

The Shearer's Colt

Paterson, Andrew Barton (1864-1941)

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Part I.

Chapter I. An Englishman Abroad

WHEN Young Hilton Fitzroy, nephew of one earl and second cousin to another, was due to leave school, the family went into conference as to his career. His widowed mother naturally had no doubt that he would make a good Prime Minister; but the young fellow soon showed that he would be very difficult to place. His extraordinary strength, his violent temper and his stubborn refusal to bear himself lowly and reverently towards anybody, all marked him out as a throw-back to some (possibly royal) ancestor who had helped himself to everything in sight in the dim and distant past.

Fitzroy senior had been the younger son of a younger son of a county family, so his widow was left with very little money. In this extremity she was financed by the generosity of the head of the clan, a wealthy peer, who felt it his duty in the patriarchal English fashion to do something for the various scions of the house, even unto the third and fourth generation. Thus it came that young Fitzroy and his mother were allowed to live at one of the shooting-boxes belonging to the family. Here he was entered to hound, horse and gun, and he learnt the unusual accomplishment of catch-as-catch-can wrestling from an old retainer who followed their fortunes to the last. In due time he was sent on to Oxford where he might have laid the foundations of a career as Prime Minister, only that an inherited inability to pass examinations made it apparent that if he lasted even one year at the University he would put up a remarkably good performance.

However, there are other ways of distinguishing oneself at Oxford than by obtaining a degree with first class honours. Hardly had this youth settled down in residence, than he inveigled a policeman into his rooms, got the policeman drunk and sallied out into the streets arrayed in the policeman's uniform. Wearing these borrowed plumes and knowing exactly where to go, he visited some out-of-bounds places and arrested several wealthy Indian undergraduates; but he did not take any of his captives to the police-station. Instead he accepted large bribes to let them go, and later on refused to give the money back, holding with the Tichborne claimant that those who have money and no brains are meant to provide for those who have brains and no money. Then came boat-race night when it is traditional for the undergraduates to visit London music-halls and to play up until thrown into the street by a specially recruited force of chuckers-out. This is an annual affair, a perfunctory business, usually rather boring to the chuckers-out, who have little difficulty in dealing with half-intoxicated undergraduates. But on this occasion the chief chucker-out handled young Fitzroy with unnecessary roughness, with the result that the chief chucker-

out was treated to a lesson in wrestling which sent him flying down a flight of stone steps, with concussion of the brain and an action for damages to follow.

The next thing was a letter from the much worried head of the clan to the boy's mother:

DEAR MARIE,

I am afraid that your boy is too much of a handful for the effete institutions of this country. He belongs in the wide open spaces, where men are men and do not bring actions for damages. I am therefore arranging to send him out to Australia where he will have more scope for the exercise of his peculiar talents. I will put a thousand pounds to his credit and will let him either mak a spune or spoil a horn. Do not think that I am blaming you for the way in which you have brought up this boy. On the contrary I congratulate you on having produced such a type.

Yours to command,

MARR AND ESK

Arrived in Australia, the inhabitants of that country got the thousand pounds away from him in about half no time, and rather than ask for help, the young fellow applied for, and got, a position as probationary trooper in the Queensland Mounted Police. In appearance he was just what certain ladies would call a "nice boy," of dark complexion with violet-blue eyes, high cheek-bones and a firm chin, inherited, it was thought, from the royal ancestor aforesaid. Except for his springy wrestler's walk and the mat of black hair on the backs of his hands, he gave no indication of the strength that enabled him, as a probationary constable, to go single-handed into the haunts of the razor gang and bring out their best man, carrying him in his arms as a shearer carries a sheep.

On the strength of this performance he was selected out of a score of young troopers to go to Barcoo River township to relieve the local trooper who was sick. It was known that a fairly tough man was needed at Barcoo and Fitzroy appeared to fill the specifications.

So, knowing nothing of the people, nothing of the place, and very little about Australia, he arrived at Barcoo as sole representative of the law on the day of the Barcoo Grand Annual Race-meeting.

It was a broiling day, and the leaves on the bough-and-sapling grandstand were drying to tinder in the sun. A course of a mile and a furlong round had been roughly marked out by stakes on the vast plain; if they had wished to mark out a ten-mile course they could have done it. In front of the grandstand the plain stretched away to infinity; back of it the river spread out into a maze of reed-beds; and in the middle distance on the right was Barcoo River township itself: a public house, a store, a school, a police-station and a blacksmith's shop. One wondered where the horses and

the people were to come from.

But they were there all right. Horses whose training consisted mostly in being led round the circuit of these small backblocks meetings had placidly tramped their fifty miles from the last meeting. These were reinforced by a few local animals trained on the stations, and some “take-down” horses owned by shearers who mixed the shearing of sheep with the more exciting task of shearing their fellow creatures. As for the people, some of the big sheds had just cut out and “cheque-proud” shearers were there in scores. Also, every jackeroo, station-hand, prospector, fencer, splitter and contractor in the district had made some excuse or other to get a day off for the races. When a man sees nothing but sky, sheep and saltbush plain for a year at a time, Barcoo River Races are indeed a Grand Annual meeting.

There are in Australia people who make a good living by classing sheep; an expert in humanity would have had little difficulty in classing that attendance at Barcoo Races. Nobody wore a coat, but there was something about the cut of the pants and the quality of the hat that differentiated the jackeroos (Englishmen getting colonial experience) from the tank-sinkers and fencers. There were the shearers trying to look knowing and raffish, and the racecourse hangers-on trying to look simple and respectable. One man alone might have puzzled an expert. At first glance he was undoubtedly a shearer, for his hands had the gnarled look that comes from handling sheep full of thistles, burrs, and various kinds of thorns. At a second look it would be noticed that he wore a silk shirt, which is only done by jackeroos and very flash shearers. But whatever else he was, this man was certainly not flash. About forty-five years of age, standing quite six feet high, with prominent nose, freckled red face and red hair, his long gaunt arms and huge hands gave the lie to the silk shirt and the pants which, though ready-made, were obviously expensive. Apparently knowing nobody, he looked like a supernumerary who has never spoken a line in his life and suddenly finds himself called upon to take the centre of the stage. As a simpleton he appeared to be in the AI combing class, so he soon attracted the attention of the vultures who follow races all over the world.

“Who's the bloke with the face and hair like a bushfire? I thought I knew everybody round here, dear boy, but he's a new one on me. He looks like a shearer that's made a cheque, and it wouldn't be too hard to get it off him. These way-backers will come at anything if you pitch the tale strong enough.”

The speaker was Dear Boy Dickson, turf urger, battler and general hanger-on at race-meetings throughout Queensland; and his remarks were addressed to his partner and confederate Spider Ryan. Dear Boy was so-

called because he aped the swell and could worm himself into the good hotels where the rich men were to be found, and where he addressed everybody as "Dear Boy," just to put them at their ease while he got their money from them. An Englishman by birth, a fine, personable man, well dressed and well educated, he had been faced all his life by the problem of living like a gentleman without any money. He had managed to solve the problem in his own way, but his operations had more than once brought him within the grip of the law. Finally, he had settled down as adviser of uncanny schemes for getting money from people on racecourses. It was said of him that he could talk a punter off a battleship on to a canvas dinghy in mid-ocean. His mate, Spider Ryan, had less originality and acted as a sort of chorus and backer-up to anything that Dear Boy said.

"I know who the cove is," said Spider; "the boots at the squatters' pub told me about him. His name is Carstairs, and he owns three or four stations away out back somewhere. He used to be a shearer, and so help me goodness, he strikes a gold-mine. Now he's just black with money. If we can get him by the lug he ought to be worth a couple of hundred to us. You go and breast him."

Fully aware that in their line of business a good introduction meant everything, Dear Boy Dickson hung about the vicinity of the red man like a dry-fly fisherman waiting for a trout to rise. Presently the squatter went over and leaned on a rail while he looked at a bay mare tied up in one of the stalls. Dear Boy promptly ranged up alongside him.

"Decent little mare that, dear boy," he said. "Do you know what she is?"

The red man, six feet of muscle and bone, turned his head and regarded his questioner with eyes that had that far-away look which comes from gazing over illimitable plains. So far from resenting the address of a stranger he seemed to be glad to have any one to speak to him.

"She belongs to me," he said. "I bought her to have a bit of fun. She's thoroughbred, but I don't know much about racing myself."

This was just what Dear Boy wanted — a man asking for guidance in the tortuous way of the turf. He at once set to work to establish the attitude of superiority which is essential to all successful battling, whether on the turf, in politics, or on the Stock Exchange. Get 'em down and keep 'em down, is the motto.

"Look here, dear boy," he said, "that's a nice little mare and all that, but my friend and I have one in the next race that'll positively eat her. Ours can't get beaten. We're putting five hundred on it, so we can't give away what it is till we get our money on. When we've finished we'll have the books climbing trees, and you won't be able to get a shilling on it. You can have a hundred in with us, if you like — but not more, in fact it'll be hard

to manage that.”

“Listen, dear boy,” he went on, “nobody here knows it, but ours won in good open company in Sydney, and it can stop and throw three or four somersaults and still beat this lot. It'll open at about ten to one, for these yokels here don't think anything can beat their local cracks. You can win a thousand pounds as easy as smoking a cigar. I tried this one with a horse I have in the Melbourne Cup, dear boy, and there was nothing between them. Of course, you must keep all this to yourself, and you'll have to give me the hundred now, for I'll shove the money on as soon as the betting opens.”

Considering that Dear Boy had no horse at all this was a pretty good effort. Whether or not the squatter would have parted with his hundred pounds will never be known. As Dear Boy bent down to run his hands over the mare's legs in a very professional way, there was a quick step alongside and the mare's trainer appeared on the scene. Pointing to the unsuspecting form of Dear Boy who was still groping about the mare's feet, the trainer said:

“Who's this?”

“That's a gentleman who has a horse in the nest race,” said the bushman, “and he doesn't think our mare . . .”

Just here Dear Boy straightened up and came face to face with the trainer.

“Stone the crows!” said the trainer, “why, it's Dear Boy Dickson! I thought you were in jail! So you have a horse in the next race, have you! Look, Mr Carstairs, if this man was seen looking at a horse, everybody connected with the horse would get two years.”

He might have said a lot more, had not Dear Boy melted away into the crowd without a word. Why waste words? To him this exposure was just an ordinary incident in life, another sprat thrown away without catching any mackerel. Better luck next time!

Leaving now the owner and trainer to discuss the prospects of the little mare, let us follow the adventures of Dear Boy Dickson in his efforts to raise some capital. Meeting Spider, he informed that worthy briefly that there “was nothing doing with the red bloke, his trainer came up and narked the lurk,” meaning thereby that their intended victim had been warned of the plot against him. Then they went into a committee of ways and means, for things were really desperate with them. Even that usually reliable harvest, the drunkard crop, seemed likely to fail them; there were too many gleaners at work. As Napoleon might survey a battle-ground, Dear Boy cast his eyes over the paddock enclosure where squatters, shearers, drovers, blackfellows, trainers, and jockeys milled around like

cattle on a camp, or stood three deep in front of the two liquor bars under the bough sheds. It had been a good season and there was plenty of money about; the only thing was how to get it.

At last an idea worthy of Napoleon at his best struck this General of the Battling Brigade. He noticed a man come up from the entrance gates bearing a black hand-bag which with considerable ceremony he deposited in the Secretary's office under the bough grandstand. It did not need a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that the bag contained the day's takings, or so much of them as had been collected up to that time, and the bag might contain anything from a hundred to two hundred pounds. The Secretary's clerk, a callow youth employed in a local stock and station agent's office, dumped the bag under the table and went on with his work of elucidating the writing of the handicapper who had just issued the weights for the next race.

Like lightning the bandit general produced his scheme of operations.

"See here, dear boy," he said, "I've just thought out a lurk, but it'll want three of us. Monkey Brand's here, isn't he, and he's about your weight?"

"What's our weight got to do with it? They wouldn't put a trouser button on any horses with me and Monkey Brand riding them."

"Too right, dear boy, too right they wouldn't. But the whole crowd will rush to look at a fight when they don't have to pay anything, and you and Monkey can both scrap a bit. Now, I want you and Monkey to get up a barney in the bar. You can say he shore at Nocolleche, while the Union was on strike — I believe he did too, but that's neither here nor there — and when you say that, of course he'll *have* to hit you. Then the two of you'll get tearing and grappling each other and they'll roll you into the open, so as you can have it out. Every living soul will run to see the fight, and I'll just nip in and get that bag. Then it'll be me for the reed-beds down there at the back, and a black-tracker couldn't track an elephant in those reed-beds, dear boy. Then you and Monkey can come down to the end of the reed-beds to-night and we'll split up the stuff and scatter three different ways. If the thing works I'll be down at the end of the reed-beds at eight o'clock to-night."

"You'd better be there, too," said Spider. "If you're not there, it'll be a shame what me and Monkey will do to you when we ketch you."

"I'm aware of that, dear boy, I'm aware of that. No use having money if you don't live to enjoy it. Now, you go and pick up Monkey and get busy."

Shortly afterwards there was a sound of harsh voices in the liquor booth.

"I'll swear you did."

"I'll swear I never."

"I'll swear you did. You shore at Nocolleche while the strike was on. The

station cook told me. You shore — scab!”

Biff!

In a second the two active young fellows, snarling with fury, were rolling on the ground grappling at each other's throats. Eager hands rolled them outside, separated them, and seconds sprang up like magic. The cry of “Fight! Fight!” brought all hands on the run. The girls behind the bar left their drinks and the callow youth in the Secretary's shed, having seen nothing exciting for about two years, darted out of his bough shed leaving everything in the place to look after itself. While the excitement was at its height the well-dressed form of Dear Boy Dickson, carrying a light buggy-rug over his arm, slipped into the Secretary's office unnoticed and slipped out again in an instant, carrying the bag under the rug! During that instant he had struck a match and applied it to the tinder-like leaves of the bough shed.

Now the cry of “Fight! Fight!” was drowned in another shout of “Fire! Fire!” as the flames shot with the speed of rockets from one bunch of dry boughs to another. So fast did the fire spread that the people who were watching the fight from the grandstand had to jump out of it to save their lives. There was a wild rush to get the precious racehorses free from their bough-roofed stalls and an equally wild rush to save the kegs of rum and the cases of whisky from destruction. There was such a din that the yells of the Secretary's clerk, “The money's in there, the money's in there, and it's all burnt!” attracted no more attention than the squeakings of a mouse in an artillery bombardment. Before the loss was properly understood Dear Boy Dickson was wading knee-deep in sludge in the centre of the reed-beds and philosophically preparing himself to fight mosquitoes until eight o'clock at night.

There is a sort of spacious freedom of expression about a Queensland crowd that is not found in closely settled communities. There is no mass psychology, so to speak. Widely scattered about on lonely stations or boundary-riders' huts, or on outlying prospecting shows, each man forms his own opinion, particularly in sporting matters. Many of them read nothing but sporting papers, studying the accounts of the races and the fights until they, who have never been within a thousand miles of a big fight, will flatly contradict a man who was at the ringside. Thus it came that after the little affair on Barcoo racecourse, Red Dempsey, the shearer, who had seconded Spider Ryan, nearly came to blows with Bluey Cavanagh, prospector and ex-prize-fighter who had seconded Brand. The point at issue was whether Brand should have used a half-arm jolt, in the manner of Bob Fitzsimmons, instead of swinging his punches wildly, like an old woman throwing a stone. There was every prospect of another and

better fight over this point, until a shearers' cook, who had been hanging about the town waiting for the late sheds to start, put in his oar.

“Fight!” he said, “you don't suppose them two was fightin', do yer? Them's mates, them two. They been knockin' about together for years. Ryan could kill the other bloke in one hit, if he wanted to. Brand's smart on his feet, but he can't hit hard enough to punch his way out of a paper bag. You couldn't kid him even to pretend to fight unless he got something for it. If that bag full of frogskins [pound notes] was burnt in the fire, they'd be some of the iron frame of the bag left, wouldn't there? Let's go and have a look.”

Shielding their faces with one hand and wielding long green sticks with the other, the amateur detectives raked busily in the ashes but found no framework. The crowd, watching their efforts and not knowing what it was all about, soon started a story that a man had been burnt in the fire. It was here that Mounted Trooper Fitzroy came into the business.

Chapter II. Fitzroy's Mistake

IT is an unwritten law of the outer back that a trooper shall not interfere in a fight, unless there is great disparity between the combatants, or unless they take stirrup-irons to each other. During the fight Fitzroy stalked, lonely as Napoleon on the Rock at St Helena, through the back of the crowd. His revolver made an appreciable bulge on his hip under his tunic, he was fit and well, and he hoped sincerely that he might have to make an arrest. As he stalked along he measured the various shearers and blackfellows with his eye, wondering what sort of a scrap they would put up if he had to arrest them; for this was the first time that he had acted on his own responsibility, and a policeman about to make his first arrest feels all the thrills of a concert singer making his first appearance.

When he was told that a bag of money had been stolen from the Secretary's office and that the place had been set on fire to cover up the theft he produced a note-book and proceeded to make the inquiries laid down in the police manual.

"Have any of you seen any suspicious strangers about the town?" he said.

Considering that the town was practically full of suspicious strangers, this question seemed more worthy of Doctor Watson than of Sherlock Holmes. He would have got enough names to fill his book, if Handkerchief Jones, who claimed to be the flashiest man west of the Barcoo River, had not stepped in and taken charge of the proceedings. Handkerchief Jones had earned his name because of his three guiding principles in life which were: (1) that he always wore a silk handkerchief round his neck, (2) that he always took his boots off to fight, and (3) that he never took his hat off to a lady. A horse-breaker by profession and a great singer, dancer, and playboy at the bush concerts, Handkerchief Jones felt that he had to live up to his reputation for flashness; and he knew that it would add lustre to his name if he could in some way score off this green-horn policeman.

"I seen a bloke," he said, "like a red wallaroo — looks like his head had been raddled. He's the dead ring of that feller that's wanted for the murder of the half-caste down at Leila Springs. I seen him talkin' to Dear Boy Dickson, and that ought to get any one three months, oughtn't it? Wears a barber's delight [silk shirt] and jemimas [elastic-sided boots], but the dressier they are the hotter they are. Look at Dear Boy Dickson. You couldn't get a dressier bloke than him, and look how hot he is! I'd put the word on this red bloke if I was you, trooper. There he is now, down be the fence."

Recalling the various rules laid down for the examination of suspected

persons Fitzroy opened up on the red man with question one of the drill-book.

“What is your name?”

Few people are at their best when suddenly confronted by a policeman, but the red man only allowed a sort of Mona Lisa smile to pass across his face, then he drew himself smartly to attention and answered like an automaton.

“Carstairs, Fred Carstairs.”

“Where do you live?”

“I live one place and another, anywhere that suits me.”

“What is your occupation?”

“I'm a bushman, I can do any sort of bush work. I can shear, but I'm not looking for it.”

“There is some money supposed to be missing from the Secretary's room. Do you know anything about it?”

“I do not.”

“Were you ever at Leila Springs?”

“Yes, I shore there one year.”

“Do you remember that a half-caste named Andy was murdered down there?”

“Yes, I was there at the time.”

“Do you know a man they call Dear Boy Dickson?”

“I have spoken to him.”

“H'm. Well, I'm afraid I will have to detain you for identification. You may be charged in connexion with the disappearance of a lot of money from the race-course.”

“But, supposing I'm prepared to deposit some money to show I'm not a crook?”

“How much would you deposit?”

“Would a hundred thousand pounds be any good?”

“Don't be funny! You can tell all that to the magistrate. Come along.”

And Trooper Fitzroy had made his first arrest!

As there was no lock-up cell at the little bush police-station, the suspect was accommodated with a stretcher on the veranda. Here he slept very badly, as two hostile drunks were chained to the uprights in the fowl-house, where their roars of defiance kept the fowls and turkeys in a state of cackle and gobble that would have awakened the seven sleepers of Ephesus.

Next day the wires from Brisbane ran hot with excited messages. There was one from the General Manager of the Empire Pastoral Company protesting against the detention of one of their most valued clients on a

ridiculous charge. There was one from the Inspector-General of Police to the local sergeant:

“Tell Fitzroy to apply for discharge, give him month's leave while matter under consideration.”

Having passed this message on to the trooper, the sergeant then set to work to find out the whereabouts of Dear Boy Dickson, Spider Ryan and Monkey Brand; but beyond the fact that within the next few weeks each of them sported a new suit of clothes and a gold watch and chain, no clue was ever obtained as to the whereabouts of the missing racecourse money.

By this time the millionaire suspect had been turned loose and was packing his gear in his battered old Ford, meaning to pay a surprise visit to one or two of his stations. He had a long drive in front of him with a lot of gates to open, and it suddenly struck him that for all his money, he was a very lonely man. Besides, he wanted someone to open the gates.

He thought for a while of picking up one of the town boys as a travelling companion and sending the youngster back by the mail-coach when he had done with him. Then he thought what poor company a boy would be, and his mind went back to the trooper who had arrested him. He himself had been one of the under dogs of this world all his life, and here he had got this young trooper into trouble for want of a word or two. With a queer smile he turned his car and drove down to the police-station.

There he found Fitzroy who was giving his horse a last touch up with a brush.

“Come here, young feller,” he said. “I hear they're goin' to give you the sack. Do you want a job?”

“Yes, I'll have to get a job of some sort, but I don't suppose you'd give me one after the way I treated you.”

“Oh, I don't know. I like a man with a bit of grit and you done me no harm. You see, all my life I've just been plugging along, no more important than one sheep in a mob. Now I've got money and I want to get something out of it.”

He paused here for a while and appeared to have some difficulty in explaining what he wanted. His manner was apologetic rather than patronizing and Fitzroy wondered what was coming next. He felt that he himself could make a first-class success of helping anybody to spend money; so he thought he had better mention the line of life in which he was most likely to shine.

“I'm a Londoner myself,” he said, “and I could show you how to spend money in London. I don't know what a man would do with money out here.”

“That's just it,” said the red man, “I been a battler all me life, poor as a

crow, and now I got money I don't know what to do with it. But I'm terrible fond of horses and I thought I'd buy some horses and go in for racin'. I bought that little mare I got here, just to give it a try, but I didn't start her when you ran me in. I been in the shearing-shed and the kitchen all me life, and now I want to see somethin' different. They say if a man has a few good horses he can get anywhere and know anybody. But I want a mate to come along and show me the track. Red Fred! That's what they call me round the sheds! Just Red Fred, till I hardly know me own name. And I don't like facing this new job by meself."

Fitzroy was ready to jump at any job, but he wondered whether he would be expected to act as valet, or as turf adviser. The inferiority complex which afflicted the red man was quite foreign to Fitzroy and he drew the line at being a valet.

"What do you want me to do?" he said. "I never worked at anything, only being a trooper, and I didn't make much of a job of that."

By this time Red Fred seemed to have arranged his ideas. He had been studying Fitzroy and some kind of instinct told him that this young fellow was used to something better than being a trooper.

"I want you to be a kind of offsider to me," he said. "I want you to answer me letters, and to tell me what to say to the Governor, and to keep me from making a big fool of meself. I'll give you a thousand a year and your tucker. You can live with me and I mean to live pretty well, too. No more old ewe mutton or lumpy-jawed bullock like what I got in the shearing-sheds. I'm the biggest shareholder in the Daybreak Reef, and I can afford to buy good grub. So if you want to see life, now's your chance. What about packing up your traps and coming along? We'll race in Sydney, and then we'll go to London later on and paint the place red. What about it?"

The ex-trooper laughed.

"Suits me all right!" he said. "But if you don't mind my mentioning it, it takes a lot of paint to make much of a mark on London. I'll go and say good-bye to the sergeant — he's a decent old chap — and then the sooner I get out of this town the better."

Chapter III. Class Distinctions

DANCING along in the battered old Ford the new employer gave his employee his life-history.

“Me, I’m like two men,” he said. “Me father had some swell people in England, but he was a bit of a hard doer, and he got into some trouble and had to clear out and come over here. I think he changed his name when he came out here because he didn’t want to disgrace his people. Re could speak of lot o’ languages, so he started to teach languages for a living. I lived with him, lived hard, too, until I was sixteen and then I cleared out and got a job on the mines at Charters Towers. Look at me hands —” and he held out a hand that was nearly as broad as it was long. “That’s the mines did that,” he said. “Working the drill underground putting in the shots at the two thousand feet level. Did you ever work a drill?”

“No, I can’t say that I ever did.”

“Well, don’t do it, unless you’ve got to. I can work a drill with any man, but I don’t hanker after it. But what I was going to say about being two men. I can talk just like an Englishman if I like. You know, ‘Haw, haw, tell the butlah to bring the sugah!’ But they used to laugh at me on the mines, so now I talk Australian just as good as any cockatoo. But, keep it dark that I got money. You call me Fred, and they’ll think you have the money. You look more like it!”

They threw mile after mile behind them and Red Fred grew reminiscent.

“I made a bishop jump a foot high once,” he said. “He came out to a place I had in the Northern Territory, after I made me money, and he thought he’d get a whacking big subscription. So he drives up in his buggy and he sees me and he thinks I’m the rouseabout! ‘Haw,’ he says, ‘I’m the Bishop of Carpentariah, and I wish to see the proprietah.’ So, I says, ‘Haw, I’m the proprietah,’ I says, ‘and I’m — haw — an athiest,’ I says. ‘Well,’ he says, ‘that’s unfortunate, haw, for both of us,’ he says. ‘But I’ll get you to ring up the next place and see if they can get their men together and perhaps arrange a little subscription,’ he says.”

“So I rings up Flaherty, who’s a good Roman Catholic — that Bishop had no luck — and Flaherty rings back and he says: ‘You tell the Bishop’ he says, ‘that if he comes out here we’ll guarantee him twenty-five pounds, and if he don’t come we’ll give him fifty!’ he says.”

“And what did the Bishop do?”

“He didn’t go and he took the fifty. But I couldn’t let a Mick like Flaherty poke it at me that I was a savage, so I gives the Bishop fifty quid to help put a new roof on a church, and we were the best of friends and talked haw

haw talk all the evening. But about a month afterwards he wrote me that the church had been struck by lightning and would I send another fifty. But I said no, if Providence likes to bust up it's own buildings, I ain't going to interfere."

"But now I'm going to tell you something. I'm all right till I get tight, and then I get quarrelsome, or I gets chucking money about. You can always tell when I'm getting full, for I start to talk like my father used to. Dash it all, sometimes I talk a bit of French, though I don't know a word of French when I'm sober. The booze seems to bring it back. So, if you hear me starting to *parlez-vous*, you get a hold of me and take me away to bed. I'll most likely take a swing at you and I'm sure to give you the sack. But I'll be all right next day. I reckon we'll work together like two leaders in a bullock-team."

While Fitzroy was thinking over these prospects they drove mile after mile over the plains, on a two-hundred-mile trip out to Delahunty's Cockatoo Creek station. Those who think plain country must be dull and uninteresting would get a surprise if they saw the West in a good season. In the intensely dry inland air, colours are intensified and sizes are magnified. Silver-grey and bright green trees, such as the myall, belah, krui-bush and emu-bush gleam in the bright light and a clump of Old Man Saltbush in the distance looks like a dome of silver. The breeze brings sweet scents of ripening herbage. Looking out over that immensity a whole thunder-storm looks like a wandering patch of black against the blue of the sky; sometimes two or three such thunder-storms can be seen moving in stately fashion along the horizon, like wrestler's manoeuvring for a hold.

They passed a big lagoon where for acres and acres the ground seemed to be covered with a pink and white snow, but was really covered by tens of thousands of the crested galah parrots moving in orderly fashion to the water for a drink and a bath; each splashing and ducking himself in the water for his allotted time and then flying off to a tree to dry, so that before long the trees seemed to be laden with pink and white blossoms.

To the bushman those phenomena meant nothing. His companion noticed that as they approached Delahunty's station a certain uneasiness and irritability was developing in Red Fred's mind. He muttered to himself a few times and more than once he canvassed the idea of pushing past Delahunty's for another fifty miles to the next place.

"Delahunty's all right," he said. "But he's an Irish swell, you know, and he thinks all the rest of the population is just a lot o' culls. When his wife's at home he wouldn't ask the Governor inside, not until he'd had a look at his breeding. Broke to the world he is too; but that don't worry him. If he's at home we'll be all right, for he's bound to have heard of my luck; but if

he's not at home I don't know what about Maggie.”

“Who's Maggie?” said the ex-trooper. “What has she got to do with it?”

“Maggie's the girl who works there, and she and I used to be pretty thick when I was shearing there. You know there is a big lot of travellers come to these far-back places and you can't tell by looking at them whether they ought to be asked inside, or whether they ought to go to the bachelors' quarters, or to the men's hut. They all look like scum to Delahunty, so he lets Maggie sort 'em out. When Maggie was away one time he came home and found a mob of travellers there and he said:

““Well, gentlemen, this is inside; that's the bachelors' quarters; and that's the men's hut. Draft yourselves.””

The young Englishman laughed.

“Does Maggie ever make a mistake?” he said.

“Never. She can smell a swell like these here pointer dogs can smell a game bird. If Maggie hasn't heard about me, and if she thinks that you and me are just a shearer and a trap [policeman] she'll tell us to come into the kitchen for our grub, and she'll tell us to sleep in the skillion behind the wash-house. Well, we'll have to chance it.”

As they drove up to the homestead the sheep-dogs barked and a red-haired Amazon holding a decapitated fowl in one hand and a shingling tomahawk — like a battle-axe — in the other, walked out into the yard. When she saw Red Fred her face was wreathed in smiles.

“Hello, Fred!” she said. “Put your old Tin Lizzie in the cart shed and come into the kitchen and I'll give you a drink o' tea.”

The worst had happened. Evidently Maggie hadn't heard. Refusing to meet her eye, Red Fred shuffled about in his seat, and at last he said:

“Is the boss about, Maggie?”

“An' what do you want with the boss?” said Maggie. “Didn't he spear [dismiss] you for cutting a plateful of meat off one of them stud rams? If you're lookin' for a pen for the next shearin' you'd better drive on to some place where they don't know you. This young feller'll be the trap from Barcoo, I suppose? I heard none of the boys in Barcoo could keep a girl since he come there. You can go for a walk to-night, Fred, and leave me and the trap to have it out.”

Before things could get any worse a tall elderly man with a hawk-like face, and eyebrows that nearly met across his forehead, walked out into the yard followed by a beautiful Irish setter.

“Hello, Fred!” he said. “I heard about your luck. You must come inside now. You wear the golden cloak that admits through any door. The daughter is away, but Maggie will look after us, and we can have a talk and forget all about the stud ram. You might introduce me to your friend who, I

should say, has in his time been at home in places where admission is not obtainable either by cheque-book or ticket.”

“This young bloke's name is Fitzroy,” said Red Fred, whose boasted fluency in what he called haw haw talk had deserted him under the old man's satire. “He was a trap at Barcoo but he got the sack, same as I got over the ram. We both got the sack!”

“Fitzroy, eh! Any relation to Hilton Fitzroy who used to come over and hunt with the Kildares?”

“Yes, I'm a nephew.”

“I thought so; I thought so. I very seldom make a mistake. I think I can class humanity much better than I can class stud rams. But come inside, Fred, and to-night we will see whether you have the Midas touch that will convert Maggie's fowl into a golden pheasant. Would you like to have a look round before dinner, re-visit your old haunts in the shearers' hut, for instance?”

“I'll tell you what I'd like to do Mr Delahunty, if you don't mind. We'd like to have a look at the young horses. I know you've been racing all your life, and you've bred some pretty good ones. I don't know much about horses meself, but I want to go in for racing, and I thought we might get a good youngster or two off you. Fitzroy knows a good bit about horses, and when he got the sack off the police, I made him my ‘seckitary.’ First we'll race in the bush, and then we'll race in Sydney, and then we'll go on to England.”

Even after a lifetime of surprises, the old Irishman lost his somewhat stilted pose for a moment.

“You're going in for racing! God help you! And you've got a seckitary? Well, I'm damned! I thought from your name you'd be English, but you must be as Irish as I am. What do you know about racing, and about seckitaries?”

So far from resenting these crudities, the ex-shearer visibly brightened up. This was the sort of talk he was used to, and he felt like the Admiral's servant who told the Admiral that he wished to leave the service, whereupon the Admiral said: “What will a double-distilled fool like you do for a living if he leaves the service?” And the servant went back to his mates and told them that he couldn't think of leaving after the Admiral had spoken to him so friendly.

“You see, it's this way Mr Delahunty,” Fred said, “I thought I'd go in for racing. I've got the stuff now and what else is there for a man to do? I hadn't hardly rung the bell at this here racing before I got pinched. And now me name's in all the papers. When you get your mail you will see all about it.”

“I see, I see. From shearer to celebrity, so to speak. Well, if you *will* go in for racing, we can have a look at the horses and we can have a deal over them after dinner. I will of course take you in if I can. Perhaps you have heard of Abraham who, when badly pressed for a sacrifice, looked up and saw a ram caught by the horns in a thicket. After what has happened between us, it is a *bêtise* on my part to bring up the subject of rams. But Abraham accepted the sacrifice and who am I that I should set myself above Abraham? Come along and be sacrificed.”

As they walked down to the horse paddock Fitzroy recalled that in his youth, he had heard stories about this queer old eccentric Delahunty. He had squandered fortunes in Ireland; had fought a professional bruiser with bare knuckles; had won the sword championship of the Army; and had nearly strangled his card partner in a Dublin club for holding up an ace at a critical moment. Fitzroy determined there and then to be very guarded in his remarks about the horses.

