# AT THE TAWDREY HOUSE

## The Little Twisted Note.

I.

The big red car hurtled up to the front entrance with a bang. Amid a mingled aura of gasolene and champagne the three women and two men swarmed into the office of the Tawdrey House, even more unmannerly and cacophonous, with one exception.

While the hallboys ran wild under a silver rain with the wraps, to the bar, to flash up the lights in the private dining room and to show the way I noted this young girl following slowly apart, with them but not of them, even as a captive Grecian maid might have followed in the train of the brutish Romans who owned her, submissive, yet still retaining her freedom of spirit.

The burly man in the lead suddenly swung around and lurched over to where I was sitting.

"Hello, Sniffen!" he roared good naturedly. "I didn't know you hung out here. Come in and join us and get that Nunc Dimittis look off your face. We're out for the time of our lives—the missus, her sister, Miss Skene; Joe Ohlmann—your brother wrote you about Joe, didn't he?—yes, and Em'ly, a sort of a connection of my wife—she has to go along too, worse luck.

"Why, what ails you, man? You look as if you had been rapped with an invisible club!"

It was Plaisted; ensanguined, jovial, redolent of wine, saturated with tobacco, ravenous for food and drink, at the very apex of his delectable mountain; and he didn't know, he didn't know! No wonder that I stared dully; no wonder I gulped twice before I spoke.

"I do want to see you," I hesitated, "but——"

"Then you'll have to take pot luck," he declared. "I wouldn't cut off a moment from our layout for a million. So see you later, or ta-ta, just as you please." Away he swayed to the curtained doorway of the small dining room, where the two flashily dressed women in the impossible hats were impatiently waving their veils to him.

Yes, it was Plaisted, dancing on air, in utter ignorance that he was a pauper or worse, as the cablegram in my pocket, only an hour before received, assured me. No wonder I had looked awed, for money was that man's life.

Actually I was faint from the agony of not knowing just what I should do, and out of that spirit of temporizing with oneself which comes to all in a quandary I proceeded to review my slight connection with Plaisted.

It began by his calling on me with a cautiously worded note of introduction from my brother Sam in England. He represented, so Plaisted said, the American-African Diamond Syndicate. Perhaps on account of his long absence from home I would be so good as to put him wise on this point and that.

There were baits dangled on the side of course, but if I had any idea of venturing a bite I was scared into deep water again by a warning letter from Sam, in which he wrote:

The syndicate is sound and rich, but there is much quiet talk against Plaisted. It is said that his own shares are hypothecated for their full value and that a big batch of them has been rehypothecated, that his account is enormously overdrawn, that experts now at work on the books have already found false entries and other signs of fraud. It is said that he persuaded Joe Ohlmann, an undeniable millionaire, to accompany him in the desperate hope of binding him to him through marriage with Miss Skene, his wife's sister. All this and more is sure to come out. When it does I will cable a single word significant of his fate.

As I recalled this letter I thought of Sam's prudent nature—how he said nothing unless he knew, and then but little. With such a context the cablegram in my pocket was absolutely damning, for it contained the single word "Destruction." Freedom alone remained for Plaisted; and if that was to be his he must be warned this night.

Should I do it? I declare that, against the many good reasons for me to mind my own affairs, the strongest plea was the memory of the pensive but proud face of Emily, the despised connection, who had to go along. Sorry as was her dependent lot, it must needs be worse if Plaisted was dragged to prison and the two luxurious women left penniless.

"I believe I'll join them at any rate," at length I muttered.

Just then a young man who had been sitting all this while in one of the high backed chairs in front of me, his hat over his eyes, sprang to his feet.

"Let me entreat you, Mr. Sniffen," he said with the greatest earnestness, "to take me in there with you."

"Who are you?" I demanded, "and why should I make you a fellow guest with me?"

"I am Henry Fraser," he answered, simply. "When there is time I can show you I deserve your confidence.

"That young girl, Emily Dare, whom I saw you watch with such interest, and I love each other; we have loved each other all our lives. She is not rightly placed with these fast and vulgar people; besides, she is being persecuted by that empty ass of an Ohlmann.

"I would take her away. See, I am able to support a wife." And he showed a pocketcase well filled with notes and drafts.

"Ohlmann is after Miss Skene," I objected, sharply.

"No, sir; pardon me; it is Miss Skene who is after Ohlmann. Give me a chance, I beg you. I have been following them for days. Surely no harm is done in introducing any well behaved person to such a crew. For the rest, you can see for yourself."

"Come," I said, with sudden sympathy for the young couple.

II.

The gorge—I can use no fitter word—was at its height when we entered. Half a dozen waiters had scarce sufficed for the endless task of fetching, removing and replacing viand upon viand and wine upon wine. Passive Emily glanced up from a barely touched plate with a shy smile, it is true, but not a sign of recognition came from the active four until a change of course afforded a chance for breath.

"What, Sniffen!" cried Plaisted, vigorously polishing with his two napkins. "Good for you! You are welcome, and so is your friend. The toffy is bang up and the wine out of sight.

"Draw up, the both of you. Let me make you acquainted, gents, with Mrs. Plaisted, Miss Skene, Joe Ohlmann, the joker of the pack—yes, you are, Joe—and on, of course, Em'ly Dare; we generally have to bring her along."

"It isn't good form to speak of our charities, Oscar," said Mrs. Plaisted, a monumental woman, with a voice situated somewhere near the base.

"Besides, it wouldn't be appreciated if it was," added Miss Skene spitefully, with a ruddy glow at Ohlmann, who had bent forward to whisper to the shrinking Emily.

"Cut it out!" roared Plaisted. "I tell you I won't have any sharp shots. This is just the shank of the evening and we've all got to be mellow.

"Make room, there, Joe, for this young fellow—what's his name, Fraser?—Jennie Skene is about your size. And you, Sniffen, come this side of me, where you can say what you want to say when I'm not too busy.

