

THOROUGHBREDS; A STORY OF THE TURF.

By W. A. FRASER.

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CHAPTER XVIII.—CONTINUED.

Crane accompanied Allis as far as the paddock gate. Allis went over to the fatal No. 7 stall. Lucretia had been brought in, looking very distressed after her hard race. For an instant the girl forgot her own trouble at sight of the gallant little mare's condition. Two boys were busy rubbing the white-crested perspiration and dust from her sides; little dark rivulets of wet trickled down the lean head that hung wearily.

"Well, we lost," it was Dixon's voice at Allis's elbow. "That'll do," to the horse; "here, put this cooler on and walk her about."

Then he turned to Allis again. "She was well up with the leaders half way to the stretch. I thought she was going to win."

"Was it too far for her, Dixon?" The trainer did not answer at once; with him, at all times, questions were things to ponder over. He knitted his brows, and air of hesitating abstraction showed plainly that this question of Allis's was one he would prefer to answer days later, if he answered at all.

"Didn't she stop suddenly?" Allis asked again. "I couldn't just see from where I was what happened," he returned, evasively, "and I haven't owned John Porter. She may have got shot in. Ah, here comes Redpath now," as the jockey returned from the weighing scales.

Redpath seemed to think that some explanation was necessary, as he came up to Allis and the trainer, so he said: "The little mare seemed to have a chance when I turned into the stretch, and I thought once I was going to win; that big black just kept galloping, galloping, and I never could get to his head. I'd a black, he was money, though, if something hadn't happened to me, and then my mount just died away—she just seemed to die away."

He repeated this in a falling cadence, as though it best expressed his reason for finishing in the rack. "Well, we're beat, an' that's all there is to it," declared Dixon, half savagely; then he added, "An' by a cast-off out of your father's stable, too, Miss Allis. If there's any more bad luck owing John Porter, hang it if I wouldn't like to shoulder myself, an' give him a breather."

Then with ponderous gentleness for a big, rough-thrown-together man, he continued: "Don't you fret, miss; the little mare's all right; she'll pull your father through all this; you just cheer up. I've got to go now, an' look after her."

When the trainer had gone the jockey turned to Allis, hesitating and said: "Dixon's correct about the little mare; she's all right. I wouldn't speak ever before him, though he's all right too, but— and he looked about carefully to see that nobody was within earshot.

Two men were talking a little further out in the paddock, and Redpath, motioning to Allis, stepped close to the stall that was next to the one Lucretia had occupied. "I could a' been a better rider, but I wasn't; the girl started. Crane had said that the jockey had stopped riding."

"Yes, miss, you mustn't blame me, for I took chances of bein' had up afore the stewards."

"You did wrong if you didn't try to win," exclaimed Allis, angrily. "I did try to win, but I couldn't. I saw that I'd never catch that big black, he was going too strong; his long stride was just breaking the little mare's heart. She's the gamest piece of horseflesh—say, Miss Porter, believe me, it just hurt me to take it out of her, keeping up with that long-legged devil. If I could a-headed him once, just got to him once—I tried it when we turned into the straight—he'd have quit. But it was to use—the mare couldn't do it."

"With him out of the race, I'd have won, I could a' been second or third as it was, but it might have done the little mare up so she wouldn't be any good all season. I thought a bit over this when I was galloping."

"I knew she was in the Brooklyn Derby, an' when I had the others beat at a mile, thinks I if the public don't get on to it, Mr. Porter can get all his losses back in the Brooklyn Derby. That's why I leaned upon the veto man, think I could do anything crooked against you, Miss? Give me the mount in the Derby, an' your father can let his last dollar that Lucretia'll win it."

"As he finished speaking Mike Gavner shuffled moodily up to them. Usually Mike's clothes suggested a general despondency; his wiry body, devoid of roundness as a rat trap, seemed inadequate to the proper expression of their original design. The habitual air of endeavorous decay had been accentuated by the failure of Lucretia to win the Brooklyn. Mike had slunk into his all-enveloping coat with pathetic moroseness. The look of pity in his eye when it lighted upon Allis gave place to one of rebellious accusation as he turned his head slowly and glared at Redpath.

"You put up with that, did you? You commenced, speaking in a hard, dry, defiant tone; "a bad ride, an' no mistake. Mind, I'm not sayin' you could, at won, but you might, a' tried," and he waited for Redpath's defence.

"She was all out, Mike, beat. What was the use of drivin' her to death when she had a ghost of a chance?"