The first lot they looked at were half a dozen yearlings running in a small paddock, up to their knees in irrigated lucerne, while the unirrigated part of the paddock was belly-deep in Mitchell grass, that wonderful Queensland grass on which a horse can be trained almost as well as on oats. Mostly whole chestnuts in colour, the luxuriant feed had forced their growth until they were as big as two-year-olds.

Like the aristocrats that they were, they came and welcomed their owner by rubbing their velvety noses against his face, fearless as young children, “gentlemen unafraid” as our friend Kipling puts it.

“There you are,” said the old man. “These are my unworthy possessions in the way of horseflesh. I would race them myself, only a soulless bank manager has decreed otherwise. Their sire never raced but he is a direct descendant of Irish Birdcatcher, and their dams all run back to unbeaten Barcaldine. Do you know the history of Barcaldine? He would have been one of the greatest horses in history, only that his owner, an ignorant countryman of mine, actually wrote to an official of the Jockey Club and asked him to join with him in doing some shady work with the horse in England. The official handed the letter to the authorities, and Barcaldine was disqualified for some of the best years of his racing life.

“Fred,” he went on, “tell me now, which of them appeals to you most, so that I will be able to pretend that I don’t want to sell that one when we are dealing to-night.”

A massively built chestnut colt, shaking with fat, with a somewhat coarse head and a neck like that of a stallion, drew out from the mob and aired himself for their admiration. Fred’s eyes bulged with appreciation, and he spoke with all the confidence of an American oil magnate criticizing

pictures by the Old Masters.

"Which do I like?" he said. "Why, a blind man could pick this lot, Mr Delahunty. Look at that chestnut feller. Look at his ribs! Look at his rump! Look at his bone! What'll he be like next year, eh?"

"I thought so," said the old man. "I thought so. There was once a celebrated judge of racehorses who lost his sight and had to be led about by an attendant. One day this attendant said to him, 'There's a beautiful horse passing us just now.' The blind man gave a sigh and said: 'A beautiful horse, is he? Well, I'll bet he's a fat 'un.' I shudder to think what that colt will be like next year. He's got plenty of bone, but in my distressing country they say 'the bigger the bone the nearer the cart.' You might make a success at buying war-horses for Job, Fred, but you had better let me select your racehorses. I won't rob myself, you can be sure of that.

"And now Mr Fitzroy," he went on, "judging by what I remember of your uncle, you should have some sort of affinity for racehorses. Which of them do you like?"

Among the yearlings trotting round them was a long, low-set whole-coloured bay youngster with black points, not too well grown and a trifle low in the shoulder. He seemed all legs and wings, but he had great arms and thighs and a set of cast steel legs. Apart from his arms and thighs his best point was his great depth through the back ribs. When Fitzroy was asked which of the young ones he fancied he ran his eye over the mob before replying.

"Well," he said, "I don't know a great deal about it, but the old stud groom at my grandfather's place always told me to keep off the ready-made yearlings and to go for one that might grow into something. He said that the ready-made ones might race early and that would be the end of them. He said that a pumpkin vine would grow quicker than an oak, but it wasn't as tough. How is that bay fellow bred? I think he's the one that old Archie would have picked."

"Excellent, excellent," said the old man. "Who would have expected so much wisdom from an English stud groom? An Irishman, now, would tell you that he liked one of the others, but he would come and steal that one in the night. That colt's dam was no good as a two-year-old, but she won the Victorian Oaks, and his grandsire won the English Leger. Any one who buys him and puts him by for a year might have a very good three-year-old. The more haste the less racehorse is the motto with his sort. The shoulder is your best guide. The early ones are always well up in the shoulder, and the late ones are low in the shoulder but they come up later on."

Having listened by the hour to other shearers laying down the law about

horse-breeding, Red Fred thought it was time to air his knowledge. He had felt rather hurt at Delahunty's condemnation of his judgment about the big chestnut colt, and he meant to buy that colt, anyhow. As all horse-dealers know, the best way to make a man buy a horse is to tell him that you would sooner sell him one of the others.

“Do you believe in this horse figure system, Mr Delahunty?” he said.

With a wave of his hand the old Irishman consigned the figure system to the bottomless pit, and excitement lent his speech a touch of the brogue.

“The figure system, is it?” he said. “Let me tell you there was only one man in all England and Ireland who ever believed in the figure system and he went bankrupt three times. That was Allison. But the fellow was so clever with his pen that he collected an army of fools to follow him.”

“Any great horse is a freak,” Delahunty said. “After a few generations his blood gets watered down until the strength goes out of it. Did iver ye see a Jew get married into a Christian family? For five or six generations the nose on that Jew's face, and his nose for a bargain, will crop up in that family. After that it gets bred out of them. It's the same with horses. Ye have to breed from a freak, and when his blood gets done, look out for another freak. But, it's time to get back to the house, or Maggie'll ate the face off us if we're late.”

Chapter IV. Bush Hospitality

A SQUATTER'S dinner in the backblocks is apt to cover any range from a cold mutton chop eaten in shirt-sleeves to a five-course affair eaten in dinner-jackets. Maggie, who was simply snorting with rage, and with curiosity to know why a shearer and a trap had been allowed inside, had an idea of serving them up a real shearers' meal, fit for their station in life; but on second thoughts she decided on a dinner which should show those *canaille* how the quality really lived. She gave one of the station-hands a gun and some cartridges and told him to get a couple of wild duck, and she sent down to the blacks' camp to say that she would "give it big feller nobbler" to any black who could catch her a Murray cod.

Both items for the menu came to hand, and Maggie set to work to prepare her dinner. Only a thoroughly aroused woman could have done it in the time at her disposal. She brought in a dinner consisting of Murray cod with (tinned) oyster sauce, a stew of black duck and a roast fowl with onion sauce. A water-bag dripping coolness on the veranda contained a bottle of claret, three bottles of whisky and a squat little flask of cherry brandy. The boss's enormously valuable old Irish silver was strewn about the room in any place where there was room for it, and gold and silver racing trophies glittered on mantelpiece and sideboard. It was an ideal setting for a horse deal. Who could haggle about a few pounds in the midst of such magnificence!

The two guests dressed for dinner by the simple process of washing their faces and hands at a tap. When they came into the dining-room Maggie was pleased to see that the ex-shearer was staggered by the magnificence of his surroundings. The young policeman, however, was quite cool, and actually seemed to know something about old silver: a knowledge gained, as Maggie suspected, by his association with burglary cases.

When the claret, the only wine in the establishment, was served with the fish, the young fellow said:

"Where on earth did you get this claret? I haven't tasted anything like it since Oxford."

But the shearer was critical:

"On one of the gold-rushes," he said, "there was an old German bloke used to make his own claret and it had more kick than this. You could pour it out on the counter and set fire to it with a match, and it'd burn."

The Irish whisky rose superior to all criticism in the matter of strength, but he complained that it left "a taste in your mouth like after you've been working at a bush-fire."

When they had topped up with the cherry brandy, Red Fred reckoned it must have been the stuff that made the rabbit chase the kangaroo dog. And when they settled down to talk horses, nobody had the slightest hesitation in expressing an opinion on any subject whatever.

To Maggie's great satisfaction the host did the thing properly by handing round cigars, an almost unheard-of luxury in those parts. Then he started to talk business.

"Tell me now, Fred," he said, "how many horses do you want to buy?"

"I'll buy," said Fred, "any you've got, or all you've got."

"Ah, yer sowl, what way is that to talk? Dealing with you is like fighting a duel with a man who won't fire at you. In Ireland a horse deal will last a week, and they'll differ not only over the horse itself, but even the halter it's led with, and the bit of rug that's over its loins. If you buy any, who's going to break them in for you? What about a trainer? I can get you a breaker here if you like. He's what they call a whisperer in England. Did you ever hear of a whisperer?"

"I have," said Fitzroy, "plenty of 'em. They're fellows who come to you on the racecourse and whisper to you what'll win."

"No, no, no, not at all! A whisperer is a man who can shut himself in a loose-box with a dangerous horse, and he'll begin talking to it and in a little while the horse will follow him about rubbing its head against him. It's a gift. There used to be plenty of them in England and Ireland. There's a fellow knocking about here, a worthless sheep-stealing scoundrel he is too, and he has the gift. He can go into a yard with one of my unbroken station colts and an old mare, and he'll work the old mare up alongside the youngster and talk to it. And while you're expecting to see the colt ram its fore foot down his throat, he has it caught and saddled and he's riding it round the yard. I've known him come here and catch a green unbroken bush scrubber that had never been fed or handled in its life, and he'd ride it away next day and lead another unbroken horse off its back. He's in jail now. But he'll be out in time to handle these horses."

All this talk bored Red Fred who was just getting into that frame of mind when he was not disposed to agree with anybody. He took another swig of the cherry brandy.

"I know a blackfeller . . ." he began.

"A blackfellow! A blackfellow is it? Listen! Before I'd see you let a blackfellow within a hundred miles of any of my horses, I'd pick up that empty bottle and leave you stretched a corpse on the floor here in front of me. It's a duty I'd owe to the world. Don't you know, man, that once a blackfellow breaks in a horse, the horse looks on all white men as his enemies?"

“And then there's the trainer. Trainers are like cooks, there's mostly always something wrong with the good ones, a good cook, you know, pretty well always drinks. Even Maggie. I've heard her and her friends sitting out there on the wood-heap of an evening singing like dogs howling. Well, I'll say this for trainers: there's very few of them drink; but every owner thinks his horse has wings on his legs and a Rolls-Royce engine in his inside, and the trainer daren't deny it or he'll lose the horse.”

Here the embryo owner thought it was time that he should get a word in. Visions of cleverly worked coups began to float on the sea of liquor, and he decided to put his foot down.

“I'll tell yer what I'm goin' 'er do,” he said, “I'm not goin' 'er run horses for the click [clique]. You know what I mean. The click that hangs round the big stables and says ‘How's your horse goin' 'er run, old chap?’ an' they get in and back it before you do. I'm goin' 'er find a lirrle trainer can keep his mouth shut, an' I'll keep *my* mouth shut. Jimmy the Head, that was shearin' with me at Bogan West, he done all his old man's dough horse-racin' and he sez to me, ‘you can't have no friends in racin', Fred, friends is only a curse to a man.’ Wha' about that?”

Old Delahunty, who had drunk, perhaps not with more restraint but certainly with more discrimination, became more pompous and didactic, as the liquor stimulated his sense of superiority:

“Excellent in theory, my dear Fred, but impossible in practice. Every moneyed fool that has gone into the game from the Marquis of Hastings down to the Jubilee Juggins has been obsessed with the same idea. But your small trainer will have no decent trial horses, so you won't really know where you are. Another thing, he won't be able to get good jockeys, for the princes of the pigskin stick to the big stables, and a small trainer has to go to them on all fours and give away the whole circus, before they will even consider riding one of his horses. ‘See my valet,’ that's what the crack English riders will tell him. And he has to convince the valet that it's a stone home-and-dried certainty before the valet will even look at the jockey's engagement book. You threaten to report the ruffian, and you find that he's keeping, or being kept by, a duchess.

“I mean nothing personal by the remark, but you are like a bear with all your troubles before you. You've got to go through it all, putting bad riders up on your horses to get a price, and getting accused of pulling the horse when it is beaten. If you don't bet, they'll say you are a nuisance on the turf because they can't tell when your horses are fancied; and if you do bet, you'll have to back every horse you start or some ink-slinging assassin will print that your horse was pulled. But it's the greatest game in the world; and when you've learnt it — if you have any money left — you'll be glad

you went into it.”

Looking out through the open door they could see the moonlight flooding the plain. In a lagoon below the garden, frogs sang in chorus and wild ducks quacked and splashed. A flock of plover wheeled just over the house, chanting their shrill war-cry. Away, up in the paddocks a bull roared a challenge and was answered from across the river. Young Fitzroy got up and walked to the door to stretch his legs.

“Well,” he said, “this is better than the police-station at Barcoo, or lying out under a log all night waiting for some of those sheep-stealing johnnies. But we're not getting any further ahead over this deal. I might as well start work on my new job. If you'll give me the names and breeding of the horses I'll write them down and then you can say what you want for each one. Then my boss here can say what he'll give, and if you can't agree he can make you an offer.

“It's wonderful what you'll get by making an offer. A pal of mine had a horse that he *had* to sell, stone-broke you know, and the horse was full brother to something or other but ran as though he was full brother to a milking cow. He was a titled man, this friend of mine, but he had very queer teeth, and somebody christened him Curius Dentatus. A theatrical chap, all scent and astrakhan collar, was in Oxford and he came to have a look at this horse. He didn't really want a horse, you know, he only wanted a talk with a titled man, and he got that all right. Curius was a polished liar when it suited him, and he started to say how sorry he was to part with the horse, and he pitched a tale that would have fetched tears to the eyes of a crocodile. Then he wound up by asking a thousand guineas for the horse.

“The theatrical chap wouldn't dream of insulting a lord by saying that he was asking too much for a horse, so he started to crawfish a bit. ‘I've no doubt, my lord,’ he said, ‘that the horse is worth every penny of a thousand guineas, and I only wish I could afford to buy him; but I want a horse for selling races, something about three hundred, something just to take my mind off my work, you know.’

“Curius wheels on him' in a flash: ‘He's yours at three hundred,’ he says, ‘and you've got seven hundred the best of the bargain. Come and have a drink. He'll take your mind off your work all right.’”

While this episode of undergraduate days was being unfolded old Delahunty's eyes twinkled.

“And do you suggest, Mr Fitzroy,” he said, “that I would ask a man like Fred here, a man that has shorn for me, to pay a thousand pounds for a horse worth nothing! I had expected to have some fun over this deal, just to see if I were in my old form; but I see I must outrage all the decencies by being both seller and buyer. I would advise you to take the chestnut colt

out of Single Star for one. He is half-brother to a Derby winner and that makes a horse valuable, even if it doesn't make him win races.”

By this time the ex-shearer had begun to goggle a good deal about the eyes, and the assorted liquors that he had consumed were beginning to fight amongst themselves.

Like Ivan Chinitzky Cheddar, he assumed his most truculent sneer and said that he would certainly take the Single Star colt, and with some difficulty in articulating he added “an' I wan' the' big colt, the one you don' like.”

“Right! Now, if I sent them to Sydney I ought to get a thousand guineas for the Silver Star colt on account of his relations, and I ought to get five hundred for the big fellow. Deducting something for travelling them down and costs of sale, commission, insurance, risk of injury, and so on, it would be a fair thing if I asked you eight hundred guineas for the Single Star colt; and I wouldn't insult Fred's judgment by asking less than four hundred for the big fellow. That little fellow you said the stud groom would have liked, I'll take a hundred and fifty for him, and he might be a good horse. You can leave them here as long as you like, and I'll get them broken in for you. How does that suit you?”

Before Fitzroy could make any offer, such as the man with the astrakhan collar had made, his employer ruined any chance of a deal.

“I'll go and get my cheque-book, Fitz,” he said. “It's been yabber, yabber, yabber the whole evening. Like a lot of black gins round a sick dog. I don't have to study a few bob, you know. But I won't take that scrawny lirrle bay scrubber. You can buy him if you like, Fitz, and pay for him out of your screw, so much a week — like a time-payment suit of clothes.”

So saying he stumped off to get the cheque-book.

“I can see heaps of trouble ahead of you, my young friend,” said Delahunty. “Your employer has, I believe, a heart of gold, but he hasn't got a head of cast iron. You will have to shepherd him a bit. When he first came in for his money there was a politician making a speech at Fred's mining-camp, and he had one of these new-fangled loud speakers rigged up in the crowd. Fred had been celebrating a bit, and when the loud speaker said 'I shall provide millions for irrigation,' Fred said to it 'where are you going to get the money?' The loud speaker went on about irrigation, and Fred said 'answer my question, won't you? Where are you going to bet the money?' And when it wouldn't answer he tried to throw it in the creek. Here he comes now.”

While Red Fred was ostentatiously writing out a cheque, the old squatter thought he would ease the situation for young Fitzroy.

“I don't want Fitzroy to take this horse,” he said, “a racehorse is a bad

asset to a young man. I ought to know.”

But Red Fred was in the frame of mind when he couldn't be told anything.

“I say he will take him,” he growled. “I'll guarantee his account. Just because I been a shearer and been kicked about like a dog all me life, that doesn't say I'm to take orders from an Irish half-sir like you, does it? You been tyrr'nisin' over people all your life, sendin' 'em round to the kitchen, but that's all done now, for Mr Frederick Carstairs.” And then in a pleasant baritone voice he sang:

“Aux armes, mes citoyens,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé...”

Then relapsing into his Australian voice he said, “Whadda you think of that, you cows?”

If Fitzroy had been in a normal frame of mind, he would have hesitated before man-handling his employer. But the world just then seemed to him one glorious adventure, and without an instant's delay he threw his arms round his master and started to carry him out of the room.

“Obey orders if you break owners,” he said. “You'd better come to bed. Good night, Mr Delahunty. We'll put off the revolution until the morning.”

As he put out the lights and took a final walk round the place, talking to his dog as his habit was, old Delahunty laughed to himself.

“Well, we had some fun out of it anyway, Molly,” he said. “The man sang in French and he called me a half-sir! How did he get to know that word? I ought to have called him out, Molly. But a man can't go out with a shearer, especially when he's buying one's horses.”

Next morning Red Fred came into the breakfast room without any trace of embarrassment.

“Good morning, all,” he said. “I suppose you think I was tight last night. Well, I wasn't. I was cold sober. You see, I told young Fitz here that when he saw me gettin' into a barney and startin' to talk French, he was to cart me off to bed, and I wanted to see if he was game enough to do it. All what I said about that bay horse, that was just part of the lurk. I am going to give him that horse as a present for his pluck. When you have had your breakfast, Fitz, you fix up all the papers about the horses and I'll go and get the old car ready.

“Do you know what I got in that car? I got an opal brooch that'd fair knock your eye out. An old mate o' mine come to me at Barcoo, flat broke, and asked me to buy it to give him a start. I gave him fifty quid for it. I

never saw such a stone, the size of a hen's egg, and all scarlet and green and gold lights like fire-works. I'm going out to give it to Maggie. Maggie stuck to me many a time for a feed and a drink o' tea. Maggie'll be like the Opal Queen that used to keep the pub at Eulo, and get all the best opal from the gougers when they came in to knock down their cheques."

While he was fixing up the car and making his peace with Maggie the other two fixed up the papers about the horses.

"Do you know," said the old man, "I envy you your job. If you go to England to race, you can go anywhere and meet anybody. A good racehorse is better than any letter of introduction. Here am I like Kipling's Roman Emperor, sitting by a river waiting for death, and you'll be meeting princes and potentates and some of the best people in the world and some of the worst. The women will be your main trouble. That red fellow is easy money for any woman. By the way, talking of that, I have a daughter away on a visit at Saltbush Downs, just alongside the place you're going to. I'll give you a note to her. If you can teach Red Fred not to mix his liquors and not to drink cherry brandy like water, he'll do all right. I wish you luck."

When they went out to the car their eyes were dazzled by something that looked like a lighthouse, and they found that Maggie had pinned the opal brooch on her breast, and was loading the car with sandwiches and fruit.

"So long, Fred," she said. "If you get broke, come back here, and we'll see that you get a pen. When the studs come on to be shorn, you can say that your wrist has cracked up, and let the other fellows shear 'em. So long!"

Chapter V. Jimmy The Pat

A LETTER from young Fitzroy to his mother, though somewhat misspelt, will perhaps tell the story of their next adventures better than could be done by any chronicler. Being congenitally unable to spell correctly, most of his correspondence, such as police reports, had been painfully compiled with the help of a dictionary, but writing to his mother he could let himself go:

Dearest Mother,

You will be surprised to know that I have given up the police force. I don't suppose that bit of news has been cabled to England yet. There was a scrimage at a race-meeting where a lot of money was supposed to be stolen. I was like the North West Mounted Police I got my man, but the man I arrested was a milliunair and the chaps who informed on him were the chaps that got the money. When he had to be let go, he saw I was disappointed so he offered me a job as secertary at a thousand a year, so I told the police they had better look out for a man in my place.

Most rich men are so close with their money, you wouldn't get anything out of them with the synide [cyanide] process, but my boss is free with his money and too free with his tongue when he gets a few drinks in. I am chucker-out as well as seckertary, and I have to chuck out my boss and put him to bed when he gets into a brawl.

My boss is mad on going in for racing and he bought three young horses from an old Irish squatter, a friend of Uncle Hilton's, and I think much the same sort as Uncle Hilton. He fancied himself a lot and talked in a snearing way and made fun of Red Fred, which is my boss's nickname and not a bad sort either. My boss hadn't any money a year ago but now he has a private gold-mine and three big stations, about half a milliun sheep. We left the young horses to be broken in, one of them belongs to me. The boss gave him to me for carrying him out of the room when he wanted to fight.

We left the old Irishman's place to go two hundred miles up the river to Calabash which is one of my boss's places. Everything he touches turns out lucky just now. He bought this place from a man who was runed by four years drought and when the man gave delivry of it he had to swim his horses away from the place. The country is like a wheat feild now and the river is over its banks out for miles over the plain. It had banked up and was running the wrong way. We got into boggy country and had to leave the river and go ploughing through the scrub. When we retirned to the river we followed it the wrong way. Thinking it was flowing down stream when it was rearly flowing upstream. We were out all night and that is the time men get on each others nerfs, but we were all right. We had to do a perish, no grub, and he was saying what sort of dinners he would order when he got to England. He said what would a dinner cost at a fashuonable hotel in London and I said about two pounds a head, and he said that be blowed for a yarn, how could any man eat two pounds worth of grub at one sitting!

When we got going again we stopped for breakfast at a bush shanty. The publican

wanted Red Fred to buy a lot of shares in a gold-mine. He said it was like a jeweller's shop for gold, they had let him go down and take spessimens, so my boss said 'if they let you go down that settles it. If it was as good as you say they wouldn't let anybody look at it, they would keep it for themselves.' He is shrood all right is Mr Fred Carstairs. His wool clip last year was over two hundred and fifty thowsand and his mine another fifty thowsand. As fast as one place paid for itself he bought another. We are going to inspect a fresh place next week.

We only got here last night so haven't had much of a look round yet. The homestead isn't much but the boss says if you build too good a homestead the manager mill never go out on the run.

Will close now and finish this letter when we settle down. We are going to a real backblocks race-meeting soon, it ought to be some fun and will give the boss his first crack at the racing game.

Hilton Fitzroy

PS. Since writing above, Mr Delahunty's daughter has come over with some friends for the race-meeting and will be here for some days. Her name is Moira and she is like the old man, very tall and dark, with deep blue eyes, but she doesn't talk like him, she talks quite frendly and is full of fun. She is mad on racing and she says we must get my boss a fair run for his money. These little bush meetings are even hotter than lether-flapping meetings in Ireland. She has visitered England and Ireland and knows a lot of people you know. Must close now for the present. The boss bought a mare called Nancy Bell down at Barcoo, but he didn't race her when I arrested him. The trainer is sending her over by road and we will run her here. With much love from your son.

H.F.

The mare Nancy Bell, with her jockey, duly arrived at Calabash and soon cast the spell of the thoroughbred over her millionaire owner. The day after the mare's arrival he was discovered sitting by her feedbox, listening ecstatically to the sound of her jaws as she munched her food. Every now and again the mare would give him a friendly look from one of her liquid brown eyes and rub her head against him. When she went out for walking exercise he would follow her down the paddock, admiring the dainty way in which she picked up her feet.

“Them's the sort,” he said, “that the bushrangers used to take away when they stuck up a station. They'd run the mob into the yard and pick out the good-bred sorts. Then when the traps got after them they'd race straight across country, up mountains and down sidelings, till they got where they could hide out for awhile. How would you like to have the troops after you, Nancy? You'd show 'em, old girl.”

After a day's acquaintance the ex-shearer took to giving the mare furtive lumps of sugar from the bin in the kitchen, or handfuls of milk-thistle and prairie grass gathered in the garden. The mare, on her part, soon got to know his footsteps and acknowledged his attentions in a ladylike way by

calling out to him while he was still a hundred yards off. The little one-eyed jockey who looked after the mare — if he had any other name than Bill the Gunner nobody had ever heard it — was inclined to take a firm stand about these variations in diet, but Red Fred, in spite of his inferiority complex, was not to be daunted by a jockey. He told Bill the Gunner that if he didn't like it he could come and get his cheque, and Bill the Gunner, though undesirable in many ways, had so firm an affection for the mare that he would rather have left his wife than Nancy Bell.

Not that the mare was any great champion. Of clear thoroughbred English stud-book pedigree, as many backblocks horses in Queensland are, she hadn't been broken in till she was four years old when her frame had had time to mature. She was not gifted with any great amount of pace, but she was as tough as steel and would fight out a race under the whip with the tenacity of a bulldog. Many a better horse had she worried out at the finish of a desperate race on a rough bush track, for tracks or weights or heavy going were all alike to Nancy Bell.

One day there was some trouble with the shearers, and trouble with shearers is serious enough to take a man's mind off any other sort of trouble. A strike may mean that the sheep will have to be let go, to shed their wool all over the paddocks, so when the shearers demanded to see the owner instead of the proper authority, the station manager, a messenger was sent off hot-foot after Red Fred. The shearers said they must see the owner before they would shear another sheep. Nobody could find the owner until it was remembered that he had been seen walking down the paddock after Nancy Bell, and when found he refused to come back to the house.

“Tell 'em they can come and get their cheques,” he said. “I know shearers. If a shed runs for two hours without somebody gettin' chipped [faulted for bad shearing] they say 'twelve o'clock and not a word said. We're robbin' ourselves. Up on 'em boys'; and away they go, only taking the tops off the fleece and leavin' that much wool on their legs you'd think the sheep was wearin' gaiters. Ain't the mare lookin' lovely, Fitz? I was down at the track at daylight this mornin' watchin' her gallop and she cleaned up the black horse from Lost River, like as he was a hack. And he won the Town Plate at Wallaroo, that fellow.”

The station manager who had come down with Fitzroy to get the boss's verdict about the shearers, was a canny Scot and like all Scots he couldn't resist an argument, even if cost him his job.

“I wouldn't take too much notice of that, boss,” he said. “When they run a trial and one of the owners is there, that owner's horse always wins the trial. All over the wor-r-rld that's the ir-r-ron-clad and un-br-r-roken rule. I

mind . . .”

“Never mind what you 'mind.' You mind your shearers; they'll keep you hopping. Come on, Fitz, let's go and see the mare feed.”

The Calabash Charity Meeting was well named, because charity covers a multitude of sins. The Secretary of the District Hospital was nominally in control of the meeting, and as the hospital was desperately hard up he would, like Nelson, clap the telescope to his blind eye when asked to detect any wrongdoing by a big subscriber.

Meeting this official in Calabash township, Fitzroy was given the lay of the land.

“The whole show here,” said the Secretary, “is run by one man, and a Chinaman at that, Jimmy the Pat. D'yever hear of him?”

Having ascertained that Mr Hilton Fitzroy had not had the honour of meeting Jimmy the Pat, the Secretary proceeded to give the Chinaman's dossier.

“Don't you make any mistake,” he said, “this is a wonderful chap, this Chow. He started with nothing — just a coolie — but he was a big, powerful bloke and could mix it with anybody. He was in the ring for a bit, what d'you think of that — a Chow in the ring! He could take a punch too, let me tell you. 'My face all same iun,' he'd say. Then he took on running fan-tan and pakapoo joints, and he got to be a big man, because if any of the larrikin crowd got playing up Jimmy could knock him cold. Then he started smuggling opium and working it back to the blacks and Chows up in the Territory — heaven only knows what he made out of that. Then he started importing Chinese coolies from Canton with false identification papers, and he made these coolies work as slaves for him in Chinese gardens, until they had paid him big money. He owns a couple of stations on the quiet. And then, dash me, if he doesn't start bookmaking!”

This was a task so far beyond Fitzroy's arithmetic that he could hardly believe it.

“A Chow make a book?” he said. “What does he do that for?”

The Secretary looked round him before he spoke.

“I'll tell you something,” he said, “Jimmy's a very solid man and gives thousands to charities. But there's hardly a fan-tan shop or an opium joint in Queensland but what Jimmy's got a finger in it. There isn't a criminal in Queensland but what would do exactly what Jimmy told him and do it at the double. I think that he took up the bookmaking so that he could travel about and keep an eye on all sorts of crooked jobs. Anything from fan-tan to murder. I don't put anything past Jimmy. His right name is Kum Yoon Jim, but the boys call him Jimmy the Pat. They call all Chinamen 'Pat.' The larrikin crowd only call him that behind his back. He'll hit any one that

calls him Pat to his face. Tough on the Irish, isn't it, when a *Chinaman*, will strike a man for calling him Pat! It ought to be a compliment."

"Why doesn't somebody arrest him?" said Fitzroy, "if he's half what you say he ought to be doing time!"

"That's all very well, but who's going to give evidence against him? The police have been trying to catch him for years over the opium smuggling and fan-tan, but no one will risk his life by giving evidence against him. He's always good-natured and always laughing, but every now and again there's a Chow found dead, and the police think that the dead man has been trying to put the squeeze on Jimmy. Keep all this under your hat and don't come to me about anything. I'm not going up against Jimmy. This isn't much of a life, but such as it is I mean to hang on to it as long as I can."

And now all was hurry and bustle at Calabash. Strings of carts loaded with grog and provisions streamed out to the track. Blackfellows from adjoining stations raced their half-broken horses down the main street, or perhaps one should say *the* street, for there was only one street in Calabash. The bullock-team from Apsley Downs brought in a load of laughing humanity consisting of about six families down to the smallest baby. The *élite*, such as the party from Calabash station and the squatters and their wives from other properties, came in cars flying the colours of their horses. Dressed in yellow silk and sitting in a particularly showy car came the great Chinese bookmaker, Jimmy the Pat, cigar in mouth, and lolling back against the yellow upholstery till, as a cynic observed, you couldn't tell there was anybody in the car.

Bill the Gunner arrived full of importance and leading Nancy Bell from a station hack, and the Calabash party made a bee-line for the mare's stall under the long bough sheds. The millionaire, shaking with excitement, led the rush, followed by Moira Delahunty and Fitzroy. They plied the Gunner with questions as to whether the mare was all right, and had she eaten up her feed. But the Gunner's vocabulary seemed to be limited to two sentences: "She's home and dried," and "She'll lob in," and with that they had to be content. Then there was a hurried inspection of all the mare's opponents in the Town Plate in which Nancy Bell was engaged.

Such is the glamour of proprietorship that they all agreed that none of them looked like having a chance with her, until they came on a very racy-looking chestnut called Desire about which nobody seemed to know anything. He looked like a horse that should have a reputation, but even the Gunner could not find out anything about him. He seemed to have dropped from the clouds on to northern Queensland.

Moira had a horse of her own called Iron Cross engaged in the first race, a Maiden Plate of six furlongs at catch weights; and as she had no rider of

her own, Bill the Gunner was legged into the saddle. Well-bred and not in bad condition, this four-year-old might have run very well, but he had never been off his own bush track and was green and frightened. At an earlier age he might have run better, but age and experience had taught him that the world was not altogether a friendly place. He went down for his preliminary shying and swerving about as he passed bullock-drays, blackfellows, men operating spinning jennies, and booths where raucous-voiced “barkers” were inviting all and sundry to come in and earn a pound by staying three rounds with Ironbark Joe, the lightweight champion of western Queensland.

“The dear thing,” said Moira, “he's all of a dither. I rode him most of his work myself, and he can go a bit, but I suppose he'll run all over the place. Still, we must have something on him, mustn't we, Fitz? We can't haul down the flag without firing a shot.”

They went into the crowd where Jimmy the Pat was standing on a box and calling “Tlee to one on er feah! Tlee to one on er feah! Whaffor you larp?” for Jimmy, who could speak good English when he chose, always found it paid him to act the comic Chinaman at race-meetings. “Koom on now, I gi' you four to one on er feah! Four to one on er feah!”

As there were ten runners and not a previous winner in the lot, Jimmy was not taking much risk in offering four to one on the field, but he made it sound as though he were offering them a gold-mine. There were three professionally trained horses in the race, and most people knew that whichever the professionals fancied, would win: but the locals began to pour half-notes and pounds and even fivers on to their own horses, and before long Jimmy was holding quite a decent bit of money. When Moire and Fitzroy came up and asked the price of Iron Cross, Jimmy beamed on them and said:

“Iun Closs b'long you Sissetah, eh? Welly goo' 'oss. I give you flet-ten pong [fifteen pounds] to one, Iun Closs.”

Fifteen to one was a nice price but it implied a sort of sneer at the horse and suggested that only a person of inferior judgment would own or train such an animal. Instead of putting on a pound each, as they had intended, they were stung into putting on a fiver each, and they walked away quite indignant.

“I do hope he runs well,” said Moira. “I'd like to teach that Chinaman a lesson. This horse *can* gallop, we've tried him with some pretty good ones.”

