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BOY WOODBURN

By the same Author:

BOB, SON OF BATTLE
THE GENTLEMAN
REDCOAT CAPTAIN
THE ROYAL ROAD
THE BROWN MARE

FOUR-POUND-THE-SECOND
"Look at that head-piece. He's all the while a-thinkin', that hoss is. That's the way he's bred."

BOY

WOODBURN

A STORY OF THE

SUSSEX DOWNS

By

ALFRED OLLIVANT

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1918

**TO
THE MOTHER
OF
LAUGHTER**

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OLD MAT

CHAPTER I
The Trainer

The Spring Meeting at Polefax was always Old Mat's day out. And it was part of the accepted order of things that he should come to the Meeting driving in his American buggy behind the horse with which later in the day he meant to win the Hunters' Steeplechase.

There were very few sporting men who remembered the day when Mat had not been a leading figure in the racing world. For sixty years he had been training jumpers, and he looked as if he would continue to train them till the end of time. Once it may be supposed he had been Young Mat, but he had been Old Mat now as long as most could recall. In all these years, indeed, he had changed very little. He trained his horses to-day at Putnam's, the farm in the village of Cuckmere, over the green billow of the Downs, just as he had done in the beginning; and he trained the same kind of horses in the same kind of way, which was entirely different from that of other trainers.

Mat rarely had a good horse in his stable, and never a bad one. He kept his horses in old barns and farm-stables, turning them out on to the chalk Downs in all seasons of the year with little shelter but the lee of a haystack or an occasional shed.

"I don't keep my hosses in no 'ot-house," he would say. "A hoss wants a heart, not a hot-water bottle. He'll get it on the chalk, let him be."

But if his horses were rough, they stood up and they stayed.

And that was all he wanted: for Mat never trained anything but jumpers.

"Flat racin' for flats," was a favourite saying of his. "'Chasin' for class."

And many of his wins have become historic; notably the Grand National in the year of Sedan—when Merry Andrew, who had three legs and one lung, so the story went, won for him by two lengths; and thirty years later Cannibal's still more astounding victory in the same race, when Monkey Brand out-jockeyed Chukkers Childers, the American crack, in one of the most desperate set-to's in the annals of Aintree.

There is a famous caricature of Mat leading in the winner on the first of these occasions. He looked then much as he does to-day—like Humpty-Dumpty of the nursery ballad; but he grew always more Humpty-Dumptyish with the years. His round red head, bald and shining, sat like a poached egg between the enormous spread of his shoulders. His neck, always short, grew shorter and finally disappeared; and his crisp, pink face had the air of one who finds breathing a perpetually increasing difficulty.

In build Mat was very short, and very broad; and his legs were so thin that it was no wonder they were somewhat bowed beneath their load. Far back in the Dark Ages, when his body was more on a par with his legs, it was rumoured that Mat had himself won hunt-races.

"Then my body went on, or raythe spread out," he would tell his intimates, "while me legs stayed where they was. So Mat become a trainer 'stead of a jockey."

And Mat's legs were not the only part of him that had stayed as they were in those remote days. He wore the same clothes now as then; or if not the identical clothes, as many averred, clothes of the identical cut. Younger trainers, who were fond of having their joke with the old man, would often inquire of him,

"Who's your tailor, Mat?"

To which the invariable answer in the familiar wheeze was,

"He died reign o' William the Fo'th, my son. Don't you wish he'd lived to show *your* Snips how to cut a coat?"

Mat indeed was distinctly early Victorian in his dress. He always wore a stock instead of a tie, and the felt hat with a flat top and broad-curled brim, which a rising young Radical statesman, for whom Mat had once trained, had imitated. He walked with a curious and characteristic lilt, as of a boy, rising on his toes as though reaching after heaven. And his eye underlined, as it were, the mischievous gaiety of his walk. It was a baffling eye: bright, blue, merry as a robin's and very shrewd; "the eye of a cherubim," Mat once described it himself. When it turned on you, grave yet twinkling, you knew that it summed you up, saw through you, was aware of your wickedness, condoned it, pitied you, comforted you, and bade you rejoice in the world and its crooked ways. It was an innocent eye, a dewy eye, and yet a mighty knowing one. Whether the owner of the eye was a saint or a sinner you could not affirm. Therefore it bade you beware what you said, what you did, and not least, what you thought, while its mild yet radiant beams were turned upon you. One thing was quite certain: that blue eye had seen a great deal. More, it had enjoyed the seeing. And its owner had a way of wiping it as he ended some tale of rascality, successful or exposed, with his habitual cliché—"I wep a tear. I did reelly," which made you realize that the only tears it had in fact ever wept were in truth tears of suppressed laughter over the foolishness of mortals. It had never mourned over a lost sinner, though it had often winked over one. And it had profound and impenetrable reserves.

And the trainer's ups and downs in life, if all the stories were true, had been amazing. At one time it was said that he was worth a cool £100,000, and at another a minus quantity. But rich or poor, he never changed his life by an iota, jogging soberly along his appointed if somewhat

tortuous way.

Old Mat was nothing if not a character. And if he was by no means more scrupulous than the rest of his profession, he had certain steadfast virtues not always to be found in his brethren of the Turf. He never drank, he never smoked, and, win or lose, he never swore. A great raconteur, his stories were most amusing and never obscene. And when late in life he married Patience Longstaffe, the daughter of the well-known preacher of *God-First* farm on the North of the Downs between Lewes and Cuckmere, nobody was much surprised. As Mr. Haggard, the Vicar of Cuckmere, said,

"Mat could always be expected to do the unexpected."

That Patience Longstaffe, the Puritan daughter of Preacher Joe, should marry the old trainer was a matter of amazement to all. But she did; and nobody had reason to think that she ever regretted it.

Patience Longstaffe became in time Ma Woodburn, though she remained Patience Longstaffe still.

Mat and his Ma had one daughter between them, known to all and sundry in the racing world as Boy Woodburn.

CHAPTER II
Boy Shows Her Metal

The Polefax Meeting was small and friendly; never taken very seriously by the fraternity, and left almost entirely to local talent. Old Mat described it always as reg'lar old-fashioned. The countryside made of it an annual holiday and flocked to the fields under Polefax Beacon to see the horses and to enjoy Old Mat, who was the accepted centre-piece.

The Grand Stand was formed of Sussex wains drawn up end to end; and the Paddock was just roped off.

Outside the ropes, at the foot of the huge green wave of the Downs, were the merry-go-rounds, the cocoanut-shies and wagons of the gypsies; while under a group of elms the carts and carriages of the local farmers and gentry were drawn up.

There, too, of course, was Mat's American buggy, a spidery concern, made to the old man's design, seated like a double dog-cart, and looking amongst the solid carts and carriages that flanked it like a ghost amongst mortals. It was the most observed vehicle of them all, partly because of its unusual make and shape, and partly because that was the famous shay in which year after year Mat drove over the Downs from Putnam's behind the horse with which he meant to win the Hunters' Steeplechase.

That race, always the last item on the programme, and the most looked-for, was about to begin.

The quality in the Paddock were climbing to their places in the wagons. The voices of the bookies were raised vociferously. The crowd jostled about them, eager to back Old Mat's old horse, Goosey Gander. They believed in the old man's luck, they believed in the old man's horse, they believed in the old man's jockey, Monkey Brand, almost as famous locally as his master.

A boy slipped into the Paddock and began to bet surreptitiously behind the dressing-tent.

He was fair, slight, and horsey. His stiff, tight choker, his horse-shoe pin, the cut of his breeches, his alert and wary air of a man of the world, all betrayed the racing-lad. From the corner of his mouth hung a cigarette waggishly a-rake; and his billycock had just the correct and knowing cock. He kept well under the lee of the tent; and if he was brazen, it was clear that he was sinning and fearful of discovery: for he had one eye always on the watch for the Avenging Angel who might swoop down on him at any moment.

"What price, Goosey Gander?" he asked in a voice harsh and cracking.

"Give you threes," replied the bookie.

"Do it in dollars," replied the boy, with the magnificent sang-froid of one who goes to ruin as a man of blood should go.

"And again?" asked the bookie.

The answer was never forth-coming; for the Avenging Angel, not unexpected, swept down upon the sinner with flaming sword.

She was in the shape of a girl about the lad's own age and size, fair as was he and slight, a flapper with a short thick straw-coloured plait. She came round the tent swift and terrible as a rapier, her steel-gray eyes flashing and fierce. Such determination on so young a face the bookie thought he had never seen. For a moment he expected to see her strike her victim. And the boy apparently expected the same, for he cowered back, putting up his hands as though to ward off a blow.

"Got you, sonny," said the bookie, and bolted with a half-hearted grin.

The girl never hesitated. She leapt upon her victim, keen and direct as a tigress.

"Give me that ticket!" she ordered in a deep bass voice whose earnestness was almost awful.

The boy had recovered from his first shock.

"It were only——"

"Give me that ticket!"

Reluctantly the lad obeyed.

"Spit out that cigarette!"

Again he obeyed. The girl put her broad flat heel on the chewed remnant and churned it into the mud.

"Any others?"

"No, Miss."

"You have!—I'll search you."

"Only a packet o' woodbines, Miss."

She pocketed them remorselessly.

"Leave the paddock!"

The boy went, slow and sullen. Then he became aware of people watching beyond the ropes and recovered himself with a jerk.

"Yes, Miss. Very good, Miss," he cried cheerfully, touched his hat, and began to run as on an errand.

It was a pretty piece of bluff. Boy Woodburn, in spite of her anger, marked it down to the credit side of the lad's account. When he was collared, Albert Edward kept his head. That would help him one day when he was caught in a squeeze in a big race and had to jockey to get through.

The roar from the crowd told her the race had started. She flashed back to the ropes, a slight figure, in simple blue serge, the radiant plait of her hair flapping as she ran.

Old Mat, standing a little behind the crowd at the ropes, had watched the scene.

"One o' my lads," he said in his mysterious wheeze to the big young man at his side. "'No smokin', swearin', or bettin' in *my* stable!'—that's Miss Boy's rule. Gets it from Mar." The girl passed them swiftly and the old man hid his betting-book behind him. "Well, Boy, sossed him?" he asked innocently.

"He's not the only one," retorted the girl.

"O, I'm not bettin', Boy," pleaded the old man in the whimsical whine which he adopted when addressing his daughter. "Don't go and tell your mother that now. It wouldn't be right. Reelly it wouldn't. I'm only makin' a note or two for Mr. Silver here."

The girl was lost in the crowd by the ropes.

"She'd ha' come and sossed me, too, only you was with me," wheezed the old man confidentially. "You stick close to me, there's a dear. You're like a putection to an old man. She won't do me no 'arm while you're by, de we."

The other smiled. He was an upstanding young man, with the shoulders and the bearing of a soldier; and there was something large and slow and elemental about him. He wore white riding-breeches and tan-coloured boots. The blood polo-pony under the elms, with the little group of coachmen and grooms gathered in an admiring circle round him, was his: and those who had seen Mat drive on to the course in the morning knew that the young man had ridden over the Downs from Putnam's with him.

Boy took her place at the ropes.

The young man found himself standing at her side. He did not watch the race. That keen young face at his side, so self-contained and strong, absorbed him.

Once the girl looked up swiftly, and he was aware of her gray eyes, that flashed in his and were instantly withdrawn, to follow the bob of the heads of the jockeys lifting over a fence on the far side of the course.

"Lul-like my glasses?" he asked, with a slight stutter.

"No," she said. "I can see."

Later she climbed on to the top of an upturned hamper. As the horses made the turn for home, he heard her draw her breath.

"Is he down?" he asked.

"No," she said. "He's got 'em beat."

"How do you know?"

"He's begun to ride," replied the girl briefly.

Old Mat was nibbling his pencil in the rear.

"How's it going, Boy?" he wheezed.

"All right," replied the girl. "He's through now."

The dirty green of the Woodburn colours topped the last fence; and Goosey Gander came lolloping down the straight, his jockey, head on shoulder, wary to the end, easing him home.

"That's a little bit o' better," said Old Mat comfortably, totting up his accounts.

"By Jove, he's a fine horseman!" cried the young man with boyish enthusiasm.

"Monkey Brand!" said the girl, without emotion. "One of the has-beens, I should say."

CHAPTER III
GOOSEY GANDER

Boy Woodburn came leading the winner through the cheering crowd.

It was Old Mat's horse, Old Mat's race; and they had all got a bit on. They were pleased with themselves, pleased with the horse, pleased with the jockey, who, perched up aloft on the great sweating bay, his hands still mechanically at work, his little dark face shining, chaffed his chaffers in the voice of a Punchinello.

"Get off him, Monkey," called a joker; "get off quick afore he falls to pieces. *Do!*"

"Same as you do when I get talkin' to ye!" retorted the little jockey.

There was a roar of laughter at the expense of the joker, who turned suddenly nasty.

"Who said Chukkers?" he cried.

There was an instant of silence, and then some groans.

"Not me," replied the little jockey grimly.

A snigger rippled through the crowd.

"What you done with your old friend this time, Monkey?" somebody asked. "Laid him out again lately?"

"No such luck," the other answered. "He's beat it."

"Where is he then?"

The little jockey tossed his head backward.

"Gone back to God's Own Country to find his birf certificate. No flowers by request."

The reference was to the fact that Monkey's old-time enemy, the vanquished of Cannibal's National fifteen years before, Chukkers, the greatest of cross-country riders, was an American citizen of uncertain origin.

The thrust was received with a fresh outburst from the hilarious crowd. Monkey Brand's relations with his "old friend" were well known to all.

The little jockey prepared to dismount.

Amid a burst of jeers and cheers, he threw his leg over his horse's withers, slipped to the ground, stripped off the saddle, and limped off to the weighing machine.

Old Mat watched him go.

"On his hoss, on his day," he muttered confidentially to the young man, "Monkey Brand can show his heels to most of 'em yet."

"How old is he?" asked the other.

The old trainer frowned and shook his head mysteriously.

"You must never ask a jockey his age, no more than a woman," he said. "He come to me the year I was married, and that's twenty year since come Michaelmas. And when he come he looked much just the very same as he do now. Might ha' been any age atween ten and a hundred." He dropped his voice. "Only way he shows his years—he ain't so fond of fallin' as he was. And I don't blame him. Round about forty a man begins to get a bit brittle like."

He lilted off after his jockey.

Goosey Gander stood stripped of everything but his bridle, with dark flanks and lowered head reaching at his bit.

He was a typical Woodburn horse: a great upstanding bay, full of bone and quality. But he showed wear. A tube was in his throat, a leather-boot on each fore-leg, and he was bandaged to the hocks, both of which showed the serrated lines of the firing iron.

The girl in front of him pulled his sweating ears. Jim Silver watched with admiration not untinged with awe her stern young face. She was entirely unconscious of his gaze, and unaware of the people thronging her. Her whole spirit was concentrated on the dark and sweating head, trying to rub against her knees. The crowd pressed in upon her inconveniently.

"Give the lady a chance to breathe," cried the young man in his large and lazy voice.

The crowd withdrew a little.

"Say, Guv'nor!—do they call you Tinee?" called one.

"No; his name's Silver," said another. "They calls you Silver Mug, don't they, mister?"

"I believe so," replied the young man, unmoved.

He was fair game: for he was very big, clearly good-humoured, spick and span to a fault, and a member of another class.

They gathered with glee to the baiting.

"That ain't because of his name, stoopid. That's because he's got a silver linin' to his mug, ain't it, sir?"

"Silver!—gold, you mean. 'E breathes gold, that bloke do, and then it settles on the roof of his jaw. Say, Blokey, open your mug and let's 'ave a peep. I'll put a penny in."

A little red ball was run up an improvised pole. Old Mat was waving.

"All right," he called.

The girl led Goosey Gander out of the Paddock into the field at the back. Women in parti-coloured shawls selling oranges, labourers, riff-raff, and children were gathered about the merry-go-rounds and cocoanut-shies, listening apathetically to the hoarse exhortations of the owners to come and try their luck.

Silver followed the girl thoughtfully.

She led the winner past the side-shows toward the group of stately elms under which the carriages and carts were gathered.

The ejected stable-lad, Albert Edward, now in his shirt-sleeves, came toward her, carrying a bucket. The girl rinsed out the old horse's mouth. Then with swift, accustomed fingers she unlaced the leather-boots, and set to work to unwind a bandage.

Jim Silver watched her attentively and then began clumsily on the other bandage.

"No," she said. "Like so," and taking it from him unwound it in a trice.

The old horse shook himself.

"Go and fetch his rug from the buggy," ordered the girl, addressing Albert.

The lad went off.

The young man took off his long-waisted gray coat and flung it over the horse's loins, lining down.

Boy's gray eyes softened. Then she let go the horse's head, took the coat off swiftly, and as swiftly replaced it, lining upward.

"Thank-you," she said.

She glanced over her shoulder.

"Will you lead him up and down, while I go and fetch his rug?" she said. "That kid'll be all day."

"Rather!" replied the young man, with the fervour of a child to whom a pony has been entrusted for the first time.

The girl's neat slight blue-serge figure made off for the elms and the carriages. Her back turned to the young man, the sternness left her face, and she smiled.

A blue-and-black sheep-dog, shaggy as a bear, and as big, leashed to the wheel of the buggy, began to whimper and to whine with furious ecstasy. The big dog's big soul seemed to burst

within him as the Angel of the Keys drew near. He had no tail to wag, so he wagged his whole body, putting back his ears, and laughing with his heart as he lifted his joyous face to his mistress.

She rested her hand a moment on his head.

"Billy Bluff," she said. "Steady, you ass!—How can I loose you?—There!"

She eased the spring of his leash. He was off with a bound, gambolling about her like a wave of the sea.

Albert was messing about the buggy in leisurely fashion.

"Hurry, Albert!" came the deep voice.

"Yes, Miss," replied the other, more leisurely than ever.

"Bring that clothes-brush along and brush Mr. Silver's coat when you've finished fooling," she said.

Then she took the rug from the buggy and went back to Goosey Gander.

The young man in his pink shirt-sleeves, his baggy white breeches, and polo boots, was walking the old horse gravely up and down, talking to him.

His back was to the girl, and she watched him with kind eyes.

She was thinking how like he and Goosey Gander were: good big uns both, as her father would say; clean-bred, large-boned, great-hearted, quiet-mannered. But the man was just coming into his prime, while the horse was well past his.

"Hullo, Bill, old boy," said the young man in his quiet voice.

Billy answered deeply.

Silver had only come to Putnam's the night before for the first time, but he and Billy Bluff were friends already. Boy Woodburn noticed it with swift appreciation. In her young and entirely fallacious judgment there were few shrewder judges of character than Big Dog Billy.

She paused a moment, pretending to shift the rug on her arm.

The group of three before her held her eye and pleased her mind. Her face was full of beauty as she watched, the spirit peeping shyly forth.

That horse, that man, that dog, so physically remote from each other, yet spiritually akin, filled her young heart with the same sense of satisfaction as did her familiar and well-beloved Downs. She felt the goodness of them and rejoiced in it. All three were sound in body and in spirit, honest, healthy, and therefore happy as the good red earth from which they came.

CHAPTER IV
The Gypsy's Mare

Monkey Brand in a long drab coat came limping toward them, his saddle over his arm.

"Best put in, Miss," he said. "Mr. Woodburn's comin'."

The old man indeed was rolling slowly toward them, followed by the chaffing and expectant crowd to whom he paid no heed. His mouth was stuffed full of bank-notes, and he was absorbed in calculations made in a little book, and muttering to himself.

"We'd best be moving," said the girl to her companion.

She led the old horse away before the oncoming crowd.

Silver followed, with grave amusement in his face. He did not know whether he dared to laugh or not, and was too much afraid to try. The girl was aware of his embarrassment and became shy in her turn.

She led the old horse up to the buggy.

This was the tit-bit of the meeting, the last and by far the greatest event. Everybody always waited for it. For was it not the Grand Finale of the Jumping Season?

Monkey Brand stuffed his saddle away in the buggy, and pulled the harness out from beneath the seat. Then he and Albert began to harness Goosey Gander, while Boy stood at the old horse's head.

The crowd gathered round and began to chaff.

"Say, Monkey, when you get that 'orse 'ome, shall you 'ave 'im for supper?—to finish the day like?"

"They'll never get 'im 'ome. He's goin' to lay down and die when 'e strikes the road—ain't you, beauty? And I don't blame 'im neether."

"He ain't though. They won't let him. That old 'orse has got to take the washin' round when he gets back to Cuckmere this evenin'."

Goosey Gander was harnessed now.

Old Mat made slowly toward the buggy.

The crowd, which had been popping off its feu-de-joie of jokes, steadied into silence to watch the old man climb to his seat.

"Someone to see you, Mr. Woodburn," came a voice in the silence.

"Indeed," panted the old man, his heavy shoulders rising and falling. "Who's that?"

There was a movement in the crowd, which parted. At the farther end of the lane thus made, a flashy young gypsy was seen, with a somnolent old mare on a halter.

"There, Mr. Woodburn!" called the gypsy in a hoarse staccato voice. "There she is—your sort to the tick. Black Death blood. Throw you a National winner and all."

The old man cast his shrewd blue eye over the mare.

She was old and rough as the halter that adorned her drooping head; but there was no mistaking her quality any more than that her one aim in life was to go to sleep.

"Yes, she's a lady all right," said the old man.

"Black Death mare, sir," reiterated the gypsy. "Out o' Vendetta. Carry the young lady a dream."

"Might ha' done twenty year ago," muttered the trainer. He took off his hat and made a floundering rush at the mare. She never so much as winked an eye, pursuing her undeviating purpose with a steadfastness worthy of a greater cause. Old Mat grunted.

"Look her over, Boy," he said.

The girl, who loved a bargain dearly as she loved a horse, was already walking round the mare. Her father was in a complacent mood; and when he was happy he would do the romantic and foolish things the girl's soul loved.

"Like her, Boy?" the old man asked.

The girl pursued her critical survey, felt the mare's legs, looked into her mouth, lifted an eye-lid. The crowd, deeply interested, watched in silence. Utterly absorbed in the work in hand, Boy, as always, was unaware of them because she was entirely forgetful of herself.

"Yes," she said simply.

The old man turned to the gypsy.

"What ye want?" he asked.

"She's yours for a tenner, sir."

He stiffened his lips.

Boy walked sedately past her father.

"Pound a leg," she said quietly in his ear.

"Four pound," said the old man, firmly. "Cash down—and accommodation."

He rustled the bank-notes in his pocket.

The gypsy frowned, and appeared to be engaged in a portentous spiritual struggle. Then the clouds cleared suddenly.

"Done with you, sir!" he called, and hauled the old mare down the widening lane through the crowd. She came reluctantly, every inch of her resenting the necessity for motion.

Old Mat paid out five sovereigns into the other's outstretched paw.

"Four sovereigns for the mare—and a half for the halter, and a little bit o' beer-money."

The crowd cheered and the gypsy danced a jig.

"You're a gentleman, Mr. Woodburn," he cried. "Now I'll tell you somefin for yourself." He drew the old man aside and whispered in his ear, ending with an emphatic: "S'truth, sir!"

The trainer grunted sceptically.

"Now, Boy," he said. "There she is. Take charge o' your cripple."

The girl, her face alight with pleasure, took the halter of the lagging mare.

Old Mat gathered the reins and mounted to his seat. Monkey Brand took his place at his master's

side. Boy got up behind, the halter in her hand.

The trainer raised his whip.

The buggy bumped over the grass, the old mare trailing behind with outstretched neck. The girl folded her arms and looked down her nose like a footman.

Silver, following on his pony, saw her face and chuckled suddenly.

This stern girl had a sense of humour after all.

Then the chaff became a cheer; and the Polefax Meeting was over.

CHAPTER V
Across the Downs

What Old Mat called his little bit of theayter—which his irreverent daughter was wont to describe with characteristic brutality as sheer swank—was quickly over.

As soon as the buggy left the fields and bumped down into the pack-horse track which led up the shoulder of the Downs, Old Mat halted. Boy slipped down from her seat, and the old man and Monkey Brand followed more leisurely. Silver dismounted, too.

The little cavalcade wound slowly up the hill, skirting the steep side of a coombe that gathered the dusk in its huge green bowl until it brimmed with mystery.

Boy looked down into it and longed, as often before, that she had wings on which to float upon that soft and undulating sea of shadow.

Not seldom this desire was so strong upon her that she felt a certainty she *had* wings, wings within her which she could not spread, but of the existence of which this insurgent desire was the irrefragable witness.

The sides of the coombe were hung with beeches sheathed now in tenderest green; while from out of the emptiness beneath, the insistent and melancholy cry of lambs seemed to make the shadows quiver and touched a chord of wistfulness in the heart of the girl.

The sun was already sinking behind the smooth ramparts of the hills and rose to meet them as they climbed, peering at them over the summit through the shaggy eyebrow of the gorse.

Boy walked beside the old mare, throwing every now and then swift and surreptitious glances at her new treasure. She was fearful lest the young man leading his pony on the foot-track at her side should think her a baby and over-keen.

Once only he spoke to her, and that clearly with the difficulty of the shy.

"What shall you cuc-call her?" he asked.

"I don't know," she answered.

She longed to help him, but when the chance came she could only snub him. That was always the way with Boy, when she was in touch with somebody she liked.

Old Mat came unconsciously to the rescue.

"Why, Four Pound, o' course," he panted, labouring up the hill, his hands on his knees.

"Is she Black Death blood?" asked the young man.

"Yes, she's Black Death all right," answered the old man. "That's the old Pocahontas strain. Jumpers to a gee. You know. Look at them gray hairs at the root of her tail—and that lazy, too! sluttin' along with her nose out and her tongue a-waggin'. They're all like that, Black Deaths are. If you was to let off a bomb under her belly, she wouldn't so much as switch her tail. Couldn't be bothered. Constitutions like hoxes, too." He paused to pant. "If what that feller said was O.K., why then she's worth money, too. Only o' course it ain't. Else he wouldn't ha' said it."

On the top of the Downs, facing the wind that blew straight from the sun sinking over Newhaven into the sea, they paused to breathe. Beneath them stretched the Weald, and the great saucer of Pevensey Bay ringed about with a line of brown sand fringed with foam. Northward was Crowborough Beacon, the Ashdown Forest Ridge, and the hills about Battle Abbey. Southward, and the way of the setting sun, the Downs ran out in huge spurs, line behind line of them, into the shining splendour of the sea, to break off abruptly in the white cliffs of the Seven Sisters. The hills were bare and bleak in their austere yet rounded strength, stripped of trees, clothed only in resplendent gorse, here a squat haystack dumped upon a ridge against the sky, there a great patch of plough let into the green.

"By Jove!" cried the young man; and the girl thrilled to him because she felt he loved what was so

much to her.

"Some space," panted the old man, climbing back to his seat, and tucking the rug around him. "Room to stretch a hoss here; and somethin' for his windpipe better'n Owlbridge's lung-tonic."

Boy said nothing but stood breathing deep and with quiet eyes. At her side was Billy Bluff, his shaggy hair blown back from his forehead and astrew across his face, lifting his nose as though to sniff the sunset.

They jogged quietly along the crest of the hills, travelling always toward the sun, over the ancient Pilgrim's Way that runs from Pevensey, by the Holy Well in Cow Gap, and the Lamb on the hill at Eastbourne, past the Star at Alfiriston along the top of the Downs to that cathedral beyond the Arun, once a chapel of wood, whence St. Wilfrid set out to take the Gospel from the coast to the heathen dwelling in the dark and savage Andred's Weald.

The slope was with them; and Goosey Gander made his own pace, slipping along with smooth and easy stride.

They followed the line of the telegraph poles, skirting steep coombes shrouded at the foot with beech woods, past round-eyed dew-ponds, at which cloaked shepherds were watering their flocks. Once an encampment in the gorse caught their eyes. A yellow van, an ancient horse or two hobbled in the gorse-bushes, a patch of brown tent, and a whiff of blue smoke rising from an unseen fire, betrayed the nature of the squatters.

The old man pointed them out with his whip.

"There they are, the beauties," he said. "Thought they wouldn't be fur. Rogues and rasqueals, Mr. Silver!" he cried, twiddling his whip, and raising his voice to a sort of chant. "Rogues and rasqueals on h'every side, layin' in wait for to take a little bit off you—same as the Psalmist says. And it's no good talkin' to 'em. None whatebber." He dropped his voice to the old confidential note. "Pinch the hair off the back o' your head while you're sleepin', they would. Wonder who they sneaked *her* off?"

He turned his rogue-eye on the young man on the chestnut pony jogging at his side, winked, and made a movement with his elbow.

"Course if they was to claim her, I got her off of an old friend o' mine down in the West Country," he said, raising his voice. "Better still Ireland as further away. Yes, South of Ireland—a'ter Punchestown. He'd better be dead, too, my old friend—so he can't tell no tales and deny no stories." He elaborated his idea with glee, clapping his sides with his elbows. "Yes, that's about it. I bought her in at the sale of the effects of an old friend o' mine, South of Ireland—to help his widie. That's got it. Good idee. Very good idee. Charity *and* business—what they like. Micky Mahon, his name was. Died o'—I must have it all pat on the tongue. What *did* he die of, Brand? You're an artful little feller, settin' there so smug and secret like a hen crocodile a-hatchin' h'out h'its h'egg."

"Lung-trouble's best, sir," replied the little jockey gravely. "I reck'n you can't go far with lung-trouble. See, we all dies o' shortness o' breath in the latter end. That *is* lung-trouble in a manner o' speakin'."

"Lung-trouble's good," said the old man. "Vairy good. You're a good little lad, Brand. You help me in my hour o' need...."

"Father!" came the stern voice from the back seat.

The old man began to flap with his elbows.

"There she goes, givin' tongue! Is that you, Miss?" he called, in his half-humorous whimper. "You wasn't meant to hear that. Your ears is altogether *too* long—like that young Lollypop hoss o' mine."

They swung away off the crest of the Downs and began to drop down the slope into the village of Cuckmere lying beneath them in the valley among trees.

The sun dipped into the sea as they turned with a noise of grinding wheels into the village street. The news of Goosey Gander's victory had preceded them and they drove slowly through little crowds of cheering children, between old flint cottages with tiled roofs, and gardens white with arabis and overspread with fig-trees.

As they turned a corner, Putnam's lay before them, a Queen Anne manor-house, homely, solid, snug, with low blue parapeted roof, standing a little back from the road, and buttressed by barns and stable-buildings.

Directly they came in sight of the windows of the farm the old man took his hat off his shining head, put it on the end of his whip, and began to twiddle it.

The signal was instantly answered.

A handkerchief was waved at a lower window.

"There's Mar!" Mat said comfortably, easing into a walk. "One thing, she ain't dead. *That's* a little bit o' better."

He gave his plump body a half-turn and began again to whimper over his shoulder to the occupant of the back seat.

"You wouldn't get your old dad into trouble, would you then, Boy?—not by tellin' Mar I done a lot o' things I never dreamed o' doin'. If you was to say I betted now you'd say what wasn't true, wouldn't you?—and you've often told me what come to Annie Nyas and Sophia in the Book, haven't you? A lesson to us all that was—to be took to 'eart, as the sayin' is. All I done was just this: An old friend come up to me—had a drop in him, must have had!—and he says: 'Your old hoss won't win, Mat,' he says, very insultifyin'. 'My old hoss *will* win then,' I answers, polite as you please. 'De we,' I says, mindful o' Mar. 'Will you back your opinion?' says he, sneery. 'No,' I says, very firm. 'No; I never bets—cause o' you know.' 'Oh, yes,' he says, 'I know you—and I know your master,' meaning Mar." He swung round and addressed the young man riding on his right. "That's 'ow they go on at me all the time, Mr. Silver," he whined. "Persecute me somethin' shockin' because o' me religion—for all the world as if I could help it."

"It's not your religion," came the deep voice from the back seat. "It's mother's."

"What's it matter whose religion it is if they martyrizes you for it at the stake?" wheezed the old man. He took up his tale anew. "So as I was sayin' he says to me, Sam Buckland do: 'Man to man,' he says, 'I respeck you for stickin' to principles what you don't 'old, Mat,' he says. 'And far be it from me to undermine a man's faith what he learned acrost his mother's knee,' he says. 'But see here,' he says; 'if that 'ole rockin'-hoss o' yours gets round the course I'll give you fi' pun for yourself; if a miracle happens and he gets a place I'll make it a tenner; and if all the other hosses takes and lays down and dies so as he wins outright, it's a pony to you.' And I says to him: 'As to my champion, Mr. Buckland,' I says, 'you're jealous of him and I don't blame you, seein' as he can roll faster nor any hoss o' yours can gallip. But if he *don't* win,' I says, 'I'll give you fi' pun to buy yourself some manners with, fi' pun for your missus to get her a better 'usband, and fi' pun for that bald-faced, ewe-knecked, calf-kneed son of a laughin' jack-ass who calls you dad.' That's all that happened' Boy. That's not bettin', is it? That's fair give-and-take. Quite a different thing entirely. Ask the clergee."

They pulled up in the road.

Mrs. Woodburn came slowly down the steps of the old manor-house to meet them.

She was a tall woman, gray, rather gaunt, and perhaps twenty years younger than her husband. She wore a plain black dress, and there was about her a wonderful atmosphere of peace and dignity.

Nobody but Mat would have dreamed of calling such a woman Mar, and any other woman of the type but Patience Longstaffe would have resented the name.

"I'm glad you won, dad," she said in a voice deep as her daughter's, but harsher, as though from wear. "And I hope you won fair."

The old man, who had alighted, was passing the reins through the rings of the saddle.

"There she goes!" he croaked in his protesting voice. "Might just as well be on the crook—straight, I might, for all the credit I gets."

Mrs. Woodburn kissed him and the girl, and ran a practised eye and hand down Goosey Gander's fore-legs.

His wife might be a Puritan, but Mat was the first to admit that there was little about a horse he could teach her.

"He got round all right, then, Brand?" she said.

"Oh, yes, 'm," chirruped the little jockey. "It was light goin', so his pipe didn't trouble him; and he fenced like he was in Paridise. I lay off a bit till they was all bust, then I come right away through 'em and spread-eagled the lot."

The woman's hand, strong yet tender, passed down the old horse's flank.

"I see you waled him," she said.

"Well, 'm, just a couple of taps like—to settle it," deprecated the other. "Three fences from home I see I'd got the measure of 'em, and come away from the ruck with a rattle. Then I easied him home."

"You'd no call to take up your whip, Brand," grumbled the old man. "He'd ha' won without that, and you'd a plenty in hand."

"*I* told him to come through and finish it if he got a chance," interposed Boy from the back.

The old man turned away with a grunt.

"Oh, *you* told him, did you? Course my instructions goes for nothin' if *you* told him. There's *two* masters in my stable, Mr. Silver, as you see—and neither of 'em's me."

"Mother!" called the girl.

Mrs. Woodburn went round and looked at the old mare.

"What d'you think of her?" asked Boy, unable to disguise her keenness.

"You've bought two," said the mother slowly.

"D'you think so?" cried the girl.

"Sure," muttered the old man. "One thing, if they claim her, they can't claim her foal, too." He grunted in his wife's ear: "Chap said she's in foal to Berserker. Likely tale, ain't it? Howsoebber, if 'tain't true, don't make no matter; if 'tis, all the better. Anyways, she might throw a winner, plea' Gob in his goodness."

Mrs. Woodburn held up a warning finger at him.

"Now, dad!" she said; then turned to her daughter.

"Turn her out in the Paddock Close for the present," she said. "And send one of the lads for Mr. Silver's pony."

The girl led the old mare away into the yard. Jim Silver followed slowly.

CHAPTER VI
PUTNAM'S

In the days when Putnam's had been a farm, the yard had always been deep in dung and litter. Now it was cobbled and clean as a kitchen floor. All round it on three sides were old barns and cattle-sheds, transformed into rough but roomy loose-boxes. And the most casual observer could not have mistaken the nature of the place. For a clock stood above the main building; a chestnut crib-biter, looking out into the yard, had the top of his half door between his teeth and was wind-sucking with arched neck; while a flock of fan-tails strutted to and fro, flirting and foraging.

A tortoise-shell cat crossed the yard leisurely. The cat was known as Maudie. But it was a matter of dispute amongst those interested in the question whether she derived her name from Maud Allan, the dancer, or from Mordecai, the Jew. The dispute hung round the question whether Old Mat had christened her or Ma. If she owed her name to Old Mat, then it was clear that it came from the dancer; if to Ma, then from the Old Testament.

Billy Bluff, entering the yard in an expectant bustle, made for Maudie with a joyful flourish. Maudie arched her back, spat, and passed on gingerly. Whenever the pair met, and that was frequently, they went through the same pantomime, to the satisfaction of one of them at least.

The bob-tail next made a dash at the fan-tails. These rose with a mighty splashing of wings, fluttered a yard above his head, and settled again unconcernedly.

Albert, who, true to his promise, had somehow got home before the rest of the party, was standing outside the door of the saddle-room. The other lads were gathered round him in respectful silence. Albert was busy, but he was not engaged as usual in telling his admirers tall stories of the Meeting and his own prowess in getting the blind side of mugs and dandy duds. He had a bit of chalk in his hand and was drawing on the door. There was no doubt the lad could draw. Monkey Brand indeed asserted that there were few things Albert Eddud could not do if he tried—"and the wusser the thing the better he does it." Now he was drawing the head of a man with a huge and bulbous nose. Boy caught a glimpse of it as she entered the yard, and recognised it in a flash. It was the face of the hero of a comic paper the lads took in: a paper of which she disapproved, although with her instinctive sense for government, she did not think it wise to suppress it. *Ally Sloper* its name; its subject, ladies in bathing costume.

Albert, rapt in his labour, was working with the fury of the artist. He finished with a flourish. The lads crowded round to look. Foremost amongst them were Jerry, a youth with corrugated brow and profoundly sagacious air; and Stanley, dark and sleek and heavy of face, in whom sloth and sleep and insolence seemed to war. Jerry clearly should have been a philosopher, and Stanley an emperor.

Monkey Brand was in the habit of referring, not without bitterness, to the pair and Albert as "them three." He believed them capable of anything, and was not far out in his belief. Jerry, the thinker, planned the crimes; Albert, the man of action, committed them; and Stanley, the stupid, bore the blame and paid the price. When they were not at each other's throats, the three hung very close together.

Albert Edward now thrust his friends aside.

"Half a mo'!" he cried, and scrawled in dashing hand beneath the portrait the legend:

Ally Slo's
Got a nose
Like our Jose'.
S.

Albert stood back with folded arms to admire his masterpiece. The beauty of it over-awed his naturally irreverent spirit.

"'Ush!" he said.

But a rude voice burst in on his silent rapture.

"Albert!" it called peremptorily.

The artist turned round to see Boy leading the old mare into the yard.

"Yes, Miss."

"Take Mr. Silver's pony."

"Yes, Miss."

"Jerry, put Billy Bluff on the chain. Stanley, put that chestnut's muzzle on."

She led the old mare to the gate that opened on the Paddock Close.

Silver followed her, and looking back saw Monkey Brand limp into the yard from the road, leading Goosey Gander.

Mat was on the other side of the old horse, walking thoughtfully, his whip over his shoulder, and muttering to himself, as was his way.

Goosey Gander's head was framed fittingly between master and man. Now he rubbed it against one and now against the other. They led him to the water-trough and stood over him as he drank with nibbling lips, shaking the oppressive collar from his shoulders. Jim Silver at the gate watched the little group with quiet content. The three seemed so perfectly at home together that between them was no need for words.

Monkey Brand was a cockney.

He had been born in the River Ward of Hammersmith in that blind alley known to the police and the inhabitants as Tiger Bay.

His father's ice-cream business never had any fascination for the lad; but from the first his spirit drew him to the long-eared shaggy mokes of certain of the neighbours. While the other urchins from the River Ward spent their days in and out of the river dodging the coppers, at the draw-docks on Chiswick Mall, or down by the coal-wharves under the bridge, Monkey's happiest hours were passed leading a coster's cart laden with green stuff up and down the alleys. When possible he slept with Mary, the donkey he had in charge. She was fond of him, too; and the Joes, who owned her, found that the long-eared lady, when in one of her stubborn moods, would give to the boy's persuasions what she refused to the big stick.

To the Joes Monkey proved himself invaluable.

He was industrious and reliable; and he had his reward when young Joe jaunted across London for fish at Billingsgate or greens at Covent Garden and took the lad with him.

The great day of the boy's life came when the Joes took him to Epsom for the Derby week.

Old Joe, young Joe's missus, and the kids, stowed away in the body of the cart; while young Joe balanced on one shaft and Monkey on the other. The party crossed Barnes Common in the small hours of the Monday morning, and dossed on Banstead Downs that night. Next day they joined the great stream of traffic rolling out of London Epsomward. Young Joe, whose strength lay in his powers of sympathetic intuition, let Monkey drive. And the urchin took his place with pride in that vast stream of char-à-bancs, 'buses, hansoms, and drags rolling southward; and no four-in-hand coachman of them all held up his hand to stay the following traffic, or twiddled his whip with lordlier dignity than the dark lad who sat on the shaft and drove Mary up the hill on to the course.

There for the first time young Monkey saw thoroughbred horses. They were a revelation to the lad. He stood and gaped at their beauty.

"Don't 'alf shine neever!" he gasped. "I reck'n our Mary couldn't 'old 'em."

At the end of the week the Joes returned to Tiger Bay without their coachman.

"Where's my Monkey then?" cried his mother.

"Stayed along o' the 'orses," young Joe answered, unharnessing.

Indeed there was but one walk in life for which the boy was fitted; and the fates had guided him into it young.

It was when he was nineteen that Mat Woodburn found him out.

Monkey had been left at the post in a steeplechase. Old Mat didn't follow the race. Instead he

watched the struggle between the lad and the young horse he was riding. Monkey gave a masterly exhibition of patience and tact; and Mat, then in his prime and always on the look-out for riding talent, watched it with grunts of pleasure. Monkey won the battle and went sailing after the field he could not hope to catch, cantering in long after the other horses had got home and gone to bed, as his indignant owner expressed it.

"Fancy turn!" he said. "Very pretty at Islington. You don't ride for me no more."

"Very good, sir," said Monkey, quite unperturbed.

As he left the dressing-room Mat met him.

"Lost your job, ain't you?" he said. "Care to come to me? I'm Mat Woodburn."

Monkey grinned.

"I know you, sir," he said. "Yes, sir. Thank you. I'm there."

Thus began that curious partnership between the two men which had endured twenty-five years.

Always master and man, the two had been singularly intimate from the start, and increasingly so. Both had that elemental quality, somewhat remote from civilization and its standards, which you find amongst those who consort greatly with horses and cattle. Both were simple and astonishingly shrewd. They loved a horse and understood him as did few: they loved a rogue and were the match for most.

Both had a wide knowledge of human nature, especially on its seamy side, based on a profound experience of life.

Monkey Brand had never been quite in the front rank of cross-country riders. At no time had he emerged from the position of head-lad, nor apparently had he wished to do so. It may be that he lacked ambition, or was aware of his limitations. For his critics said that, consummate horseman though he was, he lacked the strength to hold his own consistently in the first flight. Moreover, just at the one period of his career when it had seemed to the knowing that he might soar, the brilliant Chukkers, then but a lad, had crossed the Atlantic in the train of Ikey Aaronsohnn—to aid the cosmopolitan banker to achieve the end which was to become his consuming life-passion; and in a brief while had eclipsed absolutely and forever all his professional rivals.

CHAPTER VII
Ally Sloper

Silver opened the gate into the Paddock Close. Boy passed through, leading the old mare.

"Shall I take her?" asked the young man.

"No, thank you," she answered.

In the depths of her eyes there lurked a fugitive twinkle. So far the intercourse between herself and Mr. Silver had consisted in his offering to do things for her and in her refusing his offers.

The Paddock Close stretched away before the girl in the evening light. On the hill half-a-dozen young horses stampeded in the dusk.

An early swift screeched and swept above her. A great white owl swooped out of the wood and waved away up the hillside, hovering over the gorse. Under the hedge a scattered troop of children were coming down the slope along the path that led past the little old church among the sycamores.

Boy led the mare up the hillside, her eyes on the flowing green of the hill. The young man followed in her wake, lazy almost as the old mare, who trailed reluctantly behind with clicking shoes. The dreams seemed to have possessed him, too. He did not speak; his eyes were downward; but he was aware all the time of that slight, slow-moving figure walking just in front of him.

Then something seemed to disturb the stillness and ruffle his brooding mind. It was a vague disease as of a coming sickness, and little more. He emerged from the land of quiet and looked about him, like a stag disturbed by a stalker while grazing.

A man was blundering down the hillside toward them, an easel on his shoulder.

