bolt out of the course as did Cupbearer at Ascot, or be upset even by a stray dog or a stupid man as has happened from time to time. Then there was at one time the question of "doping" to be considered. Very few people seem to understand the nature of "doping"; but one thing is certain, that it is something in the nature of a drug, applied internally or externally as the case may be, which has a stimulating effect upon a horse for a time and gives him a kind of Dutch courage so long as he is under its influence. When the effect has worn off after repeated employment, the horse is practically useless for racing, whilst there can be no doubt that for breeding purposes the animal is also very seriously injured. This injurious use of drugs has recently been the subject of a rule framed by the Jockey Club, who, moreover, did not act in haste. It had previously been made penal by racing law in America. Although difficult of detection, the mere fact of its being subject to pains and penalties at the hands of that august body the Jockey Club should act as a very stringent preventative.

There is no royal road to success in handicap-

ping ; like a born horseman, a handicapper is born not made ; he must be a devotee of the sport, have a natural love for horses, be familiar with their breeding and performances, must possess the keenest of eyes and the shrewdest powers of observation to note what is being done in a race. He should also have a judicial mind, be incapable of partiality, and possessed of a memory sufficiently retentive to keep within its scope all the principal equine battles he may have witnessed during a series of years. Great quality, however, as a most retentive memory is, I doubt whether the power or capacity of discarding from the mind actions or events which it is best on the whole to forget is not really of equal importance. The more familiar he is with the peculiarities of each racehorse the more expert will the handicapper become, for he must take into consideration at times their weight-carrying capabilities ; their liking for good, hard, medium, soft, or heavy going ; their ability to make the best show with a light or heavy weight on their back ; their condition, and, above all, their stamina, remembering that horses which have shown a predilection for a five furlong course may possibly stay six furlongs, but are almost invariably beaten before they have gone a mile ; that horses whose best course is six furlongs may be trusted as a rule up

to seven furlongs and an easy mile, but no further ; whilst those which have run and won at a mile, but have not been tried at a further distance, may reasonably be expected to stay a mile and a half, or even two miles, in the same class of company.

The statistics of the last forty years' racing, which are before me, all tend to prove this ; but, of course, every now and then there are notable exceptions. The framer of weights must, however, take no risks ; if in any doubt, he should accept the very best form of the horse as a guide ; indeed this form should undoubtedly be always taken as the safest criterion in estimating the capacities of horses ; for the task that they have once performed they may perform again, and it is only convincing proof of their decadence and retrogression on the turf that can justify you in allowing them a rapid and material fall in the weights. Above all, the handicapper must be well acquainted with the nature of the various racecourses with which he deals. On some courses the going is at all times very dead, on others it is elastic and firm. A subsoil of clay is productive of much jar or concussion to horses' legs in droughty weather, whilst that of a sandy or peaty nature is less subservient to climatic changes. The gradients and declivities of Epsom and Brighton are vastly

different from the ascent at Ascot. The very slight undulations on the straight course at Hurst Park, and the slightly falling slopes at Lingfield and Lincoln, render those courses as easy to some horses as such tracks as Gosforth Park (as good, perhaps, as any other racecourse in the kingdom) are difficult. Here stamina as a rule asserts itself; but the accurate observer of racing problems soon discovers any peculiar leaning of a horse to a particular kind of course, be it right-handed or left-handed, uphill or downhill, hard going or soft going; noting too, perhaps, that whilst horses of inferior class are much affected by a change in the weather, state of course, etc., really high-class horses appear to be more capable of showing good form on any kind of track, and under any disadvantages, and are naturally regarded with much greater affection by the handicapper than a lot of selling platers, who are continually running for the hay and corn stakes, and winning one day, to be defeated under precisely similar conditions the next. Then, again, horses have their peculiar moods, their likes and dislikes, much in the same way as human beings. Their recollection of particular courses and of spots on those courses is marvellous; thus it was curious to see the old hurdle racer, Swaledale, on the last occasion on

which he ran at Carlisle, refusing at the very self-same simple flight of hurdles at which he had thrown it up three years before, though he had never seen the racecourse meanwhile.

There are no fixed rules laid down by the Jockey Club regarding the handicapping of horses, but it seems to me that most experts on the subject would agree with the following short code—namely, that horses which have never run should carry the top weight on the weight-for-age scale ; that horses which have only run once should have slight concession in the matter of weight, the class in which they run being, of course, taken into consideration ; that after two races a considerable concession may be made if they appear to be ridden fairly out, but that not until they have run in at least three races can they be treated on their merits and take what seems their rightful place in a handicap. Foreign horses, more especially those hailing from America and Australia, whose proper form it is impossible to gauge through any line, should be weighted more or less as having never run ; for if an attempt be made to handicap them on what appears to be their capacity when they first arrive in this country (and are incapable of showing their true form), the handicapper will repent of his lenient treatment the moment they are thoroughly

acclimatised, and once more fit and in a perfect condition for racing. This way of reckoning may seem a little harsh to our antipodean brethren, but the process of acclimatisation, which is a natural and not very rapid one, demands it ; otherwise the horses would be obtaining an undue benefit by means of a gradual reduction of their weight, when in all probability in no condition to produce their true form.

The theory of " horses for courses," again, and the value of recent form, should at the same time never be omitted from any rules that you may lay down for your own guidance. Again and again people inquire, How do you make a handicap ? Do you find the top weight first and work downwards, or do you find the bottom weight and work upwards ? whilst others suggest that perhaps you begin with the middle weights. There is no hard and fast rule as to how you should begin your task. Experience has taught the writer that the first step is to become thoroughly acquainted with the names of the horses and their owners, which can only be done by reading them carefully over in the sheet *Racing Calendar* ; then, perhaps, write them down in your handicap book under the heading " Horses' names," in the possible order in which you think they may come when the weights have

been worked out ; this is a good practice for the memory, and it is interesting to compare the actual order when the weights have been finally adjusted with the original order, the result of your first impressions. With constant practice you will find that in about two out of every three races you will write down first the name of the horse which is eventually destined to carry top weight. Curiosity whilst writing this has prompted me to ascertain the result of my work in this direction during 1902, and I find that out of 289 handicaps recorded in the book the first horse written down was awarded the " post of honour " on 190 occasions as against 99 when another top weight was substituted, though there was frequently a very narrow margin between the two.

Cavillers might say that this is a proof that you are not impartial, and that you allowed your first impressions to overrule the result of your investigations, but I am confident that were the books of other more or less experienced handicappers to be inspected the same results would usually be found.

After affixing the age of each horse to his name, the next column of index numbers referring to the horses' performances (in whatever guide is used for the purpose) is filled in, the latest reference number being in each case sufficient ; then

begins the process of looking up the horses' performances, starting from the top and gradually working downwards. A column headed "Remarks on performances, state of going, course, distance, etc.," is left for the result of these labours, which is only arrived at after very many references, both direct and collateral, have been investigated, and mental calculations made. The final column, headed "Weights," is now reached, and these are in the first instance written down in pencil, so that they may be easily altered in consequence of error or miscalculation in the original allotment, results of future running, or information received which seems to necessitate correction, all of which things happen almost daily. Subject to final correction by telegram owing to the possible running of some of the weighted horses on the day that the handicap is posted to the Secretary to the Jockey Club for insertion in the *Weekly Calendar*, the handicap is now complete, and the weights as finally adjusted are copied from the "weight" column on to final portion of the same sheet, perforated so that it can be easily detached from the handicap book.

Some will ask how much time has been spent in working out the results on the perforated sheet. That, of course, depends upon the number of

horses entered in the race, upon previous knowledge, if any, of the performances of those horses, and, to a certain extent at any rate, upon the importance of the race ; for it would be idle and unprofitable to expend six or seven hours of valuable time upon an overnight selling handicap, when (considering the class of animals) the chances are just as much in favour of your arriving at a proper estimate of the platers' abilities in one hour as in twenty-four. There can be no manner of doubt that the highest trial to which a handicapper has to submit is to weight a large number of second or third class horses (not necessarily selling platers) in a district which is more or less out of his own beat, and where he has not the advantage of knowing the form of the majority of the horses, nor the ways of the owners and trainers ; for there are times when a knowledge of human nature is a great blessing and assistance, and no one will deny that such a knowledge is material to the framer of weights in horse-racing, when the form of the owner, trainer, and horse alike has to be taken into consideration ; though the writer is bound to admit that the morality of the Turf is not really so bad as it is frequently painted, and that, considering all the drawbacks and disadvantages to which it is subjected, it is really wonderful how

correctly the form works out "according to Cocker," not occasionally but time after time, and in race after race, the exceptions only going to prove the rule.

An average handicap of between thirty and forty horses may, if thoroughly and conscientiously worked up, be said to entail a good three to four hours' study; but where the horses are for the most part total strangers to the solver of the problem of weights, no doubt considerably more time would be taken up. Some few handicaps are very simple and very easily dealt with; others—and these are the majority—are tricky and full of pitfalls. In some, most of the horses have previously met, and *their* form can be estimated to an ounce, providing, of course, that they have given their running, which may generally be relied upon if they have been ridden by a high-class jockey, well backed, and have made a good show in the race. This is the form the handicapper delights in, whilst he regards with suspicion that shown by equine competitors running manifestly out of their distance, unmentioned in the ring, and ridden by "chalk jockeys." The presence of a single horse in a handicap may frequently transform the whole business of the compilation of the weights from a matter of ease and facility into

one of trouble, almost approaching despair. I will take an instance which occurs to me : Two horses which had previously fought out a very close finish together at even weights (separated, if I remember, by merely a head or a neck) were entered in a handicap ; there was no difficulty about their weights, and it was very plain sailing with all the other entries barring one ; unfortunately this horse had previously met both the animals referred to, and whereas he had proved a few pounds better than one, his form with the other made him a good stone behind it. Matters were further complicated by his having run with other horses in the race, so that what would have been the simplest of tasks was converted into a confusing headachy puzzle by the presence of this one horse, who could be made out to be just 21 pounds better than himself !

