THOROUGHBREDS; A STORY OF THE TURF.

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CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

Mrs. Porter, reading a book on the veranda, heard the crunch of wheels as a buggy, slow moving, turned into the drive. She raised her eyes leisurely, the matter of the story still in her mind: but with a quick cry of "John!" she sprang to her feet, the volume, left to itself, rustling from her lap to the floor.

The mother eyes saw that something was wrong, and the mother heart felt that some evil had come to Allis.

Mrs. Porter had gone white in an instant. Over her hung heavy at all times the dread of some terrible accident coming to Allis through the horses.

"Did you call, wife?" Porter asked, as he came to the door. Then he sprang quickly across the veranda at sight of his wife's blanched face, and reached out to catch her in his arms. But she stopped him, pointing down the drive. "It's Allis, John; oh, my God!"

"No, no," he answered, "they're just coming back—here, sit down again. I'll see," and he raced down the steps, just as Mike pulled up.

"What's the matter, girl?" he began.

"The young gentleman's got a bit shook up, sir—nothin' bad loike," Mike broke in, hastily. The diplomatic rider, "not bad," was added for Mrs. Porter's benefit; his quick eye having seen her white face.

"Miss Allis's not hurt at all," he continued. "We'll help the young gentleman in, an' I'd best go for the dochter, I'm thinkin'."

Even as he was speaking, they helped Mortimer from the rig. He had not uttered a sound; his teeth were set hard against the agony that was in his side, and the queer dizziness that was over him left little beyond a consciousness that he was being looked after, and that if he could only keep going for a little, just use his legs a trifle, he would presently be allowed to sleep.

Yes, that was what he wanted, he was so drowsy. As he went up the steps between two men, a haggard face peered at him over the rail. It was familiar; he felt that some recognition was due, for it was a lady's face. He tried to smile. Then he was on a bed, and—and—sleep at last.

When the three men, with the silence of disaster over them, passed strugglingly into the house, Mrs. Porter threw herself on Allis's neck and a passion of tears flooded down and damped the girl' shoulder.

"God be thanked, God be thanked!" gasped the troubled woman, and one hand that was over the girl's shoulder patted her with erratic rapidity. Then she interrupted herself. "What am I saying? it's wicked, and Mr. Mortimer like that. But I can't help it—I can't help it. Oh, Allis, my heart was in my mouth; I feel that some day you will come home like this."

At that instant Gaynor dashed by them, leaped into the buggy and called, as he drove off: "I'll have the docther in a jiffy—th' young man's all right!" He was still talking as the whirr of swift-rushing wheels smothered out his voice, and the dust rose like a steam cloud, almost blotting him from the landscape.

"Oh, girl! I thought you'd been killed."

"Here, sit down, mother—you're all worked up," and Allis put a cool hand on her mother's hot forehead.

But the shock to her feelings had loosed the good woman's vocabulary. At all times smouldered in her heart a hatred of racing, even of the horses.

"It's the anger of God," Mrs. Porter denounced vehemently. "This gambling and racing is contrary to His law. Never a night passes, Allis, that I do not pray to God that He may open your father's eyes to the sin of racing. No good can come of it—no good has ever come of it—nothing but disaster and trouble; in a day the substance of a year is wasted. There can't be prosperity living in sin."

"Hush, mother," crooned Allis, softly. This outburst startled the girl; it was so passionate, so vehement. When they had talked of racing in the home life the mother had nearly always preserved a reproachful silence; her attitude was understood and respected.

"I must speak, girl," she said again, "this sinful life is crushing me. Do you think I feel no shame when I sit in meeting and hear our good minister denounce gambling and racing? I can feel his eyes on me, and I cannot raise my voice in protest, for do I not countenance it? My people were all church people," she continued, almost apologetically, "tolerating no sin in the household. Living in sin there can be no hope for eternal life."

"I know, mother," soothed the girl; "I know just how you feel, but we can't desert father. He does not look upon it as a sin, as carrying any dishonor; he may be cheated, but he cheats no man. It can't be so sinful if there is no evil intent. And listen, mother, no matter what anybody may say, even the minister, we must both stick to father, if he chooses to race horses all his life."

"Ah, sweetheart!" John Porter cried out in a pleased voice, as he came to them—"looking after mother; that's right. Cynthia has helped me fix up Mortimer. He'll be all right as soon as Mike gets back with Rathbone. I think we'd better have a cup of tea—these horses are trying on the nerves, aren't they, little woman?" and he nestled his wife's head against his side. "How did it happen, Allis? Did Mortimer slip into Diablo's box, or——"

"It was all over that rascally boy, Shandy. Diablo was just paying him back for his ill-treatment, and I went in to rescue him and Mortimer risked his life to save mine."

"He was plucky, eh, girl."

"He fought the black like a hero, father. But father, you must never think bad of Lauzanne again—if he hadn't come and fought the black, Mr. Mortimer would have been too late."

"It's dreadful, dreadful," moaned the mother.

Allis shot a quick look at her father, and he changed the subject and began talking about Alan—wondering where he was, and other irrelevant matters.

Then there was a fresh divertisement, as Mike rattled up, and Dr. Rathbone bustled in to where Mortimer lay.

Three smashed ribs and a broken arm, was his inventory of the damage inflicted by Diablo's kick, when he came out again with Porter, in an hour.

"I'm afraid one of the splintered ribs is tickling his lung, though," he added, "but the fellow has got such a good nerve that I hardly discovered this unpleasant fact. He'll be all right, though; he's young and healthy as a peach. Good nursing is the idea, and he'll get that here, of course He doesn't want much medicine; that we keep for our enemies—Ha, ha!" and he laughed cheerily, as if it were all a good joke on the battered man.