"Hurry up with that magnum, Peters; you must have glue on your heels. Well, here's looking to-wards you all."

It was during the next merciful interregnum between courses that I found my opportunity. Mrs. Plaisted was powdering herself at the mirror. Miss Skene and Ohlmann were holding hands on the sofa, that is she was holding his. Fraser and Emily were absorbed in close conversation. Only Plaisted, the old guard, still held his post and glass.

"There's a cablegram I had from my brother," I said.

He took the paper unsteadily to the light, and even as he read I could see the gray creeping under the scarlet.

"There's a lot in that word," he said.

"Your lot," I replied, and I told him all I knew.

Such joviality as Plaisted's is often a conscript force to hold down fear. It was wonderful now to see how the natural emotion arose and overthrew the hireling. The man bent forward, his head on his hand. In the posture there was the stupid submission of a knockout blow.

"Are you sick, Plaisted?" screamed his wife from the mantel, and they all came crowding around.

Through the triangular opening of his arm I could see the thick red blood again surging to his brain. Something was at work there, spurred on by the voice that could mean so much of reproach, bickering and torment.

"Are you sick, I say?" she persisted. "The Lord knows you might well be; there never was such a man!"

Plaisted lowered his hand; he raised his head. In his mottled face I saw purpose growing more resolute.

"If you will only all sit by for a few moments while I get my second wind," he growled. "I'll be all right again. Here, Joe, you and that young fellow there—what's his name, Fraser?—help me into the next room, where I can lay quiet a bit. Sniffen, you stay with the ladies and see that they do what I say. I'm in no mood for damn nonsense."

There was something in the sickly energy of the man that corroborated and enforced his words, something sinister, malign, devilish, as if the jester's mask had been discarded and the true evil force underneath revealed.

I know I came near calling to Fraser to stay as Plaisted lurched into the dressing room with the young fellow, slim, erect, manly, candid, and Ohlmann, smug, auriferous, supremely selfish, on either side; but then what reason could I give for what was no more than an impression of an impression?

We resumed our seats, the two women bored and sleepy and Emily abstracted, and sat in silence, but not for long. Presently I heard the hall door of the waiting room open and shut and light feet speed down the corridor. Silence again, but not for long. Of a sudden the connecting door banged open and Plaisted staggered back, a rubicund ghost from the lowest circle.

"What are you doing of, Plaisted?" screamed his wife, "you will be my end if——"

"Ohlmann's dead!" he gasped. "That young devil of a Fraser, at a word, stabbed him to the heart, and then put off like mad. Call the po——"

He fell in a raging fit, as if possessed of a legion of selves.

III.

Out from the horrible confusion of women screaming, employees rushing hither and thither, the cool, sharp inquiries of Mr. Flewcomb, our proprietor, the swarm of policemen and detectives, with Fraser, shining like a scornful young Apollo in the midst of them, and the perfunctory examination of a magistrate dragged from his sleep, certain definite steps to order ensued.

Plaisted, still a turgid lump of unconsciousness, was sent upstairs with attending physicians and wailing women. Fraser, under guard, marched off almost blithely to the station house, while the dead body of Ohlmann, that one definite and undeniable fact, was hustled out of sight like a pauper's.

I was glad to break away from the insistent and sarcastic inquiries of Tawdrey idlers, all going to the point of what I had been doing in any such affair, and to seek the retirement of my room, my sympathies more active than ever for the young pair of lovers. Fraser's explanation of his conduct had seemed both natural and sufficient to me. He had run through the hall, he said, because Plaisted begged him to summon a physician; and indeed the physician who had so quickly appeared on the scene declared that he had been called on the telephone to attend a Mr. Plaisted.

Then too Emily, as she unwillingly attended the women upstairs, had turned her eyes so expressively to me that I seemed to read in the glance her faith in her lover's innocence and her resolve to make it manifest.

Was there not something more—an appeal that I should help? It seemed so; but what, alas, could I do, so shaken, so mystified by the tragedy?

If Fraser did not kill Ohlmann, then Plaisted must have done so; and why should he kill the friend upon whom he depended for help in his troubles? I own I felt very small and weak when I crept into bed and went to sleep.

I woke with a start at a sound. It was still dark, that qualmish dark which precedes daybreak.

I listened and again I heard a faint, persistent rat, tat, tat on the window pane. As I sat up and strained my eyes I seemed to discern a shadowy form without, feminine of outline

I sprang to my feet and into my dressing gown. I turned up the light and threw up the sash and admitted Emily Dare, scantily clad and shivering.

"They locked me in my room," she declared breathlessly, "but I lay out on the fire escape and listened through the crack of the window. Then after they went to bed I slipped in and got it, and worked my way along to bring it to you. Oh, you must save poor Harry; you must, you must!"

"It" proved to be a large hotel envelope filled to bulging. My eyes went one way and my breath another when I found that it contained 100 crisp, new one thousand dollar bills.

"They figured it all out, did Mrs. Plaisted and Miss Skene, between them," Emily hurried on to say. "Oh, but they are keen ones.

"They agreed that you must have told Mr. Plaisted that the jig was up in England; that he must have killed Mr. Ohlmann for the large sum he knew he had with him, and that he would have slipped away with it to parts unknown, after causing poor Harry's arrest, had not the fit caught him. Oh!

"Yes, and they whispered a good deal, but I made out that they would look for this money in Plaisted's clothes, and put it away in a safe place until they could divide. Oh!

"Yes, and so they did; fetching the money from the other room and taking back the pocketbook that held it all stuffed with papers. Then they put the money in this envelope and hid it under the carpet by the fireplace, and then, think of it, both went sound asleep—oh!"

"But why did they stuff the pocketbook with paper," I asked, "and put it back in Plaisted's pocket?"

"I don't know," answered the girl. "I tell you they whispered some, and the more they whispered the worse they did—oh! Yes, he is bad enough, is Plaisted, but they are more than his match—women always are when they are that kind—oh!"