As he came closer his face seemed strangely familiar to the young man. Where had he seen it? Then he recollected in a flash. It was the face Albert had drawn in caricature on the stable-door—the face of Ally Sloper.

Silver found himself wondering whether the owner of the face was aware of his likeness, crude indeed though real, of his great protagonist.

The fellow was incredibly slovenly. His hair was reddish and bushy about the jaw, and but for his eyes you might have mistaken him for a commonplace tramp. Those eyes held you. They were sensitive, suffering, terrible with the terror of a baffled spirit seeking escape and finding none. In

that coarse and bloated face they seemed pitifully out of place and crying continually to be released. Indeed, there was something volcanic about the man, as of lava on the boil and ready at any moment to pour forth in destructive torrents. And surely there had been eruptions in the past with fatal consequences.

Now he waddled toward them with an unsavoury grin.

"What luck?" he called, in a somewhat honied voice.

"We won," replied Boy briefly.

She slipped the halter over the head of the old mare, who, too lazy to remove herself, began to graze where she stood.

The artist stood above the girl, showing his broken and dirty teeth, his eyes devouring her.

Silver resented the familiarity of his gaze.

"Mr. Silver, this is Mr. Joses," said the girl.

The difference between the two men amused her: the one clean, keen, beautifully appointed, like a horse got up for a show, the other shaggy and sloppy as a farmyard beast.

"Very pleased to make your acquaintance, sir, I'm sure," grinned the artist, bowing elaborately.

The other responded coldly.

Joses had not made a favourable impression on the young man. Boy saw that at once; and it was not difficult to see. For Silver showed his likes and dislikes much as Billy Bluff did.

The girl wished with all her heart that she was standing behind him that she might see if the hair on the back of his neck had risen.

A spirit of mischief overcame her.

"Mr. Joses'll paint your horses for you," she said demurely.

"Delighted, I'm sure," laughed the artist.

"Thank you," said the young man, with a brevity the girl herself could not have surpassed. His shyness had left him, and with it his tendency to stammer.

Boy felt herself snubbed, and was nettled accordingly.

"I'm going home by the wood," she said.

"I'll come with you," said the artist.

The two moved away down the hill together toward the wood that thrust like a spear into the heart of the Paddock Close.

Silver watched them with steady eyes. As usual he had been left. That swift and slimy artist-chap had chipped in while he was thinking what he should do.

Silver hated artists—not as the result of experience, for he had never met one in the flesh before, but from instinct, conviction, and knowledge of the race acquired from books. Artists and poets: they were all alike—dirty beggars, all manners and no morals, who could talk the hind-leg off a she-ass.

And Silver, being dumb himself and very human, hated men who were articulate.

He watched the pair walking away from him down the hillside. An ill-matched couple they seemed to him: the slight, strenuous girl, her plait of hair like a spear of gold between her shoulders, her slim black legs, and air of a cold flame; and that loose, fat thing who gave the young man the impression of a suet pudding that had taken to drink.

The beast seemed disgustingly fatherly, too, rubbing shoulders with the girl, and fawning on her.

Silver sat down on a log and took out the cigarette-case, which was his habitual comforter.

The old mare grazed beside him in the dusk, and he began to laugh as he looked at her. Her laziness tickled and appealed to him. There was something great about it. She was indolent as was Nature, and for the same reason—that she was aware of immense reserves of power on which she could fall back at any moment.

A rabbit came out of the gorse to feed near by. The owl whooped and swooped and hovered behind her. The sea wind, fresh and crisp, came blowing up the valley; and the young stock, bursting with the ecstasy of life, thundered by in the dusk with downward heads and arched backs and far-flung heels.

Silver sat and smoked.

There was a funny feeling at his heart.

Some vast, deep, silent-running river of Life, of whose presence within him he had only become aware within the last few hours, had been thwarted for the moment, thrust back upon itself, and

was tugging and tuzzling within him as it sought to pursue its majestic way toward the Open Sea.

CHAPTER VIII
The Great Beast

Joses had been haunting the village off and on for some time past.

Boy Woodburn knew nothing of him except that Monkey Brand disliked him.

Herself she had been given no chance of forming an opinion till lately, when Joses had asked permission of her father to paint some of the horses. Old Mat had given leave, and Joses had gained the entrée to the stables. He had made the most of his chance, haunting the yard, dogged by Monkey Brand, who resented his presence, watched him jealously, and made things as uncomfortable and precarious for the artist as he could. Joses, to do him justice, stuck to his self-imposed task with astonishing pertinacity in spite of opposition. He did not give up indeed until Flaminetta, a lengthy mare with an astonishing reach, suddenly exploded without warning and missed his head with a steel-shod heel by a short foot.

Joses tumbled backward off his stool and crawled out of danger on his hands and knees with astonishing alacrity for so gross a man.

Monkey Brand, an interested witness of the catastrophe, came limping up full of the tenderest solicitude.

"Oh, my, Mr. Joses!—my!" he cried. "I never knew her to do that afore. *Ah, yer! what ye up to?*"

Joses, still on his hands and knees, looked up at the little jockey, his eyes aghast with anger and fear.

"Ginger!" he snorted. "You put it there."

Monkey Brand eyed him with bland interest.

"You know a wunnerful deal about 'orses for a hartist, Mr. Joses," he remarked, not troubling to deny the soft impeachment.

Joses got to his feet and began to talk volubly.

Monkey Brand listened in respectful silence, waving to the lads to keep in the background.

When the orator had finished, the little jockey went in to report to Old Mat.

"He knows altogether too much that Mr. Joses do," he ended.

The trainer nodded.

"I guessed as much," he said. "I'll make inquiries."

Two days later Old Mat called his head-lad into the office. He was in his socks and shut the door with precautions.

Mystery was the breath of life to both men, who were at heart but children.

"Seen Joses lately?" began the old man cautiously.

"Not since then, sir," the other answered in the same tone.

Old Mat went to the window and drew down the blind. There was nobody but Maudie in the yard outside, and no human being within fifty yards. But such considerations must not come between the principal actors and the correct ritual for such occasions.

"I was over at Lewes yesterday," he panted huskily. "I see that tall inspector chap—him I put on to Flaminetta for the Sefton."

Monkey was all alert.

"What did he say, sir?"

"Not much," muttered the other. "Enough, though."

Monkey drooped his eyelids and tilted his chin. His face became a masterpiece of secrecy and cunning.

Old Mat turned his lips inward.

"I've warned him off," he said, "you might snout about a bit and rout out what he *is* after."

The other nodded.

"Monkey's the man, sir," he said, and stole away on tip-toe.

That evening the old trainer, driving through the village, came on the discomfited artist and drew up to have a word with him.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" began the old man in his sympathetic wheeze. "This *is* a bad job to be sure, Mr. Joses. So that long mare o' mine had a shot at your pore brain-box. When I heard, I wep' a tear, I did reelly." He shook a sorrowful head. "You mustn't come no more, though, Mr. Joses, you mustn't. If anything was to 'appen to you in my place I should never forgive meself. 'Tain't so much the compensation to your widows and such. It's *here*"—he thumped his heart—"I'd feel it."

Joses began to make excuse, but the old man refused to be convinced.

"Rogues and rasqueals, Mr. Joses," he cried. "Layin' pitchforks for yer feet—same as the Psalmist says. Hosses is much the very same as men. Kilted cattle, as the sayin' is. Once they turn agin' you your number's up. And they got *somefin'* agin' you. No fault o' yours, I know—godly genelman like you. But where it is *there* it is!" He sat in his buggy and wiped his dewy eye. "And there's the dorg, Mr. Joses. Big dorg, too!"

Joses, ejected from Putnam's, as Adam had been from Paradise, might be the loser; but Art certainly was not.

For he painted abominably.

Even the lads jeered at his efforts, while Old Mat said:

"I reck'n my old pony could do better than that, if I filled her tail with paint and she sat on it."

But Joses was not to be beaten so easily. Meeting Boy Woodburn in the village street, he asked her if he might paint Billy Bluff.

The girl, knowing Billy's views on Mr. Joses, excused herself and her dog.

Joses walked down the village street with her, expostulating.

Mrs. Haggard, the vicar's wife, an austere woman, with a jealously guardian eye for all the village maidens, met the pair and eyed the girl severely.

Later in the day she came on Boy alone and stopped her.

"Do you know that man, Joyce?" she asked.

Mrs. Haggard was the one person in the world who called Boy by her Christian name. And she did it, as she did everything else, on principle.

"Not really," answered Boy.

"I don't like him," said Mrs. Haggard.

"Neither do I," answered the girl.

"I'm glad to hear it," said the other. "He's *not* a nice man."

That evening Mrs. Haggard went to see Mrs. Woodburn and gave the trainer's wife some of her reasons—and they were good reasons, too—for thinking Mr. Joses *not* a nice man.

Mrs. Woodburn, who was in the judgment of the vicar's wife a good but curious woman, showed herself distressingly undistressed.

"Boy can look after herself, I guess," she said, a thought grimly.

She reported later to Mat what Mrs. Haggard had told her and what she had replied to Mrs. Haggard.

Old Mat agreed.

"She can bite all right," he said. "Trust Boy."

And Boy, as she walked down the hillside on leaving Mr. Silver and the old mare, felt like biting.

She was annoyed with Mr. Silver, annoyed with Joses, and, above all, annoyed with herself.

She had been mischievous, and now she was being punished for it.

She did not like Joses; and she *did* like being alone in the wood at dusk.

Her companion walked too close to her; he laughed too much; she was aware of that haunted and haunting eye of his rolling at her continually; and he smelt of alcohol.

Also he would talk.

"That's Silver, is it?" he said familiarly, as they walked down the hill.

"That's *Mr.* Silver," she retorted.

His eye sought hers, questioning; but found nothing save a proud, cold face.

"Your dadda's training for him, isn't he?" continued the fat man.

Her dadda!

The cheek of it!

"I don't know."

"He's a Croesus, isn't he?"

"He's *not* a greaser," with warmth.

Joses laughed his unpleasant laughter.

"A Croesus, I said. Rolling. He's the Bank of Brazil and Uruguay."

"I don't know," replied the girl. "I haven't asked."

They had reached the stile into the wood.

"Good-night," she said.

"I'll see you through the wood," the other answered.

A moment she hesitated. Should she after all go back by the field? If she did he would think she was afraid. And she was not, as she would show him. But she wished that Billy Bluff was with her. Reluctantly at length she climbed the stile and walked through the dusk. He shambled at her side.

"Begun to bathe yet?" he asked.

"No."

"You let me know when you begin, and I'll come and paint you on the rocks."

Her eyes flashed up at his.

"You won't!" she said fiercely.

He edged in upon her, laughing sleekly.

"Saucy, is it?" he said.

"Keep off!" she cried.

"Wants taming, does it?"

He wound his arm about her.

"Let me go!"

She kicked his shins with her square-toed shoes.

She kicked hard and hurt him.

"You little devil!" he snorted.

He pressed her to him, seeming to smother her, like an offensive blanket.

His red beard brushed her forehead; his hot face crowded down on hers; and above all his great red nose protruded above her like an inflamed banana.

Mrs. Haggard was fond of saying that Joyce Woodburn was like a wild animal. And in a way the vicar's wife was right. Self-preservation was the first law of life for the girl as for every healthy young creature. And long and intimate contact with horses and dogs had made her swift and direct in action as were they.

Now when she felt herself in the clutches of the Beast, and the Greater Death closing in upon her, she knew as little of doubts and scruples as any creature of the wilderness.

That hateful breath was in her nostrils; those covetous eyes were close to hers; that inflamed and evil nose protruded over her in flaming invitation.

She seized it in her gloved hand and wrenched it. The effect was immediate.

Joses squealed and clapped both hands to his damaged organ.

"My——, you——!" he squeaked in the voice of a Punch.

The girl broke away and ran. She was swift and hard as a greyhound. For a moment the other stood, leaning over a bed of nettles, snorting and sniffing as the blood dripped from his nose.

Then he pursued. She heard him thundering behind her. It was like the pursuit of a fawn by a grizzly. She had only a hundred yards to go to the open; and as she fled with her head on her shoulder, and her plait flapping, feeling the strength in her limbs and the courage in her heart, she mocked her pursuer silently.

That drink-sodden grampus catch her!

Her pride came toppling down about her. She tripped, wrenched her ankle, and knew that she was done.

Before her was a familiar tree she had often climbed, with a branch some six feet from the ground.

She swung herself up.

The Great Beast came snorting up. He was a dreadful sight. His nose was bleeding profusely, and the blood had mingled with his beard and moustache. He had lost his cap, and his head shimmered bald at her feet beneath wisps of hair.

He seemed like a great vat full of spirit into which she had tossed a lighted match.

"I got you, my beauty!" he panted in smothered and unnatural voice.

He put his hands on the branch.

She stamped on them with her heels: and she stamped hard. He swore, and drew from a leather sheath a wooden-handled knife such as Danish fisher-folk use.

She grasped the branch above her and swung in the air; but she could not swing forever thus.

"I can wait," said the Great Beast beneath, laughing dreadfully.

Then there came the sound of a man singing some kind of boating-song.

The voice was deep and drawing nearer.

"*Then we'll all swing together,*
Steady from stroke to bow."

It was Silver strolling home through the wood.

Boy heard him; so did Joses, and withdrew into the dusk.

The girl slipped down from the tree.

The young man dawdled up, and looked at her with some surprise.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"Yes," said Boy. "Up a tree."

She limped coldly away.

He followed her.

"Are you lul-lame?" he asked, shy and anxious.

"Sprained my off-hind fetlock," she replied.

BOOK II
THE WATCHER

CHAPTER IX
PATIENCE LONGSTAFFE

Patience Longstaffe was the only child of Preacher Joe, of God-First Farm, on the way to Lewes; and she was very like her father.

He had been brought up a Primitive Methodist and had first heard the Word at Rehoboth, the little red brick place of worship of the sect on the outskirts of Polefax; but being strong as he was original he had seceded from the church of his fathers early in life to the Foundation Methodists and started a little chapel of his own, which bore on its red side the inscription that gave the popular name to its founder's farm.

The chapel was hidden away down a lane; but as you drove in to Lewes along the old coach-road, with the Downs bearing on your left shoulder, you could not mistake Mr. Longstaffe's farm: for a black barn on the roadside carried in huge letters the text,

To the cultivated and academic mind there might be something blatant and vulgar about so loud an invitation.

But if its character estranged the carriage-folk, the man who had put it up had sought the Kingdom himself, and had, if all was true, found it. Joe Longstaffe was by common consent a Christian man, and not of that too general kind which excuses its foolishness and fatuity on the ground of its religion. The Duke's agent disliked him for political reasons, but he would admit that the dissenter was the best farmer in the countryside; and the labourers would have added that he was also the best employer.

The curious who walked over from Lewes to attend the little chapel in which he held forth, found nothing remarkable in the big, gaunt man with the Newgate fringe and clean-shaven lips, who looked like a Scot but was Sussex born and bred. Joe Longstaffe was not intellectual; his theology was such that even the Salvation Army shook their heads over it; he had read nothing but the Bible and Wesley's Diary—and those with pain; he stuttered and stumbled grotesquely in his speech, and a clerical Oxford don, who pilgrimaged from Pevensey to hear him, remarked that the only thing he brought away from the meeting was the phrase, reiterated *ad nauseam*,

"As I was sayin', as you might say."

But there was one mark-worthy point about the congregation of the chapel; and the Duke in his shrewd way was the first to note it.

"Nine out of ten of the people who attend are his own folk—his carters, shepherds, milk-maids, and the like. And they don't go for what they can get. Now if I started a chapel—as I'm thinkin' of doin'—d'you think my people'd come? Yes; if they thought they'd get the sack if they didn't."

They went, indeed, these humble folk, because they couldn't help it. And they couldn't help it because there was a man in that chapel who drew them as surely as the North Pole draws the magnetic needle. And he drew them because there was Something in him that would not be denied, Something that called to their tired and thirsting spirits, called and comforted. It was not possible to say what that Something was; but this man had it, and it was very rare. And that tall daughter of his, who rarely smiled, and never grieved, who was always strong, quiet, and equable, going about her work regular as the seasons, possessed it, too.

Everybody, indeed, respected Patience Longstaffe, if few loved her.

She was long past thirty, and people were beginning to say that she had dedicated herself to virginity, when to the amazement of all it was announced that she would marry Mat Woodburn, the trainer, twenty years her senior.

The Duke, of whose many failings lack of courage was not one, asked her boldly why she was doing it.

Her answer was as simple as herself.

"He's a good man," she said.

It was a new and somewhat surprising light on the character of Old Mat, but the Duke accepted it without demur.

"She's right," he said at the club at Lewes. "Mat's a rogue, but he's not a wrong 'un." And with his unequalled experience of both classes, the old peer had every right to speak.

The vulgar-minded, who make the majority of every class in every country, thought that Preacher Joe would make trouble, and looked forward hopefully to a row. For at least a month after the announcement every drawing-room and public-house in South Sussex was rife with malicious and sometimes amusing stories. The authors of them were doomed to disappointment. Not only was Mr. Longstaffe quietly and obviously happy, but he and his son-in-law, who was but five years his junior, showed themselves to be unusually good friends.

And there was no doubt the marriage was a success. The content on Patience Woodburn's face was evidence enough of that.

How far the strange and apparently ill-assorted couple affected each other it was difficult to say. Outwardly, at least, Old Mat remained Old Mat still, and Patience, although she became Ma Woodburn, went her strong, still way much as before her marriage. Bred on the land and loving it, inheriting a wonderful natural way with stock of every kind, she was from the first her husband's right hand, none the less real because unsuspected and to a great extent unseen.

She was never known to attend so much as a point-to-point, but when a colt wasn't furnishing a-right, or a horse entered for a big event was not coming on as he should, it was Ma who was sent for and Ma who took the matter in hand.

"I've nothing against horses and racing," she would say. "God meant 'em to race and jump, I reck'n. But I don't think he meant us to bet and beer over 'em."

From the first she was a power in the Putnam stable.

Except in a crisis she interfered little with the lads, but when they went sick or smashed

themselves, she took them into her house and nursed them as though they were her own. If they were grateful they did not show it; but in times of stress some spirit whose presence you would never have suspected made itself suddenly and sweetly apparent.

The Bible Class for the lads in her husband's employ she had started on the first Sunday of her reign at Putnam's.

It was voluntary for those over fifteen; but all the lads attended—"to oblige."

That class at the start had been the subject of untold jokes in the racing world.

There had even been witticisms about it in the *Pink Un* and other sporting papers.

And when Mat had been asked what he thought of it the story went that he had answered:

"I winks at ut," adding, with a twinkle: "I winks at a lot—got to now."

Ma Woodburn kept the class going for twenty years, until, indeed, her daughter was old enough to take it over from her.

CHAPTER X
HER DAUGHTER

Boy Woodburn had been born to the apparently incongruous couple some years after their marriage.

From the very beginning she had always been Boy. Mrs. Haggard, who didn't quite approve of the name—and there were many things Mrs. Haggard didn't quite approve of—once inquired the origin of it.

"I think it came," answered Mrs. Woodburn.

And certainly nobody but the vicar's wife ever thought or spoke of the girl as Joyce. She grew up in Mrs. Haggard's judgment quite uneducated. That lady, a good but somewhat officious creature, was genuinely distressed and made many protests.

The protests were invariably met by Mrs. Woodburn imperturbably as always.

"It's how my father was bred," she replied in that plain manner of hers, so plain indeed that conventional people sometimes complained of it as rude. "That's good enough for me."

Mrs. Haggard carried her complaint to her husband, the vicar.

"There was once a man called Wordsworth, I believe," was all the answer of that enigmatic creature.

"You're much of a pair, you and Mrs. Woodburn," snapped his wife as she left the room.

"My dear, you flatter me," replied the quiet vicar.

On the face of it, indeed, Mrs. Haggard had some ground for her anxiety about the girl.

Boy from the beginning was bred in the stables, lived in them, loved them.

At four she began to ride astride and had never known a side-saddle or worn a habit all her life. She took to the pigskin as a duck to water; and at seven, Monkey Brand, then in his riding prime, gave her up.

"She knows more'n me," he said, half in sorrow, half in pride, as his erstwhile pupil popped her pony over a Sussex heave-gate.

"Got wings, she have."

"Look-a-there!"

But the girl did not desert her first master. She would sit on a table in the saddle-room, swinging her legs, and shaking her fair locks as she listened bright-eyed while Monkey, busy on leather with soap and sponge, told again the familiar story of Cannibal's National.

It was on her ninth birthday that, at the conclusion of the oft-told tale, she put a solemn question:

"Monkey Brand!"

"Yes, Minie."

"Do-you-think-I-could-win-with-the National?"

"No sayin' but you might, Min."

The child's eyes became steel. She set her lips, and nodded her flaxen head with fierce determination.

She never recurred to the matter, or mentioned it to others. But from that time forth to ride the

National winner became her secret ambition, dwelt upon by day, dreamed over by night, her constant companion in the saddle, nursed secretly in the heart of her heart, and growing always as she grew.

Certainly she was a Centaur if ever child was.

To the girl indeed her pony was like a dog. She groomed him, fed him, took him to be shod, and scampered over the wide-strewn Downs on him, sometimes bare-backed, sometimes on a numnah, hopping on and off him light as a bird and active as a kitten.

Mrs. Woodburn let the child go largely her own way.

"Plenty of liberty to enjoy themselves——" that was the principle she had found successful in the stockyard and the gardens, and she tried it on Boy without a tremor.

Old Joe Longstaffe on his death-bed confirmed the faith of his daughter in this matter of the education or non-education of the child.

"Don't meddle," he had said, "God'll grow in her—if you'll let him."

Patience Woodburn never forgot her father's words and never had cause to regret that she had followed them.

The girl, wayward though she might be at times, never gave her mother a moment's real anxiety. She was straight as a dart, strong as a young hawk, fearless as a lion, and free as the wind. Her simplicity, her purity and strength made people afraid of her. In a crowd they always made way for her: for she was resolute with the almost ruthless resolution of one whose purpose is sure and conscience clean.

"You feel," Mr. Haggard once said, "that—she's clear." He waved vaguely.

"Pity she's a little heathen," said Mrs. Haggard acridly.

"She doesn't know her catechism," answered the mild vicar in his exasperatingly mild way. "Is she any the worse?"

"Churchman!" snorted his outraged spouse.

Mrs. Haggard's indictment was unfounded. The girl was fierce and swift, but she was not a heathen. Mrs. Woodburn had seen to that. Sometimes she used to take the child to the Children's Services in the little old church on the edge of the Paddock Close. The girl enjoyed the services, and she loved Mr. Haggard; but when, during her grand-dad's lifetime, her mother gave the child her choice between the church and the little God-First chapel on the way to Lewes, she always chose the latter.

It may be that her choice was decided by the fact that she drove to the chapel and walked to the church; it may be that, dearly as she loved the vicar, she loved her grand-dad more; or it may be that the simplicity of the chapel, the austerity of the service, and the character of the congregation, all of a kind, close to earth, humble of heart, and russet in hue, attending there for no other reason than because they loved it, appealed to something profound and ineradicable in the spirit of this child bred amongst the austere and simple hills to which she knew herself so close.

Old Mat was fond of saying that the girl's mother could do what she liked with her, and nobody else could do anything at all.

"I don't try," he would add, "She puts the terror on to me, that gal do."

And the old man was right.

Different as they were, there was a deep and mysterious sympathy between mother and daughter. And on that sympathy the mother's power was based.

Only once was her authority, based as it was upon the spirit, subject to breaking strain.

When the girl was fourteen, Mrs. Woodburn decided to send her to the High School at Lewes. Old Mat shook his head; Mrs. Haggard was delighted; the girl herself went about with pursed lips and frozen air.

The vicar, meeting her in the village, stopped her.

"What d'you think about it, Boy?" he asked in his grave, kind way.

"I shall go," blurted the girl. "But I shall win all the same."

"Win what?" asked the vicar.

"*That*," said Boy, and flashed on her way.

When the day of parting came, word was sent round to the stables that nobody was to be in them at twelve o'clock. At that hour a slight cold figure crossed the yard swiftly, and entered the stables. The key was turned in the door. There was no sound from within, except the movement of the horses, to whom the girl was bidding good-bye.

Half an hour later the door was opened, and she came out, cold and frosty as she had entered.

Monkey Brand, standing in the door of the saddle-room, keeping guard over the stable-lads lest they should peep and pry, saw her come.

"She look very grim," he afterward reported to Old Mat.

"Keeps a stiff lip for a little 'un," whispered a lad peeping from behind the jockey's shoulder.

Monkey Brand rounded on him.

"If you'd 'alf her 'eart," he said, "you might be mistook for a man."

For three weeks thereafter Putnam's knew the girl no more; and it seemed that the soul had died out of the place. Monkey Brand moped, and swore the horses moped, too.

"When I goes round my 'orses in the mornin' they look at me like so many bull-oxes askin' to be slaughtered," he said. "Never see sich a sight. Never!"

Old Mat for once was glum. His eye lost its twinkle, and his walk its famous lilt. Mr. Haggard was genuinely sorry for the old man.

"Miss her, Mr. Woodburn?" he asked, stopping the trainer in the village street.

"Miss her!" cried the other. "Mr. Haggard, there's nothing about Hell you can teach *me*. I knows it all." He waved a significant hand and walked away, his heart in his boots.

Of all the party at Putnam's, Mrs. Woodburn only seemed undisturbed. Unmoved by the gloom of those about her, glum looks, short answers, and the atmosphere of a November fog, she went about her business as before.

Boy's history during those weeks has never been written, and never will be. What she did, said, thought, and suffered during that time—and what others did, said, thought, and suffered because of her—none but the Recording Angel knows. The girl herself never referred to the point; but were reference made to it, she winced like a foal at the touch of the branding-iron.

The episode happily lasted but three weeks.

At the end of that time, on a Saturday morning, one of the lads had ridden the Fly-away filly over to Lewes. There in the High Street the girl swooped on him.

"Get off!" she ordered.

The lad, who feared Miss Boy as he did the devil, obeyed with alacrity.

"Put me up!" Boy ordered.

Again the lad obeyed, and the next thing he was aware of was the swish of the filly's thoroughbred tail as she disappeared round the corner of the street.

An hour later the girl clattered into the yard at Putnam's, the filly in a foam.

Monkey Brand, a chamois leather in his hand, came running out.

"Miss Boy!" he cried.

There was an extraordinary air of suppressed excitement about the girl. She was white-hot and sparkling, yet cold. Indeed, she gave the impression of a sea of emotions battling beneath a floor of ice.

"I've got out," she said.

Panting, but fearless eyed, she went in to face her mother.

Mrs. Woodburn did not seem surprised.

She met her daughter's resistance with disarming quiet.

"Well, Boy," she said, kissing the truant.

"I'm not going back," panted the girl. Her spirit fluttered furiously as that of an escaped bird who fears recapture.

"I'm not going to send you back, my dear," replied the mother.

The girl put her arms about her mother's neck in a moment of rare impulse.

"Oh, mother!" she sighed.

She did not cry: Boy Woodburn was never known to cry. She did not faint. She very rarely fainted. But she trembled through and through.

Mrs. Woodburn paid the necessary fees. The schoolmistress didn't ask to have the girl back. She admitted that she could make nothing of her.

"Stuck her toes in," said Old Mat. "And I don't blame her. Can't see Boy walkin' out two be two, and hand in hand." He shook his head. "Mustn't put a blood filly in the cart, Mar," he said. "She'll only kick the caboodlum to pieces."

Mrs. Woodburn made one more effort to educate her daughter on conventional lines. She introduced a governess to Putnam's. But after the girl had taken her mistress for a ride, the poor woman came to Mrs. Woodburn in tears and asked to leave.

"I can't teach her the irregular verbs on horseback," she said. "And she won't learn any other way. Directly I begin on them, she starts to gallop."

Mrs. Woodburn accepted the governess's notice, and tried nothing further.

"She must go her own way now," she said to Mat.

"It's the right way, Mar," replied the old man comfortably.

"I hope so," answered his wife.

"She can read, and she can write, and she can 'rithmetik,'" continued the other. "What more d'you want with this 'ere education?" He went out, shaking his head. "I sha'n't wep no tear," he said. "That I sha'n't, even if she don't get round them wriggle-regular French worms Mamsel talks of. Roast beef o' old England for me."

Mrs. Woodburn announced her decision to her daughter.

"Thank you, mother," said the girl quietly, and added: "It's no good—not for me."

Mrs. Woodburn eyed her daughter.

"You're a good maid, Boy," she said. "That's the main."

A month later the girl asked her mother if she might help with the lads' Bible Class.

Mrs. Woodburn consented.

A year later, when the girl was sixteen, Mrs. Woodburn asked her daughter if she would take the class alone.

The girl thought it over for a month.

Then she said yes.

In the interval she had passed through a spiritual crisis and made a great renunciation.

She had resolved to put aside the dream that had dominated her inner life for seven years.

CHAPTER XI
Brazil Silver

Boy Woodburn's calling had thrown her from early youth into contact with Eton men.

Indeed, in her experience the world was divided into Eton men—and the Rest. That was what the girl believed; and it was clearly what the Eton men believed, too. Boy herself belonged to the Rest, and did not seem to regret it. The Rest were infinite in number and variety; that was why she liked them so; for the Infinite can know no limitations. It was not so with the other division of the Human Race. Eton men, though almost equally numerous, were limited and stereotyped all to pattern. In the girl's judgment there were three types of them: the Superior Person, who treated her as if she was not; the Bad Ass, to whom she was a poor sort of Joke; and the Incorrigible Creature, who made up to her as if she was a barmaid.

That was her theory. And once the girl had formed a theory as the result of observation, she hated that theory to be upset.

Mr. Silver displeased her because he blew her hypothesis to smithereens on his first appearance; for he was an Eton man, yet clearly he did not come within any of the three known categories.

At first the girl escaped from her intellectual dilemma by a simple and purely feminine wile—she refused to believe that he was an Eton man.

And even when it was proved to her that he had rowed in the Eton boat she remained unconvinced.

"Need you be an Eton man to be in the Eton boat?" she inquired warily.

Mr. Haggard, her informant, thought it probable, but added that he would inquire.

It was not till she had known the young man some six months that she settled the question for herself by asking him point-blank if he had been at Eton.

"I believe so," he answered.

That was his invariable answer to the question when put to him. Now for once he elaborated on it a little.

"Mother wanted me to go," he added. "Father didn't."

"Were you happy there?" asked the girl.

The other's face lit up with the enthusiasm she liked in him so well.

"Was I not?" he said.

Albert Edward took all the credit to himself for the name of Silver Mug. Albert always took all the credit for everything; but really he was by no means so original as he imagined.

In fact, Jim Silver had been Silver Mug when Albert was still a ragged little urchin asking for cigarette pictures from passing toffs outside Brighton Railway Station.

A Lower Boy at Eton had originated the name. It was apt, and it stuck.

Jim Silver in Bromhead's was hugely rich, and he had a great, ugly, honest face. Friends and enemies called him by the name; and he had a good few of both. The former loved him for the qualities the latter hated him for. The cads of the school chaffed surreptitiously about his birth. They said he was the grandson of an agricultural labourer and the son of a bank clerk; but only one of them, more caddish or more courageous than the rest, said so to his face.

"I wouldn't mind if I was," said simple Jim, and was cheered by his loyal little friends, Lord Amersham and others of the right kidney.

His father never came to see him when he was at school.

"I know why," sneered the enemy.

"Why, then?" flared Jim.

"He daren't. Give the show away."

After that the lad gave his enemy a sound hiding, and peace reigned. The bounders might say he was a bounder, but they had to admit that he could give and take punishment with the best.

He left Eton absolutely unspoilt.

A year before the lad quitted the school his father sent for him.

"I didn't want you to go to Eton, Jim," he said. "I'm glad now. Do you want to go on to Oxford?"

The boy thought; and when his reply came it was honest as himself.

"All my friends are going," he said. "I should like it for that reason. But I don't know that I should get much out of it."

"Go for a year," said his father. "See what you make of it. If you're getting any good of it, you can go on. If not, we'll see."

The boy did not leave the room.

His interviews with his father were rare; and there was a question he had long wished to ask.

Now he blurted it out.

"Am I to go into the Bank, father?"

The old man blinked at his son over his spectacles, and then shoved back his chair.

"What d'you want?" he asked.

"I should like the Army, or to farm," replied the son.

Mr. Silver put down his paper.

It was some time before he answered.

"The Bank's my life," he said at last. "You're my son. You may choose for yourself." He drummed with his fingers on the table; and Jim left the room.

When the half-breeds, as Lord Amersham called them, jeered at Silver as the son of an agricultural labourer there was a modicum of truth at the back of the lie.

The boy came of a long line of yeoman-farmers in Leicestershire, famous for generations for their stock and their integrity.

Jim Silver's grandfather was the last of that line. He was a big man and big farmer, husbanding his wide acres wisely and well, breeding good stock, enjoying his day's hunting, but not making

too much of it, touching his hat to his landlord, a familiar and imposing figure at all the Agricultural Shows in the Midlands.

His only son George was in his father's opinion a sport. Certainly he was no true Silver: that was obvious from his earliest years. He cared nothing for a horse, was a shamefully bad judge of a beast, had no feeling for the fields, never knew the real poetic thrill at the sight and smell of a yard knee deep in muck, and hated mud and rain.

"More of a scholar," said his father regretfully. "All for books and studyin'."

Mr. Silver, wise as are those who come into contact with Nature at first hand, did not interfere with his son's queer predilections or attempt to stay his development on the lines of instinctive preference, aiding the boy indeed in every way to make the most of himself on the path he had chosen.

Thus he sent him to the Grammar School at Leicester. The boy went joyfully: for he was very modern. The town, the books, the people, the streets, the hum of business, the opening gates of knowledge, pleased and contented his insatiable young spirit. The father had the reward of his daring. George did famously and became in time Captain of the School. The farmer attended prize-giving, and watched his son march up to the table time after time amidst the cheers of his school-fellows.

"George has got the red rosette again, Mr. Silver," smiled the Headmaster.

"So I see," replied the farmer. "But the showring's one thing, work's another." And when pressed to send his son on to a University he refused.

"He'll get an exhibition," urged the Headmaster.

The father was not impressed.

"Moderation in all things," he said, shaking a shrewd head. "Edication as well. He's stood out long enough. Time he began to 'arn."

The Headmaster's arguments were of no avail.

"I'd got all the schooling I needed by then I was eleven. He's had till he's eighteen. If it's to be of any good to him it'll be good now," said Mr. Silver.

To his surprise and secret pleasure his son backed him. He didn't want to go to a University.

"It's not much use unless you're a classic," the boy said. "And I'm a mathematician."

Besides he had his own clear-cut views of what he wished to do. And those views were very strange. He wanted to go into a Bank.

"Bank!" cried the amazed father. "Set at a counter all day and calcalate sums?"

The boy grinned behind his spectacles in his foolish way.

"That's about it," he said.

"Well, I never!" cried the father.

But true to his principles he let his son go his own way. Indeed, he helped him to a clerkship in the great Midland and Birmingham Joint Stock Bank, of which his landlord, Sir Evelyn Merry, was chairman.

"Glad to get him," said the old baronet. "If he's half as good a man as his father he'll do well."

The boy started at a local branch, and in a year was transferred to the central office at Birmingham.

There he spent his spare time attending evening classes. At the end of a year he held a certificate, was entitled to put certain letters after his name, and had written an article on bullion which appeared in the *Banker's Magazine* and was translated into German.

By the time he was thirty he was a manager, and ten years later he was one of the managing directors of the second biggest Joint Stock Bank in the richest country in the world.

And he did not stop there. George Silver was a financier in the great style, and a superlatively honest one. He had the initiative, the knowledge, and above all the judgment that made some men call him the Napoleon of Threadneedle Street. At forty-five he launched the Union Bank of Brazil and Uruguay; and to that colossal undertaking he devoted the last twenty-five years of his strenuous and successful life.

In the City he was known thereafter as Brazil Silver.

The Bank was his passion and his life.

When at fifty, to the astonishment of many, he married, the City merely said:

"He must have an heir to carry on the Bank."

Mrs. Silver was a semi-aristocratic woman of limited intelligence, suppressed ambition, and

sound limbs. It was the latter characteristic which won her a husband. He was not such a bad judge of make and shape as his father would have had the world believe; and as usual Brazil Silver's judgment proved good. In the appointed time his wife fulfilled her function, and gave him the son he asked of her.

CHAPTER XII
The Eton Man

Jim Silver grew up neither his father's son nor his mother's.

"He's a throw-back—to his grandfather," said old Sir Evelyn.

And in fact from the first the lad's soul hankered after the broad lands of Leicestershire rather than the counting-house in Threadneedle Street.

His happiest days were spent as a child on his grand-dad's farm, amid the great horses, and sweet-breathed kine, and golden stacks.

"Back to the land," as his grandfather was fond of saying, was the child's unspoken motto.

The old man and his sturdy grandchild were rare intimates, and never so happy as when wandering together about the yards and farm-buildings and pastures, the child, silent and absorbed, as he clutched his grand-dad's big brown finger.

The pair did not talk much: they were too content. But there was one often-repeated conversation which took place between them as they strolled.

"What goin' to be when you grows up, Jim?"

"Farmer."

"What shall ye breed?"

"Shire-'osses."

The child came back always from those prolonged visits with the sun on his cheeks, the strength in his limbs, and Leicestershire broad upon his tongue; and he never understood why his mother cut his visits short on every imaginable pretext.

At Eton the lad's friends were almost all drawn from the families in whose blood, after generations of possession, the land and its belongings had become a real if somewhat perverted passion. They would sit on into the twilight in each other's studies and ramble on interminably and with the exaggerated wisdom of seventeen about the subject nearest to their youthful hearts.

Sometimes Mr. Bromhead would look in, grim and gray behind his spectacles.

"Talking horses as usual, Jim, I suppose," he would say.

"And dog, sir," corrected young Amersham.

"With an occasional shorthorn chucked in to tip the scale," added old Sir Evelyn's fair grandson.

When Brazil Silver died, the year his son was the heavy-weight in the Oxford boat, he left a will which was in accordance with his life.

Every penny he had—and he had a good many, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer remarked in the House of Commons—was tied up in the Bank, and to remain there.

It was all left to his son. "I can trust him to see to his mother," ran the will, written on half a sheet of paper, "and to any dependents. Charities I loathe."

The son was free to save anything he liked from his vast income, but the capital must stay in the Bank.

The old man made no condition that Jim should enter the Bank, and expressed no wish to that effect. His friends, therefore, speculated what Jim would do.

They might have spared themselves the trouble. He left Oxford, in spite of the protests of the Captain of the boat, who spent a vain but hectic week pointing out to the apostate the path of duty, which was also the path of glory, and went into the Bank.

His reasoning, as always, was simple and to the point.

"The Bank was my father's show," he said. "He made it, and left it to me to carry on. And I shall—to the best of my ability."

With that capacity for dogged grind which distinguished him, he tried to render himself efficient, working early and late like any clerk.

It was a well-nigh hopeless task. Jim Silver's head was sound if slow; but he had no aptitude for figures.

"I'm worth two pound a week in the open market," he told his old house-master. "And I'm supposed to be bossing—that." And he brandished the latest report of the Bank of which he was nominal chairman.

Notwithstanding obvious differences in many ways, Jim inherited some of his father's characteristics.

Brazil Silver, in spite of his success, had always remained in his personal life the simple farmer's son. Indeed, it was said in the City that he never owned a dress-suit, and that when he had to attend City banquets he hired his butler's.

When he died he left behind him none of the usual encumbrances. Original in his private life as in finance, he had steadfastly refused to go the way of the world. He had never bought a great place in the country or a big house in town. He had never taken a Scotch moor or a river in Norway. In London he had a plain but perfectly appointed flat; and sometimes in the summer he took a house on the river or at St. Helen's.

In these respects Jim followed faithfully in the steps of his father.

He kept on the flat in town, worked in the City all the day, and spent much time of evenings at the Eton Mission in Hackney Wick.

One small extravagance he attempted: he tried to buy from old Sir Evelyn the farm on which his fathers had lived and died for generations.

The old gentleman, who would sooner have parted from his soul than from an acre of his inheritance, refused to sell.

"I suppose the boy'll cut up rough now," grumbled the old baronet, who was fond of Jim.

"Oh, no, he won't, grandfather," replied his grandson. "He's awfully decent."

"We shall see," mumbled the old man; but he had shortly to admit that Billy was right.

Jim Silver, thwarted in his desire to acquire his grandfather's farm, rented a little hunting-box near by instead. There he kept his weight-carriers, and there during the hunting season he spent his week-ends and occasional holidays.

Since the days when he walked his grand-dad's farm as a child, his ambitions had changed in degree but not in kind. Then he had proposed to devote his life to breeding shire-horses. Now he meant, when once he had mastered his job, to devote his leisure to owning and breeding 'chasers.

Some time elapsed after his father's death before he let himself go in this respect. His sensitive conscience and high sense of duty gave him an uneasy mind in the matter. His father had disapproved of horses, or rather had been afraid of the Turf and its consequences.

It was a while before the son could assuage his qualms and feel himself free to go forward in the prosecution of his desire.

His old house-master, still his father-confessor in spiritual distresses, finally dispelled the young man's doubts and launched him on his destined way.

"Be yourself," he said, "as your father was before you. He wouldn't farm—because he hadn't got it in him. What he had in him was banking. So like a wise man he banked. You've got it in you to breed steeplechase horses. So breed them. Only—breed them better than any man ever bred them before."

The young man's mind once finally resolved, nothing could stop him. And it was in the pursuit of his desire that he first came across Mat Woodburn.

The old man and the young took to each other from the first. Indeed, there was much in common between the two. Both were simple of heart, children of nature, caring little for the world, and both believed with passionate conviction that an English thoroughbred was the crown and glory of God's creatures.

"*HE* didn't make no mistake *that* time," the old man was fond of saying with emphasis, to the amusement of Mr. Haggard and the annoyance of his wife.

CHAPTER XIII
Boy in Her Eyrie

In the corner of the yard at Putnam's was Billy Bluff's kennel. Above the kennel, a broad ladder, much haunted by Maudie, the free, who loved to sit on it and tantalize with her airs of liberty Billy, the prisoner on his chain, led to the loft above the stable.

It was a very ordinary loft in the roof, dusty, dark, with hay piled in one corner, a chaff-cutter,

and trap-doors in the floor, through which the forage was thrust down into the mangers of the horses below.

At the end of the loft was a wooden partition. Behind the partition was the girl's room.

She slept and lived up there over the stable at her own desire. It was less like being in a house: the girl felt herself her own mistress as she did not under the maternal roof; and most of all she was near the horses.

"I keep two watch-dogs at my place," Old Mat would say. "Billy Bluff a-low and my little gal a-loft."

Boy loved to go to sleep to the sound of the rhythmical munching of the horses beneath, and to wake to the noise of them blowing their noses in the dawn. Never a mouse moved in the stable at night but she was aware of it. And when a horse was training for a big event barely a night passed but in the small hours a white, bare-footed figure issued from the partition and came swiftly along the loft, disturbing rats and bats as she came, to lift a trap-door and look down with guardian eye on the hope of the stable dreaming unconsciously beneath.

In her solitary eyrie up there the girl learned a great deal.

Elsie Haggard, the vicar's daughter, or, as Mrs. Woodburn would say, with that touch of satire characteristic of her, the daughter of the vicar's wife, who was two years older than Boy, and at college, once asked her if she wasn't afraid.

"Afraid!" asked the girl. "What of?"

"I don't know," answered Elsie. "It's so far from everybody."

"I like being alone," replied the girl. "And there are the horses."

Elsie Haggard shared her mother's concern for Boy Woodburn's soul.

"And Someone Else," she said.

"Yes," replied the girl simply, almost brutally. "There's the Lord."

Elsie Haggard looked at her sharply, suspecting her of flippancy.

Nothing clearly was further from the girl's mind. Her face was unusually soft, almost dreamy.

"Wherever there are horses and dogs and creatures He is, don't you think?" she said, quite unconscious that she was quoting inexactly a recently discovered saying dear to Mr. Haggard.

"Ye-es," answered Elsie dubiously. "Of course, they've got no souls."

The dreamer vanished.

"I don't agree," flashed the girl.

Elsie mounted on her high horse.

"Perhaps you know more about it than my father," she said.

"He doesn't agree, either," retorted the girl mercilessly.

She was right; and Elsie knew it. The vicar's daughter made a lame recovery. Theology was always her father's weak point.

"Or mother," she said.

"Your mother doesn't know much about a horse," said the girl slowly.

"She knows about their souls," cried Elsie triumphantly.