"Thim docthers is cold-blooded divils," was Mike's comment. "You'd a thought they'd been throwin' dice, an' it was a horse on the other gintleman. Bot' t'umbs! It was, too. Still if ould Saw-bones had been in the box yonder wit' Diablo, he wouldn't a felt so funny."

"Mortimer behaved well, didn't he, Mike?" asked Porter.

"Behaved well, is it? He was like a live divil; punched thim two big stallions till they took water an' backed out. My word! whin first I see him come to the stable wit' Miss Allis, thinks I here's wan av thim city chumps; he made me tired. An' whin he talked about Lauzanne's knees, m'aning his hocks, I had to hide me head in a grain bag. But if you'd seen him handle that fork, bastin' the black, you'd thought it was single sticks he was at, wit' a t'ousand dollars fer a knockout."

"One can't always tell how a colt will shape, can they, Mike?"

"You can't sor; an' yer next the trut' there. I've seen a herrin' gutted weed av a two-year-old—I remimber wan now, he was a Lexington. It was at Saratoga; an' bot' t'umbs! he just made hacks av ivery-thing in soight—spread eagled his field. Ye wouldn't a give $2 fer him, an' he come out an' cleaned up the Troy stake, like the gre at horse that he was."

"And you think Mortimer has turned out something like that, eh, Mike?"

"Well, fer a man that knows no more av horses than I know av the strology av stars he's a hot wan, an' that's the God's trut'."

Mortimer's gallant act had roused the Irishman's admiration. He would have done as much himself, but that would have been expected of a horseman constantly encountering danger; that an office man, a man to be pitied in his ignorance, should have fearlessly entered the stall with the fighting stallions, was quite a different matter.

Even Allis, with her more highly developed sense of character analyzation, felt something of this same influence. She had needed some such manifestation of Mortimer's integral force, and this had come with romantic intensity in the tragic box-stall scene. This drama of the stable had originated no polished rhetoric; the generally pedantic Mortimer's declamation had been unconventional in the extreme: "Back, you devils!" he shouted, oblivious of everything but that he must save the girl. The words still rang in the ears of Allis, and also the echo of her own cry when in peril, "Mortimer!" There must have been a foreshadowing in her soul of the man's trustworthiness, though she knew it not

Even without the doctor's orders it was patent that Mortimer must remain at Ringwood for a few days. It was as if Philip Crane, playing with all his intense subtlety, had met his master in fate; the grim arbiter of man's ways had pushed forward a chessman to occupy a certain square on the board for a time.

Mortimer had been most decisively smashed up, but his immense physique had wonderful recuperative powers. The bone-setting and the attendant fever were discounted by his vitality, and his progress toward recovery was marvellous.

CHAPTER IX.

Crane heard of the accident on one of his visits to Brookfield a couple of days later, and of course must needs hurry to Ringwood to see his employee. It happened that the Rev. Mr. Dolman graced the Porter home with his presence the same evening that Crane was there.

Naturally the paramount subject of interest was the narrow escape of Miss Allis; but the individuality of discussion gradually merged into a crusade against racing, led by the zealous clergyman. John Porter viewed this trend with no little trepidation of feeling.

It was Mrs. Porter who precipitated matters, by piously attributing Allis's escape to Providence.

"Undoubtedly, undoubtedly!" Mr. Dolman said, putting the points of his fingers together in front of his lean chest. He paused a moment, and Porter groaned inwardly; he knew that attitude. The fingers were rapiers, stilettos; presently their owner would thrust, with cutting phrase, proving that they were al indeed a very bad lot. Perhaps John Porter would have resented this angrily had he not felt that the reverend inquisitor was really honest in his beliefs, albeit intolerably narrow in his conclusions.

Dolman broke the temporary silence. "But we shouldn't tempt Providence by worshipping false images. Love of animals is commendable—commendable"—he emphasized this slight concession—"but racehorses always appeal to me as instruments of the evil one."

"It wasn't the horse's fault at all, Mr. Dolman," Allis interposed, "but just a depraved human's. It was the boy, Shandy's, fault."

"I wasn't thinking of one horse," continued the minister airily; "I meant race horses in general."

"I think Mr. Dolman is right," ventured Mrs. Porter, hesitatingly. "It's flying in the face of Providence for a girl to go among those racehorses."

"Bad-tempered men make them vicious, mother," Allis said; "and I believe that Shandy's punishment was the visitation of Providence, if there was any."

The Rev. Mr. Dolman's face took on an austere look. It was an insult to the Divine powers to assert that they had taken the part of a racehorse. But he turned the point to his own ends. "It's quite wrong to abuse the noble animal; and that's one reason why I hold that racing is contrary to the Creator's intentions, quite apart from the evil effect it has on the morals."

"Are all men immoral who race, Mr. Dolman?" John Porter asked. His question forced Dolman to define his position. Porter always liked things simplified; racing was either wrong in principle or right. Dolman found him rather a difficult man to tackle. He had this irritating way of brushing aside generalization, and forcing the speaker to get back to first principles.

The reverend gentleman proceeded cautiously. "I should hardly care to go as far as that—to make the rule absolute; a very strong man might escape contamination, perhaps."

Mrs. Porter sighed audibly. The minister was weakening almost lamentably—giving her husband a loophole to escape.

"I hardly think racing quite as bad as it is generally supposed to be," interposed Crane, feeling that Porter was being pilloried somewhat. He received a reproachful look from Mrs. Porter for his pains.