Now she broke down completely, with pitiful moans and tears.

IV.

I was up betimes that morning, glad to be away from my thoughts and active in Fraser's interests. By 10 o'clock, when the inquest convened in the big parlor, I had a bright young lawyer there named Hazard, who took my fragmentary information and exhibits without a word, but with an alert look that seemed to say he could make a complete defence from them.

He began to take the initiative at once by asking that Fraser be examined. Accordingly the prisoner, having been duly cautioned, told his story as I have outlined it, making many seemingly dangerous admissions.

Then the Coroner called Plaisted himself to the stand. It was plain to me, as the man came shambling along as if already aged, that he was still very ill and weak, but that he was braced by something to a supreme effort. While there was death in his eye there was also hope. He paused at my chair.

"Nothing in the morning papers from England," he whispered. "You won't say anything. You will give me a chance for my life?"

I answered "yes," and indeed in my statement to Hazard I had confined myself to what Emily had said, deeming it no business of mine to make public what my brother had written in confidence to me.

Plaisted testified with a sort of forced glibness. While the two men were helping him to the sofa in the dressing room he said Ohlmann had stumbled against Fraser. Whereupon Fraser had struck Ohlmann with something that flashed and then had darted away with it in his hand, even while the latter fell bleeding to the floor. He could not tell more definitely, for he then was, he still was, very faint and sick.

Just before Hazard rose to cross-examine a little twisted note was passed along to him, which he read and crumpled in his hand. I did not see whence it started, but it came from where the two women, Mrs. Plaisted and Miss Skene, sat in Oriental retirement under their great concave hats.

The line of examination which ensued was shrewdly calculated, while not alarming the witness, to stir his conceit and importance. It belittled him, throwing out the impression that he was a penniless sharper who had used Ohlmann for his own selfish purposes. It was amazing how Plaisted writhed under these stings, actually forgetting, it seemed to me, his own dreadful stress in the wounds of his vanity until one remembered, as I have already said, that money was his life.

"Come, now," asked Hazard, "you are on oath, remember. Will you swear that you have a thousand dollars of your own in the world?"

"A thousand dollars?" sneered Plaisted, leaning forward, his eyes like red danger signals. "That's easy. Yes, and I've got a thousand times a thousand dollars, solid see? Come, I'm getting sick of this; why, I'm used to carrying a hundred thousand for small change. I've got it with me now. Just run over the bills in that bunch, young man, and then give us a mild rest."

As Plaisted arrogantly slapped out the large envelope from his pocket I glanced instinctively to the two women under the twin toadstools. Their clasped hands were vibrating up and down with excitement.

Hazard opened the envelope.

"There is nothing here but a lot of worthless paper," he said quietly, "as worthless as yourself, Mr. Plaisted."

"What?" Plaisted straightened in his eagerness to see; and then, with a horrid puff of the veins in his forehead, rolled headlong on the floor.

"Have him sent to our room, have him sent to our room!" screamed the two women, and without waiting to see whether he was alive or dead, though those about well knew that apoplexy had killed him with a lightning stroke, they hurried ahead upstairs. It was not difficult to surmise what the little twisted note had contained, nor what they were after now.

When the dead body was removed I testified, producing the money I had received from Emily. She too told her story, simply, convincingly. After a little a bank teller identified the bills as having been paid to Ohlmann a day or so before. The case against Fraser melted away; he was honorably discharged.

A message from some insistent reporters called me out into the hall. As I stood there, furnishing fact for fiction, I saw two women come sneakingly down the stairs and hurry out of the side entrance. They were Mrs. Plaisted and Miss Skene. So dogs may slink when a bone has been snatched away.

When I returned to the big parlor Fraser and Emily were standing, doubtfully, side by side.

"His Honor, the Coroner, is a Magistrate," I suggested, "and there is no time like the present." Side by side they advanced to the desk.

"Let me see that little twisted note, will you?" I asked of Hazard, who was bustling by.

Without a word he produced it. It was written in a vulgar, feminine scrawl, and read as follows: "Egg him on to show what money he has with him."

"They must have counted," I mused awedly, "on the shock killing——"

Just then an attendant came up. "His Honor wants you two gents as witnesses," he said.

In another moment we stood on either side of the happy couple.

## COURT TENNIS AND RACQUETS.

### Jay Gould, Playing Polo, Will Not End International Matches.

They have clipped and rolled the polo field at Georgian Court, Lakewood, and it is ready for play. Jay Gould will probably revive the glories of the field where the Lakewood Polo Club—George, Jay and Kingdon Gould, active members—held tournaments there and formed championship teams. Kingdon and Jay were the youngest riders in polo during the early years of the present decade. They played well, but gained a fictitious advantage often because older and heavier poloists would pull up for fear of injuring the juniors. That Jay Gould is not a defender of the English honors at court tennis he won so cleverly during the last three years by no means indicates a dearth of international tennis. The British winner of this year may play for our title in 1910, or Jay Gould may go abroad. In either case the American railroad service will probably be used by both the players. This will happen surely if it is Pennell against Gould.

Should Jay Gould never touch a tennis bat again he has made as great a record for the technique of the game as in winning matches. He has established the scientific value of the American overhead or railroad service. The British players are beginning to admit it may not be bad style and to adopt it in increasing numbers. Two further indications of the respect held for the stroke are that ways to reply to it are being studied and that England now claims to have had the stroke all along. They quote the late Julian Marshall, who described a "nick service," the variation of the underhand twist service. The spin put on the ball acts precisely as in the railroad service, the invention of the Boston amateurs, and which they sent Tom Pettitt to exploit in the British courts. Pettitt, an Englishman by birth but naturalized here for many years in charge of courts at Boston and Newport, played Peter Latham at Brighton in 1898 for the championship. He lost to Latham but not on the services, for the latter furnished a magnificent game all around, and he was then at his best. Pennell uses the railroad service with great pace, but as a scientific stroke and not one of mere hitting. The former is hard to acquire, but well worth while as the successes of Jay Gould have revealed.