"You're a little too hard on Redpath," remonstrated Allis, "he's just been telling me that he didn't wish to punish the mare unnecessarily."

"His business was to win if he could, miss," answered Mike, "not at all won over. It was a big stake, an' he ought to've put up a big fight. The black would have quit if you'd ever got to his throat; he's soft, that's what he is. An' you were in the money, Miss Porter, an' praps, you quit ridin' an' let him come home alone. It's queer 'bys that's ridin' now, miss. Gavner added fiercely, nodding his head in great indignation. "You've abruptly, the petulant moroseness showing deeper than ever in his wrinkled face."

"You mustn't mind Mike, Redpath," said Allis, "he's a good friend of our family and is upset over the race, that's all."

"I don't blame him," answered the jockey, "he would have rode it out and spoiled your chances with the mare—that would have done no good."

"Still, I hardly like it," answered the girl, "I know you're right, but I don't do anything like this again. Of course I don't want Lucretia pushed beyond her strength nor out with the whip, but she ought to get the place if she can. People might have backed her for the place, and we've thrown away their money."

"The trainers will look after their own interests, Miss Porter, and they wouldn't help you a little bit if you needed it, they'd be more like to do you a bad turn. If I'd driven the mare to death, an'

In this light, My object in coming to-night was to give you a little hope for brightness in your gloomy hour of bad luck, but perhaps I had better speak to your father."

"I'd rather you should speak somewhat pleadingly," Dr. Rathbone has cautioned us all against worrying father and this could have no other result than to distress the animal. It was Shandy."

Allis's letter had been completed, but she now added a postscript, telling her mother briefly of Crane's insistence over the bet, and beseeching her to devise some plan for keeping this new disturbing element from her father.

"Crane was remaining over night in Gravesend and, going back to his quarters, he reviewed mentally the evening's campaign. He had expected opposition from Allis, but he hoped to overcome the anticipated objections."

He had failed in this, but it was only a check, not a defeat. He smiled complacently, over his pocket of self-control in having a bet of his own, and his absorbing passion to escape him.

This acceptance of money by Allis, the moment which was the outcome of an almost generous thought, had given him a real advantage. To have handed over his chance by a single pressure of the mare's head, to have spoken, though never so briefly, of the money, would be a girl's sensitive alarm. He was too perfect to let a bet to induce in such poor sword play.

He had really left the question open. A little thought, influenced by the desperate condition of Porter's fortunes, might make Allis amenable to what was evidently her best interest, should she be approached from a different quarter.

Crane had not intended to meet and meet to put into a letter to her, but she had defeated her and her hopes in such a way as to save distance to her father. She would not so simply asking her mother to get Dr. Rathbone to attend to the matter, as he deemed advisable to his patient.

They were a very depressed lot at Dixons. The evening, Dixon was never anything else but stern, and the disappointment of the day was simply revolving in his mind with the monotonous rhythm of a grindstone.

They had had a talk all there was about it. Why talk it over? It could do no good. He would nurse up Lucretia, and get her into her mile gallops a fitting strength for the race, and then, with his own hands, he would make her do it.

With a willful indifference the girl heard the doctor knock at the cottage door, she barely looking up at Dixon, and to a visitor. It was Crane who entered.

At almost any other time his visit would have been unpleasant. In his presence even the best of Dixons would be shrouded in a background of interested intention, but to-night Dixon's constrained depression weighed heavily on her spirits and irritated her nerves.

"Luck was against you to-day, Dixon," exclaimed the visitor. "You were not strong for the little mare," answered the trainer, curtly. "You were won, of course, but there were a half-dozen in the race that would have beaten Lucretia, if only."

Allis looked indignantly at the trainer; he had not talked that way to her. Then a light dawned upon the girl. She had not said a word to her father, but she had in her mind, she knew that he was maintaining a golden silence when the silver of speech was a universe coin to tender, but here he was uttering a disparaging estimate of Lucretia's powers.

This perpetual atmosphere of duplicity turned to Allis hesitating and said: "Dixon's correct about the little mare; she's all right. I wouldn't speak ever before him, though he's all right too, but— and he looked about carefully to see that nobody was within earshot."

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Langdon opened it Shandy shuffled into the room with a peculiar little rocking horse sort of gait, just like the trot of a skunk, and the odd appearance of the animal suggested this despised animal.

"Have you heard anything from the Porter stable?" Langdon asked, when the boy had taken a seat. "The little mare's well," the boy answered laconically.

"That's bad luck for us, Shandy. We'll be poorer by the matter of a few thousand if they win the Derby."