"I have never seen any good come of it," retorted Dolman. "A Christian man must feel that he is encouraging gambling if he countenances racing, for they contend that without betting racing is impossible."

"Everything in life is pretty much of a gamble," Porter drawled, lazily; "there aren't any sure things. The ships that go to sea, the farmer's crops—everything is more or less a matter of chance. If a man goes straight, he has a fairly easy time with his conscience, no matter what he's at; but if he doesn't, well, he'd better go hungry."

"A great many very honorable men are racing to-day," added Crane; "men who have built up large fortunes through honest dealing and wouldn't be racing if they felt that it was either unchristian or dishonorable."

"They can't be Christians if they countenance gambling," asserted the minister doggedly.

It occurred to Mortimer that whenever the discussion took broader lines, Dolman drew it back into the narrow cell of his own convictions.

Porter scratched his head perplexedly. They had been discussing the moral influence of racing; this seemed more like theology.

"It is certainly unchristian," commented Mrs. Porter, severely.

"I haven't seen much Christian spirit in any business," said Porter, quietly; "they all seem more a matter of written agreements. In fact there's more done on honor in racing than in any of the business gambles. A man that's crooked in racing is sure to come to grief in the long run."

Crane shifted in his chair and Dolman coughed deprecatingly.

"For my part," continued Porter, "I've never found it necessary to do anything I'm ashamed of in racing."

His wife saw an opening. "But, John, dear, you were treated most shamefully last year—a dishonest boy hauled your horse——"

"Pulled, mother," interposed Allis; "pulled father's horse, you mean."

"Perhaps; though I fail to see where the difference can be, if the horse ran the other way, and your father lost."

Porter smiled indulgently. "The boy was punished, Helen," he said. "Dishonesty is not tolerated on the race course."

"Yes; but something is always happening," she continued in lament. "It's contrary to the law of the church, John. It seems just like a visitation of Divine wrath the way things happen. And you're so sanguine, John; last year you were going to win a big race with Diablo, when he threw his leg—"

"Threw a splint, mother," prompted Allis.

"I thought your father said it was his leg had something the matter with it," argued Mrs. Porter.

"The splint was on his leg, mother dear."

"Well, I'm not familiar with racing phrases I must say, though I should be, goodness knows—I hear little, else. And talk of cruelty to animals," she turned to Mr. Dolman; "they burned the poor beast's leg with hot irons—."

The minister held up his hands in horror.

"It didn't give him as much pain as the doctor gave Mr. Mortimer in setting his arm," declared Allis.

"But it was racing injured the horse's leg," interposed Dolman.

"But your horse has got a ringbone, Mr. Dolman," said Allis, "and a spavin, too—I've been looking at him. That's because you drive him too fast on hard roads. And his feet are contracted from neglect in shoeing. It's just cruel the way that poor old horse has been neglected. Racehorses are much better taken care of."

Allis's sudden onslaught switched Mr. Dolman from the aggressive to the defensive with celerity.

"I confess I know very little about horses," he was forced to apologize; then, with something of asperity. "The spiritual welfare of my congregation takes up my entire time."

This rebuke caused a momentary silence, and Dolman, turning to Mortimer, said, "I hope you don't approve of racing, sir."

Mortimer didn't, but a look from Allis's eyes inexplicably enough caused him to hedge very considerably in his reply.

"I know nothing about the racecourse," he said, "but from what I see of the thoroughbreds I believe a man would have to be of very low order if their noble natures did not appeal to him. I think that courage and honesty and gentleness—they all seem to have it—must always have a good influence. Why, sir," he continued, with a touch of excitement, "I think a man would be ashamed to feel that he was making himself lower than the horses he had to do with."

Allis looked grateful. Even Porter turned half about in his chair and gazed with a touch of wonderment at the battered young man who had substituted common sense for sophistical reasoning.

The reverend gentleman frowned. "It's not the horses at all," he said, "it's the men who are disreputable."

Mrs. Porter gave a little warning cough. In his zealousness Mr. Dolman might anger her husband; then his logic would avail little.

"The men are like the horses," commented Porter; "some bad and some good. They average about the same as they do in anything else, mostly good, I think. Of course, when you get a bad one he stands out, and everybody sees him."

"And sometimes horses—and men, too, I suppose—get a bad name when they don't deserve it," added Allis. "Everybody says Lauzanne is bad, but I know he's not."

"That was a case of this dreadful dishonesty," said Mrs. Porter, speaking hastily. She turned in an explanatory way to Crane. "You know, Mr. Crane, last summer a rascally man sold my husband a crooked horse—now, John, what are you laughing at?" for her husband was shaking in his chair.

"I was wondering what a crooked horse would look like," he answered, and there were sobs in his voice.

"Why, John, when you brought him home you said he was crooked."

As usual Allis straightened matters out. "It was the man who was crooked. Mother means Lauzanne," she continued.

"Yes," proceeded the good woman, "a Mr. Langdon, I remember now, treated my husband most shamefully over this horse."

Crane winced. He would have preferred thumbscrews just then.

"John is honest himself," went on Mrs. Porter, "and he believes other men; and this horse had some drug given him to make him look nice, so that my husband would buy him."

"Shameful," protested Dolman. "Are men allowed to give horses drugs?" He appealed to Mr. Porter.

"No; the racing law is very strict on that point."

"But evidently it is done," contended Dolman.

"I think there's very little of it," said Porter.

This turn of the conversation made Crane feel very uneasy.