"She can't if they haven't got them," retorted Boy, with the brutal logic that distinguished her.

Boy Woodburn's room in the loft was characteristic of its owner.

Mr. Haggard said it was full of light and little else.

It was the room of a boy, not of a girl; of a soldier, and not an artist.

The girl in truth had the limitations of her qualities. She was so near to Nature that she had no need for Art, and no understanding of it.

The room knew neither carpet, curtain, nor blind. The sun, the wind, and not seldom the rain and snow were free of it. A small collapsible camp-bed, a copper basin and jug, an old chest, a corner cupboard—these constituted the furniture. The walls were whitewashed. Three of them knew no pictures. On one was her hunting-crop, a cutting-whip, and a pair of spurs; beneath them a boot-jack and three pairs of soft riding-boots in various stages of wear. In the corner stood a tandem-whip.

Above the mantelpiece was one of the plates in which Cannibal had run the National, framing a

photograph of the ugliest horse that ever won at Aintree—and the biggest, to judge from the size of the plate. Beneath it was a picture of the Good Shepherd and the Lost Sheep, and a church almanac. On the mantelpiece were the photographs of her mother, her father, Monkey Brand in the Putnam colours, and the Passion Play at Oberammergau; while pinned above the clock was the one poem, other than certain hymns and psalms, that Boy knew by heart.

It was called *Two on the Downs*, and had been written by Mr. Haggard, when in the first vigour of youth he had come to take up his ministry in Cuckmere thirty years since:

TWO ON THE DOWNS

Climb ho!
So we go
Up the hill to the sky,
Through the lane where the apple-blossoms blow
And the lovers pass us by.

Let them laugh at you and me,
Let them if they dare!
They're almost as bad maybe—
What do we care?

Halt ho!
On the brow!—
O, the world is wide!
And the wind and the waters blow and flow
In the sun on every side.

By the dew-pond windy-dark,
Take a gusty breath;
The gorse in glory,
The sunshine hoary
Upon the sea beneath.

Swing ho!
Bowing go,
Breathless with laughter and song,
The wind in her wilful hair a-blow,
Swinging along, along.

She and I, girl and boy,
Merrily arm in arm,
The lark above us,
And God to love us,
And keep our hearts from harm.

Sing ho!
So we go,
Over Downs that are surging green,
Under the sky and the seas that lie
Silvery-strewn between.

One brilliant morning in early June, some two months after she had brought the gypsy's mare back to Putnam's on the evening of the Polefax Meeting, Boy rose early and stood humming the lines as she dressed, to a simple little tune she had composed for them.

The words were in harmony with her mood and with the morning. In part they inspired, in part they determined her. As she began the song Boy was wondering whether she should begin to bathe. Her mind had resolved itself without effort as she ended.

There had been a week of summer; the tide would be high, and only a day or two back a coastguard at the Gap had told her that the water was warming fast.

She went to the window and looked out over the vast green sweep of the Paddock Close running away up the gorse-crowned hillside that rose like a rampart at the back.

It was early. The sun had risen, but the mist lay white as yet in the hollows and hung about the dripping trees. Earth and sky and sea called her.

The girl slipped into her riding-boots, put her jersey on, and over it her worn long-skirted coat, twisted her bathing gown and cap inside her towel, and walked across the loft, the old boards shaking beneath her swift feet.

At the top of the ladder she paused a moment and looked down.

The fan-tails strutted in the yard; Maudie licked herself on the ladder just out of the reach of Billy Bluff, who, tossing on his chain, greeted the girl with a volley of yelps, yaps, howls of triumph, petition, expectation and joy.

Maudie, less pleased, rose coldly, and descended the ladder. She knew by experience what to expect when that slight figure came tripping down the ladder.

The Monster-without-Manners would be let loose upon Society. The Monster-without-Manners was kept in his place all through the night by a simple but admirable expedient which Maudie did not profess to understand. As the sun peeped over the wall, Two-legs appeared at the top of the ladder, and peace departed from the earth till the sun went down again, when the Monster-without-Manners resumed his proper place upon the chain. He did not know how to treat a lady, and was impervious to scratches that would have taught one less shaggy. He was rough, and no gentleman.

Maudie herself had the manners of an aristocrat of fiction. She walked through life, curling a contumelious lip, unshaken by the passions, aloof from the struggles, high above the emotions that stir and beset the creatures of the dust. In Maudie's estimation Billy Bluff was a bounder. Certainly he bounded, and like most bounders he conceived of himself quite falsely as a funny fellow.

Brooding on her grievances, Maudie strolled thoughtfully across the yard, one eye always on her enemy, timing herself to be on the top of the wall just a second before the M.-w.-M. was free to bound.

"Shut up, you ass!" said the girl as she released the bob-tail.

He was away with a roar, scattering the fan-tails, as he launched on his way to exchange jibes with Maudie, languid, secure, and insolent on the top of the wall.

The girl went to the saddle-room, took down her saddle and bridle, and turned into the stable.

For once she was not the first.

Monkey Brand was before her, standing at the head of a now familiar chestnut pony, waiting, saddled, on the pillar-reins.

"Is Mr. Silver down?" the girl asked, surprised.

"Yes, Miss. Came late last night. Down for the week-end, I believe. He's goin' for a stretch before he looks at the 'orses," the little jockey informed her. "They're goin' to gallop Make-Way-There this morning."

"Are they?" said the girl sharply.

It was rarely anything took place in the stable without her knowledge. And Make-Way-There, who was one of Mr. Silver's horses, was to run at the Paris Meeting two weeks hence.

The girl, to hide her resentment, placed her hand on the pony's neck, hard as marble beneath a skin that was soft to the touch as a mole's.

"Ain't he a little clinker?" said Monkey Brand in hushed voice. "They say Mr. Silver refused £600 for him at Hurlingham. And he took champion at the Poly Pony Show."

The girl's hand travelled down the pony's neck with firm, strong, rhythmical stroke.

"Heart of Oak!" she purred affectionately.

Ragamuffin, the old roan pony in the next stall, began to move, restless and irritable.

"He's jealous, is old Rags," smiled Monkey.

The girl went to the roan.

"Now, then, old man," she said. "Old friends first."

She saddled him and led him out into the yard.

Attached to the d's of the light saddle was a string forage bag such as cavalry soldiers carry. Into it she stuffed her towel and all that it contained.

Monkey Brand held the pony's head as she mounted.

"How's the old mare?" she asked, gathering her reins.

"Four Pound?" queried the jockey. "I didn't see her this morning as I come along, Miss. She must ha' been layin' behind the trees. Another week, I should say."

"William!" called the girl, and rode through the gate into the Paddock Close.

Since the Polefax Meeting Silver had come and gone continually. His week-ends he spent frequently at Putnam's, returning to London by the first train on Monday morning.

"He don't like the Bank, and I don't blame him," said Old Mat. "I reck'n he'd like to be all the while in the saddle on the Downs."

"Why does he stick to the Bank?" the girl blurted out.

It was the only question she had ever put about Mr. Silver.

"Because he's got to, my dear," replied the sagacious old man. "If he don't stick to the Bank, the Bank won't stick to him, I guess."

In those months the girl had learned a good deal about Mr. Silver. He was different from the other men she knew. She had felt that at once on meeting him. She was shy with him and short; and it was rare for her to be shy with men. Indeed, in her heart she knew that she was almost afraid of him. And she had never known herself afraid of a man before. That made her angry with him, though it was no fault of his.

Then she had resented the unconscious part he had played in the affair of the wood. She was sure he was laughing at her. And that good, plain, smileless face of his, and the very fact that he never referred to the incident, only made her the more suspicious.

His awkward big-dog attempts at friendliness had been repulsed. She played the Maudie to his Billy Bluff, and all would have been well but that he refused to get back upon her by bounding. Instead, he apparently had come to the conclusion that she disliked him, and had withdrawn.

That made her angrier still.

Now she had not even known that he was coming down last night. And worst and most unforgivable of all, she had not been told that Make-Way-There was to be galloped that morning.

Ragamuffin, the roan, was surprised when his mistress picked him up immediately she entered the Paddock Close and pushed him into a canter.

CHAPTER XIV
Old Man Badger

Ragamuffin was old, but his heart was good. Directly his mistress asked him he snatched for his head and went away smooth and swift as a racing boat.

Boy pulled off to the right and made for the clump of trees half-way up the hill.

The gypsy's mare was grazing by herself behind them.

The girl steadied to a halt and watched her critically, calling Billy Bluff to heel.

She didn't want the boisterous young dog to worry the old mare just now, and it was clear that Four Pound didn't want it either.

As Billy Bluff skirmished about, she put back her ears and lowered her head with an irritable motion; but she was far too lazy to make the charge she threatened.

The girl's inspection made, and conclusions drawn, she pursued her way up the hill, popped her pony over the low post and rails which fenced off the Paddock Close from the untamed Downs, and walked leisurely over the brow, the gorse warm and smelling in the sun.

Beneath her a valley stretched away to the sea. There the cliff rose steeply to a lighthouse, standing on a bare summit; dipped, and rose again. In the hollow between the two hills a white coastguard station sentinelled the Gap, across which the line of the sea stretched like a silver wire.

Nobody was yet astir save a ploughman driving a team of slow-moving oxen to the fields. To Boy the beauty of the early morning lay in the fact that she had the hills and heavens and seas to herself, and could enjoy them in her own way without thought of interference from a world too frivolous, too feverish, and above all too loud, to understand.

As she rode along, her young face was uplifted to catch the rivulets of song that came pouring down on her from the blue.

She dropped down the hill, disturbing the rabbits busy in the dew, and bursting through the cables of gossamer that tried to stay her. A kestrel hovered over the gorse, and she marked a badger on the hillside shuffling home before Man and his Dogs began the old rowdy-dowdy game once more.

Happily Billy Bluff, who was always too much absorbed in the object immediately beneath his nose to take long views, did not see him. And the girl was glad. Sport, in so far as it meant killing the creatures of the wilderness for pleasure, made no appeal to her. She had no desire whatever to see a fight between the badger and Billy Bluff. The badger had in her judgment many qualities. She respected his desire for freedom and determination to go his own way. Also if the pair fought, the girl shrewdly suspected that Billy Bluff, big though he was, and bold as a lion, might be worsted. For Billy, after all, was decadent according to the standards of the wilderness.

He lived on a chain, protected by the police, and fed by hand. Every man was not his enemy, and he had not to hunt for each meal or go without. Billy Bluff, however fine a fellow he might be in

his own eyes, was a poor creature in that of Warrior Badger. Civilization, if it had given him much of which the badger recked nothing, had also taken her toll of him.

Thinking vaguely thus, the girl once down the hill caught hold of Ragamuffin and spun him along the valley between the hills till she came to the coastguard station, straggling like a flock of sheep across the Gap.

At the mouth of the Gap was a familiar post.

She slipped Ragamuffin's rein over it, and ran down the steep, uneven way through the chalk cliff, her bob-tail baying at her side.

Right athwart the Gap, peering into it, shining-eyed and splendid, lay the sea, calling her.

"I'm coming!" her heart answered with a thrill, and she swooped toward it with a whoop and widespread arms.

Her feet crashed into the jolly shouting shingle, and she ploughed her way through it, to the rocks under the cliff which made her bathing tent.

The tide was brimming and beautiful. It came welling up, curled and fell with a soft, delicious swish on the answering beach.

Calm and full, twinkling still through faint mists, its shining surface was ruffled faintly by a light-footed breeze.

Swift as a bird the girl, blue-clad now, came rushing out from her hiding-place, her fair hair bunched in a cap, the sea in her nostrils, and exaltation in her heart.

This surely was heaven!

A moment she hovered on the brink, testing the waters with a tentative foot.

Then with a sigh of content she trusted herself to the deep. It closed about her like the arms of a friend.

She had not bathed since November, and it seemed to her the ocean welcomed her, clinging to her, lifting her, loving her, holding her close.

She buried her face in it, rose dripping, shaking the water off her eyes and face and hair, and swam out to sea with long and steady strokes.

She did not shout, she did not splash, she did not play the fool, and did not want to; rejoicing deeply in the quiet of her great friend, heart to heart and flesh to flesh, while the waters made music all about her.

The first bath was for her a kind of sacrament. She drew from it the deep and tranquil exaltation that she supposed Elsie Haggard drew from Communion.

Fifty yards out to sea she turned and trod water.

Billy Bluff, the old ass, was fussing about on the edge of the tide, barking at her.

"William!" called the head on the water. "Come on!"

Billy fiddled and flirted and could not bring himself to make the plunge.

Boy watched him with amused resentment. It was his domesticity which was his undoing. Old Man Badger on the hillside would never have dillied or dallied like that.

"Come on!" she ordered deeply. "Or I'll come and lug you in."

Billy marked the imperious note in his young mistress's voice. He ran this way and that, excused himself, pranced, whined, whimpered, yapped, barked, tasted the water and didn't like it, tried a dip, and withdrew, and finally made the effort and shoved off.

He swam rather low. His long, black back lay along the shining surface, his hair floating like seaweed on either side of him, while he left a little eddying wake behind him, as he pushed swiftly toward the girl.

As he came nearer she splashed him and he barked joyfully. He made for her, to paw and sprawl upon her. She evaded him.

Awhile girl and dog sported together in the deep, happy and laughing as two children.

Then they raced for the shore. He reached it first and, a caricature of his usual shaggy self, ran up toward her clothes, flinging off showers of drops.

"Keep off, creature!" she ordered, her big voice emerging strangely from her wisp of dripping figure, as she walked delicately up the shingle.

CHAPTER XV

Old Mat was fond of telling his intimates that Monkey Brand was fly.

"He do love his little bit o' roguey-poguey," he would say with a twinkle. And it was the old man's opinion, often expressed, that weight for age Monkey would beat the crooks at their own game every time.

And when he set the little jockey to snout about and rout out the business of Joses, he knew he was setting his head-lad a task after his heart.

Monkey Brand had gone to work indeed with the tenacity and the tact that distinguished him. Once on a line, he hunted it with the ruthlessness of a stoat. But this time, it seemed, he had met his match. If Monkey was cunning as a fox, Joses was wary as a lynx.

The fat man watched the other's manoeuvres with eyes that did not disguise their amusement. He was always ready for a chat in which Monkey liberally be-larded him with sirs, was obsequious and deferential; but he would never cross the door of a public-house, and never, as the little man reported, "let on."

It was by a chance the seeker came on the clue at last.

One evening he marked his victim down in the Post Office and followed him quietly. Joses was at the counter sending a telegram. The postmistress, unable to read the code-address, had asked for enlightenment.

"Spavin," Joses said; and the secret was out. For all the world knew that Spavin was the code-address of the shady and successful trainer at Dewhurst on the Arunvale side of the Downs.

"Who said Jaggers?" came a little voice at his elbow.

The fat man turned to find the jockey close behind him.

"I did," he answered brazenly.

Monkey smiled the smile of a bottle-fed cherub.

"'Ow's my ole pal Chukkers?" he piped.

Joses grinned.

"Just back," he said.

"So I hears," answered the other. "Been teachin' 'em tricks in Horsetralia, ain't he? Went there by way of God's Country, same as per usual, huntin' fer black diamonds. What's he brought back this journey?—a pink-eyed broncho from the Prairees bought for ten cents from a Texas cow-puncher, and guaranteed to show the English plugs the way to move."

Joses wagged a shaggy head. If to retain a sense of humour is still to possess something of a soul, then the fat man was not entirely lost.

"You love Chukkers, don't you?" he said.

"Don't I love all dagos?" asked Monkey. "Sich a pretty little way with 'em they got. Same as a baa-lamb in the meadow 'mong the buttercups."

"Then now I'll tell you something for yourself," said Joses. "He loves all the English—owners, jockeys, and crowd. But he loves *you* best."

"Never!" cried Monkey, greatly moved. "Then I'm the man what won the Greaser's Heart. It's too much."

A few further inquiries, made by Mat, put the thing beyond question.

Joses was watcher for Jaggers, who trained for Ikey Aaronsohnn, for whom Chukkers rode.

In England, Australia, and the Americas, the three were always spoken of together as the Three J's—Jaggers, the Jockey, and the Jew. Wherever horses raced their fame was great, and amongst the English at least it was evil and ominous.

"Rogues and rasqueals!" Old Mat would say with one of his deep sighs. "But whatebber should we do without 'em?"

For Putnam's the Three J's had always possessed a particular interest.

Their stable was at Dewhurst, just behind Arunvah, at the other end of the South Downs. And Dewhurst had been for twenty years the centre of that campaign to lower the colours of the English thoroughbred, which Ikey Aaronsohnn had embarked upon in his unforgotten youth.

The little Levantine hailed from New York, Hamburg, and London—especially the first two. A cosmopolitan banker, and genial rascal, he had, even in England, a host of friends, and deserved them. A man of ideals, and extremely tenacious, *objets d'art* and steeplechase horses had been his twin passions from his childhood. He collected both with a judgment amounting to genius. And there were few experts in either kind who were not prepared to acknowledge him their

master.

The day when Ikey, then young, sure of himself, and enthusiastic, had been called a "bloody little German Jew" in the Paddock at Liverpool by a noble English sportsman, as he led his first winner home, had been forgotten by others but not by him. And when a year later the little man stood for White's Club, on the strength of winning the International, and was black-balled, the die was cast.

There was no doubt that Ikey had his qualities. Whether he was your friend or your enemy, he never forgot you; and he gave you cause to remember him. His memory was long; his temper not to be ruffled; his humour, in victory and defeat, invincible; his purse unfathomable. He was never known to be angry, impetuous, or bitter. And he never deviated from his aim. That aim, as he once told the New York Yacht Club, in words that were trumpeted across the world, was "to lick the English thoroughbred on his own ground, at his own game, all the time, and every way."

What P. Forilland had done for a previous generation of Americans, when Iroquois snatched the Blue Riband of the Turf from the English and bore it across the Atlantic, Ikey meant to do some day at Liverpool.

"We've wopped 'em once on the flat, and we'll wop 'em yet across country," he once said at Meadow Brook.

It was with this end in view that Chukkers, then a kid-jockey from the West, had crossed the ocean in Ikey's train, and first carried to victory the star-spangled jacket which for the past twenty years had caused such heart-burnings among the English owners, trainers, and jockeys, and such mingled enthusiasm and indignation in the uncertain-tempered English crowd.

In that twenty years Ikey, if he had never yet achieved his end and won the Grand National with an other-than-English horse, had given the Englishmen such a shaking as they had never experienced before.

All over the world, wherever horses were bred, from the Punjab to the Pampas, and from the Tenterfield Ranges to Old Virginia, he had his scouts and his stud-farms. It was said that if a wall-eyed pack mule, carrying quartz in the Nevadas, showed a disposition to gallop and jump he would be in Ikey's stable in a fortnight, and, if he made good, at Dewhurst within six months.

It was, of course, with the Walers that the little Levantine came nearest his desire. He imported them into the old country on a scale never before dreamed of. Some of them proved themselves great horses, the equals of the best the English could bring against them: all were good. And it was only by an act of God, as the enemy English declared, that Boomerang, the king of them, had failed to win the National and consummate his owner's long-delayed end.

But Ikey, that merry little rogue, the cup of victory dashed from his lips, never for a moment lost heart.

As he truly said,

"If I haven't yet found the horse, I've found the jockey that can beat their best."

And in time he would find the horse, too.

He believed that. So did America.

CHAPTER XVI
The Fat Man

It was notorious that the Three J's (or, to be more exact, Ikey) not only had their scouts out all over the world, seeking what Monkey Brand called "black diamonds," but that they had their eyes everywhere in the Old Country, watching enemy stables. And Joses was the Eye that watched all the stables on the South Downs from Beachy Head to the Rother—and Putnam's most of all.

When tackled further on the subject by Monkey Brand, the tout admitted the fact without demur and even with pride.

"Yes," he swaggered. "I'm a commission agent. A very honourable profession, too."

"Not ha hartist at all?" queried Monkey, chewing his quid.

Joses laughed and spread himself, throwing back his gingery curls.

"I was at Oxford," he said, "and I've all the tastes of a gentleman. Art and poetry are my specialties—when my professional duties allow me time."

The little dark jockey turned in his lips, eyeing the other with bland interest.

"'Ark to him!" he said. "Don't he talk. Learned the patter at Oxford College, I expect." He turned on his lame leg. "Anyway, we know now where we are, Mr. Moses Joses."

After the incident in the Post Office Joses dropped his easel and went about with field-glasses unashamed. To give him his due, there were few better watchers in the trade. A man of education and great natural ability, he was quite unscrupulous as to how he achieved his end.

As Chukkers said of him:

"He gets there. Never mind how."

Joses indeed was out early and late, and he was horribly alert. Nobody knew when and where his fat body and brown face might not be turning up.

"Crawls around like a great red slug," said Old Mat; and it was seldom a horse did a big gallop but the fat man was there to see.

The morning Boy went for her first dip he was at the lighthouse on the cliff above the Gap. Whether he had slept there, or risen with the dawn, it was hard to say. The lighthouse marked the highest point in the neighbourhood, and was therefore useful for the watcher's purpose. From there with his glasses he could sweep The Mare's Back and The Giant's Shoulder and neighbouring ridges on which the horses of the stables in the district galloped.

The Paris Meeting was the next big event; and Ikey Aaronsohnn's horse Jackaroo—the waler Chukkers had just brought back with him from the other side—was to make his first appearance at it. There was only one English horse of which the Dewhurst stable had not the measure, and that was the Putnam mare Make-Way-There. Jaggers, in that curt, sub-acid way of his, had instructed Joses to report on her form, and "to make no mistake about it."

The tout had touched his hat and answered:

"Very good, sir."

Now it was well known that a man had to be up very early in every sense if he wanted to keep an eye on a Putnam horse. Mat Woodburn might be old, but he was by no means sleepy; and Joses could not afford to blunder.

Last night two telegrams had come to Cuckmere: one was to Silver from Chukkers, and the other to Joses from Jaggers. They had been written at the same moment by the same man. And the one to Joses ran—

Make-Way-There to-morrow.

Standing under the lee of the lighthouse, seeing while himself unseen, the tout kept his eyes to his glasses.

Little escaped him. He saw the badger moving on the hillside, and watched the girl on her pony come over the crest from Putnam's, a slight figure black against the sky. He followed her as she dropped down the hill and scampered along the valley, marked her hang her pony's rein over the post, and disappear down the gap.

Joses closed his glasses. His face became a dirty red. It was as though the mud in him had been stirred by an obscene hand.

In a moment a slight figure in a blue gown appeared from under the cliff and entered the sea.

Shoving his glasses into his pocket, Joses began to shuffle down the hill toward the Gap. The kittiwakes flashed and swept and hovered in the blue above him. The sea shone and twinkled far beneath. A great, brown-sailed barge lolled lazily by under the cliff.

He was unaware of them, shuffling over the short, sweet-scented turf like some great human hog, snorting as he went, his eyes on that little bobbing black dot on the face of the waters beneath him.

There was no cover. The turf lifted its calm face to the naked sky. And he crept along, crouching in himself, as though fearing detection from on high.

The girl was in and out of the water again with astonishing speed. By the time the tout had reached the foot of the hill she was under the cliff again and out of sight. He peered over stealthily. There was nothing much to see but a dark blue gown spread on a rock to dry, and behind the rock the bob of a bathing cap.

The Gap was three hundred yards away. A sleepy coastguard had emerged from one of the cottages and was washing at a tub of rain water.

Where Joses stood the cliff was low, scarcely twenty feet above the beach, and was not entirely precipitous.

He pocketed his glasses and scrambled panting down to the beach.

Then he began to stalk the rock decorated with the bathing gown; and he did not look pretty.

His hot red face perspired, and he panted as he crawled.

It is hard to say what was in his heart, and better perhaps not to inquire.

One thing only stood out clearly in his mind.

He owed that girl behind the rock *two*; and Joses rarely forgot to pay his debts.

There was first the affair of the wood. He suffered pain and inconvenience still as the result of that incident, and the doctor told him that he might expect to continue to suffer it. And what mattered more, there was the sense of humiliation and the disfigurement. His nose, never a thing of beauty, was now a standing offence. The children ran from it, and Joses was genuinely fond of children. The little daughter of Mrs. Boam, his landlady, Jenny, once his friend, had now deserted him.

And there was the matter of the young man, which he found it even harder to forgive. That young man was Silver, and he was a Mug. A mug was made to be drained; and Joses had dreamed that to him would fall the draining of this singularly fine specimen of his class. His attachment to the firm of the Three J's, based largely on fear, was not such but that he would break it at any moment could he do so with security and profit.

He had known all about Silver long before he had turned up at Putnam's; it was part of his business to know about such young men. Indeed, he had made an abortive, determined, and characteristically tortuous attempt to sweep the young man and his horses into Jaggers's capacious net.

Silver indeed had hesitated awhile between the two stables. Then he had met Jaggers, and had decided at once—against Dewhurst. When the game was finally lost, and it was known that Putnam's had come out top again in the struggle that had lasted between the two stables for thirty years, the tout changed his method but never lost sight of his ideal; yearning over the rich young man as a mother yearns over a child.

His dreams had been shattered finally in the wood a month back, and for that dêbâcle the girl behind the rock must be held responsible.

CHAPTER XVII
Boy Sees a Vision

Joses when in liquor was wont to boast that his memory was good, and he was right upon the whole. But on this occasion he had forgotten something, and that something was Billy Bluff. Billy and Joses had met before, as Monkey Brand had pointed out to Mat, and had agreed to dislike each other. And when Joses began his stalk, Billy Bluff started on a stalk of his own.

Boy Woodburn, peeping between two rocks, watched with grim glee. Her senses, quick as those of a wild creature, had warned her long ago of the Great Beast's approach. For Joses to imagine he could take her by surprise was as though a beery bullock believed that he could catch a lark. The girl was almost sorry for the man: his fatness, his fatuity appealed to her pity. Alert as a leopard, she was not in the least afraid of him. In the wood, true, he had caught her, but her downfall there she owed to a sprain. Here in the open, in her riding things, she could run rings about her enemy.

Lying on her face behind the rock, she watched the little drama.

Billy Bluff, wet still from the sea, his hair clinging about his ribs, and giving him the air of a heraldic griffin, crept on the puffing fat man and hurled at him with a roar.

The assault was entirely unexpected.

"You—bear!" blurted Joses, the picturesque phrase popping out of him like a cork from a heady bottle of champagne.

He struggled to his feet, picked up a stone, and slung it at the charging dog.

Billy Bluff meant business; and it was well for his enemy that the stone struck him on the fore-paw. The blow steadied, but it did not stop, the dog. He gave a little gurgle and came again on three legs in silent fury.

Joses made for the cliff, where a fall had constituted a steep ramp. He scrambled up it, an avalanche of chalk slipping away from beneath his feet and half burying the pursuing dog.

He panted up to the top of the ramp, and stood with his back to the cliff, looking down on his attacker.

Billy Bluff could not make his footing good upon the shale.

He lay at the foot of the cliff, one eye on his prey, licking his damaged paw, and swearing beneath his breath. And it was clear he did not mean to budge.

Joses turned his face to the cliff. He got his hands on the top, and lifting himself, could just peer over the edge of the cliff and see the green and the gorse beyond. Unaided, he could do no more.

Happily help was at hand.

A man on a chestnut pony was standing on the turf not twenty yards away.

"Give me a hand up, will you?" he panted. "That —— of a dog!"

The young man approached.

"By all means," he said, in a deep, familiar voice.

It was Silver.

Joses did not mind that. He was not at all above taking a hand from an enemy in an emergency.

And young Silver seemed surprisingly kind. Big men usually were.

The young man got off his pony, came to the edge of the cliff, and gave the perspiring tout his hand. With a heave and a lurch Joses scrambled to the top.

How strong the fellow was! No horse would ever get away with *him*.

"Good of you," panted the fat man, rising to his feet.

"Not at all," replied Silver. "It was less trouble to pull you up than to come down to you."

There was a note in his quiet voice Joses did not like.

"What you mean?" he asked.

"I'm going to give you a hiding," observed the other mildly.

Joses looked aghast at his rescuer and snorted. He shot forward his shaggy face, and the action seemed to depress his chest and obtrude his stomach.

"Whaffor?" he asked, in tones that betrayed the fact that such experiences were not entirely new to him.

"I don't know," said Silver in his exasperatingly lazy way. "I feel I'd rather like to."

He seemed quietly amused, much more so than was Joses. And he meant what he said. His clean, calm face, his mouth so determined and yet so mild, his steady eyes and the thrust of his jaw, all betrayed his resolution.

"Here, stow it!" stammered the fat man. "Chuck the chaff. A gentleman!"

"I'm not chaffing," said Silver in a matter-of-fact way. "How d'you like it?"

"What ye mean?"

"Will you put your hands up—or will you take it lying?"

His pony's rein was over the young man's arm; and they were standing on the edge of the cliff. Joses, weighing his chances with the swift and comprehending eye of fear, marked it greedily. Silver was young, strong, an athlete; but he was handicapped.

Joses's cunning was returning to reinforce his doubtful heart.

"That's Heart of Oak, isn't it?" he asked.

"Is it?" said the young man.

"The model polo pony," continued Joses. "Refused £600 for him at Islington, didn't you? And I don't blame you. You're rich, we all know, Mr. Silver. £600's no more to you than sixpence to me. But there's the pony! You can't replace him. Pity if he got away here on the edge of the cliff and all."

For the second time that morning Joses's luck deserted him.

"I'll hold your pony," said a deep voice from behind.

The fat man turned.

Boy Woodburn stood behind him.

Fresh from the sea, her hair in short, thick plaits of gold, dark and wet and bare; with the eyes of a sword and the colour of an apple-blossom; the brine upon her and the brown of wind and sun; in her breeches, boots, and jersey, her big dog straining on his lead, she looked like Diana turned post-boy.

"Thank you," said the young man, handing over his pony.

Joses snorted.

"Call yourself a woman!" he cried.

"I'm all right," answered the girl, seating herself critically on a mound, the pony in one hand, the dog in the other. "Don't hit him over the heart," she advised out of some experience of race-course scraps. "There might be trouble."

"I sha'n't hit him at all," replied the young man. He seized the fat man by the shoulder and spun him round. "I shall—*shake* him, and—*punt* him."

The girl did not know what punting meant, but it sounded good and was not so bad to watch.

Silver was applying his knee to his victim with precision and power. The fat man's teeth seemed to rattle under the pounding shocks. The words came joggling out of him, and they were not pretty words. He struck backward with his arms and feet, wriggling to get his plump shoulders free; but he was helpless as a baby in the arms of a nurse.

Silver was strong. Joses was right in that if in nothing else.

"He's killing me!" he gasped. "Fetch the coastguard!"

"No, thank you," said the girl.

The young man loosed his prey at last, and sent him spinning forward, projecting him with a kick.

Joses fell on his face, and stayed there fumbling, while he vomited oaths.

"Look out!" cried the girl sharply. "He's got a knife, and he'll use it."

She was right. Joses was busy with that wooden-handled sheath-knife of his.

Silver took a step forward.

"Ah, then!—would you?" he scolded, and hit the other a tap over the wrist with the handle of his hunting crop.

Joses yelped and dropped the knife.

Then he scrambled to his feet, wringing his hand.

The brown of his face had turned a dirty livid.

"I see what it is!" he cried. "Assignation. And I spoiled the sport—what! You and the dandy toff.

Him and me,
Beside the sea.

Quite unintentional, I assure you!"

He bowed, cackling horribly.

Silver looked ugly.

"Now then!" he said, and advanced a pace.

The girl put a staying hand upon him; and the tout shambled away toward the Gap, muttering to himself.

Silver turned to his companion. He was breathing deep, but outwardly unmoved.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "He knocked Billy Bluff out, but he didn't touch me. Hold your paw, Bill! It's nothing much. I shall put him on a wet bandage soaked in borax when I get home."

A sound of hand-clapping and hoarse laughter ascended to them from the Gap.

Joses had slipped Ragamuffin's reins over the post, and was clapping his hands. Then he took up a pebble and threw it at the roan. The old pony went off at a gallop and with trailing reins.

Boy watched him calmly.

"I should have thought of that," she said.

Silver was starting off down the hill toward the mocking figure at the mouth of the Gap; but the girl stopped him.

"You get on and ride up the valley," she said. "Ragamuffin'll stop to graze under the lighthouse; and you'll collar him there."

Silver hesitated.

"What about you?" he asked.

"I shall be all right," she answered. "I've got the legs of him."

He mounted and went off at a canter, Billy Bluff pursuing him.

The girl walked down toward the Gap, looking ridiculously slight in her post-boy attire.

Joses had disappeared.

As she came to the mouth of the Gap and picked up her coat, her towel, and the tackle she had thrown down, she saw him.

He was standing in the Gap, between the white chalk walls, nursing his hand.

She was glad he was down there. He would be safe at least from Mr. Silver.

As she put on her coat she looked at him with calm, musing eyes. The Spirit of Action was laid to sleep in her. In its place a Moving Dream, welling up as it were out of Time into Eternity, possessed her slowly. These Other-Conscious Moments, as Mr. Haggard called them, grew on the girl with the growing years. She was aware of them in others—in her mother, Mr. Haggard, her grand-dad—but hardly so in herself. They were of her, yet beyond her—mysterious invasions from she knew not where, gleams of Eden from exile. At these times she saw men as trees walking and all created things as part and expression of a Huge Vague Life of Wonder and Beauty without end.

And now, as she looked at the man in the Gap she said with quiet severity, as though addressing one of the lads at Bible Class:

"You *are* a naughty boy."

He glanced up at her from his earth.

She saw his eyes, and the suffering in them, and recognised them with a start. They were the eyes of a fox she had seen last season dug out of an earth to the screams of men and halloos of women, after a long run, that hounds might not be defrauded of blood.

And she felt now as she had felt then. A passion of sympathy, a sea of furious indignation, boiled up within her. Something pitifully forlorn about the man struck her to the heart. Quite suddenly she felt sorry for him; sorry with the sorrow that has sent heroes and saints throughout the ages to persecution and death with joy, if only they may relieve by ever so little the sufferings of sinful humanity.

Boy Woodburn was not a saint and was not a hero; but she was on the way to be a woman. The Voice that was not hers spoke out of her deeps.

"Why did you do that?" she asked quietly.

There was no anger in her tone or spirit; no sorrow, no surprise. She was curiously impersonal.

The fox showed his teeth.

"I'll do worse than that yet," he said.

The girl found herself gulping.

She looked at him through shining eyes. And as she did so it came in upon her that this degraded creature had once been beautiful. Ruin as he was, there was still about him something tragic and forlorn as of a great moor over which a beaten host has retreated, leaving desolation in its wake.

The man in the Gap wrung his wrist.

The girl took a step toward him.

"May I look at it?" she said.

He glanced up at her again, much as glances a dog which has had a licking and is uncertain whether the hand stretched out is that of an enemy or a friend.

"Likely," he snarled. "You'd bite."

CHAPTER XVIII
Two on the Downs

Silver came trotting up with Ragamuffin trailing discontentedly behind.

The old roan didn't really mind being caught, but he dearly loved to pretend he did.

Billy Bluff, who had already forgotten his injury, limped along behind, busy and cheerful.

Both man and dog had on their faces the same jolly grin of health and happiness, the result of a sound conscience and still more a sound digestion.

"He didn't take much catching," said the young man. "And Billy Bluff helped."

Boy looked at her dog.

"I saw him helping," she said sternly. "You old scoundrel, you!"

The young dog lay on the ground and gnawed his wounded paw complacently. He loved being scolded by his mistress when she was not too serious.

The girl stuffed her towel and all it contained into the forage bag.

"Shall I give you a leg up?" asked Silver.

"It's all right," she answered.

She mounted and rode alongside him.

"Where's our friend?" he asked.

"Gone to earth."

"What!—down the Gap?" He turned on her with that delightful eagerness which constantly revealed him to her as a boy in spite of that plain, grave face of his. "Shall I draw him?"

She shook her head gravely.

"Poor old thing," she said.

He steadied instantly to her mood.

"Are you sorry for him?" he asked.

Boy looked away, shy and wary.

"Sometimes," she said. "He must have had a pig's time to be so rotten as that."

It was a new view to the young man, and sobered him.

"Perhaps," he said doubtfully. He was thinking out the question in his slow way. "It may be his own fault," he said. "You make yourself, I think."

"Part," answered the girl. "And part you are made by your surroundings. That's the way with young stock anyhow. It's a bit how they are bred—the blood in them; and part the food they get, and the air and liberty and sun they're allowed."

"I suppose so," said Silver quietly. "Certainly our friend's food don't seem to have suited him."

The girl refused to be amused.

"He's come down," she said. "Mr. Haggard says he was once a gentleman."

"Some time since, I should guess," replied Silver. "What!"

They were moving along a narrow cart-track that led across a fallow. He was riding behind her, his eyes on her back. The bathing cap had been stuffed away, and her hair, still dark from the sea, was bare to the sun.

"I'm glad you came," she said casually over her shoulder.

"I was just out for a canter before going to look at the horses," he answered.

She nodded to where against the skyline a string of tall, thin-legged black creatures, each with a blob of jockey on his back, paraded solemnly against the sky.

"See them!" she said. "On the Mare's Back." She watched them critically. "That's Make-Way-There—No. 2 in the string. Now she's playing up." She lifted her voice. "*Don't pull at her, you little goat!*"

"They're going to gallop her this morning, I believe," said Silver. "You hear Chukkers has let me down?"

"No!" cried the girl keenly.

"Yes; he wired last night to say he couldn't ride for me at Paris."

If it was news to the girl, it was by no means unexpected, and she took the blow with philosophical calm.

"That was certain once he knew we were training for you," she said. "I suppose dad's going to see who he'll give the ride to."

"Shall we canter?" said the young man. "I don't want to miss it."

"That's all right," replied the girl. "Father won't set 'em their work till I come."

It was clear she wished to keep him walking at her side, and he was pleased.

The incident on the cliff had brought them closer. For the first time the young man felt the warmth of the girl breaking through the barriers of her reserve. Her eyes, when they met his, were friendly, even affectionate. It was his turn to be pleasantly shy.

"D'you love them?" she asked.

She felt somehow so much older than he that she was free to question him.

"The horses?" he asked. "*Rur-rather*," with that infectious enthusiasm of his.

"You've got some pretty good ones," she told him.

"D'you think so?" keenly.

She nodded.

"Raw, but they'll come on. That's what you want."

"Any up to National form?" he asked.

"Make-Way-There might be good enough in a season or two if she'll stay," she said. "You can never tell. She's only four off."

They began to breast the slope of the Mare's Back.

"I've only had one real ambition in life," he said confidentially.

She looked at him.

"What?"

"To win the Nun-National."

She beamed on him friendly.

"I used to have one," she said—"till last year: tremendously."

"What's that?"

"To ride the National winner."

She peeped to see if he was mocking. He was sober as a judge.

"You may yet."

"Not now."

"Why not?" he asked. "Because it's against the National Hunt Rules?"

"Not that," she said with scorn. "I could get round their rotten rules if I wanted."

"How?" he asked.

She glanced at him warily.

"Eighteen months ago a lad came into our stable who was rather like me."

He laughed merrily.

"Good for you!" he cried. "Now put your idea into practise."

She shook her head.

"Why not?"

"I don't want to win the National now."

"Don't you?"

She looked up into his face.

"I'm too old," she said. "I've got to put my hair up this winter."

The confidence once made frightened her.

She broke into a canter, Heart of Oak striding at her side. The hill steepened against them just under the brow, and they came back into a walk.

"If I was my own master I should farm and breed horses," said the young man.

She glanced at him keenly.

"Aren't you your own master?"

He shook his head.

"I've got to stick to the desk."

"D'you like it?"

He looked away.

"I shall never make a banker," he said. "You see, I'm no good at sums." He flicked at the turf with his thong. "Now my father was a born financier. He could do that—and nothing much else. If there are no banks in heaven I'm afraid he'll be terribly bored. But I'm a farmer—or a fool; I'm not quite sure which. If my father had lived it might have been different. He might have entered me. But he died during my second year at Oxford four years ago, and I had to buckle to and do the best I could for myself."

"Bad luck," said the girl.

"It was, rather," admitted the young man. "But it gave me my head in one way. You see, father didn't approve of horses, though he was a farmer's son himself. He was afraid of the Turf. But he was always very good to me. He let me hunt when I was a boy though he didn't like it." The young man laughed. "But when I grew big he was awfully pleased. 'You'll never make a jockey now,' he used to say. And I never shall."

Boy ran her eye approvingly over his loose, big-limbed figure.

"You play polo, don't you?" she said.

"I do, a bit," he admitted.

"Back for England, isn't it?" she asked.

"This old pony did," Silver answered. "And he used to take me along sometimes."

"Don't you play still?" she inquired.

"I haven't this season, and I sha'n't again," he answered. "To play first-class polo you must be in the top of condition. And they keep my nose too close to the grindstone. Besides, pup-polo's very jolly, but 'chasing's the thing!"

They topped the brow. The crest of the Downs swelled away before them like a great green carpet lifted by the wind.

"There they are!" cried Boy, beginning to canter.

CHAPTER XIX
CANNIBAL'S NATIONAL

Old Mat sat dumped in familiar attitude on a cob as full of corners and character as himself.

The trainer was thumping mechanically with his heels, sucking at the knob of his ash-plant, his legs in trousers that had slipped up to show his gray socks, and his feet shod with elastic-sided boots.

He glanced shrewdly at the pair as they rode up.

"Good morning, sir," he said, touching his hat. "So Chukkers has chucked you."

"So I believe," answered Silver.

"I wep' a tear when they tell me. I did reelly," said the old man, dabbing his eye. "He's goin' to ride Ikey's Jackaroo—that donkey-coloured waler he brought home from Back o' Sunday. That's what he's after."

Silver nodded.

"I'm not altogether sorry," he said quietly. "And I'm not entirely surprised."

"Nor ain't I," replied Mat, with faint irony. "Not altogether somersaulted with surprise, as you might say. We knows Chukkers, and Chukkers knows us—de we." He dropped his voice. "Monkey Brand'll tell you a tale or two about his ole friend. You arst him one day when you gets him on the go."

He raised his voice and began to thump the air with his fist.

"Rogues and rasqueals, Mr. Silver!" he cried in a kind of ecstasy. "Emmin on you in—same as the Psalmist says. But we got to love 'em all the same; else we'll nebber, nebber lead their liddle feet into the way." He coughed, wiped the back of his hand apologetically across his lips, and ended dryly: "Not the Three J's anyway!"

The horses were walking round the little group. Tall, sheeted thoroughbreds, each with his lad perched like a bird on his back, they swung daintily over the turf, blowing their noses, swishing their long tails, miracles of strength and beauty.

Monkey Brand led them on Goosey Gander, bandaged to the knees and hocks. Albert followed him on Make-Way-There, a pretty bay, with a white star. The lad's lips were turned in, and his face was stiff with aspiration and desire. That morning he hoped to have his chance, and he purposed to make the most of it. Jerry, the economist with the corrugated brow, followed him on a snake-necked chestnut. He sat up aloft, his shoulders square, his little legs clipping his mount, a Napoleon of the saddle, pondering apparently the great things of life and death. In fact, he was cogitating whether if he smoked behind the Lads' Barn at nights it was likely that he would be caught out by Miss Boy. Next came Stanley, the stupid, surreptitiously nagging at the flashy black he rode. Young Stanley was in evil mood, and he meant his horse to know it. His dark and heavy face was full of injured dignity and spite. Last night Chukkers, just back from winning the Australian National, had wired to say he couldn't keep his engagement to ride Make-Way-There at Paris. Monkey Brand would not ride, as his leg had been troubling him again; and Jerry had it that Albert, who was Make-Way-There's lad, was to get the mount. Stanley resented the suggestion. Albert had never yet ridden in public, while he, Stanley, had sported silk half-a-dozen times and had won over the sticks.

"Pull out, Brand," grunted the old trainer.

The little jockey yielded the lead to Albert, and joined the group of watchers.

The lads continued their patrol.

"What's the going like on the top there, Brand?" asked the old man.

"Not so bad, sir," the other answered. "Tidy drop o dew, I reck'n."

Make-Way-There, now she had the lead, showed a tendency to swagger. She bounced and tossed. The fair lad, swaying to the motions of his horse, rode the fretting creature patiently and well.

"She's a bit okkud yet," said Monkey, watching critically. "*Woa, my lady. Woa then.*"

"It's the condition comin' out of her," muttered Mat. "She's all of a bubble. Fret herself into a sweat. Boy, you'd better take her. Send her along five furlongs smart and bustle her a bit as she comes up the slope."

"No," said the girl.

The old man threw a swift glance at her.