An amateur at racquets named Iver de la Rue has offered $500 as prizes in a professional tournament at London, which will be a handicap. There is no match in sight for the world's racquet championship, which has been held by W. Jamsetji of Bombay, instructor to the Bombay Gymkhana since 1903. He won it by defeating Gilbert Browne at the Queen's and Prince's courts. In the event of a challenge Jamsetji has announced that he will not insist on the challenger going to India to play but that he will to go London. Jamsetji is playing with his old brilliance. The time would seem propitious for a trip to England by George Standing, American professional champion, or one of the minor men.

# UNCLE DAVID IN THE DUMPS

## Trusted Signs Fail and Cousin Marcellus Has a Chicken Dinner.

CHESTER, N. Y., April 24.—"It does beat all how the failin' of a sign that has been counted on to be as unfailin' as the changes o' the moon will play hob with folks's calc'lations an' set 'em 'way down in the dumps, don't it?—jest like the one that has proved onsartin to Uncle David Beckendarter, an' left him a heartsore an' disapp'inted man. It does beat all.

"I see you've got a sure enough sign hangin' over yonder, though, tellin' us that spring is with us."

The man whose claim to being a dweller in the Pochunk precinct is said to be denied with some heat by people over that way nodded toward the bright new bock beer sign the landlord had put on show and glanced smilingly around.

"It has an invitin' look," said he, with his hands on the arms of his chair, as if ready and willing to rise.

Farmer Bill Leonard, who lives down opposite Goose Pond Mountain, asked Farmer Seely Hunter of Hardscrabble whether the prospects for hoss trottin' were lookin' up any, and Farmer Hunter said yes, they ought to be, for they were layin' on their back flat enough. The Pochunk delegate pushed his thumb back until it cracked like a forerunner of the Fourth of July, and said:

"All signs is liable to fail in time o' drought, but Uncle David Beckendarter says he never had none o' Cousin Marcellus Merriweather's signs to up an' fail on him afore.

"Uncle David knowed every time when the sign was goin' to be right for fishin' by Cousin Marcellus always comin' then to borry his fishpole. An' he knowed every time when the sign wa'n't goin' to be right fer goin' fishin', 'cause then Cousin Marcellus didn't keep the fishpole no longer, but brung it back.

"He knowed when it was goin' to be jest the proper weather fer hayin' an' harvest by Cousin Marcellus always gittin' the roomytiz along about then an' can't git out to help; an' he knowed that the best time to make cider didn't show no sign till Cousin Marcellus's roomytiz let up onto him an' he could be on hand

"An' soon as Cousin Marcellus's ague ketched him an' holed him up in the fall Uncle David always knowed that tater diggin' time had come. An' so on an' so forth the onfailin' signs of Cousin Marcellus's was counted on by Uncle David season in and season out.

"'The zodiack of the firmament on high, Rhadamanthus,' says Uncle David to me one time, 'ain't fuller of onfailin' signs than Cousin Marcellus is,' says he. 'The wet moon an' the dry moon ain't sartiner than him,' says he.

"A couple o' weeks or so ago Uncle David was settin' by the kitchen winder ponderin' whether the sign was right fer him to start in to ploughin' fer early taters, when he looked out an' says:

"'The sign ain't right yet,' says he, 'fer yender comes Cousin Marcellus, an' he hain't walkin' lame a bit, nor hain't got an arm in a sling,' says he. 'So he hain't got no sprained ankle, nor no arm out o' j'int,' says he, 'nor nothin' else to prevent his pitchin' in an' yankin' a plough,' says he. 'Cousin Marcellus is onfailin' with his signs, an' yonder he comes,' says he. 'The sign ain't right fer ploughin' yit, Rhadamanthus,' says he.

"Sure enough, yonder Cousin Marcellus was comin' right along. Aunt Sally she kivered Uncle David with a penetratin' an' a reproachin' eye, but he only jest sot back in his sheepskin cheer an' winked a comic wink at me.

"Cousin Marcellus come in an' Aunt Sally was glad to see him, an' Uncle David says to him that he s'posed now the sign must be right fer sucker fishin'; he was sorry, he says, but he'd have to disappoint Cousin Marcellus this time, 'cause he was goin' to use the fishpole his ownself. Cousin Marcellus sot down lookin' disappointed to hear this, whereupon Aunt Sally she says:

"'I declare to man, Marcellus!' she says. 'Seems like you always ketch us when we've goin' to have fried ingyuns fer supper!' she says.

"Cousin Marcellus sorty grinned an' says yes, it did seem so, didn't it? An' Uncle David says to me arterward, says he:

"'That's a sign that Sally knows about Cousin Marcellus that somehow or other has slipped by me,' says he, 'but lookin' back,' says he, 'I kin recomember it now as bein' unfailin',' says he.

"Cousin Marcellus stayed fer supper an' Aunt Sally says to him that she wished he'd stay all night, an' Uncle David says yes, he mowt as well, long as he was there, but Cousin Marcellus looked at the sky an' the p'int the wind was comin' from and says no, he'd better go back home, he guessed, as he hadn't calc'lated on stayin', an' so he didn't stay. As he went out Uncle David says:

"'Get ready fer ploughin' first thing to-morrow, Rhadamanthus,' says he. 'The sign'll be right or else Marcellus would 'a' stayed,' says he, an' if he felt that penetratin' an' reproachin' eye of Aunt Sally's kiverin' him he didn't show it, fer he was grinnin' the satisfiedest kind as he went out to feed the pigs.

"But he ain't feelin' that way now. If you should happen to drop in on Uncle David now you'd find him crossgraineder than an old speckled hen that's bound to set an' won't be let to—though it ain't no ways likely at that that he'd be so onpolite an' onsociable as to let you set there with your throat full o' dust an' all a-crackin' an' not let you know what the cider pitcher or the little yaller jug behind the door with the corncob stopper in it was settin' there fer!"