A lengthy entry of say sixty, at a meeting more or less out of the handicapper's personal range, and the presence of half-a-dozen horses with two or more separate and distinct forms in an early nursery, taxes the mental powers of the official to the very utmost, and it is astonishing how quickly time speeds on whilst he is busily and laboriously engaged in, it may be, vainly endeavouring to discover the true solution ; a sitting of four or

five hours is thus frequently necessitated, but occasionally this time does not suffice, and a vivid recollection of writing what was jocularly termed at the time a three-volume novel on a Leicester selling handicap still haunts the writer. The sitting for this problem began at 10 a.m. and was continued until 5 p.m. without intermission or even break for lunch, indeed the chair was never once vacated. Truly there must be something fascinating about the arrangement of the weights of racehorses, for the time passed only too quickly. In a word, the handicapper must be a real glutton for work, and it seems to me that the owners of racehorses do not give him credit for half (I might say one quarter) of the labour which he conscientiously performs. How often have we heard it suggested, after many long hours thus consumed, that "if the framer of the weights would only take the trouble to look the horses up" he would satisfy the requirements of owners and trainers?

The writer's own efforts in big races have been chiefly confined to the Lincolnshire Handicap, Ebor Handicap, Northumberland Plate, and Ayrshire Handicap, of which the first-named undoubtedly absorbs the greatest all-round interest, and an average of about four horses per hour is a fair allowance in estimating the amount of time

expended from beginning to end upon the race. In some years this has been exceeded, but in 1902, when St. Maclou gained a narrow victory, the handicap was by no means a difficult one, and rather less time was cut to waste in verifying the records of the various performers. On an average each horse in a handicap of the highest class may be said to represent a reference to about fifteen races ; that is to say, the races in which he has himself taken part and those in which the exact form of other horses which he has met is set out. If the direct form of a horse tallies with the indirect or collateral form, so much the better for the handicapper ; if it does not, the greater reliance must be placed upon the direct and most recent form, but no stone must be left unturned in an endeavour to account satisfactorily for the apparent discrepancy. Occasionally, but fortunately not very often, mere guesswork comes in ; but the experienced handicapper will be much more likely to be nearer the mark when reckoning thus than any one would be who has not given the subject a similar amount of attention.

The selection of handicappers is for the most part left for decision to the clerks of the various courses, subject to the approval of their stewards and the Jockey Club Stewards, which approval,

there is every reason to believe, is in general granted; but from time to time a notice has appeared in the *Racing Calendar* to the effect that Clerks of Courses should not always employ the same handicappers at the same meeting, but should make changes in the names they submit. The reason of this is difficult of comprehension, for the person of all others who is most likely to make a successful handicap is the one who has a thorough knowledge of the course, of the previous performances of many or most of the horses likely to take part in the races, of the jockeys' colours, character of the owners, trainers, and riders with whom the sport is associated. The greater his knowledge the less his difficulties; the more restricted his experience the greater the possibility of error—for *humanum est errare*—and how true are the words which invariably form the preface to my handicap book: "The man who never made a mistake never made anything!"

If the handicapper be changed, and, coming from a distance, be unacquainted with the form of the horses entered, he is certain to take his cue from information obtained from his predecessor (who would do the work in half the time), either personally or from a careful consideration of his weights in other races. And no one can better

appreciate the difficulties of thus adjusting the weights in a comparatively strange land than the writer. Depend upon it, when a licence is once granted, implicit confidence should be placed in the official until he has shown by his conduct that he is unworthy of it, and then, and not till then, should steps be taken for his immediate removal. The unsystematic handicapping, if I may so term it, of the present day prevents handicappers from being in that constant touch with each other which, in my opinion, is indispensable to success in adjusting the weights ; and on the conclusion of each and every meeting they should be empowered to draw up a report of the racing, taking note of any marked disparity of form, calling attention to any horses manifestly unfit, and, indeed, making any remarks which they considered likely to be of service to their brother handicappers. This report might be forwarded weekly, or more often if necessary, to the Secretary to the Jockey Club, and circulated privately amongst the other handicappers, so that each and all would be in possession of every fact relating to the week's racing which a handicapper should know, and of which at the present time he is frequently entirely ignorant. Under present arrangements, of course, this idea *might* be carried out, but as matters now

stand it would involve the writing of six or seven letters by each official, and would not be stamped with the same air of authority as in the course I have here suggested.

What has always seemed to me one of the weakest points in our handicapping system is the right that is claimed by any person who considers himself aggrieved in the matter of handicapping to call the official framer of the weights before the stewards and ask for an explanation. It is practically impossible to frame one handicap of any size out of twenty that will not, on the face of it, appear hard on the nominators or owners of one or two of the horses. Horses are not the mere machines so many suppose them to be ; at times their running is contradictory, more especially during their early career on the Turf, and their first appearance is frequently marred by a "greenness" which practice rapidly dissipates ; and consequently a revolution in the form appears. The book tells you nothing here ; but careful study and discernment throw timely light upon the very many obscure difficulties with which you are constantly confronted. The Stewards of race meetings, though as a rule the most honourable of men, and most anxious to do their duty, are by no means always well versed in the technicalities of

handicapping ; there is not time, as a rule, thoroughly to thrash out all the ins and outs of horses' running, both direct and collateral ; a certain race has to be fixed upon, and the book taken as the guide ; it may or may not be right, but the result is that handicappers are too closely tied down to the book for fear of a complaint being lodged against their handicapping, consequently they are practically debarred from handicapping men unless they are prepared to prove that in such and such a race a horse was not running upon his merits. This is, of course, a strong statement not always easy of corroboration, and in its absence a horse that has been conspicuously "down the course" may roll home, though, except for this weak spot, as it has been termed, considerably more weight might have been placed upon his back ; but you are, unfortunately, tied down by the book—"the book, and nothing but the book!" Admiral Rous, who is often quoted as the greatest handicapper of all times, stood in a different position—he was an absolute dictator in the matter of weights, his ruling was never called into question ; and therein probably lay his success. Still, complaints against handicappers are comparatively few, and all good sportsmen accept the situation with equanimity, giving

the framer of the weights, as a rule, the credit of having done his level best. Racing men usually are generous and gifted with the virtue of good fellowship, and it is a pleasure to be able to say that after upwards of six years of handicapping you have not made, so far as you know, an enemy, whilst you have quadrupled the number of your friends.

Time was when there were many complaints by letter to handicappers, but this custom is now strongly forbidden by the Jockey Club, and is well-nigh a thing of the past, though a letter is still in my possession animadverting in strong language on the harsh and uncalled-for manner in which a certain gentleman's horse had been treated. The reply was in a chaffing mood, and suggested that an opportunity should be afforded of seeing the horse run instead of scratching it. The horse came and ran, ridden by an unknown jockey, and unbacked ; most unfortunately for its owner, it took hold of its bit in a manner not intended, ran fairly away with its diminutive steerer, and romped past the post some six or eight lengths ahead of a fairly large field. That horse never won another handicap, nor was any further objection made to whatever impost it was awarded.

A word as to penalties in races and this article

is concluded. There is no system of betting which shows a better return than that of backing penalised horses, for the very simple reason that penalties are as a rule far too light. Now the object of penalising a horse is to afford animals he has beaten a fair chance in their turn; but observation shows us that penalties of five, four, and even three pounds are not uncommon. These cannot be fairly termed penalties at all, for when a horse is arriving at the top of his form he will carry an additional three, four, or five pounds home with greater ease than he bore the lesser weights, say, a week or ten days before. The consequence is that horses having run themselves fit, and reached the top of their form, carry off a sequence of races before they can be re-handicapped; running over the same course, to which their style is adapted, they will often carry twelve pounds extra, and win with it, too! One of the last races of the flat-race season of 1902 is brought to my mind, and I may ask what penalty could have prevented Bachelor's Button from winning the Castle Irwell Handicap at Manchester? Again, the prospect of securing a sequence of races is a great temptation to the manager of a horse not to slip him until he sees his way to a coup. The raising of penalties is in

my opinion a subject which the Stewards of the Jockey Club should seriously consider.

It has been frequently stated of recent years, and asserted in print, but without any facts or figures to support the statement, that the handicapping of racehorses as a science is not to be compared with that which ruled thirty or forty years ago. Now, facts are stubborn things, and it is never safe to make a general assertion unsupported by them unless you are perfectly certain that these tell-tales are in your favour. There are, fortunately, tests by which the handicapping of racehorses, as well as most other things, can be nicely gauged, and if you apply these tests, so far from finding the adjustment of the weights to be of an indifferent character during recent years, you will quickly discover that not only is it incomparably superior to what it was in the time of Admiral Rous, who has been described as the "prince of handicappers," but that the results of some recent years are at least equal to, if not considerably in advance of, those of any preceding one. It may be presumed that the object of the framer of the handicap is so to balance it that the result will be a dead heat between two or more horses. If he cannot attain that end he will hope for the narrow margin of a head victory ; failing that, his ambition would be

to see a neck win, with the betting as close as possible amongst a good proportion of the horses—in fact, what is generally termed an open race. What he dislikes to see is favourite after favourite come rolling home ; that is, indeed, a reflection upon his handiwork, and proves that the public are better judges than he is ; but what he naturally detests most of all is to see "odds on" favourites catching the judge's eye.