As the field fretted and twisted about at the post, Bill the Gunner, who was no mean horseman, watched his chance and had Iron Cross on the move as the barrier went up. He had drawn a good position on the rails and

for a furlong or so Iron Cross went to the lead, galloping within himself. Then some loud-voiced spectator, leaning over the rails, gave vent to a howl of excitement, and Iron Cross ran across the track almost to the outer rail, letting the whole field come up inside him. By the time the Gunner had got him balanced and into his stride again, most of the field were ahead of him, but he settled down to his work and began to pass them one after another. Before long he was racing almost level with the leaders, but wide on the outside. As they made the turn, the Gunner began to swing him in towards the inner rail to get a position for a straight run home. Though he had covered more ground than anything in the race he was still galloping gamely and a mighty shout went up:

“Here, what's this! I'll take even money Iron Cross!”

As he came in towards the leaders, one of the professional horses swung out and cannoned into him sideways, almost knocking him off his feet, and before he had a chance to recover himself the race was over. Even then he was placed third and must undoubtedly have won, only for the deliberate interference. There was no room for a protest as the winner had not interfered with him, and Moira and Fitzroy went to lunch with rage in their hearts and a determination to get level with the Chinaman who, they felt sure, had organized the whole thing.

Chapter VI. The Big Wager

LUNCH at the Calabash Races was what might be called a sporting affair as it was enlivened by a fight between two aboriginals who elected to settle their differences in sight of the bough shed under which the repast was set out. The local trooper scorned to interfere in the affair, but he managed to change the venue to a spot where the language of the antagonists was, at any rate, mellowed by distance.

Fitzroy, who had no intention of taking the defeat of Iron Cross lying down, was turning over schemes of revenge in his mind. Matters were not improved by a visit from Jimmy the Pat, who poked a blandly smiling face in under the bough shed and said that he would give Moira ten pong (ten pounds) for Iron Cross, which he described as “welly goo' 'oss, welly ni'.” This was rubbing it in with a vengeance and Fitzroy could hardly keep his hands off him, prize-fighter and all that he was.

The only cheerful member of the luncheon party was Red Fred who had been down to worship at the shrine of Nancy Bell and to receive the usual assurance that she would lob in. His informant was of course Bill the Gunner, who had learnt very early in his career that an owner, like a nation at war, must always be told good news, otherwise neither the nation nor the owner would go on with the business.

“There's a thing called Desire,” said the Gunner, “that nobody knows nothing about. He might give us some trouble, but he's handled by the Chow's mob and I don't think they'll have a go with 'im. They say he's a disqualified Randwick horse, but if he is they won't want to spin 'im for the few quid they can win 'ere. They'll keep 'im for some other place where they can dob it down on 'im and win a packet. Anyways, even if they do spin 'im, the little mare'll tear the heart out of 'im at the finish. You take it from me she'll lob in.”

“Isn't it funny,” said Moira, “that a man who has sense enough to turn down an offer of a gold-mine would swallow everything told him by such a character as Bill the Gunner? How do you explain it? Even in England I've seen a sensible business man standing outside the betting-ring shifting from one foot to the other, and waiting for a dirty little stable-boy to come and tell him to put a hundred pounds on a horse. Bill the Gunner knows nothing about the other horses, but you'd think he was the turf guide, the way your boss listens to him!”

“I'd like to get even with that Chinaman,” said Fitzroy. “We must see if we can't get at him somehow. They're all frightened of him here — and they are not a crowd that are easily frightened either. I wouldn't much care

what I did as long as we could get level with him.”

Just then he was hailed by the local trooper, a well set-up young fellow, known as Bismarck (that man of blood and iron) from his readiness to resort to a stirrup-iron when any hard citizen wanted to resist arrest. Bismarck said that because he got seven bob a day, that didn't include being punched and kicked by every tough in the West. As he walked past them, Bismarck's roving eye lit with approval on the young lady, then he stopped and had a second look at Fitzroy.

“Here, I know you, don't I?” he said. “Wasn't you in the police depot with me? Wasn't you that strong recruit that the sergeant took hold of to show us how to throw a man, and he couldn't throw you? If you ain't him you're a dead ring for him. That was why they sent you to hell-and-gone out at Barcoo. If you'd let him throw you they'd have kept you in town. You don't want to show the bosses any points, you know, when you're a recruit. What are you doing now? Are you in the police force still?”

Feeling rather like Mohammed's coffin, hovering between heaven and earth, Fitzroy explained his position.

“I'm half in and half out,” he said. “I applied for my discharge, but I haven't got any answer yet, so I suppose I am in the force still. I'm on leave just now.”

“Of course you're in the force still. Once you put on the jacket you've got to go on running 'em in until the Crown lets you go. But you might introduce me to this young lady. My name's Frankston if you've forgotten it.”

Fitzroy at once introduced him to Moira, adding that she was the owner of Iron Cross who had been fouled in the first race.

“Fouled,” said the trooper, “I should think he was. This is a charity meeting so they will stand anything; but even if the stewards go to work they'd never get the right man. The Chow was at the back of all that; and if this young lady will excuse us for a bit, I've got something very important to tell you.”

Supposing it to be some great racing secret, Moira decided to get it out of Fitzroy later on.

“I'll go over and look at the horses,” she said. “Don't bother to come with me. But if there's anything exciting, don't leave me out of it.”

Drawing Fitzroy out of the crowd, the trooper known as Bismarck spoke with great earnestness and with his mouth about an inch from Fitzroy's ear.

“It's the luck of the world you've come,” he said, “I've got a big job on here. You know this Chinaman, Kum Yoon Jim, or Jimmy the Pat, or whatever they like to call him? Headquarters have got something on him at last, whether it's opium, or receiving stolen goods, or defrauding the

customs, I don't know. But I'm expecting a wire to arrest him any minute, and he might put up a very ugly scrap. He's all oil and butter while things go to suit him, but if anything goes wrong he'll draw a knife in a minute. He goes stone mad.

“I daresay you've heard that I've got me own way of dealin' with these rumbunctious coves; but this chap is different. Most of 'em, I just ride up alongside 'em, slip the stirrup-iron out of the saddle as I jump off the horse, and I tell 'em that I want 'em. Then if they look like showing fight I stun 'em first and read the charge to 'em afterwards. But I daren't do it with Jimmy the Pat. He's got so much money that if he got out of the charge he'd have the jacket off me for undue violence. I'm senior to you so I can order you to assist me, or if you're not in the force I can call on you for assistance in the King's name. How do you feel on it, brother?”

Fitzroy did not take very long to make up his mind. Apart altogether from his personal grudge against the Chinaman over the interference with Moira's horse, he felt that here was a chance to make a name for himself. His only effort so far in the force had made him look like a considerable fool, but here he had a chance to wipe out all that and to leave the force in a blaze of glory.

“Right you are,” he said. “I'd rather like to have a crack at this Chinaman. Let me have first go at him and if he skittles me, then you can come in with the stirrup-iron. When does the balloon go up — when is the scrap supposed to start?”

Fishing out a telegram from the breast of his tunic Bismarck proceeded to read it out:

“‘Be prepared to arrest pickpocket,’” he read. “That's the code word for Jimmy. We daren't mention his name for fear it would leak out. 'Be prepared to arrest pickpocket on receipt further orders stop.' So you see I can't do anything till I get a later wire. But they must think they've got something on him at last, for I've got definite orders to arrest his mate and to keep him where Jimmy can't get at him. I expect they are going to put the third degree on his mate and see if he'll squeal before they take Jimmy in.”

“Who's his mate?” said Fitzroy.

“A big disqualified trainer chap that they call Sandbag because he can drink such a lot. He's mixed up with Jimmy in the opium trade and if he'll squeal we might hear something. Jimmy brought him up here to look after a horse they call Desire that they've got here to-day. There's a little stable-boy here that used to work in Sydney and he says that he looked after this Desire when he was racing in Sydney. He says the horse's right name is Despair. He was a real crack, but he turned unmanageable at the barrier so

they refused his nominations.

“This stable-boy stood outside Desire's stall while Sandbag was rubbing him down and the boy said: 'How much do I get?' Sandbag says: 'You'll get a lift under the ear if you want it. What's your game?' And the boy said: 'That's not Desire. That's Despair. I looked after him in Sydney. Take those bandages off and you'll see a big scar on his shin where he cut himself on a bucket. How much do I get?' So, Sandbag said: 'You'd better go and ask Jimmy the Pat what you get.' Of course that settled the boy, for a team of draught-horses wouldn't drag him in to give any evidence against Jimmy the Pat. But the boy came and told me, because he thinks they may frame him upon some criminal charge, just to get him out of the way.”

“Bad at the barrier, is he?” said Fitzroy. “I was wondering what he was doing here.”

“The boy says that Sandbag is the only man that can handle this horse,” said Bismarck, “and they'll get leave for Sandbag to hold him at the post in the race to-day. But just before that race I'm going to put Sandbag away where the crows won't roost on him, and they'll have to get somebody else to hold the horse. Anyhow, you be ready to tackle Jimmy the Pat just before the last race — if I get the wire — and if I see him getting the best of you I'll hit him that hard that the money will bounce out of his trouser-pockets.”

Meanwhile our friend Red Fred was thoroughly enjoying himself. He had won a few small bets — just enough to give him a taste for blood — and being utterly unspoilt by prosperity he had drinks and arguments with all and sundry, ranging from shearers' cooks to the visiting Police Magistrate. Always an unassertive man he had been in the habit of agreeing with everybody. Now he found to his surprise that everybody wanted to agree with him. As for racing, about which he knew next to nothing, he had them all eating out of his hand, listening to the words of wisdom gleaned from Bill the Gunner. He had picked a couple of winners for himself, and it is said a man's first winner makes him a critic; his second winner makes him an expert; and the third winner makes him a candidate for the bankruptcy court.

When asked about the chances of Nancy Bell he said, “she'll lob in,” with such inspired certainty in his voice that several people began to believe him. One thing which made his tale more convincing was that he never entered into any explanations or gave any reasons; he just repeated his formula with the monotony of the Roman general who swayed a whole nation by repeating “Carthage must be destroyed.”

In vain some of the shrewder men told him that really first-class horses were sometimes brought from civilization to these outlandish parts and

given a few runs at the uncontrolled scrub meetings just to establish a new identity, with a view to a descent to the heavy-betting coastal meetings later on. Sometimes, they said, these horses might even win a scrub race or two just to give an air of bona fides to their efforts. When the ex-shearer said that he didn't believe people would be as crook as that, he was asked whether a four-year-old did not once win the English Derby.

When the scratching time expired for Nancy Bell's race, the board disclosed a field of ten, all well-known local horses except the chestnut Desire. All of them had won races of some sort except Desire, who was entered as a maiden having his first start and with what is called a station pedigree, that is to say, his sire was given as a fairly well-known thoroughbred horse, and his dam was given as a station mare that might be thoroughbred. As they turned out about three hundred horses a year from this place, it was hard to identify any of them; for no stud-books were kept and the horses were mostly sold as remounts to the Indian Army.

While Bill the Gunner and the trainer known as Sandbag were busily saddling their charges, Red Fred walked round to the betting-ring. He had no idea of betting more than a few pounds, for after all he was a sportsman at heart and was quite content with the excitement of seeing his colours carried for the first time in his life. When he got round to the ring he was hailed by the Chinaman who, like everybody else, had heard of his luck.

"Hello, Fled," said the Chinaman, waving his hand and beaming all over his face, "you lich man now — catch'em plenty station, plenty gold-mine."

Sad to relate Red Fred, for the first time in his life, found himself possessed of a class-conscious spirit. It had been all right to call each other Jimmy and Fred in the days when he was a shearer and the Chinaman used to visit the sheds with his hawker's cart which was really a travelling sly-grog shop. Things were different now. He would have to start and draw the line somewhere and he had better draw it at the Chinaman.

Deciding that half-measures were no good he said the most insulting thing that he could think of. Mimicking the Chinaman's lingo, he said:

"Hello, Jimmy, you get plenty too fat. Catch him plenty dog, plenty cat, b'long you tucker, eh?" Then having torn up the treaty, as it were, he went on "You make'em book, eh? How much you bet my mare Nancy Bell?"

A Chinaman values his prestige — what he calls his "face" — even more dearly than life or liberty; and being called a dog-eater in front of a crowd was something that would have to be paid for later on; but with true Oriental stolidity Jimmy the Pat gave no sign of his feelings. He smiled blandly and said: "Nancy Bell, eh? More better you back something else. Nancy Bell welly good mare, welly game, but too slow, crawl along all same slug. I bet you ten to one. How muchee you want? You have ten

shillings on, eh?"

As they say in the poker schools, the Chinaman had seen his bluff and had raised him one, now it was the white man's turn.

"I'll have two thousand to two hundred," he said.

Two thousand to two hundred! Such a bet had not been made at a scrub meeting since the diggings days when the miners shod their horses with gold and lit their pipes with five-pound notes! Two thousand to two hundred in that crowd, when the gang had already shown in the first race what they would do to win a couple of five-pound bets! The pigs in the fable that ran about with knives and forks in their bodies asking to be eaten were nothing to this callow millionaire who was just asking to have his money taken from him. The Jubilee Juggins at his best was only an amateur spendthrift compared to this man. But it takes much to rattle a Chinaman. Jimmy the Pat wrote out a ticket for two thousand two hundred as coolly as though he were signing a receipt for some washing.

Chapter VII. A Racecourse Brawl

AN Australian backblocks racehorse is the gentleman adventurer of the turf family. His life, like that of the old Scottish freebooters, is mostly travel and combat and he must be prepared to walk any distance, sleep anywhere and eat practically anything. Horses differ in gameness just as much as they do in speed and staying-power, and the humble battler on the outside tracks will generally fight like a bulldog at a finish.

A bush racehorse may have to do a twenty-five-mile walk one day, and the next day he may have to get down to it and race on an iron track with an uneven surface, half blinded by dust and seeing nothing but the straining bodies of the horses which are packed around him. A horse that will stand a few seasons of this and still retain his love for racing is an object lesson to humanity.

The horse Desire that had to oppose Nancy Bell in the last race at Calabash had never been off the Sydney tracks. Bred from a particularly wayward stallion, he had shown something very near classic form on the few occasions that he could be brought to the post in racing trim. But he had developed a blind unreasoning hatred for the barrier, and once a horse gets that bee in his bonnet, he is as hysterical as a girls' school. He would not only refuse to go up to the barrier, he would turn round and bolt away from it; and not one of the many jockeys that were tried on him could stop him. He was at last voted incorrigible, and was sold into slavery to the Chinaman's gang. At Calabash he was very upset by his surroundings, and had been terrified out of his wits by the sight of a string of camels he met on the way to the track. His trainer, the redoubtable Sandbag, had secured permission to hold Desire at the post, so he had no doubt that the horse would get away and, as he himself put it, "it would be a shame what he would do to these bush cuddies."

So now the bell rings for the Town Plate and out come the horses on the track. The little mare Nancy Bell holding herself like a gamecock and looking about twice her usual size goes down for her preliminary without looking to left or right, cool as an old actor stepping on to the stage. The other bush horses follow her, all moving a little short in their action, for they know too much to reach out on this hard rough track until the real business begins. Then, a picture of condition, with a beautiful free easy action, comes the Sydney horse, but camels and blackfellows and an iron-hard grassless track have ruined his morale. He stares about him prepared to bolt for his life at any moment. The Chinaman, inscrutable as an image of Buddha, climbs up on to a log and sticks his betting-book under his arm,

for this is a one-bet race and so long as Nancy Bell is beaten he does not in the least care what wins it. The gang's second string, a heavily built black horse, goes down in business-like fashion. If he can block Nancy Bell at any stage of the race it is long odds on his doing so.

Red Fred, trembling with excitement as he has never trembled over the purchase of a seventy-thousand-pound station, gets up on another log. Moira and Fitzroy have hardly said a word to anybody but each other during the whole day and are in blissful ignorance of the big bet on the mare. But the young lady finds her escort distraught and inattentive — he is awaiting the summons which shall call him to battle with the head of the opium gang. Just as the horses are finishing their preliminaries the local black-tracker arrives at a gallop and hands Fitzroy a letter. This proves to be from Trooper Frankston, *alias* Bismarck, and runs as follows:

I beg to report that I got kicked in the leg by a draught-horse and doctor thinks leg is broken. He is taking me to the police-station. You must carry on. Orders are to arrest trainer Smith, *alias* Sandbag, before the last race and do not allow the Chinaman or any one else to see him. Also arrest Chinaman if telegram arrives, but keep them apart. Tracker will give you every assistance but cannot be trusted with any weapon. Please report all

R. FRANKSTON,
Mounted Trooper.

Without a word to his companion Fitzroy jumped on the tracker's horse and cantered down to the post, followed by the black-tracker on foot. Arrived at the post he found Desire's trainer just stepping on to the track to take that horse by the head, while the others were quietly coming up into line. Handing his horse's bridle to the black-tracker, Fitzroy walked quickly up to the big trainer:

“Smith, I want you. I have a warrant for your arrest on a charge of opium smuggling.”

“You have a warrant for my arrest! What's it got to do with you, you cow? You ain't a trooper! You can't arrest me! I've got to hold this horse.”

Without ever quite realizing how it happened, Mr Smith found himself trussed up like a turkey, his wrists handcuffed behind his back, and thrown like a sack into the police car. Fitzroy jumped in alongside him, and off they went to the police-station. The crowd round the winning-post watched this drama from the distance without in the least knowing what it was all about. Above a babel of shouts there arose a hoarse yell from the Chinaman:

“Whaffor? Whaffor?”

It passed his understanding that a civilian should come along and carry off his trainer at such a critical moment; but the starting-post was a long

way down the track and he had no time to interfere. The starter was the only professional official connected with the charity meeting and he was giving his services for nothing: furthermore, he had about seventy miles to cover before he got home so he had no idea of wasting time over a charity race among a lot of scrubbers.

“Line up here,” he said in reply to the frenzied protest of Desire's rider, who demanded that the start should be delayed. “If you can't get him away, you'll be left.” Then, to the Clerk of the Course, he said: “Get down the track a bit with your stock-whip, Billy, and wheel him if he tries to break back.”

Desire refused to go near the tapes and twice he tried to bolt the wrong way, but was skilfully wheeled by the Clerk of the Course. As he walked up the track after his second attempt at a bolt the starter let the others go, thinking that Desire would follow them, but the curious obstinacy or obsession that possesses a horse, once it has learnt a bad habit, was too strong for him. As the others sprang into their strides, Desire wheeled round and would have been off, only that the stockwhip met him fair over the nose. He propped dead, wheeled round and went after the others, but by this time they were a couple of hundred yards on their journey and only a first-class horse would have any chance of catching them.

Desire soon showed that he had the class, for he settled down after them like a kangaroo dog after a mob of wallabies. Bill the Gunner knew that Desire was left, so he drove Nancy Bell along at the top of her speed to get as big a lead as possible before the chestnut got after him.

Could the mare sustain a run of a mile and a quarter from end to end? Racing alone in the lead is a greater strain than waiting and coming with a run from behind, which was the mare's usual way of running her races. With the Gunner crouched down on her neck she plodded grimly on, but her small strides were ridiculously inadequate compared to the greyhound action of the chestnut who seemed to eat up the ground without effort. If only the post were a little nearer! To the other riders the Gunner appeared to be trying to ride his mare's head off and for a while they made no attempt to go after her.

Then the boy on the big black horse sat down as though he were riding a finish and drove his mount along in hopes of getting alongside the mare. Once there, he would soon settle the mare's chance by forcing her off the track, and he got as far as her rump and her quarter. The Gunner cast a glance back and saw that it was not the chestnut head that he had expected to see, but he knew that he had to ask his mare for an extra effort to beat off this black horse. For twenty yards they ran stride for stride and then the big black horse dropped back, beaten, and the mare still had three furlongs

of a bitter battle ahead of her.

Luckily for Nancy Bell, her pedigree was full of the blood of Fisherman — that wonder of the English turf who was never really going at his best until he had run a mile. The others all dropped back, beaten, but still the big chestnut came on and seemed to be going better as the mare began to tire. He was gaining at every stride now, and to the experienced eye of Moira the mare's defeat was a matter of certainty. Crying with excitement, she shrieked:

“Give her the whip, Gunner. She'll stand it.”

But the Gunner saved the whip till the big chestnut drew up to her quarters with a furlong to go. It seemed all over. Apparently he could go on when he liked. But the terrific pace he had made in the early part was beginning to tell on him. With a hundred yards to go, there was a savage howl of exultation from the crowd as the boy on the chestnut picked up his whip and got to work with it. From there to the post it was a fierce flogging finish; but the stride of the big horse was sure to tell. In the last twenty yards the Gunner drove home the spurs — spurs that will settle a cur but will get the very last ounce out of a really game horse. The mare had never felt spurs in her life. She made one last desperate effort and fairly threw her head a foot in front as they passed the post.

Talk about pandemonium! Motor-cars hooted, stockwhips cracked, shearers and squatters beat each other on the back. Moira seized the hands of the next person to her, a blackfellow, and danced with him:

“By crikey, Moira,” said the black, “that mare game all same bulldog ant.”

Red Fred was slapped on the shoulders, on the back, on the hat, anywhere, by shearers who had shorn with him and by squatters who had sacked him. Only the Chinaman and his followers drew together in an ugly snarling mob, and the more timid people began to look round to see what had become of Bismarck, the knight of the stirrup-iron. It looked as though there would be plenty of work for him before the proceedings closed. Bismarck, however, was just having his leg set, and there was no representative of law or order in the mob. As the horses came back to weigh, with heads drooping and nostrils stretched to the utmost as they tried to fill their lungs with air, Fitzroy rode up on the trooper's horse. He was still in civilian clothes and the crowd were wild to know what it was all about. The voice of Dear Boy Dickson made itself heard above the din:

“Why did you grab him, dear boy? Why did you grab him?”

Fitzroy pulled his horse up and dismounted at some distance from the crowd, and it was just as well that he did so. Like a yellow tiger the Chinaman launched himself out of the mob and made a blind rush,

shrieking curses and striking out with his fists. When a Chinaman is pushed over the edge of his composure he goes wild as a Malay running amuck. It was a case of a fifteen-stone fighting-man against an eleven-stone wrestler, but the wrestler knew all about the fighting-man, while the fighting-man at the moment was incapable of thought. If he had made his attack coolly he might have landed a blow that would have ended the affair. Instead he came on shouting, clawing and striking, leaving himself open to any throw the wrestler chose.

With a movement as quick as the strike of a snake Fitzroy seized the Chinaman's wrist and jerked him off his balance. Before he could recover, the yellow man's hamlike arm was bent over the white man's shoulder. Using the arm as a lever and exerting his extraordinary strength, Fitzroy threw his antagonist's huge bulk over his shoulder as a coal-heaver might throw a sack of coals. The Chinaman crashed to earth almost stunned, and with one arm out of action. With the snarl of a trapped dingo he reached inside his clothes with his uninjured arm and flashed out a knife. This Fitzroy promptly kicked out of his hand, and snapped the handcuffs on to the Chinaman's wrists.

As Jimmy the Pat lay on the ground, glaring upwards like a scotched snake, Fitzroy thought over what he should do. He had received no orders to arrest the Chinaman and he knew that the authorities did not wish to make any move till their opium-smuggling case was quite ready. The little matters of a racecourse brawl and the flashing of a knife were not worth talking about, compared to the possibilities of breaking up the yellow man's criminal organization. Fitzroy had made one mistake over an arrest and he did not mean to make another.

"Look here," he said, "if you like to behave yourself you can go. You've had all you want, haven't you?"

The Chinaman gave a sulky nod and held out his wrists to be freed of the handcuffs. He climbed into his car and was driven off. And the spectators at the Calabash Charity Race-meeting dispersed, having seen something that they could talk about for the next three years.

In the mosquito-proof enclosure of Calabash homestead that evening, when even the cockatoo was brought in lest the mosquitoes should cause him to do an uneasy kind of step-dance by stinging his legs, the bush millionaire waxed eloquent.

"What did I tell yer?" he said. "Didn't I say that racing was the way to see life? First of all I gets arrested and then I buys a mare and backs her for two thousand quid and she lobs in. And my seckertary throws the champion of China all over northern Queensland. Will I get paid, do you think?"

The Calabash manager had no doubt on that point.

“Jimmy'll pay you all right,” he said. “He's lost enough face now to cover the side of a woolshed. If he welshe you his gang will begin to wonder whether they'd get their cut out of the opium game and the fan-tan joints. Two thousand pounds isn't a button off his waistcoat. But he won't care what he does or how he does it until he gets even. You're talking of racing in Sydney and in England. If I were you I'd reckon that Australia wasn't big enough for me and the Chinaman. Fitzroy here — well, if I was him I'd dress up as a swagman and I'd put one foot in front of the other and never stop till I got to Sydney. On the boat for England I'd change me name and I'd grow a crop 'of whiskers.”

Fitzroy appeared to have other things on his mind, for he and Moira looked longingly out into the garden with its deep shadows and its scent of flowers. The breeze brought a breath of myall and pine, and everything in the garden looked lovely; but the mosquitoes that always come in clouds in a good season were waiting outside in their millions, howling for blood, so the party decided to disperse for the night. Just as they were drawing their candlesticks — for Calabash did not run to electric light — Bill the Gunner came in to say that the mare had eaten up and had gone to sleep.

“What did I tell yer?” he said. “She'd lick Desire seven days a week! What about her in the Melbourne Cup with me on her?”

The owner of Nancy Bell appeared to be impressed, in fact, he hung on to Gunner's every word. But the station manager knew that winning a Melbourne Cup with a bush-bred pony would be about equivalent to taking Gibraltar with a rowing-boat.

“She's game enough, Gunner,” he said. “The gamest thing on four feet. But do you think she's class enough?”

“Class enough?” said the Gunner. “She'd lob in.”

Chapter VIII. Station Life

HAVING disposed of the Calabash Races and heaped dirt on the head of the Chinaman, Fitzroy and his employer were free to attend to financial business. But it is remarkable how little business a really wealthy man ever needs to do. James Tyson, an Australian grazier who died worth over two millions sterling, never even had an office. Applicants for an interview, especially bishops, were always turned down, because, as he said himself, he never saw a bishop but what the bishop wanted something; and when he wished to fix up a deal of a hundred thousand pounds or so over a station, his bank was always prepared to let him have the use of a room for nothing. The big graziers have all their accounts kept, their returns received, and purchases made by the financial firms that sell their wool.

It is even on record that one grazier, wishing to be married, wrote to his financial house to fix up everything about the wedding. They were to select the church and the parson, to buy presents for the bride and bridesmaids, to chose the place for the honeymoon, to engage the necessary accommodation and buy the railway tickets. And everything went off with the greatest éclat, though, certainly, the man charged with the arrangements did remark to a friend that if he had been allowed to select the bride he might have done better for his client.

A vast amount of correspondence had followed them to Calabash, and Fitzroy shuddered at the amount of dictionary work he would have to do in answering all those letters. But most of them answered themselves. There was a huge envelope from the Empire Pastoral Company containing reports from the various station managers — all very favourable except for one outlying man who reported some mortality among the old ewes.

“Tell him to report something else next time, or I'll think there's nothing but old ewes on the station,” the millionaire remarked.

Another report stated that a big stock-dealer wished to buy the whole drop of lambs (about ten thousand) on one station, paying for same with a promissory note, and that the buyer was “undoubted.” Red Fred snorted at this and said:

“Well, I doubt him! I knew that feller when he hadn't got a bob and I'll know him when he hasn't got a bob again. These big dealers always go broke.”

Then they tackled the mass of circulars from tradesmen, begging letters, appeals from cranks, offers to trace his descent from William the Conqueror, letters from ladies who would be glad to meet Mr Carstairs any time and show him a good time. All these got short shrift, for the

millionaire's mind was on other matters.

“What's this fellow want? Fifty thousand pounds to finance a perpetual motion machine. Tell him to write to Callan Park lunatic asylum, there's plenty there will lend it to him. I say, Fitz, did you ever see anything like the way the little mare battled it out? Here's another cove wants twenty thousand to develop a gold-mine. He says all the mine wants is a capitalist to put some money into it. Well, I suppose that's the only way it'll ever get any money into it. We'll go down to Sydney, Fitz, and buy something to have a crack at 'em while those young ones of Delahunty's are coming on.”

Then he opened another letter:

“Here's a letter from a woman with a lot of children and very hard up. Reads straight enough, too. Put all the letters that look straight into an envelope and send them to the Empire Pastoral. They've got a man who looks into those cases for me. And some nice birds he ketches, too. One chap wrote that he was starving and he came round in a motor-car to collect his letters. We help the real cases. If I win the Melbourne Cup I'll give 'em the lot. Good gosh, here's a letter from Jimmy the Pat with a cheque for two thousand — lucky you only crippled his left hand. Now you write the Empire and tell 'em to get cash for those lambs and in everything else to work their own topknots. What do they want to bother me for? It's no use keeping a dog and barking yourself. Dump all the other letters, and when you've finished we'll go out and have a look at the little mare.”

The next few days were spent in idling about the station. They did some duck-shooting on the river, where the birds came over in clouds. Fitzroy got one with each barrel every time. But Red Fred was no shot, and he even missed a bewildered wallaby that tried to run up his leg. Soured by this misfortune he was just about to put his gun away in the car when a mob of wood-duck came over. In a great flurry he fired both barrels into the brown of them and was amazed to see five drop into a little patch of reeds.

Rushing into the water up to his ankles he grabbed about in all directions and as he secured each threw it out on the bank. Making sure none were left, he turned round to wade ashore, and nearly sat down in the water with astonishment when he saw the whole five get up and fly away. To make things worse, as he stood gaping after them, Tarpot Tommy, a station black, who had been driving the ducks, rode up and laughed at him just as though he were a common person and not the owner of several stations and a gold-mine.

“Hoo!” said the black, “that feller young duck. He no fly before. You prighten him bad, he hide longa reeds. Sposin' you ketch him he sham

dead, and then he ply away.”

This was bad enough, but when they returned to the house the blackfellow started giving imitations of the scene for the benefit of the blacks' camp — and the blacks are the world's best mimics.

Having beaten a Chinaman, Red Fred thought he could beat a black, so he decided to show Tarpot Tommy a point. Liberally smearing an old pair of riding-breeches with aniseed he sent for all the blacks in camp and presented the breeches to Tarpot Tommy as a compliment to his histrionic powers.

“You go make him bang bang, all same gun, go splash splash, all same duck.”

Just as the delighted Tarpot Tommy started on his performance the half-dozen or so station dogs in the backyard got wind of the aniseed, and a whiff of it was borne on the breeze down to the hundred or so dogs in the blacks' camp. Among this lot there was one fellow with a trace of foxhound in his ancestry; throwing his tongue, he set off to investigate. All the others followed, and the bewildered Tarpot Tommy saw the whole of the mongrel pack coming for him on the full run.

In a second they were all round him, sniffing at his trouser-legs in a sort of ecstasy. Dogs were in front of him, dogs behind him, dogs shouldering each other and fighting to get near him. He could not move a step for dogs, and could not take his eyes off them for various reasons. Grabbing a big stick he swung it round to make the dogs keep their distance. As he made a vicious swipe at a particularly persistent mongrel he said:

“By crikey, Missa Carstairs, these damn dogs think me smell all same you!”

After that the millionaire and his secretary decided it was time to go to Sydney.

Before they left they received a letter from Mr Delahunty who wrote just as pompously as he talked:

MY DEAR SIR,

I have to communicate the unpleasant fact that the Philistines are upon us. Your three yearlings were missing from the stud paddock in the last few days and have disappeared altogether. They would certainly not go away from their mates, so it does not need a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that they must have been stolen. I have a tracker here who claims to be able to track a mosquito along a bar of iron, but there have been four inches of rain and all tracks are obliterated. The country is now in a state which, to quote the aforesaid tracker, would bog a duck with a shingle on his foot.

I hear by the mulga wire that your young friend Fitzroy had a bit of a dust-up with that Chinese criminal Jimmy the Pat, so I have no doubt as to the thief, or rather as to the Moriarty who arranged the crime. Whether we have any hope of getting a

conviction, or any chance of recovering the horses is another matter. He has agents and spies everywhere and, given two days' start, he can take them north, south, east, or west, and substitute them for three of the less aristocratic yearlings on some station where he has the head stockman in his power. I am sorry to say that I never brand my yearlings, so by this time they probably have brands and new identities, pedigrees, etc.

One thing is certain, they are sure to race them sooner or later, for not even the fear of the police — even of the devil himself — would keep these local Dick Turpins from racing horses of this class. We have a few men in the police who are peculiarly qualified to prove the truth of the proverb “set a thief to catch a thief,” so a good big reward, privately circulated among the police, might bring results. Meanwhile, if we hear of any colt with an obscure pedigree racing like a champion we can have him overhauled.

I cannot understand why they have never arrested Jimmy the Pat. They are always threatening to do so, but, as my tracker says, they will never do it, until he has whiskers which trail on the ground.

Moira sends her regards and Maggie has already blinded several people with her opal.

Coming on top of his unfortunate effort to be funny at the expense of Tarpot Tommy, the theft of these yearlings upset their owner considerably.

“Did you ever hear the like of that?” he said. “I suppose that Chow sent somebody into the paddock with a handful of hay, and when the yearlings come up to him, he slipped halters on 'em and off they all went. When I started shearin', before the motor bikes come in, we used many a time to slip into a squatter's paddick and ketch a couple of horses that may, and ride 'em fifty or a hundred miles to a shed. But we always let 'em go again. We'll offer five hundred reward, and we'll make it free for all, not only the traps.