The Pochuck chronicler paused. If his reference to the way the social amenities were regarded in the house of Beckendarter was intended to quicken the conscience of present company and prick it to some action on the lines of the Beckendarter idea it failed. Farmer Bill Leonard said to Farmer Seely Hunter that the way it looked to him if the price of feed kept goin' up first thing the farmers knew they'd have to go to ploughin' and harrowin' again and seedin' down their farms to grow their own feed for their cattle; and Farmer Hunter said yes, that was so, and it 'd be hard on a good many farmers too, for they'd mostly forgot how to do it. The custodian and dispenser of Pochuck happenings swallowed hard and said:

"Yes, you'd find Uncle David anything but a joy and a pleasin' thing if you'd drop in on to him now. Yisterday I was turnin' the grindstone while he was sharpenin' up his sucker spear an' Aunt Sally hollers to me from the house:

"'Rhadamanthus,' she hollers, 'soon as you git done there go right away an' kill a chicken. I want it for dinner. Kill a big one,' she hollers.

"I says all right, an' I was chucklin' fer joy too, fer it had been quite a spell back sence we'd had chicken fer dinner, an' Uncle David turned to me, chucklin', too, but not with the kind o' joy that was movin' me.

"'Rhadamanthus,' he chuckles, 'that's an onfailin' sign o' Cousin Marcellus,' he chuckles. 'Your Aunt Sally don't go an' have chicken fer dinner this time o' year, when the hens is all layin' or hatchin' more chickens, unless it's a sign o' Cousin Marcellus!' he chuckles. 'He's on the way here fer dinner to-day. It's an onfailin' sign. Rhadamanthus,' he chuckles, 'go kill a chicken. Kill that ol' red rooster we've been fattenin' fer market. We'll have the old red rooster fer Cousin Marcellus!' he chuckles.

"That was a heartsore blow to me, fer I knowed how tough that red rooster was bound to be, but I killed him an' picked him an' dressed him fer Aunt Sally an' went an' hid in the barn. Nothin' happened, though, an' dinner time come, but Cousin Marcellus hadn't.

"Aunt Sally hollered fer us to come to dinner, but Uncle David held back, waitin' fer Cousin Marcellus to show up. Somehow Cousin Marcellus didn't show up.

"'Can't be that the sign has gone an' failed on me, kin it, Rhadamanthus?' says Uncle David, lookin' mighty glum.

"I says it looked that way, an' Aunt Sally hollerin' ag'in fer us we knowed we better go on in, an' we went.

"'David,' says Aunt Sally, 'you fergot this was your birthday, but I didn't,' says she, 'an' I planned to set you out a ch'ice chicken dinner,' says she, 'but Rhadamanthus has went an' killed the oldest an' toughest chicken o' the hull flock,' says she, 'an' it'd most break iron jaws to chaw it!' says she. 'I've a notion to crack you over the head with the mop handle, Rhadamanthus!' says she.

"I didn't dast look at Uncle David an' so I can't say jest how he was takin' it, but he says to Aunt Sally to never mind, we'd make fried pickled pork do ag'in, an' he'd kill a nice, young fat pullet himself to-morrow an' have the birthday dinner then. So we eat the pickled pork, an' when me an' Uncle David went out he says:

"'The sign failed on to me, Rhadamanthus,' says he, 'an' it's most su'prisin' an' disapp'intin'. But mebbe it's fer the best,' says he. 'If it hadn't failed,' says he, 'an' Cousin Marcellus had come,' says he, 'me an' you wouldn't have no nice, young pullet fer dinner to-morrow,' says he, an' he chuckled, an' seein' the p'int I chuckled too.

"There never was a nicer, fatter, better chicken dished up than that pullet Uncle David killed next day, an' as we sot down to it Aunt Sally looks up an' squeals:

"'Oh, goody! If here doesn't come Cousin Marcellus!' she squeals. 'You're jest in time, Marcellus!' she squeals.

"There he was, sure enough, jest in time, an' sot on edge fer it. Uncle David didn't say nothin', and o' course I didn't. An' the way Cousin Marcellus did inj'y that pullet was a sight to see.

"Me and Uncle David went out to the barn arter while. Uncle David was sunk lower in the dumps than I ever see him afore.

"'Rhadamanthus,' says he, 'when a feller kin sniff the differ'nce from clean over to Sprout Hill to here betwixt a six-year-old rooster an' a year-old pullet,' says he, 'signs is too onsartin' to lay store by any longer,' says he, 'an' I wisht I could boot myself from Pochuck to Cankertown an' from Cankertown on to Peppercotton an' from Peppercotton back to Pochuck ag'in,' says he, 'without missin' a kick, an' every kick h'istin' me two foot clear o' the ground!' says he, an' he piked off, headed fer consolation an' the tavern.

"An' speakin' o' signs failin' in time o' drought," says he after a convincing interval of uncomplimentary silence, "it's dry enough now right here to put every ding sign there is in the zodiac out of business from this minute to the judgment day!"

He passed out, but if he had lingered a moment up the road a piece he could have heard the drought being broken, the cash register jingling merrily.

## BLOCK ISLAND RACES.

### Two Events of the New York Athletic Club for Saturday, June 19.

The regatta committee of the New York Athletic Club, H. A. Jackson, Jr., chairman; C. S. King and A. B. Fry, have issued details of the two long distance races to be held under the auspices of that club on Saturday, June 19. In the morning the sailing craft will start on the annual race to Block Island and in the afternoon power boats will go over the same course.

This race to Block Island has been a popular one ever since it was first started in 1904. It is for small yachts in cruising trim not less than 32 feet water line length. The course is through Long Island Sound and there always has been a large fleet of starters and the yachtsmen have had such good times that they have now grown to regard this event as one of the most pleasing of the season. It is expected by those who have the race in charge that there will be about forty starters this year.