Now, applying these tests, with which no one who understands anything about the adjustment of the weights can reasonably find fault, we are brought face to face with the fact that the results during the past four or five years have been singularly good. In the year 1898, as was pointed out in the *Sportsman* at the time by the present writer, four handicappers were responsible for nearly two-thirds of the 749 flat race handicaps made and run for in that year ; and out of the 517 handicaps so made by them, 7 resulted in dead heats, 74 were won by a head, 52 by a neck, whilst 163 fell to favourites, and but 13 (or an average of 1 in 40) to "odds on" favourites. In 1902 the figures were, if anything, better for the leading handicappers ; for out of 517 races taken in order as arranged by them, there was one dead heat of three, there were 4 dead heats of two, 94

head wins, 70 neck wins, and only 147 wins of favourites, whilst the "odds on" favourites which passed the post first were very few indeed. Keeping these figures in mind, turn to the results of 1866, 1869, 1872, and 1875—years when the late Admiral Rous was in the zenith of his fame—and what do we discover? We find, to our astonishment be it said, that in the years alluded to, which were selected hap-hazard, taking an interval of three years in each case, the following tabulated figures (the 517 handicaps beginning in each case with the Lincoln Spring Meeting, and being taken in direct sequence therefrom as meeting followed on meeting).

| | No. of handicaps. | Dead heats. | Head wins. | Neck wins. | Favourite wins. | "Odds on" favourite wins. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1866 | 517 | 4 | 50 | 61 | 198 | 80 |
| 1869 | 517 | 11 | 54 | 54 | 201 | 83 |
| 1872 | 517 | 4 | 74 | 73 | 210 | 53 |
| 1875 | 517 | 4 | 68 | 50 | 237 | 50 |
| 1898 | 517 | 7 | 74 | 52 | 163 | 13 |
| 1902 | 517 | 1 dead heat of 3.<br>4 of two. | 94 | 70 | 147 | —[1] |

Judging from these figures, which have been tested on two or three occasions and verified to be correct, unless the handicapping in the first four years above tabulated (and I believe that the intermediate years will be found to correspond

[1] I have lost the record of these, but the number was very small.

with them) was outrageously bad, that of the past season and of 1898 must have been extremely good, and if the bookmakers were able to make a living in the "sixties" and "seventies" when so many favourites carrying "odds on" caught the judge's eye, they must find racing under the present conditions of handicapping a singularly gratifying occupation, the wins of favourites being reduced by at least one quarter, and those of "odds on" favourites by five or six hundred per cent. But the money invested on handicaps nowadays is very trifling; it may be granted that the many bet, but they bet in copper where in former generations men wagered in gold.

# TOUTS AND TOUTING

BY A TOUT

## XI

# TOUTS AND TOUTING

### BY A TOUT

The word "Tout" has not a very pleasant sound. Tout, in racing parlance, is a spy on other people's business, and spying is an occupation which has never been looked upon with other than a feeling of aversion by most folk, however much they may benefit by the work the spy does. But the tout has become from long usage tolerated, and his doings at present by no means awaken that strong resentment which was the case years ago, when he carried on his avocation in the fear of what only too frequently occurred—bodily ill-usage. Ever since races have been run touts have existed, but only when huge sums were wagered on matches, handicaps, and other events, have they been able to make a living at the game.

With the march of time the employers of horse-watchers have totally changed. In the early days

they were engaged for the most part by big bookmakers and occasional backers, but now, although many of them still work for the "pencillers," they principally derive their incomes by gleaning information for the newspapers. With the doings of these men in days gone by, as also with those of the present time, it is my province, as a tout of many years' experience, to deal.

Previously to the publication of training reports by the newspapers, large amounts were made by leviathan layers out of future events. There was tremendous gambling on the Derby, the Lincolnshire Handicap, the Chester Cup, the City and Suburban, the Royal Hunt Cup, the Stewards' Cup, the Cambridgeshire and Cesarewitch, and many other of the big races. Where one book is made now on these races—and that for but a small amount—hundreds were made in the days gone by.

The reason of this state of things is apparent. Without any guide being supplied to the public by the papers as to the well-being of horses, the only information obtained on these points went to the bookmakers or professional backers who paid touts to watch the doings of the prominent candidates. If a horse went wrong the bookmaker

generally knew it ; and there is no doubt whatever that hundreds and thousands of pounds were betted by the public on horses that were dead lame, and had never been out of the stable or had a gallop for months. They were kept in the betting list by the artful trickery of the bookmakers themselves, who for the most part threw dust in the eyes of the reporters who compiled the prices. It was not likely, if bookmakers knew anything which in Turf parlance "smelt a bit" that they would "give it away"; thus outsiders were robbed right and left ; and no doubt this accounts for the large fortunes which were netted by the chief operators at that time.

Prior to the adoption of starting-price betting, the whole of the transactions were in what was called "list" betting on the day of the race. The bookmakers throughout the country would put up lists on the morning, stating the odds which would be laid against various horses in the day's races. All these bookmakers employed touts, or they would have had very much the worst of the transactions. The touts for the old "list" bookmakers obtained and sent to their clients tips about horses that were not likely to run—horses that had gone wrong, but were entered and "on form" had a good chance of winning. In the "list" days, if

a price was accepted about a horse and that horse did not run the backer lost his money, which of course is not now the case with "starting price" transactions. Needless to say, the tout, under these circumstances, was a man who could earn for a layer in a large way of business an immense amount of money; for the bookmaker would get all he possibly could out of "stiff 'uns," and in addition would often be able to make a "round" book. At times it cut both ways, and the sharp backers and owners of horses played many tricks on the bookmakers; but the public at that time were very bad sufferers, and the only men who were able to hold their own at the game were the bookmakers, and smart backers who had commissions from the owners.

At the present time the S.P. layer is protected by the man on the course, who practically makes the price for him, so that there is no necessity for him to employ a tout at all. The newspapers, by the adoption of training reports, probable starters and jockeys, etc., in the morning editions of evening papers, the touts who wire from the course to their respective clients and also from the training quarters, keep the public very well informed, and it is pretty generally known in the inner circles of the Turf that bookmaking, either

on the course or in S.P. transactions, is by no means the game that it was.

This enterprise of the papers has also been entirely responsible for the decrease in the betting on future events. Very few, either of the largest bettors in the ring or those who keep S.P. offices, will now accept any such business. By means of the trustworthy training reports which are furnished by touts the public can tell any morning the amount of work the various candidates have done, and they (the public) are able to read between the lines, and find out the horses that are doing good preparations for big races ; hence, as the judgment of the public has always been considered good when backed up by information, for the past few years it is questionable whether, on the events in question, backers have not had the best of the deal.

In olden days the tout had to gather the information for his employers very often under highly unsatisfactory conditions, and I have very distinct recollections of sundry unpleasant hours spent in observing the work done by horses, it being absolutely necessary at that time to avoid being seen. I have on many occasions lain for several nights in a cold, dank, and uncomfortable ditch, in order to watch an expected trial, with the

certainty that, if I happened to be caught, I should be badly mauled. I remember being sent down at one time by a bookmaker to watch the doings of a prominent candidate in a small training establishment. My first plan in all those touting expeditions was to find out the boys in the stable ; and if possible, get from one of them, by means of bribes, assumed friendliness, and so forth, information as to the condition of the horse, and the expectations of the owner and trainer ; also if any trial were likely to take place, so that I might make my arrangements to watch it ; and, if I had not seen the gallop myself, to find out what the horse had done. At times my business was discovered, and I was lucky if I got off with a whole skin, as, taking into consideration the small amount of wages boys were paid for looking after horses, it was astonishing what fidelity they displayed towards their employers. It was not, let me candidly admit, a business that I recall with satisfaction ; but one must live—at least, the one in question is apt to think so !

I remember once being "had" thoroughly. I was watching a favourite for a big handicap, and, although I did not know of it at the time, the horse went wrong. It was only a small stable, and the trainer used to ride himself. When the animal

went amiss he substituted another horse for him, keeping the favourite in the stable the whole time, and galloping a horse of very much the same build and colour, which completely deceived me and several other touts who were down there. The secret was also well kept by his three helpmates, who had been sworn to silence, and it never bubbled out until the owner and his trainer had got back all their money out of the favourite, and had backed the second and third favourites to win a huge stake. When they had transacted this business to their satisfaction they gave out that the horse had broken down, and scratched it, and the second and third favourites went to very short prices. The bookmaker I was working for was badly hit over the affair, as also were several others, and I had to find other employment.

I shall never forget the advice that I once received from a bookmaker for whom I was touting. I had watched a horse who had done a good preparation for a certain race. I knew he was going to be backed and I wrote to one of my employers to give him the information, at the same time advising him to back the animal. I received a quaint letter in reply, to say that he was much obliged for the tip, as it would prevent him from being "hit" for

long shots about the animal; but as for backing him, he would not think of doing such a thing. "My business," he said, "is to lay horses, and not to back them. My idea is that to mix the two games is not profitable. I always like to know about a horse that will be fancied to win, but the most valuable information you can send me is not the horse that will win, but the one that will lose, particularly if that one happens to have a good chance on form."

Sometimes you hear of some peculiar doings of the fraternity, and I remember being told a funny story about a couple of touts who gambled their money away on horses, as they usually do when they get any. They had been at a race meeting with the horses which had been sent from the respective training quarters they watched. They met in the paddock; one had an idea that he could borrow a bit from the other, and their sore straits were soon explained to each other. In the next race there was a fancied candidate from each of the training quarters from which these men came. There were only three starters, and one of these had, on the book at all events, but little chance.

"I must get a bit somehow!" said one of the touts.

"So must I!" said the other.

"I'll tell you what to do; you go and tell So-and-so" (mentioning the name of a bookmaker) "that the horse from your training quarter is no good, and he must 'get something out of it,' and I will do likewise with my bookie. That is the surest way that I can see."

"If your horse gets beaten," said one, "you will be able to draw from your man. If my horse gets beaten I shall receive from mine, so that in any case we are sure of something, and what we obtain we'll divide."

The two worthies went to their respective clients and told them this tale.

Fortunately for the pair, an outsider won the race, and when they went up to their respective masters with the "What did I tell you?" the layers had had such a good race that they paid out liberally for the supposed good tips.

It was only to old pals that these two cronies used to tell this yarn, and it will be seen that even the bookmaker cannot always place thorough reliance on touts; and there is not the slightest doubt that, when it paid them to do so, the worst type would just as soon sell their masters as not. It must not, however, be thought for a moment that all touts are as callous as

these two unmitigated scoundrels, and I can say from a very wide experience that those horse watchers who stick to their clients are men who honestly work and do their best in the interests of their employers, and, though there are black sheep in every line of life, I do not think they prevail to a greater degree amongst touts than amongst any other class of men.