"Do you think, Mr. Porter," he asked, "that there was anything of that sort over Lauzanne? Do you think Langdon would?"—he hesitated.

"Mr. Langdon has a tolerable idea of what I think," answered Porter. "I shouldn't trust that man too much if I were you. He's got cunning enough, though, to run straight with a man like yourself, who has a horse or two in his stable, and doesn't go in for betting very heavily."

"I know very little about him," protested Crane; "and, as you say, he will probably act quite straightforwardly with me, at least."

"Yes," continued Porter, half wearily, as though he wished to finish the distasteful discussion, "there are black sheep in racing as there are in everything else. My own opinion it that most of the talk we hear about crooked racing is simply talk. At least nine of ten races are honestly run—the best horse wins. I would rather cut off my right hand than steal a race, and yet last summer it was said that I had pulled Lucretia."

"I never heard of that, John," cried Mrs. Porter, in astonishment

"No, you didn't," drily answered her husband.

Allis smiled; she had settled that part of it with her father at the time.

"If you'll excuse me," began Crane, rising, "I think Mr. Mortimer is getting tired. I believe I'll jog back to Brookfield."

Reluctantly the Rev. Mr. Dolman rose, too. He felt, somehow, that the atmosphere of racing had smothered his expostulation—that he had made little headway. The intense honesty that was John Porter's shielded him about almost as perfectly as a higher form of belief might have done.

But with almost a worldly cunning it occurred to the clergyman that he could turn the drawn battle into a victory for the church; and as they stood for a minute in the gentle bustle of leave-taking, he said: "The ever-continuing fight that I carry on against the various forms of gambling must necessarily take on at times almost a personal aspect"—he was addressing Mr. Porter, ostensibly—"but in reality it is not quite so. I think I understand your position, Mr. Porter, and—and—what shall I say?—personally feel that the wickedness of racing doesn't appeal to you as a great contamination: you withstand it, but—you will forgive me saying so—thousands have not the same strength of character."

Porter made a deprecating gesture, but Dolman proceeded: "What I was going to say is that you possibly realize this yourself. You have acted so wisely, with what I would call Christian forethought, in placing your son Alan in a different walk in life, and"—he turned with a grave bow in Crane's direction—"and in good hands too."

"His mother wished it," Porter said simply.

"Yes, John was very good about Alan's future," the mother concurred. "But, husband, you quite agreed that it was much better for Alan to be in the bank, than possibly drifting into association with—well, such dishonorable men as this Mr. Langdon and his friends. He is so much better off," she continued, "with young men such as Mr. Crane would have about him."

The Rev. Mr. Dolman smiled meekly, but it was in triumph. He had called attention to an act which spoke far louder than Mr. Porter's disclaiming words.

Porter was not all deceived by the minister; in fact he rather admired the other's cleverness in beating him on the post. He gave a little laugh as he said: "I should not have succeeded very well in a bank. I am more at home with the horses than I am with figures; but I expect I would have gone fairly straight and hope the boy will do the same. I fancy one of the great troubles about banking is to keep the men honest—the temptation of handling so much money being great. They seem to have more chances to steal than men on the racecourse."

As usual Porter seemed to be speaking out of his thoughts, and without malice, and no one took offence. It was simply a straightforward answer to Dolman's charge.

Porter had simply summed up the whole business in a very small nutshell. That there was temptation everywhere, and that honest men and thieves were to be found on racecourses, in banks, in every business; but that, like horses, a fair share of them were honest.

"Speaking materially of racehorses, quite outside of the moral aspect," said Crane as he was taking his leave, "you'll have to be mighty careful of that Diablo, Mr. Porter, when Miss Allis is about; he seems a vindictive brute."

"Yes, John; you'll have to sell him right away; I'll be frightened to death while he's about the place."

"I shall never be a bit afraid of him," remonstrated Allis; Shandy, who made all the mischief, has been discharged."

"Diablo has always been more trouble than he is worth," said Porter. "I thought he was going to be a good horse, but he isn't; and if he has taken to eating people, I'll give him away some day. I wouldn't sell him as a good horse, and nobody'd buy a maneater."

"I'll buy him when you make up your mind, Mr. Porter," exclaimed Crane, somewhat eagerly. "I have nobody sweet enough to tempt his appetite. In the meantime, Miss Allis, if I were you, I should keep away from him."

Then presently with good nights and parting words of warning about Diablo, the guests were gone, and Mortimer, having declined Porter's proffered help, was somewhat awkwardly—having but one good hand—preparing to retire in Alan's room.

His mind worked somewhat faster than his fingers; several new problems had been given to it to labor over within the compass of a single moon. That horse racing should ever become a disturbing interest in his life had seemed very improbable; now it was like a gale in his soul—it swayed him. He was storm-tossed in the disturbing element—he could come to no satisfactory conclusion. On the one hand, the thoroughbred horses were to be admired, they were brave and true creatures of love. Also Porter was an honest man, the one thing he admired above all else.

And Miss Allis! Somehow or other his eyes flew up to a picture that rested on a mantelpiece in the room. He took it down, looking furtively over his shoulder as he did so, and taking it closer under the lamp that was on the table, sat and gazed steadfastly into the girlish face.

Even in the photograph, the big, wondrous eyes seemed to say: "What of wrong, if we are not wrong?" That was the atmosphere; so thoroughly straightforward and honest, that wrong failed of contamination.

Still it was unconvincing to Mortimer. The horses might be good, the man honest, and the girl pure and sweet, but the life itself was distasteful. Reason as one might, it was allied to gambling.