This race is open to decked or cabin yachts in cruising trim of less than 32 feet water line length. The course will be from off Whortleberry Island to the West Harbor of Block Island, disregarding buoys, and the distance is 100 nautical miles. The starting line will be between two boats flying club flags anchored to the northwest of Whortleberry Island. The warning signal is to be made at 10:50 o'clock, the preparatory at 10:55 and the start at 11 A. M. At the finish yachts are to leave the committee boat which will fly the club flag by day and at night show a red and white light, inside of West Harbor on either hand. In order to check any possible errors each boat will take its own time when the light on the outer end of West Harbor breakwater bears south and is fifty yards distant.

There are no restrictions as to crew except that only Corinthians may steer. There are no restrictions as to size, number or manner of carrying sails. Yachts will be considered in cruising trim when they carry lead line, compass, charts, fog signal two anchors and cables, one life preserver on deck, the regulation lights and their cabin fittings, tanks, &c., in their usual places.

Unless otherwise specified the rules of the Yacht Racing Association of Long Island Sound will govern. Certificates of measurement giving over all and water line length will be required, but in figuring the over all length the nearest half foot will be taken. Time allowance will be twelve minutes for each over all foot. Yawls will receive a 5 per cent. allowance additional and auxiliaries 5 per cent.

Auxiliaries must report to the committee before 9 o'clock on the morning of the race for the ensealment of the engines. Seals will be removed by the committee only at Block Island. There are five prizes offered for this race and there is a special prize for the handicap class sailing in one division and a special prize for the best elapsed time.

Entries will close with H. A. Jackson, Jr., 409 Pearl street, on June 15.

The power boat race, which will be the second over this course, will be for a cup presented by Thomas Fleming Day and is open to cruising power boats enrolled in any recognized club of not less than 25 nor more than 40 feet over all, with greatest water line beam not less than one-fifth the water line length. This cup has to be won twice over this course by the same owner to become his absolute property. The athletic club will give a second prize if five yachts start.

The course is the same as for the sailboat race, starting from the same point and finishing as the sailboat men have been instructed. The warning signal will be made at 4:50 o'clock and the yachts sent away ten minutes later. The crews on these boats must be not less than three, and in the event of the owner not being on board his representative must be a member of a recognized club. Boats must be propelled by explosive engines operated by gasolene, kerosene or alcohol. All fuel must be carried in tanks permanently piped and connected.

Each boat must carry on deck or tow a tender not less than ten feet long, two anchors and cables, the regulation lights, one life preserver for each member of the crew, lead line, compass, charts, bucket, fog signal, two fire extinguishers and their cabin fixtures, tanks, &c., in the usual places. Competing yachts must report for inspection at the New York Athletic Club house at Travers Island before 3 o'clock on the day of the race. Time allowance will be according to the rules of the American Power Boat Association, figured at 60 per cent. of the tables, with the constant of two stroke engines at 850. Certificates by a measurer of a recognized club or reputable naval architect must be in the hands of the committee not later than June 15 and no unmeasured boats will be allowed to start.

According to the conditions a cruiser is a boat built and used for cruising, with trunk cabin house, self-bailing cockpit and general living, sleeping and cooking accommodations, with solid propeller. Entries will be accepted subject to inspection and will close on June 15 with H. A. Jackson, Jr., 409 Pearl street, or Walter M. Bieling, 9 Murray street.

# GOOD WORDS FOR THE GATOR

## SCIENCE FINDS HIM A USEFUL CITIZEN OF THE SOUTH.

### Little Evidence Back of Those Old Scandals About His Appetite—His Hide Commercially Considered—The Tip of His Tail a Delicacy—Hunting Him.

Twenty years ago a visitor to that part of the South below North Carolina could see alligators in almost every stream and bayou, but now one may frequently spend months travelling through this region and not see a single alligator except those in captivity. The killing of the creatures for sport or for their hides has been the main cause of their great decrease in numbers. In addition thousands of the young have been killed or shipped away, while enormous numbers of the eggs have been gathered and sold as curios.

It was not until about 1855 that the demand for alligator leather became of importance. The market was not long continued. In 1869 fashion again called for the leather for manufacturing into fancy slippers, travelling bags, belts, card cases, music rolls, &c. The demand has continued to the present and many thousands of the animals have been killed, while the preparation of the skins has given employment to hundreds of people.

The output of the tanneries of this country approximates 275,000 skins annually, worth about $425,000, part of which come from Mexico and Central America. It is estimated that about 3,800,000 alligators were killed in Florida alone between 1880 and 1909, nearly 20,000 being killed in 1908.

The earliest settlers in the Southern States found alligators, or as they were then called crocodiles, exceedingly abundant in almost all streams, especially in Florida and Louisiana. Many marvellous tales are found in the early chronicles of the ravages of these monsters. They were said to eat dogs and pigs and to consider the negro an especially succulent tidbit, while it was considered dangerous to go into streams where they were known to exist. When such a stream had to be crossed hours were spent sometimes in beating it to frighten off the alligators.

The researches of scientists have shown that there is very slight foundation for such stories, and it is probable that the greater number of the pigs lost by the planters could have been traced to other enemies, particularly the two footed kind, while runaway slaves would naturally encourage the belief that alligators had dined off them.

The greater part of the supply of alligator leather now comes from Florida, and owing to excessive hunting the industry is profitable only in the central part of the peninsula, in what is called the Lake Okeechobee region and in the Everglades. Here the principal hunters are Seminole Indians, who have their homes on hummocks far back in the Everglades and come to the settlements only when in need of articles which they cannot produce themselves.

The alligator is most active at night and its days are usually spent lying on some low bank or log overhanging the water, where it can enjoy the warmth of the sun and be able to retreat to its native element at the first sign of danger. While on land alligators are very clumsy, in the water they are exceedingly active, and being strong swimmers are able to catch the larger fish with but slight trouble. For animals like the muskrat and otter swimming across lagoons they are always on the watch.