The artifices which trainers used to employ to deceive touts were many and various. One of the most common, and one which, if a tout did not pursue his avocation with the utmost energy, would very often mislead him, was to gallop a horse which was being prepared for a big race at totally unexpected times. The horses would do their work in the morning and be sent back home. Then, after a while, when all was quiet, and providing the touts had gone away, the horse would be brought out again and given a rasping good gallop. This could only be done, however, when the stable was a small one, and there were some trustworthy boys connected with it. I have known trainers deceive touts for weeks by this trick; and as two or three strong gallops each week were quite sufficient to keep a horse roughly ready up to the final month of preparation, if you

did not manage to find out about those gallops you would be under the impression that the horse could not have any chance of being prepared for his race, being so backward in condition, and you would accordingly send your clients information to this effect. Perhaps some tout, busier than the others, would find this out, and he would send to his man what was being done, and the bookmaker would take good care not to lay any extended price against this animal. Moreover, when the bookie was able, he would, when a commission was put on the market, at once step in and "help himself," particularly if it were a cute stable to which the animal belonged.

Another favourite dodge was for the trainer or one of his confidential men to deceive everybody by taking the horse out at night, and galloping him then, not letting even the boys in the stable know that he had done any kind of preparation other than canters in the ordinary way.

Then, about a month before the event for which he had been thus thoroughly prepared, the owner would be able to back the horse for a very large sum throughout the country, and in the various markets which then existed a commission would be launched for the animal. If the touts had

primed the bookmakers with the news that this horse had not done sufficient work to be got ready in time for the race, even if a start were made from that date many of the layers would, when the commission was executed, perhaps open their hearts a little, and in consequence the owners would get an extra price. The bookmaker thought he knew more than the owner and trainer, and, despite the fact that the layer is a man who is the first to accept that very true axiom that "Money talks," he would to a certain extent place some confidence in the information given to him by his tout. It was a very great advantage to let the market firmly settle down before backing any animal. As a rule, when once a market had become firm—the horses that were backed before by the owners having led to a lot of public money being also placed on them—the price obtained about the new candidate for honours was a generous one.

There are many tales which I could tell, had I space, of horses which have been prepared stealthily at night, or in the daytime when the "men of observation" were away; in fact, it was no uncommon thing for touts to be touted by another tout employed by the owner or trainer.

One of the most curious sights I ever saw was at

Epsom, where I was employed to watch some of the cross-country horses being prepared for the Grand National. I remember seeing a trial in which Dick Marsh, the present trainer, who rode Cecil, finished first. If I recollect rightly, R. I'Anson was second, on Surney, and Bob Wyatt, on Laird of Scotland, third. The trial was something like four and a half miles, and we touts stopped a waggon-load of straw and got on it at Walton-on-the-Hill. There were a lot of us watching the National horses in those days when Jack Nightingall used to train, and it was no rare thing for half a dozen of us to follow the animals to Walton.

I was at Russley in old Tass Parker's time, when he guarded Mr. Dawson's stable, and a tough job we had of it. I have waited there in the bushes all night, as also have I in Macgregor's time. We were beaten once by Mr. Waugh, who had a couple of horses, brother and sister, very much alike (I forget the names now) ; at all events, the mare went wrong, and the trainer put a white plaster on the brother's face and sent him out with another horse to do a good gallop. The mare was reported as doing good work each day for a long time, until we found it out.

I need not say that, as in all other walks of life,

there was (and is) the energetic and hardworking tout, and the man who would not take very much trouble, but preferred to do his touting in the public-house. But those of us who really meant business would be on the look-out most of the night and the early morning, waiting for the trials to come off. I am speaking now of Mr. Merry's time.

A good tout has to be pretty well up in his work. He must know the horses, as, if he does not, when they are tried he will be unable to furnish an accurate account of the trial. As in watching a horse-race, so in watching trials, you must keep your eyes on the riders and see what they are doing; this was more important in the old days than it is now, as many trainers would then get up "bogey" gallops, and it was only a good judge of riding who could tell when the jockeys were doing their best.

It may seem strange, but it is nevertheless true, that at times owners employed touts to watch the work done by their own horses, to make sure that the trainers were doing justice to their animals. I recollect, as a young man, when I was with my father, who, in addition to keeping a public-house, made a book and employed touts, that he used to change the cheques of a man who was at

that time well known as a horse watcher. This man asked me one day to inquire of my father if he could change him a cheque for £200.

I said to him, "That is rather a large amount, isn't it, Mark?" (His name was Mark Beswick, and he will doubtless be remembered by many of the old so-called "heads.")

He replied, "Look at the signature," and, upon looking, I found that it was signed by a great nobleman.

"How did you come by this?" I asked him.

"Well," he said, "although very few people know it, the Duke of —— employs me and gives me £200 a year to tout the work that his horses do."

But, reverting back, Harry Ivy and Brayley, two well-known backers in the early 'seventies, are men for whom touts did a lot of work.

At the present time the game is comparatively easy, because, with few exceptions, there is practically no opposition made by any trainer to having his horses watched. In some quarters it is rather a difficult job to get correct information, and you have to depend upon tips given to you by either the head lad or some of the boys in the stable as to the work the horses have done and those which are intended to be sent to meet their

engagements. You cannot keep all the animals under your own observation, as many times gallops in certain districts are miles away from one another.

The touts of the present day obtain their information in the manner aforesaid, and then, when the horses have done their morning's work and trials, and we get to know the probable runners for the next day from the trainer's head lads and by watching the stations, we make our way as quickly as we can to the telegraph office and wire off to the various papers for which we work.

In some centres several touts combine to help one another, or otherwise it would be impossible to send our employers accurate news.

Of course many of us "get a bit" now and again for wiring or writing to backers when we know anything that it is really worth their while to put their money down on. If good horses, or the horses that are fancied to be good, are known of, the boys soon begin to talk, and we watch our opportunity, when we think some animal has been prepared for a race, then, whether we have any information or not, we generally send to our clients, and we are very seldom far wrong in our ideas. If a horse has not done any work, you

may depend upon it that he will not be much use upon a racecourse ; but, if an animal be known to have improved by the boys—and they can easily tell this when they are galloping the horses at exercise—we look out for that horse, and, if he be tried and his trial be satisfactory, if he has had a good preparation and some good winding up gallops, we know that he is sure to be "expected."

I have been employed at Newmarket, where, in addition to writing to the papers myself, and sending special information to backers and layers, I also worked for a man who did a lot of stuff for various journals. He, as did other correspondents, employed several men to give him information about the various trainers' horses, and all this was collected by him and sent away. It is no joke to tout the work done by the horses at Newmarket, and it would be impossible for one or for two or three men to do this, particularly as it is necessary to get the names of the horses that are likely to be despatched to run at meetings ; also to watch carefully the gallops of the prominent horses entered for the big handicaps. Men in the various stables generally furnish us with the likely runners for the coming meetings, and we also watch them as they are sent away from the stations. There are, as already mentioned, men at Newmarket who write

articles for several papers, in addition to sending training reports each day ; and, although they do not all see very much of the work themselves—only one or two of the conscientious ones—they are able, by collecting the various reports from their henchmen, to furnish a very accurate account of the gallops, etc., which have been done at headquarters each day.

Then there are touts who attend all the races for the purpose of watching the stations to find out the horses that arrive overnight and the various stables where horses are quartered, and of distributing information about them. These men also get up very early in the morning to see the horses at work, in order to furnish the sporting agencies, or bookmaker by whom they are employed, with the news as to the gallops and well-being of the candidates, and the probable runners for the events which are to take place during the day ; the details being wired all over the country.

That wise saw of the ancient philosopher, " Contentment is true riches," has been variously interpreted, perhaps by none better than Dryden :

> Content is wealth, the riches of the mind :
> And happy he who can such riches find.

So far as I am concerned I am thoroughly

contented with my lot in life ; settled down at one of the principal training centres in the kingdom, I am happy, exceptionally happy, the work being a pleasure ; and, if there is not a fortune to be made at the business, there is no more delightful pursuit to the lover of the horse than to watch the animals maturing under the patient care and attention of a practical trainer, and growing at last into racehorses—perhaps of merit. The glow of health that surfeits one as the fresh bracing atmosphere of the breezy downs fans one's cheeks, and the music of the horses' hoofs thunders over the heath, are joys which appeal to one irresistibly, and make one feel that for a poor man with a love of sport there is no more enchanting or healthful calling than that of "the Tout."

# RACEGOERS AND RACEGOING

BY A RACEGOER

## XII

# RACEGOERS AND RACEGOING

### BY A RACEGOER

People go racing for various reasons. Some are attracted by a genuine love of the sport ; it gives them immense pleasure to look over the horses in the paddock, to note their action as they canter to the post, and to watch every detail of the struggle. These may be set down as sportsmen, a title to which a large proportion of racegoers certainly have no sort of claim. Others go for lack of occupation. It is something to do, a way of passing the afternoon ; they see people they know, and reflect that it is good to be in the open air. Members of another class attend in the hope of advancing their doubtful social status. Acquaintances are soon made on racecourses, and may possibly be extended beyond such resorts ; it furnishes a subject to talk about at dinner, and the snob can mention the peers and personages who were present, with a sort of suggestion that he is on

familiar terms with them. The majority, however, I suspect go because the racecourse is a potential Tommy Tiddler's ground, where it is possible that you may pick up gold and silver. It is so simple !

"What price Deception ?" you ask.

"Four to one, sir," is the reply.

"Four fifties," you say, scribble it in your betting book just as the horses are started, observe that Deception is full of running at the distance just behind an obviously beaten horse, see him come cantering home at his ease—the race was never in doubt—and you have won £200. You have often heard of Tommy Tiddler's ground, but never knew where it was situated ; your geographical knowledge is extended, now you have discovered the locality : it is to be found on the other side of the rails which bound the Club enclosure.

Of course you may be a philosophical person, and then you may be inclined to wonder how Tommy Tiddler first grew wealthy, where the gold and silver came from ? Reflection will suggest to you that it originally dropped from the pockets of adventurers—backers, in fact—who had gone to pick it up, but on the contrary had left what they had behind them ; for bookmakers seldom start in life with plethoric banking accounts : they begin with a very small capital, and increase it by more

or less (but more rather than less) regular contributions from takers of the odds. In truth your geography is wrong. Tommy Tiddler's ground is in reality on the side of the rails where "the talent" assemble, and the habitually successful prospectors are members of the ring.