Mortimer rose with a sigh; the whole thing wearied him. Why should he distress his mind over the matter? As he put the photograph back on the mantel, he held it for an instant, then suddenly, with a nervous, awkward gesture, brought it to his lips and kissed the eyes that seemed to command tribute.

The movement twisted his broken-ribbed side, and an agony of pain came to him in quick retribution. It was as though the involuntary kiss had lurched him forward into a futurity of misery. The spasm loosed beads of perspiration, which stood cold on his forehead. Swift, taken from the stimulant of his thoughts, his nerves overtaxed by the evening, jangled discordantly, and he crept into bed feeling an unutterable depression, as though the room was filled with evil threatening spirits.

CHAPTER X

In coincidence, the two men, Mortimer and Crane, had similar thoughts the day after Mr. Dolman's discussion; and, rather remarkably, their deductions were alike, having the same subject of mental retrospect, Allis Porter.

It was evident that outside of her family, little interested her but horses; certainly not a very lofty aspiration. When the conversation had dealt with broad principles, men and their shortcomings, the previous evening, she had centralized it in Lauzanne, picturing him as symbolical of good acts and evil repute. Patently it was difficult to become interested in such a young woman; actually she monopolized their thoughts. Inconsistently the fair offender felt no recoil of this somewhat distressing situation; her mind busied itself chiefly over the reclamation of Lauzanne.

By inheritance all the qualities of a good horse had come to him, except a submissive temper. Allis worked on the theory that his disposition had been set awry by injudicious handling: that unlimited patience would cause him to forget all that. He could gallop, else he had not won the race in which he beat the Dutchman. That he had needed a stimulant that day was because he had been soured, and would not try with his wits about him.

From the time of coming back to Ringwood, Allis had ridden him in all his exercise gallops, and had asked Mike personally to supervise his stable education. It had taken all her great patience, all her youthful enthusiasm and faith, for the chestnut had notions beyond all belief.

At first, missing the abuse, he almost seemed to thirst for it; tried the gentle girl in every way—sulked and loafed, and took little streaks of trying to cut the course, and made false breaks, as though he were going to run with a full vigor—even laid hold of the horses with his teeth when opportunity offered. These antics did not break the girl's faith; she rode him with the gentle hand a woman knows, and a horse soon learns to appreciate; and made him to understand that he was to have fair treatment.

Porter viewed this continuous performance with silent scepticism. He did not abuse horses himself, neither did he put up with too much nonsense from them. To him they were like children, needing a lot of tolerant kindness, but, also, at times, to be greatly improved by a sound spanking. Once, when he suggested something of this sort to Allis, saying that Lauzanne was a spoiled child, she admitted that he was, but that thoughtless cruelty and not indulgence had done the harm, therefore kindness was the cure.

The first sign of regeneration was the implicit faith that Lauzanne began to place in his young mistress. At first, when she put up a hand to pet him, he would jerk his head away in affright; now he snuggled her shoulder or nibbled at her glove, in full spirit of camaraderie. Then one day in a gallop, came a stronger manifestation—a brief minute of exhilaration, with after hours of thankfulness, and beyond that, alas for the uncertainty of a spoiled temper, an added period of wallowing in the Slough of Despond.

It was on a crisp sparkling, morning, and with Shandy—it was before his downfall—on Lucretia, another stable lad, Ned Carter, on Game Boy and Allis on Lauzanne, the three swung off for a working gallop of a mile or more.

Lauzanne was in an inquisitive mood, as the other two raced on in front. What was his light-weighted rider up to, anyway? Why did she always leave it to him to do just as he liked? Was she really deceiving him—did she wish him to lie back there behind the others always? He fell to wondering what she would do if he were to take hold of the bit and spread his big muscles in one rushing gallop and go on past the others and get home to the feedbox first. He rattled the snaffle in his mouth with nervous indecision—he had a notion to try it.

"Steady, my boy!" said Allis, as she slipped the reins back through her fingers till they stretched tight. A dozen times she had sought in vain to make him think she did not wish him to gallop; but something in the crisp air this morning threw him off his guard. Why should he be forced to lag behind? He stretched the arch of his neck straight till the bit held hard in his mouth; the ears pitched forward in eager point; the great frame under the girl quivered and sank closer to earth; the roar of his beating hoofs came up to her ears muffled by the drive of the wind that was now a gale as the chestnut raced into it with the speed of an express.

How her heart sang! Here was speed; and with such stride—strong, and straight, and true! Low she crouched, and her call to Lauzanne was but a joyous whisper. Her small hands were framed in steel; strength to steady the big chestnut as he swung round the course glued to the rail. On Lauzanne sped; and to the rhythm of his big heaving quarters the girl's soul sang a song of delight. At last, at last! was coming reward; her reward.

And then, just when everything had been achieved, when the great gallop had brought them half up the stretch, something came to Lauzanne—perhaps the memory of the whipping finishes; at any rate he curled up like a dog, threw his ears back—Allis could feel the sudden stiff prop of the fore-legs, as he set himself against the rush of speed, and in a dozen strides he was Lauzanne again—Lauzanne the Despised.

And so it had gone on for weeks, Allis working out her theory, up to the time of the trouble over Diablo.

There was something in the girl's quiet determination that was masterful; perhaps that was why she had always had her own way at home. Now this mastery was spreading out wonderfully; Lauzanne, and Mike, and her father, and Crane and Mortimer, all in different degrees of subjection, but, as fate knew, all subject.

Mrs. Porter's lament, the night of Dolman's crusade, had given Crane a keynote for his line of action.

It was the day following her scoring of the tolerant husband that Crane revisited Ringwood, full of his new idea.