On seizing its prey the alligator sinks with it to the bottom and there remains until all struggling has ceased; it is then able with less effort to tear it into pieces. While thus submerged a peculiar collar at the base of the tongue prevents the water from passing into its lungs.

While the alligator is said to make very effective use of its tail in warfare the widely disseminated story that it uses its tail to sweep animals off the banks into its jaws appears to have but slight foundation in fact.

In April or May the mother alligator seeks a sheltered spot on a bank and there builds a small mound with a hole in the middle. The foundation of this mound is of mud and grass, and on these she lays some eggs. She then covers the eggs with another stratum of grass and mud, upon which she deposits some more eggs. Thus she proceeds until she has laid from twenty-five to sixty eggs. The eggs are hatched out by the sun.

As soon as they have chipped the shell the baby alligators are led to the water by the mother, who provides them with food, which she disgorges. Papa Alligator has to be carefully watched at this time, for he highly esteems a dinner of young saurians and is not particular whether they are his own or his neighbor's children. When by strategy or downright fighting the mother has got her family safely into their natural element it is not long before the young scatter, each to begin life on his own hook. At this period they form a favorite food for turtles and the larger fishes.

When fully grown the alligator is about sixteen feet in length. In the adult stage it is greenish black above, having lost the yellowish color bands that belong to its earlier years. Hunters say that alligators grow very slowly, attaining the first year a length of about one foot. When two feet in length they are said to be from ten to fifteen years old, while those twelve feet long are supposed to be 75 or more. Their normal life is estimated at from 100 to 150 years.

Alligator hunting originally began as sport. Then some one tanned the skin and found that it could be put to commercial use. Carried on as it must be, at night, the hunt is picturesque.

In many places the hunters fasten bicycle lamps on their caps, and when the animal is attracted by the light pick it off by hitting it in the eye with a rifle ball. Torches are often used. Sometimes the hunter lures the alligator to the surface of the water by "telephoning to the gator," as it is called

An alligator is always attracted by the peculiar grunt which the young alligators make, for there is no sort of food they love better than newly hatched gator. The hunter takes a long slender pole and lets one end of it down very quietly into the water. The other end he places between his teeth and imitates the grunt of the baby gators. The old fellows easily hear the call and come up to feast on the babies they think are there.

In catching them alive hunters frequently lasso them while asleep on the bank or on a log. When asleep in their holes in the mud they are occasionally drawn out by means of an iron hook. These holes are easily found. Sometimes the grass is set afire and the animals lassoed as they seek the water.

After the alligator is caught the hunter in sport sometimes mounts it, using the reptile's fore feet and legs as reins. It is needless to say that it is only by the exercise of considerable skill that the hunter keeps his seat through the struggles of the reptile, and if care is not used the fun may develop into tragedy.

Alligators three feet and more in length are generally killed at once and the hide removed. All of the hide except the ridge of the back, which is very bony, is used. The hide is salted, and is then in condition for sale to the buyers, who are usually storekeepers, who furnish provisions and ammunition in exchange.

The hides range in value to the hunter from 20 cents for a three foot hide to $1.25 for a hide seven feet or more in length. The five and six foot hides are the most desirable, as the larger hides have a hard piece of bone in the square checks on the hide, and it is impossible to sew through this. Nearly all of the tanning is done at Newark, N. J.

Young alligators are often brought in, and these are worth about 8 cents apiece.

The eggs are also gathered, and sell for 2½ cents each. They are mainly sold to curio dealers, who either hatch them out or blow them and sell the shells. Most of the small alligators are stuffed and sold as curios to tourists, who pay from 50 cents to $2 apiece for them.

Many of them used to be shipped North alive by tourists as presents. Owing to ignorance as to how the animal should be cared for many of these soon died.

If properly cared for the young alligator will thrive even in unnatural circumstances. Its main requirement is sufficient heat. Its diet should consist of bits of fresh meat, insects and worms. They often show great fondness for the ordinary earthworms and will frequently refuse all food but these. The larger specimens in captivity are fed about three times a week on fresh meat or small live animals, and they require little attention other than this.

Alligators' teeth, which are secured by burying the head until they have rotted out, are of fine ivory and valued for carving into ornaments. They are worth to the hunter about $2 a pound—from fifty to seventy-five teeth. The dealers will not buy very many of them as there is but a limited demand. At one time the paws were saved and mounted as curios, but it is impossible to do anything with them now.

Both flesh and eggs are eaten by a few persons, but it requires a very hardy stomach to stand the disagreeable, musky odor. There is nothing better, hunters declare, than the tip of the tail of an alligator which has reached, say, the pullet period. It is creamy in color, tasting a little like frogs' legs, but with a more pronounced gamy flavor, juicy—altogether tempting. The dish is a great favorite with the Crackers of Florida.

Alligator tails are best at the time of the rice bird season. The big alligators float in the water with only their eyes showing. When an alligator gets near a flock of these fat, juicy little birds it dives to the bottom. Its long wide snout scoops up some of the loam, and it floats to the surface again with just the rich soil showing.

The birds think it is an island. They alight upon it. When the whole family is there the big beast turns suddenly. Just as the birds scramble off the alligator opens its mouth once. They are gone.

The birds are neat little feeders, and the alligator is an epicure at this time of the year. The rice bird diet makes the tip of its tail tender and sweet.

In St. Augustine is an alligator farm, one of two in the United States, the other being at the Hot Springs in Arkansas. Here the alligators are kept in confinement until large enough for market.

It will probably be news to many that Florida has a representative of the crocodile family. This animal was first supposed to be confined to the West Indies and South America, but it has been occasionally captured on the peninsula of Florida. It is easily distinguishable from the alligator by its narrow snout. For many years scientists were sceptical of reports from Florida of the appearance of this animal in that State, but the capture of several fine specimens in recent years has settled all doubt.