Well, you and I, gentle reader—I like the old phrase with its pleasant assumption—do not belong to the sordid crew who come racing from motives of greed, nor are we snobs in search of dubious social recognition. We enjoy and appreciate the sport, have a reasonable knowledge of horses and of racing, and are fortunate enough to be on friendly terms with a considerable number of patrons of the Turf. We have a claim to regard ourselves as in the ranks of the sportsmen aforesaid—but all the same are not, you know, above backing a winner if the chance occurs ! What will win the next race ? that is the pressing question of the moment, and here comes Captain Percival, who manages one of the most dangerous of contemporary stables, that is to say one of those in which fewest mistakes are made : when their horses are "expected" they seldom fail to fulfil expectations. Ask him what he fancies ? I don't think I will. I know him well, belong to several of the same clubs, meet him shooting, have, as it happens, done him more than

one good turn, but I do not care to ask him questions; if his horse is being backed I shall certainly follow suit, but I will not make direct inquiries, partly for the reason that I know his cryptic style of answering them, apparently outspoken and straightforward, but therefore all the more misleading. You know him? Ask him by all means if you choose.

"Fancy mine?" says the Captain in reply. "How can I, my dear fellow? You saw it run last week. Cake Walk beat it half a dozen lengths, and my horse is allowed 3lb. for the beating. Backing it, are they? Well, I hope they'll win their money. The handicap's absurd, but they always rush anything of ours to a false price."

The Captain's horse wins easily enough, and with a shrug of the shoulders he says he does not understand what Cake Walk can have been doing. A friend of the Captain's—who had put a couple of hundred pounds on for him, one of several similar little commissions executed for the stable—listens gravely whilst some innocent on-looker remarks that the race must have been rather a surprise, and it is a pity that they did not back it as it won so easily.

The horse is a noble animal, as writers on natural history agree, but he is the unfortunate

occasion of a great deal of untruth and deception. There seems to be something in the atmosphere of a racecourse that leads to unveracity. A few years ago there lived a well-known devotee of the Turf, an owner of horses, one of the selectest body of the racing world—I am intentionally vague, for I do not wish to point to my example too directly—who had a reputation for being phenomenally lucky. After a race when some surprise had occurred, when one or two animals that their owners had thought could not be beaten had suffered defeat, when two or three more with outside chances had been "down the course," and an "impossible horse" had won, this personage would frequently ask me if I had backed the winner.

"Why, no!" would be the reply, "I had a dash on the favourite, saved on Blank's mare, and Snaffle made me have a few sovereigns on his. Did *you* back it?"

"Yes! I was fortunate enough to take 1,000 to 60 twice," he would answer, and you wondered at the happy combination of judgment and luck which had influenced him, reflecting that this kind of thing only happened to a rich man. One day he blew his brains out, and to the general amazement it was found that he had dissipated every shilling of a very handsome fortune, nearly all of it

lost on the Turf. The thousands to sixties had existed only in his imagination.

"Why didn't he pull up? Why did he go on betting when he found what a bad game it was?" the wise man who has never been bitten by the mania (*do* manias bite, by the way? but never mind, the colloquialism will serve) may ask. It is the rarest thing in the world, the racing world, to find anyone who ever does so. Look in what is called the Silver Ring, where men wager their scarce half-crowns, often suffer privations because they lose them, and yet, mysterious and inexplicable as it is, always find money, somehow or other, to take them to race meetings, to pay railway fares and admission fees, and to enable them to back horses; look there and you will discover men who used to belong to all the clubs, were accustomed to bet ponies and fifties and hundreds, till all they had passed over the rails and the bookmakers would let them make no more hopelessly bad debts. They have learnt the value of "good things," the desperately precarious nature of "certainties"; and still they go on, convinced that their luck *must* turn, and comforting themselves with the legends of how somebody ran two sovereigns into £1,327 in one afternoon.

Some racegoers are singularly silent men; others

delight in chattering. Like Benedick, according to Beatrice, they must still be talking, and sometimes these serve the purposes of the astute. Entered for a recent big handicap were no fewer than four horses from a "dangerous" stable, and, to the perplexity of outsiders, who studied the weights and puzzled themselves sorely as to which of the quartet had the best chance, all four accepted.

"I wish I knew which they were going for!" observed an intending backer, seated in a railway carriage on the way to Newmarket, conversation having naturally turned on the race.

"Well, I think I know, in fact I'm sure I do!" replied an acquaintance, one of the voluble tribe. "They asked Martingale, who's a friend of mine, just to find out on the quiet what sort of a price he could get about Moorhen. They told him not to say anything about it, but he gave me the hint and particularly asked me not to mention it, so please don't talk about it; only if you can get a decent price to-morrow you might as well have a bit on."

That sounded all right. The voluble man had a bit on himself, so did the inquirer, so did the other two who were in the carriage, and all four of them told a friend here and there, who told others, all in the strictest confidence of course, that Moorhen

was the "pea." In truth she was not at all that sort of vegetable. A great many people were sadly disappointed when Moorhen, duly sent to Newmarket, and backed down to a short price, was not among the starters, and when the race fell to her stable companion Gay Hussar. The manager of the stable had selected Martingale and one or two other acquaintances as the repositories of his "secret," knowing full well that it would leak out and spread till everybody knew it—in confidence to the end; but in truth there had never been any intention of running Moorhen, and every intention of winning with Gay Hussar, who, having been carefully "readied" all the year, had about a stone in hand.

As for unveracity, some men apparently cannot speak the truth about horses. I do not know whether they try very hard, but, if so, they fail. A good many years ago a very prominent owner was staying with a friend for one of the principal meetings, and it was known to the numerous party who were enjoying the hospitality of their popular host that this owner was having a horse tried on the Monday for a race to be run later in the week. It was understood, furthermore, that his trainer would let him know the result of the gallop on the Tuesday morning; and the party

assembled at breakfast had a not unnatural curiosity to learn what had happened. The more or less noble lord was the last to come down. By his plate was a pile of letters, and presently he came to the epistle from his trainer.

"Ah!" he said, when he had read it, "that's very bad! I thought I should have won that handicap."

"No good?" someone inquired.

"No," replied the owner. "He wasn't asked to do much, but he was badly beaten."

"Shall you run?" the host casually asked.

"Oh, I suppose so! I may as well. He won't get any weight off if he's kept in the stable. But he can have no chance."

That seemed to settle the question; however, the colt was sent, started at "100 to 8 others," and won in a canter. A member of the party, who was younger then than he is now, and had seen less of racing, chanced to meet the trainer soon after the jockey had weighed in, and observed that the result must have rather astonished him.

"Not at all, sir," the trainer answered; "he won his gallop handsomely, and I felt sure he couldn't be beaten. It was good for him."

Of course he had written the truth; but the owner, anxious for a price, had perceived that if

he put all his friends off, the story would get abroad that the animal was not fancied. They, it was supposed, staying in the same house, would be sure to know, and so they had been deliberately led astray. Other members of the party had horses running at the meeting, and had frankly discussed their prospects and stated their beliefs, to the great benefit of his lordship, who was a most assiduous searcher after information, and betted heavily, so that they never suspected he would designedly lead them astray.

I fear that I am giving a bad impression of the racegoer, and, being one myself, seem to be fouling my own nest. Racegoers, I fancy, are neither better nor worse than any other class that makes money-hunting a primary object; but there are few effective stories to be told of the straightforward man who does things in a straightforward manner. Sometimes to tell the simple truth, plainly and unhesitatingly, is the most effectual way of misleading people, and this because it is such a suspicious world, that of which we are speaking.

"Do you fancy yours at all?" the owner is asked, more or less diffidently as the case may be, by someone who is in the not unusual position of wanting to back a winner.

"I fancy it very much," the owner replies, "I make out that it certainly must have 10 lb. or 12 lb. in hand, and I don't see how it can be beaten, as it is so well just now."

"Thanks very much," is the not too grammatical acknowledgment. "I must have a bit on then. Very good of you to tell me."

"What did he say?" Someone's friend inquires, having watched the little interview, and accurately comprehended the nature of it.

"He says it's sure to win—can't be beat; he thinks it has over a stone in hand," the inquirer is told—it is odd how people exaggerate the goodness of these good things—and he smiles contemptuously.

"Told you that, did he?" the other rejoins. "Well, *you* may back it if you like, but *I* sha'n't! He would not give it away like that if he really fancied it. He is telling everybody the same tale, putting it about all over the place. I wipe *him* out; *he* won't win!"

He does nevertheless and notwithstanding, with great ease, and as nearly as can be reckoned with the 10 lb. or 12 lb. to spare. The suspicious man angrily shakes his head and says he can't understand it! There is something far too mysterious for him about the whole business.

They are shrewdly observant, too, our racegoers.

"Do you know anything?" says White to Black, employing the accustomed formula.

"I know that Stripes will win one of the handicaps to-day," Black replies, with a confident pride in his powers of perception.

"But which of them? What does he ride?" White eagerly inquires, with a growing conviction that he is on the track of something special.

"I don't know what he rides, but it is in at about 7 st. 4 lb. or 7 st. 5 lb.; and he will win!" says Black.

"How do you mean you don't know? Who told you about it?" the mystified White desires to be informed, and he is more mystified still when Black says that no one has told him anything.

"Well, then, I don't understand. What do you—" he begins, and Black becomes communicative.

"Why, it's just this," he explains. "I was on the Cheveley road yesterday evening, and Stripes passes me in sweaters going a good seven miles an hour. I saw him go into the Turkish bath at ten o'clock this morning, and he didn't come out till past twelve. 'Wants to get three or four pounds off!' I says to myself. Well, he was riding 7.9 yesterday, so that means he's trying to do about

7.5 this afternoon. He wouldn't take all that trouble for nothing, so I'm going to back him ! "

White pronounces the argument sound, and is not surprised to find among the runners for the Visitors' Handicap, ' No. 15, Stripes, 7.4 (carries 7.5).' No. 15 is Wayfarer, and though Stripes had not quite got down to the weight, and the horse was not one of the leading favourites, he won by a short head, which would have been increased to a good neck if the jockey could have got off the rest.