He had an impulse to buy back Lauzanne. For almost the first time in his life he experienced twinges of remorse: this was because of Allis. Porter's affairs were in a bad way, and he would probably accept eagerly an offer from Crane to lighten his load. Individually, he cared little for Porter's financial tribulations, but it was a good opportunity to prepare the way for a stronger pressing of his suit with the girl.

With his usual fine discrimination he spoke to Mrs. Porter first, intimating never so slightly that her words had won his entire sympathy, that if her husband would sell any of the horses he would buy them.

There was a strong atmosphere of sincerity about Crane at all times; what he did he did with the full vigor of a man believing in its truth. One might almost have suspected that he deceived himself—that he had no conception of the unrighteousness of his acts. At any rate, he imposed most successfully upon the mother of Allis. Quite egotistically she attributed to herself the trend of his friendship. In racing phrase, Crane was out for a killing, and playing his cards with consummate skill.

With the master of Ringwood he went very straight to the point. This was possible, as Porter could not hesitate to discuss his financial condition with his banker.

Crane offered to buy Lucretia—this, with him, was purely a speculation—but Porter would not part with the little mare. Then the banker spoke of Lauzanne, saying that he felt somewhat guilty since learning the previous evening that the horse had been doped.

Porter failed to see where Crane had anything to do with it. But the latter insisted that he had unwittingly helped Langdon by speaking of Lauzanne as a good horse. He had known nothing of the matter beyond that his trainer had assured him that the horse would win; in fact, he had backed him.

Porter laughed at the idea that responsibility could attach to Crane. As to the chestnut, he was not worth a tenth of the three thousand he had cost—that was well known; and if Crane, or any other man sought to buy him at that price it would savor too much of charity. At any rate Lauzanne belonged to Allis, and Crane would have to bargain with her.

Then there was Diablo, Crane said; his presence was a menace to Miss Porter.

"I've nursed him for a good while," Porter replied, "and he's a bad betting proposition—he's too uncertain. You don't want such a horse as that—nobody does. I'll keep him a bit longer, and put him in a handicap or two where the purse will be worth running for, and I won't have to back him; he'll get in with a featherweight, and some day may take it into his head to gallop, though he's a rank bad one."

Crane did not press the point; he understood Porter's motives throughout. He knew the master of Ringwood was an unchanging man, very set in his ways, adhering closely to his plans and opinions. So Crane went back to Brookfield without purchasing a horse, saying as he left: "I claim first privilege when you wish to sell."

He had talked to Porter in the stable, and Mike, busy nearby, heard that part of their conversation referring to the horses.

"They haven't got money enough in the bank to take the little mare from us yet, have they, Mike?" Porter said to Gaynor, full of his pride in Lucretia.

"That they haven't, sor," replied Mike, proudly. "But, faith, I wish th' gint hadn't come a-tryin' to buy her; it's bad luck to turn down a big offer for any horse."

Porter smiled indulgently. This stable superstition did not appeal to him.

"It would a-broke the bad luck, sor, to have let him took the black."

"It would have broken his bank, you mean, Mike."

"Well, he'll break some wan's back here yet, an' I'm tellin' you that sthraight. They say a black cat's full av th' divil, but Diablo's ould Nick himself, though I'm sayin' it was th' b'y, Shandy's, fault sp'ilin' him. An' if it wasn't fer Miss Allis it's a pity you couldn't a-sold him the chestnut. He's a sawhorse—he's as heavy in th' head as a bag of salt; he'll never do no good to nobody. Them's the kind as kapes a man poor, eatin' their heads off, an' wan horse, or maybe two, in the stable earnin' th' oats fer them. It's cheaper to cut th' throats av such cattle."

"I believe you're right, Mike," Porter answered, quietly, as he left the stable.

Crane, driving back to Brookfield, turned over in his mind the matter of his mission. He was satisfied. He had succeeded in the main objective point.

It would have been a good move to have acquired Lucretia—to have tempted her owner to part with her for ready money in sight. The money would soon have disappeared, then Porter, with a lot of bad horses on his hands, would almost certainly have come more firmly into the grasp of Crane.

The offer to buy Lauzanne had been a bit of saving grace—a faint, generous impulse, begot of Allis's regenerating influence. Crane had discovered that Porter did not at all suspect him of interest in the fraud—that was a great something. He had also established himself firmly in Mrs. Porter's good graces, he could see. It would be indeed strange if in the end he did not succeed completely.

(To be continued.)

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RANCHING NOT WHAT IT WAS

DIFFERENT PRINCIPLES RULE CATTLE RAISING NOW.

Increase in the Number of Small Farms in the West Has Restricted the Ranges and Made a New System Necessary—Business More Profitable Than Ever.

The raising, feeding and shipping of cattle have for years been a foremost industry of the great Southwest, but in recent years while the cattle business has not decreased in volume, it has covered less space. Farmers are coming and using up the Government land, formerly vast ranches.

A recent census shows that there are 1,000,000 more farms to-day than ten years ago, and all of these in Oklahoma, Indian Territory, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. But the number of cattle held in these Territories has not decreased from the average number—6,250,000. The approximate value of the cattle held in the great Southwest—the States and Territories mentioned, including Texas as well—is near $125,000,000. This number decreases and increases as the seasons come and go.

With the gradual settlement of the Southwest frontier, the cattle business loses its wild and free reign of the soil. Ranchmen must curtail their pasture land, and figure closely upon the sustenance necessary for the fattening of each steer. Fences are erected at great cost and when pastures run short of grass the herds must be put "on feed" at a heavy expense. Consequently the economies of modern cattle ranching need the strictest of business judgment if profits are to be realized.