“I knew a little bloke named Flash Jack; was out on bail for pinchin' a horse, and he went down to the police-station and pinched the horse out of their yard and they never saw him or the horse again. I s'pose he'll be up in the Territory now — that's where most of 'em go, when the traps are after 'em. If Flash Jack hears there's five hundred hangin' to it, he'll come down and find them horses. And look here. You'd better write to the police and get your discharge. Tell 'em you've turned respectable.”

Fitzroy himself had been worrying over this for some time. It is fairly hard to get into the police force, but (as with an Australian Eleven) it is much harder to get out of it. The training of a policeman costs a lot of money, even more than the training of a soldier, so the authorities are unwilling to let a man go, even though he may have done something particularly silly — such as Fitzroy had done at Barcoo. That *faux pas* had been offset by his magnificent victory over the Chinaman at Calabash, and

a strong, willing man can always be used in the criminal districts where he can arrest pretty well anybody without much fear of a mistake. Acting on the principle of “do it now,” he decided to write the letter at once and went in search of a dictionary.

A search in the station bookcase revealed some yellow-backs and a set of Walter Scott's novels, but nothing in the nature of a dictionary; and an inquiry of the manager's wife revealed that there had never been such a thing in the place. Faced with this catastrophe, he thought for a while of going through one of Scott's novels till he found each word he wanted; but on second thoughts he decided that his own natural spelling might be an inducement to them to let him go. So he sat himself down in the station office, with its samples of wool and strong smell of sheep-dip, took up his pen and wrote:

TO THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE —
SIR,

[He was all right so far, as he had written those words hundreds of times, but then he had to launch on an uncharted sea] I regret to say that my sirkumstances have alltered very much for the better, since I unlissted in the force. I am now seekertary to a gentleman of wealth and owner of several stations. In regard to my applection for discharge from the force, consiquent on arresting a milliunar on a charge of theft, I now beg that you will aprove same. [Having got so far, he was soon on safe ground when he wrote the familiar words] I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant

HILTON FITZROY,
Mounted Trooper No. 79.

Fortunately for him, this letter got to headquarters before any report of the famous victory at Calabash over Kum Yoon Jim, the terror of the force, otherwise he might never have got his discharge. His letter was dealt with by the Secretary to the Commissioner, a man who was a purist in English but had been put on to secretarial work because of his dislike for arresting or mixing in any way with desperate criminals. Having shuddered at the spelling and criticized the construction of the letter, this official relaxed so far as to mark it, “applection granted,” and Fitzroy was free — free to indulge in thoughts of a return to England.

Chapter IX. The Entertainment Officer

WHEN Red Fred and his secretary arrived in Sydney for the second stage of their march to turf honours. they knew practically nobody, and the millionaire had decreed a strict silence on the subject of his wealth. "If they know I've got money," he said, "they'll want to tear it off me like wool off a hogget."

They quartered themselves at an unpretentious hotel; and instead of chartering a car went out to the races in a tram. As they watched the arrivals, a magnificent limousine car drove up and out of it stepped a square-built, short-necked man dressed by a good tailor, with a Talisman rose in his buttonhole. An American would have classed him as the chief executive of a chain of factories; an Englishman would have guessed him to be a big Yorkshire contractor. Dismissing his car with a wave of his hand he turned to enter the gate and his eye lit on Red Fred.

"Hello, Fred," he said, "fancy meeting you! I ain't seen you since we done that job o' fencin' for old hungry Williams, and we nearly had to pull him to court to get our money. What are you doin' now?"

Being determined not to make any admissions Fred sparred for time.

"Why, Jim," he said, "I never thought I'd see you again. How did they let you get out of Queensland? Do you remember that night we camped up on the end of the line of fence and you went down a quarter of a mile in the dark to fill two buckets at the creek? And just as you got back you fell over a calf asleep in the grass and you had to go back again. Haw! Haw! You had plenty to say that night, Jim.

"Fitz," he went on, turning to his aide-de-camp, "this is Jim Frazer; used to be fencin' with me in Queensland. Fitzroy and me have just come down for a fly round. Fitz used to be a trap but he pinched the wrong bloke so they let him out on his ear. What are you doin', Jim?"

"Me, I'm makin' a book. I strained me back fencin' so I started a barber's shop up in Lost River. But I wasn't too good at it. The first cove I shaved, he said: 'Either your hand's very heavy or your razor's very blunt.' Well, it's no good lettin' 'em jump on you, is it, Fred? So I said: 'No, my hand ain't very heavy nor my razor ain't very blunt. It's your face that's wrong,' I says. And he had a look at me — I weighed fifteen stone — and he says: 'Perhaps you're right.' And he pays his money and walks out.

"So then I started layin' 'em the odds in the township, bettin' on the wires you know, and I done so well that I gave up the shop and followed the races. If you want a bet you'd better come to me. But unless you've got more money than sense you'll leave it alone. There ain't many books would

tell you that. But I don't want your money, Fred. If you're broke, I might be able to stake you till you get a job.”

The owner of the Daybreak Reef considered this offer for some time but said that he could carry on for the present.

“Don't nobody ever make any money bettin', Jim?” he said.

“Only the plungers, and they never keep it. There's some that'll bet their shirt while they've got a shirt, and they might run into big money. But they can't stop bettin' and it all comes back to us. They'll never beat us while we've got our health and strength. . . . Why do you go on workin', Fred? Only fools and horses work?”

By this time he had half a dozen men waiting to see him — scouts who touted horses for him and runners who went round the ring to report any big commissions — and Red Fred and his secretary were left to their own devices.

When men have been cooped up together for weeks, as Red Fred and Fitzroy had been, they are apt to get on each other's nerves. Something of the sort might have happened to these two, but relief was in sight. Through the crowd came an enormously fat man dressed in the height of fashion and looking as Mr Pickwick would have looked if he had weighed nearly seventeen stone. He was all smiles and affability, although his eyes had the strained and weary look of a night sub-editor, or a gigolo in the height of a New York season.

Charley Stone was what is called the entertainment officer for the Empire Pastoral Company and his job was to keep in touch with the firm's clients on their visits to Sydney. His duties were first and foremost to prevent the emissaries of other firms from getting hold of these clients; then to take them to the races, theatres, night clubs, the Museum, or Wesleyan lectures, according as their tastes dictated. He had to be an authority on the purchase of clothes, pictures, furniture, saddlery or sheep-dip. He had to be able to get tickets for everything, from a Government House ball to the best seats at a popular prize-fight. He had to be prepared to sit drinking and playing cards all night with a party of young Western squatters, and then turn up sober, shaved, and in his right mind, to see an elderly lady off the early train. He never did any work, in the generally accepted sense of that word; but his firm paid him a big salary, and he was able to get his clothes, food, and entertainment for practically nothing. A glorious life, but apt to be very short.

He lumbered up to Red Fred and shook his hand vigorously.

“Been looking all over the place for you,” he said. “Heard you were down. I could ha' got you a ticket for the Members' Stand. I didn't know you were a racing man.

Having won the only race in which he had ever started a horse, Red Fred had a fair claim to the title of racing man, but bitter experience in life had taught him never to overbid his hand.

“My secketary here knows more about racin' than I do,” he said; “but I'm thinkin' of buyin' some horses and goin' in for it. Meet Mr Fitzroy. Him and me are goin' to buy some horses at the sales.”

“Going to buy some horses, are you? I'll put you on to a man that'll tell you what to buy, and I'll get you a good trainer. I'll introduce you to Jim Frazer, if you like. He's our biggest bookie. Bet you a million if you want it.”

“Oh, I know Jim Frazer all right. We was mates in Queensland. But Jim says you can't beat the ring. I won two thousand off a bookie in Queensland. I didn't tell Jim, and do you know what he done — he offered to lend me some money.”

This set the giant back on his heels, so to speak, for never in his life had he met a non-racing man — and very few racing men for that matter — who had won two thousand pounds from a bookmaker. Thinking that he had better feel his way a bit before trying to impress this peculiar client he turned to Fitzroy.

“You come with me to the office,” he said, “and I'll get you those tickets. You wait here, Mr Carstairs, and I'll send Fitzroy back with the tickets. Then I'll meet you upstairs before the first race.”

As they shouldered through the crowds he took a good look at Fitzroy and decided to unburden his spirit.

“What's your boss's line?” he asked. “Women, horses, theatres, booze, gambling? They all come at something, and whatever it is I have to come at it with them. The firm'd tear me to pieces if we lost this man's business. Will I offer him a drink?”

Fitzroy laughed:

“He's racehorse mad just now. Keep him off the drink. He's a fine chap, but he can't carry too much and when he gets a few in he wants to fight somebody. You might have to fight him out of trouble. How are you on fighting?”

“Not too good. You mightn't think it to look at me, but I could always run too well to fight much. But if he gets into any scrap I've only got to hold up my finger and I'll get ten men round me who can fight like thrashing machines. If he gets into a scrap I'll soon fight him out of it.”

As they drew near the office they were aware of a bleating sort of voice trying to make itself heard behind them.

“Here! I say! Hello! Fitzroy! What!”

Looking round they saw a young man of about twenty-two, a vision in

morning coat, top hat, spats, cane, eye-glass — a typical Ascot Johnnie, incongruous in Australia. A small man, he seemed to be all top hat and eye-glass, but Fitzroy had no difficulty in recognizing an old undergraduate friend in the Honourable Algernon Salter, better known in the University as Psalmsey, owing to the way in which the word Psalter is spelt on the cover of the hymn-book.

Judged on his appearance and conversation, the Honourable Psalmsey was, a most inadequate person in every way; but he had a flair for horses and, while an undergraduate, had ridden his own horse into a place in the Grand National Steeplechase under an assumed name. To do this he had to break about half a dozen rules of the University; so that, instead of awarding him the Victoria Cross, or whatever is the equivalent of that distinction at Oxford, they sent him down. We next find him acting as aide-de-camp to his uncle the Governor of New South Wales. It would be understating the case to say that he was glad to see Fitzroy — he positively bubbled and became incoherent in speech.

“What ho, Fitz! By Jove! Rippin’! I’ve got a most frightful job! Positively awful! I have to steer his Excellency about and see that he doesn’t miss recognizing all sorts of weird Johnnies he has already met at some show or other. And if we invite the wrong chappies to Government House, why, yours truly gets it in the neck. I wouldn’t be secretary to the Prince of Wales for all the tea in China. . . . But you’re all right, Fitz. Your uncle’s the head serang in the F.O. What are you doin’, Fitz? You must come and have dinner some night with us.”

“Well, I was a policeman.”

“A policeman! Good gosh! Ain’t that too awful! When I do find a decent chap he’s a policeman! I couldn’t pick a winner in a field of one. But it’s my day off, and I know a few things that might do us some good. Come and we’ll get on the trail like bloodhounds.”

Thinking that it was about time that he too had a day off, Fitzroy left his employer to the guidance of the representative of the Empire Pastoral Company and melted into the crowd. Then the bell rang for the first race. This was a hurdle race, and as soon as the scratching time had expired the bookmakers got up on their stands and started to roar the odds. Around them frolicked the children of the turf — so wise and important they were too, those children — each with his little bit of information gleaned perhaps from a sporting paper, or a friend who knew the friend of a jockey. In the early betting these neophytes poured in with their pounds and their fivers. One callow sportsman vouchsafed the information to Jim Frazer:

“They’re going to put a packet on Simon’s horse to-day, Jim, so I got in early.”

For this the bookmaker thanked him; then turned to his penciller, an old bushman like himself, with the remark:

“I'm sure Simon'd tell everybody he's going to back his horse. He's that mean he wouldn't give a dog a drink at his mirage.”

There was not very much betting on this hurdle race, as few people like to see their money jumping in the air. It was won by a fine old horse who had developed a technique of going full speed over the hurdles, thus gaining a couple of lengths at every jump. This performance impressed Red Fred tremendously. As soon as the winner came in he wanted to buy him; but Charley Stone advised him to wait a bit as he might see something he liked better.

“A hurdle horse is a good poor man's horse,” he said.

“He'll keep him poor. You don't want a hurdle horse. Wait till you see some of the cracks.”

The hurdle horse had been favourite for his race; then there set in one of those inexplicable runs of favourites which send the smaller bookmakers to the *mont-de-piété* to pawn their diamond rings. The favourite for the two-year-old race — a beautiful colt belonging to a wealthy non-betting owner — cantered in at even money to the accompaniment of hoarse cheers from Red Fred who had a tenner on it on Charley Stone's advice.

“That's a bobby-dazzler of a colt,” said Fred. “I wonder what he'd want for him.”

“No chance in the world,” said Charley Stone. “That's a Derby colt, and his owner's got as much money as you have. He has been trying to win a Derby all his life.”

Two minor handicaps also went to favourites, and the crowd were on their toes. They had the bookmakers on the run, and who would work for money when he could get it by betting? They almost resented the fact that the fifth race — a mile and a quarter — was a moral certainty for the great four-year-old Sensation, winner of the Sydney and Melbourne Derbies and the Melbourne Cup. He was one of those colts of the century that occur every ten years or so, and the weight-for-age races were at his mercy. The bookmakers were ready to gamble, but were not prepared to commit financial suicide; so they refused to bet against Sensation. And they laid very cramped odds against any one picking first and second.

“It's too bad” said Charley Stone. “Here's a horse that's as good a thing as St Simon in a field of selling platers, and you can't get a bet on it! It's like holding four aces cold at poker and nobody coming into the pool against you.”

Sensation, of whom we shall hear more later on, left his field at the top of the straight and swept past the post with his head in his chest to the

accompaniment of a roar of cheering. After all the public do love a good horse. Then it was a case of “to your tents, oh Israel” with the bookmakers. Five favourites in a row, and all were diving into secret pockets under their armpits in search of wads of notes.

Just as betting was about to start on the last race, Red Fred and Charley Stone bumped into Jim Frazer on the way down to his stand.

“Come with me,” he said, “and I’ll show you some bookmaking. I’m going to pill this favourite. There was never six favourites won in the world. You’ll see some betting too, for the rats have got money now, and that’s the time to see betting — when the rats have got it. Talk about your gentlemen punters — it takes a rat to bet. When he has a win he won’t put by a fiver of it. Up it goes, all he’s got, every time. Secrecy ought to be favourite and you’ll see what I’ll do to her. She ought to win — but there never was six favourites won yet.”

By the time that he mounted his box, the betting was well under way and the ring were calling three to one the field. Early money came in, and, thinking that it was a pity to pay three to one if the public would take five to two, the price was dropped to that figure. Even at five to two the public were coming along with their money and then Jim Frazer started. His bull-like voice rang over the tumult:

“Four to one on the field, four to one on the field! Four to one Secrecy! Four to one Secrecy! Four to one on the field!”

Like a wave they came at him. Fierce, flushed faces surrounded him and thrusting fists tried to push money into his hands. Unable to get near him, the big punters yelled from the back of the crowd, “Two hundred me, Jim,” “Three hundred me, Jim,” and his penciller worked feverishly as the leviathan called the names:

“Two hundred, Mr Skinner; three hundred, Mr Clark; a hundred, Fred Staples; fifty, George Sharkey; fifty, Harry Smith; twenty, Mr Sothern. Four to one on the field!” A rat elbowed his way through the crowd and shrieked: “You got fifteen of mine, Jim. All up on it!”

“Won’t you keep the odd five, Brownie? You might want it. Put a tenner on this.”

“No, up with the lot! What’s the good of a lousy fiver to a man?”

“Right-oh! Fifteen on it, Bullswool Brown. Four to one on the held. Tenner on it number sixty-nine. Fiver on it number seventy. Twenty on it number seventy-one. A quid number seventy-two. Four to one on the field.”

By this time the excitement of betting had swept even the bookmaker off his feet, and instead of getting in some money on the other horses he went in deeper and deeper against the favourite. His penciller whispered to him:

“The mare's taking out twelve thousand and we're only holding three thousand.”

But his employer's answer was a snort of defiance:

“What do I care what she's taking out? There never was six favourites won! I'm down three thousand on the day and I want to hold four thousand so as to make it a winner. That's why I'm laying four to one. Come on here, four to one on the field.”

“You were laughing at the rats, Jim,” said Charley Stone, “and now you're betting like a rat yourself. All or nothing.”

“Don't I know it! But you've got to bet like a rat to make a big book. Four to one on the held.”

By this time Red Fred had had a few drinks and was beginning to think that his opinion was at least as good as anybody else's. Seeing a fine-looking old horse going to the post he turned to Jim Frazer and said:

“Here, Jim, what price Peacemaker?”

“Peacemaker? Spare me days! You don't want to back *him*. He's been out for a spell and he's not half ready.”

“That's all right, Jim, that's all right. I know what I'm doin'. What price Peacemaker?”

“Well, if you *will* have it, fifty to one to you. What do you want on it? Ten bob?”

Rocking slightly on his feet Red Fred gathered himself together with great dignity and handed over a twenty-pound note.

“That's what I'll (hiccup) on it,” he said. “I've heard too much of this ten bob talk. Too much of it. Just 'cause you got money you think everybody else is a porpoise [pauper]. A thousand to (hic) twenny. Gimme me ticket.”

“Right. Here's your ticket. Don't come to me to borrow money if you get broke. Of all the fools . . .”

Those who know most about racing will agree that a horse will sometimes run his best race when fresh and full of life. Old Peacemaker, a good performer in his day and naturally a clean-winded horse, went into his job like a Trojan. His apprentice rider, like many other apprentices, went into a sort of trance as soon as the barrier lifted. But the old horse knew his business. Jumping out clear of his field, he made for the rails and in spite of the barbaric finish of his rider he just lasted long enough to beat the favourite by a head. Instead of coming out with a profit of a thousand, Jim Frazer had had all his day's work and his huge risk for a loss of a couple of hundred pounds.

When Red Fred came to be paid, he presented his ticket without saying a word. He struck an attitude and waited for the applause which had been all too rare in his life. Instead, he got advice of which he had always had too

much. It seemed to him that everybody looked upon him as a sort of natural advice-taker, and it was time to resent it.

As the bookmaker paid him over the money he said:

“Well, Fred, a fool for luck! I don't know why you picked on me, but if anybody had to take me down for a thousand it might as well be you. Now listen. Don't come at that game again — backing fifty-to-one shots. If you back favourites you'll have no laces in your boots, but if you back outsiders you'll have no boots.”

“That's all right,” said Red Fred. “That's all right. If ever I want yer to buy me a pair of (hic) boots I'll come and ask yer.”

Chapter X. Sensation

AFTER the day's racing the party split up, Fitzroy being carried off by the Honourable Psalmsey to the aide's quarters at Government House. He dared not ask him to dine at Government House itself, lest the other guests should be offended at being asked to sit down with an ex-policeman.

Charley Stone, who looked upon the guardianship of Red Fred as a full-time job, carried that hero off to have dinner at a sporting night club. He suggested that the tedium of the meal might be mitigated by the presence of a couple of ladies, whose attendance would be procured and paid for by the entertainment fund of the Empire Pastoral Company, but Red Fred said that he was tired and that they could invite the ladies at another time.

"Charley," said he, "that colt Sensation. Do you think a man could buy him?"

No dingo on the scent of a wallaby is keener than the commission man on the scent of a sale. But there is a technique in these things, and the first principle of salesmanship is not to appear too eager.

"Sensation," said Charley Stone, wrinkling his brow with the air of a man facing a chess problem, "Sensation. Now you're asking me something. He might be bought. And there's only one man in Australia could buy him. That's Charley Stone of the Empire Pastoral Company. That colt belongs to a client of ours, a man who was up to his neck in the soup and Sensation pulled him out of it. He's won twenty thousand pounds in stakes, that horse; and he's the best we've seen in Australia this century. But he might sell him, I say he *might* though I doubt it. The horse is up in the weights now, and the right thing to do with him is for someone to take him to England. They don't think much of our horses over there; they don't think much of anybody's horses except their own; and you might give 'em the shock of a lifetime. It'd be no good talking anything less than ten thousand pounds — better say twelve thousand. Even at that you'd be lucky to get him. I'll just have a word with his owner and feel his pulse a bit. He *might* sell. You never know."

Next morning Charley Stone reported to the great panjandrum of the Empire Pastoral Company, Mr Frost by name — a grey-faced old gentleman with gimlet eyes — and gave an account of his stewardship.

"I've been shepherding Mr Carstairs," he said. "Had him to the races. Had him to dinner. Saw him to bed at the pub, and I'd have slept in front of his door if they'd have let me. Do you know what? He wants to buy that horse of Mr Magee's! If we can make the sale, we'll get a commission on ten or twelve thousand pounds, and I thought you might consider it wise

for Mr Magee to sell him.”

The brains of these great financiers work like lightning and the Empire Pastoral chief weighed up the affair in a second.

“Wise to sell him!” he said. “Of course he'd be wise to sell him! It's wise to sell any horse. Sell and repent, but sell. Mr Magee has made twenty thousand out of him and it only needs the horse to put his foot in a hole and that's the end of him. Mr Magee has been buying a lot of sheep on the strength of the money this horse won, and he's got bills for six thousand coming due next month. You put it to Mr Magee any way you like, so long as you — er — hum — ha — convey it to him, that he's got to sell, and sell quickly before this man changes his mind.”

“The horse is worth ten thousand . . .” Stone began.

“No horse is worth ten thousand. There's six million people in Australia and only one buyer. Don't lose him. Get it settled to-day. Racehorses, Mr Stone, are the curse of Australia, and I hope that in the course of your — er — ha — hum duties as boozehound — I beg your pardon, the slang phrase slipped out accidentally — as entertainment officer for this Company, you will impress upon our clients the necessity of having nothing to do with racehorses. By the way, what sort of man is Mr Carstairs? Could one put him for a club?”

“No, sir,” replied Charley Stone, feeling that he was on safe ground here. “You'd have to rope him to get him into a club.” And then, fearing that he might be detailed for some distasteful job, he picked up his hat and made for the door remarking, “I must go and get busy about this sale.”

Later on in the day, at the Pure Merino Club, Mr Frost hailed an old crony, just such another dried-up old spoil-sport as himself.

“George,” he said, “let's split a small bottle. I've just sold a horse for ten thousand guineas.”

“Good God! What horse?”

“Sensation.”

“Sensation! You don't own Sensation! I thought Magee owned him.”

“No, George, I own him, or rather did own him. When he was a two-year-old we struck a drought and Magee was just going down for the third time so I gave him a thousand for the horse and saved his life. I always liked that Musket-St Simon cross. And all the money the horse has won since — I let Magee have it without any interest. He's got a wife and a very fine family. Every time that Magee looked like going under, Sensation would come along with a win of two or three thousand and throw him out the life-line. He's on his feet now. so the horse can go.”

“Why didn't you race him yourself?”

“Bad example to the staff, George. Besides you know what Directors are.

Well," he went on, holding his glass up to the light and watching the bubbles rise to the surface, "here's a curse on the staff, George, and to hell with the Board of Directors. I'm retiring next year; then I'll get a couple of good horses and show them some style."

The next day's papers contained the news that Sensation had been sold for ten thousand guineas to a client of the Empire Pastoral Company who preferred not to disclose his name. But sales of this sort can no more be kept secret than a sale of the Crown Jewels if such a thing ever took place.

At the races next day, the paddock hummed with the news that a newcomer had appeared in the turf firmament. He had won a thousand — most of them made it ten thousand — on the first day; he knew more and bet bigger, than Clarkey or Skinny, the two champion local punters; he had bought Sensation: and every time our friend went into the ring he had a string of men after him as they would after an American champion prize-fighter. Under the strain of this publicity his inferiority complex asserted itself more than ever. He confined his wagers to a pound on each race, which satisfied the public that he had a commissioner putting thousands on for him in other parts of the ring. Unknown ladies bowed to him, and urgers tried to make his acquaintance on the ground that they had met him in some country town — but they couldn't exactly remember where it was.

By degrees he got used to it and at the end of the day he took a childish pleasure in hearing people say as he walked past:

"That's him ! That's the bloke that give ten thousand for Sensation!"

Through this turmoil Charley Stone hovered over him, protecting him as the sign of the cross protected the heroine in the play of that name. He told the aspiring ladies to "trot along Sissie," and he inquired of the urgers what they fancied and then told them that he knew something very much better. He talked so fluently of leading trainers and jockeys that before long he had the urgers coming to him for information, which he gave them in a hoarse whisper strictly enjoining them not to tell anybody.

At the end of the day Fitzroy reported for duty, accompanied by the aide-de-camp, who said that His Excellency and party would like to go out and see this celebrated racehorse. Whereat terror once more beset the bushman and he badly wanted to clear off home to the pub. But he was to a certain extent reassured on being told that he could put his hat on after being once introduced and that he should call His Excellency "Sir" and his wife "My Lady." The Government House party came through the crowd with their Excellencies looking anxiously to right and left lest they should miss somebody entitled to recognition. As a precaution, the Governor occasionally lifted his hat and directed a bow into the thickest of the crowd — firing into the brown of them as it were — and feeling sure that his

salutation must light on somebody entitled to it. The two scrawny daughters of a local magnate who acted as Lieutenant-Governor in the absence of the real article, also attached themselves to the party, feeling that they were at any rate semi-vice-regal; and they sparingly distributed bows of such hauteur and frigidity that one woman went home with a chill after receiving this recognition, and another sent a donation of five guineas to the local Bolshevik Society.

Red Fred refused to get into a car with their Excellencies, so he and Fitzroy and Stone occupied one car; the aide and the two semi-vice-regal ladies another; and their Excellencies a third. Thus they proceeded to the establishment of Harry Raynham, the trainer of Sensation and a score of other horses of varying ability.

Harry Raynham was a tall, bearded Australian of about fifty — so like a bushman that urgers had more than once tried to “tell him the tale” about his own horses. Born of a farming family, he had run away from home to join a circus at the age of twelve, but the nauseous medicine given to circus boys to make their bones supple soon tired him of that business. Running away from the circus he joined a country racing stable where he worked for a bachelor boss who did his own cooking, and who fed him mostly on a diet of sausages, they being a form of food that could be cooked with very little trouble and with a fair chance of a satisfactory result.

By the time that he had eaten about half a mile of sausages he was a competent horseman and got a job in Sydney breaking in yearlings for one of the big stables. Here he stayed on for some years working as a breaker, jockey, and stable-hand, and he soon distinguished himself not only by his instinct for horses but by an ability to handle punters and owners. From presents and a few judicious bets of his own, he put together a couple of thousand pounds while still working as a stable-hand.

Then his boss died, and it looked as though the string would be dispersed to the four winds of heaven. A very wealthy old lady, however, for whom Harry had found several winners, bought the dead man's stables and installed Harry there as her trainer. Other patrons left their horses with him, just to see how he would get on.

Harry Raynham knew nothing except horses; but he knew them thoroughly. By spending a few shillings among the men who came down with yearlings he would get to know which yearling was the winner of the races that the foals and yearlings hold among themselves in the paddocks, and so he picked up some amazing bargains. For instance he gave forty guineas for an unfashionably-bred, ungainly yearling which afterwards, under the name of Masterpiece, won forty thousand pounds in stakes. From that time he could pick and choose among the wealthiest owners as

patrons.

Holding, perhaps with some, justification, that no owner is fit to manage his own horses, he disregarded all orders and ran his horses in such races as suited him. After one magnificent betting coup was spoiled by the loquacity of an owner he refused to tell his owners anything until their horses were at the course and ready to run; and when any early betting was necessary Harry put the money on first and let the owner know about it afterwards. It is recorded of him that when he was in Melbourne with two horses for the wealthy and important owner Mr Isaacson (of Isaacson's ready-made pants) that gentleman grew rather tired of hearing nothing whatever about his horses. In order to get some information he actually sent a reply-paid telegram, costing fifteen shillings, in which he demanded to know what work the horses were doing and what times they were making. To this he received a reply containing just the two words: "Raining; pouring" — just that and nothing more.

In anticipation of the Governor's visit, Long Harry, as Raynham was habitually called, had put on his best clothes consisting of a reach-me-down suit of tweeds and a cabbage-tree hat — the latter costing five pounds, though it looked like the sort of thing you could buy in any draper's for five shillings. His wife had put on everything she had, including four bracelets valued at a hundred guineas each, that had been won by the horses at various times. Of course the party had to have tea — nothing is done in Australia without tea. While Mrs Harry poured out the tea, displaying her bracelets to the best advantage, the Governor tried to engage Harry in conversation; but he could get nothing out of Harry except "Yes, Your Lord" and "No, Your Lord." When the conversation looked like dying in its tracks, one of the semi-viceregal sisters, aching to patronize somebody, started on Long Harry:

"What a beautiful place you have here, Mr Raynham," she said. "The grass all cut and everything so neat. You must tell us *all* the winners at the races on Saturday."

This was like striking artesian water, for it unloosed the flow of Harry's conversation with a rush.

"Lady," he said, "if I knew all the winners, do you think I'd get up at four o'clock in the morning and get me feet wet watchin' horses work? Do you think I'd go down to the track with a string of yearlings playin' about on the asphalt, and me wonderin' whether they'd break their own necks or the boys'? If I knew the winner of *one* race at each meeting I'd never get up till ten o'clock in the morning. And I'd play cards all night and go fishing all day. Have some more tea."

It is one of the penalties, of Governorship that when any difficult

situation arises, the holder of that exalted rank is expected, in the words of the American base-ball game, to step to the bat and hit a home run. Like a star actor, he must not linger in the wings while the lesser characters brawl upon the stage. His Excellency knew that the semi-viceregal sister had a tongue of her own and might resent the trainer's remarks in a regrettable way, so he hastened to take charge of the proceedings.

In the ponderous manner he found most effective on official occasions he delivered his judgment:

"I am sure, Mr Raynham," he said, "that trainers have to contend with a lot of difficulties in their arduous and exacting occupation. The responsibility of a long string of valuable horses must be very great. The public are apt to attribute to trainers an omniscience which they do not possess."

Here he turned suddenly on Mrs Raynham, who became terrified and held up her bracelets in an attitude of self-defence:

"No doubt, you have heard, Mrs Raynham," he went on, "of the Shah of Persia who refused to go to a race-meeting because he said he already knew that one horse could run faster than the others. But he seems to me to have missed the point, because thousands of our struggling fellow citizens spend most of their waking hours in an attempt to find out *which* horse can run faster than the others. There are some people, of course, who detest the sport of racing. The last time that I visited a trainer's establishment I received from the Society for the Prevention of Human Enjoyment a circular, headed 'You are on the road to hell.' But Captain Salter has had experience in such matters, and I have no doubt that his judgment, aided by what your husband may care to tell him, should enable the ladies to participate profitably in what is, in their case, a very harmless enjoyment. Let us now go and look at the horses."

As the procession moved through the yard, His Excellency drew his aide aside, and with the air of a man delivering an important order, he muttered:

"Psalmsey, try to find out from this old savage whether he fancies his two-year-old next Saturday. I might as well have a tenner on it."

The loose-boxes occupied three sides of a quadrangle, with a neatly kept grass plot in the centre. The half-doors of the boxes were open, and from each box there showed the lean head and bright eyes of a thoroughbred. All greeted Long Harry with a chorus of whinnies. Affecting to despise his popularity the trainer waved his hand towards them and said:

"Ark to 'em. You'd think they was fond o' me. But when I come down to the track of a mornin' they all start to fidget and darnee. They know they've got to gallop. Would you like the boys to bring 'em out, Your Lord?"

Having to preside at a meeting of the Anti-Gambling Society in half an

hour, His Lordship was pressed for time; so he said that he could only wait to see Mr Carstairs's horse. At a nod from the trainer a boy led into the centre of the grass plot the finest horse that any of those present had ever seen.

Dark chestnut in colour, with a long, narrow blaze down his face, Sensation strode out on to the grass with the easy stride of a panther. It seemed strange that so massive a creature could move so daintily. His silky tapering ears and his steel-like legs, told of a throwback to his Arab ancestry while his size was evidently an inheritance from the other blood — possibly Spanish — that goes to make up the thoroughbred. His head was set on at an obtuse angle, throwing his nostrils forward, and the width of his gullet left room, as his trainer said, for a bird to build its nest between his jaws. His neck was only slightly arched and appeared light for so big a horse, but the arch and the solidity would come later on in life. He presented a sort of streamline effect; for his neck ran back into his shoulders, and his shoulders ran back into his ribs, with a smoothness that made it hard to say where the one ended and the other began. A deep, but by no means broad, chest was another streamline feature. And he had no suspicion of a “waist,” for his ribs ran back to a slightly arched loin which gave the impression of the strength and suppleness of a steel spring. His hips were broad and his rump was carried back for an appreciable distance without any droop — much as one sees it in the old pictures of Stockwell taken in the days when the thoroughbreds were closer to the Arab type than they are to-day.

Everything about him fitted so perfectly that it was only by standing behind him that his breadth and weight could be realized. Red Fred's starved soul had never dreamed of owning a horse like this. At last he felt that he was really getting something for his money. Though he knew little about racing, Red Fred had made friends with horses on many a long shearing trip, and when his new owner walked up to him the big horse recognized a man who had the love of horses in his system. He rubbed his nose against his owner's waistcoat and the trainer called out:

“Rub him round the lips and the mouth, boss. That's what he likes. Some days I'll put in an hour talkin' to him and rubbin' him about the head. Keeps him contented-like and makes him take to his grub.”

In a sort of daze, Red Fred turned to the trainer:

“What has this horse won?” he said.

“What has he won? Lor' blime, what hasn't he won'? Breeders' Plate, Sydney and Melbourne Derbies, Craven Plate, Melbourne Cup, with seven pounds over weight for age — everything he ever went for. Never been beaten, this feller. He's in the Leger and the Sydney Cup now. But they've

put the grandstand on him for the Sydney Cup, and I won't run him in that. He's a horse, not a weight-lifter.”