" When do you go down ? " says Racegoer No. 1 to Racegoer No. 2, on the Friday or Saturday before a Newmarket meeting, as they casually come across one another. There is no " You are going to Newmarket, of course, next week ? " or " We shall meet on Tuesday, I suppose ? " Naturally No. 1 and No. 2 are going, what else could they be doing—and it seems that they both propose to leave Liverpool Street by the 4.30. Somehow or other, quiet, unobtrusive men as they are, they look like racing, and a gentleman who is just beginning to yield to the seductions of the Turf thinks he would like to travel with them, in case, as is probable, they talk about his new hobby. This is just what they do talk, and the stranger listens with the utmost attention.

"I suppose the mare will win?" says No. 1.

"I think so. I have not backed her yet, but I shall," says No. 2. "They seem to fancy the other, though. There is a lot of money for him."

"Yes, but I don't believe he has speed enough. I'm more frightened of the three-year-old?"

"Too far for him, I think, and too much weight. I shall only back the mare," is the response.

But what mare and which "other one" and who is the three-year-old, our innocent friend in the corner of the carriage wonders? If he were a racegoer he would at once understand that "the mare" is the favourite for the principal handicap of the week, that the "other one" is the second favourite, and with 100 to 9 bar two, the only animal besides this couple that seems worth taking into consideration is a good class three-year-old of whom the handicappers have a high opinion. Our racegoers are not for a moment endeavouring to be incomprehensible; they are scarcely aware of the existence of our inquiring friend, who, eager to learn something, heartily wishes that they would be a little—a good deal—more definite.

"I suppose those people will win the Selling Race again to-morrow?" presently says No. 2.

"I haven't really looked at it," No. 1 answers,

and forthwith proceeds to read the entries, as also does the listener. He has no idea who "those people" are, but is at any rate aware that a Selling Race is in the programme.

"There's another in it," observes No. 1 as a result of the inspection. There are seventeen others in it, to be accurate, as the man in the corner perceives, and he feels that he is getting no forwarder; but evidently No. 2 understands, for he rejoins:

"I don't think so. This is six furlongs. She won't get the course."

"Third last meeting, and that was six furlongs, you know?"

"Not third best. I watched the race very carefully. The other two were out by themselves and the rest were pulling up."

"Yes, now you mention it I remember the race," says No. 1, leaving the listener more perplexed and rather exasperated. Of course he does not know that "those people" are Captain Percival and his associates, who put a very useful horse in a selling race to gamble on a fortnight before, bought her in, and have entered her again; nor does he understand that in the opinion of these good judges one other seems to stand out from the rest, so obviously to them that when No. 2's

attention is called to the entry he is certain to notice it. Newmarket is reached, and if the listener could have comprehended what he heard he would really have learned a good deal about the prospects of the week's sport ; but the language of the regular racegoer is cryptic to the outsider.

I once took a distinguished lawyer to a race meeting, and what chiefly struck him was the manner in which what he called the "contracts," otherwise the bets, were made. I had, he said, betted on two animals but never mentioned any horse's name ; and he thought that endless confusion and dispute must inevitably be the result of such transactions. At first I did not understand what he meant, but he explained.

"I took particular notice," he went on, "because I was interested in the business. You said, 'How are you betting ?' 'Two to one on the field, 5 to 1 bar one, 8 to 1 bar the two.' That is what the man replied, and he added, 'Two ponies ?' You said 'Yes,' at least I don't really believe you spoke : you simply nodded, and said 'And fifty to ten the other.' Now, how could he know which you wanted to back ? It seems to me that blunders—very likely quite unintentional—must constantly be made ?"

I could quite understand then that it may have

struck a stranger as curious. I pointed out to him that the bookmaker and I both knew what was favourite ; that I often betted a pony on such a race, and he suggested the sort of bet he was accustomed to lay me ; that we both, again, knew what was second favourite, especially as some of the other bookmakers were calling out its name and offering 5 to 1, or indeed 9 to 2 ; but my friend shook his head, and was much astonished when I assured him that any sort of discrepancy between the figures of bookmaker and backer at the weekly settling was extremely rare.

There is one subject upon which every man who goes racing could enlarge, and that is "good things." Sometimes the memory is most agreeable. In other cases the result has been distressing, heart-breaking at the time ; but there is perhaps a humorous side when one looks back upon it. A flood of examples occur to me—more of one sort than of the other—but I think one that stands out is connected with Doncaster. A few years ago I was the guest, at York Cavalry Barracks, of a very particular friend in one of the cheeriest regiments in the service. To describe what delightful quarters they were and what a good time one had is not a necessary part of the narrative. On the course, however, things were

less agreeable—much less. I had a bad Tuesday, a worse Wednesday, and on this night, studying next day's programme, Thursday looked ugly : in two of the races backers would, we saw, have to lay longish odds, and the other events were unusually difficult. As I said good night to my host in his room before crossing the passage to mine, I noticed that he seemed to be hesitating as to whether he should tell me something, and just as I was going he resolved to speak.

"Look here, old boy," he said, in his earnest, genial way, "it doesn't matter a bit what you've lost these two days, or what you lose to-morrow. Now, I haven't breathed a word of this to a living soul, and I know you won't—some men in the stable haven't been told—but on Friday we have something that *can't* be beat. In the Prince of Wales' Nursery, old boy, one of the best of all races to go for if you've got the right horse, because so few of the two-year-olds really stay the mile. This is the biggest certainty I've ever known racing ! The colt would win at five furlongs, for he has a wonderful turn of speed, it would be better for him at six, better still at seven, and best of all at a mile ; he stays for ever. Well, old boy ! if he'd been in the Leger to-day I verily believe he would have been close up with the

third. You'll laugh at me, of course, but he is a real ripper!"

"It's very good of you to tell me," I said. "Very short price, I'm afraid?"

"No, old boy, that's just it," he rejoined. "Not a creature has an idea of it. You'll get 20 to 1, at least you ought to; 100 to 6 certainly—say 100 to 7. It can't be less than that! What are you out? A monkey? Well, old boy, 1,000 to 60—1,000 to 70 perhaps—will leave you a nice winner. 2,000 to 140—*sure* to get it, old boy! I should back it to win £4,000 if I were you—I shall have a dash myself—you won't have to risk £300 to do it, though really there is no risk. You will be a nice winner on the week, can keep a thousand to play with, buy those two colts we liked that didn't fetch their reserve, and have a ripping time next year. They are sure to win good races."

"Who rides?" I inquired. "Not Matthew, I hope. It's wonderful how he muddles races away, if you won't mind my criticising your jockey?"

"I agree with you, dear old boy, he is very bad," my friend replied; "but they won't put him up—they'll run no risks, I assure you. Though anyone could win on this colt. The jockey might get into a tangle, but there would be

plenty of time to get out of it—pull right round his horses, come up outside, and canter home. It's "—here he lowered his voice—"it's a colt called The Ruler. Don't bother about the monkey, old boy. He'll get it back for you ; but not a syllable !"

I went to my room, looked up the form, and found that The Ruler had run twice without making any show ; but that signified little in the case of a presumably improving two-year-old. Next day the two good things came off, but both were odds on, and the result of the afternoon's sport was to leave things much as they had been. On the Friday an even-money chance ran a dead heat, and a horse that ought to have won was beaten because his jockey rode a ridiculous race, thought a short head was far enough to win, and a bad peck close to home made the head the wrong way. My entertainers had a coachful of luncheon on the other side of the course ; the sanguine backer will usually find a glow of inspiring confidence at the bottom of his third glass of champagne, and was there not reason to be sanguine about The Ruler ?

I went into the paddock to have a look at the animal that was to retrieve my fortunes, but could not find him, and hurried back to the ring soon

after the numbers went up, anxious to watch the market.

"How are they betting?" I asked a bookmaker with whom I did a good deal of business.

"Two to one on the field, sir," he answered. "They take it freely, too, but I can lay you nine to four."

"No, I don't want to back the favourite," I replied. "I want a few sovereigns on an outsider. What will you lay me The Ruler?"

"Why, that *is* the favourite, sir. I can lay you six to one bar that," he said, and I was fairly staggered.

Oh, my 1,000 to 70 four times, what had become of you! Who would now own the couple of promising yearlings! Not a creature was supposed to know anything of The Ruler, but everyone knew all about it. Who was riding, by the way? I actually had not looked, but did so, and found—Matthew! This was another blow, for I had the poorest opinion of him, and with twenty-three starters all the best jockeys were up. Still, the colt's strong favouritism showed what was thought of him. Others were presently backed; I managed to get 550 to 200, and a little later, seizing a fortunate moment, I took 110 to 40. After a long delay the flag fell; when I could

make out the state of affairs through my glasses I saw The Ruler much nearer last than first, and there he stayed throughout—he was never in the leading ten or twelve. The race fell to an animal I had picked out when the weights appeared as one of two or three that seemed to have it between them, and one of these did not run. If I had not heard of the invincible Ruler I should have had a good race at the comfortable odds of 100 to 9. 'Twas ever thus—at least it was so frequently, and for the matter of that is so still!

Other good things, a rush of them, come to mind. Does anyone remember The Sun? (I am now giving the real name: The Ruler is a pseudonym.) The question is not put because The Sun belongs to a remote past, out of the probable recollection of racegoers; he only ran, indeed, some ten years since; but I say "does anyone remember him" merely because there is no reason why anyone should. But it was believed very firmly that he was a horse who would make a great name for himself; and a leading patron of the Manton stable, one of the most famous owners of the latter half of the last century, with characteristic kindness told me what the colt had done and what he was expected to do. Most likely the Manton trial book is still in existence. It was at Good-

wood that I heard this, the day before The Sun made his first appearance, and in the evening my friend drove me over to Waterbeach to have a good look at the flyer, rejoicing on the way that the colt was so well entered. The Sun, however, was a flyer that never flew. He started a hot favourite, ran badly then, and failed to improve upon the performance afterwards. I fancy he won a single little race in moderate company, but it could have gone a very small way towards paying for the engagements, the making of which my friend thought a cause for so much congratulation. The Cob was also a Manton horse, but his story has been told,[1] and indeed the subject of good things that have not come off is endless.