The business of cattle raising is not now the mere turning loose of vast herds upon the plains and allowing them to fatten and prosper of their own accord. From the time the small yearlings are placed in the barnyard of the modern cattle ranch of to-day until driven out of the stock car at the yards of the marketing place, their owners are under a constant strain. The onward march of civilization westward is due to the congestion of the cattle business on the Southwest plains, the crowding into an area one-half the size of ten years ago. But cattlemen of to-day are making fortunes just as they did when range was cheap and plentiful. Better business methods are necessary, and herein lies an interesting story of economics.

A dozen years ago a Texas ranchman asserted that twenty-five acres of grass land was insufficient for the fattening of one steer for marketing. Last month an equally successful rancher of Oklahoma allowed three acres for each of his eight thousand head, and said that this is really a half acre in excess of actual need. He says that the range steer of to-day fattens easier than the longhorns of frontier days. Better blood has been bred into the stock cattle.

The cattle ranch of the present era is not a cattle ranch at all, but a farm run on a large scale. Take a fifty-thousand-acre tract of land, used primarily as a cattle ranch. Not less than 15,000 acres of this will be in cultivation, sown to wheat, oats, corn and millet, while at least 5,000 acres will be sown to alfalfa. The remainder is pasture land.

Old stock raisers would have scouted the idea of sowing their range in cereals for feeding purposes Instead, they would have changed the cattle about from one part of the country to another, seeking fresh range instead of striving to make fresh fields at home. But the custom of driving steers to fattening pastures has been tried and found wanting.

The fields change in aspect. Instead of finding only cowboys upon the ranch of the present time, there are many farmhands; men who know nothing about riding a bucking bronco or roping a racing steer. And the cowboys must understand farming, for during the dull season of guarding the herds, generally midsummer, there is work for them in the fields. Tenderfeet who imagine the ranching section of the West in these days to be populated entirely with cowboys, booted and spurred, are in error, for no gentler or milder mannered type of workmen may be found anywhere than the young fellows who now make cattle herding and farming a business.

What of the herds and steers then that are being raised and shipped into the Western markets every season, fall and spring? The stock yards' reports tell that the grade is much above the highest average. On the range one will know the reason if he is a close observer. The breeding of finer stock is now a part of the ranchman's programme, as well as the raising of them.

Texas is noted for the number and extent of its ranches. Land is cheaper there than elsewhere on the frontier, hence cattle raising remains more primitive in that State than in Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado or Indian Territory. Western Kansas has come to the fore in very recent years as a rich cattle country. Along the Santa Fé, Rock Island and Missouri Pacific roads, running to Colorado and the West, are numerous modern cattle ranches.

The Sherman ranch on the Missouri Pacific road, near Geneseo, is a type of the modern cattle ranch. It contains 40,000 acres, of which 5,000 acres are sown to corn and forage crops, besides 2,000 acres in wheat. This ranch produces 2,500 fat beeves for sale annually, besides 2,000 yearling calves which are sold as veal to packing houses. Cattle fattened for the market by the owner of the ranch are not only allowed to run on the pasture, but they are fed with corn, ground feed, bran and cottonseed meal, a newly discovered feed for steers.

The Frank Rockefeller ranch in western Kansas on the Santa Fé Railroad at Belvidere is a more perfect type of the ranch which all cattlemen of this era are striving to own. Of course Mr. Rockefeller is not hampered for money, as a majority of cattlemen are. He has had fifteen or twenty immense stone and steel barns erected at different parts of his fourteen thousand-acre property, has dug at an enormous expense immense lakes for irrigation of his fields and employed the finest experts in the cattle business to work for him. The annual expense of his ranch is almost equal to the profits, but he says he is going to have the best stock ranch in the West soon and is therefore sparing nothing to gain that end.

The largest individual cattle ranchers of Texas are G. W. Littlefield and C. C. Slaughter, each of whom owns a million or more acres. They follow the old plan of allowing range cattle to fatten almost exclusively upon the range, with perhaps a month on full feed before shipping. But their full feed only means corn and fodder, while a full feed in the northern part of the southwest country means ground corn, millett, and various mixed chops.

In Arizona and New Mexico there is a free-range herd law, which allows any and every one to pasture their cattle and sheep upon Government land. But even in these remote sections farmers have been homesteading quarter sections at an increasing rate that alarms the stockmen. Major Littlefield of Texas, perceiving the possibility of too many small farmers in New Mexico, has recently purchased 280,000 acres in the river valleys, and has stocked this immense ranch with 75,000 head of steers. Although an advocate of plenty of range for cattle, he is coming into line with other expert raisers and is giving each steer only about three acres, whereas a few years ago he allowed each twenty-five upon which to graze.

There was an old rivalry among ranchmen as to whose steers had the longest horns, and when they began, five or six years ago, to dehorn fattening steers many of the old-time cowboys threw up their hands in disgust. Any one who knows cattle at all knows that long horns do not count for anything, but the rangers used to think so.

The rivalry to-day is between the merits of various kinds of blooded cattle as feeders. Shorthorns and Durhams are known to be good breeders, while Herefords are even finer for that purpose. But the Scotch Galloway and Angus are easily fattened and produce a good quantity of flesh for marketing. No cattle ranch to-day is complete without bulls and cows of each of these breeds.