Boy had stuck her toes in again. He knew all the symptoms of old and made no effort to overcome them. She was growing into a woman, Boy was. That was the young man. A while back she cared not a rap for all the men in creation.

The old man made a mental note for reference to Ma.

"Albert can ride her," said the girl. "I want to see if he's coming on."

Jerry, the true prophet, winked; Stanley jobbed the black in the mouth and kicked him; Albert, his face firm and important, drew out. He had at least one of the qualities of a jockey—supreme self-confidence.

"Take her along at three-quarter speed till you get round them goss-bushes," growled Old Mat. "And when you feel the hill against you shove her for a furlong. Don't ride her out. And no fancy pranks, mind."

"And sit still," said the girl.

"Jerry, you take him along," continued the trainer.

The lads made sundry guttural noises in their throats, leaned forward as though to whisper in their horses' ears, and stole easily away.

A flash of swift feet, a diminishing thunder of hooves, and the pair made a broad sweep round the gorse-clump and came racing home.

Once the girl spoke.

"Keep your hands quiet," she ordered deeply.

Opposite them Jerry took a pull, but Albert and the mare went thundering past the watching group, the lad's fair head bowed over his horse's withers. He had her fairly extended, yet going well within herself, her head tucked into her chest.

On the ridge behind them he steadied to a walk, jumped off, and led the mare, breathing deep and flinging the foam abroad, down to the party.

"That's a little bit o' better," muttered the old man. "She can slip it. That lad'll ride yet, Boy."

"Perhaps; but don't tell him so," said the girl sharply.

She walked her pony across to the lad, and laid her hand on the mare's wet neck.

"That's a little better to-day, Albert," she said. "But you ought to steady a bit before you come."

The boy touched his cap and rode arrogantly on to join the other lads.

Monkey Brand saw the look upon his face.

"Once you knows you know nothin', you may learn somethin'," he said confidentially as the lad passed him. Then he turned with a wink to Silver and said *sotto-voce*: "They calls him Boysie when he's crossed 'em. See he apes Miss Boy. He features her a bit, and he knows it. She's teaching him to ride, and he's picked up some of her tricks. Course he ain't got her way with 'em. But he might make a tidy little 'orseman one o' these days, as I tells him, if so be he was to tumble on his head a nice few times and get the conceit knocked out of him."

The lads continued their patrol.

Their knees were to their chins, and their hands thrust in front of them, a rein in each, almost as though they were about to pound a big drum with their fists.

Monkey nodded at them.

"She rides long, Miss Boy do—old style, cavalry style, same as you yourself, sir. They've all got the monkey-up-a-stick seat."

"Don't you believe in it?" asked the young man.

The other shook his head. He was himself a beautiful horseman of the Tom Cannon school; too beautiful, his critics sometimes said, to be entirely effective.

"Not for 'chasin," he said. "You can't lift a horse and squeeze him, unless you've got your legs curled right away round him. They ain't jockeys, as I tells 'em. They rides like poodle-dogs at a circus. There ought to be paper-'oops for em to jump through. No, sir. It may be Chukkers, as I says, but it ain't 'orsemanship."

The young man angled for the story that was waiting to be caught.

"Yet Chukkers wins," he said. "He's headed the list for five seasons now."

"He wins," said Monkey grimly. "Them as has rode against him knows 'ow."

Silver edged his pony up along the other.

"You've ridden against him?" he inquired with cunning innocence.

The little jockey's eyes became dreamy.

"My ole pal Chukkers," he mused. "Him and me. Yes, I've rode agin' him twenty year now. He was twelve first time we met, and I was turned twenty. The Mexican Kid they called him in them days. Kid he was; but wise to the world?—not 'alf!" ...

"Was that his first race?" asked Silver.

"It was so, sir—this side. Ikey'd just brought him across the Puddle to ride that Austrian mare, Laria Louisa. Same old stunt it was then as now—*Down the Englishman, don't matter how.* Yes, it was my first smell of the star-spangled jacket."

"Was that when you got your leg?"

"No, sir. That was eight years later. Boomerang's year. He was the first waler Ikey brought over this side to do the trick. My! he were a proper great 'orse, too. I was riding Chittabob—like a pony alongside him. At the Canal Turn Chukkers ran me onto the rails." He told the tale slowly, rolling it in the mouth, as it were. "Chukkers went on by himself. Nobody near him. Thought he'd done it that time. Only where it was Boomerang snap his leg at the last fence. Yes, sir," mystically, "there's One above all right—sometimes, 'tall events."

"And you?" said Silver.

The little jockey thrust out his left leg.

"I was in 'orspital three months.... Howsomever, it come out in the wash next year."

"That was Cannibal's year, wasn't it?" asked Silver.

"Ah!" said Monkey. "Cannibal!—his name and his nature, too. He was a man-eater, that 'orse was. Look like a camel and lep like a h'earthquake. It was just the very reverse that year. Chukkers was on Jezebel, Chukkers was. She was a varmint little thing enough—Syrian bred, I have 'eard 'em say. And he was out to win all right that journey. There was only us two in it when we come to Beecher's Brook second time round." He came a little closer. "So when we got to the Canal Turn I rides up alongside. 'That you, Mr. Childers?' I says, and bumps him. That shifted him for Valentine's Brook. There's a tidy drop there, sir, as you may remember. Chukkers lost his stirrup, and was crawling about on her withers. I hove up alongside agin'. He saw me comin' and made a shockin' face. 'Clear!' he screams, 'or I'll welt you across the —— monkey mug!' And just then, blest if old Cannibal didn't make another mistake and cannon into him agin'. That spilt him proper! Oh, my, Mr. Silver!—my! And I sail 'ome alone. Oh, he was a reg'lar outrageous 'orse, Cannibal was." He dropped his voice. "When he come out of 'orspital of course he made a fuss about it, he and Jaggers and Jew-boy Aaronsohnn. But of course I knew nothin' about it; nor did nobody else. See, they all knew Chukkers. He'd tried it on 'em all one time or another. And I told the Stewards I was very sorry the fall had gone to 'is 'ead. Only little Bertie Butler—him with the squint, what won the Sefton this year, you know—who'd been following Chukkers—he says to me: 'Next time you're goin' to play billiards with Chukkers, Mr. Brand, tip us the wink, will you?'"

CHAPTER XX
The Paddock Close

The girl's voice broke in on them.

"I'm going home now," she cried abruptly.

"Right," answered Silver. "May I come along?"

As he swung round, he saw the girl already jogging away. He pursued leisurely, anxious to talk about Make-Way-There, the Paris Meeting, and Chukkers and Monkey Brand's gossip. But she flitted away in front of him. As he drew up to her she broke into a canter, and the young man took a pull.

His intuitions, like those of most slow-brained men, were unusually swift and sure. It was as though Nature, the Dispenser of Justice, to compensate him for an apparent dearth in one direction, had endowed him richly in another.

"Woa, my little lad, woa then!" he murmured as Heart of Oak bounced and fretted to catch the retreating roan.

He realised that the girl had withdrawn within herself again. On the cliff, in the excitement of action, she had forgotten herself for the moment. Now she was cold and shy once more, retreating behind her barriers, closing her visor. It was as though she had admitted him too close; and to recover herself must now swing to the other extreme.

Obedient to her will, he kept several lengths behind her. When she found he did not draw up alongside, she slackened her pace. He felt her resistance was dying down in answer to his non-resistance. She was shoving against emptiness, and getting no good from it.

As they came to the crest of the Downs and began the descent of the hill, Boy dropped into a walk.

Below them the long roofs of Putnam's showed, weathered among the sycamores.

As the girl passed into the Paddock Close he was riding at her side again.

The Paddock Close was a vast enclosure, fenced off from the Downs, an ideal nursery and galloping ground for young stock.

There was hill and valley; here and there a group of trees for shade in the dog-days; a great sheltered bottom fringed by a wood that ran out into the Close like a peninsula; and the wall of the Downs to give protection from the east.

As they walked together down the hill, Boy was looking about her.

"Where's the mare?" she asked.

They were the first words she had spoken.

"Which mare?" asked Silver

"Four Pound."

He glanced round. The young stock were standing lazily under the trees, swishing their tails, and stamping off the flies. But the old mare had forsaken her usual haunt.

Then far away on the edge of a bed of bracken in the bottom, something like a piece of brown paper caught his eye. It rose and fell and flapped in the wind.

Boy saw it, too, and darted off.

"Call Billy Bluff!" she cried over her shoulder; but Billy had already trotted off to the yard to renew the pleasant task of tormenting Maudie and the fan-tails.

The girl made at a canter for the brown paper struggling on the edge of the bracken.

As she came closer she raised a swift hand to steady the man pounding behind her.

The brown paper was a new-born foal, woolly, dun of hue, swaying on uncertain legs. The little creature, with the mane and tail of a toy horse, looking supremely pathetic in its helplessness, wavered ridiculously in the wind. It was all knees and hocks, and fluffy tail that wriggled, and jelly-like eyes. Its tall, thin legs were stuck out before and behind like those of a wooden horse. It stood like one dazed, staring blankly before it, absorbed in the new and surprising action of drawing breath through widespread nostrils; quavered and then collapsed, only to attempt to climb to its feet again.

Close beside her child lay the mother, her neck extended along the green, her eyes blood-shot.

As the girl rode up, the old mare raised her gaunt, well-bred head and snorted, but made no effort to rise.

Boy dismounted.

"Hold Ragamuffin, will you?" she said.

Silver, himself dismounted now, obeyed.

Boy knelt in the bracken and felt the mare's heart.

The young man stood some distance off and watched her.

"Pretty bad, isn't she?" he said gravely.

"Go and tell mother, please," replied the girl, still on her knees. "And send one of the lads with a rug and a wheelbarrow."

The young man walked away down the hillside, leading the two ponies.

Left alone, Boy brushed away the flies that had settled in black clouds on the mare's face. The

foal repeated its ungainly efforts, whimpering in a deep and muffled voice, like the wind in a cave. The urge of hunger was on it, and it did not understand why it was not satisfied. Boy went to it, and thrust her thumbs into its soft and toothless mouth. The foal, entirely unafraid, sucked with quivering tail and such power that the girl thought her thumbs would be drawn off. The old mare whinnied, jealous, perhaps, of her usurped function.

In another moment Mrs. Woodburn's tall and stately form came through the gate and laboured up the hill. She was wearing a white apron and carried a sheet in her hand.

Soon she stood beside her daughter, breathing deeply, and looking down upon the mare.

"Bad job, Boy," she said.

"Have you brought a thermometer?" asked the girl.

Mrs. Woodburn nodded, and inserted the instrument under the old mare's elbow, laying an experienced hand on her muzzle.

"If she'd make an effort," she said in her slow way. "But she can't be bothered. That's Black Death."

Silver, looking ridiculously elegant in his shirt-sleeves and spotless breeches, came up the hill toward them, trundling a dingy stable barrow. Behind him trotted a lad, trailing a rug.

"We must just let her bide," said Mrs. Woodburn. "Lay that sheet over her, George, to keep the flies off, and get a handful of sweet hay and put it under her nose to peck at it. You've brought the barrow, Mr. Silver. Thank you."

"Can you lift the foal in?" asked Boy.

"I guess," answered the young man, stripping up sleeves in which the gold links shone.

"Oh! your poor clothes!" cried Mrs. Woodburn. "Whatever would your mother say? Put on my apron, do."

The young man obeyed, gravely and without a touch of self-consciousness, binding the apron about his waist; and to Boy at least he appeared, so clad, something quite other than ludicrous.

"Can you manage it, d'you think?" she asked in her serious way.

"I guess," answered the young man.

He blew elaborately on his hands, made belief to lick them, and bowed his back to the lifting. There were no weak spots in that young body. It was good all through.

Strong as he was tender, he gathered the little creature. A moment it sprawled helplessly in his arms, all legs and head. Then he bundled it into the barrow.

The old mare whinnied.

"Put the rug over her head so she can't see," said Mrs. Woodburn.

The foal stood a moment in the barrow, then it collapsed, lying like a calf with a woolly tail, its long legs projecting over the side.

Silver grasped the handles of the barrow.

"Is it all right?" asked Boy.

"I guess," replied the young man, and trundled his load away down the hill.

The girl walked beside the barrow, one hand steadying the foal, who reared an uncanny head.

They passed through the yard, jolted noisily over the cobbles, and turned into a great cool loose-box, deep in moss-litter.

"I'll go and get the bottle," said the girl. "George, just run and bring a couple of armfuls of litter-grass off the stack and pile it in that corner."

When she returned with the bottle, the barrow was empty, and the foal lay quiet on a heap of brown grass in the corner.

It whinnied and essayed to stand.

"It's coming, honey," said Boy in her deep, comforting voice.

The foal sucked greedily and with quivering tail.

From outside in the yard came the pleasant clatter of horses' feet on the cobbles.

The string was returning.

In another moment Old Mat was standing in the door of the loose-box, grunting to himself, as he watched the little group within.

Boy, in her long riding-coat, stood in the dim loose-box, her fair hair shining, tilting the bottle, while the foal, with lifted head and ecstatic tail, sucked.

Silver, still in his shirt-sleeves, watched with folded arms.

"Colt foal I see," grunted the old man. "That's a little bit o' better. Four-Pound-the-Second, I suppose you'll call him."

BOOK III
SILVER MUG

CHAPTER XXI
The Berserker Colt

On the morning that Make-Way-There had done his gallop Old Mat had noted that a change was coming over Boy.

She was ceasing to be a child, and was becoming a woman.

He mentioned it to Ma.

"Time she did," said the mother quietly. "She'll be seventeen in March."

The girl herself was aware of strange happenings within her. More, she knew that the tall young man was responsible for them.

A great new life, full of shadows and delicious dangers, was surging up in her heart, sweeping across the sands of her childhood, obliterating tide-marks, swinging her off her feet, and carrying her forward under bare stars toward the Unknown.

She fought against the invasion of this Sea, struggling to find footing on the familiar bottom.

That Sea and Mr. Silver were intimately connected. Sometimes, indeed, the girl could not distinguish one from the other. Was it the Sea which bore Mr. Silver in upon her resisting mind?—or was it Mr. Silver who trailed the Sea after him like a cloud?

Her helplessness angered and humiliated her. She fought fiercely and in vain. That strong will of hers, which had never yet met its match, was impotent now. This Thing, this Sea, this Man, crept in upon her like a mist, invading her very sanctuaries.

She might close the doors and lock them—to no purpose.

She was angry, excited, not entirely displeased.

The change wrought in her swiftly. At least she had the sense that she was embarking on a great adventure; and her romantic spirit answered to the appeal.

She became quieter and passed much time in her room alone.

Mr. Silver kept knocking at the door in the loft which he had never entered; but she refused to open to him.

To revenge herself she practised small brutalities upon him, which had no effect. He just withdrew and came again next day with his big-dog smile, quiet and persistent as a tide. Shy he was, and singularly pertinacious.

Then his mother died.

That seemed to Boy unfair; but as she reasoned it out he could hardly be held responsible.

They knew all about it at Putnam's, because there was a paragraph in the paper about Brazil Silver's widow.

The young man buried his mother on Friday, and on Saturday came down to Putnam's for his usual week-end.

Boy asked her mother if he had spoken to her about his trouble.

"No," said Mrs. Woodburn.

"Then he shall to me," said the girl, with determination.

He should not bottle up his grief. That would be bad for him. The mother in the girl was emerging from the tom-boy very fast.

On Sunday evening she took him for a ride, and had her way, without a struggle.

As they breasted the hill together, the young man told her all at some length.

"Was she much to you?" asked the girl keenly.

Her own mother was all the world to her.

He shook his head.

"Oh! that's all right," replied the girl, relieved and yet resentful, "if you didn't care."

"In some ways I'm glad for her sake," continued the young man. "She was always unhappy. You see she was ambitious. One of the disappointments of her life was that my father wouldn't take a peerage."

"Can't you be happy and ambitious?" asked Boy, peeping at him in the wary way he loved.

Jim Silver laughed and flicked his whip.

"I doubt it," he said.

"Aren't you ambitious?" she inquired.

He laughed his deep, tremendous laughter, turning on her the face she so rejoiced in.

"I've told you my one ambition."

"What's that?"

"To breed a National winner."

That brought them back to their favourite subject—Four-Pound-the-Second and his future.

The foal kept the girl busy, for the old mare died, and Boy had to bring up the little creature by hand. She didn't mind that, for the summer is the slack season in the jumping world. Moreover, trouble taken for helpless young things was never anything but a delight to her. And fortune favoured her. For the Queen of Sheba, one of her nanny-goats, had lost her kids, and the milk was therefore available for the foal.

Boy fed him herself by day and night, sleeping in his loose-box for the first few weeks, she and Billy Bluff, who promised to be good. Monkey Brand, who had neither wife nor child of his own, and loved the girl with the doting passion of a nurse, wanted to share her watch, but his aid was abruptly refused. So the little jockey slept in the loft instead, to be near at hand, and would bring the girl a cup of tea after her vigil.

Once, in his mysterious way, he beckoned Silver to follow him. The young man pursued him up the ladder, treading, of course, on Maudie, who made the night hideous with her protests.

Up there in the darkness of the loft the little man stole with the motions of a conspirator to a far trap-door. He opened it gingerly and listened. From beneath came the sound of regular breathing. Thrusting his lantern through the dark hole, he beckoned to Silver, who looked down.

In a corner of the loose-box, on a pile of horse rugs, slept Boy, her mass of hair untamed now and spreading abroad like a fan of gold. Beside her on the moss-litter lay Billy Bluff, curled and dreaming of the chase. And on a bed of bracken by the manger, his long legs tied up in knots, was the foal.

Silver peeped and instantly withdrew as one who has trespassed innocently.

"Pretty as a pictur, ain't it?" whispered the little jockey. "Only don't go for to say I give her away. That'd be the end of Monkey Brand, that would."

He swung the lantern so that the light flashed on the face of the sleeping girl.

"That'll do," muttered the young man uneasily. "You'll wake her."

"No, sir. She's fast," the other answered. "Fair wore out. He wouldn't take the bottle yesterday, and she was up with him all night. I went down to her when it come light. Only where it is she won't allow nobody to do nothin' for him only herself." He stole back to his lair in the straw at the far end of the loft. "That's the woman in her, sir," he said in his sagacious way. "Must have her baby all to herself. Nobody don't know nothin' about it only mother."

Four-Pound-the-Second after the first few perilous weeks throve amazingly. He ceased to be a pretty creature, pathetic in his helplessness, and grew into a gawky hobbledehoy, rough and rude and turbulent.

Old Mat shook his head over the colt.

"Ugliest critter I ever set eyes on," he said, partly in earnest and partly to tease his daughter.

"You'll see," said Boy firmly.

"If he's a Berserk he's worth saving, surely," remarked Silver. "Berserker—Black Death. Ought to be able to hop a bit."

Everybody at Putnam's knew that the colt was the son of that famous sire, but nobody, except Mat Woodburn and Monkey Brand, knew how they knew it.

"Oh! if he's going to win the National—as I think he is, de we—he's worth a little trouble," replied

the old man, winking at Monkey Brand.

"D'you think he'll win the National?" cried the young man, simple as a child.

"Certain for sure," replied the other. "When 'e walks on to the course all the other hosses'll have a fit and fall down flat. And I don't blame 'em, neether."

"Father *thinks* he's funny," said the girl with fine irony.

"I ain't 'alf so funny as that young billy-goat o' yours, my dear," replied the old trainer, and lilted on his way. "It's his foster-ma he takes after. The spit of her, he be."

As soon as the foal began to find his legs Boy took him out into the Paddock Close, and later on to the Downs. He followed like a dog, skirmishing with Billy Bluff up and down the great rounded hills.

The bob-tail at first was inclined to be jealous. He thought the foal was a new kind of dog and a rival. Then when he understood that after all the little creature was only an animal, on a different and a lower plane, to be patronised and bullied and ragged, he resumed his self-complacency. Thoroughly human, a vulgar sense of superiority kept his temper sweet. He accepted Four-Pound-the-Second as one to whom he might extend his patronage and his protection. And once this was understood the relations between the foal and the dog were established on a sound basis, while Maudie watched with a sardonic smile.

That autumn the girl, the foal, and the dog roamed the hillside by the hour together in the cool of dawn and evening. And the colt became as handy as the goat he was alleged by his detractors to resemble.

"Go anywhere Billy Bluff does," said Monkey Brand. "Climb the ladder to the loft soon as look at you."

On these frequent excursions Boy took her hunting-crop with her, and the long-flung lash often went curling round the legs of the unruly foal. Early she broke him to halter, and when he became too turbulent for unbridled liberty she took him out on a long lounging rein.

The Downs about Cuckmere, which lies half-way between Lewes and Beachy Head, are lonely. Apart from shepherds, you seldom meet on them anyone save a horseman or a watcher. But more than once the three came on Joses on the hillside.

Since the moment she had marked him cowering in the Gap like a hunted creature, Boy had seen the tout with quite other eyes than of old. Never afraid of him, from that time her aversion had turned to pity for one so hopelessly forlorn.

Whether Joses felt the change or not, and reacted to it unconsciously, it was impossible to say. Certainly he showed himself friendly, she thought, almost ashamed. At first she was not unnaturally suspicious, but soon the compassion in her heart overcame all else.

One brilliant September evening she came upon him on the Mare's Back.

The fat man pulled off his hat shyly.

"You've put him on the chain, I see," he said, referring to the long rein.

Boy stopped.

His face was less bloated, his appearance more tidy than of old. It was clear he had been drinking less.

"What d'you think of him?" she asked.

The tout threw a critical eye over the foal. There was no question that Joses knew a thing or two about a horse.

"Ugly but likely," he said, with the deliberate air of a connoisseur. "What they call in France a *beau laid*."

The girl demurred to the proposition. Her foal was *not* bow-legged.

"His legs are all right," she said, somewhat tartly. "He's a bit *on* the leg; but he's sure to be at that age."

"How's he bred, d'you know?" asked the other thoughtfully.

Boy was on the alert in a moment. That was a stable secret, and not to be disclosed.

"I'm not *quite* sure," she answered truthfully. "We picked up the dam from a gypsy."

The fat man nodded. He seemed to know all about it. Indeed, it was his business to know all about such things.

"She was a Black Death mare, that, no question," he said, and added slowly, his eye wandering over the colt: "Looks to me like a Berserk somehow." She had a feeling he was drawing her, and

kept her face inscrutable in a way that did credit to the teaching of Monkey Brand. "If so, you've drawn a lucky number," continued the other. "Such things happen, you know."

Boy moved on, and was aware that he was following her.

She turned and saw his face.

There was no mischief in the man, and fluttering in his eyes there was that look of a hunted animal she had noticed in the Gap.

She stopped at once.

"What is it, Mr. Joses?" she asked.

She felt that he was calling to her for help.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Woodburn," he began.

"Yes, Mr. Joses."

Her deep voice was soft and encouraging as when she spoke to a sick creature or a child. Those who knew only the resolute girl, who went her own way with an almost fierce determination, would have been astonished at her tenderness.

"That little mistake of mine on the cliff," muttered the man.

A great impulse of generosity flooded the girl's heart and coloured her cheek.

"That's *quite* all right," she said.

It was clear he was not satisfied.

His eyes wandered over heaven and earth, never meeting hers.

"You've not said anything to the police about that?"

"No!" she cried.

"Nor that gentleman?"

"Mr. Silver?"

"Yes."

"I'm *sure* he hasn't."

The other drew a deep breath.

"It wouldn't help me any if he had," he said.

He looked up into the deep sky, that was gathering the dusk, and still alive with the song of larks. "I wouldn't like to see 'em in a cage," he said quietly. "It wasn't meant. Never!"

Next Saturday, when Mr. Silver came down, she told him of the incident.

"You didn't say anything to the police, did you?" she asked anxiously.

"No," he said. "I meant to, but I forgot."

She repeated Joses's remark about the cage.

"He's been in the cage," she said quietly.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

She nodded with set lips.

"How d'you know?"

"I saw it in his eyes."

The young man was genuinely moved.

"Poor beggar!" he said.

CHAPTER XXII
RAGAMUFFIN

The little affair of Joses was one of the many trifles that made for intimacy between the young man and the girl.

In spite of herself Boy found her opposition dying away. Indeed, she could no more resist him

than she could resist the elements. She might put her umbrella up, but that did not stop the rain. And if the rain chose to go on long enough, the umbrella would wear away. The choice lay with the rain and not with the umbrella.

By the autumn Boy had ceased even to pretend to be unfriendly. It was no use, and she was never much good at pretending.

Then with the fall of the leaves old Ragamuffin began to tumble to pieces.

She watched him closely for a week. Then one October dawn, the mists hanging white in the hollows, she led him out to the edge of the wood before the lads were about. Only Monkey Brand accompanied her.

Herself she held the old pony alongside the new-dug grave, talking to him, stroking his nose. Monkey Brand, of the steady hand and loving heart, did the rest. A quarter of an hour later the girl and the little jockey came back to the yard alone. She was carrying a halter in her hand and talking of Four-Pound-the-Second.

The lads watched her surreptitiously and with brimming eyes. Albert, who prided himself on the hardness of his heart, wept and swore he hadn't.

"I'll lay she feels it," blubbered Stanley, who was not clever enough to conceal his tears.

When Silver came down for the week-end, Old Mat told him what had happened.

"That's the strength in her," he whispered. "Just took and did it, she and Monkey Brand. Never a word to her mother or me—before or since."

But the young man noticed that the girl looked haggard, wistful, more spiritual than usual. He was shy of her, and she of him.

When that evening she met him in the yard and said, "Will you come and see?" he was amazed and touched.

They stood together by the new-made grave under the wood. Jim was far more moved than when his mother died.

"Dear old Ragamuffin!" he said.

She seemed to quaver in the dusk.

"You mustn't," she said, in strained and muffled voice, and for a moment laid a finger on his arm.

Next day, as they were making their Sunday round of the horses together, Silver stopped at Heart of Oak's box.

"I don't quite know what to be at with this poor old cormorant," he said, slow and cogitating. "I'm looking for a home for him. But there are no bidders. A bit too good a doer, I guess. Eat 'em out of hearth and home."

The girl's eyes flashed on his face and away again.

"He's not old," she said, as her hand stroked the pony's neck.

"Well, he's like me," the young man replied. "He's older than he was."

Boy made a cursory inspection of the pony's mouth.

"Eleven off," she said.

"That's too old to play polo."

She believed it to be a lie, but she did not think she was sufficient an authority on the game to justify her in saying so.

"Anyway, I'm getting too heavy for him," Silver went on. "Joint too big for the dish, as they say. That fellow's more my sort, ain't you, old lad?" He nodded to the next loose-box, where his seventeen-hand hunter, Banjo, stood, blowing at them through the bars. "What Heart of Oak wants is a nice light weight just to hack him about the Downs and ease him down into the grave."

That evening after supper Jim Silver sang.

Apart from the members of the Eton Mission Clubs there were perhaps a dozen men in the world—Eton men all, boating men most—who knew that he did "perform," to use their expression; and just two women—Boy Woodburn and her mother. Old Mat, to be sure, did not count, for he always slept through the "performance."

The young man's repertoire consisted of two songs—*The Place Where the Old Horse Died* and *My Old Dutch*.

With a good natural voice, entirely untrained, he sang with a deep and quiet feeling that made his friends affirm that once you had heard Silver Mug's—

We've been together now for forty years,
And it don't seem a day too much,
There ain't a lady livin' in the land
As I'd swop for my dear old Dutch.

you would never listen to Albert Chevalier again.

That, of course, was the just and admirable exaggeration of youth and friendship.

But it was the fact that always after the young man had sung there was an unusually prolonged silence, and, as Amersham once said, you felt as if you were in church.

This evening, after he had finished, and Mrs. Woodburn had broken the silence with her quiet "Thank you," the young man returned to the subject he had broached in the stable.

Silver indeed was nothing if not dogged, as the girl was beginning to find out.

"I say, Miss Woodburn," he began in that casual way of his, "I wish you'd take charge of that old yellow moke o' mine."

Boy shook her head.

He laughed and drew his chair beside her as she worked. Not seldom now he doffed the Puritan with her, and became easy, chaffing, almost gallant. Amersham and his friends would have been amazed had they seen their sober Jim Silver so much at home with a lady.

"Oh, I say—why not?" he protested, boyish and chaffing.

"He's too much of a handful for me," said the girl gravely, threading her needle against the light.

He laughed, delighted, smacking his knee as he did when pleased, while even Ma, who of wont turned a deaf ear on the young couple, smiled sedately.

"I like that!" cried Silver. "Ha! ha! ho! ho! That's a good un." Then he turned grave, almost lugubrious. "But of course if you won't have him I must do something to him. I'm too fond of the old fellow to let him rot."

Next morning, before he left for London, Boy saw him from her window holding intimate communion with Monkey Brand in the Paddock Close beside the wood.

When he had driven away, the girl descended from her eyrie and cross-examined the little jockey sharply.

Monkey looked secretive and mysterious even for him.

"He's a very queer gentleman," was all he would say. "One o' them that's been to India without their 'ats, I should say. You know, Miss?" He tapped his forehead. "Melted a-top."

"What did he *say*?" persisted the girl.

"He said nobody was to exercise Heart of Oak only unless you wanted him. And he said he'd make up his mind next week."

"Make up his mind?"

"That was the word, Miss."

"Bring me the gun," ordered Boy.

The little man obeyed sulkily.

"It'll be in my room," she said. "And it'll stay there."

"Very good, Miss," replied the jockey, and winked to himself as the girl ascended the ladder.

That evening, as Old Mat slept noisily by the fire with open mouth, the two women worked.

Mrs. Woodburn every now and then lifted her eyes to her daughter's face and let them dwell there, as the sky dwells on a tree.

"D'you like him, Boy?" she asked at length, tranquilly.

The girl for once was taken by surprise. She flushed a little and perhaps for the first time in her life fenced.

"Who, mother?"

"Mr. Silver."

"Yes," said the girl. "He's like Billy Bluff—only less rowdy."

CHAPTER XXIII
The Duke's Hounds

Silver's Leicestershire friends were under the delusion that he was keeping his hunters at Lewes. And so indeed he did till the hunting season began; and then he brought them over to Putnam's.

The Duke's north-country stud-groom, who was in *The Beehive* at Folkington, as they came along the road from Lewes, ran out of the bar to have a look at them.

"Ma wud!" he whistled. "Champion!"

And Mike Rigg was right. Silver's horses indeed were the one item of his personal expenditure on which the young man never spared his purse. He used to say with perfect truth that except for his stud he could live with joy on £3 a week. But there was no man in England who had a rarer stud of weight-carriers.

"Big as blood elefunks," said Monkey Brand in the awed voice of a worshipper. "Flip a couple o' ton across country singin' hallelooyah all the way."

The Duke, when first they appeared with his hounds at the covertside, shook his head over them: for Jim Silver came south with a formidable reputation as a thruster.

"Too classy for my country, Silver," he said. "What d'you want with that sort of stuff down here?"

"I didn't like to part with 'em, sir," replied the young man. "They've done me well in their time."

"I don't want you young bloods from the shires down here," scolded the Duke. "You'll be all over my hounds. This is an old man's country, ain't it, Boy?"

Thunderbolt stood on his hind legs and pawed deliberately at the heavens.

"They're big, your Grace," answered the girl. "But Mr. Silver's bigger. He can hold them."

"And you can hold him, my dear," said the Duke. "Keep him in your pocket, there's a good gal. Now, Joe, let's be moving on."

The Duke was fond of the girl. It was said, indeed, that he liked her better than anybody in the hunt. Certainly he was never so happy as when showing her round his famous piggeries at Raynor's, or talking goats to her at an Agricultural Show.

Boy on her side was one of the most regular followers of the Duke's hounds; but, as she never tired of impressing on her friends, she hunted for professional reasons, and not for pleasure. Indeed, she was honest as always when she declared that she did not care for hunting for its own sake. There was so much swank about it and so little business: oceans of gossip, flirting, swagger, and spite to every ounce of reality. Moreover, her refined and Puritan spirit revolted against the people who hunted: she thought of them all as bubbles, brilliant apparently, but liable to burst at any moment and leave nothing behind them but a taint of vulgarity.

When hounds were running people saw little of Silver and the girl, who were always well behind.

"Carrying on together," was the spiteful comment of those whom Boy was wont to call in scorn "the ladies."

But it was not true. The pair were not coffee-housing. Boy was at her job, schooling her youngsters with incomparable patience, judgment, and decision; and Jim Silver, on those great fretting weight-carriers of his, was marking time and in attendance.

The Duke, when he got the pair alone, never tired of chaffing them.

"I notice she always gives you the lead, Silver," he mocked.

"Yes, sir," replied the young man. "She makes the hole, and I creep through it afterward."

The couple were talked about, of course; and both were dimly aware of it. Boy was used to being made the subject of gossip; and Silver was almost as unconscious of and aloof from it as were the horses that he rode.

The ladies, to whom he paid no attention, were indignant and resentful.

"It can't be," they said; and—"I hate to see that chit making a fool of a nice man like that."

The Duke, whose ears were growing longer every day, heard them once and began to bellow suddenly in that disconcerting way of his.

"It's all right!" he shouted. "You needn't be afraid. She won't have him."

The ladies jeered secretly. To their minds the question was not whether the girl would have Silver, but whether he would be Mug enough to give her the chance.

Certainly the pair were drawing close.

Days together in the saddle, the risks and small adventures of the field, and by no means least those long hacks home at evening, not seldom in the dark, over the Downs, a great wind blowing gustily under clear stars, did their sure, unconscious work.

Up to Christmas the young man visited Putnam's regularly. Then he missed two successive week-ends. When he came again there was a cloud over him. It was so faint and far that nobody noticed it indeed but the girl. She was not deceived.

As they rode home in the afternoon he was more silent than his wont. Once or twice her eyes sought his. His brows were level and drawn down. There was resistance in his face.

"Are you worried?" she asked.

His plain, strong face broke up, brightened and became beautiful.

"Yes," he said.

"Tell me."

"It's the only thing that ever worries me."

"What?"

"The Bank."

"Is it going wrong?"

He laughed again.

"I don't know," he said, and began to chuckle at himself. "That's the trouble. I can't get the hang of it. There's a screw loose somewhere. I'm like a man steering a ship who knows nothing about navigation."

"It's all right if you do your best," said the girl, with the little preacher touch she inherited from her grand-dad. That note always caused an imp of mischief to bob up in the young man's heart.

"Hope so, de we," he said.

She looked at him sharply. *She* might censure her father, but she allowed that liberty to no one else.

"What!" she said.

Jim Silver took to instant flight.

"None-nothing," he stammered. "Only I'm afraid the pup-passengers won't think it's all right when they find themselves going to the bottom. They'll say, 'What business had you at the wheel if you can't steer?' And they'll be right, too."

With the New Year the young man came no more for week-ends, and the reason was well known.

The hunting-field is always a great place for gossip, for except at rare intervals there is little else to do. And with the Duke's hounds the gossip was about Mr. Silver.

The Union Bank of Brazil and Uruguay was known to be in difficulties, and Boy hunted alone.

"Where's your Life Guardsman?" asked the Duke.

"Guarding the Bank, I believe, your Grace."

The Duke grunted.

"Wants guarding from what I can hear of it," he blurted. "Tell him it's no good," he shouted. "Tell him to come out of it. It's no job for an honest man."

"What isn't?"

"Bankin'." He muttered to himself. "There's only one thing an honest man can do, that's land. Everything else you get dirty over. I'm not overclean myself, but I'm not as dirty as some of 'em."

Then there appeared paragraphs in the paper.

The girl asked her father about them.

He shook his head.

"I don't understand it, my dear," he said. "And what's more, I don't believe Mr. Silver do himself. I see the accounts published in the paper. Accordin' to them the Bank had five millions in cash. You'd think you couldn't go very fur wrong with five millions in cash in the till."

"Perhaps a clerk's been taking some," said the girl eagerly.

Once, but only once, there had been a clerk at Putnam's.

The old man was not to be convinced.

"Take a tidy-sized clurk to go off with five million in his pocket," he said. "Course I don't say he couldn't do it, Gob 'elpin' 'im. Only he'd be carryin' a lot o' dead weight, as the Psalmist said. *Too* 'eavily penalised, I should say. No, my dear, 'tain't the clurk. 'Tis the li'bilities."

"What are the liabilities?" asked Boy.

"They're the devil, my dear," said the old man. "That's all I can tell you. Land you in the lock-up

soon as look at you."

Later that evening the girl went to call on her friend, Mr. Haggard.

He was in his study among his books, and rose to greet her with that affectionate kindliness he reserved for her.

"I want to know something, Mr. Haggard," said the girl in her determined way.

He looked at her over his spectacles.

"Yes."

"Can they put you in prison if you lose your money?"

"Not if you lose it honestly," replied the vicar.

One reason the girl liked him so much was that he never played the fool. The heavy horse-chaff with which the average Englishman of the Duke's type, in his elephantine efforts at gallantry, thinks it necessary to adorn his conversation, were not for him.

"Oh, he'll lose it honestly all right," cried the girl eagerly, unconscious of the fact that she was giving herself away, or careless of it.

It was not hard for the other to gauge her mind. Casually he turned over an evening paper.

"I see there's good news about Mr. Silver's Bank," he said. "It's weathered the storm."

He pointed out to her a paragraph in the stop-press column.

CHAPTER XXIV
The Man with the Gamp

The good news was confirmed.

That night a telegram came from Mr. Silver to say he was coming down next morning and asking them to meet him at Lewes.

"I knew he'd come if he could to-morrow," cried the girl.

Her mother looked at her.

"It's your birthday, Boy," she said.

The girl's fair face flushed.

"He doesn't know that," she said, on the defensive. "And you're not to tell. It's the last day of hunting. That's what I meant."

She was indeed seventeen next day. And the sign of her womanhood was that when she came down in the morning her hair was bunched in a neat little coil at the back of her head. Because of it she was shy and somewhat defiant. Dressed for hunting in snowy shirt and long-skirted dark coat, she entered the parlour more swiftly than her wont, in her shoes and stockings, and carrying her riding-boots in her hand.

Her father's mild blue eye penetrated her secret at once.

"That's a little bit o' better," he said. "It's *Miss* Woodburn now."

"Now then, father," reproved Mrs. Woodburn.

"Oh, I knows my place, plea Gob," mumbled the old man. "Ought to arter all the trainin' you been at the pains to put me to." And he winked and chuckled and grunted over his porridge.

"Let me look at you, Boy," said her mother, when the teasing old man had gone.

The girl coloured faintly. Her mother kissed her. "Joyce," she said gravely, "you're a woman now."

"Am I, mother?" laughed the girl. "I feel like a boy sometimes still."

She was gay with an unusual gaiety.

Her mother marked it with those observant eyes of hers.

After the pair had read together, as their custom was, Mrs. Woodburn laid the Bible down and took up her knitting.

Boy pulled on her boots before the fire.

"I hope you won't marry out of your own class, Boy," said Mrs. Woodburn at last quietly. "We're humble folk, as dad says."

"I don't think I shall marry at all," replied the girl curtly. "I don't feel like it."

The mother continued on her tranquil way.

"When you marry, marry your own sort," she advised.

Boy was silent for a time.

"Isn't Mr. Silver our sort?" she asked at last, her eyes on her mother's.

Mrs. Woodburn, for all her liberal mind, was of the older generation.

"My dear," she said, "he's an Eton man."

"He's not like one," replied the girl shortly. "He's a gentleman."

"My dear, Eton men are gentlemen," reproved Mrs. Woodburn.

"Some," replied the girl. "The Duke is." She added maliciously—"Sometimes."

Old Mat, Monkey Brand, and Albert started early for the meet.

It was a long hour later before mother and daughter, waiting in the parlour, heard the steady clop-clop of a horse's feet and the crisp trundle of wheels on the road.

In another moment the buggy had drawn up at the gate; Goosey Gander was stretching his neck, and Jerry of the corrugated brow was touching his hat to the descending passenger.

A tall, top-hatted figure, enfolded in long, shaggy gray frieze coat, came up the paved yard toward them between clouds of arabis.

Silver had changed in the train on the way down. He was booted, spurred, and above all radiant.

Mrs. Woodburn went out on to the steps to meet him. The girl hid her hair behind her mother's stately figure.

"So you've managed it!" smiled Mrs. Woodburn.

"I was determined not to miss it," replied the young man, striding up the steps stiff in his top-boots. "Miss Woodburn, congratulations."

"Who told you?" cried Boy, taken aback.

"Billy Bluff, of course," replied the other. "Caddish of him, wasn't it?"

They went into the parlour.

Mrs. Woodburn did not offer the traveller a drink for the simple reason that it never occurred to her to do so.

"By Jove! I *am* late!" cried the young man, glancing at the clock. "There was a break-down at Hayward's Heath."

He stripped off his ulster, and stood up in his pink coat, his baggy white breeches, and top-boots.

In Boy Woodburn's judgment most men, so attired, looked supremely ridiculous. It was not so with Mr. Silver. It may be that his absolute lack of self-consciousness distracted attention from his costume. It may be that he was so real himself that he dominated his artificial habiliments. Certainly his strong, clean face, his short, crisp hair, and pleasant, booming voice possessed and pleased the girl.

"You'd better be off, or you'll have the Duke down on you," said Mrs. Woodburn.

"Dad's gone an hour since," said Boy.

She led the way swiftly down long stone passages out into the yard. He followed, his eyes on that shining bunch of hair before him.

The yard looked deserted. The fan-tails strutted vaingloriously; Maudie lay in the sun on the stable wall; and Billy Bluff's kennel was empty.

"Hullo, where's Bill?" cried the young man.

"Some idiot's let him off his chain," grumbled the girl. "Just like them. A hunting morning."

A great gray horse, led by little Jerry, was feeling his way through the stable-door. Banjo stood seventeen hands or over, but he was all quality. His long neck was hog-maned; and his Roman nose and sober colour gave him an air of wisdom and experience which a somewhat frivolous character belied.

Young Lollypop, a brown three-year-old, followed demurely behind. For all his sixteen hands, he looked a mere stripling beside the gray; but he was far too tall for the girl to mount without assistance. Stanley went for a bucket, but before he could return Silver had shot the girl into the saddle, and stood a moment looking up at her with eyes in which laughter and admiration mingled.

The girl seemed so slight and yet so masterful on these great larruping thoroughbreds she always rode!

Young Lollypop had the callow and awkward ways of a young giraffe, but, though only a three-year-old, he was sedate as an old maid and had the dignity of a churchwarden. His behaviour was an example to his flippant colleague.

For Banjo, directly he felt his master on his back, began to galumph about the yard with a clatter of hoofs among the injured fan-tails and to the discomfiture of Maudie.

"Right!" grunted Silver, settling into his saddle. "Now, you old hog, you!"

Brown Lollypop cocked his long ears and watched with pained disapproval the gambols of his elder. Himself incorruptible, he was no doubt well pleased at heart that Banjo's misconduct should throw up in high relief his own immaculate conduct. Lollypop was in fact a bit of a prig. Had he been a boy he would have been head of his school, a Scholar of Balliol, and President of the Union at his University.

The girl followed her leader through the gate, the brown horse stepping gingerly, swinging his tail, and feeling his bit, while Banjo galumphed and grunted to the sound of a squeaking leather.

The meet was at Folkington Green, at the foot of the Downs on the edge of the low country.

Once in the road, Silver and the girl turned their backs on the sea and made through the village.

Just outside it a familiar figure was waiting them on the road, apologetic and pleading.

"I knew he would," said Boy. "He started with father and got turned back. Now he's waiting for us. *Go back, you bad dog!*"

"Poor boy!—he wants a bit of a hunt, too," said the young man.

"I'll hunt him!" cried the girl remorselessly, and proceeded to do so with vigour.

It was some time before the dog was routed and they were free to pursue their way.

"What's the time?" asked the girl.

Silver referred to his wrist-watch.

"It's nearly half-past eleven."

"We must trot," said Boy.

They trotted away, the brown horse and the gray side by side, the regular clap-clap of their feet sometimes overlapping and sometimes beating in unison, only to break eventually again, to the disappointment of the girl's attentive ear. It was the fashion amid the hunting folk to despise hacking along the road as so much waste of time. To the girl the steady tramp along the hard road was like the march of life. She would hack from covert to covert, one of a great cavalcade, men and women, with bobbing heads, their faces set all in the same direction, the sound of the horses' feet splashing all round her like a stream. She would flow along in the centre of that stream, unconscious of those about her, silent when addressed, absorbed in the only music for which she cared.

The noise of Banjo blowing his nose now brought her back to earth. She peeped at the face of the man on the big gray at her side.

"Had a bad time?" she asked warily.

He turned to her, his face lit with the smile that took all the heaviness out of it.

"Worrying," he said.

"Well, you're through now," said the girl.