The Government House party then took their departure, without having had a chance to ask any questions about the stable two-year-old, leaving the trainer, the owner, his secretary, and Charley Stone to discuss the campaign. Red Fred was so frightened of the trainer that only by a desperate effort could he bring himself to say that he was thinking of taking the horse to England.

“I'll send you a couple of horses I have in Queensland,” he added, by way of propitiating the autocrat. If Red Fred expected an argument on the point he did not get it, for the matter was settled in a couple of sentences.

“Go to England!” said Long Harry, staring at him, as a schoolmaster might stare at a pupil who asked leave to swim the Channel. “Go to England! What's the sense of that? It costs half a crown a minute to live there they tell me! Top hats an' spats and all the like o' that! Oh, no, this 'orse don't go to England. Come and I'll show you a two-year-old that might make something if he goes on the right way.”

This closed the matter for the time being, and Red Fred and his satellites retired in disorder and a taxi-cab. But Fitzroy had heard from the semi-viceregal sister that Moira Delahunty was coming to Sydney on a visit and was then going on to England. So he decided that he and his employer and Sensation would all go to England, even if he had to forge Fred's name to the order for shipment of the horse.

Chapter XI. Leger Day

DURING the next few days Moira Delahunty and her father arrived from Queensland and went to stay with relatives in a fashionable suburb. Red Fred and his secretary still remained at their unpretentious hotel; the millionaire had made friends with the landlord's children and refused to move. Getting a day off from his secretarial duties (which were practically nil) Fitzroy went out to call on Moira and her father.

As the old gentleman was away, he took Moira for a run round the harbour suburbs in a car and they were soon discussing the happenings since the affair with the Chinaman at Calabash.

"How have you been getting on?" Moira asked. "Have you had to carry Red Fred lately? I knew him when he used to shear for us and he was the quietest man I have ever known. And now look at him! You can't pick up a newspaper without seeing his name in it and all about his horse. We're off to England soon. Couldn't you get away and come too?"

"That's just it," said Fitzroy. "He bought this horse to take to England, and now his trainer won't let him go. We'll have to fix that up somehow. The boss has let other people order him about all his life, so that now if anybody stamps a foot at him he wants to run under the bed. Fancy, if we could get away to England with that horse on board, what a trip we'd have! Did you hear any word about that stolen yearling of mine?"

"Yes. The black-tracker got on to the tracks of some horses and he ran them for miles. Then he came on to two white men and a Chinaman leading three beautiful young horses. He told me: 'I been think it better I arrest them feller, but the Chinaman he pull out a revolver and he say, go back you black mongrel or we shoot you.' So I said to him: 'What did you do then, Billy?' 'I went back,' said Billy. But father says the horse will turn up all right, they're sure to race him."

Then they discussed hunting in Ireland with the soft light on the hills, and the dewdrops on the hedges, and the Irish hunters springing on to the banks and off again, and the ladies of title (with horses to sell) who would jump on a fallen man to attract his attention to their horses. Fitzroy inquired after Maggie. Moira told him that at the last shearing Maggie had strolled up to the shed when shearing was over and found the shearers' cook going away with some kerosene-tins of kitchen fat, which were his perquisite. But a dab of Maggie's knife into the fat had revealed that the tins were full of plates, knives, and forks covered over with fat. Maggie had confiscated fat and all. Then they talked of Sensation's chances in England. Moira said:

"I stick up for the Irish when I'm here, but I stick up for the Australians

when I'm at Home, for that's the way the Irish are. I'll cheer this horse over there and I'd cheer an Irish horse here."

By the time the drive was over they were, in their minds, writing the name of Sensation on the hearts of the English bookmakers.

Leger day at Randwick drew all parties to the course as a magnet draws steel filings. The cynosure of all eyes was Red Fred who was invited — one had better say compelled — to join the Government House party. In the days when he had been chipped by a soulless boss of the board for making second cuts in a sheep's fleece, he had solaced his feelings by dreams of the day when he would be wealthy and powerful and generally admired, and able to walk round his own shed with every shearer keeping close to the skin while the boss's eye was on him. Now that those days had arrived they fell far short of the dreams. Everybody turned to stare at him as he went into the ring.

By way of escaping public notice, he went inside the rails to Sensation's stall and they mutually enjoyed themselves while he rubbed the chestnut horse about the mouth. But somebody passed the word, and Press photographers arrived in shoals, knocking people out of the way and calling out to him "Turn round a bit, mister, so that we can get your face." When the Governor's wife congratulated him on the ownership of such a beautiful horse he thought with horror of the fight ahead of him before he could get the horse away from Long Harry. When he drifted down to stand for a while alongside his old friend Jim Frazer, the crowd that came to gape and not to bet was so dense that Frazer asked him to go away.

"I won't hold five shillings while you're standing there Fred," he complained.

As this juncture Long Harry arrived and cut Red Fred out of the crowd as skilfully as a stockman cuts out a steer from a mob. The trainer had been handling owners all his life and had no idea of letting such a Koh-i-noor of the punting world lie round loose to be picked up by any adventurer.

"Come along o' me," he said, "and I'll tell you what to back. The favourite in this fust race is drawn right away from the rails and he'll want to be a flying machine to come in from there and win. Now, this thing 'ere — Snowfire," he went on, turning over his book and dropping his voice, to the discomfiture of some loiterers who appeared to be enlarging their ears in an effort to hear what was said, "this thing 'ere Snowfire belongs to a mate o' mine, and we gave 'im a run with your 'orse and it made the big feller stretch out to beat him. The crowd are backing one of mine in his race, a thing called Sylvester. He's second favourite. If I had a donkey in, they'd make it second favourite. But you might as well ask a fish to climb a tree as ask mine to beat Snowfire. Go and put a hundred on Snowfire and

see me at my stall after lunch.”

Following, as usual, the line of least resistance, Red Fred went and put a hundred on Snowfire at six to one and then, with a sinking heart, he rejoined the Government House party. He found things less strenuous than he expected. The party were listening spellbound to a very large and confident young man who had just arrived from England.

This, was a Mr Noall. In England he was secretary to a Prime Minister and was himself in line for political honours; also, he owned a string of racehorses and was just as sure about racehorses as he was about everything else. He was the glass of fashion and the mould of form. But to the eyes of the two young Englishmen — Captain Salter and Fitzroy — he didn't seem quite right. He was just a little too loud in the necktie, and - too large in the tie-pin for their money. If they had been asked to name his nationality they would have said that he was a Levantine Greek; and they would not have been far wrong.

“I won't have the favourite for this race,” said Mr Noall with the air of a man whose decision is final and subject to no appeal.

“This thing of Harry Raynham's — Sylvester — he's a stone certainty. He was strangled by his rider last time he ran. The stewards never saw it; but I saw it. They let that stable get away with murder. They're putting a thousand on him to-day, so you must all be on it. You can get sixes. Go and get on before they shorten it.”

Fearing to be drawn into an argument with this omniscient person Red Fred looked round for a way of escape and to his delight he saw Moira smiling at him from the crowd. She and Fitzroy had also been asked to the official luncheon, and were only waiting for the first race to be run before joining the select band for the viceregal table.

“Oh Fred,” said Moira, “I've got such a lot of things to talk to you about. You must sit next me at lunch There's no time to talk now. Did Raynham tell you anything about this race?”

“Yes, he said his horse was no good and that Snowfire would win. But you heard what that young feller said? He said Raynham's horse was a certainty. Raynham must ha' been tellin' me lies. They're terribly crook some of these racin' chaps.”

“Don't you believe it, Fred. Father says that the racecourses are full of people who like to show off and tell everybody the winner and when their certainty gets beaten they say it was pulled. And the worst of it is that the crowd believes them. Father heard a man talking like that about one of his horses and he tried to ram the man's race-book down his throat. Father said it was the only remedy an owner had. . . . Now, Fitz, we've got this beautiful tip about Snowfire and I'm going to have a tenner on it. Run

down and put it on for me quick. They're at the post.”

A six-furlong race is a hammer and tongs affair from the start, and the favourite — drawn twenty-five horses out — put up a gallant battle but he had to strain every nerve over the first couple of furlongs to hold his position. Sylvester and Snowfire jumped out smartly from positions near the rails and were racing on the inner side, while the favourite was racing on the outer circle. At the turn into the straight the three had come together and were racing abreast. It looked to be anybody's race. But the favourite's early efforts told their tale and he was the first to crack up. Then Sylvester was the cry; for, as usual, a lot of people had backed both the favourite and second favourite. At two furlongs from home a doleful howl went up as the jockey on Sylvester, noted for his ability to ride a finish with his hands, went for his whip and gave his mount a couple of sharp cuts down the shoulder. Sylvester made a game effort to answer the whip but he was hopelessly outpaced and Snowfire ran home an easy winner. Sylvester's jockey, not wishing to knock a game horse about, dropped his hands in the last couple of strides and finished second, beaten a length and a half, which might have been three lengths had Snowfire's rider so wished.

Moira and Fitzroy each won sixty pounds and went into lunch bubbling with delight. In fact, with the selfishness of youth, they never thought of asking Red Fred what he had won. The truth did not come out until half-way through lunch.

Mr Noall and some of his admirers were seated just opposite Red Fred and his party at the end of the long table-out of hearing of the real swells at the top of the table. One of the semi-viceregal sisters started the trouble by saying:

“I don't suppose you backed the winner, Mr Carstairs?”

Before Red Fred could answer Mr Noall chipped in.

“Of course he didn't,” he said. “He'd back the horse from his own stable — Sylvester.”

“No I didn't,” said Red Fred, feeling that for once in a way he had distinguished himself. “I backed the winner. I won six hundred. Raynham told me not to back his horse. He told me to back Snowfire.”

Here was a situation right after Mr Noall's heart. A trainer had the second favourite in a race and he had told one of his patrons to back something else!

“Raynham told you! Well, I wonder what they will stand in this country. I thought that boy on Sylvester wasn't too keen at the finish. Did you see him drop his hands?”

Having the Irish sympathy for the under dog, Moira threw her hat into the ring and spoke without choosing her words.

“The boy on Sylvester hit him with the whip in the straight. He had no chance with the winner. Any fool could see that.”

His experience as a platform speaker had made Mr Noall a very difficult antagonist in a debate. He smiled tolerantly:

“Of course, young lady, as you say, any *fool* could see it. Some of these jockeys would fool anybody.”

Not liking either his tone or his appearance — in fact not liking anything about him — Moira returned to her lunch with the acid remark:

“I'm afraid you look at life through very dirty spectacles.”

“I see some very dirty spectacles, if that's what you mean.”

While this was going on, Fitzroy said nothing whatever and applied himself industriously to his plate; but from under his brows he favoured Mr Noall with the look that a fighting bull-terrier gives to his opponent when the pair are led into the pit. Noticing this look, and knowing Fitzroy's temper, the Honourable Captain Salter thought he had better be the little diplomatist and patch up some sort of peace. One never knew what Fitzroy might do.

“Hard to say,” he said. “Hard to say. Before I started ridin' I thought if there were six races there were six bally crimes to be detected. Absolutely! But after I'd ridden a bit, I wasn't so sure. Some people said I didn't ride my horse out in the Grand National. And of course any chap would give one of his ears to win a National.”

Before the captain could enlarge on this subject His Excellency rose and the party broke up. The next race was the Leger, for which Sensation was voted a certainty, so Red Fred went down to see the trainer.

They found Long Harry saddling the big horse with the greatest care, while Sensation, in no way excited, nibbled thoughtfully at the cardigan jacket of the boy at his head.

“He's home and dried,” said Long Harry. “They won't bet on it. They're offering six to four that you can't place first and second. He's got two weight-for-age races next week so I want to get him an easy race to-day. A lot of 'em think this horse can't sprint, so they'll run it as slow as they can and try to beat him in the run home. That's right into my barrow. I'm tellin' Jacobs to let 'em run the first mile at a walk if they like, and we'll show 'em if he can sprint or not.”

“What'll run second to him, Mr Raynham?” said Moira, whose sixty pounds were burning a hole in her pocket. “I might have a bet on placing first and second.”

“Daylight'll run second to him, miss. Biggest certainty ever you saw.”

“But there's no horse in it called Daylight.”

“No, miss. But there'll be daylight between him and the other horses.”

And with that he turned his back and went on testing the girths.

It is customary on the stage for the minor characters to prepare the way for the entrance of the star, and when the field of three-year-olds went out on the track, Sensation was kept back to the last. Some of them went up fighting for their heads, while others sidled like crabs, but Sensation trotted along by the rails like an old hack, taking no notice of the cheering mob a few feet away from him. His coat glowed in the sun and the play of his huge muscles could be seen at each stride. Wheeling for his canter he came down with his head in his chest, playing with the bit and disdaining to quicken his pace when another horse rushed past him. He pulled up at a touch of his rider's hand and walked back to the starting-post with the reins lying loose on his neck, while his rider settled a stirrup-leather in its place.

When the barrier lifted, Sensation was pulled back last of the field of seven, and here he ran along at an easy swing while some of the leaders were taking a lot out of themselves, springing off the ground and throwing their heads about as a protest against the slow pace.

"I wish they'd string out a bit," said Long Harry who was watching the race with Sensation's owner. "I don't want him to have to come round a mob of horses at the turn, and I don't want him to come inside and get pocketed."

For the first half-mile a couple of blankets would have covered the field, but at last the two leaders wore out the arms, or the patience, of their riders and the field lengthened out just as Long Harry had wished. Providence, they say, is always on the side of the big battalions.

There was no real pace on until they had run a mile. The riders were obviously watching each other, for at the six-furlong post every horse jumped into top speed in a stride and the real race was on. Sensation was still the last and was giving as much as six or seven lengths to the leaders, and the trainers clicked their stop-watches just to see what pace the big horse could make over the last six furlongs. There was no fighting for their heads now, the field were all hard at it. But without an effort the big chestnut horse, with his crimson-jacketed rider, seemed to glide past horse after horse. At three furlongs from home, he had made up the six or seven lengths and was on the flanks of the two leaders into the straight. A sprinter that had saved up his energies for a final dash, made a run up to him at the distance but he only lasted there for a couple of strides. Then, without apparently quickening his pace at all, the big horse drew away and won with the greatest ease by a clear three lengths.

The watches showed one minute eleven seconds for the last six furlongs, of a Leger with eight stone ten up.

When the next race came on Red Fred's trainer gave him peremptory

orders not to bet on it at all. But the Leger victory had given Fred a feeling of confidence, so he immediately went into the ring and took two hundred to ten about a horse, because he saw one of the rats backing it. The word went round like lightning that "Bluey," as the crowd called him, had found another winner. (All red-haired men are called "Bluey" in Australia for some reason or other.) So the crowd got in behind Bluey and made this horse second favourite, to the mystification of the horse's owner and trainer. What is more, it won. As Red Fred went up to collect his winnings one of the underworld called out to him:

"Good on you, Bluey, you saved me life!"

After all it seemed fairly easy to be a hero.

At the end of the racing Fitzroy told Charley Stone to take Red Fred and to see that he did not get into any brawls, adding that he himself had a little business to attend to before he left the course.

He waited down near the motor-cars and before long saw Mr Noall walking by himself across the lawn. People were hurrying home and no one took any notice as Fitzroy walked up to the embryo statesman and stood square in front of him:

"I want to see you a minute. I didn't like the way you talked at lunch, accusing my friend Mr Raynham, of pulling a horse."

A Machiavellian bit of diplomacy that, for he did not wish to drag a lady's name into the fracas. Mr Noall's political training had taught him to be at times suave and at times dictatorial, so he gave Fitzroy a good hard push:

"Get out of my way, you're drunk. If you stop me, I'll give you something you won't like."

Fitzroy dropped his hands by his sides and stuck out his face:

"Yes, go on. You have first hit at me."

Sure enough, the big man had a hit at him. Fitzroy ducked under it and before any one could see how it happened he was kneeling on Mr Noall and trying to force his jaws open with one hand and to thrust a race-book into his mouth with the other.

"Eat this, you tailor's dummy. Eat this, and see how you like it."

A couple of plain clothes policemen ran over from the car rank and pulled them apart. On learning that neither wished to take out a summons against the other, they started them off in different directions and returned to their duties. Brawls of this sort were so common in their lives as to be hardly worth mentioning. Still, Trooper Smithers, an Australian, said in a bored way to his Irish colleague:

"Wot in 'ell do you suppose the little swell wanted to choke the big swell with his race-book for?"

“Search me,” said Trooper O’Grady. “But I’ll tell yez somethin’. I know the little felly. Him and me was in the depot at Brisbane together, and what he’s doin’ here in that rig-out I don’t know. Working the confidence game I suppose. But if ye have to arrist him take another good man wid yez. He’s a handful for anny chew [two] men in Australia, that same easy-looking gentleman.”

Chapter XII. Shifting For Fred

IT is said that women are variable creatures. But they are models of consistency compared to a millionaire who has drifted, jelly-fish-like, on the tides of shearing, mustering and lamb-marking, varied only by an occasional trip out prospecting. Such a man may roll his swag preparatory to starting on some enterprise in a due northerly direction, and may then meet a friend who persuades him to start on quite another enterprise due south.

Thus it was hardly to be wondered at that when Red Fred was called upon to make the decision to go to England, and to trust himself to a sea he had never even seen, he felt a sort of blind urge to remain where he was. He had settled down comfortably at the hotel and had made friends there. It was, perhaps, the nearest approach to a home that he had ever known since he grew to manhood and he did not like leaving it.

When Fitzroy opened the question of taking the horse to England, he thought that there would be little difficulty about it as Sensation had been bought with that one object in view. He found, however, that since the Leger Red Fred's views had undergone a decided change.

"I don't know," he said when Fitzroy asked him when they would get away. "I don't know. We're doing pretty well here ain't we? Harry says there's two thousand to be picked up in the weight-for-age races and we'd laugh our heads off if we left a goldmine behind us and went away and bottomed on a duffer. I'll see about it. I've got to go down now and try on a suit o' clothes at that tailor Charley Stone put me on to. I don't want you to-day. You can go and see Moira if you like."

This accorded well with Fitzroy's own desires, and before long Moira and he were discussing their chances of getting to England. As is usual in such cases, they felt they were actuated by the highest and most altruistic motives, and like boy scouts they felt they must do their one good deed for the day. They must get Red Fred to England whether he wanted to go or not.

"It's ridiculous," said Moira, "that he should want to keep a horse like Sensation in this country, picking up easy money, when it might win a big English race. Fred doesn't *want* the money. It's not fair to himself. It's not fair to the horse. He might win the Ascot Gold Cup with that horse and be presented to the King and everybody. And he wants to stop here. I'd like to murder that old trainer."

Fitzroy, too, felt it was his duty to get his employer away from Australia. He had sensed a subtle change in Red Fred's character in the last few days,

and it behoved him to act quickly before things got worse.

“The boss,” he said, “is not looking after himself. Takes no exercise. He's been shearing his hundred sheep a day, and now he just loafes round the pub and eats and drinks half his time. No feller could stand it. He put the wind up Charley Stone by going out to a big lunch with the boozehound of the Squatters' Financial Company. Charley thought they might get his business away from the Empire Pastoral, but luckily the boss got a load on board and he wanted to fight the Squatters' Financial chap in the car coming back. Then all sorts of take-downs have got wind of him, and they're hanging round the pub trying to get him to put his money into things. We must get him away somehow. There's only one thing he's afraid of. He thinks that Chinaman might come after him.”

“Why is he afraid of the Chinaman?”

“Well, you know, these Chinamen are very bad medicine. They think a lot of what they call their face. The boss won two thousand off Jimmy the Pat, and I threw him about a bit, and altogether we made him look like a monkey. He's got to wipe that off somehow, even if he has to wipe off Red Fred. I can look after myself, but when I see a Chinaman coming down the street I cross the road and look into a shop window till the Chow goes past. I don't want a knife in my ribs. Anyhow, I can do without it.”

“Perhaps we can scare the life out of Fred,” said Moira hopefully. “And we could scare that trainer, too. I'm sure we ought to try it, even if we get into trouble over it. We simply can't let him stop here and run to seed like a public-house loafer. I've known Fred ever since I can remember and he's got a heart of gold, that man.”

Between them they hatched a plan that at any rate had the virtue of originality. The first blow was struck when Red Fred received a letter with a Queensland postmark. As a rule he just glanced at his letters and handed them either to the Empire Pastoral Company or the wastepaper basket. But this one was obviously something out of the ordinary run of letters. He was at breakfast eating an egg when he opened it. As he read it he put down a spoonful of egg untasted and emitted a hollow groan.

“Look at this, Fitz,” he said. “That Chow! I thought he'd be after me.”

The envelope contained merely a dirty crumpled sheet of common note-paper on which the following message had been laboriously printed, apparently by some illiterate person:

Bewair.

The Chinaman's Vengunce.

I beg to inform you that unless you get out of Australia you will die by the hand of a Chinaman.

A WELL-WISHER.

“A well-wisher, eh! I wish he was a well-sinker. I'd give 'im a 'undred quid to sink a well and leave the Chow down it. What does the Chow want to get after me for? I didn't sling him about like a bag of feathers. I didn't get his horse left at the post” — eyeing his secretary meanwhile as though he blamed him for everything. “I remember a Chineese cook once that put poison in the tea and nearly wiped out a whole shedful of shearers, just to ketch one man that had kicked his dog. I wonder is there a Chineese cook at this pub? I won't eat anything, only eggs and sardines, and drink ginger beer, till we get out o' this. I better go out and tell Long Harry. That Chow might get after the horse and I'd sooner he'd poison me than poison the horse. You go down and have a look if there's a Chow in the kitchen.”

Fitzroy's investigations in the kitchen revealed a Chinese chef who greeted him with an affable smile, and Fitzroy wondered how Red Fred would receive the news that he was living at the mercy of a Chinese assassin. Fitzroy returned upstairs and sat down to wait for his boss. But when Red Fred returned all his fear had vanished. Like a celebrated English politician Red Fred took his opinion from the last man with whom he conversed. Long Harry had scoffed at the idea of there being any danger.

“He says it's all rot,” said Red Fred. “He says it's some cove that wants to bluff me into givin' him a hundred quid to keep the Chows off me. Long Harry says to let you have your breakfast first, and if you're all right, then I'll be all right. Ring for a whisky and soda, Fitz. It's a bit early, but I knew coves up in Darwin that always drank gin and soda as soon as they'd finished their breakfasts, and they lived to be nearly a hundred. They can't scare me with their Chows.”

Having missed with their first barrel, as it were, the mysterious writers of the anonymous letter made a new move. Just after the horses had come home from their exercise and the boys (who had been up since four o'clock) had retired to their bunks to have a sleep, a Chinaman might have been observed making his way up Long Harry's deserted stable-yard. In fact he *was* observed. Mrs Harry happened to come to the kitchen door with a rolling-pin in her hand and saw the Chinaman making for Sensation's box.

Having been born an O'Grady, the lady disdained to call for assistance. Instead, she tiptoed up the yard after the Chinaman and hit him a polthogue over the head with the rolling-pin. Down he went on his hands and knees, and as he fell a long-bladed knife dropped out of his clothes. At sight of the knife Mrs Raynham went into a most successful fit of hysterics. Her yells split the air; while the Chinaman, after casting a dazed look about him, picked up the knife and ran like a redshank. Long Harry did not put in an

appearance for some time. He said afterwards that he had mistaken Mrs Raynham's shrieks for the whistle from the factory down the road.

The portly grocer, however, from next door came running into the yard just in time to meet the Chinaman face to face. The grocer spread out his arms and pretty well blocked the way, but the Chinaman threw his arms round the grocer's legs and tossed him over his head with as little exertion as though he were lifting a straw man. Then he darted like a rabbit round the corner and jumped into a racing car that was cruising slowly along, with a veiled lady at the wheel. In a second there was nothing but a streak of dust to show that a car had been there.

Of course the police and the Press were hot on the scent of this outrage. But they got very little out of Long Harry. That worthy said it was all rot; that some poor inoffensive Chinaman had come into the yard to see about buying the stable manure, and his wife had "woodened" him without giving him a chance to explain. This did not suit Mrs Harry at all. She gloried in the notoriety of interviews with the police, and posed for the Press photographers with a rolling-pin in her hand. Just to assert her importance, she relapsed into hysterics every two hours. Her female friends told Long Harry that he was an unfeeling brute and that he should get the doctor to her.

Police investigations ended in nothing. The affair seemed likely to remain a mystery; when it was capped by another sensation which made the first look like a chapter from the adventures of a curate. The horses were pacing with their stately walk down to the track in the grey dawn, and Long Harry was leading Sensation from the back of an elderly white pony. Suddenly a motor-car stopped in front of them and a man dressed in a long ulster, with his hat pulled well down over his eyes, rose to his feet and pointed a double-barrelled gun straight at Long Harry.

There could be no manure-buying about this business — at least that is not the way in which people generally go about the purchase of manure. Any one who has ever had a gun pointed straight at him can realize how much Long Harry regretted he had made light of this affair. Instinctively he put his hands up to protect his face and as he did so "bang" went the gun, and the charge whistled overhead. Sensation pulled away and set off for home at a pace that perhaps no other horse in the world could equal. The stable-boys and their charges joined in the flight, and Long Harry pulled his pony round and set off after them. As he did so, the gun went off again. It was held lower this time, but again it missed and the charge made a pattern in a solid sawn timber fence, where the local boys spent the next few days in picking out the pellets of shot. Riding for his life Long Harry sent the white pony scurrying down the street. As they rounded a corner

the pony slipped, and its rider went flying over its head. Luckily he lit on his feet, and was running at top speed the instant his feet touched the ground.

Long Harry said afterwards that he had ridden many races but had never really made a horse gallop before; also, though he had been a track runner in his early days, he did not think he had ever really run before.

Again there was work for the police; but again they made nothing of it. All the notorious gunmen and the underworld of the turf were brought in and made to account for their movements on that day, but the absence of a motive puzzled the police from the first. Long Harry did not wait for any capture of criminals. He came in to see Red Fred and demanded that he take the horse away at once:

“I never had a horse like him, and I'll never get another like him. Do you know,” he went to speaking very slowly and looking straight in front of him, “do you know, I think a man ought to be proud that he lived at the same time as that horse. After the scare he got, and the gallop he did, he came home sound as a bell and ate up his feed as cool as a cucumber. Whinnied to me when I walked into the yard. But what with me wife shrieking the town down, and me dodgin' charges of shot, I'm full up. It ain't fair to the horse anyhow. They'd be sure to get him, whether you left him with me or whether you gave him to anybody else. You take him to England. That's the only thing to do with him. All I want to see is his tail goin' out of my yard for the last time — for his own sake. And yet — I'd very near cry to see him go.”

The next day's papers announced that Sensation was to leave for England in a week, and that the owner and his secretary would travel with the horse. As a sort of afterthought, it was added that the celebrated Queensland breeder Mr Delahunty and his daughter Moira would travel by the same boat. Two other passengers whose names were unrecorded were the Honourable Captain Salter who had come into money and was off back to England, and Bill the Gunner, specially brought down from Queensland to look after Sensation on his voyage to the old country.

Part II.

Chapter XIII. London Bound

WHEN Alastair de Vere Fysshé, ninth Earl of Fysshé and Fynne, Baron Seawood, G.C.B., Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard, Conservative whip, owner of pictures by Reynolds and Gainsborough — when the owner of all these titles died, it was found that (contrary to the general opinion) he really had married the music-hall star whose presence in his baronial halls had caused many dowagers to sniff and stop away.

Not only had he married her; he had left to her all his disposable estate: freeholds in London, factories in the Midlands, coal-mines, and a successful stud of thoroughbreds. Lady Seawood (as she preferred to be called, having an aversion to the name of Fysshé) had been the idol of the halls for ten years or so, and was a personality to be feared if not respected. She was a peroxide blonde, with the face of a Roman emperor. Her broad sloping shoulders topped a chest like that of a coal-heaver; her hips and legs, originally like those of an Epstein statue, had been further developed by years of dancing; her voice, when she chose to let it go, could outroar a bos'n's mate.

Perilously near the age of forty, she had kept herself in perfect physical trim by constant exercise and rigid abstention from all that she most desired in the way of eating and drinking.

When the *Oronia*, with Sensation and his entourage on board, pulled into Colombo, a thrill ran through the ship as soon as it was known that among the passengers to join her at that port were Lady Seawood and her companion Miss Fysshé. And the ship had hardly got under way again when Her Ladyship made her appearance in the saloon.

“Ere, Frogmouth,” she said — addressing a steward who certainly was a bit down in the gills — “ere, Frogmouth, go and find me the chief stooard. Tell him Lady Seawood wants 'im. At the double.”

Though he did not exactly come at the double, the chief steward lost no time in making his appearance and started on some commonplace about having the honour. But Her Ladyship cut him short with an imperious “Sit down, old Fishface, and lissen to me.

“There's a man on board,” she went on, “I want to meet. Name of Carstairs. 'E owns this racehorse you've got up forrard. What sort of a proposition is he? Who's with him? Where does he sit? I want you to put me at his table. Savvy? No captain's table for me. All the old tabbies on the ship will be at that table, and if I cut loose I might make some of 'em jump overboard.”

The chief steward was by no means rattled. He had paid many a shilling

to see Her Ladyship's legs in the old days, and he had carried music-hall stars on previous voyages.

“There's a party of them with that horse,” he said. “They got on at Sydney, but they're not all Australians. I put them at a table by themselves, because I had to keep room at the captain's table in case any real swells came on with the Indian passengers. There's the Honourable Captain Salter, aide-de-camp to the Governor of New South Wales, and an old Irish gentleman and his daughter, and this Mr Carstairs that owns the horse, and his secretary, a Mr Fitzroy.”

“Right-oh,” said Her Ladyship. “Now we've got the cast give us the scenario. What part does this Carstairs play? Does he keep the 'orse or does the 'orse keep him? Is he a rich juggins, or could he walk down Threadneedle Street without somebody selling 'im the Bank of England?”

“Well, he's a very quiet man, Your Ladyship. Hardly says anything. I heard him say he'd been a shearer, but I believe he's a very wealthy man.”

“Ha, the mysterious stranger lurking in the wings! What time do they carry round the slush — tea and bovril and that — on this hooker? Eleven o'clock? Well, you give 'im my compliments, Lady Seawood's compliments, and I'd be glad if he would join me and Fishy at the eleven o'clock swill. By the time I've drunk a cup of concentrated ox with 'im, I'll know more about 'im than you know — and you've 'ad three weeks' start on me.”

At eleven o'clock the awkward and shambling figure of Red Fred bore down on the corner of the deck where Her Ladyship and Miss Fysshe were waiting for him.

“Sit down and rest your legs,” said Her Ladyship, eyeing the freckled and weather-beaten countenance of her visitor. “I 'ear you're taking an 'orse to England. Well, I've got the best 'orse in England an' I want to know wot you've fixed up. 'Ave you got a trainer? I think my trainer's a bit of a thief, but there's some worse than 'im. I can get you a straight trainer if you 'aven't got one.”

Any other person than Red Fred might have questioned the bona fides of such an unlikely lady of title, but he had seen her name in the passenger's list. For all he knew, the whole British aristocracy might be addicted to slang and to making friends with perfect strangers. Anyway, she seemed a most friendly sort of person, and he managed to drink half a cup of soup without his hand shaking.

“We've done nothin' yet,” he said. “We had to clear this horse out of Australia quick and lively because a Chinaman was tryin' to shoot him. Would have shot me too, if I'd have gave him the chance.”

“Gosh!” said Her Ladyship. “Sounds like a movie. What do you think of

it, Fysshé?”

Miss Fysshé, a distant relative of the late earl, was a great contrast to her employer; while one was built on the lines of a barge the other was a racing skiff. Of any age from twenty-five to thirty-five, Miss Fysshé was a trimly built little woman, tightly buttoned up in a beautifully-cut tailor-made suit. A certain American lady tennis-player has been described as “little poker face.” She had nothing on Miss Fysshé. The only sign of expression that that lady allowed herself was an occasional flicker of her little black eyes. In many ways she was more sophisticated than her patroness, for she was bred in the purple and had the entree to circles which Connie Seaweed, as she was familiarly called, had no chance of entering.

“I think they've been pulling his leg,” said Miss Fysshé, whose conversation was as sparse as her appearance.

“Oh, no, lady,” said Red Fred. “It's all right. They had two shots at him. With a gun. They sent me a letter that they'd do me in.”

Lady Seawood shook her head.

“Beats me,” she said. “But you can tell me the story of your life another time. Now, lissen 'ere. There's nothin' like puttin' your cards on the table, especially when you've got an ace up your sleeve. You own the best racehorse in Australia. I own the best racehorse in England, and the best in France belongs to a pal of mine. We can get the best horse in America if we make it worth his while to come. Do you get that?”

Red Fred was puzzled as to what all this portended, but he signified that he understood the situation up to a certain point.

Then Her Ladyship abruptly changed the subject and embarked on an entirely new tack.

“You wouldn't think to look at me,” she said, “that I'm a Yid. But that's what I am — a Whitechapel Jewess. I used to work in a rag factory for ten bob a week.”

Here, by way of enlivening the dialogue she covered her nose with her hand and exclaimed in dramatic tones: “Mother, vot am I?”