What is luck for the racegoer? "Owning winners if he be an owner, backing them if he be not," is the probable reply; to which I say, as regards the latter half of it, "Perhaps." One of the worst things that can happen to an enthusiast who goes racing with the intention of battling with the ring is a run of luck at the first; for the reason that he imagines it is always an easy matter to find winners, and when—as so very often happens—they prove elusive and are beaten at

[1] See the chapter on "Handicaps" in *The Turf* (Lawrence and Bullen, Ltd., 16 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden).

times by "impossible horses," he is tolerably certain to lose his head, take to plunging, and come to grief.

I well recollect going to a certain July meeting at Newmarket with an enthusiastic young backer who had been carrying all before him. I was doing it from London that year, so was he, and a couple of other experienced racegoers were in the carriage. We all knew each other, and the plunger showed me his book. He was betting high—£100 on a horse was an exceptionally small wager; there were £1,000 to 300, 500 to 200, 500 to 400 on, an even 500, and other bets of the sort, nearly all on the right side, and he was jubilant. It seemed to him the easiest thing in the world to back winners, and he had quite made up his mind about most of the races on the day's card. In one of them there was a horse who seemed sure to win—as sure as anything can be racing—if he stood, but it was a shade of odds on his breaking down. Our plunger pronounced such a fear to be ridiculous nonsense—he was going to have a monkey on, and chance it. (The animal started at 11 to 10, won, and broke down badly as it passed the post.)

As we left the carriage and the favourite of fortune gaily drove off, one of my friends said,

"Will he last the year?" "Not a hope of it," the other replied. "I will bet you a sovereign he is gone before the Cambridgeshire!" The estimate was too liberal. The Sussex fortnight practically finished him. He went to Doncaster, proclaiming himself the unluckiest creature that was ever seen on a racecourse, betted with the bookmakers who would take him on, lost continually, and ceased to be a racegoer.

There was another ardent youth who after a phenomenally good day was heard expressing regret instead of satisfaction.

"You haven't much to grumble at, I should fancy!" a friend said to him.

"Haven't I!" was the answer. "It makes me furious to think of the time I've wasted" (he was twenty-four); "why, this is the best game in the world for a man with his wits about him, and I've only just learnt it!"

Less than a month saw him out, with everything he had gone, and his name with unpaid bets to it in the books of half the ring.

Here I must pull up abruptly, not because my subject is exhausted, but because my space is filled.

# TIPSTERS AND TIPPING

BY A TIPSTER

## XIII

# TIPSTERS AND TIPPING

### BY A TIPSTER

The great changes made in the method and manner of racing during the present generation, the increasing stakes, the promotion of clubs at the suburban fixtures, etc., have quite revolutionised the sport, which in many respects differs widely from what it was, say, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Where the aristocratic few then betted pretty generally, speculation is now a hobby of the masses, and, in consequence, enlightenment for those who do speculate is much more sought after. Hence the rise and progress of the tipster. There is no question whatever but that nowadays backers of horses are marvellously well posted. Few things happen in the Turf world, either on a racecourse or at the numerous training centres, without their being immediately communicated to the general public. This dissemin-

ation of news is the outcome of reporters' work, and all tending to one end—the correct anticipation of some pending racing event.

Tipsters are a varied class. There are the newspaper prophets—many with an immense following ; the touts at training centres who act for the various journals ; men similarly employed to report on behalf of leading bookmakers or professional backers who bet "to money" ; advertising tipsters who remain at home, and the men who prate to whatever crowds they can gather round them on racecourses. The last-named body are, of course, a very rough lot, usually ex-stable lads. Their charge for the opinion they offer varies according to immediately preceding success or failure from threepence to a shilling. To the holiday mobs who know little or nothing about the sport their stable language appeals strongly, and there is no doubt they do get an inkling of things at times from their former companions, the boys who are in charge of horses at meetings, with whom they hob-nob night and morning. Trainers, in fact, often consider their "lads" more trouble than their horses. What the course tipsters get they undoubtedly earn ; but this class of business is rapidly dying out, as even men who only occasionally go racing are well

posted through the daily and weekly newspaper issues. The stay-at-home tipsters are those who advertise most speciously ; and if their flowery and not always grammatical language—especially in their circulars—could even claim to possess relationship with truth, the fortunes of their followers would be speedily made—although it is apparently not good enough for them to act upon their emphatic statements with their own money. It is this class of tipster that really brings disrepute upon racing, and against whom certain drastic enactments were attempted in what is known as the Bishop of Hereford's Betting Bill.

There are still a few who, acting in their own name, do geuinely try their utmost to guide their followers aright ; and the same is the case as regards some course tipsters—many racegoers will readily recall the late Jack Dickenson, who was quite a notoriety in his way, and worked hard at his self-imposed vocation. The men who ought to be suppressed are those who, to catch the unwary, adopt the names, or very nearly the names (merely altering a letter or an initial) of leading trainers and jockeys ; for this is clearly a false pretence.

I would emphatically say, as the result of a fairly lengthy and varied experience, that following any

class of tipster means loss in the long run. Each one, of course, of whatever grade, may have his run of good fortune ; but the reverse is bound to come. My own decided opinion is that one's best chance of winning—certainly the way to lose least—is to limit the number of one's bets. The more frequently one speculates the more certain and rapid will be the loss. It is extraordinary that the betting public will not realise this, but clamour for tips for practically every race at every meeting ; and thus to meet the demand the sporting papers are compelled to string out a whole list of selections. This very fact alone must stamp these predictions as guesswork, for no mortal can reasonably expect to be able to pick the winner of every race. If one is driven to couple two horses in a race—with certain exceptions, as, for instance, a very big handicap—the use of the word "or" alone stamps it as guessing, for if one is not sufficiently confident from information or practical knowledge to give a single horse as the probable winner, the race is best left alone. Few tips should be given, and with each an absolute reason for the choice, so that, win or lose, the readers know the basis and can judge for themselves ; and it is an old racing maxim that the best judges are the public

themselves. Besides, how wise we all are after the event !

The reasons for which some people back horses, and even extraordinary winners, are remarkable. Many follow systems, in none of which, I would at once say, do I believe. Some adhere to favourites, others to second favourites, a few follow jockeys' mounts (although this is now almost an exploded practice), while sometimes by the aid of the none too scrupulous advertising commission agents such methods as the "first away," the "doubling up," the "Tideway" systems, and numerous others, are put most lucidly and plausibly before backers. All can be made to work out well "on paper" and in theory, but actual practice would very soon show different results.

To my mind the best plan, if one be desirous of following a very fascinating sport and deriving from it the added excitement of speculation, is to read a reputable newspaper. Learn, as one soon will do, the capacity of the writer, whether he be cautious or sanguine and in a modest way exercise one's own judgment in weighing those of his ideas which appear to be based on experience and keen observation.

There is no truer saying than that "money speaks." It is a fact that plenty of professional

backers, or "heads" as they are called, do follow the market and make a living out of it. Standing near every substantial bookmaker will be found a crowd of men waiting and watching what is done. Throughout an afternoon's racing they never move a distance of a dozen yards, but follow the good money, especially when a rush comes for anything.

It is a very serious fault to go to a meeting open-eared, for then one becomes too clever and learns too much. Everybody has a tip of some sort for everybody else, and finally the would-be speculator is so embarrassed that it becomes a matter of luck which horse he supports. The chances are that he misses the right one—not improbably his own original fancy.

It is merely a matter of sheer luck as to which day one follows a certain owner or stable. The smallest coincidences are accountable for the most important results in racing and betting—a chance happening, such as with whom one travels to a meeting, whom one meets there, or even which way one turns on arrival. To go into the paddock might mean meeting Robinson, who has a horse running, and declares that whatever beats him will win. If one goes into Tattersall's, Jones would be encountered, and he has a similar sort of story, or is even more confident. To-day one follows

Robinson, and Jones wins ; to-morrow one hearkens to Jones, and it is Robinson's turn. There is absolutely no golden rule in betting, and I for one am the strongest believer in fate and in the inseparable grooves of luck which are found in turn by a tipster, backer, owner, trainer, or jockey. At times one can't do right ; at others—but how far less frequently !—everything falls out favourably.

Many people follow horses with more or less success ; and here again it is a matter of luck, for by no means need it be the highest-class horses that pay best to support. Some people adhere to the animal's chances on an increasing scale until they win ; others only back penalised candidates, particularly in the autumn. The " horses for courses " theory is an old maxim in sport, and of late years it really seems to be that " owners and jockeys for courses " also needs consideration. All owners specially delight in winning in their own home districts, and lay themselves out so to do ; for instance, it is a recognised thing to follow the Rothschild blue and yellow at Northampton or Lord Derby's colours at Liverpool. Most trainers, too, have their " pet " meeting for some reason or other, usually a superficial or superstitious one.

Ignorant people not seldom win money for the

most ridiculous reasons. How many occasional racegoers—ladies frequently do such things—have backed horses because of their possessing the names of relatives? Again, how frequently even the hardened racegoer is guided by and acts on the fact of a competitor bearing his wife's or his child's name, or some such little influencing item! I know one particular case in which a man, who only trod a racecourse about once a year, had his maximum (£5) on Lucinda when she won at Hurst Park last summer at 20 to 1, although she was held by all the clever followers of racing and backers to have no possible chance. His reason for the investment was that the last time he had been racing he had seen Lucinda win "running away"; he was unaware of, and indifferent to, the fact that when she scored previously it had been in a selling hurdle-race, now she was competing for a good flat-race handicap. The very fact of his knowing so little won him £100.