"Plea Gob," he answered, "till next time. We'd have been in the cart but the Bank of England stood by like a brick."

Their steady pace took them along. They were getting away from the hills, and the Weald was opening before them. The sun shone on them, and the willows on either side the road declared that April was at hand. They eased down to a walk.

Silver opened his chest.

"I feel like singing!" he cried.

"Sing then," said Boy.

In his quiet booming voice he sang a verse from *Two on the Downs*, which in their long hacks home of evening she had taught him—

Sing ho!
So we go,
Over Downs that are surging green
Under the sky and the seas that lie

Silvery-strewn between.

He finished and turned to her with a laugh and shining eyes.

She glanced away, and on her face was that delicious wary look he loved so well, baffling and baffled, disturbing because disturbed, as when a little wind ruffles at evening a willow, exposing to the sky in spite of protest the silvery undersides of naked, shining leaves.

Jim Silver edged across to her.

"Miss Woodburn!" he said quietly. He held out a great gloved hand.

Boy looked resolutely between her horse's ears.

"Trot," she said.

A few straggling foot-passengers, an occasional trap, a man on a bicycle, and some children pushing a perambulator, showed them they were drawing near their goal.

About half a mile in front the road opened on to a green. There among trees they could see a gathering of men and horses.

"Good!" cried the young man. "They haven't moved off yet. Shall we slow down?"

"Best get on, I think," replied the girl.

A man in a slouch hat, carrying a gamp as untidy as himself, was walking before them down the middle of the road.

"Ass!" muttered the young man. "Why can't he keep to one side?"

Boy shot ahead, Silver took a pull. Banjo made a fuss, took offence, then went striding hugely by, and shied off, splashing through a puddle.

The brown waters rose and drenched the pedestrian.

"Thank *you!*" he called furiously after the horseman.

Banjo, as though frightened at his deed, tried a bolt. A horseman of unusual power, Silver steadied the great horse and swung him across the road. There Banjo sidled, yawed, and passaged, fretting to be after the brown.

The young man, swinging to the motions of the tossing gray, raised his hand in that large and gracious way of his.

"So sorry," he shouted back.

The man with the gamp shuffled toward him.

"Of course it wasn't deliberate!" he cried.

It was Silver's turn to be angry.

He gripped the gray, lifted him round like a polo pony, and drove him back to the angry man.

"You don't think I'd do a thing like that on purpose!" he said, and saw for the first time that the man with the gamp was Joses.

"You didn't know it was me, of course," sneered the other, shaking with anger.

"I did not," replied Silver, calm and cold as Joses was hot.

"Then I don't believe you," cried the tout.

Silver looked down at him.

"I've said I'm sorry. I've no more to say," he remarked quietly.

"Haven't you?" cried the fat man. "I have, though."

He made a snatch at Banjo's rein.

The gray reared, backed away into the ditch, collapsed there on his quarters, and recovered himself with the grunt and flounder of a hippopotamus emerging from a river.

A little crowd was collecting swiftly, drawn by the hopes of a row.

Then there came the clatter of a horse's feet. Boy was coming back to the group at a gallop.

"I saw what happened," she said, her deep voice a little sharp. "Your horse shied and splashed Mr. Joses." She appealed swiftly to him. "Wasn't that it?"

"Yes," said Silver coldly. "I splashed him by accident and apologised."

"*And he turned nasty!*"

The intervening voice was harsh and unfamiliar. Silver turned to see a tall inspector of police sitting like a pillar of salt in a dog-cart, which had drawn up in the road.

Joses, who had seen him, too, began to shake, and more horrible still to laugh.

"He was naturally a bit annoyed," said Silver.

The tall inspector was looking Joses up and down. There was a dreadful air of domination about him.

"If you're satisfied, sir, I say no more," said the inspector, reluctant as a dog to leave a bone.

"I'm satisfied," replied Silver.

The inspector withdrew. The little knot of people who had gathered began to disperse. The young man and the girl trotted on their way.

"Most unfortunate," muttered Silver.

"Most," Boy answered.

In Joses's eyes she had seen again that look of the wild beast, caged and cowering.

The young man felt censure in her voice.

"Well, I don't think it was my fault," he said, nettled.

"I know it wasn't," she cried. "But—"

"What?"

"That inspector's way with him. Like a slavedriver."

"I know," said Silver. "Horrible."

CHAPTER XXV
The Black Bird

The last meet of the season was, as always, at Folkington Green, close enough to Lewes to draw the townsfolk out on bicycles and in char-à-bancs.

The morning was fine after rain, and there was a full attendance on the green under the swinging sign of *The Beehive*.

Old Mat sat by the muddy pond on his three-cornered cob. He was dressed, as always, in flat-topped hat, trousers, and elastic-sided boots; and he swung his legs mechanically against Ichabod's hardened sides.

About him was gathered the usual group of admiring ladies. They liked Old Mat as much as they disliked his daughter.

"I don't come 'ere to 'unt," the old man was saying wearily; "I come 'ere to putest. Yes, you can persecute me if you like, same as you do the fox, but if I live through it, as I 'ave before, I shall go 'ome to Mar, and next time you comes out I shall be there givin' my witness, de we." His face was firm and nobly resolute. "Crool, I calls it," he said. "Such a lot of you, too. Hosses and dogs, men and women, not to say perambylators. All on his back at once; and he'll beat the lot yet, you'll see. That's because he's got religion in him, little red fox has. His conscience is clear, same as mine." He looked about him. "Now there's Mr. Haggard there be the elm. He thinks just the very same as me—only he ain't got the spirit in him to stand up and say so. I'd 'a' wep a tear—only I ain't got one."

The Duke in his hunting cap sat close by on his cobby chestnut, which looked as if it had come out of an old hunting print, and the hounds sprawled about it in the sunshine on the green.

Silver rode up to the Duke, who greeted him ironically.

"Late as usual, Silver," he said. "We've been waiting for you since Christmas."

"Very good of you, sir," replied the young man. "I only came down from town this morning."

"Glad you could get away," grunted the Duke. "Hope you've done 'em down all right."

Silver walked his horse away across the green.

The inspector, who had drawn up in the road, got down from his trap, and came toward Silver.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "You've nothing against that chap?"

He knew very well who Silver was, and was obsequious accordingly.

"Nothing," said Silver shortly.

"Excuse me, won't you, sir?" continued the inspector. "I wouldn't trouble you only we know him. He's been in trouble before. And we have to watch him. He's a bit funny in the temper. And when he's on the boil there's not a great deal he'll stop at."

"I've nothing against him," repeated Silver, and rode on to join Monkey Brand, who was nursing a youngster by the pond.

The little jockey greeted him with a drop of one eyelid.

"He's watchin' you, sir," he said quietly.

"Who is?" asked the young man.

"Joses, sir. Through the window of *The Beehive*."

"Never mind him," replied Silver, keeping his broad scarlet back turned on the public-house and the face peering at him over the half-blind.

"He's got some friends here," continued Monkey, in the same hushed monotone. "That's why he's gone inside. That tall genelman you was talkin' with. Very close they was at one time. Too close in a manner o' speakin'. See, you can be *too* close friends. Then you gets to know too much about each other. Then there's trouble and a kickin'-match."

The Duke waved his arm, and hounds moved off.

Horsemen, carriages, and pedestrians followed them in straggling procession.

Monkey Brand and Silver kept together. In front of them Boy Woodburn and Albert Edward rode side by side.

Viewed from the rear, they were ridiculously alike in shape and size and bearing.

The little jockey pointed out the resemblance to his companion. He clucked and winked and joggled with his elbow.

"Not much atween 'em seen from behind, sir," he said.

"How's he coming on?" asked Silver.

"Why, not bad, sir," replied the jockey. "He's the pick of our bunch anyway. If he wasn't so puffed up wiv himself, he'd do."

"I saw he did Chukkers down at Sandown in the International," said the young man.

"He did, sir. He did so," replied the little man. "One more up to Putnam's, that was." And he gave the story of how the Putnam's lad had beaten the crack in the big race.

It seemed that Chukkers, who was riding Jackaroo for Ikey Aaronsohnn, had thought he was well through, and was sitting down to idle home, when two fences from the finish Albert Edward, riding an any-price outsider, came up on his right out of the blue and challenged the star-spangled jacket.

Chukkers, who was on the favourite, with orders to win, had drawn his whip and ridden for his life.

"'E could draw whip and draw blood, too," chuckled Monkey Brand. "But it weren't no manner o' good. Took up his whip and stopped his 'orse. Albert, 'e never stir. Sat there and goes cluck-cluck and got home on the post. Rode a pretty race, he did. Miss Boy was ever so please."

"And what about Chukkers?" asked Jim.

Monkey Brand sniggered.

"He was foamin'-mad, bloody-yellin' all over the place. I was glad Mrs. Woodburn wasn't there to hear. Jaggers had him out on the mat afore 'em all. Said he'd been caught nappin'—by a boy with a face like a girl, too. Putnam 'orse and all. That got ole Chukkers' tail up. He made trouble in the weighin'-room. Said Albert had done him a dirty dish; but you can't go to the Stewards on that. And Albert he told Miss Boy—'I never done nothin' to him, only beat him.' And he told the truth that time if he never told it afore. 'Never you mind,' says Miss Boy. 'You won and you'll win again—if your head don't get so swelled you can't get the weight. We all know Chukkers,' says she, 'and Jaggers, too.'"

The last day was never taken very seriously by the regular followers of the Duke's hounds. All those to whom hunting was the one worthy occupation in life kept religiously aloof.

"It's the people's day," they said. "They don't want us."

To-day was no exception to the rule.

Before lunch hounds chopped a mangy fox outside Prior's Wood; and it was not till the afternoon was getting on that they found a rover lying out in a field of mangolds.

He must have been a hill-fox, who had been caught raiding in the lowlands, for he made a straight point for the Downs.

There was the usual scurry. Boy Woodburn was, as always, the last away, with Silver in close

attendance.

They threaded the ragged fringes of pedestrians, who still clung to the skirts of the horsemen, turned to the right through an open gate, and leisurely pursued the cavalcade disappearing furiously before them in the distance.

The girl nursed her baby, who showed himself as unconcerned by the fuss and flurry of the vanguard as his young mistress; while Banjo fretted and fumed to get away.

They crossed a big grass field at a canter. Lollypop was young and raw as a calf, and Jim Silver rode well behind, giving him and his rider plenty of room.

Before them was a low stake-and-bound with a drop on the far side. Lollypop flopped along toward it like a boat in a swell, flapping his long ears, bridling, and pondering whether he would have it or not. On the whole, he thought he would. To lift over it would probably mean less trouble in the end than to fight the quiet and resolute creature who cooed so softly in his ears, and rode him with such iron resolution. Moreover, he knew now as the result of experience that if it came to a struggle he would be worsted in the end if it took all day. It would certainly be less irksome, and more gracious, to get the thing behind you. To jump, and to pretend you liked it, was the generous and the politic thing to do. Moreover, it was all in the direction of home and bran-mash; while there was Banjo golly-woshing through the mud close behind him. And Lollypop not only had to live up to his reputation and set his elder an example, which he loved to do, but he also wished to show the gray what he could do himself when he tried.

The young horse had just made up his mind in the right way, cocked his ears, gathered himself, and passed the thrill to his responsive and expectant mistress, when a huge and black bird, vaster and far more hideous than anything the young horse had ever seen upon the Downs, rose suddenly underneath his nose on the far side of the hedge, flapped its wings obscenely, spread them wide, and then twirled round insanely at astonishing speed.

Joses, nursing his wounds, sat on in the parlour of *The Beehive* long after the cavalcade had moved off, and comforted himself in the usual way.

When at length he rose with a drained tankard and paid his shot at the counter, he gave his views on society to the landlord in such coloured terms as genuinely to shock that worthy, who had been brought up respectably in the shadow of a Duke.

"They're patriots and imperialists, they are," said the fat man. "Never think of themselves. They hunt the fox, and shoot the pheasant, and keep you and me under, not because they enjoy it and want all the fun to themselves. Oh, no!—don't make that mistake. But because it's their bounden duty to God and man so to do!"

The landlord gave him his change.

"Are you a Socialist?" he asked.

"No," laughed Joses. "I'm a —— aristocrat. You might know it from me language—let alone me looks. With a stake in the country, a pew in the church, and a seat in the House of Mammon. Goodbye! God bless our gracious King! And to hell with the rights of You and Me!"

He went out and made for the hills, churning his grievances into mud within him.

He had walked for an hour across the fields, blind and deaf to all about him, when an insistent sound from the outer world penetrated the outworks of his disturbed spirit.

He stopped and listened.

Hounds were running. Yes. No. Yes. That musical tow-row, passionate, terrible, and never-to-be-forgotten, was not to be mistaken.

Hounds were running, and they were coming in his direction at speed. Joses, always something of a sportsman, came out of himself in his own despite. He hurried down a bridle-path toward the line of the hunt.

Before him, some fields away, he saw hounds toppling over a hedge like a breaker curling before it fell. There followed in line horsemen and horsewomen, singly, straggling, and in groups.

Joses stayed and watched them sweep by some distance from him. The mutter of horses' feet close at hand struck his ear. He turned and looked over the hedge. A man and a girl were cantering leisurely toward him. The man was on a gray, and it was clear from the way the girl handled her horse that he was young and uncertain of himself.

An imp of malignant deviltry, born of spite and alcohol, bobbed up in Joses's heart. He ducked behind the hedge, opened his umbrella suddenly, and twirled it overhead.

Lollypop's nerves were of the very best, but this was altogether too much for him. He refused suddenly and with a snort, whipped about, swift as a top, slid up, and collapsed on his side.

Boy was flung forward on her head and shoulder.

A moment she stayed where she was on her hands and knees, clutching at the bridle. Lollypop floundered to his feet, and tugged to get away, staring with wide-flung nostrils and trembling flanks at the hedge.

The girl rose slowly to her feet. Her hat was muddy and battered, and she looked before her foolishly and with dazed eyes.

Silver had galloped up and was on his feet in a minute at her side.

"Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"I'm all right," she replied sleepily.

Joses was peering over the hedge. It was difficult to say what was in those shining eyes of his.

"Nasty shy," he said.

Silver looked up.

"I'm coming round to you in a minute, my friend," he said deeply.

Joses's face darkened.

"Why, you don't think it was deliberate?" he cackled.

"I'll let you know what I think later," replied the young man.

"You frighten me!" mocked the other, rumbling his dreadful laughter. "Mind you tell your friends the police!" he added, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXVI
Jim Silver Goes To War

Boy was muddy, and her hat was dented and askew. The little creature looked strangely pathetic as she stood up alongside tall Lollypop with the slimy flank.

"I'll get on again now," she said, gathering her reins. "Put me up, will you?"

"No," answered Silver.

The tears sprang to the girl's eyes.

"Why not?" she asked fretfully, but for the first time since they had met she submitted to his will.

Jim took Lollypop's rein and led both horses slowly toward the farm among apple trees at the end of the field.

Boy walked at his side.

"It's silly to feel so funny," she laughed feebly.

"Take my arm," he said; but she refused.

They came to the gate of the farm.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"In here."

He gave a shout.

A woman in a sunbonnet came to the door and stared.

"Is that you, Miss Woodburn?" she cried. "Oh! *dear* me!"

"Hullo, Mrs. Ticehurst," said the girl. "I've had a bit of a spill."

"Can Miss Woodburn come in and rest for a moment?" asked Silver.

"Come in and rest!" cried the woman. "Hark to him! Think I'd turn a dog away like that—let alone Miss Joyce."

"Such a fuss!" protested the girl.

The woman called to a yokel to come and take the horses.

Languidly the girl walked down the paved path between rank currant bushes, and entered the house.

"Here in the parlour, Miss!" said the woman, kind and bustling.

"I'd rather the kitchen, please," said Boy. "Cosier there."

"Very well, my dear. There's a fire there. And I'll get you a cup o' tea."

When Silver entered the house a little later he saw the girl comfortably established by the fire.

He peeped in and withdrew quietly.

"I'll be back in a minute," he said quietly to the woman. "I'm just going to have a look at the horses."

In the yard he found the yokel trying in vain to induce Banjo to enter a door that was too small for him.

"All right," said the young man. "He won't fit."

Mounting, he rode out into the field.

Banjo knew his master meant business directly he was in the saddle, and answered instantaneously to the call, dropping the nonsense, and settling down to work sober as a bishop.

The yokel watched the pair with admiration.

There was such power about them both.

The big man cantered across the field, put the gray at the fence, and cleared it without an effort.

There was a slight drop into a bridle-lane.

The man on the gray turned and cantered quietly along it.

He jumped a low heave-gate and followed the track beyond. In the next field he saw his quarry, hunting along at a little dog-trot.

Joses seemed to have no fear of pursuit.

Jim Silver stole up behind him, Banjo, as though entering into the spirit of the pursuit, seeming to muffle the sound of his going.

A hundred yards from his quarry the young man came with a rattle. Joses turned, but it was too late.

The lash curled round his plump carcase.

Silver swept on like a hailstorm, and pulled Banjo up on his haunches.

Then he sat with white face and shining eyes, trailing his lash as he waited the assault.

He had not long to wait.

Boy sat by the fire in the kitchen and drank her tea, an alert little figure, her burnished hair neatly coiled, and hat beside her.

It was clear she was entirely herself again.

Then Silver stood in the door and smiled at her. He was very quiet and rather pale.

The girl looked up at him suspiciously.

"Where've you been?" she asked.

"With the horses," he answered.

She was not to be deceived.

"You've been having a hunt of your own," she said. "I hope you didn't find."

He looked out of the window evasively.

"Scent poor to bad," he said slowly.

By the time they mounted it was late in the afternoon, and the glory had departed from the day.

They climbed the Downs, and rode along the tops of them, their faces to the sea, speaking hardly at all, and walking all the while.

This sudden and surprising contact with evil had taken the joy from their hearts and oppressed them like a shadow.

Once as they drew near home he spoke.

"How are you?" he said.

"I'm all right," she answered, and added, lifting her face to his in that frank and beautiful way of hers, "I don't think he meant it for me."

"I'm not sure," replied Silver.

"I think he meant it for you," continued Boy.

"If so I should think a shade better of him," replied the other stubbornly.

"I'm glad you didn't catch him," said the girl. She turned full face to him. "You *were* angry."

"I *was* a bit put out, I think," answered the other.

They dropped down the hill into the Paddock Close, graying faintly in the dusk.

Boy's high spirits were pouring back on her in merry little rivulets, all the readier to brim their banks for having been dammed so long.

"Come and see Four-Pound-the-Second," she cried, and led away along the hillside at a trot.

"How's he coming on?" asked the young man, jogging at her side, delighting in her returning life.

"Father thinks he's going to be a great horse," laughed the girl. "But he won't admit it to me, of course."

"So he is, plea Gob," said Jim.

Boy looked at him severely. Then she tapped him with her crop.

"He may," she said. "You mayn't. And you mustn't mimic dad."

He touched his forehead.

At the Bottom, not far from the place where the old mare had died, a rough thatched shed of tarred sleepers had been run up for the colt.

"There he is!" said the girl. "By the wood," and called him.

The yearling came, trotting proudly at first, and then breaking into an ungainly gallop. A gawky creature, with a coat like a bear's, he moved with the awkward grace of a puppy, slithering and slipping in the mud, yet always recovering himself with surprising speed and precision.

Boy dismounted, and Silver followed her example.

She held out her hand toward the colt.

"Come on, the boy!" she cooed. "Billy Bluff's not here to rag you."

The colt came delicately with outstretched neck and wide nostrils, fearing for his liberty, yet poking out his nose toward the extended palm on which there lay a piece of bread.

"Looks as if he might make into something, don't you think?" said the girl. "Lots of bone."

"What colour's he going to be?" asked the young man.

"Black-brown with bay points. Black-and-tan, mother calls him."

"Black-and-tan," said the young man. "That's Berserk, isn't it?"

"I believe so," replied the girl.

"Is that sure?" asked the young man.

"Father seems to think so," replied Boy evasively. "Monkey Brand met the gypsy afterward, who pitched him a tale."

"Who's he belong to?" asked the young man.

"Me, of course," laughed Boy.

"I'll go shares with you!" said Silver. "Halve expenses and winnings. There's an offer now!"

"Right," she cried.

They shook hands with laughter, and led their horses across the Close.

The girl edged off to the right.

"We'll look in on old Ragamuffin," she said. "I always used to give him an apple on my birthday."

As they put the wood between them and the Bottom, a man who had been lying in the shelter out of the wind came to the door and called to the colt.

"Whoa, little man!" he said. "Whoa then!"

CHAPTER XXVII
The Fire in the Dusk

It was Jerry who gave the alarm ten minutes later. He had been busy at his garden in the Sloperies when he saw the smoke rise from the shelter on the hill, and rushed into the yard to say the shed was ablaze.

Boy and Silver, after their leisurely walk home, had just entered the yard and surrendered their horses to two of the lads. The girl was releasing Billy Bluff from his chain, to Maudie's open annoyance, when Jerry panted in with his news.

Silver ran to the gate.

"By Jove, so it is!" he cried.

He was in the saddle in a moment, but not so quickly as was the girl.

She led him through the gate.

Together they galloped across the Paddock Close and made for the hill, Billy Bluff racing at their side.

The lads ran heavily behind.

The shed was belching smoke, and from the heather-thatch the flames were leaping in red flicker.

"Jolly blaze!" cried Silver as he galloped.

A sound of banging came from the heart of that cloud of smoke, and then the loud neigh of a frightened horse.

The young man's face changed.

"Four Pound's inside!" he cried.

He stormed up the hill, and for the first time in his life Banjo tasted steel.

Boy, too, had heard that muffled cry, and came shooting by the heavy-weight up the hill, Lollypop well extended.

"Keep clear!" cried Silver. "Hold my horse!"

He was off in a trice, and wading through the bellying smoke.

The girl could see him dimly as he kicked at the door of the shed.

It burst open.

A vast shadow came hurtling through the fog.

Silver was sent hurling backward and sprawled on the hillside.

He was on his feet in a moment.

"That's all right," he panted, as he watched the colt career whinnying away, wreaths of smoke still clinging to his woolly coat. "He's not taken much harm."

"I suppose he went in after we left," mused Boy. "And then the wind banged the door."

"I don't think the wind dropped that bar," said the young man. "And I doubt if it set the shelter alight."

The shed was blazing merrily, the flames devouring the tarred wood with greed.

Jerry had seen a man leave the public path, cross the Paddock, and enter the shed half an hour before.

"What kind of a man?" asked Silver.

"Trampy, sir," replied the lad.

"He got smokin' in it out of the wind," said Stanley, "and set it ablaze, and did a bolt."

"After shutting the door behind him with the colt inside," commented Silver.

He searched the grass on the outskirts of the shed for footmarks. Something glimmering in the dusk caught his eye. It was a wooden-handled sheath-knife.

Silver picked it up and showed it to the girl.

She said nothing.

"Billy Bluff!" called the young man. He shoved the knife under the dog's nose. "Sik him out!" he called. "Good dorg!"

Billy Bluff skirmished round and went off up the hill at score.

Silver mounted and followed.

The trail carried the dog up on to the Downs.

He pursued it at speed and unfaltering in the dusk.

Against the pale west, on the brow, the figure of a man soon came into view. Billy Bluff raced up and greeted the pedestrian effusively.

Silver, pounding up behind, found himself face to face with the vicar.

The dog, his task completed to his own entire satisfaction, sought applause and sympathy from the horseman.

"Is that you, Mr. Haggard?" called the young man in the dusk.

"Yes; I came up to have a look at the sunset."

"You haven't seen that man Joses about?"

"Our lurid friend," said the vicar absently. "No; and I don't want to see him just now. It's all so quiet."

Boy, who had stayed behind to examine the colt, came cantering up.

The dusk was drawing down apace, the earth dark about them, and seaward that window in the west pale and lovely.

"Wonderful!" said Mr. Haggard, dreamily, and repeated slowly and to himself—

Since I can never see your face,
And never shake you by the hand,
I send my soul through time and space
To greet you. You will understand.

The riders turned away.

Neither spoke for a while.

"Mr. Haggard's like mother," said the girl at last. "He's got *that*." She added: "I'm glad we met him. I was very angry."

"Aren't you now?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "but in a different way. It's white now. It was red then."

They rode slowly off the crest amid the gorse, the lights of Putnam's burning far beneath them in the dusk.

"Give me that knife, please," she said.

"No."

"Why not?"

"I want it."

"What for?"

He didn't answer.

"I know," she said. "To get him put away."

"He deserves it," replied the young man doggedly. "If it had only been the shed now!—but—"

"Four Pound," she said. "I know." Her little hand came reaching toward him in the dusk. "Give me that knife, please."

He fenced with her.

"Don't you believe in punishment?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Not even for cruelty?"

"I don't think you can stop cruelty by being cruel yourself."

"Wouldn't you give him in charge?"

"Yes," she said, "if I was sure they'd kill him. But they wouldn't. They'd only cage him. And I can't believe in the cage for anyone." She was breathing deeply.

"Here you are," said the young man.

She laid her hand on his a moment.

He grasped it, and drew toward her silently.

The horses moved side by side down the hill, a few pale stars sprinkling the dull heavens, and somewhere behind, the glimmer of a young moon.

They passed into the Paddock Close, stealing softly over the turf, the wood moving gently on their right in the darkness.

He came looming up beside her.

"Boy," he said deeply.

It was the first time he had dared.

"Yes," she answered, and her voice trembled ever so little.

"Will you share something besides Four-Pound-the-Second?"

"What?"

"Everything."

The moon caught her.

She turned full face to him; and her eyes were tender and brilliant as he had never known them.

"D'you care for me?" she asked.

"I love you," said Silver.

She squeezed his hand, but answered nothing.

"D'you care for *me*?" he asked in his turn.

She did not answer for some time.

"I'm not going to marry you," she said at last.

"Why not?"

He thought she gulped.

"I'm not going to marry a gentleman."

"Why not?"

Again she paused.

"It doesn't do."

He lifted her little hand in his great gloved one and kissed it.

"Bless you, dear Boy," was all he said.

CHAPTER XXVIII
The Fat Man Goes Under

It was two days later that the girl met Joses in the village street.

She crossed to him swiftly, and she was white and sparkling.

"Here's your knife, Mr. Joses," she said, handing it him.

There came into his eyes at once that hunted look.

He put both hands behind him and bowed with his honeyed smile.

"It's not mine, Miss Woodburn, thank you," he said.

The girl was growing apace.

A few months back she would have said "It is," and have dropped it at his feet. Now she answered:

"You may have it whenever you like to call for it," and passed on.

A little farther down the street she met the vicar.

On her face was that frosty look that Mr. Haggard said made him afraid.

"Well, Boy?" he said.

"Good morning, Mr. Haggard," she answered, but she did not stop.

That evening she called at the cottage where Joses lodged and handed Mrs. Boam the knife done up in brown paper.

"Will you give this to Mr. Joses?" she said.

The woman's apron was to her lips, and over it her frightened eyes peered at the girl.

"He's gone, Miss," she said.

The girl was surprised.

"Gone?" she said. "Where?"

The woman nibbled her apron.

"An hour since. The police come for him. I was makin' the tea."

That strange tide of Other-Consciousness overwhelmed the girl.

"Are you fond of him?" asked the Voice that used her as an instrument.

The woman with the streaming eyes nodded over her apron.

"Our Jenny love him," she said.

End of Part I

Battle

It was Old Mat who was responsible for the arrest of Joses on the charge of incendiarism.

"I got to do me duty by the pore feller," he said quietly. "And will do, de we. Same as the Psalmist says. It's *because* you love 'em you got to chastise of 'em. Only where it is," he ended disconsolately, "don't somehow seem as they *can* understand."

The evidence was fairly plain. Jerry had marked the tout late in the afternoon of the day in question cross the Paddock Close from the public park and enter the shed half an hour before the fire; while Monkey Brand, coming off the hill, on his return from the hunt, swore he had seen him emerge from the shed as flames broke from the thatched roof.

It was growing dusk at the time, and the distance was considerable, as Monkey admitted, but the little jockey maintained with restraint and emphasis that "he'd know that waddle anywheres."

Joses did not go undefended. The fact of his value to the Three J's, if ever in doubt, was proved beyond question by the fact that they paid a good lawyer to keep him out of gaol. And it was notorious that the Three J's never gave except where they got.

Indeed, one of the funniest scenes at the trial took place when Ikey Aaronsohnn, who it was said had returned post-haste from America for the purpose, Jaggers, and Chukkers, one after the other, stood up in the witness-box and gave evidence solemnly as to the character of the accused.

"Of course we know he *has* made a little mistake in the past, pore chap," said Jaggers, who looked like an austere Stiggins. "But he's a *good* man for all that."

"A hopeful penitent," suggested the prosecuting counsel.

"There's 'ope for all, I 'ope, sir," said Jaggers, with quiet manliness.

The case against the accused seemed black; but he met it with extraordinary courage and resource.

He admitted that he had been in the shed at the time alleged.

He said that he had gone there to smoke out of the wind, and admitted further that he *had* set the shed on fire—by accident.

When asked in court why, if he had set the shed on fire by accident, he had run away, his defence was simple and convincing.

He said he was afraid. He'd been in trouble before.

"And once you've been in trouble, the police know you, and you never get a chance. I got a panic, and I bolted—very foolishly."

The defence evidently impressed both judge and jury. And had it been simply a question of setting fire to the shed the accused might have got off; but there was the further matter of Four-Pound-the-Second.

How did the yearling come to be in the shed?

Joses retorted that it was not for him to say; but he suggested that it had come on to rain, and that the colt had sought shelter from the storm.

It was there that Silver came in.

The papers said, and said truly, that the young banker gave his evidence with obvious reluctance.

"Was the colt in the shed when you came up?" asked the prosecuting counsel.

"Yes."

"Was it raining?"

"It was drizzling."

"Was the door shut?"

"Yes."

"How was it shut?"

"With a wooden latch."

"That you lifted to let the colt out?"

"Yes."

"Could the wind have banged the door to?"

"Possibly."

"Could the latch have *fallen* into its place?"

"I don't know."

"What d'you think?"

"I doubt it."

In cross-examination the aim of the counsel for the defence was to show that the evidence of the witness was unreliable because he was actuated by personal malevolence against the accused.

"Have you had words with the prisoner on more than one occasion?"

"Yes."

"It was a word from you that put the police on to him in the first instance?"

"It was *not*," with warmth.

"You found a knife you believed to belong to the prisoner in the shed after the fire?"

"Outside the shed."

"And you took the knife to the police?"

"I did not."

"Where is the knife now?"

"I don't know."

"Who did you give it to?"

"Miss Woodburn."

The girl was called. Her evidence was very brief. Mr. Silver had given her the knife. She had taken it to the cottage where the prisoner lodged and handed it back to the woman there.

To substantiate the charge that Mr. Silver was actuated by malice, the counsel for the defence called evidence to prove the scene that had taken place between the witness and the accused on the way to the meet.

On this point the prisoner gave further evidence himself.

"You met Mr. Silver later in the day?"

"I did."

"What happened?"

"He rode at me and struck me."

"What for?"

"He said he'd show a —— convict how to speak to a gentleman; and he'd get me put away."

"Was anybody present?"

The accused laughed.

"No fear! He waited till he got me alone."

"What time was this?"

"About two-thirty."

"Where?"

"Just outside Prior's Wood."

Mr. Silver, recalled by the prosecuting counsel, was re-examined as to the facts alleged by Joses.

"Did you strike the prisoner?"

"I gave him one with the lash of my crop."

"Under what circumstances?"

The witness explained.

"Did you say the words attributed to you?"

"I did *not*."

"Did any words pass between you?"

There was a pause.

"After I struck him, while he was messing about with his knife, he said: 'I'll do time for you!'"

"Did you say anything?"

There was another pause.

"I said: 'What! More?'"

In cross-examination the counsel for the defence asked the young banker what he meant when he said to the prisoner—"'What! More?'"

Silver was silent.

"Were you referring to the fact that the accused had been in trouble?"

"Yes."

"And you're a sportsman?"

No answer.

"And a gentleman?"

In his speech for the prosecution counsel pointed out that the motive for the crime—the one point in doubt—had been established. Joses had been a little too clever and had established it himself. He had supplied the one missing link, and would be hung in a chain of his own making. The two men had come to words and blows. Joses, smarting alike in body and mind, had trotted home and, beside himself with rage and a desire for revenge, had committed this most insensate and abominable crime.

The jury found the prisoner guilty without leaving the box, and the judge, who described the crime as deliberate, malignant, and the work of a frustrated fiend, gave him a swinging sentence.

PART II
THE WOMAN AND THE HORSE

BOOK IV
THE TRIAL

CHAPTER XXIX
Albert Edward

Four years had passed; but Maudie had not changed or aged.

She lay in the sun on a step on the ladder, languid, insolent, concerned only for herself. True the kennel beneath the ladder was empty now, and had a rusty and pathetic air as of long disuse; but the Monster-without-Manners was not dead, alas!—he had but changed his abode. Now and for some years past the Great Unspeakable had shared a kennel with the Four-Legs-Who-Might-Not-Walk-Alone; the one who there was all this foolish fuss about. There were many such Four-Legs about, each as a rule with a small Two-Legs in attendance or on top. As a whole, they were harmless. They lived and let live, and Maudie asked no more. But the Four-Legs with whom the Monster-without-Manners had entered on a sinister intimacy had been corrupted by his companion. He bounded, too, upon occasion. And when he bounded he was so big that he seemed to fill the yard, sprawling here and there and everywhere, till the walls bulged and burst, to the grave inconvenience of Maudie, the fan-tails, and all sober citizens; while the Monster-without-Manners *more suo*, encouraged him with coarse laughter.

When the Four-Legs-Who-Might-Not-Walk-Alone bounded in the yard, Maudie retired indignantly and with the grand air to safety in the loft. She did not blame the Four-Legs. He was young, innocent, and the victim of the impossible M.-w.-M., who was still the villain of her piece and had not altered for the better with the years. Maybe he bounded less; but on the other hand age had brought with it cunning.

When Putnam's Only Gentleman had brought her a saucer of milk the M.-w.-M. would approach

with a great air of gallantry and high breeding, and deliberately thrusting his great foot into the saucer, would upset it. That was what the M.-w.-M. thought a joke.

Apart from Maudie the yard was deserted now. The horses moved restlessly in their loose-boxes, but there was no bustle of shirt-sleeved urchins with buckets and pitchforks mucking them out. For it was Sunday morning, and the lads were elsewhere.

Arrayed on the long-backed roofs the fan-tails sidled, cooed, and blinked in the sun. In a sycamore in the Paddock Close a hedge-sparrow raised its thin sweet song, and the celandine lifted a pale and fragile face under the beeches on the hillside. Hope was everywhere except in Maudie's heart, for February was already on the wane.

The back door of the house opened, and Mrs. Woodburn, grayer than of old, stately and aproned, stood in it with a corn-measure in her hand, and tossed showers of golden grain for the fan-tails who came fluttering to her call.

Albert, busy on his chin with a shaving brush, peeped surreptitiously round the door of the saddle-room, and seeing Ma opposite withdrew swiftly; but he kept the door ajar as though awaiting something he was determined not to miss.

Mrs. Woodburn retired indoors, and a few minutes later there came the noisy clacking of a horse and cart entering the cobbled yard.

Instantly Albert was all alert. He flung a towel about his neck and looked out.

An ostler from Lewes, known familiarly as Cherry, had pulled up a dog-cart opposite the pump. The old horse stretched his neck, shook his collar from his sweating shoulders, and, breathing on the water in the trough, drank delicately.

Mr. Silver descended from the cart.

He marked the fair lad in the door of the saddle-room and greeted him in his large and leisurely way:

"Good morning, Albert," he said.

"Morning, sir."

"Where are the other lads?"

"Where they ought to be, sir. In the Lads' Barn, waiting for Miss Boy."

"And why aren't you there?" asked the young man, amused.

Albert, in fact, spent all his spare time of late shaving. Indeed, he was in the habit of informing those he called his colleagues that unless he shaved three times a day he wasn't 'ardly decent.

"I got to keep at it, sir," he confided now to Mr. Silver. "Else I gets it from Miss Boy."

"What d'you get from her?" asked the young man blandly. "A razor?"

Old Cherry chuckled.

"'E larders his chin and then scrapes the soap off," he said. "That amooses Albert, that does."

The insult left the lad cold; but that was less because the insult was a feeble one than because his mind was elsewhere.

His eyes and whole attention were on the back of the departing toff.

There was something fascinating to Albert about that back this morning. He followed the young man with the interest and the undisguised admiration of a Paris gamin watching an aristocrat go to the guillotine.

As the long back disappeared round a corner, the lad turned to Cherry and winked.

"Guts," he said.

The ostler led the old horse with dripping muzzle away from the water-trough. The expression on his face seemed to suggest that the other was a vulgar fellow.

"Did he talk?" asked Albert.

"Talk!" said Cherry ironically. "To me? Likely, ain't it? He talked all right. Only he never let on."

Albert had picked up his towel, and was scrubbing away at his chin.

"Plucky little feller," he said. "You'd never know."

"He takes his gruel all right," admitted the other surlily, unharnessing.

"Yes, we've learned him his lesson since he's been at Putnam's," reflected Albert.

"'Ow long's he been training here then?" asked Cherry grudgingly, as he coiled the traces.

"Five year I've had him now," answered Albert. "He come to me the spring afore Four-Pound-the-Second was foaled."

Cherry led the old horse into the stable and put him into an empty stall.

"—— shame I call it," he said. "A nice feller like that."

Albert watched him with folded arms.

"I would, too," he said, "only it's Sunday, and Mar might hear."

Cherry smirked.

"Why ain't you at Bible Class then?" he asked grimly.

The Bible Class at Putnam's was a standing joke along the South Downs from Arunvale to Beachy Head.

Albert swaggered.

"I'm not takin' it this morning," he said. "I'm givin 'em a serees of addresses on the 'Igher Life when the jumpin' season's over."

The little ostler looked at his watch.

"You'd better step it," he said, "you and your Hired Life. It's past eleben and the bells have stopped. If you ain't there before her, you'll get the stick, you will."

Albert moved slowly up the gangway behind the loose-boxes, unheeding the other's taunts.

"I reck'n they've took a couple o' million off of him since Christmas," he said, returning to the subject which he could not leave. "And I got to get it back for him."

"Indeed?" said Cherry ironically. "'Ow? Tellin' lies and gettin' paid for 'em?"

Albert opened the door of a loose-box and pointed dramatically.

Cherry stared at the brown horse within.

Albert whistled softly and the horse turned his long neck and gazed at them with wise and quizzical eye. "Ain't he a big un?" cried Cherry, the note of irony dropping from his voice in spite of himself.

Billy Bluff, who had been curled under the manger, came across the loose-box and sniffed the little ostler friendly.

"'Ullo, Billy!" said the old man. "Do you sleep in here?"

"Won't sleep nowhere else," answered Albert. "And what's more, Four Pound won't sleep unless his pal's with him. They've always had this loose-box atween 'em from the start. Miss Boy used to sleep in here, too, when he was a foal." The youth dropped his swank, and became confidential and keen. "Wonderful close friends, them two, you wouldn't believe. Four Pound had a cracked heel last autumn, and I used to bandage him at nights. He didn't like the bandages, and every night after I'd rugged him up and left him, Billy'd take and unwind the lot. Didn't you, Billy?"

He shut the door.

"Who's goin' to ride him?" asked Cherry.

"Me or Monkey," said Albert. "'Taint settled yet. Will be this morning."

He led along toward the saddle-room.

"You got your work cut if you're goin' to beat *her*," said Cherry.

"No fear!" answered Albert. "Got the Sunday paper? What are they layin'?"

"Sevens the favourite," replied the old ostler, producing it. "The rest any price."

The youth glanced at the betting news.

"Sevens it is," he said. "Price shortening. I suppose the stable's got all the money they want on her, and so they don't bother to tell no more lies."

Albert opened the saddle-room door. Cherry passed in. The lad followed, and locked the door behind him.

"Now don't mind me," he said. "I'm busy."

CHAPTER XXX
The Bible Class

In the old days, when Mat had been in his prime, there had not seldom been as many as a hundred horses on occasion billeted in and around Putnam's.

At that time Mat had done a bit of dealing in addition to his training, and had kept hunters as

well as 'chasers.

The Lads' Barn, as it was called, was at the back of the old hunter-stables, somewhat removed from the yard, and opening on to the Paddock Close.

It was big, black, with red-tiled roof, raftered, and ideal for its purpose; for it served as the Lads' Club, instituted by Mrs. Woodburn when first she came to live at Putnam's. Here in winter they had singsongs, dances, and entertainments; and in the summer they played games, read, and held their committee meetings.

At one end was a mattress, a wooden horse, parallel bars and rings, and the ordinary appurtenances of a Boys' Club; at the other a raised platform, and on it a blackboard and harmonium.

Now some twenty lads were gathered in the barn, waiting for Miss Woodburn to take the Bible Class.

To-day the girl for once was late. And the lads were glad. They had plenty to talk about this morning, and they welcomed an opportunity for misconduct at this time all the more because it rarely offered. There was a delicious relish about wrongdoing in the one hour a week devoted to seeking good and ensuing it.

Some of them were smoking, some playing cards.

Both acts were forbidden—the latter absolutely, the former in the main; for no lad under seventeen years was allowed to smoke in the Putnam stable.

The consequence was that the lads over the age limit bought and owned the cigarettes, and with fine capitalist instinct let them out to the youngsters at a farthing the puff. Albert when under age had instituted the puff, and when over it had organized the tariff. By the puff-a-farthing method the cigarettes could not be confiscated, for they belonged only to those who had a prescriptive right to them, while the puffers, with a little cunning, were able to enjoy illicit smokes.

Jerry, the economist with the corrugated brow, and Stanley the stupid, both with cigarettes in their mouths, were standing apart in lofty isolation, as befitted the fathers of the flock.

A cherub-faced urchin, playing cards, and deep in his play, was humming abstractedly the chorus of a catchy song.

Stanley nudged his pal, strolled up behind the youth, and boxed his ears.

The whistler rose and rubbed his ear, aggrieved.

"What's that for?" he asked.

Stanley scowled down at him.

"Whistlin' that at Putnam's o' Sunday."

"What were I whistlin' then?" asked the aggrieved urchin.

"Mocassin Song," said the haughty Stan. "Now no more of it!"

"I didn't know I were whistlin' it," replied the youth.

"He whistles it in his dreams, Alf does," explained a little pal. "It's got to his head."

"He won't 'ave no 'ead to dream with if he mocassins us," retorted Stan.

The wrong righted, and order restored, Stanley stalked majestically back to his pal with a wink.

"Where's Albert then?" asked Jerry.

"He said he wasn't comin'."

"He's been sayin' that every Sunday these ten year past," answered Jerry with the insolence of the ancient habitué. "Ere, one o' you kids, fetch me a bit o' chalk. I 'ate to see you idlin' your time away, gamblin' and dicin', like the Profligate Son when he broke the bank at Monte Carlo."

He mounted the platform.

"While Ginger's gettin' the chalk I'll ask you a question or two to testify your general knowledge."

He took the cigarette out of his mouth, and wriggled his chin above his high collar.

"Who done Mr. Silver down?" he asked pontifically.

There was a moment's silence. Then a hand went up.

"Chukkers," piped the cherub-faced urchin.

There was a jeer from the other lads, and even the proud Stanley deigned to smile.

"Alf's got Chukkers on the crumpet," Jerry said sardonically. "If there was a nearthquake and they ask Alf who done it, he'd say Chukkers."

"Well, he's up to all sorts," retorted the wise cherub.

Jerry repeated his original question.

"Who done Mr. Silver down?"

"Jews," ventured a sporting youth.

This answer met with more approval.

"That's more like," said Jerry. "Now 'ow can he get back on 'em?"

"Bash 'em," suggested the sportsman, encouraged by his previous success. "He's bigger nor them, I'll lay."

The lecturer on the platform lifted a protesting hand.

"You mustn't bash 'em, boy Jackson," he said. "Tain't accordin' to religion—at least not the religion what I'm here to teach you. No," said the preacher of righteousness, "you mustn't bash 'em. That'd never do."

"What then?" piped the cherub.

"You must lay for him," answered the moralist.

Alf was on his feet in a trice.

"At the Canal Turn," he chirped. "Bump him off and then jump on the flat of his face."

The moralist greeted the suggestion with warm approval.

"One up to Alfie!" he cried. "He'll make a jockey and a Christian yet, Alf will."

Ginger handed up a piece of chalk.

Jerry hushed his audience.

"Quiet now, *if* you please," said he.

He took the chalk and wrote up in sprawling letters on the board:

Bible Class.