“I used to work in a rag factory,” she repeated, “for ten bob a week. And now look where I am. These old fossils that run everything in England, they think I'm only a noise, and a nasty noise at that. They wouldn't let me into the enclosures at the big meetin's. So now I'm going to take 'em on. Me and a few of my pals, we reckon that London wants livenin' up. So we formed a syndikit and bought a racecourse just a few miles out of town. We bought more land and put up good stands, and now the place'll hold a hundred and fifty thousand people. We're going to start off our first meetin' with a bang. We want to get the best horses in the world to come and run each other at a three days' meetin', two Saturdays and a Wensday. What

distances did you say they ought to run, Fishy?"

"Six furlongs first day. Mile and a quarter second day. Two miles third day," said Miss Fysshie.

"Fishy knows all about it," the Countess said. "She does in all her money bettin'. Now, we want you to come in with us. The syndikit is mostly Yids, but you'll get a square deal with the Yids, and they are the best show people in the world. I sometimes go to the board-meetin' just to see their beaks hangin' over the table like pelicans at feedin' time. Of course we'll have to have a lord or two on the board, but they're cheap these days. We'll pay good appearance money for real first-class horses, like yours, and we won't let any second-raters run in the big races. Only the best 'orse from each country. What's your 'orse, short distance, long distance, or no distance?"

"He's won at six furlongs and he's won at two miles," said Red Fred who was quite relieved to find that he was to be a person of considerable importance, right straight away as soon as he landed. More than that, he had had some very disquieting news from Australia by wireless, and was just in the frame of mind to do anything that anybody told him.

"That was out in the sticks," said Miss Fysshie — "out in Australia where they time 'em with a kitchen clock. I'll bet even money he don't win any of the three races over here. Let's go and see him."

They went up forrard where Sensation was accommodated in a double loose-box with padded sides and floored with heavy coir mats. It was in an exposed position where it got all the wind and occasional splashes of spray, but Bill the Gunner, who had made trips to India with horses, had insisted on this position; the more air a horse got the better he travelled, he said. Red Fred had really wanted to put Sensation down in the 'tween decks where it was nice and warm; but as usual he had shirked fighting a battle with Bill the Gunner on the subject.

A coir matting led from the loose-box to the forehatch and strips of matting laid on the deck round the hatchway formed a safe exercise ground in fine weather. There was also a small sand-yard where the horse had just finished his roll and was pacing round the hatchway, the picture of health and contentment.

"Hello," said Miss Fysshie, "he's some horse. I'll bet even money that he does win one race out of the three."

This pleased Lady Seawood very much. She had great reliance on the judgment of the lady companion and had been wondering how she would face her co-religionists if she brought them what is known in certain financial circles as a "stumer."

"You think 'e's all right, Fishy, eh? 'Ere, Lord Nelson," she went on,

addressing Bill the Gunner, who was leading the horse round, looking neither to the right nor to the left and taking not the slightest notice of his employer or anybody else. "Ere, Lord Nelson, 'ow do you think 'e'll get on in England?"

"He'll lob in," said Bill the Gunner, and moved off with the horse as though any further conversation were out of the question. Waiting till he came round again Her Ladyship had another shot at him:

"What's his best distance?"

"Any distance," said Bill the Gunner, never pausing for a moment in his solemn walk.

"Come on," said Her Ladyship. "That feller gets my goat. If I stop 'ere I'll 'ave to take 'im to pieces just to see what makes him so chatty. Come and interduce me to your friends. They'll be lappin' up the tea somewhere down aft. There they are now, the Rajah of Bhong, the leading lady, and the two extras" — meaning thereby Mr Delahunty, his daughter, and the two young Englishmen.

Introductions were effected and after half an hour's chat Her Ladyship, like an expert bridge player, knew not only what cards they all held but what cash they had in their pockets. Realizing that all four of them came out of what she would have called the top drawer, she was guarded in her speech and behaviour. She left most of the general conversation to Miss Fysshe, for she wished to make a good impression and knew that Miss Fysshe was born with the instinct to do and say the right thing; while she herself, when following her own instincts, had done and said things that set all London talking.

After a while Miss Fysshe and Captain Salter, both ardent horse-lovers, went forward to have another look at Sensation; Mr Delahunty asked to be excused as he had to write some letters; and Lady Seawood was left with Red Fred and his secretary. On the principle that if you are going to do a thing you had better do it now, she decided to clinch the matter about Red Fred's horse.

"About this 'ere syndikit," she said, "we want you to come into it. We want you to sign an agreement not to race your 'orse anywhere else until you've raced him with us. And we want you to take some shares. We'll float a company later on and you must get in early on the ground floor. It'll be a gold-mine. The shares will go up out of sight. The Yids all over the world will fight to get into it, when they see the names we've got."

The mere thought of money seemed to throw her into a state of exaltation, for she came of a breed that had parted with their teeth rather than make a bad investment by lending their gold to bankrupt kings. Her powerful personality dominated Red Fred; he had no more chance against

her than a rabbit caught in the open by an eagle-hawk.

“Of course, I'll come in with you,” he said. “But I don't know how many shares I can take. I've just got a wireless from Australia. Run down, Fitz, and get that book that tells you what them things mean.”

While Fitzroy was away, Red Fred unfolded a telegraphic slip which read “Exalts daybreak humidity ashpan,” and a reference to the code showed that these words meant as follows:

Exalts: Production has been stopped.

Daybreak: Daybreak mine.

Humidity: The mine is flooded with water.

Ashpan: Considerable expense necessary before resumption.

“There you are,” said Red Fred. “I was gettin' thirty thousand a year out of that mine and now I might have to spend fifty thousand to put it right. The stations are payin' real good, but if there came a drought and I had to feed — well, when you start feedin' you never know when you'll stop. I paid ten thousand for the horse, and if I spend too much money the Empire Pastoral might buck.”

Here his natural instinct for compromise asserted itself and he hastened to make terms with the invader.

“I'd like to put in five thousand,” he went on — “if it'd be all right to wait and see if there was no fuss with the cheque. I thought I'd better tell yer all this, lady, 'cos you know these things better'n I do.”

Like a conjurer, Lady Seawood produced a type-written agreement from some hidden pocket in her jacket.

“Sign right 'ere,” she said. “That's the way I like to hear a man talk. Most of 'em are all talk and no money. I'll post your cheque back from the next wharf, and if there's any fuss, I'll put old Manasses on to it. Give 'im a bit o' paper with one wrong un's name on the foot of it, and another wrong un's name on the back, and he'd buy you the Tower of London. There's the luncheon gong. Come along an' let me look at the grub, even if I daren't eat it.”

This financial deal appeared to give satisfaction to everybody except Fitzroy. For some time he had felt that things were too good to last. He knew that if the Empire Pastoral had to cut down on Red Fred's expenditure the money spent on his' (Fitzroy's) salary would be about the first to go. Moira Delahunty was constantly in his thoughts, and he felt that he would be a poor specimen of humanity if he allowed any tenderness to grow up between them, and then found himself out of a job in England. It would not be fair to the girl.

There was a ship's dance that night. Any doubts that Fitzroy might have

felt as to whether he should ask Moira or the Countess for the first dance, were settled for him when Lady Seawood seized him by the arm and said:

“Come on, Rudolph Valentino, let's give 'em a treat. If you step on my feet I'll crack you on the jaw.”

With this prospect before him, he kept his feet to himself and they got along very well. Her Ladyship wrapped herself round him in a sort of grape-vine hug that was not so bad when one got used to it. Just then two stewards in fancy dress started to do a comic turn on the deck, and Fitzroy and his partner found themselves at the back of the crowd. It would never do that Connie Galbraith (to use her stage name) should be in obscurity, while the wretched amateur stewards were getting all the limelight.

“I can't see, I can't see,” she roared in a voice that nearly drowned the band. Just by way of a joke, Fitzroy picked up her twelve stone of humanity on one arm, lifted her to his shoulder and carried her a couple of steps up a companion-way. As he did so, the electrician turned the spotlight on them and a yell of recognition went up from cabin and steerage passengers alike.

“Connie! It's good old Connie! Give us a high kick Connie! Gee, that bloke must be strong!” The disgruntled stewards stopped their act, and Connie, after kissing her hand to the crowd, jumped down alongside Fitzroy and posed there for just the correct number of seconds. Then, to round off the turn properly, she threw her arms round him and kissed him; then the spotlight was shut off. Everybody had seen it, including Moira.

The rest of the voyage was much like other voyages — perpetual meals, perpetual sleep, perpetual gossip and perpetual bridge. Moira was very dignified and distant in her conversations with Fitzroy, and devoted herself to enslaving the Honourable Captain Salter; while the Countess treated Fitzroy much as a child treats a puppy, rumpling his hair in public, planting his hat, and playing other music-hall tricks on him — all with the idea of getting what she called “a rise” out of Moira. As for the others, those who were not bridge players sometimes envied Bill the Gunner who really had some work to do. He must have covered fifty miles in his constant pacing round the hatchway with the big horse following contentedly behind him.

Chapter XIV. A Cure For Betting

LONDON, the city where, as Tennyson might have said, "the individual withers and the type is more and more." London, where the outlander feels so unimportant that he could dress himself up as a Choctaw Indian and walk down Piccadilly waving a scalping-knife without attracting the slightest attention. London, where on the other hand, the rules that guide the dress and conduct of Londoners are as the laws of the Medes and Persians; where, for instance, the Prince of Wales once arrived at a garden-party without spats, and hundreds of visitors slunk into a shrubbery, took their spats off and threw them into an ornamental lake.

Of our party of visitors, Fitzroy and the Honourable Captain Salter were the two who really sensed the importance of doing in London as London does. The Honourable Salter put it into words:

"Fitz," he said, "do you think they'll let us get to the club alive in these hats?"

This was the city which Lady Seawood and her associates were about to enliven and, hopeless as the task might appear, it is nevertheless a fact that a gnat can occasionally enliven an elephant.

Arrived in London, the Countess and her troupe, as she called them, decided to have a breaking-up luncheon and pay a visit to the Countess's horse before dispersing to their various destinations. They were welcomed by her trainer whose establishment was a great contrast to that of Long Harry. Her Ladyship employed one of the increasing class of gentlemen trainers who are making quite a success of the business, and the visitors had sherry and biscuits instead of tea before making their inspection. Mr Geoffrey Stradbroke, trainer to the Countess, was a sort of male duplicate of Miss Fysshe — small, wiry, and tightly buttoned up. But while Miss Fysshe specialized in an absolute silence, the trainer was prepared to hand his patrons any amount of conversation without giving them any information. To use his own words, he could get them to go the right way without pulling their heads about.

When the English crack was led out for inspection the visitors gasped. Crusader had won the Triple Crown — the Two Thousand Guineas, the Derby and the Leger — and was now in his fourth year, an age at which a horse looks his best. At that age he has his full size and strength without any of the heavy appearance which comes out in later years. A whole bay with hard black legs, he threw true to the line of Bend Or, while the St Simon blood in his dam had given him an extra dash of quality.

For some reason or other (possibly climatic) the English horses have

more vitality and more quality than any other horses in the world. While Sensation was a big, sleepy, good-natured giant, this was a fiery domineering horse, snorting, rearing and showing himself off like a picture actor. He had neither the length nor the substance of the big Australian horse, but he was as compact and muscular as a pocket Hercules. A fine, fiery head was followed by a crested neck, and his shoulder, while neither so high nor so deep as that of the Australian, was high enough and deep enough for modern ideas. Like Mercutio's wound his shoulder was neither as deep as a well, nor as wide as a church door, but it would serve.

Behind the shoulder he had a short back with barrel-like ribs, a broad loin and hips, and his hind quarters were so built up with muscle that the insides of his thighs touched each other almost down to the hocks. Apart from his shape, he had the indefinable gift of quality, the steel-like look about his bones and sinews, that told of immense strength compressed into a relatively small area.

"There you are," said his trainer. "He's not such a wonderfully big horse, but the blade of a steel knife is worth twice its weight in hoop-iron, isn't it? Not that I mean your horse is too big, Mr Carstairs; he must be one of these really good big ones. I'm speaking more of the big fellows, we beat over here. I don't suppose any of you have seen the American or the French horse, have you?"

"How's the show shaping?" said Her Ladyship, who expressed herself always in theatrical terms. "Have the stars signed their contracts — the American and French horses I mean? Will we have to close the doors against the crowd, or will we have to give out some paper to fill the house? I've been away out where the nigger minstrels come from, and I haven't seen a paper or heard a word of news. Let me know the worst."

Here the horse gave a scream and a bound in the air that scattered his audience somewhat, and the trainer told the boy to put him back in his box.

"There's no worst that I know of," he said. "Some of the old brigade have been making speeches, saying that it is against all the traditions of racing to pay these men to bring their horses here. But these horses can make so much money in their own countries that their owners won't spend a lot of money to come over here and perhaps get beaten. Give 'em their expenses and a bit for appearance money, and they'll come over and have a crack at us."

"Loud applause," said Her Ladyship. "Loud applause. This study in scarlet 'ere," she went on, indicating Red Fred with the point of her parasol, "he has paid his own expenses but we'll give 'im an order on the treasury so as he gets the same as the others. If Manasses is in his old form I'll bet he has secured the picture rights and taken an option on half the theatres in

London for the crowds that'll come over. . . . So the old boys don't like it, eh? I'll bet the man who likes it least is that crawling little brother-in-law of mine! 'Ow I do 'ate that man!"

In this unchristian spirit the party broke up, Moira and her father going off to stay with relatives in Ireland; the Honourable Captain Salter going off to his recently inherited estates; and Red Fred and his secretary betaking themselves to an hotel strongly recommended by the Countess. "Under Yid management, and the Yids buy the best food in the world," she declared. The parting between Moira and Fitzroy was of the most perfunctory nature. She had not forgiven the exhibition he had made of himself on the night that the music-hall star kissed him; and he on his part thought it better for them to part now rather than have a perhaps more painful parting later on.

As the curtain descended on the gathering Her Ladyship struck an attitude and spoke the tag.

"Farewell, friends. We will meet again at the Mont de Peet. Farewell!"

Then, observing that Fitzroy was not listening to her, she walked behind him, kicked his hat off, then jumped into her car; thus making a most successful exit according to the exigencies of dramatic art. She felt free, now, to turn her attention to her brother-in-law.

When General Sir Ponsonby Fysshe succeeded to the title and entailed estates of his late brother the Earl of Fysshe and Fynne, he was a man with a grievance. He had never believed that his brother was married to the music-hall star who shared with him sumptuous Fysshe Castle, or as it was usually called the aquarium. And the General had made up his mind that when he succeeded to the title and estates, his very first act would be to hunt into outer darkness the lady to whom he had always referred as "my brother's concubine." When the blow fell, and he found that this woman had got pretty well all the money and all the racehorses, while he himself had got little except the title and a few frightfully expensive family seats, he shut himself up for a week and refused to see anybody.

He was a middle-sized man with a choleric temperament and a protruding red moustache which had earned him in the army the sobriquet of "the Lobster." As his ancestors for a dozen generations had never done anything for themselves — even their clothes and food were chosen for them — Nature had revenged herself by denying to him the initiative and intelligence for which he appeared to have no particular need. He was a robot — a very presentable robot certainly — still, a robot, and he walked through life as a robot might walk, performing various functions to which his machinery was adjusted but knowing nothing else. In his military career he had collected a couple of rows of medals of the type known in the

Army as “piccadillies,” given for Coronation and Jubilee parades, or presented by foreign powers. These were eked out by several South African decorations.

He had commanded a brigade in that affair. But he had committed the *faux pas* of ordering one of his regiments to fire on their own advance party, which happened to consist of Canadian mounted infantry. When the officer hesitated to give the order, the General roared:

“Damn it sir, why don't you fire?”

A volley was fired well over the heads of the Canadians. These latter promptly scurried round the corner of a hill, and were lost to sight. But it takes an expert to tell whether a bullet is twenty yards or twenty inches over a man's head, so the Canadians were convinced that a deliberate attempt had been made to murder them. Just as the General was dictating a heliographic message to say that he had engaged and defeated a large body of the enemy, the Canadian Colonel — a most impossible person arrived and said he would like to meet the nameless offspring of shame who had fired at his men.

This resulted in the shelving of the Lobster to a staff job, where he collected all available medals and came home. Then he retired from the Army and became Fault-Finder-General and Depreciator in Chief to the various clubs, committees and boards of directors to which he belonged. He was a great stickler for the proprieties and insisted on everybody keeping his proper place. At a settling after a race-meeting he hailed a bookmaker who rejoiced in the name of “the Major” because of his military appearance:

“Why do they call you the Major? You never were in the Army.”

To which the bookmaker replied:

“Why do they call you the Lobster? You never were in the sea.”

As already stated, the whilom Connie Galbraith loathed and detested her brother-in-law with a bitterness which usually exists only between persons of different religions. When he, in his turn, heard of her intention to enliven London with a new sort of race-meeting, he became almost inarticulate with rage; said that the affair was a damned hippodrome; and that he would give a thousand pounds at any time to see her horse beaten.

Nothing was further from the poor old gentleman's thoughts than parting with any such sum for any such nefarious purpose; but words spoken cannot be recalled and sometimes a bird of the air will carry the matter. This injudicious remark was made in a club where all communications are sacred. Unfortunately it was overheard by a waiter who was polishing glass behind a screen. Being under notice of dismissal fell an incurable habit of attending race-meetings when he was supposed to be on duty, this waiter

thought he saw a chance to make a few pounds to carry him on until he got another job, or backed a long-priced winner. He wrote down the date and time of the remark and the names of the persons present; then went into the hall to see what had won the four o'clock race.

While the Lobster and his associates were predicting all sorts of disaster for the new venture, the "International Racing Syndicate," as they called themselves, were exhibiting no end of showmanship. For instance, they directed that Sensation should be left in the nominal charge of Bill the Gunner who would also ride him in his races, thus ensuring the international element that was the basis of their plans. Privily, they placed Bill the Gunner under the orders of a leading English trainer, for it was not to be expected that a partially civilized Australian could train the horse properly under new conditions. The French and American horses had their own trainers and riders.

Then the world woke up to the fact that an international racing championship meeting was to be held. Hotels were flooded with telegrams for accommodation; theatres were booked out for weeks in advance; and the ten thousand reserved seats in the racecourse stands, issued at five guineas each, went to a premium in twenty-four hours. As Mr Manasses put it, hunching up his shoulders and spreading out his palms:

"Vot did I tell yer? Thereth any amount of money in the world if you can only get at it."

While the chosen people were preparing their feast of racehorses and their flow of finance, Red Fred and his secretary had nothing in the world to do with themselves all day long. The management of Sensation had been taken over by the syndicate under their written agreement, and the only connexion Red Fred had with the horse was to go out occasionally to see him work. Here he had to listen to the biting criticisms of Bill the Gunner on English trainers and English methods.

It appeared that quite early in the proceedings Bill the Gunner had taken it on himself to give the horse what he called a "twicer" (a working gallop twice round the course) in defiance of the trainer's orders; whereupon the trainer, being one of the old school, had promised him a good flogging with a horse-whip if he ventured to do such a thing again. The horse had become acclimatized in a week and was looking beautiful, but Bill the Gunner professed to see nothing but disaster ahead. "This Englishman," he said, "wouldn't be allowed to train billy-goats at Rockhampton" — a city where goat-racing is brought to a fine art, and hundreds of pounds can be won on a derby for goats driven in miniature sulkies with rubber tyres and ball-bearing wheels.

Tiring of the lamentations of Bill the Gunner, Red Fred and his secretary

paid only occasional visits to the stables, and found the rest of the time hang very heavy on their hands. It was then that Miss Fysshé, a confirmed frequenter of racecourses, stepped into the picture and started taking Red Fred to the races.

Miss Fysshé, a most sophisticated person in ordinary matters, was still a child when it came to racing. She had never really grown up, in a racing sense. She still believed in fairies, hoarse-voiced men who whispered in her ear that Timbertoes was a good thing at two to one in a field of twenty-six maiden horses, or that the road to affluence lay in following the betting operations of a notorious bankrupt. A touch of mystery will intrigue any woman, and so long as the tips were sufficiently mysterious she could not resist them. Having appointed herself guide, philosopher, and friend to that vacillating character Red Fred, she directed his operations with the best intentions in the world but with the worst results.

“They tell me it's unbeatable,” was her only answer to any questions on his part. And when they proceeded to reckon up, their losses at the end of the day she silenced all criticism by saying: “Look what a royal day we would have had if that boy hadn't gone to sleep on Monkey Tricks.”

When a man has arrived at middle age without any experience of racing and then suddenly tastes the thrill and excitement of backing a few winners, he is apt to go fantee and to take to betting as some people take to cocaine. He becomes an addict; and it is said of this addiction that the only cure is death. Be that as it may, Red Fred started to bet in a fashion reminiscent of the Jubilee Juggins. Before long his plunging operations had attracted notice even in the City of London. His lady friend derived a vicarious excitement from “planking on” five hundreds and thousands for him, and the lower class of sporting papers took to referring to them as “the Australian Copperhead and the Shrimp.” Their sporting columns would record that a certain double had been backed for twenty thousand pounds and as the wager was taken by the Australian Copperhead, it was obviously inspired by the stable.

To Red Fred this was fame, fame with a capital F. To Fitzroy it was simply lunacy. He was experiencing a bad attack of the blues, so when he found himself with nothing to do except supervise the sending out of huge cheques every settling-day it was hard to keep his self-respect. News from Australia was not reassuring; the bailing-out of the Daybreak mine was costing a lot of money without any certainty that it would resume production. And he, Fitzroy, was drawing a big salary and doing nothing for it. Overhearing one day some remark about a parasite he suddenly resigned from Red Fred's service and went away to look for a more honourable job.

Red Fred accepted this as he accepted everything, without protest of any sort. Now that he was relieved of Fitzroy's supervision he began to bet worse than ever. Every day Miss Fysshe and he experienced the delirious excitement of a hunt through the list of runners, the gathering of information from people who, being blind themselves, were always ready to lead the blind, and occasionally the supreme moment when their fancy rounded the turn hard held with everything settled and only a furlong to go. Unfortunately these occasions were so few that not even the Bank of England itself could have carried him on indefinitely.

Betting had already begun on the great championship races and almost every day Red Fred put what the sporting papers described as a packet on Sensation for the long race, and he also backed the horse in doubles and trebles. Shrewd racing men whose acquaintance he had made at the meetings advised him not to try to win too much money at once, for there were ways and means of "fixing" a favourite that threatened to take too much money out of the ring. They might as well have proffered some advice to the Sphinx as try to influence Red Fred.

Matters were at this stage when the Dowager Countess of Fysshe and Fynne got to hear of what was going on. Without the loss of a moment she sent for Fitzroy and told him off in true Whitechapel fashion:

"You," she said. "You, to leave your boss just when he wanted someone to look after him! Didn't he treat you well? Didn't he give you a job when you were down and out, sacked from the police? The only man I ever knew that wasn't on the take-down, or on the make, and that wouldn't tell you lies. And when he wants a friend you run out on him like a yeller dog. I've told 'im to come and stop 'ere with me and you've got to come back and look after 'im. You've drawn a lot of money for nothin'; now let's see you earn some of it. That damned little Fysshe, if I catch her takin' 'im away bettin', I'll take the scales off her. Now go away and get your traps before I reelly start to talk to yer."

Within the next few days a chastened Red Fred and a Fitzroy with a new sense of duty were established with the Countess at one of her houses near Newmarket, where there was every luxury including a few loose-boxes for the use of the horses when they came up to race. Nothing could be gleaned from either the appearance or the conversation of Miss Fysshe as to what had transpired between her and the Countess, but the betting partnership between the Copperhead and the Shrimp was irrevocably dissolved.

Her Ladyship only referred once to the affair, when she said at dinner that the only people who could make money at racing were people that could make a fortune if turned loose with a shilling in the streets of Aberdeen — a statement that was received in silence by all parties.

Neither Red Fred nor Miss Fysshé had any interest in life other than betting. Fitzroy on the other hand had, for the time being, no interest in life at all. He was somewhat cheered up by the receipt of the following letter from Ireland:

Kilgannon Castle,
via Dublin,
Ireland,
Thursday.

Dear Mr Fitzroy,

Father has asked me to write this letter for him as he has rheumatism in the hand. He has had a letter from his manager and he desires me to inform you that your colt has been recovered by the police. He was being trained in a shed at the back of a Chinaman's garden up on the Diamantina, and there is no doubt that Jimmy the Pat put him there. The colt is in great order, nearly ready to run, and he is said to be something quite out of the common, and may be the colt of the year. Father says that his nominations were all transferred to your name and you will be able to race him as soon as legal matters are fixed up.

There is a warrant for murder out against Jimmy the Pat for stabbing a man in a gambling dispute. His gang is all broken up and that is how the police got the information about the horse. The police think that Jimmy has cleared out of Australia and that he has come over to England. There is an old suit of armour here which I daresay they would lend you. I hope the Countess is well.

Yours truly,

MOIRA DELAHUNTY.

PS. We shall be staying at Claridge's for the races and Father hopes you will come to dinner one evening.

Chapter XV. The Dopers

THE Chinese are a peaceful people — up to a certain point — and they always prefer diplomacy to more violent methods. Thus it came that when two truculent American toughs became obstreperous at the low-class Chinese restaurant known as the House of the Rising Sun, and stated that they intended to knock the block off the waiter who had served them, the proprietor did not send the waiter out to them. Instead, with a sort of grim humour, he sent, them out a boarder at the restaurant, a Chinaman newly arrived from Australia and well known to our readers under the name of Jimmy the Pat.

One look at Jimmy the Pat satisfied them that here was no defenceless Chinaman to be clouted with impunity. Instead of giving him a punch on the jaw, they offered him a drink of *samshoo* and asked him to sit down with them.

“Sit down, guy,” they said, “and have a shot of the curse of China. We b'long big Amellican lacehorse. You savvy lacehorse?”

“Me plenty savvy lacehorse,” said Jimmy the Pat, who had got away from Australia with most of his money and was finding life insupportable among a lot of his countrymen whose ideas of gambling were limited to perpetual games of fan-tan for pitifully small stakes. “Me plenty savvy lacehorse. What name lacehorse belong you?”

As already stated Jimmy the Pat could talk quite good English when it suited him to do so, but in his character of refugee from justice it was necessary to give nothing away. His shrewd brain told him that these were no owners of a racehorse but were “wrong uns” of the worst description, such as he had often employed in Australia.

They were vultures that had come over in the wake of the money-spending army, in the hopes of getting their beaks into something payable, by fair means or foul. The smaller man was an Italian-American with sleek black hair and quick beady eyes. In the crime sheets of his own country his name figured as Dominic Salvatore better known as Dominic the Doper. His friend was a Spaniard or Mexican or some sort, yellow-visaged, with an utterly expressionless face. When any racecourse swindle occurred in the States a police call would go out for Ramon Hialeah, a name that he had adopted from a leading American race-track.

Like most criminals they specialized in one particular line, the fixing-up of favourites for big events; and with the curious vanity of criminals they would often boast to the police of cases in which they had managed to beat the rap (escape from justice) through the aid of a good mouthpiece and

some suborned evidence.

Normally, they would never have talked to a stranger; but they were full of *samshoo* and felt boastful and vain-glorious. Sensing some sort of kindred spirit in the Chinaman, Dominic put out a feeler.

“Any guy with money could make a big rise over here,” he said. “Fix'em up one, two favourites, back 'em other horse. You savvy any man got money bet longa horse?”

“Hi-yah,” said Jimmy the Pat, “me savvy man got plenty money — 'ow you fix'em lacehorse?”

“Never you mind how me fix'em lacehorse. You show us the mazuma and we'll show you the fix. Look here, brother,” he went on, “I ain't going to talk Chow talk to you any more. You savvy English all right. You didn't get that pin in your tie growing cabbagee. This place ain't so all-fired slow after all. We met one guy already had the right idea. A waiter in a club he was, and he heard one of the big shots say he'd give five thousand dollars — what you call a thousand pounds — to have this English horse fixed up. That's the way to talk.

“Now, see guy, this is the lay of the cards. Our American horse can burn up the track for six furlongs, but he'll quit cold at anything over a mile. That's right, ain't it, Ramon? If we can fix up the English and the Australian horses for the long race on the last day, we can back the Frenchman and he'll be the outsider at a long price. We'll have money in our ears. But we must get someone that will bet big and give us our chop out of it. We'll see that we get it too. How does this sound to you, brother? Do you know any one that wants to pick up fifty grand, easy money?”

Needless to say, Jimmy the Pat felt this programme was ideal in every way, but having three times the brain-power of the two American crooks he was careful not to appear too eager. Also he continued to act the unsophisticated Chinaman.

“You say you fix'em two horse,” he said. “Welly, ni'. But s'pose you no fix 'em! My countlyman velly lich man, but no like lose money.”

Professional pride lent indignation to Dominic's answer:

“Say, you. Whadda you think we are? Just tin-horn sports talkin' through our hats? We got the fast stuff and the slow stuff. We can make a horse beat a railroad train or we can make him lie down and go to sleep on the track. This dead-and-alive old burg ain't seen nothin' like we've got. You show us the horses and the money, and you can go home and have a shave and a hair-cut till it's time to bring round a bag for the kale. We must wait till the last day, 'cos they'll watch these hosses like they was diamonds the first two days. Then they'll let up a bit and we'll get a chance to put in the work.”

In the end it was agreed that all parties concerned should meet at the restaurant the next night to fix up details, and the star boarder of the House of the Rising Sun went into the fan-tan room with the feeling that once more he was on the track of something really worth while.

The meeting of the International League of Dopers next evening resolved itself into a committee of ways and means. As nobody trusted anybody else, all sorts of precautions had to be taken about the obtaining of the reward for their enterprise and the division of the reward when obtained. The two Americans and the Chinaman were reinforced by the dismissed waiter, a self-satisfied little Cockney who thought himself a past master in turf roguery. When he saw his associates he began to think that he might be lucky if he got out of it with his life. The huge muscular Chinaman and the two tight-lipped American crooks were very different propositions to the servants' hall breed of bandits among which he had cut quite a dashing figure. Still, it was a case of over shoes over boots with him, so he decided to go through with it.

"It's a Hearl," he said. "A Hearl what I 'eard sayin' 'e would give a thousand to see Connie's 'orse beaten. An' 'e said it to a Baronite and a Marquis. I 'ave the names wrote down, an' the date, and everythink. Now, if we can bring this horf we can write to the Hearl and tell 'im to spar up with the money or we'll go to the Jockey Club and call the Baronite and the Marquis to give evidence. An' they'd love it — I don't think — to have to go into the dirty water and through the mangle before that nasty sneerin' Jockey Club lot. Fix Connie's 'orse up an' the money's all right, but wot do I get out of it? That's the point. Wot do I get out of it?"

"You've said a mouthful, kid," said Dominic, "that's the point. What do we all get out of it? Speakin' for me and Ramon, if anybody tries to scale us for our share, well, they won't live very long nor enjoy theirselves very much. Wot about you?" he went on turning to the Chinaman.

"Me no likee fightee," said Jimmy the Pat. "But my countlyman, he b'long hatchet-man Tong, longa China. Hatchet-man Tong all over world, longa London, longa Sanfrisco, longa Sydney. Use automatic, no use hatchet now."

This brief sketch brought to the mind of the waiter a vision of himself going for his life, with the hatchet-men after him with automatics. Even the American crooks were impressed, for they knew better than anybody else the danger of offending one of these Chinese secret societies.

"Why worry, guys?" said Dominic. "Why worry? We ain't goin' to play no skin game on each other. We're all gentlemen 'ere. There'll be plenty for all of us. We'll get it off the sheet boys [bookmakers]. Now, let's come down to tin tacks. We want somebody to put up ten grand on the right

horse. Will your countryman do it?"

Ten grand, or in English figures two thousand pounds, was a big stake, but Jimmy the Pat had dealt in big figures and he still had plenty of money. Like all Chinese he would sooner gamble than eat. He decided there and then to go on with the business.

"All li," he said, as casually as though he were clinching a deal for a jar of ginger. "All li. My countlyman he find'em money. I go long, see you fix'em horse."

This did not suit the plans of the dopers at all, and Ramon Hialeah, speaking for the first time, made a few ill-chosen remarks.

"Chee," he said, speaking out of the corner of his mouth, "who's goin' to give dis horse de woiks? Us or you? You yaller Chink . . ."

He got no further. Jimmy the Pat had summed up the situation quickly, and he knew that if he sailed with this pirate crew he had to be either captain or cabin-boy; and he had no intention of being cabin-boy. Quick as a flash, he hit Ramon on the chest with his right hand and at the same time dropped his left hand into his coat-pocket, where a bulge suggested an automatic. It is said that when an amateur wishes to hit a man on the chest, he aims at his chest, but a professional wishing to hit a man on the chest, aims at his backbone. Ramon flew out of his chair as though kicked by a horse and lay on the floor gasping, while Jimmy the Pat glared down on him and said:

"Me b'long hatchet-man Tong, too."

He kept his hand in his pocket as he said it, and the two crooks expected an automatic bullet at any moment. Realizing that Jimmy had the drop on them, they did not attempt to draw their guns but hurriedly conceded all points in dispute and cleared out.

Thus was a new captain elected to the International League of Dopers. After the others had left the room Jimmy the Pat drew a large pipe from his pocket, lit it, and proceeded to enjoy a well-earned smoke.