"Who's who?" questioned Shandy, with saucy directness. "A man has played the Dutchman to win a hundred thousand, an' he's got to give the boys, one or two of them, if it comes off."

The small imp's words, re-told in the boy's own words, were a straight good. "What're you givin' us for that, straight goods?" he demanded, looking at the trainer.

"Well, you'll know race-day. If she goes to put up a race like it before."

"She didn't cut much figure last year when Lucretia beat her."

"You speak to me with a drawing significance, it was a direct intimation that if Lucretia's present jockey could be got at, as her last year's ride had been well, as she had not been responsible for the jockey's failure, would have accentuated the girl's sensitive alarm. He was too perfect to let a bet to induce in such poor sword play."

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JOYS OF THE HOP PICKER.

CHIEF AMONG THEM IS THE COUNTRY DANCE.

Young Folks Driving Out the Old-Timers—All Sorts and Conditions of Pickers, \$80,000 of Them, It's Said, This Year—They're Slippery and Frolicsome.

This year's crop of hops is in the hop house, the sulphur and wood fires have been put out and the Mohawk Valley awaits the coming up from the city of the buyer. There are not many old persons nowadays in the hop fields. The rising generation has driven them out. The young folks take a pride in their work, and a personal interest in having their hops clean.

It is said that the old folks are apt to be too remiss in their work. The number of pickers in the fields this year is placed at 30,000—upwards of 10,000 more than in any year heretofore.

Picking hops is a fascinating employment. Once the habit is acquired of going to the hop country, the desire to engage in the work returns with the coming of the season. In August it was printed that Mr. A. J. Mott had been asked by a prisoner in the workhouse for his liberty, so that he might pick hops. It turned out that this was the thirtieth such request made within a short time. All said they wanted to go and pick hops.

Growers do not come as far away from home as this city for pickers. A corporation was formed here and incorporated at Albany to supply pickers to growers. They are not any more, but had to go to the hop pickers in the city, either at Albany or in the neighborhood of the Mohawk Valley. All the hop pickers stopping in this city have places where they have been picking for years, to which they go.

Pickers, hop growers have learned, are very uncertain propositions. And their promises are not apt to be a source of great reliance. Pickers may bargain in a country town, pick hops, and slip away from the hop grower anywhere before reaching his farm.

"I once hired a number of pickers in Amsterdam," said a hop grower, "and had started off toward home with the bunch. Going across fields, they 'lit out.' I went back and got other pickers, and they, too, skipped away. I had to go home without pickers."

The corporation was formed just to spare the grower all worry, and it certainly did get all it wanted itself. The hop pickers made all sorts of trouble for the new company. The latter showed that it would stand for no nonsense. It had a number of hop pickers locked up in Fort Plain. They were let off after being in jail several hours. The threats of false imprisonment were made.

Once the pickers are in the hop fields nowadays they are fed well and they are contentedly situated. They may not be just delightfully situated, but they are getting the fumes of burning brimstone when the wind shifts, but pickers do not mind that, going to the country, the sulphur is too strong in places. The weather they do not mind it at all, but in storms it is bad, as they have nowhere else to go for shelter.

But the food it is that delights the picker. The air of the country develops a good appetite in him. The twenty or thirty meals in the country are a pleasure to him from drink of any kind. This is a new life. His old life is a pleasant memory and in the new one he enjoys anticipation of the good things he is to enjoy again when back in the city.

"How'd you like a schooner just out of the keg?" a picker sitting down to a dinner of hot, baked potatoes and a cold potato was asked on a hop farm some little distance out from Cooperstown, the other day.

"I'd get away with several of them without difficulty," was the reply, "but heavens, where are they? Miles and miles away."

"If food and the hard work seem to tickle the fancy of the pickers, at table and in the hop fields they are as frolicsome as kids."

Artists and conditions turn up in the hop fields—mechanics, tradesmen, artisans, song and dance men, showmen—all want to get in shape for the coming season. They are all doing work and earning a little money to help along at picking hops.

It is to the hop grower's family that the strain of the hop picking is felt hardest. The hop grower looks after the hops on the farm. He has a sharp eye for the flies, and the sulphur, and the weather, and the night, he pours sulphur on the fire. He looks to see that the pickers get all that is coming to them in the way of food. His regular work on the farm has to be done besides by him.

His wife has her hands full. She can't get away from the hop fields, and she has to see that the pickers get all that is coming to them in the way of food. His regular work on the farm has to be done besides by her.

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