First Question. What price Four-Pound-the-Second, Grand National?

Instantly there was a hub-bub, from which the words "Hundred to one" came with insistent force.

"Hundred to one," said the lecturer. "Thank you, genelmen."

He proceeded to write.

Second Question. Any takers?

"Yus," said the lofty Stanley. "I'll do it in dollars—twice over."

"Thank *you*," said the scribe.

Third Question. What price Mocassin?

The name was received with groans.

"Sevens—if Chukkers rides," cried the cherub. "Tens if he don't."

The answer was received with jeers.

"Chukkers *not* ride!"

"O' course he'll ride!"

"He always has ridden her—here and in the States and in Australia!"

Stanley finally deigned to descend from his heights to crush the youth.

"They got a quarter of a million on God Almighty's Mustang, the Three J's 'ave. Think they'd trust anyone up only one of their fat selves? Now then!"

In the middle of the storm Monkey Brand, who had been waiting for the girl in the door, looked in.

He saw the writing on the board and crossed the barn. Monkey himself could neither read nor write, but he was well aware that anything written by the lads should be rubbed out at once.

"Who wrote this?" he asked.

Jerry, who on the other's entrance had descended swiftly from the platform, repeated the question.

"Who wrote this?" he asked authoritatively. "Can't you 'ear Mr. Brand?"

"Albert, I reck'n," answered Stanley, taking his cue from his pal.

The door opened, and a girl stood on the threshold.

"Who said Albert?" she asked.

The lads turned.

The young lady wore a long drab coat and had a fair pig-tail. She was like Boy Woodburn and yet unlike her: the figure much the same, the colouring identical. But if it was Boy, the years had coarsened her and altered the expression in her eyes not for the better.

With swift, decisive steps she made for the platform amid the suppressed giggles of the lads.

Jerry made way for her at once.

The girl proceeded to rub out with the duster all the questions but the first. Then she turned over the leaves of a Bible, wetting her thumb for that purpose, seized the pointer, and took her stand by the blackboard.

"The first question that arises h'out of h'our lesson to-day," she began quietly, "is this 'ere—'*What price Four-Pound-the-Second?*' Now think afore you answers, there's good little fellers."

It was Jerry who held up his hand.

The girl pointed at him.

"You there, Jerry me boy."

"Depends on who rides him, Mrs. Chukkers," he said.

There was a deadly silence. In it the girl let the handle of the pointer fall with the noise of a grounded rifle.

"Mrs. Who?" she asked, fatally quiet.

"Chukkers, ma'am," answered the courteous Jerry.

"Go on then," sneered the girl. "Chukkers ain't married. Nobody won't 'ave him."

Jerry had risen.

"No, ma'am. That he ain't," said the polished little gentleman. "You're his mother—from Sacramento. Anyone could see that by the likeness. You're the spit of each other, if I might make so bold. And I'm sure," said the orator, "speakin' on be'alf of all present, meself included, we feel honoured by the presence in our umble midst of the mother of the famous 'orseman—Chukkers Childers."

In the silence the speaker resumed his seat.

The lady addressed was too busy to reply.

She was taking off her drab coat, her picture hat, and her pig-tail, and she was spitting in her hands.

Soaping them together, she came to the edge of the platform.

"Shall I come down and give it you?" she asked. "Or will you come up and fetch it?"

"Neever, thank you," said Jerry, puffing imperturbably.

Albert jumped down.

"You're for it, Jerry," said Stanley, glad it was his friend's turn this time.

"Not me," Jerry replied. "No scrappin' Sunday. Miss Boy's orders."

Albert, very white, was sparring all round his adversary's head.

"Chukkered me, did ye?" he said. "Put 'em up then, or I'll spoil ye."

The offence was the unforgiveable in the Putnam stable, and the watching lads had every hope of a battle royal when a calm, deep voice stilled the storm.

"That'll do," it said.

The real Boy entered.

The dark blue of her dress showed off her fair colouring and hair.

She was nearly twenty-one now and spiritually a woman, if she still retained the slight, sword-like figure of her girlhood days. Her face was graver than of old and more quiet. The touch of almost aggressive resolution and defiance it once possessed had shaded off into something stiller and more impressive. There was less show of strength and more evidence of it. Her roots were deeper, and she was therefore less moved by passing winds. Something of her mother's calm had invaded her. She got her way just as of old, but she no longer had to battle for it now as then. Or if she had to battle, the fight was invisible, and the victory fought and won in the unseen deeps of her being.

"Who's been smoking here?" the girl asked immediately on entering the barn.

"Me, Miss," said Jerry.

Monkey Brand was fond of affirming that on the whole the lads told the truth to Miss Boy. But whether it was the girl's personality or her horsemanship that accounted for this departure from established rule it was hard to surmise.

"You might leave that to Jaggers's lads," said the girl. "Surely we might keep this one hour in the week clean."

Mr. Haggard had once said that the girl was a Greek. He might have added—a Greek with an evangelical tendency. For this Sunday morning hour was no perfunctory exercise for her. It was a reality, looming always larger with the years, and on horseback, in the train, at stables, was perpetually recurring to the girl throughout the week.

In the struggle between her father and her mother in her blood, the mother was winning the ascendancy.

"I thought the rule was we might smoke if you was late, Miss," said Jerry, in the subdued voice he always adopted when speaking to his young mistress.

"It's not the rule, Jerry," the girl replied quietly, "as you're perfectly well aware. And even if it was the rule it would be bad manners. Alfred, give me those cards."

"What cards, Miss?"

"The cards you were playing with when I came in."

The cherub produced a dingy pack.

"They're only picture cards, Miss," he said.

The girl's gray eyes seemed to engulf the lad, friendly if a little stern.

"Have you been gambling?" she asked.

"No, Miss," with obvious truthfulness.

"He's got nothin' to gamble with," jeered the brutal Stanley. "His mother takes it all."

The girl mounted swiftly on to the platform, saw the writing on the blackboard, and swept it away with a duster.

Then she turned to her little congregation, feeling their temper with sure and sensitive spirit.

They were out of hand, and it was because she had been late through no fault of her own. The kitchenmaid had fainted, and Boy had, of course, been sent for.

There was one hope of steadying them.

"We'll start with a hymn," she said, taking her seat at the harmonium. "Get your hymn-books. What hymn shall we have? Alfred, it's your turn, I think."

Alfred, after some hesitation, gave *The Day Thou Gavest Lord Is Ended*, amid the jealous murmurs of his friend.

"That's a nevenin nymn, fat-'ead," cried Jerry in a loud whisper.

"I don't care if it is," answered Alf stoutly. "It's nice."

"'E likes it because it makes him cry," jeered Stanley.

The girl started to play, her back to the congregation.

They sang two verses with round mouths, Jerry and Stanley shouting against each other aggressively and wagging their heads. The third verse went less well. There were interruptions. The voices grew ragged. Jerry spoke; somebody whistled; and the singing ran away into giggles.

Boy swung round.

The cause of the merriment was sufficiently obvious.

A lop-eared Belgian rabbit was hopping across the floor, entirely self-complacent and smug. As the sound of singing, which had covered him like a garment, died away in smothered titters, he sat up on his hind-legs and stared about him.

The girl descended from the platform, caught the rabbit by the ears and suspended him.

Tame as a cow, he made no resistance.

"Who's is this hare?" she asked.

"Mrs. Woodburn's, Miss," answered Jerry brightly. "That's Abe Lincoln. Queen Victoria's his wife. They lives together in a nutch."

"How did he come in?"

"Through the window," said the muffled voice of Albert from the back. "Flow'd."

The rabbit, which had been hanging placidly suspended, was now seized with spasms and began to twitch and contort violently.

The reason was not far to seek. A red-eyed ferret, tied by a string to the foot of a chair, was making strenuous efforts to get at him.

"Who's is that ferret?" asked Boy.

"That genelman's," replied the voice from the back.

The girl looked up and saw Silver standing in the door.

Coldly she dismissed the class.

"That'll do," she said. "You can all go now." The lads shuffled away, rejoicing. "There'll be no sing-song this evening," continued their cruel mistress. "Jerry, put that rabbit back in the hutch you took it from. Stanley, I don't want to see that ferret of yours at Bible Class again."

The lads trooped out, injured and innocent.

Albert was left in his shirt-sleeves and without a collar.

"What is it?" asked the girl.

"Can I 'ave me things, Miss?"

His face was stiff and impenetrable.

She handed him the long drab coat on the platform.

"And me 'at, Miss."

"Is this yours?"

"Yes, Miss."

She passed him the picture-hat. Albert received it with immobile face.

"And me pig-tail."

"You don't deserve it," said Boy.

Silver approached.

"Put 'em on, will you?" he said.

Albert obeyed without demur and without a symptom of emotion. In a moment he had become a coarse caricature of his young mistress, ludicrously alike and yet worlds away.

"Not so bad," commented the young man. "You could act, Albert?"

"Yes, sir," said Albert, in whom diffidence was not a defect.

The lad made for the door in his hat and pig-tail, and as though to manifest his quality gave a little coquettish flirt to the skirt of his coat as he went out.

"You'll be wanted this morning, Albert, you and Brand," the girl called after him.

"Yes, Miss."

"Mare's Back. Twelve-thirty. Make-Way-There and Lollypop, trial horses. Stanley and Jerry know. Silvertail for me."

"Yes, Miss."

He closed the door behind him.

Silver came toward the girl slowly and took her hand.

"How are you, Boy?" he asked.

The girl laid her firm, cool little hand lightly on his and let it rest there. Her eyes were soft in his, still and steady. She felt herself surrounded by his love as by a cloud, and dwelt in it with quiet enjoyment and content.

It was a while before she answered.

"I'm all right," she said. "You're through, aren't you?"

"Yes; I'm free."

"That's right," she said. "The rest doesn't matter."

Together they went out into the sunshine of the Paddock Close.

He stood a moment, filling his chest, and looking up toward the green wall of the Downs.

"Let's go slow," he said.

She accommodated herself to his stroll.

"By Jove," he said slowly. "It *is* a delight to get down here again. And I don't feel anything's changed really."

"Nor has it *really*," replied the girl.

CHAPTER XXXI
God Almighty's Mustang

Jim Silver turned out of the yard into the office.

As the young man entered, the old trainer sat dumped in his chair, rosy, bald, with innocent blue eyes, like a baby without a bib, waiting for its bottle. His round head was deeper between his shoulders than of old, and his pink face was strained and solicitous.

Some men said he was over eighty now.

"Well, sir," he wheezed, "I see you take it good and game."

"No good crying over spilt milk," replied Silver.

The old trainer raised his hand as he settled in his seat.

"Don't tell me," he said. "It's them there li'bilities. I was always agin 'em. Said so to Boy four year back. 'Cash in 'and's one thing,' I says. 'And li'bilities is another and totally different.'" He lifted a keen blue eye. "I understand from what Mr. Haggard tell me, you could ha' dodged 'em out o' some of it—only you was too straight." He held up a disapproving finger. "That's just where you done wrong, Mr. Silver. No good ever come o' bein' *too* straight, as I often says to Mar. You're only askin' for trouble—same as the Psalmist says. And now you got to pay for it."

"Well, they're all satisfied now," laughed Silver. "And so am I."

"I should think they was," snorted Mat Woodburn. "I see 'em settin' round, swellin' and swellin', and rubbin' their fat paunches. Think they'll keep a nag among the lot of 'em! Not so much as a broken-down towel-hoss."

Silver stared out of the window.

"I shall have to sell the horses," he said.

The old man banged the table.

"Never!" he cried. "They've took a slice off o' you, and now you must take a bit off o' them. That mayn't be religion, but it's *right* all right!"

He rose and, kicking off his slippers, padded to the door and looked out. Then he peeped out into the forsaken yard and half drew the curtain.

Silver, who loved the old man most when he was most mysterious, watched him with kind eyes that laughed.

"I don't bet, Mr. Silver, as you know," began the other huskily, "except when it's a cert., because it's against *her* principles." He looked round him and dropped his voice. "But I took a thousand to ten about Fo'-Pound-the-Second at Gatwick on Saraday. Told Mar, too. And she never said No. Look to me like a sign like." He blinked up at the young man. "You ain't clean'd out, sir, are you—not mopped up with the sponge?" he asked anxiously.

"There'll be a few thousands left when it's finished, I guess," replied the other.

The old man lifted on his stockinged toes.

"Put a thousand on," he whispered. "I'll do it for ye, so there's no talk. If he wins, thar's a hundred thousand back. If he don't, well, it's gone down the sink and h'up the spout same as its fathers afore it."

The young man brimmed with quiet mirth.

"Will he win?" he asked.

Old Mat swung his nose from side to side across his face in a way styled by those who knew him trunk-slinging.

"He's up against something mighty big," said Jim, nodding at the wall.

On it was pinned a great coloured double-page picture from *The Sporting and Dramatic* of the famous American mare Mocassin. Beside it were various cuttings from daily papers, recounting the romantic history of the popular favourite, and beneath the picture were three lines from the Mocassin Song—

Made in the mould,
Of Old Iroquois bold,
Mocassin, the Queen of Kentucky.

Ikey indeed had found his horse at last; and she was American—Old Kentucky to the core. It was said that Chukkers had discovered her on one of his trips home. Certainly he had taken her across to Australia, where she had launched on her career of unbroken triumph, carrying the star-spangled jacket to victory in every race in which she ran. Then he had brought her home to England, her reputation already made, and growing hugely all the while, suddenly to overwhelm the world, when she crowned her victories on three continents by winning the Grand National at Liverpool—only to be disqualified for crossing amid one of the stormiest scenes in racing history. After that Mocassin ceased to be a mare. She became a talisman, an oriflamme, a consecrated symbol. She was American—youthful, hopeful, not to be put upon by the Old Country, quietly resolute to have her rights.

For the past twelve months indeed the Great Republic of the West had fixed her two hundred million eyes upon the star-spangled jacket across the sea in a stare so set as to be almost terrifying.

True that for a quarter of a century now her sons had followed that jacket with sporadic interest. But since the affair at Liverpool, that interest had become concentrated, passionate, intense.

Ikey with all his faults was an admirable citizen, beloved in his own country and not without cause, as Universities and Public Bodies innumerable could testify. For twenty-five years it had been known that he had been trying for a goal. At last he had won it—and then John Bull!... Ya-as.... American horse—American owner—American jockey! Sure....

Brother Jonathon turned in his lips. He did not blame John Bull; he was not angry or resentful. But he was determined and above all ironical.

Then, when feeling was at its highest, the Mocassin Song had suddenly taken America by storm. Sung first in the Empire Theatre on the Broadway by Abe Gideon, the bark-blocks comedian, ten days after the mare's victory and defeat, it had raged through the land like a prairie fire. Cattlemen on the Mexican Border sung it in the chaparral, and the lumber-camps by the Great Lakes echoed it at night. Gramophones carried it up and down the Continent from Oyster Bay to Vancouver, and from Frisco to New Orleans. Every street-boy whistled it, every organ ground it out. It hummed in the heads of Senators in Congress, and teased saints upon their knees. It carried the name and fame of Mocassin to thousands of pious homes in which horses and racing had been anathema in the past, so that Ministers from Salem and Quaker ladies from Philadelphia could tell you over tea cups *sotto voce* something of the romantic story of the mare from the Cumberland.

And that was not all.

The Song, raging through the land like a bush-fire, dying down here only to burst out in fresh vehemence elsewhere, leapt even oceans in its tempestuous course.

The English sang it in their music-halls with fatuous self-complacency. Indeed they, too, went Mocassin-mad, and the mare who had once already humbled the Old Country in the dust, and would again, became the idol of the British Empire.

In shop-windows, on boardings, stamped on the packet of cigarettes you bought, the picture of the mare was met, until her keen mouse-head, her drooping quarters and great fore-hand, had been impressed on the mind of the English Public as clearly as the features of Lord Kitchener. Jonathon watched his brother across the Atlantic with cynical amusement.

Honest John Bull, now that he had something up against him that could beat his best, what did he do? Admit defeat? Not John! If the mare won in the coming struggle he claimed her as his own with tears of unctuous joy. If she was beaten—well, what else did you expect?

America's feeling in the matter was summed up in the famous cartoon that appeared at Christmas in *Life*, where Jonathon was seen shaking hands with John Bull, the mare in the background, and saying:

"I'll believe in you, John, but I'll watch you all the same."

"That's God Almighty's Mustang, Chukkers up," said Old Mat. "The Three J's think they done it this time. And to read the papers you'd guess they was right. She's a good mare, too—I will say that for her; quick as a kitten and the heart of a lion. You see her last year yourself at Aintree, sir!"

"I did," replied the young man, with deep enthusiasm. "Wonderful! She didn't gallop and jump; she flowed and she flew."

"That's it, sir," agreed the other. "Won all the way. Only Chukkers must be a bit too clever o' course, and let her down by the dirty."

The old man pursed his lips and nodded confidentially. "Only one thing. My little Fo'-Pound's the

daddy o' her." He sat down and began to draw on his elastic-sided boots with groans.

"Who's going to ride him?" asked Silver.

"That's where it is, sir," panted the old man. "Who *is* goin' to ride him. There's Monkey Brand down on his knees to me for the mount; and he don't go so bad with Monkey Brand—when he's that way inclined. But I don't know what to say." His efforts successfully ended, he lifted a round and crimson face. "See where it is, Mr. Silver; Monkey Brand's forty-five, and his ridin' days are pretty nigh over. He reckons he can just about win on Fo'-Pound and then retire. That's his notion. And ye see it ain't only that, but there's Chukkers and the little bit o' bitterness. See it's been goin' on twenty year and it's all square now. Chukkers broke Monkey's pelvis for him Boomerang's year, and Monkey mixed up Chukkers's inside Cannibal's National. And there it's stood ever since. And Monkey wants to get one up afore he takes off his jacket for good."

Silver was looking into the fire.

"If Monkey Brand don't ride, what's the alternative?" he asked.

"Only one," replied the trainer. "Albert. He's a honest hoss is Fo'-Pound-the-Second, only that fussy as to who he has about him. That's the way with bottle-fed uns. They gets spoiled and gives 'emselves airs. Albert's his lad, and Monkey's been about him since he was a foal. Sometimes he'll work for one, and sometimes for the other; and sometimes he won't for eether. One thing certain, he won't stir for no one else—only *her*, o' course. No muckin' about with *her*. It's just *click!* and away."

"Pity she can't ride," said Silver.

"If she could ride I'd back him till all was blue," replied the old man. "No proposition in a hoss's skin that ever come out of Yankee-doodle-land could see the way he'd go."

"Who rode him at Lingfield?" asked Jim.

Just after Christmas Mat had put the young horse into a two-mile steeplechase to give him a gallop in public.

"Albert," answered the old man. "Rode him and rode him well. It was just touch and go through. Would he or wouldn't he? When he was monkeyin' at the post I tell you I sweat, sir. See he'd never faced the starter afore. And I thought suppose he's the sort that'll do a good trial and chuck it when the money's on. He got well left at the post; but when he did get goin' he ran a great horse. It was heavy goin', and he fair revelled in it. 'Reg'lar mudlark,' the papers called him. Half-way round he'd caught his horses and went through 'em like a knife through butter, and he could ha' left 'em smilin'. But that lad, Albert, he's got something better'n a sheep's head on his neck. Took to his whip and flogg'd his boot a caution. Oh, dear me!—fair sat down to it. All over the place, arms and legs, and such a face on him! And little Fo'-Pound he winks to 'isself and rolls 'ome at the top of his form just anyhow. 'Alf a length the judges gave it, and a punishin' finish the papers called it. Jaggers didn't see it, and Chukkers wasn't ridin'. So there was nobody to tell no tales; an' they're puttin' him in at ten stone."

"And the mare's got twelve-seven," said the young man meditatively.

"Twelve-three," said the trainer. "And she'll carry it, too. But I'll back my Berserk against their Iroquois any time o' day this side o' 'Appy Alleloojah Land."

The hacks were being led out into the yard with a pleasant clatter of feet, and Boy was already mounted.

"Come and see for yourself," panted the old man. "I'm goin' to send him along to-day. See whether he can reelly get four mile without a fuss. I was only waitin' till you come."

CHAPTER XXXII
The Fat Man Emerges

The old man, the young man, and the girl rode out of the yard into the Paddock Close.

"Where's Billy Bluff?" asked Silver. He was on Heart of Oak, she high above him, perched like a bird on tall old Silvertail, who looked like a spinster and was one. Almost you expected her to look at you over spectacles and make an acrid comment on men or things.

"In front with his friend," replied Boy.

"Are you going to pace him?" asked Jim.

"I believe so," replied the girl casually. "Dad's going to send him the full course to-day. Jerry and I are to take him over the fences the first time round. And then Stanley's to bring him along the flat the last two miles."

They travelled up the public path past the church amid the sycamores. Mat on his fast-walking cob rode in front, kicking his legs. Boy and Jim followed more soberly.

She rode a little behind him that she might see his profile. Suddenly he reined back and met her face, his own gleaming with laughter. At such moments he looked absurdly young.

"I say, Boy!" he began, dropping his voice.

She snatched her eyes from his face, and then peeped at him warily.

"What?"

He drew up beside her.

"I'm not a gentleman any more."

She looked straight before her. Her fine lips were firm and resisting, but about her eyes the light stole and rippled deliciously.

"I'm not sure," she said, half to herself.

He pressed up alongside her, lifting his face.

"I'm not!" he cried. "I'm not!" eager as a boy in his protestations. "You can't chuck that up at me any more."

Boy refused to face him or to be convinced.

"I don't," she said. "I don't believe in class. It's the man that matters."

"Hear, hear," he cried. "It's the man—not the money. I see it now. I haven't got tuppence to my name."

She turned her eyes down on him, brushing aside his coquetry with the sweep of her steady gaze.

"D'you mind?" she asked in her direct and simple way as they emerged on to the open Downs.

He sobered to her mood.

"Only in this way," he answered, "that it was my father's show, and I don't like to have let it down."

The girl deliberated.

"I don't see that you could have helped it," she said after a pause.

"No, *I* couldn't," he admitted. "*He* could have. It was a One Man show. And when the One Man went it was bound to go in time. However, I've let nobody down but myself. And I don't care so much about the stuff."

"No," she said. "You don't want all that. Nobody does; and it's not good for you."

Preacher Joe had bobbed up suddenly in his fair grand-daughter, as he did not seldom. She was deliciously unaware of the old man's presence at her side; but Jim Silver welcomed him as a familiar with lurking laughter.

"Thank you, sir," he said, and touched his hat. Then he covered his daring swiftly. "Except for the horses I wouldn't cuc-care a hang," he said loudly. "They were the only things mum-money gave me."

Gravely she peeped at him again.

"Shall you sell the lot?"

"I shall sell the 'chasers," he answered.

"All but one," she corrected.

"Which one?"

She nodded up the hill.

"The one you share with me."

He laughed his resounding laughter.

"I'll sell you my share," he said.

"I won't buy," she answered firmly.

"Very well. Then I'll sell to Jaggers."

Boy tapped Silvertail with such an increase of emphasis that the old mare snatched resentfully at her bit.

"You won't," she cried with the old fierce, girlish note in her voice which so delighted him.

"*After* he's won the National," continued the young man calmly.

"We'll see—*after*," replied Boy.

They passed out of the Paddock Close on to the Downs.

"How's he coming on?" asked Jim.

"Monkey Brand says he's streets better than Cannibal," replied the girl. "We've never had anything to touch him in my time." This was one of few subjects on which the girl sometimes would flow. "Of course he's young for a National horse—only five, and she's in her prime. But he's got the head of an old horse on the body of a young one. Nothing flurries him—once you can get him going."

"And the trouble is there's only one person who can get him going," mused the young man.

"I don't know about that," she answered tartly. "He's only run the once in public. And that time he ran rings round his field. Albert was riding—not me."

They were nearing the brow.

A man was labouring up the hill in front of them.

Old Mat pulled up, and the pair jogged up alongside him. The trainer nodded quietly at the heavy figure in front.

"He's out," he wheezed. "On to it pretty quick, too. Heard we're goin' to gallop Fo'-Pound and he's come to see what he can see."

The man drew to one side to let the riders pass.

It was Joses; and he had changed.

There was less of the sow and more of the wolf about him than of old. His shaggy whiskers were touched with gray, and there was something hard and fierce about his face. The old inflamed and flabby look had been hammered out of him in the hard school from which he had just emerged.

He eyed the riders as they passed.

Boy's grave eyes became graver and more self-contained. At once she was alert and had locked all her doors. In that firm, courageous face of hers there was no curiosity, no unkindness, and least of all no fear. The young man glancing at her thought he had never seen such strength manifest in any face; and it was not the strength that is based on hardness, for she was paler than her wont.

Then she spoke.

Her voice, deep as a bell and very quiet, surprised him in the silence. He had not expected it, and yet somehow it seemed to him beautifully appropriate.

"Good morning, Mr. Joses," said the voice, and that was all; but it wrought a miracle.

"Yes," growled the man in the wayside, "it wasn't you: it was Silver."

The young man's face flashed white. He pulled up instantaneously.

"What's that?" he said.

Boy, riding on, called sharply over her shoulder:

"Come on, Mr. Silver!"

Reluctant as a dog to leave an enemy, the young man obeyed, and caught up the other two.

"Little bit o' bitter," muttered the old man. He jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "I got him five year for himself," he went on querulously. "And now he ain't satisfied. No pleasin' some folk."

CHAPTER XXXIII
The Gallop

On the Mare's Back a little group was awaiting the party.

There was Monkey Brand, Albert, and a sheeted horse, patrolling lazily up and down; while Billy Bluff lay on the ground hard by and gnawed his paw.

Ever since, years back, Joses had struck the paw with a stone Billy had bestowed a quite unfair amount of attention on it, spending all his spare time doctoring his favourite. There was nothing whatever the matter with it, but if he continued his attentions long enough there might be some day, and he would then be rewarded for his patient labours by having a real injury to mend.

It was somewhat misty up there on the hill, though clear above; the sea was wrapt in a white blanket, and the Coastguard Station at the Gap was invisible.

A little remote from the others in body and spirit, Jerry, deep in philosophic doubt, was walking Lollypop up and down—Lollypop, now a sage and rather superior veteran of seven; while on a mound hard by was Stanley on the pretty Make-Way-There.

The course was two miles round, running along the top of the hill over fences that looked stark

and formidable in the gray.

"Strip him," grunted Old Mat.

Albert and Monkey Brand went swiftly to work.

A great brown horse, gaunt and ugly as a mountain-goat, emerged. His legs were like palings; his ears long and wide apart, and there was something immensely masculine about him. He looked, with his great plain head, the embodiment of Work and Character: a piece of old furniture designed for use and not for ornament, massive, many-cornered, and shining from centuries of work and wear.

That lean head of his, hollow above the eyes, and with a pendent upper lip, was so ugly as to be almost laughable; and his lazy and luminous eye looked out on the world with a drolling, almost satirical, air, as much as to say:

"It's all a great bore, but it might well be worse."

"A thundering great hoss," muttered Old Mat. "I don't know as ever I see his equal for power. Cannibal stood as high, but he hadn't the girth on him. And Cannibal was a man-eatin' mule, he was. Savage you soon as look at you. I never went into his loose-box without a pitchfork. I seen him pull his jockey off by the toe of his boot afore now. But him!—he's a Christian. A child could go in to him and climb on to his back by way of his hind-leg. Look at them 'ocks," he continued in the low, musing voice of the mystic. "Lift you over a house. And a head on him like a pippopotamus."

Jim Silver's eyes followed the line of the horse's quarters.

"He's come on a lot since Christmas," he remarked. "He's less ragged than he was."

"You could hang your hat on him yet, though," said the old man. "Walk him round, Brand."

The little jockey, now in the saddle, obeyed.

Four-Pound-the-Second shook his head and, blowing his nose, strode round with that wonderful swing from the hocks which made Mr. Haggard once say that the horse walked like a Highland regiment marching to the pipes.

"He's on C springs," said Mat, watching critically. "See where he puts his hind-feet—nigh a foot in front of the marks of his fore; and I don't know as I knows a knowin'er hoss. Look at that head-piece. He's all the while a-thinkin', that hoss is. That's the way he's bred. If they're much with human beings they picks up our tricks, same as dogs. He'd take to drink, he would, only he ain't got the cash."

Boy had stripped off her long riding-coat and sat on the tall Silvertail, a slight figure in breeches and boots, her white shirt fluttering in the wind, her face calm and resolute.

Mat kicked his pony forward.

"Four-mile spin and let him spread himself," he grunted. "I want to see him move to-day. And you, Jerry, ride that Lollypop out. He'll save himself if you'll let him. First time round over fences, Boy. Then you and Jerry'll pull out and Stanley'll pick up the running and take him round again over the flat. Now!"

Boy and Jerry set their horses going quietly. The girl's head was on her shoulder, watching if the horse she was to pace was coming along.

He was thinking about it. Monkey Brand, handling him with the wonderful tact of a nurse with a delicate child, gathered the great horse quietly, clicking at him. Four-Pound-the-Second broke into a reluctant canter. Billy Bluff began to romp and bark.

The young horse had found the excuse he sought, swung away from his leader, and began to buck round in a circle, propping and plunging.

"Put the dog on the lead, Albert," ordered the girl, trotting back.

She and Jerry tried again, cantering past the rebel, calling and coaxing.

Four-Pound-the-Second went marching round in a circle, champing at his bit, thrashing with his tail, and every now and then flinging a make-believe buck, as much as to say:

"I could throw you if I would, but I won't, because I like you too much."

Monkey Brand, wise and patient, humoured him.

"Let him take his time," called Boy. "*Steady, lad, steady!*"

Old Mat watched grimly.

"I thought as much," he muttered. "He ain't 'alf a little rogue. 'Tain't temper, eether. He's the temper of a h'angel and the constitootion of a h'ox. It's that he just won't. For all the world like a great spoilt boy. He's *mischeevous*. He wants to give trouble because that amooses him. I've known him sulk in his gallop afore now because Billy Bluff wasn't up here to watch him. Where it is to-day he wants *her* to ride him. He don't care about nobody else when *she's* about."

Boy had ridden back to the young horse.

"Steady him," she said quietly. "Get up alongside him, Jerry. Now try and get him off the mark with me. All together. Now!"

The manoeuvre failed. Lollypop and Silvertail got well away, but the young horse merely pawed the air.

Monkey Brand's face was set.

"Give me that whip, Albert," he said between his teeth.

"No," said the girl. "That's no good."

Old Mat held up his hand.

"He ain't for it," he said masterfully. "Get off him, Brand."

The little jockey glanced at his master, saw he meant business, and slipped off the great horse, chagrin in every line of his face.

Albert, unbidden, had already gathered the reins in his hand and was preparing to mount.

"No," said Boy authoritatively. "Albert, take Silvertail."

She slipped off the tall old mare.

Her father nodded approval.

"She's right," he muttered. "Never do to try Albert when Brand has failed."

"Chuck me up, Brand," said the girl.

The little jockey turned.

"Yes, Miss."

The girl had broken the blow for him, and he tossed her into the saddle with a will.

She sat up there on the great horse, ordering her reins with masterful delicacy.

Jim Silver's eyes dwelt tenderly upon her face. He longed to dismount and kiss the girl's hand. But all he said in matter-of-fact voice was:

"You've got a lot in front of you."

"It's like a glacier," replied Boy.

"She could slide on that shoulder," commented Old Mat. "Like Napoleon on the Pyramids."

The young horse began to sidle and plunge.

"Right!" said Boy. "Stand clear!"

The little jockey jumped aside, and mounted Silvertail.

Four-Pound-the-Second gave a great bound. The girl rode him as a yacht rides the sea, swinging easily to his motion, and talking to him the while. He sprawled around with tiny bucks and little grunts of joy, brimming over with energy.

Then, as if by magic, he steadied down and began to walk round with that tremendous swing of his, blowing his nose, and playing with his bit. David had swept his hand across his harp and the dark spirit had been charmed away.

Old Mat nodded and said to himself: "Where it is, is there it is."

Nobody else spoke.

Boy, in her white shirt, her hair radiant against the dull heavens, began to feel at her horse's mouth.

Monkey Brand and Jerry watched her closely.

"Keep walking in front of me," called the girl sharply. "And move with me."

Both obeyed, eyeing the girl over their shoulders, and slowly gathering way.

Then she spoke to her horse; and he stole away, easy and quiet as a tide, Boy leaning forward, the two pacing horses, one on either side, leading him by half a length.

"Yes," commented Old Mat, as he slung his glasses round and adjusted them. "You'd think a little child could ride him be the look of it."

The three rose at the first fence all together, the white shirt sandwiched between the dark jackets.

Jim Silver felt a thrill at his heart. That thunder of hoofs moved him to his deeps.

"Gallops very wide behind," he remarked casually.

"That's Berserk, that is," muttered the old man, adjusting his glasses. "Chucks the mud about a treat, don't he?"

Billy Bluff was straining on his lead, whimpering to be after his big friend, while Albert leaned back against the wind, holding him.

The horses had settled to their gallop, their steady, rhythmical stride only varied as they rose at their fences, spread themselves, slid earthward and went away again with a steady roar of hoofs.

The three kept well together till they swung for home, then the white shirt began to bob up against the sky a second before the dark bodies of the other two showed.

"Tailin' 'em off," muttered Old Mat. "Ain't 'alf tuckin' into it, Four-Pound ain't."

Then Lollypop began to lag, and Jerry's arm was going.

"Stopped him dead," said Silver.

"And he's a good little two-mile hoss, too," replied Old Mat.

Another moment and the white shirt came over the last fence, the brown horse soaring like some great eagle.

Silvertail, clinging gamely to her leader, brushed through the fence and pecked heavily on landing.

Monkey punished her savagely.

"Ain't in a very pretty temper, Monkey ain't," muttered Old Mat, as the little jockey pulled aside and slipped off. "Now Make-Way-There'll take it up."

The brown horse came thundering by, steady and strong, his little jockey collected as himself, lying out over her horse's neck.

"The fences don't trouble her much," said Silver, his voice calm and heart beating.

"See, she's that strong," wheezed Old Mat confidentially. "You wouldn't think it, but there's eight stun o' that gal good. It's her bone's so big."

The brown horse had swept past them, going wide of the fences for the second time round.

Make-Way-There, who had been dancing on his toes away on the left as he waited for his cue, chimed in as Four-Pound-the-Second came up alongside him.

He settled down to his stride at once and took the lead.

The brown horse, entirely undisturbed by this new rival, held on his mighty way.

The two horses swung round the curve, on the outside of the fences, Four-Pound-the-Second on the inside berth and close to the quarters of his leader.

The horses dropped into a dip, but for some reason the echo of their hoofs came reverberating back to the watchers in ever-growing roar. When they emerged from the hollow and raced up the opposite slope they were still together.

Then they made for home.

Old Mat had edged up alongside Silver.

"When he lays down to it, belly all along the ground!" he whispered, in the ecstasy of a connoisseur enjoying a masterpiece.

"Whew!—can't he streak!" cried Albert.

Then a silence fell upon the watchers like a cloud. Their hearts were full, their spirits fluttering against the bars of their prison-house.

The horses dropped into a dip again, and only the heads and shoulders of the riders were seen surging forward, borne on the crest of a roaring avalanche of sound.

As they came up the last hill with shooting feet and knees that buffeted the air, they were locked together, the little riders lying over the necks of their horses and watching each other jealously.

In the silence there was something terrifying about the tumult of those swift, oncoming feet. The earth shook and trembled. Even Billy Bluff was awed and quivering.

Jim Silver never took his eyes off that little figure with the fluttering white shirt riding the crest of the oncoming storm and growing on him with such overwhelming speed. He dwelt with fascinated eyes upon the give-and-take of her little hands, the set of her shoulders, the swift turn of her head, as she watched the boy at her side. His will was firm, his heart high. She seemed to him so fair, so slight, and yet so consummately masterful, as to be something more than flesh and blood.

A rare voice penetrated to his ears through the tumult.

"That's a little bit o' better."

"Ain't it a cracker?"

"Hold that dog!"

As they came along the flat, the two horses seemed neck and neck.

The dark lad was riding a finish in approved style. Then the girl stirred with her hands, and the great brown forged ahead.

As the horses came past the watchers, Make-Way-There tailed off suddenly.

Four-Pound-the-Second thundered by like a brown torrent, the stroke of his hoofs making a mighty music.

"Gallops like a railway train," said a voice at Silver's side.

It was Joses.

The young man, lifted above himself, did not resent the other's presence at his side, did not wonder at it. Indeed, it seemed to him quite natural. The wonder of Infinite Power made manifest in flesh rapt the beholders out of themselves. They stood bare-headed in the presence of the abiding miracle, made one by it.

"Can she hold him?" thought Silver as the horse shot past them.

And either he expressed his thoughts unconsciously in words, or as not seldom happens in moments of excitement, Old Mat read his unuttered thoughts.

"She can hold him in a snaffle," he said. "She's the only one as can!"

And in fact the young horse was coming back to his rider. She was swinging to steady him. At the top of the rise she turned him, dismounted, and loosed his girths. Then she led him down the slope back to the group, an alert, fair figure, touched to glory by the gallop, the great horse blowing uproariously at her side, tossing his head and flinging the foam on to his chest and neck, looking like a huge, drenched dog wet from the sea.

"Pull at ye?" asked the old man.

"He caught hold a bit as we came up the slope," answered Boy.

Jim Silver had dismounted and laid a hand on the horse's shining neck.

"Great," he said.

The faint colour was in the girl's cheeks, and she was breathing deep as she peeped up at him with happy eyes.

"He's not clumsy for a big horse, is he?" she said. "Rug him up, Albert, and lead him home. He's hit himself, I see—that off-fore fetlock. Better put a boracic bandage on when you get him in."

She put on her long coat and mounted Silvertail.

"Yes, don't stand about," said her father; "or you'll have Mar on to me."

The three moved off the hill.

Stanley had already gone on with Make-Way-There, and Albert followed with the young horse still snorting and blowing.

Billy Bluff patrolled between his mistress and his friend, doing his best to keep the two parties together.

Monkey Brand was left alone.

"Took it 'ard!" muttered Old Mat, jerking his head.

"He'll be all right," said Boy, glancing back. "Give him time to get his second wind."

The little jockey went back to pick up a plate Make-Way-There had dropped.

Joses strolled up to him with portentous brow.

"Turned you down!" he said. "You're not horseman enough for them, it seems."

The little man gathered himself. He was very grim, curling his lips inward and whistling between his teeth as though to relieve inward pressure.

"How long have you ridden for 'em?" asked the fat man.

"Twenty-five year," the other answered, with the quiet of one labouring under a great emotion.

The other rumbled out his ironical laughter.

"And now they chuck you," he said. "Too old at forty. What?"

The little man spat on the ground.

"Blast 'em," he said. "Blast you. Blast the lot. It's a bloody world."

CHAPTER XXXIV
The Lovers' Quarrel

Boy did not appear at dinner.

The midday meal, especially on Sunday, she generally skipped.

Old Mat, Ma, and Silver lunched together and in silence.

The old trainer was absorbed in himself, and there was no question that he found himself exceedingly good company. His face became pink and his eye wet with the excellence of the joke he was brewing in his deeps. He slobbered over his food and spilt it. Mrs. Woodburn watched him with amused sympathy.

"You've been up to something you shouldn't, dad," she said. "I know you."

He held up a shaking hand in protest.

"Now don't you, Mar!" he said. "I been to church—that's all I done. Mr. Haggard preach a booriffle sermon on the 'Oly Innocents. 'There's some is saints,' he says, and he looks full glare at me; 'and there's some as isn't.' And he looks at his missus. 'There's some as is where they ought to be Sundays,' and he looks full glare at me. 'And there's some as isn't.' And he stares at the empty seat aside o' me. Yes, my dear, you'll cop it on the crumpet to-morrow when he comes to see you, and you'll deserve it, too."

After lunch, as the old man left the room, he beckoned mysteriously to Silver, and toddled away down the passage with hunched shoulders to his sanctum.

The young man followed him with amused eyes. He knew very well what was coming.

Once inside his office, Mat closed the door in his most secretive way.

"Only one thing for it," he whispered hoarsely. "The gal must ride."

Silver stared out of the window.

"But will she?"

The old man messed with his papers.

"She mayn't for me," he mumbled. "She might for someone—to help him out of a hole. I'll try her anyway. If she will I'll put a thousand on myself."

An hour later Silver was smoking a cigarette in the darkness of the wainscoted dining room, when the door burst open.

Boy came in upon him swift and radiant. She was in her blue skirt and blouse again, and her hair was like a halo against the dark wainscoting. The glory of the gallop was still upon her.

He rose to her, challenged and challenging.

She crossed the room to him, and stood with her hand on the mantelpiece. She did not laugh, she did not even smile, but there was in her the deep and quiet ecstasy that causes the thorn to blossom in beauty after a winter of reserve. It seemed to him that she was swaying as a rose sways in a gale, yet anchored always to the earth in perfect self-possession.

As always, she came straight to the point.

"Do you want me to ride him in the National?" she asked.

"I don't mind," he answered nonchalantly.

"Have you backed him?"

"Not yet."

"Are you going to?"

"I might—if I can get a hundred thousand to a thousand about him."

Her gray eyes searched him. Not a corner of him but her questioning spirit ransacked it.

"How much money have you got left?"

"When all's squared? a few thousand, I believe."

She looked into the fire, one little foot poised on the fender. He was provoking her. She felt it.

"I could just about win on him," she said. "I think."

"I'm not so sure," he answered.

She became defiant in a flash.

"One thing," she said, "I'm sure nobody else could."

He followed up his advantage deliberately.

"I'm not so sure," he said.

Her eyes sparkled frostily.

She understood.

He was furious because her father had spoken to her; resentful that in her hands should be the winning for him of a potential fortune.

She would show him.

"I might think of riding him perhaps," she said slowly, "on one condition."

"What's that?"

"That you don't bet on him."

He rolled off into deep, ironical laughter.

"Done with you!" he cried, holding out his hand.

She brushed it aside.

"What I said was that I *might think* of it," she said, and made for the door.

He did not pursue.

"Oh, do!" he cried lazily. "Do!"

"I shall see," she answered. "I might and I might not. Probably the latter."

She went out with firm lips.

"I see what it is!" he cried after her, still ironical.

She turned about.

"What?"

"You're afraid of Aintree."

The girl, who in many matters was still a child, flared at once.

"Afraid of Aintree!" she cried. "I'll show you whether I'm afraid of Aintree or not!"

She marched down the passage, pursued by his mocking laughter, and went out into the yard with nodding head and flashing eyes.

Then she walked to the gate and looked across the Paddock Close.

Mr. Haggard was walking slowly up toward the church to take the children's service. On the public path by the stile were two figures engaged in conversation. She recognized them at once. They were Joses and Monkey Brand.

Thoughtfully she crossed into the stable.

It was Sunday afternoon, and there was nobody about but Maudie, who departed coldly on the entrance of the girl, suspecting trouble. Maudie's suspicions were but too well-founded.

The girl went straight to Four-Pound-the-Second's loose-box and opened it. The Monster-without-Manners emerged and greeted his mistress with yawns. The brown horse with the tan muzzle shifted slowly toward her. She ran her eye over him, adjusted a bandage, and went out into the yard.

Billy accompanied her, for he always passed his Sunday afternoons with his mistress.

As she left the stable Monkey Brand was entering the yard.

"What was Joses saying, Brand?" she asked sharply.

The little man did not seem to see or hear her. But as he passed her, she thought he dropped an eyelid. Then he limped swiftly on into the saddle-room.

Boy, balancing on the ladder, looked after him.

Then she went up into the loft, Billy Bluff at her heels trying with whimpers to thrust by that he might hold communion with fair Maudie on the top rung.

Maudie watched the approaching feet with sullen and apathetic disdain. When they were almost on her she rose suddenly. The languid lady with the manners of a West-End drawing-room became the screaming fish-wife of Wapping. She humped, swore, and scampered away to the loft, there to establish herself upon a cross-beam, where she was proof against assault.

Boy crossed the loft, entered her room, and closed the door.

She glanced out of the window.

Joses was crossing the Paddock Close toward the cottage where he lodged.

She watched him closely.

He was going to try it on. She was sure of it.

Then she would try it on him; and she would show no mercy.

She looked at herself in the glass, and smiled at what she saw.

Mr. Silver's affront still clouded her face, and the thought of Joses struck from the cloud a flash of lightning.

Suddenly an idea came to her. Her eyes sparkled, and she laughed merrily.

She let down her hair.

It was short, fine, and thick; massy, Mr. Haggard called it. Then she took a pair of scissors and began to snip. Flakes of gold fell on the floor and strewed her feet. She stood as on a threshing-floor.