## BROOKLYN'S HORSE SHOW.

### Seventeenth Exhibition of the Riding and Driving Club This Week.

The seventeenth annual exhibition of the Riding and Driving Club will be held this week in the club's quarters, Prospect Park Plaza. This is called the Brooklyn Horse Show and it is always not only a very enjoyable affair but a very creditable show. It marks the close of the indoor season and very soon after the horses are exhibited at the summer resorts.

This year the show promises more than ordinary interest. It has attracted horse lovers in great numbers and they have been very liberal with their entries and many of the most noted show horses in the country will compete for the club's prizes. Among the best known of the exhibitors are Judge William H. Moore, Paul A. Sorg, Herbert L. Pratt, Miss Emily Bedford and Rufus L. Patterson. As Judge Moore and Paul A. Sorg have entered generally in the same classes the competition between these two will be very keen.

The judges are: Harness horses—Reginald C. Vandervilt, J. W. Ogden, E. S. J. McVicker and Theodore Frelinghuysen; saddlehorses—L. E. Waring and Seward Cary; hunters and jumpers—Richard Newton, Jr., and R. Lawrence Smith; polo ponies—Seward Cary. Having four judges in the classes for harness horses is an innovation. It is done so that the judges will not have constant work during the four days of the exhibition and three of these judges will be in attendance each night. The show will open on Tuesday evening and last until Friday evening and in that time forty-two classes will be judged. In addition to the regular prizes for classes there are several special events. One is a challenge cup for the best horse suitable for a gig. This trophy must be won twice by the same owner to become his property. Last year it was won by Hildred, owned by Miss Emily H. Bedford and Hildred will this year meet Judge Moore's Radiant, Lonsdale and Wellingstein, Paul A. Sorg's Tease and W. G. Foster's Sporting Duchess.

Another cup is for four-in-hands and has to be won twice. This is the first time it has been in competition and entries have been made by Judge Moore, Paul A. Sorg and George Watson. These three also meet in the class for road teams. Another cup to be won twice is for combination harness and saddle horses. Last year this was won by Vesta Tilley, owned by A. Morrison, and Vesta Tilley will try again this week.

There is a cup to be won twice for maiden saddle horses which last year was won by Night Rider, owned by Mrs. Charles F. Cartledge. Mrs. Cartledge has no entry this year, but Chalmers Dale, who offered the cup, and Mrs. Dale have each entered a horse.

Judge Moore has entered a long string of absolutely unfamiliar names, fresh possibilities, that he will try out for the international show in London. A few old favorites and headliners appear, like Menella. Paul Sorg has any number of novelties in horseflesh and until each class comes into the ring it is impossible to say what the outcome will be.

All this premises a horse show of very great interest. The tandems and fours in it promise to be especially strong. Among the Judge Moore entries, in all varieties of harness, there are to be noted Menella, Phosphate, Whitehall Ariel, Lady Gay, Lady Seaton, Lonsdale, Chiquita, Pandora, Cyrus, Statesman, Radiant, Hinocker, Diplomat, Senator, Orator, Debator, Minerva, Diomed, Wellingstein, Humboldt, Hagaburg, Maril, and besides these the well known and capital harness pony Berkley Bantam.

In the ring against these Paul A. Sorg will place his Tease, Vanity Fair, Torment, Tantalize, Dignity, Respect, Manhattan, Royal Oak, Pioneer, Red Oak, Jim Selby, Fatty Bates, Pilgrim, Thistle and Precise. The cream of the other harness entries are Miss Emily Bedford's Hildred, her Snapshot and Rifle; Tonzo Sauvage's Lord Nelson and Grand Duke, George Watson's Ben Hur, Blood Royal, Royalty, Lady Suffolk and Frances Starr; Mrs. H. S. Bowen's Beau Brummell, Herbert L. Pratt's Lady Eocene, Queen Mab and Trixey; Mrs. Charles F. Hubbs's Oakdale.

There are many high grade horses in the saddle and jumping classes, the exhibitors and their mounts here including Miss Bedford's Miss Ann, Bob, Trousseau; Rufus L. Patterson's Durham, Harvey Ladew's Reliance; Mrs. Charles F. Hubbs's Gold Light and Fantasy; Miss Elfrieda Weber's Madison; Williams A. Jamison's Silver Streak; Mrs. Charles F. Cartledge's Night Rider; Paul D. Cravath's Justice, Hero and Rockland; Joseph Larocque's Somerset; Mrs. Joseph E. Davis's Vesta Tilley; Kingsley Swan's The Baron; Mrs. Kingsley Swan's Lady Babs; Miss Tillie Maxwell Whiting's Denise, Thomas J. Feroe's Red Raven and Altamont; S. C. Pirie's King Modred and Bumpkin.

An extra saddle class has been added for club members only and a special cup has been offered. Those who have entered for this are Miss Tillie Maxwell Whiting, Mrs. Charles F. Holme, Miss Elfrieda Weber, Miss Caroline Weber, the Misses Hubbs, Mrs. Charles L. Cartledge and Mrs. Herbert L. Smith.

From the demand for seats and boxes it looks as if this would be one of the very best of New York shows for some years in point of view of attendance. In Brooklyn there is a new fashionable interest in horses and the Riding and Driving Club is at the top of popularity. Following are box holders up to date: No. 1, W. G. Foster; No. 2, E. G. Bedford; No. 3, T. F. Miller, No. 4, Charles F. Cartledge, No. 5, F. T. Parsons; No. 6, Chalmers Dale; No. 7, William N. Dykman; Nos. 8 and 9, the judges; No. 10, Col. William Hoster; No. 11, Edward Charles Blum; No. 12, Paul Ford; No. 15, F. S. Jones; No. 16, G. H. Coote; No. 23, William J. Kent; No. 24, J. A. Farrell; No. 25, Miss M. S. Whitney; No. 26, S. W. La Frentz.