Under the new system of ranching money-making was never more easily accomplished. Formerly, even in 1892, there was no market for calves, but to-day the production of veal upon the range is an industry quite as profitable as the sale of three and four-year-olds. This is the principal reason why good breeding stock is a necessary addition to the ranch. The sale of calves and steers is the principal resource, for no yearlings are now allowed to go to the market. The calves are worth from $5 to $15, while yearlings are worth little more. Steers run as high as $30, but range cows for breeding purposes are worth only $25. The profit on steers differs, owing to distance from the markets, freight rates and the condition of pasture land and crops.

One of the most successful cattle ranches of to-day is the No. 101 ranch in northern Oklahoma. It is conducted on principles which differ entirely from the running of any cattle ranch of frontier days, and its owners have set a style that is fast becoming a fashion among other cattle raisers.

Eight thousand steers are shipped from the ranch, half in December and half in July. These cattle are bought in Texas as yearlings and kept on the ranch two years, possibly for two and one half years. After their arrival from the South—experts inoculate them against disease, and they are turned upon the range. Three months before they are ready for shipment they are fed with only ground feed. Millett and Kaffir corn, together with cottonseed meal, make a nutritious food. They are kept in pens during the fattening and not allowed to race with each other over the plains and thus work off flesh already placed upon their ribs.

Kaffir corn in the field is an excellent and cheap feed in the estimation of present-day cattle men. Two acres of Kaffir corn cost about $5 and will put $10 worth of flesh upon the steers. This is said to be the cheapest feed for cattle that can be used. The profit from the No. 101 ranch is about $150,000 annually, of which one half comes from grain and the remainder from steers. By conjunction of the farm and the ranch, the pasturing of fields of wheat during the winter and dry fodder and Kaffir corn in the fall, the fields are made to yield a double value. The scarcity of land in the West is responsible for the economies in cattle ranching to-day, and more money is being made therefrom.

HUGH J. LEE IN ALASKA.

Peary's Comrade Occupies the Most Westerly House in North America.

Hugh J. Lee will be remembered as one of the two men who accompanied the Arctic explorer Peary across 600 miles of the inland ice of Greenland on his second journey to Independence Bay on the north-east coast of that island. It was a most hazardous and a very trying journey and no one without Peary's indomitable pluck and energy could have successfully achieved it. As it was, the three men would have perished, in all probability, if it had not been for the musk oxen they found at Independence Bay, with which they replenished their food supplies. Peary's other companion on this journey was his faithful colored servant, Matt Hensen, who has been with him during all his work in north Greenland.

Lee made an excellent record in his Arctic service with Peary. He stood the test that tries men's souls and came out of the ordeal most honorably. Some time after his return to his home in Meriden, Conn., he married a young lady of that city and the happy couple made their wedding trip on a steamer employed in one of the later expeditions to Greenland. Then Lee settled down as a reporter on one of the Meriden newspapers, where he was engaged until last spring, when he abandoned newspaper work to assume new duties once more in the Far North.

He has gone with his family to Cape Prince of Wales on the extreme eastern coast of Alaska, where he arrived on July 22 last. A letter he wrote a week later to the editor of the Meriden *Journal* said that, on a clear day, looking across Behring Strait he could see the coast of Asia. He was very busy erecting his new home, certainly not far from the place where the natives of Asia crossed the narrow channel and settled in the eastern continent, perhaps the first human beings who were ever in North America. His home, therefore, is in a region of great historic interest; and his house is the most westerly habitation of a white man in North America.

Lee has gone to this remote part of Alaska in the service of one of the missionary societies and is to be the practical man of affairs in charge of their station there. About 350 Eskimos are living around the station and it is interesting to hear from Lee that many of the words they speak are identical with those he learned while living among the Arctic highlanders of Cape York, though they probably have not met for many generations. Their language appears to be a distinct dialect of the Eskimo tongue.

Lee is to have charge of the reindeer herd at the mission station and is to teach the natives to be herdsmen and reindeer drivers; and in other respects he is to have charge of the practical education of the natives. He was the first white man on the ground and had scarcely arrived when he was called upon to perform a rather unusual function for a layman.

On his first Sunday at the cape two young couples told him that they wanted to get married after the custom of white men and asked him to perform the wedding ceremony. He begged to be excused, but the young men were very urgent and earnest. When he reflected that the young couples would go to living together, ceremony or no ceremony, he decided to comply with their request. Probably the natives never dreamed that he was a tyro in the business.

He was very busy in those July days getting things into shape for the coming winter. Daylight never faded and he said he was often working till near midnight. Such a thing as privacy was scarcely possible, for the natives were brimful of curiosity. Day and night, he wrote, juvenile faces were constantly glued to the window of his house and the natives were never weary of observing how the white folks cook, eat, make their beds and go to sleep. These natives have the reputation of being somewhat intractable, but Lee believes he is in their good graces. "They seem just as friendly," he wrote, "as my old Greenland friends, and I think we shall get along with them nicely."

The progress of the work which our Government with its agents and the missionaries are doing among the native Eskimos of Alaska will be watched with interest. A more humane work was never undertaken, for one of the very practical aspects of it is to place these poor people in such a position that they will be able to protect themselves from the bitter privations that sometimes overtake them. It is desired to fit them to become owners and breeders of reindeer which will supply them with most of the necessities of life when game fails, as is sometimes the case. When they become experienced as reindeer drivers they will be able to earn money in the haulage service of the Government, mining companies and mission stations, and thus will be started on the road to independence. There is hope for their future now that a way seems to have been found to improve their condition.

Events in Society and Other Matters of Interest to Women

are more fully and intelligently handled by THE SUN and EVENING SUN than by other daily mediums.—*Adv.*