As she worked, the boards of the loft sounded to the tramp of a heavy visitor.

Somebody knocked at the door. There came to the girl's eyes a look of amused defiance.

"Come in," she said, turning.

Mrs. Woodburn stood in the door, grieved and grim. She saw her daughter's face framed in thickets of gold, and the splendid ruin on the floor.

Boy crossed to her mother and closed the door quietly behind her. Then she led her mother to the bed, and sat down beside her.

The old lady was breathing deeply, and not from the effort of the climb.

The daughter's eyes, full of a tender curiosity, teasing and yet compassionate, searched her mother's face, in which there was no laughter.

"Are you going to, Boy?" asked the old lady.

"D'you want me not?"

The mother nodded.

"Why not?"

Mrs. Woodburn sighed.

"I'd rather not," she said.

"Why not?" persisted Boy.

"It's against the rules."

"Is that all?" with scorn.

"No."

"Then why not?"

"It's dangerous."

"Dangerous!" flashed the girl. "So you think I'm a coward, too!"

"I don't, I don't," pleaded the other. "But I don't want you to."

Boy put her hand on the old lady's knee.

Her mother and Mr. Haggard were the only two human beings to whom she ever demonstrated affection.

"Will you promise me?" said the mother.

"No," answered Boy.

Mrs. Woodburn tried to rise, but the girl held her down.

"Sit down, mother, please. You never come and see me up here."

Her eyes devoured her mother's face hungrily and with unlaughing eyes.

"Kiss me, mother," she ordered.

Mrs. Woodburn refrained.

"Kiss me, mother," sternly.

The mother obeyed.

"Shall you?" she asked.

"I shan't say," replied Boy.

She rose and went to the window.

Outside under the wood Mr. Silver, pipe in mouth, was sauntering round Ragamuffin's grave.

"He said I was afraid!" she muttered.

When her mother left the room, the girl went to the window.

The gallop had kindled in her for the moment the flame of her old ambition; but the desire had died down swiftly as it had risen.

Boy knew now that she no longer really wanted to ride the Grand National Winner. She wanted something else—fiercely.

Cautiously she peeped out of the window.

Mr. Silver, in that old green golf-jacket of his, that clung so finely to his clean shoulders, was prowling along the edge of the wood close to Ragamuffin's grave, peeping for early nests.

The girl remembered that it was St. Valentine's—the day birds mate.

She turned away.

BOOK V
MONKEY BRAND

CHAPTER XXXV
The Dancer's Son

Sebastian Bach Joses was the son of an artist of Portuguese extraction. The artist was a waster and a wanderer. In his youth he mated with a Marseillaise dancing-girl who had posed as his model. Joses had been the result. The father shortly deserted the mother, who took to the music-hall stage.

After a brief and somewhat lurid career on the halls in London and elsewhere she died.

The lad had as little chance as a human being can have. As a boy, with the red-gold mass of hair he inherited from his mother, and a certain farouche air, he had been attractive, especially to women. Clever, alert, and sensitive, brought up in a Bohemian set, without money, or morals, or the steadying factor of position, he had early acquired all the tricks of the artist, the parasite, and the adventurer. He could play the guitar quite prettily, could sing a song, dabbled with pen and brush, and talked with considerable facility of poetry and art.

An old-time admirer of his mother's, on whom that lady when dying had fathered the boy, paid for the lad's keep as a child. Later, attracted by the boy's beauty, and secretly proud of his putative share in it, he had sent him to a college in a south coast watering place and afterward to Oxford.

There Joses had swiftly worked his way into a vicious set of stupid rich men, morally his equals, intellectually his inferiors, but socially and economically vastly his superiors. They were all lads from public schools who desired above all to be thought men of the world. Joses, on the other hand, was a man of the world who desired above all else to be taken for a public-school man.

Each of the two parties to the unwritten contract got what was desired from the other. Joses had knocked about the Continent; he knew the Quartier Latin, Berlin night-life, and the darker haunts of Naples. His rich allies kept horses, hunted, and raced. They learned a good deal that Joses was ready to impart; and on his side he acquired from them some knowledge of the racing world and an entrée into it. His manners were good—rather too good; and the touch of the artist and the exotic appealed to the coarse and simple minds of his companions. He wore longish hair, softish collars, cultivated eccentricities and a slightly foreign accent; all of which things the *jeunesse dorée* tolerated with a touch of patronage. And Joses was quite content to be patronized so long as his patrons would pay.

After two years at Oxford his putative father died. Joses went down perforce, leaving behind him many debts, a girl behind a bar who was fond of him, and a reputation as a brilliant rogue who might some day prove the poet of the sport of kings.

Equipped with the knowledge acquired at the ancient University, he went to London and there

earned his living as a sporting journalist, attending race-meetings, adding to his income by betting, and performing certain unlovely services for the more vicious of his Oxford friends.

Handicapped in many ways, he had at least this advantage over the bulk of his brother-men: that he was not hampered by scruples, principles, or tradition.

At thirty his beauty was already on the wane. He was faded, fat, and tarnished; and already he was visibly going to pieces.

The end, which had been preparing in the deeps for years, came suddenly.

The story was an old one: that of one woman and two men. The three had driven back from Ascot in a hansom together. There was supper, drink, and trouble at the lady's flat. The other man got a knife in him, and Joses got five years.

When he came out, he resumed his old haunts and earned a precarious living by watching. He was almost the only watcher who could write, and his eye for a horse's form was phenomenally good. It was in those days that he came into touch with his future employers.

With an acute sense for those who could serve them, the Three J's realised at once that this man was on a different level to that of other watchers. They financed him liberally, advanced him money, and held a cheque to which in a moment of aberration Joses had signed Ikey Aaronsohnn's name. And he in his turn served them well if not faithfully.

When Chukkers rode the famous International that established him once and for all in a class by himself among cross-country riders, snatching an astounding victory on Hooka-burra from Lady Golightly, his win and the way he rode his race was largely due to Joses's report on the favourite's staying power.

"She'll gallop three and three-quarter miles at top speed," he had said, "and then bust like a bladder. Bustle her all the way, and yours'll beat her from the last fence."

When Joses was put away for incendiarism, the Three J's missed him far more than they would have cared to admit. They had two bad seasons in succession, and a worse followed. At the end of the third Chukkers, for the first time for seven years, no longer headed the list of winning jockeys.

Then Ikey carried off his jockey to the States to break his luck.

It was on this visit, at some old-fashioned meeting in the Southern States, so the story went, Chukkers discovered the mare from Blue Mounds. All the world knows to-day how she re-established her jockey's fame and made her own.

When, after an unforgettable season in Australia, he returned to England with the American mare, the pair had never been beaten. And in the Old Country they repeated the performance of Australia. Together they won the Sefton, the International, and last of all the National. And though Chukkers had been disqualified in the last race, his fame and hers had reached a pinnacle untouched by any horse or man in modern racing history.

The star-spangled jacket led the world.

When Joses came out of prison he journeyed down at once to Dewhurst.

Jaggers and Chukkers met him.

It did not take the tout long to get a hang of the situation.

The National was coming on in a few weeks. The mare had to win at all costs.

Since her victory and defeat at Aintree in the previous March she had never run but once in public, and that time had scattered her field.

Jaggers had been laying her up in lavender all the winter for the great race, and she was now at the top of her form.

They took Joses round to her loose-box.

Just back from work she was stripped and sweating, swishing her tail, savaging her manger with arched neck, tramping to and fro on swift, uneasy feet as her lad laboured at her.

So perfectly compact was she that the tout heard with surprise that she stood little short of sixteen hands. The length of her rein compensated for the shortness of her back, and her hocks and hind-quarters were those of a panther, lengthy and well let-down.

The fat man ran his eye over her fair proportions.

"She's beautiful," he mused.

Indeed, the excellence of her form spoke to the heart of the poet in him. He dwelt almost lovingly upon that astonishing fore-hand and the mouse-head with the wild eye that revealed the spirit burning within. As her lad withdrew from her a moment, she gave that familiar toss of the muzzle

familiar to thousands, which made a poet say that she was fretting always to transcend the restraint of the flesh.

"If she's as good as she looks," said Joses, "she's good enough."

"She's better," said the jockey with the high cheek-bones. He passed his hand along the mare's rein. It was said that Chukkers had never cared for a horse in his life, and it was certain that many horses had hated Chukkers. But it was common knowledge that he was fonder of the mare than he had ever been of any living creature.

"She's got nothing up against her as I know of," said Jaggers in his austere way. "There's Moonlighter, the Irishman, of course."

"He can't stay," said Chukkers briefly.

"And Gee-Woa-There, the Doncaster horse."

"He can't gallop."

"And Kingfisher, the West country crack."

"He beats himself jumpin'."

"And that's about the lot—only the Putnam horse," continued the trainer. "They think I know nothing about him. I know some, and I want to know more."

"I'll settle that," said Joses.

The jockey was pulling the mare's ears thoughtfully.

"You'd like to take a little bit of Putnam's, I daresay?" he said.

"I wouldn't mind if I did," replied the tout.

"It was them done you down at the trial," continued the jockey. "Old Mat and his Monkey and Silver Mug. The old gang."

"Regular conspiracy," said Jaggers censoriously. "Ought to be ashamed of themselves. Doin' down a pore man like that."

The three moved out into the yard.

A little later trainer and jockey stood in the gate of the yard and watched Joses shuffle away across the Downs.

"He's all right," said Chukkers, sucking the ivory charm he always carried. "Ain't 'alf bitter."

"Changed," smirked Jaggers, "and for the better. They've done 'emselves no good, Putnam's haven't, this journey."

Joses established his headquarters as of old at Cuckmere, and he made no secret of his presence. Nor would it have been of much avail had he attempted concealment. For the Saturday before the trial gallop had brought Mat Woodburn a letter from Miller, the station-clerk at Arunvale, which was the station for Dewhurst.

The station-clerk had a feud of many years' standing with Jaggers, and had moreover substantial reasons of his own for not wishing Mocassin to win at Aintree. Along the line of the South Downs to be against Dewhurst was to be in with Putnam's, and the telegraph line between Arunvale and Cuckmere could tell many interesting secrets of the relations between Mat Woodburn and the station-clerk.

The letter in question informed Old Mat that Joses had come straight from Portland to Dewhurst; that Chukkers had come down from London by the eleven-twenty-seven; that Ikey had been expected but had not turned up, and that the six-forty-two had taken Joses on to Cuckmere.

After the trial gallop, and the meeting with the fat man on the hill, Old Mat showed the letter to Silver.

"He'll want watching, Mr. Joses will," he said.

"He didn't look very pretty, did he?" said the young man.

"Yes," mused the old man. "A little job o' work for Monkey, that'll be. He don't like Chukkers, Monkey don't." He pursed his lips and lifting an eye-lid looked at the other from beneath it. His blue eye was dreamy, dewy, and twinkling remotely through a mist. "Rogues and rasqueals, Mr. Silver!" he said. "Whatebber should we do without um?"

CHAPTER XXXVI
MONKEY SULKS

On the Sunday after the trial on the Mare's Back Jerry went solemnly round the assembled lads

before Bible Class, his hat in his hand and in the hat a couple of coppers.

"What for?" asked Alf, the cherub.

The lads were used to what they called "levies" in the stable—sometimes for a new football or something for the club, sometimes for a pal who was in a hole.

"Mr. Silver," answered Jerry. "He's done us proud while he could. Now it's our turn to do a bit for him."

"Is it as bad as all that?" asked Alf, wide-eyed.

"It's worse," said Jerry, with dramatic restraint.

The cherub peeped into the hat, fingering a tanner.

He was genuinely concerned for Mr. Silver.

"If I put in a tanner, how'll I know Mr. Silver'll get it?" he asked ingenuously.

Stanley jeered, and Jerry shot his chin forward.

"Say, young Alf," he said. "Am I a genelman?—or ain't I?"

"That ain't 'ardly for me to say, Jerry," answered the cherub with delicate tact.

Then there might have been trouble but for the interference of the lordly Albert.

"Don't you let him pinch nothin' off o' you, Alf," he said. "Mr. Silver's all right."

"What ye mean?" asked the indignant Jerry. "Ain't he broke then?"

"He'll be a rich man again by then I done with him," answered Albert loftily. "That's what I mean."

"When will you be done with him then?" jeered Jerry.

"After the National," answered Albert. "Yes, my boy, you'll get your 'alf-dollar at Christmas same as usual—if so be you deserves it."

Jerry sneered.

"Albert thinks *he's* goin' to get the ride," he cried. "Likely!—G-r-r-r!"

Albert was unmoved as a mountain and as coldly majestic.

"I don't think. I knows," he said, folding his arms.

"What do you know then?"

"I knows what I knows," answered Albert, in true sacerdotal style. "And I knows more'n them as don't know nothin'."

Albert did really know something, but he did not know more than anybody else. In those days, indeed, two facts were common property at Putnam's. Everybody knew them, and everybody liked to believe that nobody else did. The two facts were that Albert was going to ride Four-Pound-the-Second at Aintree, and that Mr. Silver stood to get his money back upon the race. There was a third fact, too, that everybody knew. It was different from the other two in that not even Albert pretended that he alone was aware of it. The third fact was that Monkey Brand was sulking.

The lads knew it, the horses knew it, Billy Bluff knew it; Maudie, who looked on Monkey as her one true friend in the world, knew it; even the fan-tails in the yard had reason to suspect it.

Jim Silver, who had a genuine regard for the little man, and was most reluctant to think evil of him or anyone, was aware of it, and unhappy accordingly.

The only two who seemed not to know what was obvious to all the rest of the world were, of course, the two most concerned—Old Mat and his daughter.

They were blind—deliberately so, Silver sometimes thought.

The young man became at length so disturbed that he ventured to suggest to the trainer that all was not well.

The old man listened, his head a-cock, and his blue eyes sheathed.

"I dessay," was all he said. "Men is men accordin' to my experience of 'em." He added: "And monkies monkies. Same as the Psalmist said in his knowin' little way."

Beaten back here, the young man, dogged as always, approached Boy in the matter.

He was countered with an ice-cold monosyllable.

"Indeed," was all she said.

The young man persisted in spite of his stutter.

She flashed round on him.

"So you think Monkey's selling us?" she said.

Jim Silver looked sheepish and sullen.

But whether the girl's attitude was due to the fact that he was still in disgrace or to her resentment that he should be telling tales, he did not know.

The young man's affairs in London were almost wound up, and he was making his home at Putnam's.

About the place, early and late, he became aware that Joses was haunting the barns and out-houses. More than once in the lengthening days he saw the fat man vanishing round a corner in the dusk.

Taking the bull by the horns, he spoke to Monkey Brand about it.

"Why not turn Billy Bluff loose after dark?" he suggested.

Monkey was stubborn.

"Can't be done, sir."

"Why not?"

"Can't leave Four-Pound's box, sir," the jockey answered, turning in his lips. "Else the 'orse frets himself into a sweat."

Silver was dissatisfied. He was still more so when two days later after dark he came on two men in close communion in the lane at the back of the Lads' Barn.

They were standing in the shadow of the Barn out of the moon. But that his senses were alert, and his suspicions roused, he would not have detected them, for they hushed into sudden silence as he passed.

He flashed an electric torch on to them.

The two were Joses and Monkey Brand.

He was not surprised, nor, it seemed, were they.

Monkey Brand touched his hat.

"Good-night, sir," he said cordially.

"Good-night," said Silver coldly. "Good-night, Mr. Joses!"

The tout rumbled ironically.

Silver passed on into the yard, and the two were left together in the dark.

"On the bubble," said Joses.

"I don't wonder, eether," answered Monkey. "Four-Pound's got to win it for him."

"Hundred thousand, isn't it?" said the fat man.

"That is it," said Monkey. "Guv'nor won't part for less."

"What's that?" asked Joses, stupefied.

"Silver!" answered Monkey. "He's got to put a hundred thousand down, or he don't get her. Old man's no mug."

"Don't get who?" asked the other.

"Minie," shortly.

The fat man absorbed the news.

"Hundred thousand down," continued Monkey. "That's the contrak—writ out in red ink on parchment. It's a fortune."

Joses was recovering himself.

"It's nothing to what the mare'll carry all said," he mused. "American's bankin' on her to the last dollar, let alone the Three J's.... There's more in it than money, too. There's pride and sentiment, the old animosities." He added after a pause—"Half a million's a lot of money though. There'll be pickings, too—for those that deserve them."

Monkey moved restlessly.

"I daresay," he said irritably. "Not as it matters to me. Not as nothin' matters to me now. Work you to the bone while you can work, and scrap you when they've wore you out. It's a bloody

world, as I've said afore."

"Come!" cried the fat man. "The game's not up. There's more masters than one in the world!"

The little man was not to be consoled.

"See where it is, Mr. Joses: I'm too old to start afresh."

"Have they sacked you then?"

The other shook his head.

"They'll keep me on till after the National. He's not everybody's 'orse, Four-Pound ain't. If they was to make a change now, he might go back on himself."

The tout's breathing came a little quicker in the darkness.

"D'you see to him?"

"Me and Albert."

"Is Albert goin' to ride him?"

"Don't you believe it?" mocked the little jockey.

The tout drew closer.

"Who is, then?"

Monkey ducked his head and patted the back of it.

"Never!" cried Joses.

The other raised a deprecatory hand and turned away.

"You know best, o' course, Mr. Joses," he said. "You've the run o' Putnam's same as me. And you're an eddicated man from Oxford College, where they knows all there is to know."

He was limping away.

Joses hung on his heels.

"Steady on, old sport," he said. "D'you mean that?"

Monkey swung about.

"See here, Mr. Joses," he whispered. "When a gal's out to win a man she'll do *funny* things."

The fat man breathed heavily.

Then he began to laugh.

"And it's win the National or lose the man!" he said. "Quite a romance!"

CHAPTER XXXVII
The Early Bird

Next Sunday found Joses among the earliest and most attentive of the worshippers at church.

Boy Woodburn entered later, walked slowly up the aisle, and took her place in the front pew. As she bowed her head in her hands, the fat man, watching with all his eyes, learned what he had come to learn.

After service he waited outside.

As he stood among the tomb-stones, the girl passed, not seeing him.

"Good morning, Miss Woodburn," he said ironically.

She looked up suddenly, resentfully.

His presence there clearly surprised and even startled the girl.

She passed on without a word and with the faintest nod of acknowledgment.

The fat man, with a chuckle, thought he could diagnose the cause of her annoyance.

Next morning he met Boy in the village.

She was wearing a close-fitting woollen cap, that covered her hair, and the collar of her coat was turned up.

The collar of the girl's coat was always turned up now, he remarked sardonically, though the sun was gaining daily in power and the wind losing its nip.

She sauntered past him, and seemed even ready for a chat.

Never slow to seize a chance, the fat man closed with her at once.

"How goes it, Miss Woodburn?" he said.

"Very well, thank you."

"So you're going to win the National?"

"Are we?"

"He's good enough, isn't he?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Who's going to ride him?"

"Albert, I suppose," replied the girl casually. "There's nobody else."

"Not Monkey Brand?"

She shook her head.

"Too old," she said.

"Will he gallop for Albert?" asked the other.

"Depends on his mood," replied the girl.

The fat man laughed.

"There's only one person he will gallop for—certain," he said.

Boy looked away.

"Who's that?" nonchalantly.

Joses bowed and smirked and became very gallant.

Flattery never moved the girl to anything but resentment.

"Thank you," she said.

"Pity you can't," pursued the other.

"Yes," she said. "I should have liked the ride."

His roaming eye settled on her.

"You'd have won, too," he said with assurance.

"Think so?"

"I'm sure so," he answered. "You've only One against you."

"Perhaps," she admitted. "But the One's a caution."

"A good big un'll always beat a good little un," said the fat man.

"Besides, he's a baby," replied the girl. "Chances his fences too much."

"Sprawls a bit," admitted the other. "But he jumps so big it doesn't make much odds. And he gets away like a deer."

Joses was now very much alert; and he had to be. For, as he reported to Jaggers, Putnam's gave away as little as a dead man in the dark.

One thing, however, became clear as the time slipped away and the National drew ever nearer: that to the girl had been entrusted the winding up of the young horse, and Albert was her henchman in the matter.

Monkey was the fat man's informant on the point. Joses would never have believed the little jockey for a moment, but that his own eyes daily confirmed the report.

The window of his room looked out over the Paddock Close, and every morning, before the world was astir, while the dew was still heavy on the grass, the earth reeking, and the mists thick in the coombes, the great sheeted horse, who marched like a Highland regiment and looked like a mountain ram, was to be seen swinging up the hill on to the Downs.

There were two little figures always with him: one riding, one trotting at his side. Seen across the Close at that hour in the morning, there was no distinguishing between the two. Both were slight, bare-headed, fair; and both were dressed much alike. So much might be seen, and little more at that distance.

One morning, therefore, found Joses established on the hill before the horse and his two attendants had arrived.

He had no desire to be seen.

He squirmed his way with many pants through the gorse to the edge of the gallop, adjusted his glasses, and watched the little group of three ascend the brow half a mile away.

One of the two attendant sprites slung the other up on to the back of the phantom horse tossing against the sky.

Then without a thought of fuss the phantom settled to his stride and came down the slope, butting the mists away from his giant chest, the rhythmical beat of his hoofs rising to a terrifying roar as he gathered way.

Joses dropped on to his hands and huddled against the soaking ground as the pair came thundering by. He need not have feared detection: the rider's head was low over the horse's neck, the rider's face averted. All he saw was the back of a fair head, close-cropped.

Kneeling up, he turned his glasses once again on the little figure waiting now alone upon the brow.

As he stared, he heard the quiet footfall of a horse climbing the hill behind him.

He dropped his glasses and looked round.

Silver on Heart of Oak had come to a halt close by and was looking at him.

"Early bird," said the young man. "Looking for worms, I suppose."

Joses grinned as he closed his glasses, and rising to his feet brushed his sopping knees.

"Yes," he said. "And finding 'em."

CHAPTER XXXVIII
IKEY'S OWN

Maudie was not the only one who had cause to complain that life at Putnam's was changed now greatly for the worse.

It all centred round that great, calm, munching creature in the loose-box, with the big blue dog curled underneath the manger.

Monkey Brand was moody; Old Mat irritable; his daughter curt; Silver puzzled, and Mrs. Woodburn perturbed.

For once in her life that habitually tranquil lady was restless, and betrayed her trouble.

The young man marked it and was genuinely sorry for her.

She saw it and appealed to him.

"Mr. Silver," she said, taking him suddenly, "is she going to ride?"

The other met her with clearly honest eyes.

"I don't know," he said.

The old lady's distress was obvious.

"Mr. Silver," she said, "please tell me. Do *you* want her to ride?"

"No!" he cried, almost with indignation. "Of course I don't. I've seen too many Nationals."

"Have you asked her not to?"

He grinned a little sheepishly.

"The truth is I've annoyed her," he said. "And she's all spikes when I touch her."

Mrs. Woodburn appealed to her husband, but got nothing out of him.

"It's no good comin' to me, Mar. I don't know nothin' at all about it," he said shortly. "She's trainin' the hoss. If I so much as looks at him I gets my nose bit off."

The old lady's distress was such that at length the young man took his courage in his hands and approached the girl.

"Boy," he said, "are you going to ride him? *Please* tell me."

The girl set her lips.

"You think I'm afraid of Aintree," she said deeply.

"I don't," he pleaded. "I swear to you I don't."

She was not to be appeased.

"You do," she answered mercilessly. "You said you did."

"If I ever did I was only chaffing."

"I know why you don't want me to ride," she laughed hardly.

"Why?"

"Because then you'll be free to win your hundred thousand. That's all you care about. But you won't. If I don't ride him, he won't win. If I do, you can't bet."

The young man was miserable.

"Hang my hundred thousand!" he cried. "As if I care a rap for that." He made a final appeal. "If I've done wrong, I can only say I'm most *awfully* sorry, Boy."

"You've done *very* wrong," replied the girl ruthlessly. "And when we've done wrong we've got to pay for it," added Preacher Joe.

"Damn him!" muttered the other.

"*What!*" flashed the girl.

"Sorry," mumbled the young man, and fled with his tail between his legs.

That afternoon a telegram came for Old Mat.

He showed it to Silver.

"That's from Miller, the station-master at Arunvale," he said. "They're goin' to gallop the mare. Would you like to step over and see what you can make of her?"

The young man agreed willingly.

"No good my comin'," said Mat. "But you might take Monkey Brand along—if he'll go."

But the little jockey, when approached, refused.

"Why not?" asked Silver, determined to save the little man's soul if it was to be saved.

"I'm too fond o' Monkey, sir," the other answered, his face inscrutable.

"What d'you mean?"

"Why, sir, if they was to catch Monkey in Chukkers's country they'd flay him."

"Who would?"

"The Ikey's Own."

Silver stared at him.

"Who are the Ikey's Own?"

"They're *Them!*" said Monkey with emphasis. "That's what they are—and no mistake about it."

> *We are coming. Uncle Ikey, coming fifty million strong,*
> *For to see the haughty English don't do our Ikey wrong.*

"He slipped 'em over special last back-end. Chose 'em for the job. Bowery toughs; scrubs from Colorado; old man o' the mountains; cattle-lifters from Mexico; miners from the west; Arizona sharps. Don't matter who, only so long as they'll draw a gun on you soon as smile. Come across the ocean to see fair play for the mare. They're campin' round her—rigiments of 'em. If a sparrer goes too near her, they lays it out. *No blanky hanky-panky this time*—that's their motter."

The young man went alone.

At Arunvale the station-master beckoned him into the office.

"It's right, sir," he said keenly. "Chukkers and Ikey come down this morning. Two-thirty's the time accordin' to my information. I've got a trap waitin' for you outside. Ginger Harris'll drive you. He was a lad at Putnam's one time o' day. Now he keeps the Three Cocks by the bridge. He don't like Jaggers any better than me. Only lay low and mind your eye. Arunvale's stiff with 'em."

Silver wished to know more, but he was not to be gratified.

The station-clerk, as full of mystery as Monkey Brand himself, bustled him out of the office, finger to his lips.

"Trap's outside, sir," he whispered. "I won't come with you. There's eyes everywhere—tongues, too."

Outside was a gig, and in it sat a red-faced fly-man in a bottle-green coat and old top-hat, who made room for the young man at his side.

They drove over the bridge through the town, up the steep, into the vast rolling Park with the clumps of brown beech-woods that ran down to the river and the herds of red deer dotting the deep valleys.

As they passed through the north gate of the Park, Ginger slowed down to a walk.

"If I've time it right," he said, "she should be doin' her gallop while we walks along the ridge. Don't show too keen, sir."

A long sallow man sitting on the roadside at the edge of the wood eyed them.

The driver nudged his companion.

"One of 'em," he said. "Ikey's Own. Know by the cut of 'em."

"Many about?" asked Silver.

"Been all over us since Christmas," answered the other. "Cargo of 'em landed at Liverpool Bank 'oliday. All sorts. All chose for the job. Stop at nothin'. If they suspicion you they move you on or put you out. They watch her same as if she was the Queen of England. And I don't wonder. Nobody knows the millions she'll carry."

When they were well past the man at the roadside he whistled. There came an answering call from the wood in front.

As they emerged on to the open Downs, Ginger pulled up short.

"They've done us, sir," he said shortly.

A hundred yards ahead of them a sheeted chestnut was coming toward them on the grass alongside the road.

Jim Silver had only seen the Waler mare once—on the occasion of her famous victory and defeat at Aintree the previous year; but once seen Mocassin was never forgotten.

She came along at that swift, pattering walk of hers, her nose in the air, and ears twitching.

"Always the same," whispered Ginger. "In a terrible hurry to get there."

He had the true Putnam feeling about Jaggers; but that passion of devotion for the mare, which had inspired the English-speaking race for the past year, had not left him untouched. Jim Silver felt the little prosaic man thrilling at his side, and thrilled in his turn. He felt as he had felt when as a Lower Boy at Eton the Captain of the Boats had spoken to him—a swimming in the eyes, a brimming of the heart, a gulping at the throat.

"Is that Mocassin?" he called to the lad riding the mare.

"That's the Queen o' Kentucky, sir," replied the other cockily. "Never was beaten, and never will be—given fair play."

"Done your gallop?"

"Half an hour since."

Ginger drove on discreetly.

On a knoll, three hundred yards away, four men were standing.

"There they are!" said Ginger. "Pretty, ain't they?—specially Chukkers. I don't know who that fat feller is along of 'em."

But Silver knew very well.

CHAPTER XXXIX
The Queen of Kentucky

The little group on the knoll came off the grass on to the road, close in talk.

Jaggers was tall and attenuated. He had the look of a self-righteous ascetic, and dressed with puritanical austerity. No smile ever irradiated his gaunt face and remorseless eyes. His forehead was unusually high and white; his manners high, too; and if his morals were not white, his cravat, that was like a parson's, more than made up for the defect. It was not surprising then that among the fraternity he was known as His Reverence, because his bearing gave the impression of a Nonconformist Minister about to conduct a teetotal campaign.

Chukkers, who was wearing the familiar jodhpores which he always affected, was quite a different type. A big man for a jockey, he rarely rode under eleven stone, though he carried never an ounce of flesh. Sporting journalists were in the habit of referring to him as a Samson in the

saddle, so large of bone and square of build was he. His success, indeed, was largely due to his extraordinary strength. It was said that once in a moment of temper he had crushed a horse's ribs in, while it was an undeniable fact that he could make a horse squeal by the pressure of his legs.

He was clearly a Mongol, some said a Chinaman by origin; and certainly his great bowed shins, his dirty complexion, his high cheek-bones, and that impassive Oriental face of his, gave authority to the legend. When you met him you marked at once that his eyes were reluctant to catch yours; and when they did you saw two little gashes opening on sullen-twinkling muddy waters.

The worst of us have our redeeming features. And Chukkers with all his crude defects possessed at least one outstanding virtue—faithfulness—to the man who had made him. Ikey had brought him as a lad into the country where he had made his name; Ikey had given him his chance; to Ikey for twenty-five years now he had stuck with unswerving devotion, in spite of temptation manifold, often-repeated, and aggravated. The relations between the two men were the subject of much gossip. They never talked of each other; and though often together, very rarely spoke. Chukkers was never known to express admiration or affection or even respect for his master. But the bond between them was intimate and profound. It was notorious that the jockey would throw over the Heir to the Throne himself at the last moment to ride for the little Levantine. And of late years it had been increasingly rare for him to sport any but the star-spangled jacket.

Ikey Aaronsohnn, the third of the famous Three, walked between the other two, as befitted the brain and purse of the concern. He was a typical Levantine, Semitic, even Simian, small-featured, and dark. In his youth he must have been pretty, and there was still a certain charm about him. He had qualities, inherent and super-imposed, entirely lacking to his two colleagues. A man of education and some natural refinement, he had a delicious sense of humour which helped him to an enjoyment of life and such a genial appreciation of his own malpractices and those of others as to make him the best of company and far the most popular of the Three J's.

If Chukkers was little more than an animal-riding animal, and Jaggers an artistic fraud, Ikey was a rascal of a highly differentiated and engaging type. A man of admirable tenacity he had clung for twenty-five years to the ideal which Chukkers's discovery of Mocassin two years since had brought within his grasp.

The disqualification of the mare at Liverpool last year after the great race had served only to whet his appetite and kindle his faith.

A quarter of a century before he had set himself to find the horse that would beat the English thoroughbred at Aintree. And in Mocassin he had at last achieved his aim.

If a cloud of romance hung about the mare, veiling in part her past, some points at least stood out clear.

It was known that her dam was a Virginian mare of the stately kind which of late years has filled the eye in the sale-ring at Newmarket and held its own between the flags. And piquancy was added by the fact, recorded in the Kentucky stud-book, that the dam traced her origin direct to Iroquois who in the Derby of 1881 had lowered the English colours to the dust.

Again there was no doubt that the mare had been born in a yellow-pine shack in the Cumberlands, on an old homestead—made familiar to millions in both continents by the picture papers—known as Blue Mounds, and owned by a Quaker farmer who was himself the great-grandson of a pioneer Friend, who in the last years of the eighteenth century had crossed the mountains with his family and flocks, like Abraham of old, and had won for himself this clearing from the primeval forest, driving farther west its ancient denizens.

So much, not even the arrogant English dared to dispute.

But the rest was mystery. It was said that Jaggers himself did not know who was Mocassin's sire; and that Ikey and Chukkers, the only two who did, were so close that they never let on even to each other. True the English, with characteristic bluff, when they discovered that they had found their mistress in the mare, took it for granted that her sire was an imported English horse and even named him. But Ikey and Chukkers both denied the importation with emphasis.

Then there were those who traced her origin to a horse from the Bombay Arab stables. These swore they could detect the Prophet's Thumb on the mare's auburn neck. The Waler School had many backers; and there were even a few cranks who suggested for the place of honour a curly-eared Kathiawar horse. But the All-American School, dominant in the States and Southern Republic, maintained with truculence that a Spanish stallion from the Pampas was the only sire for God Almighty's Mustang. The wild horse theory, as it was called, appealed to popular sentiment, however remote from the fact, and helped to build the legend of the mare. And in support of the theory, it must be said that Mocassin, in spite of her lovableness, had in her more of the jaguar than of the domestic cat, grown indolent, selfish, and fat through centuries of security and sleep.

"Wild as the wildman and sweet as the briar-rose," was the saying they had about her in the homestead where she was bred.

Ikey got into his car and rolled away through the dust toward Brighton.

The other three men strolled back to the yard.

"Bar accidents, there's only one you've got to fear," said Joses.

"And that's the Putnam horse," put in Jaggers.

"How's he comin' along?" asked the jockey.

"Great guns," the fat man replied.

"Think he's a Berserk?" asked Jaggers.

"I know it," said Joses. "Stolen jump. The stable-lads let him out on that old man for a lark. He's the spit of the old horse, only bigger."

"He must be a big un then," said Jaggers.

"He is," Chukkers answered. "And he's in at ten stun. The mare's givin' him a ton o' weight. And weight is weight at Liverpool."

"She'll do it," said Jaggers confidently. "I'll back my Iroquois against their Berserk—if Berserk he is."

"He's Berserk," said Chukkers doggedly. "A blind man at midnight could tell that from his fencing. Goes at 'em like a lion. Such a lift to him, too! Is Monkey Brand goin' to ride him?" he asked Joses.

"No. Turned down. Too old."

"Then the lad as rode him at Lingfield will," said Chukkers. "Sooner him than Monkey anyway. If Monkey couldn't win himself he'd see I didn't. Ride me down and ram me. The lad wouldn't 'ave the nerve. Face like a girl."

"Monkey ain't the only one," muttered Joses. "Silver's in it, too—up to the neck."

When Joses left to catch his train Jaggers accompanied him across the yard.

"Yes," he said, "if she wins there'll be plenty for all."

The tout hovered in the gate.

"I'm glad to hear it," he said, with emphasis. "*Very* glad."

Jaggers threw up his head in that free, frank way of his.

"What, Joses?" he said. "You're not short?"

"Things aren't too flush with me, Mr. Jaggers," muttered the fat man.

Jaggers stared out over the Downs.

"If that Putnam horse was not to start it would be worth a monkey to you," he said, cold and casual.

The other shot a swift and surreptitious glance at him.

Jaggers had on his best pulpit air.

"Don't start," mused Joses. "That's a tall order."

The trainer picked his teeth.

"A monkey's money," he said.

The fat man sniggered.

"It's worth money, too," he remarked.

"Give you a new start in a new country," continued Jaggers. "Quite the capitalist."

Joses's eyes wandered.

"I don't say it mightn't fix it," he said at last cautiously. "But it'd mean cash. Could you give me something on account?"

His Reverence was prepared.

He took a leather case out of his pocket and handed over five bank-notes.

"There's a pony," he said. "Now I don't want to see you till after the race. You know me. Me word's me bond. It's all out this time."

With a proud and priestly air he strode back to the house.

CHAPTER XL
Man and Woman

Silver and Joses went back to Cuckmere by the same train from Brighton.

The young man was well-established in a first-class smoker, and the train was about to start when the fat man came puffing along the platform. He was very hot; and out of his pocket bulged a brown paper parcel. The paper had burst and the head of a wooden mallet was exposed.

Silver, quiet in his corner, remarked that mallet.

That night he took a round of the stable-buildings before he went to bed, as his custom had been of late. There was nobody stirring but Maudie, meandering around like a ghost who did not feel well.

He went to the back of the Lads' Barn, and looked across the Paddock Close. A light in the window of a cottage shone out solitary in the darkness.

It was the cottage in which Joses lived, and the light came from an upper window.

Silver strolled along the back of the stable-buildings toward it.

Under Boy's window he paused, as was his wont.

A light within showed that the girl was in her eyrie. Then the light went out, and the window opened quietly.

Shyness overcame the young man. He moved away and went back to the corner in the saddle-room he had made his own—partly because he could smoke there undisturbed, and far more because it was directly under the girl's room, and he loved to hear her stirring above him.

He lit his pipe, settled himself, and began to brood.

The girl was still there—he could tell by the sound; and still at the window.

A vague curiosity possessed him as to what attracted her. Then she crossed the floor with that determined step of hers, and went along the loft, the planks betraying her.

He heard her swift feet on the ladder, and coming down the gangway toward the saddle-room.

In another moment she stood before him. A woolly cap was on her head, and a long muffler flung about her throat. It was clear that she was going out. He noticed with surprise that her race-glasses were slung over her shoulders.

"I came for the electric torch," she remarked.

He rose and pocketed it.

"Right," he said. "Whither away?"

"I don't want you," she answered.

"I'm coming along, though."

"You can't," coldly.

"Why not?"

"I'm going spying."

"Good," he answered cheerfully.

She led out into the night. He followed her.

In the yard she paused again.

"And spying's only for people like me," she continued daintily. "It's not work for the gentry."

They were walking across the Paddock Close now under dim heavens toward the light in the cottage across the way.

"I suppose not," he answered imperturbably. "I'm glad I'm not one."

"Oh, but you are," with quiet insistence. "Your father could have been a peer. You've told us about it many a time."

Jim Silver was roused. He surged up alongside the girl in the night, and pinched her arm above the elbow.

"Now look here, little woman!" he said.

She released her arm.

"Not so loud," she ordered. "And don't creak so."

They walked delicately in the darkness, the light guiding them, till they came to the ragged hedge at the foot of a long strip of cottage garden.

The night was very warm, the blinds up, the windows wide.

Joses, in his shirt-sleeves, was busy within working at something.

The girl watched awhile through her glasses and then withdrew quietly.

"He's whittling at wooden pegs," she whispered, keen as a knife.

"Obviously."

"What was that coil on the table?"

"Wire."

"And the thing beside it?"

"Mallet."

She glanced up at him in the dusk.

"You're short," she said.

The stables showed before them, long and black against the sky.

They were nearly off the grass. In another moment their feet would take the cobbles with a noise.

The girl paused and put her hand on her companion's arm.

"Thank you for coming," she said.

The resistance died out of him at once. He stood breathing deeply at her side.

She lifted her face to his.

"Mr. Silver!"

"Sweetheart!"

He loomed above her like a great shadow; and she felt his love beating all about her as with wings.

"Bend your head!"

His face drew down to hers in the dusk.

Then his arms stole about her lithe body; and his laughter was in her ear soft as the cooing of a dove.

"Don't kiss me," she said.

"You deserve it," he replied.

Her hands rested light as birds upon his shoulders; her eyes were steady in his, and very close.

"D'you love me?" she asked, her voice so calm, so pure, somehow so like a singing star.

He choked.

"A bit—sometimes."

"Then I'll whisper you," she said.

Her beautiful little arms, wreathing about his neck, drew his ear to her lips.

She whispered.

He chuckled deeply.

"Good," he said, and added—"Is that all?"

She released him and withdrew.

"For the present," she said.

They entered the yard. The light of the great stable-lantern brought them back from the land of dreams.

They cleared their throats and trod the cobbles aggressively.

She went toward the ladder. He turned off for the house.

"What time d'you take the hill?" he called.

"Six sharp."

"Right."

"Shall you be there?"

She spoke from the door of the loft, at the top of the ladder.

"Might," he said, and was gone.

CHAPTER XLI
The Spider's Web

It was Monkey Brand's cause of complaint against the young man that he was too simple; but if his suspicions were difficult to rouse, once roused they were not easily appeased.

He was up and away next morning before even Boy and Albert were about.

Dressed in a sweater and gray flannel trousers, he swung up the hill. As he reached the summit he looked back and saw the brown horse and his attendant beginning the ascent.

Swiftly he walked along the gallop, his eyes everywhere, suspecting he knew not what. The gorse grew close and dark on either side the naked course. He watched it closely as he went, and the occasional shrill spurt of a bird betrayed movement in the covert—it might be of a weasel, a fox, or a man.

The morning was chill and misty, the turf sodden and shining. At one spot the gorse marched in close-ranked upon the green until only a passage of some thirty yards was left. As he walked down the narrow way something flashed at his feet, and caught him smartly across the shin. He tripped and fell.

A wire was stretched across the gallop some four inches above the ground. It was taut and stout, and shone like a gossamer in the mist. He rose and followed it. It ran right athwart the course and lost itself in the gorse on either side. Silver searched and found the wire was bound about two wooden pegs that had been hammered into the earth.

The pegs were so fast that his fall against the wire had not shifted them.

He looked back along the way he had come.

The horse had not yet made his appearance on the brow.

Bending over a peg, and bowing his back, the young man heaved, twisted, and lurched. It took him all his time to uproot it, but he did so at last.

Then he glanced up.

Four-Pound-the-Second had topped the brow half a mile away.

Silver took the peg and began to roll up the wire leisurely. As he did so he was aware of a man standing in the gorse on the other side of the gallop watching him. Silver did not raise his eyes, but had no doubt as to the man's identity.

It was the other who opened the conversation, coming out of the gorse on to the track.

"That's an ugly bit of wire," he said. "Now how did that get there, I wonder?"

"Spider spun it, I guess," answered the young man laconically.

"What!" laughed the other. "Gossamer is it?"

"Yes," said Silver. "And not bad gossamer at that." He looked up suddenly. "Where did you get it from?—the same place you bought the mallet in Brighton?"

The tout swaggered across the green.

"See here, Silver," he said. "None of that. You're not in the position to come it over me now you've joined the great company of gentlemen-adventurers. There's nothing in it since the Bank broke. We both stand together on the common quicksands of economic insecurity."

Silver wound up the wire.

"Common quicksands of economic insecurity is good," he said deliberately. "Distinctly good."

"Yes," replied the other. "I learned it at Oxford, where I learned a lot besides. Or to put it straight, we're both naked men now—stripped to the world. And I'm as good a man as you are."

Silver dropped the wire and advanced leisurely.

"Are you?" he said. "I doubt it. But we'll soon see."

The fat man produced a mallet from behind his back.

"No —— nonsense," he snarled.

"I thought you said we were both naked men," replied Silver, folding his arms.

"Never mind what I said," the other answered. "Keep your —— distance, or I'll puddle you into a pulp."

Jim regarded the other with admiring eyes.

"You learned more at Oxford than I did," he said. "Learned to express yourself at least. If I'd that command of language I'd be in the pulpit or in Parliament to-morrow."

There was the sound of a horse's feet behind them.

Boy was walking Four-Pound-the-Second toward them.

"Good morning, Miss Woodburn," called Joses cheerily. "So *you're* up to-day."

"Yes," said the girl.

"Going to take him for a spin?"

Boy did not answer.

"Mr. Joses has been doing the spinning this morning," interposed Silver urbanely, holding up the wire.

"Oh," said the fat man. "I'll leave him to spin his yarn, Miss Woodburn. But don't you believe all he says. You'll hear the truth when I bring the case into court. He'll want all the money *you* can win him by the time I've done with him."

He disappeared down the hillside.

The girl came close and leaned down over the shoulder of the great horse.

"What is it?" she asked.

Jim Silver showed her.

"Only this," he said. "Right across the track."

The girl took it as all in the day's work.

"Did you catch him at it?" she asked.

"No; he was lying doggo near by—to watch results."

She examined the wire.

"He means business all right," she said. "We must look a bit lively. I'll have the track patrolled."

"I shall patrol it," said Jim.

CHAPTER XLII
The Doper

In her darker moods Maudie held that the world to-day only possessed one man who could take his place beside the knights of old; and that man, to be sure, was Monkey Brand.

The lads teased or ignored her; the various Four-legs were uncouth to a degree; and the Monster-without-Manners was, of course, just himself.

Therefore Maudie passed all the time she could on the shoulder of Putnam's Only Gentleman. Perched up there, aloof, lofty, and disdainful, she would purr away like a kettle on the simmer.

That evening she was enthroned in Paradise, when Joses shambled by.