In the next few weeks a tide of visitors flowed into London from all countries of the world, lured by the attraction of the great international series of horse-races. The American horse duly arrived, a big plain-bodied and somewhat ungainly animal trained to jump out at top speed and go for his life on the hard dirt tracks of his native country. As he had several strains of American blood in his pedigree he had drifted somewhat away from the original English type and was short in the neck and carried all his power in his rump. The Americans specialize in speed, for a speed horse can get two or three races to suit him on any programme while a stayer can only get one race a day.

Clean Sweep, as he was called, after his Broomstick breeding, was

accompanied by his owner, a wealthy young American who said that his horse might get beaten but he himself was from Missouri and they would have to show him. As befitted his importance, Clean Sweep travelled not exactly with a full band but with a retinue comprising his private chemist, his Press agent, a motion picture outfit, and several galloping partners. The Americans stand their horses up to a lot of work and they have a lotion, an embrocation, and a cough mixture for every change of weather or every variation in the horse's temperature. Bill the Gunner was allowed to visit the American stable and came away saying that the horse had a separate strapper for every leg and a "messer" (masseur) for each side of its body.

The French horse Edouard, a scion of the Teddy breed, came over with much flourish of trumpets and was easily the smallest horse of the international quartette. But the French specialize in stayers, for their racing is largely supported by Government subsidies given to encourage the breeding of horses' tough enough to stand a military campaign. A lithe, wiry gentleman, this French horse, with a well-earned reputation for going to the front and beating off challengers one after another as they came at him. Still, as Crusader's trainer said, a weight-for-age race is not like a handicap, and if the Frenchman had to make all his own running the English and Australian horses would have the last run at him and their greater stride and speed should be able to smother him at the finish.

The early betting favoured the American horse for the six-furlong race, while Crusader was a strong favourite for the two longer races. The *cognoscenti* voted that the Australian horse looked lonely without a cart. But every time he drifted in the betting Red Fred's money put him back to his old place again. What psychologists call the herd instinct is strong in the English, who all like to back the same horse, and in the various betting-clubs Crusader was a strong favourite. As one of the johnnies put it: "These chaps that back outsiders always have something wrong with them."

Not that the early betting was very heavy, for there is no chance of winning a fortune at long odds in a field of four. There was, however, constant support from some unknown quarter for the French horse in the long race. After a time Mr Manasses became uneasy and ordered Connie Galbraith — she was always Connie Galbraith to the multitude — to come and see him.

Finance is supposed to be a soulless business, but just as there are artists in surgery there are artists in finance. The soul of the artist needs the stimulus of difficulty to make him do his best, and Mr Manasses was a financial artist. He dearly loved to get hold of a semi-bankrupt concern and put it on its feet by stretching credit; by putting good men in charge; and by

asking — nay, by compelling — support from the big Jewish interests. When the Saxonite Motor Company was drifting to ruin under the guidance of an expert engineer and a gifted inventor, did not Mr Manasses take charge and make it pay thirty per cent under the management of his nephew and a staff of super-salesmen? The management of Connie's racing syndicate had been merely a routine job, but things had occurred which called for a master mind. An elderly and unimpressive Jew, of the type that would have defied the greatest make-up artist in the world to make him look like anything else, Mr Manasses sat in his office and took charge of the situation.

He had known Connie in her rag-factory days. In fact, Connie's widowed mother had many a time been helped by one of the gigantic Jewish charities administered with marvellous efficiency by Mr Manasses. Also, he was an aristocrat of his race, and the fact that Connie had become an English countess was — in his eyes — just one of those accidents that are liable to occur to anybody. To him she was still the Whitechapel Jewess with whom he was accustomed to chat in the Whitechapel lingo and he saw no reason for making any change.

Connie blew into his office like a sirocco, dragging Fitzroy and Red Fred after her like bits of wind-blown paper. She sat herself down in a chair, and opened on him in pure Whitechapel:

“Now, Manasses, wot's on yer mind? 'As somebody been givin' yer a bad two bob? Tell Auntie wot they've been doin' to yer.”

Seeing that Connie had elected to play the part of a dialect comedienne Mr Manasses answered her in kind.

“Connie, vere are your ears that 'aven't 'eard the people that are workin' underground? Vere is your nose” (here Connie clapped her hand over that organ), “that you 'aven't smelt somethin' in the air? Vere are your eyes that you 'aven't seen in the papers all the money that is comin' for the French 'orse? His owner don't bet at all and yet there are men bettin' as if they knew something. Vot's the meanin' of that Connie? It means that somebody is goin' to settle the other horses. We can't afford to have anything go wrong you know.”

“Ow can anything go wrong?” said Connie. “There's enough seats sold now to show a profit.”

“Never mind about the profit, Connie. If we give the people a bad show that's somethin' goin' wrong ain't it? It mustn't 'appen, Connie. Vere 'ave you got your 'orse?”

“Where would you think I'd 'ave 'im,” said Connie. “In a wooden 'utch in the back yard? 'E's down at the trainer's, o' course.”

Mr Manasses felt it was time to drop the Whitechapel and to talk

impressively:

“Tell your trainer to slip him away quietly up to your own place at Newmarket. You've got loose-boxes there. You must put a guard on him day and night, but I don't know where you'd get a man you could trust. There's not hundreds in this job, there's thousands in it if they can fix the favourite.”

“Listen 'ere,” said Connie, waving her hand towards Fitzroy. “You see Percy the Pet sittin' at the end of the table lookin' like a counter-jumper out of a job? Well, 'e's Sandow at six stone seven. 'E lifted me with one 'and.”

Here Connie relapsed into the Yiddish. “'E'th that throng,” she said, “that I think 'e muth be vun of uth. If any dopers comes along my money's on little pansy-face 'ere. 'E's fell out with 'is girl and that'll make 'im fight savage. And 'e don't know the value of money. 'E wanted to sling up a thousand-a-year job just because 'e wasn't earnin' his pay. Could you make yourself believe that Mithter Manattheth?”

Mr Manasses looked very hard at Fitzroy. But he had seen so many freaks in his life that one or two more made little difference to him.

“What have you been doing, Mr Fitzroy?” he said.

Fitzroy reflected that for the past year or two his life had been just one thing after another. He seemed to have an incurable flair for getting into trouble and anything was better than hanging round the Countess's establishment doing nothing.

“I'll take it on if you like,” he said. “But it's all nonsense about my being so strong. I know a hold or two, that's all. I was a policeman for a bit.”

Here Red Fred thought he ought to get into the argument.

“My oath,” he said, “he was. He arrested me. An' he threw a twenty-stone Chinaman all over northern Queensland. That same Chow's wanted for murder now.”

This sounded to Mr Manasses like the outline for a movie scenario, but he supposed that it must be the sort of thing they habitually did in Australia. To him it was far more surprising that Fitzroy should want to give up a thousand-a-year job because he wasn't earning the money. Remarking that he was prepared to insure Fitzroy's life in a very good company, he turned to the next item on the agenda which was the protection of Red Fred's horse.

“Get two men with revolvers,” he said, “and let them watch your horse day and night. I'll give you a letter to a cousin of mine and he'll let you have the revolvers at wholesale price. No use wasting money. Have you got any men you can trust?”

“Too right, I have,” said Red Fred, “I've got one anyhow. Bill the Gunner. He'll shoot 'em like crows if they come pokin' round. He'll shoot

first and ast 'em what they want afterwards.”

“Yes,” said Connie, “and look at the publicity if he shot a chap. There's no Press agency stuff about a dead man. Every paper in London 'd 'ave to print it.”

Bitter experience had taught Manasses that when a music-hall star interferes in business there is always trouble and generally disaster.

“You leave the publicity to me, Connie,” he said. “You look after your horse and I'll look after the publicity. Now run along, I've got something important to do.”

Little did Mr Manasses know the publicity this affair was to get!

Chapter XVI. In Aid Of Charity

NEARER and nearer came the great day for the International Meeting and the trainers began to send their charges along in earnest. Sensation's trainer had the most difficult task, for his horse had left Sydney in full racing condition and had to be strung up again after a very brief spell. Few horses would have stood it, but Sensation was one of the easy-going, contented type and had taken a great fancy to Bill the Gunner, who looked after him and rode him at his work. Shut up by themselves the greater part of the day, racehorses thrive best when looked after by someone in whom they have absolute confidence.

Many a good horse has been spoiled by an irritable or unsympathetic attendant. Bill the Gunner simply worshipped his horse and spent most of his time in his company, rubbing his head and talking to him, assuring him that he would lob in. Sensation repaid him with absolute trust and confidence, slouching contentedly down to the track and doing his work without getting excited or taking anything out of himself. On one occasion Sensation slipped down on his side while going fast round a slippery turn and Bill the Gunner came off him. Instead of galloping wildly about the place Sensation walked back to his fallen rider, apparently to see if he were hurt.

The more fiery English horse, Crusader, wanted his own way all the time. He was being worked into condition after a long spell. While he was fresh he would rear up and whinny to the other horses on the track, and get himself into a great state of excitement. When his work had sobered him down a little, he took to pulling very hard and wanting to race every horse that came alongside him. His trainer had to resort to the device of putting up one rider for slow work and, another for fast work. Crusader got to know that the stable-boy meant slow work and the jockey fast work; he would canter round contentedly with the stable-boy, but was into his stride like a flash when the jockey got on him.

Owing to a milder winter in France the French horse had begun his preparation earlier than Crusader and had a good deal of hard work "inside him," as the trainers say, when he came over. Like most true stayers he was a quiet worker and his trainer did not hurry with him, keeping him at slow work and building muscle on to him every day. He was a laconic individual, this French trainer. Asked when he would begin to send his horse along he said in his own language that he would build him up first and fine him down afterwards.

To the initiated it was evident that the American horse was being

prepared specially for the sprint race as he was sent for short dashes against the watch on almost every galloping morning, and was never allowed to take the edge off his speed by long gallops. When asked why he did not send his horse for long gallops his trainer replied: "Say, bo, that's a job for a railroad train, this is only a hose."

The course itself lay in the centre of a circle of hills with grandstands perched on one slope and with almost unlimited room for the cheaper spectators on a hill at the other side of the course. By way of gaining publicity, Mr Manasses had directed that this hill country should be thrown open free to spectators on galloping mornings and the place soon earned the nickname of the Tower of Babel.

At first the horses thought they were at a race-meeting and were inclined to get on their toes; but they soon quietened down and it had a valuable influence in getting them used to the crowds.

Among the most constant watchers on the hill were two small Latin-Americans and a burly Chinaman, the latter so muffled, up in wraps that it was hard to see anything of his face. Jimmy the Pat knew that if once his associates got to hear of the reward for his arrest, they would sell him out to the police or murder him for his share of the doping venture. So, every day the Australian horse galloped, the Chinaman asked all sorts of questions about Australia — where it was, and whether it was part of America. Not that Ramon and Dominic paid much attention to this babble. They never took their eyes or their minds off the horses.

Both were expert track watchers. After one good look at a horse they would know his hide on a bush, as Dominic put it. Also, they had followed the horses from the track to their stables and knew every move in their routine — when and by whom they were fed, and when they were bedded at night. Before making any move they wanted to get the general lay of the land: to see which horse really had a chance and which could be disregarded.

Then came the trial gallops, when the cracks were sent against their stable-mates and the two dopers watched every stride of these trials. Crusader was always a very free worker so he was usually sent with one mate for the first half of the journey and with another to bring him home. It takes a champion to beat off a fresh horse at the end of a mile-and-a-quarter gallop, but the jockey had hard work to hold Crusader back to the fresh horse at the end of each gallop.

Nudging Jimmy the Pat with his elbow Ramon pointed out one of these finishes.

"Say, guy," he said, "you mightn't know it, but dere's not two horses in de woild could do dat. Dat hoss he beat won a big handicap at York last

week wid top weight.”

Sensation was a problem to the track watchers. Not being allowed to have his own way with the horse, Bill the Gunner had decided to show his boss a point or two, and when riding slow work he had made a habit of shaking a stick at Sensation. He never hit him with it, and after a while Sensation would swing along without taking any more notice of the stick than a polo pony takes of a polo mallet. When the trials came on, and Sensation was asked to gallop with a stable-mate, Bill the Gunner would flourish his whip and appear to be riding hard but the lazy horse never responded and was constantly beaten by his galloping companions.

“Lynx” of the *Sporting Argus*, said that Sensation was a wash-out and should be running in selling plates, while “Searchlight” of the *Racing Omniscient* said that the horse was a false alarm and couldn't beat a carpet. Sensation's trainer was as much puzzled as anybody. When he asked Bill the Gunner what was the matter with the horse, the only answer he got was that the horse was all right and was home and dried.

“Perhaps he's a natural slug,” said the trainer hopefully. “Did he always work like that in Australia?”

“I never rode him in Australia,” said Bill the Gunner, and walked away leaving the trainer more puzzled than ever.

With things in this state, all sorts of nasty rumours began to get about. The great International Meeting was a mere hippodrome; the owner of the Australian horse was living with Connie Galbraith or she was living with him, according to the taste of the talker; they would put their heads together and win with whichever suited them. The French and American owners were in their pay and would do as they were told; the good old public were due to get it in the neck once more; and so on and so on.

These rumours were not long in getting to the ears of Mr Manasses and he sent for Connie in a great hurry. He was too much upset to go through his usual pantomime of talking Yiddish:

“Connie, what's all this! I'm not going to have all my work spoiled. They say you are living with this Australian and that you and he will fix up the races. What do you mean by it?”

“I've got him stayin' with me,” said Connie. “He was bustin' himself bettin', and I pulled 'im out of it. Any 'arm in that?”

“No, but they say you are living with him.”

“Who says that?”

“Your brother-in-law for one.”

“That lobster. I'll shut 'im up. Now lissen 'ere, Manasses. I'm gettin' on, and it's lonely livin' by yourself. I been thinkin' of marryin' this Red Fred, a decent man, not one of these sham swells or hungry loafers that'd marry me

for me money and leave me for some tart. I ain't said nothin' to 'im about it yet, but I'll fix it up when I go back. 'Ow does that strike yer?"

Being absolutely impervious to shocks, Mr Manasses never batted an eyelid.

"Suit yerself, Connie. Suit yerself. But what about the races? This will make it worse than ever — husband and wife racing against each other. I'd believe it was straight; but thousands wouldn't."

"Damn the horses. I wish I'd never seen them. Wait a minit now, till I think. We must get some publicity out of it."

For a moment or two Connie prowled about the room like a hungry lioness. Then she danced a few steps and gave a whoop.

"I got it, I got it," she roared at the top of her voice, making Manasses jump out of his chair. "I got it. It's a motzer. It's a schnitzler. We'll have to pack 'em in on the roof of the grandstand. What do the shows do when they can't fill the house, Manasses? They do something for a charity. They offer to give half the house to a charity. You can always get a crowd in for a charity in England. Now lissen! You pick out two big charities, something the Royal Family is patrons of (just as well do it in style while we're about it), and Fred and I'll each hand over a horse to charity and the charity'll get whatever the horse wins. Do yer get me? Each horse might win fifteen thousand quid and which ever charity gets the best horse'll get the money. They can 'ave their own trainers and their own riders. Me and Fred'll 'ave nothin' to do with it. Ain't that a wow of a notion?"

Mr Manasses, as a rule, adhered strictly to the proverb which says praise nobody till he is dead. He did not always praise them then; but Connie's suggestion carried him off his feet.

"You're a wonder, Connie," he said, "a living wonder. Of course it will pull 'em in. I'll pick out two charities, one for soldiers and one for sailors. We might get the King and Queen, to come. Then nobody'd be game enough to stop away. I'll order ten thousand extra race-books and we'll want them all. Have you spoken to Mr Carstairs about it yet?"

"Of course I 'aven't. I only just thought of it. Anyway why should I ask 'im. Don't be silly."

"I only thought he would like to know that he might have to give away five or ten thousand pounds. Some of 'em don't like it. What made you think of it?"

"To tell you the truth, I wanted to get level with the Lobster. If this goes over the way it ought — with a bang — the Lobster'll go and drown himself for spite."

Every paper in London, even the Tailor and Cutter's Gazette, had a paragraph next day, unpaid and in the centre of the opening page.

ENGAGEMENT IN HIGH LIFE

The engagement is announced of Connie, Dowager Countess of Fyssh and Fynne, to the Australian millionaire, Mr Fred Carstairs, who has been staying with the Countess at her palatial seat in Newmarket.

Interest is added to the announcement by the fact that the Countess is the owner of the English champion Crusader, while Mr Carstairs owns the Australian horse Sensation, and the two are to run against each other at the forthcoming International Meeting. By way of celebrating their engagement the happy pair have decided to hand over their horses to run in the interests of two separate charities, one for soldiers and one for sailors.

The charities will have the right to nominate their own trainers and riders if they choose to do so, and one or other charity is almost sure to benefit largely. When this news was conveyed to the owners of the French and American horses they at once expressed a desire to be allowed to follow such an admirable example.

Connie's master-stroke changed the whole outlook for the International Race-meeting. The royal patronage was accorded to the affair, and people who had been industriously forecasting failure were now fighting desperately for tickets. In all countries of the globe there is a certain percentage of people who specialize in getting free tickets for everything. No matter how exclusive the affair, these people will get in, if the air can get into the room. Race-meetings are always happy hunting-grounds for the free-ticket fiends and they descended on Mr Manasses like flying-foxes on an orchard. From him, however, they got lots of civility but no free tickets.

Dominic and Ramon and Jimmy the Pat still attended all the morning gallops, weighing up the chances and waiting their time to strike. They knew that the really solid betting would take place after the first days racing, when the public had seen the horses; they also knew that the plodding French horse would cut but a poor figure in the six-furlong and mile-and-a-quarter races. Their associates had already secured a lot of money about him for the two-mile race and they meant to go in again, after the first day, and back him for all the money in sight. Then it only remained for them to "fix up" Crusader and Sensation, and they would win so much money that they could afford to eschew the sacking of racecourses and live cleanly ever after, if such a life had any attraction for them.

Watching the work, Ramon grew critical.

"He's a cheese champion dis Australian hoss," he said. "Why worry about heem? Even if we gave heem de fast stuff he wouldn't beat de clerk o' de course."

"Not on your life," said Dominic. "That guy on him is sore from hittin' himself down the leg with the whip. Some day he'll hit the horse by mistake and then you'll see him breeze. That guy's been feeding you on apple-sauce and you been fallin' for it. We'll fix the Englishman first and

him afterwards. It's no good sewin' a thing up unless you sew it proper.”

Jimmy the Pat had watched all the work without saying anything. It did not suit him to let his associates know that he was a first-class judge of racing; but as chief of the gang it was necessary for him to give a decision.

“I think Dominic too right,” he said. “More better we make sure.”

Chapter XVII. The First Day's Racing

A glorious day marked the opening of the International Race-meeting. A scent of summer was in the air and the stately English trees rustled and whispered as the breeze, passing through their leaves, made mosaics of light and shade on the ground. There is a sort of dignity, a repose, about an English countryside. From the grandstands the eye looked across the course, to uplands covered with a profusion of trees through which the rides ran like the aisles of a cathedral.

The course itself was just a mass of humanity. The grandstand, the flat land in the centre of the course, and the hill at the back, were packed with perhaps the most conglomerate crowd ever assembled to a race-meeting. By some sort of instinct the various nations had sorted themselves into racial groups, and bookmakers were calling the odds in every language under the sun. Black firemen from the China coast were betting in Mexican dollars; Arabs were digging into their voluminous clothing and producing — of all things — sovereigns hoarded since the days when the British Army was in Egypt. In recognition of the liberality of the horse-owners, the best naval and best military bands had volunteered their services, the former playing in front of the grandstand and the other among the people on the hill at the other side of the course. A few preliminary events were run off and then came the first of the three great races, the Six Furlongs Championship for international horses.

By way of working up the excitement, Mr Manasses had ordered that the horses should trot round the course separately before the race, and that these parades should be accompanied by international music, music being the one thing that is the same in every language. The selection of appropriate tunes he had left to a musical genius on the staff of one of the theatres, and the genius did his job perhaps a little too well.

Sharp on time a horse wearing a jacket of stars and stripes stepped out on to the track and was greeted with a roar of cheering. Most animals would have been scared to death, but a thoroughbred horse is born with an instinct for crowds and the American drew himself up and broke into a trot through that dense human lane, feeling by some animal telepathy that everything was all right and that he himself was the hero of the occasion.

Hardly had he started to trot round when the band at the grandstand gate broke into "Dixie" played as only a great band could play it. The *rap tap tap* of the kettle-drums seemed to mark the time for the horse's trot, and the blare of the brasses sounded like a call to battle. Southern Americans threw up their hats and gave the rebel yell; niggers in all directions started to

cake-walk, accompanying the performance with what they conceived to be appropriate gestures, a North American prize-fighter from the State of Maine spat out his chewing-gum and said: "I'll sure take a sock at that big nigger in a minute. He's getting too fresh." As the horse reached the back of the course the naval band stopped dead and the military band broke into "Marching Through Georgia" with its triumphant refrain of "Hurrah, Hurrah, we bring the jubilee." The North American section sang the old marching song as Sherman's soldiers sang it in the days that are gone but not forgotten. As the horse got safely back to the enclosure the genius wiped his brow and said:

"Well, I got 'em goin', didn't I? But what was up with 'em. They seemed to want to go for each other."

Then came the French horse to the strains of "Partant pour la Syrie," winding up with "Malbrook s'en va't en guerre," an appropriate enough sentiment. But the genius had been troubled as to the tune that he should allot to the Australian horse. He had an idea that Australia was a remote sort of place so he played for safety with "Ten Thousand Miles Away" and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." Being as unexcitable as crack billiard players, the French and Australian horses took it all as a matter of course. When, however, the highly-strung English horse came out, he pranced on the track and blew through his nostrils like Job's warhorse sniffing the battle. Fear was absolutely foreign to his nature, but he knew that he had to race and he snorted defiance as he looked round for his competitors. By some lucky accident the genius awarded him "A Fine Old English Gentleman" for the first half of his parade, and he came home to the strains of "Rule Britannia" sung by a massed choir of a hundred thousand voices. Far-away Britishers listened in on the wireless and wondered what it was all about and whether the Prince of Wales had got engaged.

When they went to the post the American horse was a short-priced favourite, with Crusader second in demand. The distance was voted too short for the plodding French horse, while the Australian was looked upon as out of his class in this company at any distance. Old campaigners, they gave no trouble at the post, and as the starter pressed the lever and shouted "Go," the American horse was into his stride like a flash. So quickly did he begin that he set up a lead of three lengths in the first two hundred yards, and it seemed that he would go right away from his field. But a really good horse is a good horse at any distance, and as the others got their longer strides into action he ceased to gain and the race was on in earnest. Hunched on his horse's back, the American rider hugged the rails, for a horse will run better with a rail to guide him than out in the centre of a track. Three lengths behind him came Crusader racing desperately to make

up the lost distance, with Sensation and the French horse a couple of lengths farther back. Finding himself left behind at the start, Bill the Gunner's warped mentality asserted itself, and instead of embarking on a hopeless chase after the leader he decided to let Sensation make no show at all. Flourishing his whip, he appeared to be riding his horse hard, but Sensation took no notice of the whip and dropped back till he was an inglorious last. Even the French horse outpaced him, and Messrs Lynx, Searchlight and Company were more than ever convinced that the Australian horse was one of the worst false-alarms ever seen on the English turf.

The furlong posts flashed past and at the half mile the American had exhausted his first great burst of speed. But he still had a two lengths lead and his rider was able to give him just an instant's relief from the pressure, just long enough for him to snatch a breath of much-needed air. Crusader closed on him and a roar went up as the English horse's head drew to his girth. Three lengths from the post, the American rider gave a squeeze of his knees and a twitch of his hands and his horse's great natural speed landed him a winner by half a length from Crusader, with the others beaten off. The first engagement in the international battle had been won by America, and the naval charity was richer by five thousand pounds.

Press reporters crowded round the jockeys to get their stories of the race. But the jockey's story to the Press and his story to his trainer are not always one and the same. Speaking in his soft Southern drawl the American rider said to the Pressmen:

“Waal, gents, ah never saw the other horses. Ah was looking for the winnin'-post. How did he finish with me? Waal, he knew, he'd been racing but ah never noticed that he stopped none.”

To the trainer he said:

“Say, Eli, that track here is measured wrong. That last furlong is half a mile, and then some. Ah thought that winnin'-post was galloping on ahead of us, and ah'd never catch it.”

The English rider, whose valet was waiting to take him home in his car, said:

“Put in anything you like. I think the winner went too fast for me. I may have been wrong; but that was my general impression.”

To the trainer he said:

“That Yank's a certainty at six furlongs; a possibility at a mile; but not an earthly at a mile and yard.”

The Frenchman said much the same things in his own language. Bill the Gunner when asked how his horse was going through the race said: “Flat out,” and walked away to lead the horse home. When the trainer asked him

what he thought of Sensation's chance in the longer races Bill said that he would lob in and went to work making the horse comfortable for the night.

Financially, the day's racing had been one of the greatest successes on record. On the way home in Connie's car Fitzroy had to listen to that lady bubbling over with enthusiasm as to the amount of the takings, and the prospects of Crusader in the longer races. He himself felt like a teetotaller at a big dinner, who sits silent and glum while other people are laughing at what passes for wit when everybody had a bottle or so of champagne to stimulate his sense of humour.

Things were all right for Red Fred, for the pumps had sucked dry at the Daybreak mine and production had been resumed, with the mine paying as well as ever. Mr Delahunty, too, was all right, for there had been five inches of rain on his station and fifty thousand sheep that were worth five shillings apiece before the fall were now worth twelve shillings and sixpence. Fitzroy alone was out of luck: he felt that if the heavens were to rain duck soup he would have only a fork. Then again if Connie married Red Fred, he (Fitzroy) would find his occupation gone. There is no sense in keeping a dog and barking yourself; Red Fred would have no need of a watchdog while Connie retained her health and strength. It was a parasite's job anyhow, and Fitzroy was anxious to be quit of it.

But what was he to do? He had no liabilities, certainly. Red Fred had paid him well and had kept him in food and lodging. But his only assets appeared to be an ability to throw people about and some few hundred pounds he had saved from his pay. Not much of a balance-sheet, this, to present to any prospective father-in-law. Milling the thing over in his mind he suddenly thought of the colt Red Fred had given him in Australia. According to the news from Australia this colt gave great promise and might sell for a fairly large sum of money. As he put it to himself why not sell the colt and give the money a chance — buy shares in a gold-mine; pick up an Old Master for a few pounds in a dealer's shop; or go to Monte Carlo and break the bank? Other people made money quickly, and youth is always ready for adventure.

On the way home from the races he asked Connie to stop the car. He jumped out and hunted up the cable office. There he dispatched an urgent-rate message to Charley Stone at the Empire Pastoral Company in Sydney, asking him to see what he could get for the colt. About midnight he received the reply:

“Can get a thousand. Do you want it?”

Reflecting that, as the Americans say, a thousand was the one thing he wanted, he hunted up the code-book and replied: “Saucepan audacity emporal”; which on being interpreted meant:

“Must have it, wire at once to my credit Empire Pastoral Company London.” Then he retired to bed, to dream that he had established a stud and was breeding horses, none of which were worth less than a thousand and some up to ten thousand guineas apiece.

Charley Stone must have worked fast, or Fitzroy's colt must have been very cheap at a thousand guineas. The cable to sell was only dispatched on the Saturday night, and early on Monday morning the money came to hand. This was settling-day after the first day's racing, and having nothing in the world to do, Fitzroy thought he might as well stroll down and see the settling.

One of our greatest dramatists — Barrie, was it not? — once wrote about the ten-pound look. Has any one ever done justice to the thousand-pound feeling? With that sum in cash and an honorary member's ticket in his pocket Fitzroy strolled into the settling at the big betting-club. He had no definite ideas but felt like an emperor, or, rather, like emperors used to feel before so many of them became “stonkered” — if one may use the word. Once before in his life he had known a similar feeling: when he landed in Australia with a thousand pounds given him by his uncle. That thousand pounds had vanished like fairy money; but its passing had left no tracks on the india-rubber temperament of youth. Once again he had a thousand pounds, so why worry about the past?

For a while he listened to the babel of the settling and nodded to an acquaintance here and there. Among them was a tight-lipped little man who had been at school with him and, after having floated companies, sold shares, and owned racehorses, had settled down into one of London's best-known racing commissioners. He executed commissions for other people and did not forget to help himself when any particularly good information came his way. This man was paying and receiving piles of notes as though they were grocery coupons. Fitzroy, watching his operations, became more than ever convinced that where there was so much money about some of it should fall to his share.

But looking at money was one thing; getting it was quite another. He had vague thoughts of how easy it would be to grab a pile of notes, double up the doorkeeper and make for the great open spaces. He glanced through the window, saw a policeman on guard at the door, and abandoned that method of doubling or trebling his capital. Then just as he was debating whether to go straight home or look in at his club he caught sight of his hereditary foe, the immaculate Mr Noall. Fitzroy decided to make for his club. Mr Noall, however, had other ideas. He had learnt that Fitzroy had some very influential relatives who might be of great assistance to a rising young politician, and he was not of the type that would let a little matter like a

fight stand in the way of his personal advancement. Looking more of a swell — and more Levantine — than ever, he bore down on Fitzroy, exuding affability.

“Well, well,” he said. “We haven't met since that affair at Randwick. It was just as well the police stopped it. We might have hurt each other. I met Miss Delahunty in Ireland and made my peace with her. I seem to have offended her in some way at that luncheon, but you know ladies don't understand racing.”

Fitzroy reflected that perhaps some ladies understood more about racing than some Levantines, but he did not wish to drag Moira's name into any betting-club brawl. He hated the sight of this man, and nothing would have pleased him better than to finish their Randwick fracas there and then, but he managed to choke down his temper. He even thought of offering Mr Noall a drink, but decided there was no need to go to extremes in hypocrisy. He was trying to think of something to say when Mr Noall went on:

“I met your uncle the other day. Being the head of the Foreign Office he could get me the nomination for that Bucks division. Would you come to dinner some evening, and we might be able to get the old gentleman to come along. I'd like to meet him privately. It would do me a good turn, and of course I would be glad to put something in your way later on.”

Reflecting that if he saw Mr Noall drowning he would sooner throw him a grindstone than a life-buoy, Fitzroy said he had no influence with his uncle and turned to walk away. His manner offended the Levantine in his most sensitive point, for he had a great idea of his own importance and a great desire to get into society. He had looked on Fitzroy as one able to open the door for him and here he found it banged in his face.

“All right, Fitzroy,” he said, “you're a queer fellow. I wanted to help you. I was going to ask you to dinner to meet Miss Delahunty, but we'll consider that off.”

Just as he spoke one of the bookmakers started to call the double.

“I'll lay the double. The two last Internationals. Crusader and any way. Crusader and Edouard, Crusader and Clean Sweep. Ten to one Crusader and Sensation. Come on, don't nobody want to back the bushranger?”

“I should think they wouldn't,” said Mr Noall. “A nice brute to bring all the way from Australia. I've got half a dozen horses, myself, which could beat him. I'd lay twelve to one the double Crusader and Sensation and think I was picking up money.”

Looking at this man, so sleek and prosperous, while he himself had only a thousand pounds in the world, Fitzroy recalled the saying of the big Australian bookmaker that it took a rat to bet like a gentleman. He himself

was a gentleman — by birth at any rate — and it was up to him to show that a gentleman could bet like a rat. Prudence and common sense went to the winds, for here was a chance to make a fortune at a stroke.

“Do you mean that?” he said. “Do you mean that you would bet twelve to one against Crusader and Sensation?”

Mr Noall wondered what was coming next. He knew that Fiteroy was very hard up, and he had not heard of the sale of the colt.

“Of course I mean it,” he said. “It would be like picking up money in the street. But I wouldn't be interested in any threepenny-bit bets.”

The taunt about the, threepenny-bit bets settled it.

Fitzroy's temperament was that of a schoolboy, and a schoolboy will do anything on a “dare.”

“Will you bet twelve thousand to a thousand?” he said.

“Yes, for cash. I'd like to know that I was going to get the money if I won it.”

Without another word Fitzroy pulled out of his pocket a guaranteed bank cheque for a thousand pounds and beckoned the little commissioner over:

“I've just made a bet with this gentleman. He has laid me twelve thousand to a thousand the double, Crusader and Sensation. Take this cheque and pay him if it loses, and collect for me if it wins.”

Then without even saying good-bye to Mr Noall he turned and stalked out of the club, cursing himself for the greatest fool on earth. That pocket felt so empty without the thousand pounds.

Chapter XVIII. Second Day's Racing

THE success of the first day's racing sent everybody off their balance. Even Connie, who was fond of saying that she would not bet on the sun rising, secretly rang up Mr Manasses and told him to put a hundred pounds on Crusader for her in the mile-and-a-quarter race on the second day. Her trainer had told her that she was absolutely certain to beat the American, equally certain to beat the Australian, and that it was ten to one on her beating the French horse. To which Connie replied:

"I've heard of them certainties before. I've 'ad some. I wouldn't back a racehorse with bad money" — and then set off and rang up Mr Manasses as before said.

Red Fred, too, being under orders not to bet, was leading a double life and was betting through his *valet de chambre*. This latter gentleman was, to the naked eye, the acme of respectability; on the quiet he was an agent for a big starting-price bookmaker and received a commission of two shillings in the pound on all business brought in by him. A discouraging thought, this, to those who tilt at the ring, for a backer cannot have much chance when a bookmaker can afford to pay ten per cent to get his business.