I once escorted a lady to Hurst Park on the first occasion that she had ever seen any racing. There were seven events, and she backed every winner. The first, one of Mr. George Edwardes's, because the colours, turquoise and white, were the same as those in her hat; the second, because the jockey, Kempton Cannon, was "a nice-looking

boy" ; the third, because she thought the horse had a "pretty" name ; another, through Mr. George Cottrill's sea-green and scarlet cap being, to her mind, such a tasteful combination ; and so on throughout the card. I would add that it was a thorough outsiders' day, and those who made a life study of racing and had the form at their fingers' ends were laying odds on defeated favourites. Why need inspired knowledge after this, and how many can confirm me in the statement that we too frequently know too much ?

No task is more thankless than that of giving tips, either in print or verbally. As all newspaper writers know only too well, whenever they give the loser for a big handicap they are deluged with a perfect flood of insulting letters, or more frequently postcards. By the uninitiated, jockeys and trainers are looked up to as perfect fountains of knowledge ; but it is a fact that few racing men are worse tipsters than jockeys, for they are often prejudiced favourably towards their own horses. The same is the case with owners and trainers, and not unnaturally so.

The tipster's office is indeed a very thankless one. He is always between two fires and on "a good hiding to nothing." If his selections win, the bookmakers execrate him ; if he be wrong, as

I have just said, he gets abused by his followers, for you cannot touch a man, especially a "little" backer, more severely than through his pocket. People forget when they have backed a horse at 10 to 1 that the chances are those odds *on* the horse losing. Giving tips to one's personal friends is specially a business to be sedulously avoided; one always seems to have "put them off" the winner, their own fancy; and in case of success a mere "Thank you" suffices. It is when losing that they rub it in. A tipster's *primâ facie* duty is to induce people to bet, and in the present era of gambling they need slight encouragement. My earnest exhortation, however, the best and most honest "tip" I have ever given or ever shall give, is—Don't. Look at the bookmakers, what they were and are, and how they live; although they will truthfully tell you that the game now is not half what it was.

Readers will naturally expect a few remarks upon the methods of newspaper tipsters generally in forming their opinions and giving selections. Unquestionably the very great majority are influenced by their own particular personal "fancy," the results of which are immeasurably influenced by luck. For instance, two people seldom view the identically same happening in a

race in the same light. Reading the returns of racing in the different issues will immediately confirm this, although it must be borne in mind that as a general rule this syndicate work is done through an agency, and therefore is repeated, verbatim, to several issues. Thus one man's reading of a race is utilised by many different papers. The very style of a horse's victory, as to whether he should have scored more easily or was lucky to win, impresses itself in quite a different way upon different observers.

It is an old racing adage that first impressions are best, and I frequently find it so in glancing over the *Calendar*, particularly as regards the big handicaps, for erasures or alterations more frequently than not mean deleting the winner. One can only keep one's eyes and ears open, and where one is reasonably entitled or by favour qualified so to do, ascertain if the owners or trainers "fancy" their horse, while the jockeys also can give opinions pro or con., particularly if they have ever ridden the horse in a race or been alongside him ; for in spite of what has been said about them being bad tipsters, their judgment is necessarily by no means to be altogether disregarded. It is remarkable that some jockeys invariably seem to know more about what other

horses have done in a race than about the performance of their own mount.

A racing vaticinator must weigh up all the material he has at hand, thoroughly study the public form of the horse, and then consider the suitability of the course, the distance, the going, and what is no less important, whether his jockey will be able either to hold him, or, if a slug, "get him out." Some horses of course go best for a featherweight, coming through from end to end; with others a light weight is a serious disadvantage if they are either too impetuous to be restrained or require strong handling. Every writer is influenced, particularly in moments of wavering, by incident or accident. Naturally, a good memory is half the battle, for form is our chief stock-in-trade. The "book" is of course not applicable early in the season, when some handicap horses are simply having an "airing." Two-year-olds give no collateral basis; then at jumping the novices may be only having a necessary "public school."

A racing writer receives no end of communications from numerous professional touts at the training centres and stable lads themselves, offering information about horses with whom the writers are associated. Both sources of knowledge are, I believe, accepted by certain of the smaller

issues ; and, naturally, the daily sporting papers have their own training reporters at each centre. Personally, however, I have always persistently rejected any such offers, being averse from adopting clandestine methods or breaking confidences. Yet there are certain owners who like to see their horses " tipped," and the little general public support their winners. Particularly was this so with the late Lord William Beresford and the late Sir Blundell Maple. The former repeatedly came out of his way to ask me if I had " tipped his horse " for some pending big event, and, if not, on occasions suggested my doing so. The majority of owners—those who are racing for gain, not sport, and who look upon thoroughbreds as mere machines to a financial end—are reticent, and there are many who would even deliberately " put one off." Thus it may be said that a writer must discriminate and be cognisant of human as well as equine form. Weight for age races, particularly the " classics," are usually easy matters both to analyse and select for, as there is a direct public line to go upon. At the end of a season, too, when all horses must be fit—and what is more, " trying "—the form is fairly well-known and easier to diagnose.

The Press-room on race courses at the present

time is quite a general rendezvous with owners, trainers, and jockeys, and there is no question—in contrast to a few years back—that the leading writers of the day and the actual active forces in racing are on particularly friendly terms. The advantages of a free Press are recognised, and comment, favourable or otherwise, is accepted in a good sporting spirit. At times, of course, by virtue of this very fact a tipster's hands are somewhat tied, and there is hardly a week in which I am not approached concerning some horse, and invited to have what I like on myself (either directly or by standing in with the stable), if I will not mention it in type. However, there are occasions when one obtains confidences from private sources and is perplexed how to act, when writing about the race, without seeming to break faith. I have executed no end of commissions, small and large, on big events and selling plates, for trainers and jockeys innumerable, both at flat-racing and jumping, but have rarely found the information thus naturally and directly furnished in any way an aid to success—rather the reverse. I have tipped horses of my own in the firm belief that they were practical racing certainties, only to find eventually that I have known less about them than anybody else. In the main, owners are only

wanted to pay the training bills. In dealing with horses I always much prefer those belonging to people whom I don't know or care for, so that one can express an absolutely fearless opinion. Right or wrong, unless a man is prepared to say emphatically what he means and thinks, he is not worth his salt as a tipster.

I have been for years, and am still, giving predictions both daily and weekly. In the latter, of course, one is seriously handicapped, for radical changes constantly happen with startling suddenness in turf affairs, and nothing is more sensitive than our betting market; thus what appeared common-sense overnight reads ridiculously the next morning. Horses miss their engagements, even after arrival, for a thousand and one reasons—not always apparent. Owners change their intentions, because of inability to place the commission, or to obtain a certain jockey's services; some slight mishap to the horse may alter everything at the last moment. I always glance hurriedly over the *Calendar* on Thursday if then practicable, marking such events as seem advisable to speculate upon. If opportunity occurs to revise this after a subsequent day's running, which probably alters matters, so much the better.

A sporting pressman's habits are of necessity nomadic and irregular, and I should say, speaking generally, that one's articles are rarely written twice under the same circumstances. Mine are scribbled in turn in the press-room, in trains, at offices, at home, or probably over a meal at an hotel or restaurant. I have indited them on the course during the intervals, when watching a cricket or football match, afloat up the river, during the acts at a theatre, and in the Law Courts.

Two or three of the numerous local weekly papers, that are mainly compiled by tout-tipsters, are, on the whole, well done, though their directors naturally cannot find good men to represent them at all the training quarters ; and readers who pay really careful attention to these reports from different places must surely be maddened by the blatant idiocy of some of these louts—the first letter is an "l"—for it is the invariable custom of some of them to prophesy that every horse they watch must surely win. Here is the man from Blankton. He writes that "ALPHA will strip in fine fettle for the So-and-so Plate, and *must not be missed*"—they are great men for italics. "BETA *will capture* the Welter Handicap. GAMMA is our best for the Cup, *and will win.* DELTA *should*

*easily secure* the Sweepstakes. EPSILON *should not be overlooked* for the chief handicap. HETA *can scarcely lose* whatever race is selected for him." There are six races on Tuesday (and some forty other training establishments, including a few horses at a village called Newmarket), and the tout-tipster is convinced that they are all coming to Blankton. He said the same last week of Blankton horses, and the week before, and the week before that ; since last any horse won from the ground he watches he has solemnly warned his readers that about eighty different animals *must not be missed*, *will win*, *cannot be beaten ;* they all were beaten, but he goes lumbering on ; and the quaint part of this is that the tout-tipster at the next place is equally certain, others speak with modest hope of their lots, so that each paper contains seven or eight horses that are set down as "sure to capture" the same race—and the man who does the principal tipping, and uses the blackest type, winds up with a confident view in favour of a ninth, coupled perhaps with a tenth. That any editor should tolerate this cocksure local lunatic for a tipster is a mystery, and editors are not very discreet who allow these provincial scribes to eulogise week after week "your superb special," to say that they will send further accounts to "your

invaluable Tuesday's issue," your "incomparable," your "wonderful," and so on. This surely tends to make the print that allows it look contemptible. Self-praise is no recommendation.

As a proof that second thoughts and being too much "in the know" are not always an advantage, I may give an anecdote of the Great Ebor Handicap of two years ago. It chanced to be my opinion, after Wargrave had won at Hurst Park on the Saturday, that he would certainly gain the following Wednesday's big event at York, and in that idea his owner, Mr. H. Bottomley, entirely concurred. Thus Wargrave was my emphatic prediction. On the morning of the race (which is the proper time for anybody to bet, being then assured of a run and of the horse's well being), I had wired to have £50 each way s.p. on Wargrave. By an unfortunate mischance I met Mr. Bottomley in Fleet Street two hours before the race and expressed surprise that he was not at York. It was then that I learned the reason. Wargrave had been right off his feed since the Hurst Park race, had done no work, and, to put it mildly, was not "expected" or carrying a sou of his friends' money. Thereupon, on the suggestion of his owner—truly direct, well meant, of course the very best possible information—I wired asking the

bookmaker to allow me to cancel the bet and transfer the money to another horse. Wargrave won at 20 to 1, and the other candidate, to whom my £100 was transferred, finished in the ruck.

THE END

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