But ten per cent or any other per cent meant nothing to Red Fred who had caught the punting fever for which the only cure is death. What with Connie's homilies on the folly of betting and Red Fred's sycophantic agreement therewith, Fitzroy felt that they would at least have him arrested as a lunatic if he said anything about his big double. He spent the Tuesday in keeping away as far as possible from human intercourse, and waited feverishly to see how the first leg of his double would shape on the Wednesday.

The way of the transgressor is hard and things were not made any easier for Fitzroy when Sensation's trainer turned up at Newmarket Lodge full of mystery. As Connie was out he had an uninterrupted interview with Red Fred and Fitzroy and stated his case to them.

"There's something wrong," he said. "This boy of yours, this Bill the Gunner, isn't getting your horse out. I'm certain the horse can do better. I'd like to put another rider on him to-morrow, and I think we might beat Her Ladyship's horse. This horse of yours wouldn't blow a match out after his gallops yet he'll let anything in the stable beat him. Let me put O'Rourke — Jimmy the Butcher — they call him — on your horse to-morrow and if Jimmy the Butcher can't win on him, we'll let your boy ride him again on the last day."

Red Fred was always ready to fall in with any suggestion made by anybody, but he trembled to think what Bill the Gunner would have to say to this arrangement. As usual he compromised.

“Well, you can put this butcher cove of yours up to-morrow if you like, but I won't take Bill the Gunner off him altogether. Let your cove ride him to-morrow and Bill can ride him on Saturday. I don't know what's up with the horse meself. He could go like a blue-flyer kangaroo in Australia, but here he's like a shearer's horse — goes a long way in a long time.”

With that the trainer took his departure, and Fitzroy was left to conjure up pictures of this ruthless rider driving Sensation home ahead in front of Connie's horse and settling the first leg of his twelve-thousand-pound double. It seemed to be all in keeping with the rest of his luck.

By request of the trainers the grand parade of the horses with musical accompaniment was cut out the second day. The horses had to run three hard races in eight days and the modern racehorse, temperamental to a degree, is easily upset by excitement. Crusader had not relished the first day's parade, in fact it had upset him more than the race and his trainer would have no more of it.

“If you start 'em cake-walking and dancing the *can-can* again,” he said, “I'll have to sit up to-night and drop oats into the stems of sow thistles to make my horse eat anything. We've had enough of the circus business and enough is too much if you ask me.”

This ultimatum was delivered to a committee consisting of Mr Manasses and several other gentlemen, some of whom had but the scantiest knowledge of the subject. As is usual on committees those who knew the least felt compelled to make suggestions, just to show that they were not altogether passengers on the voyage.

One of these worthies caught the word circus and hopped in with a helpful remark.

“It is a pity we didn't know about this,” he said, “there's a circus in camp just over here and we could have got them to give us a parade. Fine elephant they've got.”

“Look gentlemen,” said the trainer, “if you bring an elephant, or even a Bengal tiger, anywhere within scent of my horse I'll scratch him.”

“All right, all right,” said Mr Manasses who was used to dealing with temperamental people, and saw that the trainer, for some reason or other, was getting quite excited. “We won't have any parade. There's nothing about it in the programme. They can't ask for their money back.”

With these troubles adjusted, the first few races were run off and then came the signal for the great Mile-and-a-quarter International Race. The Americans wagered on their horse, trusting on his speed to pull him

through, but the English public put their money behind the opinion that Crusader would “get him” in the last quarter of a mile. In the paddock Bill the Gunner, saying nothing as usual, glumly saddled Sensation and gave him a parting slap on the rump for luck as he went to the post. O'Rourke, who took the Gunner's place on Sensation, was a very strong rider, a first-class man to handle an awkward or lazy horse, but he was no artist. As the barrier lifted Crusader and Clean Sweep jumped away together, but Sensation dwelt for a second and, instead of giving him time to strike his stride and get balanced, O'Rourke started to hustle him along. With his rider hard at him Sensation started to scramble, trying to take a fresh stride before he had finished the last. He did not get into his rhythmic swing till he had run nearly a furlong, and by this time Clean Sweep and Crusader had set up a four lengths lead, with the American horse holding his own rather easily with the English crack.

All were great gallopers and so easily did they move that it was hard to believe that they were going a pace which would have made the average horse look as though he were tied to the fence. For the first seven furlongs there was nothing between the two leaders, while Sensation and the Frenchman had not made up any of the ground. As they approached the mile the American rider began to niggle at his horse while Crusader, going straight as a gun-barrel with his ears pricked, began to draw away. Another hundred yards saw the end of the American and Crusader's rider was able to ease his horse for a fraction of a second while waiting for another challenger to come along. Gamely the French and Australian horses struggled after him, but it was no race. They were never able seriously to challenge him and he passed the post an easy winner, going well within himself and looking as if he could go on for another mile if wanted. Sensation shook off the French horse in the straight and finished second in fine even style, with the American beaten off. Pandemonium broke loose. Connie waltzed with her trainer and the air was thick with hats. Away on the hill a Chinaman and two Latin-Americans watched the finish through their glasses and Ramon said “Gee, ain't he a hoss? What a pity that he won't run so well next Saturday.”

Dominic looked round to see that no one could hear and said: “What did I tell yer about the Australian? See him breeze when that butcher boy hit him? Give him time to settle down and he shakes 'em up. He ain't got a five-cent chance of beatin' this winner, but he might beat the others. We'll take care of him, and, oh boy, what a diamond price we'll get about the Frenchman next Saturday.”

At the settling next day Crusader was a warm favourite for the Two Mile International. He had won at a mile and a quarter so easily that it was hard

to see anything troubling him in the long race — the last of the series. Fit and well, Crusader must win the remaining big race. When they finished their settling the bookmakers got to business on the two-mile race.

“Take two to one” was the cry. “Take two to one about Crusader.” Sensation was second favourite, while the Frenchman and the American were at long odds, but nobody wanted anything but the favourite. Before long, the books were shortening Crusader's price and were trying to get money in on the others.

“Coom on now,” roared the Yorkshireman, “ah'll stretch it a bit. 'Ere's ten to one the Boy de Bologne. Ain't there onny Frenchmen aboott”

No Frenchmen made their appearance. But Fitzroy's little English commissioner friend began to drift round the tables taking a thousand to a hundred about the French horse from every bookmaker that would lay it. He got pretty well round the room before the ring-men woke up to the fact that a big commission was being worked. By the time that he had got round to the Yorkshireman, he had invested two thousand pounds at a steady price of ten to one, and then he put his notebook in his pocket.

Even a racing commissioner must talk sometimes, and when a friend asked him if he had backed the horse for himself he drew his friend to one side and whispered in his ear.

“You'll hardly believe it,” he said, “but I don't know whose money I'm putting on. Two Americans that I never saw before and a Chinaman — a Chinaman if you please — came to me and gave two thousand pounds and asked me to put it on the French horse for them. Can you beat that? I wouldn't have touched it, only they gave me the money and the money was good, even if those birds weren't. What do you make of it? The Chinaman told me he knew I was plenty good man and he'd give me two hundred if it came off. I never thought I'd take money from a Chinaman. But there's not many men will give you two hundred for two minutes' work, you know.”

“Do you think it's got any chance?”

“Not an earthly, unless these chaps know something. I'd rather listen to two thousand cash than to all the tips in the world. They don't put on two thousand unless they know something.”

With one leg of his big double safely home Fitzroy simply could not keep away from the settling. He saw Mr Noall across the room and thought that that amateur bookmaker might ask him to lay some of the double money back to him. But Mr Noall thought that the money was as good as in his pocket and had no idea of saving a single shilling. How could the Australian horse have any chance against Crusader?

Finding no hope for adventure, Fitzroy made for home, and he had to hurry, for during the afternoons he filled the position of watchman over

Crusader's box. With an automatic in his pocket he strolled up and down the yard, occasionally looking out in the manner laid down in police regulations. He did not expect that anything would happen, but it was just as well to be on the safe side, so he refused admittance to everybody, no matter how plausible their stories.

Cranks of all sorts are attracted by notoriety as flies are attracted by treacle; they haunt Chief Justices, Prime Ministers, and great racehorses with impartiality. Several such characters hung round the gates of Newmarket Lodge trying vainly to get in and to give the horse some miraculous specific that would make him run a mile in a minute. What with throwing these people out, and hunting for rats with the stable terrier, Fitzroy found the afternoon pass quite pleasantly. And he was delighted to receive a short-notice invitation to dinner and a theatre party with Moira and her father that evening. He determined to say nothing about the double, because there is many a slip between the first leg and the second; but he went to the dinner in a more cheerful mood than he had known for months. There was at any rate a chance that Sensation might get home.

Discarding his automatic and donning his dress clothes he spent a most enjoyable evening. And it felt like old times when he realized that the music-hall they visited was the place where he had thrown the chucker-out down the stairs. Moira's attitude towards him was much more friendly since Connie's engagement to Red Fred had been announced, and he was feeling quite bucked when he returned to Newmarket Lodge about midnight. It was a dark windless night, and the brightness of the stars turned his mind to Australia. Feeling inclined for a final pipe before he turned in, he decided to stroll down to the stables just to pass the time and to enjoy the fragrance of the tobacco in the open air. He let himself into the stable-yard with his key and walked up to speak to the night-watchman, who was sitting on a chair at the door of Crusader's box with Sam the stable terrier at his feet.

Much to his surprise Sam did not run to meet him, nor did the night-watchman speak to him. He walked up to the watchman and found that he was to all intents and purposes a dead man. Fitzroy's police training had taught him to distinguish between the effects of drink and the effects of drugs, and a hurried examination of the watchman showed that he had been drugged, and heavily drugged at that. The little dog lay as though dead, but there was no time to make any examination in his case. Springing to the door of Crusader's box, Fitzroy threw it open and was relieved to find the horse apparently unharmed. Crusader knew him and greeted him with a cheerful whinny which showed that if anything had been administered to him it had not yet got in its work. It dashed through Fitzroy's mind that the

dopers must have in some way conveyed drugs to the man and the dog, and that they would come back as soon as the drugs had taken effect.

Entering the box, he felt along the wall till he found a flashlight torch that was kept on a shelf ready for emergencies at night. Then he spoke to the horse to give him confidence, and the big stallion came and nuzzled against his shoulder as though to say "We are all right, you and I."

Feeling satisfied that the horse would not get frightened nor fly round the box, Fitzroy closed the box and waited there in the pitch darkness rubbing the horse's head and listening for any sound. He heard nothing; but the doors of the box opened slowly and a flashlight was thrown into a corner of the box, evidently with the idea of getting the horse used to the light before flashing it full on him. So far, the visitors had seen only the corner of the box and the horse's hind quarters, and it must have been a severe shock to them when Fitzroy switched on his light and flashed it in their faces. There were three men there, but only one that he knew. He found that he was holding the light within two feet of the face of Jimmy the Pat.

The horse sprang back to the far end of the box, but Fitzroy sprang forward, straight for the Chinaman's throat, as he did so, Jimmy the Pat struck him over the head with an iron bar and Fitzroy went down among the straw with a fractured skull. Having one murder to his account, the Chinaman probably did not want another, but there was no safety for him while Fitzroy knew of his presence in England, and he stooped over Fitzroy's prostrate form to finish his work.

But he had to reckon with an unexpected foe. A thoroughbred stallion is not without ideas of defending himself, and as the Chinaman bent forward Crusader reared up and struck out with his iron-shod front feet. One of them landed fair on the top of the head of Jimmy the Pat and crushed in his skull like an eggshell. Then the stallion jumped over the two prostrate figures and rushed down the yard, whistling and snorting in a fashion to awake the whole establishment. When the head lad and the stable-boys came flying down from their sleeping-quarters, they found the horse trembling with excitement in the far corner of the yard, and two apparently dead men lying in the box. The Americans had made themselves scarce.

A hurried call was sent out for the police, a doctor, and a vet. Fitzroy was rushed away to a hospital, the doctor saying that he had just a chance for his life, but Jimmy the Pat was beyond human aid. By heroic measures the watchman was brought round and the vet was just in time to save the life of the little dog. The police were thoroughly puzzled as to how the two men, one of them entirely unarmed, had managed to inflict such injuries on each other; and all sorts of theories were current until an examination of the Chinaman's body at the morgue showed the mark of Crusader's hoof

clearly imprinted on his shaven skull.

Chapter XIX. The Last Day's Racing

IT takes a lot to stir up London. But London was thoroughly stirred up by the attack on Connie's horse, the death of the Chinaman and the injury to Fitzroy. Occurring as it did about midnight, the news set sub-editors on a hundred papers tearing the formes to pieces and discarding Prime Ministers' speeches, threats of war in the Balkans, and articles on the fishing-fleets in the North Sea. This attack on Fitzroy was front-page stuff, and many a weary stone-hand who had hoped to get home early, found himself in for the job of making up extra editions till daylight.

Flashlight photographers, when they were denied admittance to the Newmarket Lodge stables, erected step-ladders outside the walls and snapped away until the magnesium flares made the place look like a front line in Flanders. The newspaper people regarded it as a piece of luck that the affair had happened to Connie and Crusader, for they had numberless photographs of those celebrities; photos of Red Fred and Fitzroy would have fetched ten pounds per square inch. Every photographer in London was rung up from his slumbers, to see if by any chance he had a snapshot of the Newmarket Lodge party at the races. When one such photograph came to light, the newspaper that secured it put a reliable man on to watch it through every stage of reproduction. Crusader's trainer disconnected his telephone to avoid answering inquiries as to whether the horse would be fit to run on the following Saturday. This availed him little as inquirers got in over his fence or through his back yard and hammered at the door till they got some sort of an answer.

Reporters claiming to be friends of the family got into Newmarket Lodge in dozens and were violently ejected by the staff. Finally a police guard was put round the place and the invading army moved on to the establishments of the doctor and the veterinary surgeon. As one Chinaman is much like another, several sons of the flowery land made good money by posing as the corpse of Jimmy the Pat. By the time that the last forme was locked up and the last linotype operator had put on his coat the Press felt that they had done the affair reasonable justice.

Neither Connie nor Red Fred went to bed that night, waiting on news from the hospital. Nor did they intend to go to the races on the last day though they had to run their horses under their agreement with the syndicate. Thursday and Friday passed without any appreciable change in Fitzroy's condition. There was nothing to be done but wait, and at last came the winding-up day of the great International Race-meeting.

It was no wonder that, after such publicity, the huge racecourse was

taxed to hold the crowd. People who had never been to a race-meeting in their lives determined to go out and see the horse that had killed a man. They shouldered and elbowed one another at the gates and as each lot got in they made straight of Crusader's stall.

When they found that the horse had not arrived they did not go away. They stood there and waited, and more and more kept pouring in at every moment, massing round the stall. When Crusader's trainer arrived he took in the situation and sought out Mr Manasses.

“Look, Mr Manasses,” he said, “what am I to do? I can't take that horse in there. He's terribly upset at home, pawing up the ground and snorting if a stranger comes near him. What he'll be like here I don't know. The crowd at the back will shove those in front and they'll be forced right into the stall. There'll be a lot of people killed, and the horse will go mad. Where can I put him?”

Though Mr Manasses did not know a great deal about racing he knew a lot about handling crowds.

“No matter where you put him,” he said, “they'll find him, and we've got to give them some horse to look at, or they'll tear the place down. That parade ring has a strong picket fence round it, and I'll put a guard of bluejackets three deep all round the fence.”

“But that's no good,” interrupted the trainer. “The horse'll go mad in there.”

“I won't put your horse in there,” said Mr Manasses. “I'll get an old selling plater all rugged up with hood and necksweaters on, and walk him round and start somebody to pass the word that it's Crusader. They won't know the difference, and they'll be pleased to see him so quiet. Don't bring your horse in till it's time to go to the post.”

So for an hour, the bluejackets strained against the picket fence and held the crowd back while the old selling plater, utterly unconcerned, strolled round and round. The ineffable London bobbies got to work at each end of the crowd and kept it in circulation with the monotonous order, “Now you've seen the horse, move on.” So well did they work that before long the crowd were marching past the old selling plater as though they were viewing the body of somebody lying in state. They were thoroughly convinced that such a terrible matter as killing a man had not upset the horse at all.

Meanwhile the French, American, and Australian horses had arrived almost unnoticed. The preliminary races were run off, and then the military buglers sounded the fall in and the four cracks stepped out on to the track. Crusader was very much on his toes and it took a little trouble to get him through the gate. Out on the track he snorted and shied if anybody so much

as lifted a hand, and the starter's assistant had to take hold of his bridle and lead him down to the post. The American horse had been thoroughly strung up for his race on the first day and was feeling the reaction. It is said that a horse can only be kept in supreme condition for about as long as a pear will keep at its best on a tree. He looked somewhat drawn and uneasy, but he gave no trouble. The other two slouched down as though they had not a care in the world and Bill the Gunner, restored to jockeyship, amused himself by pretending to whip Sensation while moving at a walk. The crowd laughed, but Sensation's trainer caught a friend next him by the arm and said:

“Look at that. That infernal Australian thief has taught the horse that trick. I don't believe he's ever made him do his best on the track or in the race. If he beats Connie's horse the crowd'll have my life.”

“Better give me your watch then,” said his friend. “I could do with a good watch and it would be a pity for them to spoil it.”

Neither Moira nor her father would go to the races while Fitzroy was hovering between life and death in the hospital, so that the Honourable Captain Salter was the sole representative of the party that had come out from Australia on the *Oronia*. Captain Salter was hunting about the ring for information, as busy as a dog hunting for truffles, when he was accosted by a well-dressed stranger, perfectly turned out, and with a most charming manner.

“You don't remember me, dear boy,” said the stranger. “But of course you wouldn't remember everyone that you met at Government House, in Sydney. My name's Dickson, Dickson of Australia I call myself because there are so many other Dicksons. I left my stations to look after themselves and took a run over here to see the racing. Great idea, isn't it, dear boy, international spirit and all that you know. Splendid! I'll tell you what you might do, dear boy, for a stranger in a strange land. You might give me a card to some of these bookmakers so that I can have a bet or two. I must have a little on the Australian horse, though I think Crusader's the goods. What do you think your self?”

Captain Salter was flattered by this appeal to his judgment and felt that his late official position in Australia made it incumbent on him to help the inhabitants of that uncivilized country. Besides, Mr Dickson was obviously a prosperous man and might be able to put him on to some good Australian investments.

Without hesitation he pulled out his card bearing the name of a very exclusive club and handed it over, scribbling on it “Introducing Mr Dickson of Australia.”

“Here you are, old chap. Glad to do anything for an Australian. Had a

ripping time out there, what! I saw Sensation run in Sydney, but he doesn't seem quite up to this class, I'm afraid. They're just going to the post so you'll want to get on quick. Good luck." With that the Honourable Captain Salter returned to the task of trying to get a point over the odds about the English horse.

Armed with the card, Mr Dickson of Australia cruised up and down the rails, booking a bet here and a bet there, producing the card each time and being received with the greatest civility and deference, a man sufficiently important to be known as Mr Dickson of Australia must be somebody of consequence; and the name of the club would have commanded credit in any part of London. It was noticeable that Mr Dickson made his bets at fairly wide intervals about the ring, but there was nothing remarkable in that, for when a man makes a fairly large bet with a bookmaker the ringman on the next position is apt to offer shorter odds. Altogether Mr Dickson appeared quite satisfied with himself when he put away his notebook and climbed up into the stand to see the race.

And now they were at the post for the last great deciding event — the Two Miles International. Much to the dismay of those who thought they had seen him walking like an old hack in the parade yard, Crusader was in a lather of sweat, snorting, trembling, and refusing to stand still for a moment. His jockey tried to soothe him; the only result, was a snort and a vicious drag at the bit. In contrast to his excitement, Sensation strolled down with Bill the Gunner sitting on him with a slack rein. There is such a thing as a two-mile temperament, and the Australian horse had it with plus values, as they say in the bridge books.

The American horse had felt the strain of his two races, and it was just as well that he did not know what was ahead of him or he might have given a lot of trouble. The Frenchman's racing had fined him down till he was about at his best, and it was generally voted that if Crusader should "blow up" the Frenchman might beat the Australian horse over two miles.

Off they went on their two-mile journey, with the American in the lead. His rider had a very faint hope that if he could dawdle along in front, and slow the others down, his horse might be left with a run at the finish.

Crusader's rider tried to steady his horse but the English stallion would have none of it. Thoroughly upset, he kept his head down between his front legs and threw it from side to side, and his rider soon saw that the only thing to do was to let him go, as he might run more quietly if out in the lead by himself.

Unfortunately, the American horse went with him for half a mile or so, making him pull and fight worse than ever. Then the American rider decided that this was no good and that he had better wait at the back, so he

took a pull and dropped back a few lengths. Meanwhile, the two stayers were swinging the ground under them, galloping contentedly side by side, their jockeys watching every move of the horses in front. Crusader's rider tried to hold him back to them, but every time they closed on him, and he could hear their hoofs drumming on the turf, he made a fresh bound in the air, trying to get away again. No horse in the world can stand this sort of thing, so with a mile to go, Crusader's rider let his horse stride out, and then for a while the spectators saw some galloping. With beautiful effortless strides he drew away and, opened up a gap of half a dozen lengths and the roar went up "the favourite walks in."

It was time now for the French and Australian riders to go after him, and for the first time Bill the Gunner let Sensation have the whip in earnest. Just one cut awoke his fighting spirit and he bounded away from the Frenchman and went after the leader. But the Frenchman did not mean to be left behind and at five furlongs from home he was again up alongside Sensation, and the two of them were closing on Crusader. The latter's rider had managed to steady his horse again and was trying to save up a run for the finish. As they swung into the straight the three of them were practically level, with the Frenchman forcing the pace. He could stay for ever, but was just a little bit short of speed and his rider knew that if it came to a short dash home he would be beaten. The English rider knew that if he could steady his horse even for a few strides, he could beat the others for speed, but Crusader's temper was so thoroughly roused that he would not let a horse pass him while he had a breath in his body. Seeing the position, Bill the Gunner let his horse drop back a length, trusting to get the last run at the Frenchman and beat him for speed, and hoping that Crusader's early contest with his rider might have left him without a finishing run. The English horse was feeling the strain, but he fought on and kept the Frenchman at top pace to live with him. A hundred yards from the post Bill the Gunner called on the staying power that his lazy horse had kept in reserve. With whip and spur he drove him up to the leaders and the three of them battled it out without flinching. They flashed past the post locked together, with whips going, and until the number went up no one could say what had won. The judge's verdict was Sensation first, Crusader second, and the Frenchman third, with only half heads between them. The American was tailed off.

Fitzroy had won his double, but no double in the world seemed to be much good to him just then.

Chapter XX. Red Fred's Marriage

AT the settling on Monday after the races everything passed off pleasantly, and the bookmakers marked off as paid the great bulk of their wins and losses. Then came a lull and they began to chat among themselves.

"Ow was it, Charley?" said a Cockney bookmaker. "Did they all come up all right?"

"Pretty well, all. There's some I'll have to wait for, but I'll get it all right. There's one chap hasn't settled, a Mr Dickson of Australia. Anybody know anything about him? He owes me two hundred."

"He owes me two hundred too," said another. "But he'll be along all right. He's a big swell is his own country, got millions of sheep. I don't suppose he knows his way in here."

Here a Jewish bookmaker chipped in from farther up the table. "He knowth his way in here all right, because he'th been in and thettled."

"How could he been in and settled?" said the first man. "He ain't a member."

Among certain classes noise is considered a good substitute for argument, so the Jew roared at the top of his voice:

"I tell you he hath been in and thettled. I paid him five hundred he won over the Australian horse. Now what about it?"

"Not so good," said the Cockney. "E backed the Frenchman with me."

"He backed the favourite with me," said a voice from across the table.

"Ah laid him six oondred to fifty about th' American," boomed the big Yorkshireman. "Ah met him going down t'stairs just now and he said he'd be back in a minute."

"Backed 'em all, an' only settled on the winner," said the Cockney. "But 'ow did 'e get in 'ere? 'E ain't a member."

The door-keeper was asked whether he had admitted any strangers, and he said that the only stranger he had admitted was a great swell with a card from the Honourable somebody or other in the Guards' Club.

"Them sort generally loses," he added defensively. "You'd have made a great row with me if I'd a' turned him away."

Just then a bookmaker from another club put his head in at the door and said: "Do any of you gentlemen know anything about a Mr Dickson of Australia? He owes me two hundred."

"It's all right, Joe," said the Cockney. "E's just gone down to Australia to get the money. 'E said 'e'd be back in a minite. But they 'ave very long minites in Australia you know."

While the settling was going on, Fitzroy was lying in the hospital fighting for his life. The brain had been injured, and when Connie called at the hospital the surgeon told her that nothing more could be done, they must wait and hope for the best. All the way back home in the car she wept bitterly, and when her servants told her that a man was waiting to see her, she was in two minds as to whether or not to send him away.

Thinking that, perhaps, he might have some news that would take her out of herself, she walked into the visitors' room and found a small man with a tight-lipped mouth and the indelible stamp of the turf on his features.

"If it's anything about the racing," said Connie, "you can do your song and dance outside. I never want to hear anything more about racing as long as I live."

"It's about Mr Fitzroy," said the man. "I only wanted to tell you —"

"You can't tell me anything about Mr Fitzroy," said Connie who was loosing control of herself again. "Such a fine young feller." Here she relapsed into tears. "There's all these wasters you see about, and nothing happens to 'em and this young feller gets killed."

"He's not dead is he? I thought he had a chance —"

"So he has a chance," said Connie. "Buckley's chance, the way his luck is. Fell out with his girl he did, and lost his job, and now 'e's goin' to lose 'is life. The unluckiest man that ever lived."

The little man got up and put his hand on her shoulder, while Connie sobbed into her handkerchief.

"Cheer up, Countess," he said, "I've known him a good many years. He's a game un and a game un is hard to beat. Perhaps his luck has turned. I just called to say that I've got twelve thousand pounds for him that he won in a double. And I'd like to give it to you as I don't know what else to do with it."

Theatrical people are always superstitious and Connie took this astounding news as a certain sign that the luck had turned.

"What!" she screamed. "E's won twelve thousand pounds! Then 'is luck must 'a' turned. That means that the Lord hasn't forgotten us." And Connie threw her arms round the little man's neck and kissed him, "for luck," as she explained.

From the depths of despair she had gone to the heights of hope in one bound. She felt absolutely certain that Fitzroy would get right.

Connie's faith was justified for Fitzroy took a turn for the better that very day and before long he was able to see visitors. The first person he asked for was Moira Delahunty, and as he was no longer a penniless wastrel, matters were soon fixed up between them. It was arranged that he should

buy a partnership with his prospective father-in-law and thus give that gentleman time to devote his mind to breeding really good horses.

The affair between Connie and Red Fred did not go so smoothly. Connie's craving for publicity had had a good deal to do with the arrangement in the first place; and now that the publicity had served its turn, she wondered whether she would go on with the marriage. Red Fred had many good points; but he was so unassertive, so unable to hold his own in argument, that she felt she would be apologizing for him all her life. She couldn't bear a man without any vices to keep her on the qui vive. And life with Red Fred promised to be like drinking milk and water after a steady adherence to brandy and soda.

To tell the truth, Red Fred's existence at this time was spent in a sort of daze. His comings in and his goings out were controlled by one of Her Ladyship's grooms of the bedchamber, a man who had lived in the best houses and would have infinitely preferred to look after a nobleman or even the younger son of an aristocratic house. He felt rather like a trainer who had been accustomed to look after a Derby winner and now had to take charge of a Clydesdale. He confided to his particular pal in the servants' hall that he often wondered how long he could stand it. His principal grievance was that Red Fred persistently attempted to be friendly with him which was against all the traditions of upper-class houses. It was not until Red Fred came in one night flushed with wine and wanted to fight him, that he recovered his equanimity.

"By gad, Orthur," he said to his pal, "I'll make somethin' of that Australian yet. I 'aven't heard nothin' like it since I lived with old Lord Pepperpot. Of course Pepperpot was in a class by hisself. But this feller 'as a lot of new hoaths that I don't think even Pepperpot 'ad ever 'eard of. French hoaths, and all the like o' that. 'E gets me to do a bit of bettin' for 'im on the sly, too, 'cos Connie has knocked 'im off bettin'. Of course 'e ain't what I'm used to, for I used to look after the late Hearl; but this chap's a hoddity all right, and if you can't have a Hearl I suppose a hoddity is the next best thing."

Fitzroy's man on the other hand, had no reason to make excuses for his charge, because he could talk by the hour together about the great people to whom Fitzroy was related. The question whether Fitzroy's aunt, Lady Gwendoline, had married one of the Cavendishes or one of the Pagets occasioned a spirited debate in the servants' hall — a debate that had to be adjourned until the butler could get a look at Debrett in the library.

Fitzroy's engagement to Moira was announced. But Connie was still wondering what she would do about her marriage, when the question was settled in a most unexpected way.

When the boys at Sensation's stable opened the boxes one morning they found that the horse had gone, Bill the Gunner had gone, and more significant than all, the little dog Sam had gone. Evilily disposed people might have thought it worth while to steal the horse and to kidnap Bill the Gunner, but who would bother to kidnap Sam? The little dog had made great friends with the Australian horse and jockey, and evidently the lot of them had shifted their quarters together. Where they had gone, and why they had gone, were impenetrable mysteries. The trainer rang up Newmarket Lodge and proposed to raise a hue and cry, but was told to wait, as there must be some explanation.

A hurried call was sent up to Red Fred's room at Newmarket Lodge. Then it was found that Red Fred had gone — had disappeared without leaving a trace. Connie was equally intrigued and bewildered, for her literature consisted mostly of detective stories and here was a situation after her own heart. Fitzroy could offer no suggestions except that they ought to see if there were any black-trackers in London. Connie was just thinking of drawing up an advertisement: "Lost a racehorse, a millionaire, a jockey and a dog," when a letter delivered by hand cleared up the whole thing.

It was from Red Fred and it ran as follows:

DEAR COUNTESS,

I beg to inform you that I and Miss Fysshe got married yesterday at a registry office, and we hope you won't mind. Her and I are both fond of racing and you are not fond of racing, so you would get on better with someone that didn't like racing. We have taken a house near Epsom with stables at the back, and we are going to get Bill the Gunner to train a few prads for us, and we will let you know if we have anything any good. The chestnut horse is well and I think he was very lucky to beat your horse, but Bill the Gunner said he had it won any time. It looks like keeping very dry, doesn't it?

Yours respectfully,
FRED CARSTAIRS.

This was a situation in which most people would have found it difficult to know what to do or what to say. Connie's master mind, however, which arranged all the charity side of the International Race-meeting did not fail her. Calling in Mr Manasses to aid her in the wording she wrote the following reply:

The Dowager Countess of Fysshe and Fynne presents her congratulations to Mr and Mrs Carstairs, but regrets that they should have found it advisable to get married on such short notice. Otherwise the Dowager Countess would have been pleased to attend the wedding. The Dowager Countess suggests that the fact that her engagement to Mr Fred Carstairs was recently broken off, should be made as public

as possible.

“That'll hold 'em,” said the Countess. “Of course there's no more harm in 'em than a couple of jellyfish. I don't know how they ever had the pluck to get married. She must have waited till she got him opposite that registry door and pushed him in. But this'll let Fishy know that, if she starts to talk, I'll talk! I'll go and see 'em in a day or two and we'll get along fine.”

This programme worked out to a nicety. The public scenting a scandal at first, had all the wind taken out of their tongues by the spectacle of Connie as a welcome and honoured guest at Red Fred's residence. The whole affair had to be put down to the vagaries of music-hall life, where such things as marriages and divorces are but ammunition for the publicity agent. Connie shortly afterwards married a titled husband who beat her, and thus conformed fairly well to her ideas of what a husband ought to be.

Red Fred and his taciturn little wife were ideally happy. They thought and talked about nothing but racehorses; and they soon gathered round them a large circle of friends who also thought and talked about nothing but racehorses. Their Sunday mornings, when the horses were paraded, were attended by some of the highest in the land. Mrs Red Fred became a vogue and was able to pick and choose among the aristocracy for her dinner parties. Whenever Sensation raced she was surrounded by a sort of court but she would never let the horse run against Crusader again. Bill the Gunner wanted to have another go at him, but Mrs Fred thought that it was better to let well alone. There are so many big meetings in England that there was no need for the two stars to appear on the same stage.

As for Red Fred himself perhaps a brief picture — what the movie people call a short — may serve to illustrate his last appearance.

It is early morning and a red-haired man in an old but fashionably-cut suit of clothes strolls through the streets of an English country town. He is followed by a little dog. Stopping opposite a butcher's window he reads the legends on the carcasses and says:

“Sam, how would you like some dairy-fed pork for your breakfast?”

Sam sits down and stares appreciatively into the window, drumming on the ground with his tail, and groaning with expectation. Then the man goes into the shop and asks the butcher for threepenn'orth of dog's meat. The butcher, very haughtily, says that he does not sell dog's meat. Whereat the red-haired man places two pound notes on the counter and lifts from the hook a carcass of lamb ticketed at that price. Laying it on the block he cuts off a liberal portion for Sam and with the skill of a professional, divides the remainder into four quarters. Calling in some poverty-stricken little boys who are hanging round the door, he gives each of them a quarter and tells

them to take them home to their mothers. As he walks out of the shop he says:

“Sam, a man must get some fun for his money somehow.”