Monkey Brand, stroking her back as he stood at the gate of the yard exchanging greetings with the passers-by in the road, shook his head disapprovingly as Joses passed.

"Mug's game, Mr. Joses," he said *sotto voce*.

The fat man, who had not seen the jockey in the dusk, drew up short.

"What's that?" he said keenly.

"That wire business," continued the little man in the same monotonous undertone without moving his lips. "Ought to be able to do a little better than that with an edication like yours. Where's the good of Oxford else?"

Joses came closer swiftly.

"See here, Monkey Brand," he said. "Do you mean business, or don't you?"

The jockey's face was inscrutable.

"I never said no to *good* business yet," he answered.

"This is good business all right," laughed the tout. "Big money, and safe as houses."

At the moment a voice called from the office.

"Comin,' sir," answered the little jockey. "*That's the Gov'nor. Back o' Lads' Barn. Eight o'clock*,"

he whispered, and was gone.

Joses kept the tryst, and went straight to the point.

He had burned his boats now.

"When do they box him to Liverpool?" he asked.

"Monday," answered the other, who seemed very surly. "If you want to do anything, you must move sharp, Mr. Joses. It's here or nowhere, mind. You won't get no chance at Aintree. Too many cops around."

"Who's watching him at night?"

"Monkey."

"Does Monkey ever nod?"

The little man looked at the stars.

"No sayin' but he might—if he was to took a drop o' soothin' syrup."

"What about the dog?"

"He could 'ave some soothin' syrup, too. 'Elp him with his teethin'."

The tout turned his back with a somewhat unnecessary regard for decency, produced a bank-note and flourished it.

"What's that?" asked Monkey.

"Little bit o' crumpled paper."

"Let's see it."

"You may smell it. Only don't touch."

"Will it drop to pieces?"

Joses swept away the other's appropriating hand.

"Might burn your fingers," he said. "That's what I'm thinking of. That's to buy you a bottle of Mother Siegel's soothing syrup. There's only one thing," he went on, brandishing the note in the moon. "Looks a wistful little thing, don't you think? That's because he's lonely. He's left four little brothers and sisters same as himself at home. And he's pining for 'em to join him. And join him they will to-morrow night—if you'll let me in to his loose-box."

Jaggers at his best never looked more self-righteous than Monkey Brand as he made reply:

"I couldn't let you into his loose-box, Mr. Joses," he said quietly. "Wouldn't be right. Only the door'll be on the latch, and if you choose to come in—why, who's to stop you?"

"Right," laughed the other. "I'm an artist, I am, as you may recall. I'd like to paint you in your sleep. Study of Innocence I should call it."

He dropped away into the darkness.

A whistle stopped him.

The little jockey was limping after him.

"Say to-night," he said.

"No," said the fat man. "To-morrow night. Sunday night. That's the night for good deeds."

At ten that night Jim Silver escorted Boy Woodburn across the yard to the foot of the ladder.

For a moment the two stood at the foot of the ladder in talk. Then the girl disappeared into the loft.

As Silver turned away he was whistling.

Monkey Brand, who was standing in the stable-door near by, lantern in hand, preparatory to taking up his watch in the young horse's box, coughed.

Silver turned and saw him.

"Good-night," he said.

"Yes, sir," said the little man, gazing up at the moon. "There *is* some good in him after all. *Some* good in us all, I s'poses."

Jim Silver approached him. He knew the little man well enough by now to know that he was always most round-about in his methods when he had something of importance to convey.

"In who?" he asked.

Monkey looked surprised and somewhat resentful.

"Why, Mr. Joses, o' cos."

"What's he done now?" asked the young man.

Monkey withdrew into the shadow of the door.

"That," he said, producing the five-pound note.

Jim handled it.

"What did he give you that for?"

"Why, for lookin' down me nose and sayin A-a men. The rest's to follow to-morrow midnight—five of 'em—if I'm a good boy, as I 'opes to be. Goin' to drop into me lap same as manners from the ceilin' when Moses was around—while I sleeps like a suckin' innocent."

The young man thought.

"Have you told Mr. Woodburn?"

"No, sir. I told no one—only you."

"Shall you tell the police?"

"Never!" cried Monkey, genuinely indignant. "Are I a copper's nark?"

Whether because of childhood memories, or for some other reason, the copper was still for Monkey Brand the enemy of the human race; and the little jockey had his own code of honour, to which he scrupulously adhered.

"What shall you do?" asked Jim.

The jockey jerked his head mysteriously. Then he limped away down the gangway, behind sleeping horses, into the loose-box at the end where stood Four-Pound-the-Second.

Carefully he closed the door behind the young man and put his lantern down.

"See, you thought I was on the crook, didn't you, sir?" he said ironically, pursing his eye-lids.

"So you are," replied the young man.

Monkey wagged his head sententiously.

"Oh, I'm on the crook all right in a manner o' speakin'," he admitted. "Only where it is, there's crooks and crooks. There's crooks that is on the straight—"

"And there's straights that is on the crook," interposed Jim. "As per item, Monkey Brand."

Next morning Silver went to see Old Mat in his office and opened to him a tale; but the trainer, who seemed very sleepy these days, refused to hear him.

"I knows nothin' about nothin'," he said almost querulously, pursing his lips, and sheathing his eyes. "As to rogues and rasqueals, you knows my views by now, Mr. Silver. Same as the Psalmist's, as I've said afore. As for the rest, I'm an old man—older nor I can recollect. All I asks is to lay down and die quiet and peaceable with nothin' on me conscience only last night's cheese."

CHAPTER XLIII
The Loose-box

Next night Boy Woodburn was unusually late to bed.

Sunday nights she always devoted to preparing the Bible-lesson for next week.

Of old she had always retired to her room in the loft after supper on Sunday to wrestle with her labours; but as her mother grew into years, the girl had adopted the habit of working in the parlour.

On this Sunday she worked on long after her father and mother had gone to bed, reading and making notes. Once the door opened, and she was dimly aware of Mr. Silver standing in it. He departed quietly as he had come without a word, but her subconsciousness noted vaguely and with surprise that he was wearing a greatcoat and muffler as if he was going out.

It was eleven o'clock when she closed her book and crossed the yard.

Under the ladder to the loft a door led to a woodshed at the end of the stable.

As she went up the ladder she heard somebody moving in the shed.

"Who's that?" she asked sharply.

There was no answer.

She descended and tried the door.

It was locked.

"That's all right, Boy," called a quiet voice. "It's only me."

"Mr. Silver," she cried. "What on earth are you up to?"

"After a rat."

"A queer time to choose."

"Yes," he said. "He's a big 'un. I'm sitting for him."

"Good-night then," she called, and ran up the ladder, heralded by the swift and ghostly Maudie.

The trap-door over Four-Pound-the-Second's box was open as always. She peeped down on to the back of the horse and Monkey Brand, busy by the light of his lantern, arranging a pile of horse-blankets in the corner on which to sleep.

"Where's Billy Bluff?" she asked.

"Just gone outside a minute, Miss."

Four-Pound-the-Second moved restlessly.

"Give him some water," she directed, "and settle him down as soon as you can."

"Very good, Miss," the little jockey answered.

It was an hour later that the stable-door clicked and Joses entered.

He was wearing rope-soled shoes, and he moved softly behind the long line of horses.

In his slouch hat and loose cloak he looked like a stage conspirator.

Monkey Brand was nodding on an upturned bucket.

As the fat man entered the loose-box, the great horse turned a shining eye on him and whinnied.

Monkey blinked, stirred, and grunted:

"'Ello!"

He smelt strongly of whiskey.

The tout, unheeding him, produced a twitch.

But Monkey rose with heavy eyes and jerked it irritably out of the other's hand.

"None o' that," he said.

He nodded to the open trap-door overhead.

"She sleeps up there, don't she?" whispered the fat man.

"She never sleeps," muttered the other. "Got the stuff?" he asked drowsily.

Joses produced a bottle from the pocket of his cloak.

Monkey looked around.

"Where's a blurry bucket?" he asked, and with faltering hands inverted the one on which he had been sitting.

"Put a drop of water in," urged the fat man.

The little man obeyed, moving uncertainly.

"Is he dry?" asked Joses.

"I wish I'd only 'alf his thirst," drowsed the other.

The fat man removed the cork from the bottle. Monkey seized it rudely and sniffed it.

"What is it?" he asked sullenly.

"Nothing to hurt him," said Joses soothingly. "Just take the shine out of him for a day or two."

The jockey was so drunk that he needed humouring. The tout cursed his faulty judgment in having given the little man money to spend before the deed had been done.

Monkey let his heavy-lidded eyes rest on the other. He was breathing almost stertorously. Then he pushed the bottle back toward Joses.

"I mush trush you," he said, "same as you trush me. You wouldn't deceive me, Oxford genelman and all."

"What d'you take me for?" answered Joses.

He poured the stuff into the bucket that Monkey held. It was dark and sweet-smelling. Four-Pound-the-Second sniffed with inflated nostrils.

"Hist!" cried Monkey.

"What's that?"

"Somebury at the door."

"The door's all right. I locked it."

"He's got a key."

"Who has?"

"Silver."

"Is he on the ramp?"

"Ain't he?" snorted Monkey. "Hundred thousand—and the gal." He added with a snort: "Thought I were a copper's nark. Good as told me so."

Joses stole down the gangway to the door.

When he came back Monkey was holding the bucket to Four-Pound-the-Second, who was drinking noisily.

"It was only the cat," he said. "I heard her scuttle."

"Don't it smell funny?" whispered Monkey, swirling the bucket gently under the horse's muzzle.

Joses patted the drinking horse.

"There's the beauty," he said. "Suck it down. It'll give you pleasant dreams."

Four-Pound-the-Second had his fill by now and moved away.

Joses picked up his twitch and made for the door.

Monkey placed himself between the fat man and the exit, heavy-lidded, stertorous, and menacing.

"One thing," he said.

"What's that?"

"Them little bits o' paper there was some talk about."

"Oh, aye, I was forgettin' them."

"Was you, then? I wasn't," said Monkey brutally. "Dole 'em out."

The fat man obeyed with a snigger; then shuffled softly down the passage and out.

Monkey Brand heard him open the door and cross the yard.

Then a voice called:

"Hi at him!"

There was a scurry of pursuing feet, a scuffle, and a yell.

The jockey rushed out into the yard.

Joses was disappearing over the gate, flinging something behind him, and Billy Bluff was smothered in a cape which he was worrying.

Jim Silver, racing across the yard, snatched the cape from the dog.

A window flung open.

Boy looked out.

"What is it?" she cried.

"It's all right, Miss," answered Monkey. "No 'arm done."

The girl came swiftly down the ladder in the moonlight. She was in her wrapper, her short hair massed.

"Is the horse all right?" she cried.

"Yes, Miss."

"Where's Billy Bluff?"

"There."

Silver turned his electric torch on to a far corner of the yard, where the dog was seen chewing a lump of meat.

Boy flung herself on him and tore it away.

"Hold him!" she cried to Jim. "Between your knees! Force his mouth open! Mind yourself now."

She brought the stable-hose to bear upon the dog's extended mouth. He wrestled hugely in the grip of the young man's knees, gasping, spluttering, whining for mercy. But mercy there was none. The girl drenched him with the hose, and the man who was holding him.

"Go and get the tandem whip!" she cried.

Monkey ran.

"Now stand at the gates, both of you, and don't let him through."

Boy seized the whip and hunted the dog about the yard. He fled madly. For five minutes the girl pursued him remorselessly. Then he was violently sick.

"That's better," panted the girl. "Bring that meat, Brand."

She led the way into Four-Pound-the-Second's horse-box, followed by Silver, torch in hand.

"*He's* not taken much harm," she said, patting the horse in her deliberate way.

A delicious little figure she made in her striped pyjamas, her wrapper girt about her, her feet bare in shining black pumps, and her short hair thick and curling about her neck.

Suddenly she was aware of her companion and withdrew into herself as she felt him watching her.

"Sweetheart honey," he purred, reaching out tender hands toward her.

She put up a warning finger.

"There's no one looking," he answered her.

"Yes, there is."

"Who?"

"Four-Pound."

"He don't matter."

"I'm not sure," she answered gravely. "He's a funny little look in his eye."

He was making passes close to her face and throat. She restrained him.

"Wait," she said gently.

He dropped his hands.

"I shall go back to bed now," she continued. "You'd better turn in, too—now you've caught your rat."

"I've cut off his tail anyway," laughed the young man, showing the cloak.

Swathed in her light wrapper, the little creature shuffled swiftly down the gangway behind the line of sleeping horses, her pumps, too big for her bare feet, clacking on the pavement.

He followed her heavily, his eyes brimming laughter and delight.

A few minutes later Silver joined Monkey Brand in the loose-box.

"Good little try-on, sir," said the jockey busily. "Funny smelling stuff though."

Removing a rug, he produced a bucket hidden beneath and held it to the other's nose.

"Chuck it down the drain," said the young man.

"'Alf a mo, sir," protested Monkey Brand. "Let me fill me bottle first."

He looked up at the young man with extraordinary cunning.

"Ever know'd a monkey get squiffy?" he asked confidentially. "No. Nor me neever."

CHAPTER XLIV
MONKEY BRAND GETS THE SACK

Joses was lying on his bed in the gray of dawn, looking curiously livid, when somebody whistled beneath his window.

He rose and looked out.

Monkey was standing morosely in the garden underneath.

The fat man beckoned him in, and returned to his bed.

The little jockey entered.

He was dark, sullen, dangerous.

"Well?" said the tout, lying in disarray upon the bed.

"I thought you'd done a get-away," said Monkey surlily.

"I've been queer," answered the other. "Has the stuff worked?"

"Worked!" cried the jockey, with smothered fury. "It's worked *my* trick all right. Never touched the 'orse. Run through him like so much water. The chemist who made up that stuff doped you and not the 'orse—and done me."

"What they done to you?"

"Took the cash off me, and give me the —— boot instead."

The tout considered.

"He's fit, is he?"

"Fit?" snorted the little man. "He's throwin' back-somersaults in his box. That's all."

"When do they box him for Liverpool?"

"Twelve-fifteen train."

Joses gathered himself with difficulty.

"See here, Brand," he said. "Are you straight?"

"Straight!" shouted Monkey. "Would I ha' sold the guv'nor I serve for twenty year if I wasn't straight."

The fat man pulled on his boots.

"Never say die till you're dead," he said. "We must go north, too. There's the last card and we must play it."

Nobody but those immediately concerned were at Polefax station to see the local National horse boxed for Liverpool.

Albert was there, and Boy, her collar about her ears, and Billy Bluff looking unusually dejected.

Old Mat, it was remarked by the porters, was not present; and Monkey Brand, it was also remarked, though at the station, took no part in the proceedings, huddling over the fire in the waiting-room, a desolate little figure of woe.

As the young horse entered his box at a siding, the train from Brighton came into the station.

Silver stepped out of it, a cloak over his arm.

He did not join the little group busy about the box, but made for the solitary figure watching from the far end of the platform.

"Your cloak, Mr. Joses," he said pleasantly.

"Thank you," replied the fat man, cold and casual. "I shall want it at Liverpool."

"You left it behind you last night."

"I did," admitted the other. "I was having a chat with Monkey Brand. And that brute of a dog came for me as I left."

"The bottle you brought's in the pocket," continued Silver.

"Good," said Joses. "I hope there's something in it."

"Nothing now."

"Ah, shame! You shouldn't hold out false hopes."

Silver's chin became aggressive.

"Doping's a crime, Mr. Joses."

"Is that so, Mr. Silver?"

"Your attempt to dope that horse last night puts you within the grip of the law."

"Who says I attempted to dope him?"

"I do."

"Any evidence to support your libellous statement?"

"What about the notes you gave Monkey Brand?"

The fat man laughed.

"So Monkey Brand's implicated, is he?" he said. "He took money from me to settle your horse, and leaked when he was in liquor. That's the story, is it?" He lifted his voice. "D'you hear that, Brand?"

"I hear," came the little sodden voice from the waiting-room. "And I says nothing. There's One Above'll see me right."

Joses shook his curls at Silver.

"Won't wash," he said. "Really it won't. What the lawyers call collusion. You didn't know I was trained for the Bar, did you? Another little surprise packet for you. Come, Mr. Silver, you must do a little better than that—an old hand like you."

The young man observed him with slow, admiring eyes.

"Joses," he said deliberately, "you're a clever rogue."

The fat man's eye became almost genial. He looked warily round, and then came a step closer.

"Ain't I?" he whispered.

Silver, laughing gently, handed him his cloak.

"Here it is," he said. "I'm keeping the little bit of paper that was in the pocket."

The other's pupils contracted.

"What paper's that?"

"The prescription of the dope mixture you handed in to Burgess and Williams, the Brighton chemists, yesterday morning. They put their stamp on it and the date. I've just come back from a chat with them."

The fat man watched the other as a rabbit watches a weasel.

"Are you going to peach?" he said.

"I'll tell you after the National," replied the other.

Joses dropped his voice into his boots.

"Make it a monkey and I'll quit," he muttered. "She's worth it," he added cunningly.

Silver looked at him.

The tout came a sudden step closer.

"I *know*," he whispered.

BOOK VI
MOCASSIN

CHAPTER XLV
AINTREE

The Grand National is always the great event of the chasing year. This year it was something more. As the American Ambassador in England, speaking at the Pilgrim's Club a week before the race, said, it was an international affair fraught with possibilities for two great peoples, one in blood and tongue and history, whom an unhappy accident had parted for a moment in the past.

The mare indeed was a magnet. At the time that England is loud with the voice of lambs, and the

arabis in Sussex gardens begins to attract the bees, she was drawing men to her from all the ends of the earth.

They came hurrying across the seas in their thousands to see the Hope of the Young Countries triumphant, and above all to compel fair play for their champion.

Indeed, there was an undeniable touch of defiance about the attitude of most of them. Last year the old folks at home—God bless em!—John Bull, the leariest of frank-spoken rogues!—had done her in.

The mare had won and had been disqualified. Those were the simple facts; and no casuistry by the cleverest of London lawyers could get away from them.

On the question of Chukkers and the Bully Boys, as the English cheap press called them, showed themselves eminently reasonable.

As they said themselves not without grimness, "Gee!—Don't we know Chukkers?—Didn't we riz him? His father was a Frisco Chink, and his mother a Mexican half-breed. You can tell us nothing about him we don't know. We admit it all. Wipe it out. If she'd been ridden by the straightest feller that ever sat in the pigskin the result'd have been the same. Are you going to give America best in your big race? Is John Bull a bleatin' baa-lamb?"

And so *Hands off and no Hanky-Panky* was the war-chaunt of the young American bloods whom great Cunarders vomited on to the docks at Liverpool and P.-and-O.'s landed at Tilbury to join the Ikey's Own, who had been on watch throughout the winter.

The National always takes place on the Friday of Aintree week.

All the week special trains were running Liverpool-ward from the ends of the British Isles. London, Glasgow, Cardiff, and Plymouth each sent their contingents speeding north on the same engrossing errand. All day and night people were turning out in their thousands, hanging over bridges, lining railway embankments, to see the great engines with the Kangaroo bound to their buffer-plates coming through, yes, and cheering them.

The Boys in the corridor trains stood at the windows with folded arms, watched the waving crowds grimly, and winked at each other.

They had a profound admiration for John Bull's capacity for roguery, and an equally profound belief in their own ability to go one better.

Last year J.B. had bested them—and they thought all the better of him for it. This year they meant to get their own back—and a bit more.

> *We are coming, Uncle Ikey, we are coming millions strong,*
> *For to see the haughty English don't do our Ikey wrong,*

they sang out of the windows with provocative enjoyment.

The people waving on the embankments were in fact innocent of crime, committed or conceived. They had no champion of their own, and with a certain large simplicity they hailed as theirs the mare who had crossed the seas to trample on them.

Liverpool made holiday for the occasion.

The Corporation feasted its American visitors, while the big ship-owners gave a dance at the Wellington Rooms.

The Adelphi Hotel was the headquarters of the Beyond-the-Seas folk, and it was full to overflowing. In the huge dining-room, where every year the Waterloo Cup dinner is held, there was an immense muster the night before the race. Lord Milburn, the Prime Minister, was there, with the Mayor of Liverpool on his left, and the American Ambassador upon his right. One famous Ex-President of the Great Republic was present, and many of the most distinguished citizens of the two countries; Ikey Aaronsohnn with his eternal twinkle, was there, and Jaggers looking like a Church of England Bishop. Chukkers alone was absent. And he was lying low upstairs, it was said, with one of Ikey's Own at his bedside, and another over his door, to see that no harm befell him before the great day dawned. America might not like the great jockey, but she meant him to ride her mare to victory.

Lord Milburn, a somewhat ponderous gentleman, well-known with the Quorn, a representative Imperialist statesman, was at his best. And if his best was never very good, at least his references to Mocassin brought down the house.

"She is something moa than the best steeplechaser that ever looked through a bridle-ah," he announced in his somewhat portentous way. "She is—in my judgment—the realization of a dream. In her have met once more the two great streams of the Anglo-Saxon race. You have every right to be proud of hah; and so, I venture to say, have we. For we of the old country claim our share in the mare. She comes, I say, in the last resort—the last resort—of English thoroughbred stock. (Cheers, Counter-cheers.) And if she wins to-morrah—as she will (cheers), 'Given fair play'" came a voice from the back. "*That* she will get—(cheers and boos)—the people of this country will

rejoice that another edifice has been laid to the mighty brick—ah of Anglo-Saxon fellowship on which the hope, and I think I may say, the happiness of the world depends."

The evening ended, as the Liverpool *Herald* reported, at two in the morning, when Abe Gideon, the bark-blocks comedian, was hoisted on to the table and sang the *Mocassin Song* to a chorus that set the water in the docks rocking.

CHAPTER XLVI
The Sefton Arms

Old Mat never stopped in Liverpool for the big race.

That was partly because everybody else did, and partly because he always preferred The Sefton Arms upon the course. When his little daughter first took to accompanying her dad to the National she used to stay the night with a Methodist cousin of her mother's and join her father on the course next morning.

This time she refused point-blank to favour Cousin Agatha, and further refused to argue the matter. She was going with her father to The Sefton Arms. Mrs. Woodburn was genuinely distressed, so much so indeed that Silver heard her hold forth for the first time in his knowledge of her on the modern mother's favourite theme—the daughter of to-day.

Old Mat gave her little sympathy.

"She's said she's goin', so goin' she is," he grunted matter-of-factly. "No argifyin's no good when she's said that. You might know that by now, Mar."

He added, to assuage his wife, that Mr. Silver was going to stop with them at The Sefton Arms.

"He's better than some," said the old lady almost vengefully.

"Now then, Mar-r-r!" cried the old man, "You're gettin' a reg'lar old woman, you are."

When his wife had left the room in dudgeon:

"It's silly," grunted the trainer. "'Course she wants to be on the course. It's only in Natur. It's her hoss, and her race. She ain't goin' to run no risks. And I don't blame her neether. There's only one way o' seein' a thing through as I've ever know'd, and that's seein' it through yourself."

Mrs. Woodburn's good-bye to her daughter was cold as it was wistful.

At the garden-gate Boy turned and waved.

"Cheer, mum!" she cried.

Her mother, standing austerely on the steps of the house, did not respond.

"I shall be back on Saturday," called the girl as she climbed into the buggy.

That was on the Monday.

On that day Boy and Albert and Billy Bluff took the young horse north, travelling all the way in his box.

At Euston it was evident something out of the way was forward. There was hardly a crowd at the station, but expectant folk were gathered here and there in knots and there were more police than usual about.

The secret was soon out.

Jaggers, with the air of the Grand Inquisitor, appeared on the platform with his head-lad, Rushton. The trainer entered into talk with a man whom Albert informed his mistress was a cop in plain clothes.

"Place swarms with 'em," the youth whispered. "And Ikey's Own. They're takin' no chances."

In fact, Mocassin and her two stable-companions were travelling on the same train as the Putnam horse.

As Albert remarked, not without complacency:

"One thing. If there's a smash we're all in it."

At Aintree the crowd, which somehow always knows, had gathered to see the crack. They didn't see much but four chestnut legs and a long tail; but what they saw was enough to satisfy them.

You could swaddle her like a corpse from muzzle to hocks, and from withers to fetlock, but the Queen of Kentucky's walk was not to be mistaken. And as she came out of her box on to the platform, treading daintily, the little gathering raised the familiar slogan that told she was betrayed.

Boy let the favourite get well away before she unboxed her horse. There was nobody about by then but a small urchin who jeered:

"Say, lydy! is yon what they call a camel-leopard?"

The little party had the road to themselves, and passed unheeded.

The Billjim Guard were escorting the favourite to the yard, and the crowd were escorting the Billjims.

When Four-Pound-the-Second reached the yard with his three satellites twenty minutes later, the backwash of the crowd still eddied and swirled about the entrance.

The policeman on the gate made a fuss about admitting Billy Bluff. But the head yard-man, who knew Mat Woodburn's daughter almost as well as he knew his own, interfered on her behalf.

"He'll sleep in my horse's box," Boy explained.

"Won't your horse sleep without him, Miss?" grinned the yard-man.

"Not so well," answered the girl.

"Oh, let him in," said the other. "Pity to spoil that horse's beauty sleep. Might lose his looks."

Boy could never bring herself to titter at the jokes of those whom it was expedient to placate. Happily Albert was at hand to make amends, and he, to be sure, had no qualms of conscience.

The little procession entered, Billy Bluff at the heels of the great horse, striking fire in the dusk from the cobbled yard.

"He's to look after Chukkers, I suppose," said the yard-man grimly, pleased at his own generosity, well satisfied with his wit, and fairly so with Albert's tribute to it.

"He's to look after my horse," said Boy resolutely.

"He looks he could look after himself, Miss," replied the witty yard-man.

"So he can, sir, with you to help him," said the swift and tactful Albert.

The yard-man, who could tell you stories of Boomerang's National, and Cannibal's victory, that not even Monkey Brand could surpass, knew of old the feeling between Putnam's and the Dewhurst stable, and had placed the boxes of the two horses far apart.

All through the week the excitement grew.

The Sefton Arms was seething; the bar a slowly heaving mass of racing-men, jockeys, touts, habitués.

Once or twice there were rows between Ikey's Own—the Yankee doodlers, as the local wits called them—and the English silver-ring bookies; and the cause of the quarrels was invariably the same —the treatment of the mare at last year's National.

Throughout the week Boy went her quiet, strenuous way, unconscious of the commotion about her, or careless of it.

Jim Silver escorted her to and from the yard. Most people knew Old Mat's daughter and respected her; and those who did not, respected the grave-faced young giant who was her constant attendant.

When the pair passed swiftly through the bar, an observer would have noticed that a hush fell on the drinkers, accompanied by surreptitious elbow-nudgings and significant winks.

It was clear that the young couple were of secret interest to the dingy crowd. And in fact there were rumours afloat about them—sensational stories not a few about what they stood to win in love upon the race.

Monkey Brand and Joses were always drinking together in the bar as Silver walked through. Once he passed quite close to them. The little jockey's glassy eye rested meaninglessly on the young man's face and wandered away. When the other had moved on, he dropped his eyelid and muttered to his pal:

"Wants the —— kybosh puttin' on him. Good as called me a copper's nark."

"Hundred thousand in the pot," grinned the fat man. "And a dainty bit o' white meat. I don't blame him." He licked his lips.

There were few more familiar figures at the bar of The Sefton Arms at National time than that of Monkey Brand, and this year few more pathetic ones.

It was soon bruited abroad that Old Mat and his head-lad had parted after more years of association than many cared to recall. And it was clear that the little man felt the rupture. He wandered morosely through the crowd in the train of his fat familiar like a lost soul outside the gates of Paradise. Usually a merry sprite, the life and soul of every group he joined, he was under the weather, as the saying went, and what was still more remarkable he showed it.

Everybody was aware of the facts, though nobody knew the story.

The Duke, who was genuinely fond of the little jockey, and full of vulgar curiosity, coming upon him two nights before the race, stopped him.

"I'm sorry to hear you and Mr. Woodburn have parted after all these years, Brand," he said in his gruff way.

"Thank you, your Grace," said the little jockey, pinching his lips.

The Duke waited. Nothing happened, but Monkey poked his chin in the air, and swallowed.

"I thought you were set for life," continued the Duke slowly.

"I thought so, too, your Grace," answered the jockey. "But the human 'eart's a funny affair—very funny, as the sayin' is."

Long ago he had acquired the trick of moralizing from his old master.

"What's the trouble, then?" grunted the Duke.

He was greatly curious and honestly concerned.

"Thought I were sellin' him," muttered Monkey.

The Duke bent shaggy brows upon the little man.

"Were you?" he asked.

For a moment the old merry Monkey rose from the dead and twinkled. Then he stiffened like a dead man, touched his hat, and turned away.

The Duke clung to him.

He, too, had heard a story, and wished to know the rights and wrongs of it.

"Well, well," he said. "We must all hope the Putnam horse wins—for Mr. Silver's sake. Eh, what?"

"Yes, your Grace," replied the uncommunicative Monkey.

The night before the race the Duke, still hunting the trail tenaciously, stumbled, according to his own account, on Old Mat, and reported the substance of his interview with Monkey in that ingenuous way of his, half simple, half brutal, and all with an astonishing *savoir-faire* you would never have given him credit for.

"One thing," he ended, "he ain't blackguardin' you."

Mat seemed lost in memories.

"I wep' a tear. I did reely," he said at last. Then he shook a sorrowful head. "I ain't one o' yer whitewings meself," he said. "Not by no means. But he shock me, Monkey do. He does reely." He dabbed his eye. "Rogues and rasqueals, yer Grace," he said. "All very well. But there is a limit, as the Psalmist very proply remarked."

The Duke turned to go, his curiosity still unsatisfied.

"Where's Boy?" he asked gruffly. "I've seen nothing of her this time."

"She's kep' busy, your Grace—nursin' the baby."

"How is he?"

"Keeps a-crowin'," said the old man, "from all I hears of it."

CHAPTER XLVII
On the Course

Next morning was gray with gleams of sun: an ideal day, old hands said, for the great race of the year.

Mat found his way to the Paddock early and alone.

At Aintree everything is known about the notables by everybody, and there were few more familiar figures than that of the old man with the broad shoulders, the pink face, and the

difficulty in drawing breath.

It was twenty odd years since Cannibal had won the big race for him; and this year it was known that he had only come up to see the sport. True he had a horse running, down on the card as Four-Pound-the-Second, brown gelding, five years old, green jacket and cap, ten stone; but he was an any-price outsider, only entered because for something like fifty years there had never been a National in which a Putnam horse had not played a part. And rumour had it that Four-Pound was a rum un even for Putnam's.

As Mat entered the Paddock, he was looking round him—for his missing daughter, observers said.

Jaggers and Ikey Aaronsohnn marked him from afar and told off a couple of the Boys to track him from a respectful distance.

The old man's familiar figure, his queer clothes, and reputation as a character, drew others toward him. He lilted heavily across the Paddock with a word to one, a nod to another, a wink for a third, talking all the time and breathing like a grampus, with a little crowd of tittering nondescripts swirling in his wake and hanging on his words.

"Don't 'ave nothin' to do wi' me. That's my adwice to you. I'm Old Mat. You oughter know that by this. No, I ain't goin' to walk round the course this year. As I says, the course don't change, but I does. If the course wants me to see it, it must walk round me. I've done the proper thing be the course this sixty year. Now it's the course's turn. *Good morning, Mr. Jaggers*. Yes, I see him, and he see me—only he look the other way. Pretty little thing, ain't he? Reminds me of that foreign chap went on the religious ramp in Italy. I seen his picture at Mr. Haggard's. Savierollher, wasn't it? They burnt him; and I don't blame 'em. He was Jaggers's father I *'ave* 'eard. Only you mustn't 'and it on, else you might get me into trouble."

He crossed the course, looked at the water opposite the Grand Stand, and examined the first fence lugubriously.

"Time was I could ha' hop it off one foot," he said. "Something's 'appened. Must 'ave."

Then he returned to the Paddock, passing a bookie with uplifted hand of protest.

"Get away from me, Satan," he said. "Don't tempt an old man what's never fell yet."

"I know all about that, Mr. Woodburn," grinned the bookie.

"I got my principles same as them as 'asn't," continued the old man, marching firmly on. "You go and tell that to the Three J's, Mr. Buckland. There they are be the Grand Stand. No, when I gets back to Mar there'll be nothin' to show her only a blank bettin' book." He stopped quite suddenly and dropped his voice to a whisper: "Anything doin', Mr. Buckland?"

His little following roared.

"Favourite fours. Nothing else wanted, Mr. Woodburn," said the amused man. "It's just the day for the mare."

"Fours," said the old man. "Price shorter nor ever I remember it since Cloister's year. It's a cert. for the Three J's. What about my little ride-a-cock-horse, Mr. Buckland?"

The bookmaker referred to his card.

"Four-Pound-the-Second," he said. "Give you forties."

"Forties!" guffawed Old Mat. "A young giraffe like him, dropped this spring in the Sarah desert under a cocoanut shy. Four *hundred* and forties I thought you was goin' to say. 'Ark to him!" He appealed to the delighted crowd. "Offers me forties against my pantomime colt, and ain't ashamed of himself. I'd ha' left him at home in the menadgeree along o' the two-'eaded calf and the boy with blue hair if I'd known."

"He's a powerful great horse, Mr. Woodburn," smiled the bookie.

"Hoss!" cried the outraged old man. "'Ave you seen him? He ain't a hoss at all. He's a he-goat. Only I've shave the top of him to took you all in. He's comin' on at the 'alls to-night after the race. Goin' to sit on a stool and sing *The Wop 'em Opossum*, specially composed by me and Mar for this occasion only."

He lilted on his way.

By noon the Paddock was filling, and the Carriage Enclosure becoming packed.

People began to blacken the railway embankment, to gather in knots all round the course at likely places, to line the Canal.

In the crowd you could hear the dialects of every county in England mingling with accents of the young countries beyond the seas.

At noon the Duke and his party crossed the Paddock.

"You won't join us, Mat?" he called. "I've got a saloon on the Embankment."

"No, sir, thank you," said the old man. "Mat's corner in the Grand Stand'll find me at home as usual come three o'clock."

The Duke paused. He was still hunting the trail.

"If you see Boy before the race, tell her we'll be glad if she cares to join us."

The trainer shook his head.

"Thank you kindly, your Grace. She always goes to the Stand by the Canal Turn when Chukkers is riding."

There was a chuckle from the bystanders.

"He's ridin' this time' all right, from all I hear," said the Duke grimly.

"You're right, sir," answered the old man. "Last night he was countin' his dead in his sleep. The policeman what was over his door to see no lady kidnap him for his looks heard him and tell me."

The jockey, who was passing at the moment, stopped.

"Say it agin," he cried fiercely.

The old trainer was face to face with one of the only two men in the world to whom he felt unkindly.

"Ain't once enough, then?" he asked tartly.

The jockey walked on his way.

"Ah, you're an old man, Mr. Woodburn," he called back. "*You* take advantage."

"I may be old, but I am *white*," called the old man after him, his blue eye lighting.

"Oh, come, come!" cried the Duke, delighted, as he hurried after his party. "Where's Mrs. Woodburn?"

Chukkers joined the two J's, who were hobnobbing with some of Ikey's Own under the Grand Stand.

Monkey Brand and Joses stood together on the outskirts of the group.

Jaggers, austere as the Mogul Emperor, approached the tout.

"You're a monkey down, Joses," he said, cold and quiet. "The Putnam horse is starting."

The other smiled.

"He's starting, sir," he said. "But he's not winning."

Jaggers blinked at him.

"What d'you mean?"

"I mean the race isn't lost yet, and mayn't be—even if the mare don't win."

He moved away, and Monkey followed him.

Jaggers joined his colleagues.

"What did he say?" asked Ikey in his eager yet wary way.

The trainer told him.

"Thinks he knows something," muttered the little Levantine, his brown face thoughtful.

"Kiddin' he do," grunted Chukkers, sucking his charm.

Ikey looked after the retreating fat man.

"He's collared Monkey Brand anyway," he said.

"If Monkey ain't collared him," retorted the jockey.

The moods of the three men were various and characteristic: Jaggers glum and uncertain, Ikey confident, Chukkers grim.

"Who's riding the Putnam horse?" asked Ikey.

"Albert Edward," Jaggers replied.

Chukkers removed his charm from his mouth.

"I ain't afraid o' him," he said. "He's never rode this course afore. It'll size him up."

"What's the price o' Four-Pound?" asked Ikey.

"Forties," answered Chukkers, biting home.

The little Levantine was surprised, as those Simian eyebrows of his revealed.

"Forties!" he said. "I thought he was a hundred to one."

"So he were a week since," answered Chukkers surlily. "Silver's been plankin' the dollars on."

"Ah, that ain't all," said Jaggers gloomily. "The Ring knows something. Here, Rushton, go and see what they're layin' Four-Pound."

The head-lad went and returned immediately.

"Thirties offered, sir. No takers."

Jaggers shook his head.

"I don't like it," he said.

All morning, carriages, coaches, silent-moving motorcars, char-à-bancs with rowdy parties, moke-carts, people on bicycles and afoot, streamed out of Liverpool.

By one o'clock people were taking their places in the Grand Stand. Everywhere America was in the ascendant, good-humoured, a thought aggressive. Phalanxes of the Boys linked arm to arm were sweeping up and down the course, singing with genial turbulence

Hands off and no hanky-panky.

To an impartial onlooker the attitude of the two great peoples toward each other was an interesting study. Both were wary, ironical, provocative, and perfect tempered. They were as brothers, rivals in the arena, who having known each other from nursery days, cherish no romantic and sentimental regard for each other, are aware of each other's tricks, and watchful for them while still maintaining a certain measure of mutual respect and even affection.

When the American crowd surged up and down the course roaring magnificently,

The star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave,

the counter-marching Englishmen met them with the challenging,

The land of Hope and Glory
The Mother of the Free.

With any other peoples rioting and bloodshed would have ensued. Here, apart from an occasional cut-and-dry battle between two enthusiastic individuals in the fringes of the crowd, there was never any need for police interference.

There were two flat races before the National. The horses were gathering for the first when Albert in his shirt sleeves bustled across the Paddock.

A whistle stopped him and he turned.

"'Ullo, Mr. Brand!"

"Where are you off to?"

"I'm goin' to dress now."

"You're early."

"First race is starting."

"How's the horse?"

"Keeps a-lingerin' along."

"Who's with him?"

"Mr. Silver."

The fat man chimed in:

"Where's the lady, then?"

Albert looked blank.

"I ain't seen her," he said. "Believe she's walking round the course."

Joses laughed.

"I should have thought you'd have been the one to walk round the course," he said.

"I been," replied the lad keenly.

"And what d'you think of it?" asked Monkey.

The youth rubbed his stomach with the most delicate consideration.

"Pore Albert," he said. "That's what I think. They're a yard through some of 'em. You clears 'em clean or—it's amen, so be it, good-bye to the totties, and no flowers by request."

He bustled on his way.

Monkey nudged his mate.

"Keeps it up," he muttered.

"Proper," the other answered.

The second race was run and won. Two o'clock came and went. The jockeys began to emerge from the dressing-room under the Grand Stand. Monkey Brand and Joses watched the door.

"Where's green then?" muttered the tout, as the expected failed to show.

"'Ush!" said Monkey at his elbow.

The fat man turned.

At the far side of the Paddock, by the gate, the looked-for jockey had appeared out of nowhere.

The green of his cap betrayed him, and the fact that old Mat was in close conversation with him.

He wore a long racing-coat, and his collar was turned up. Indeed, apart from his peaked cap drawn down over his eyes and his spurs, little but coat was to be seen of him.

"Where did he spring from?" asked Joses, and began to move toward the jockey.

His companion stayed him suddenly.

Billy Bluff, who had evaded the police, and dodged his way into the Paddock, raced up to the jockey and began to squirm about him, half triumphant, half ashamed.

The fat man stopped dead and stared, with his bulging eyes.

"Straight!" he cried, and smote his hands together.

The jockey cut at the dog with his whip, and then the police came up and hunted him back into the road.

At the moment the band struck up the National Anthem, and the Knowsley party, including the King, the American Ambassador, and Lord Milburn, crossed the Paddock swiftly toward Lord Derby's box.

Suddenly the strains of the band were drowned by an immense roar of cheering.

Mocassin was being led into the Paddock.

Nothing could be seen of her. Ikey's Own had formed a close-linked phalanx about her. No Englishman might penetrate that jealous barrier or help to form it. Within its sacred circle the mare was being stripped and saddled.

Then there came another roar.

Chukkers was up in the star-spangled jacket.

The famous jockey sat above the heads of the crowd, and indulged in the little piece of swagger he always permitted himself. Very deliberately he tied the riband of his cap over the peak while the eyes of thousands watched him. As he did so the crowd about him stirred and parted. A girl passed through. It was the American Ambassador's daughter. She handed the jockey a tricolour cockade, which he fixed gallantly in front of his cap. It was clear that he was in the best of humours, for he exchanged chaff with his admirers, adding a word to Jaggers as he gathered his reins.

Settling in the saddle, he squeezed the mare.

She reared a little as though to gratify the desire of those at the back for a peep at her.

As she left the Paddock and entered the course, the people rose to her *en masse*. Storms of cheers greeted her and went bellowing round the course. The Canal tossed them back to the Grand Stand, and the Embankment was white with waving handkerchiefs.

Mocassin! Mocassin! Mocassin!

All eyes were on the mare, and the great brown horse, in the far corner of the Paddock, was stripped, and his jockey astride, before half a dozen people were aware of his presence.

By the time Jaggers and Ikey had observed him, he was on the move.

The two J's, Monkey Brand and Joses, crossed toward him, but there was no getting near that tumultuous earth-shaker in brown. Jim Silver was at his head, and, strong as the young man was, he had all his work cut out to hold the horse as he bounced across the Paddock, scattering his crowd with far-reaching heels.

"'Ware horse!" rose the cry.

"Give him room!"

"Look out for his heels!"

"Steady the beauty!"

Plunging across the Paddock, to the disturbance of everybody but the little jockey with the fair hair, who swung to his motions as a flower, fast in earth, swings to the wind, he tore out of the Paddock amid the jeers and laughter of some and the curses of others.

"Smart!" said Joses.

"My eye!" answered Monkey Brand.

Jim Silver, panting after his run, joined Old Mat.

The two made toward the Grand Stand.

In front of them a middle-aged man, soberly dressed, and a tall girl were walking.

"That's the American Ambassador," muttered the old man as they passed. "Come with Lord Derby's party. Great scholar, they say. That's his daughter."

The tall Ambassador with the stoop paused to let the other couple go by.

Then he nodded at the young man's back.

"Mr. Silver," he murmured in his daughter's ear. "And the old gentleman's *her* father."

The girl was alert at once. She, too, had heard the tales.

"Is it?" she cried. "Where's she?"

"I don't know," the other answered.

"I *hope* they win," said the girl—"in some ways."

Her father smiled.

"You're no American," he scoffed. "You're a woman. That's all you are."

CHAPTER XLVIII
The Star-Spangled Jacket

As the two men took their places, the parade in front of the Grand Stand was in full swing.

There was a big field: some thirty starters in all.

The favourite, as the top weight, led them by at a walk.

She was quite at her ease, yet on fire as always, snatching at her bit in characteristic style. Chukkers rode her with long and easy rein, as though to show he trusted her. As she came by, the Grand Stand began to sing with one voice:

The maid of our mountains—
Mocassin's her name!
The speed of the panther;
The heart of the flame;
The Belle of the Blue Ridge,
The hope of the plain,
The Queen of Kentucky,
O, lift her again—

Chanted thus by tens of thousands of voices, singing round the course and up into the heavens, and culminating in the roaring slogan—

Mocassin! Mocassin! Mocassin!

the simple song became for the moment clothed in vicarious majesty.

Jim Silver felt the thrill of it, as did his companion.

"Mar'd like that," said Old Mat sentimentally. "She's same as me. She likes hymns."

The object of the enthusiasm seemed unconscious of it.

She came by at that swift pattering walk of hers—like a girl going marketing as her lovers said—amid the comments of her admirers.

"She's all right, sure!"

"Don't she nip along?"

"He looks grim, Chukkers do."

"Yes; he's for it this time."

"They've injected her—American style."

"Never!"

"They have, my son. Trust Jaggers. Can't leave it to Nature. Must always go one better."

"Ikey's got two other horses in."

"Which?"

"There's old Jackaroo—in the purple and gold, Rushton riding."

"Which is the second Dewhurst horse?"

"This in the canary. Flibberty-gibbet. Little Boy Braithwaite."

"He's only a nipper."

"He can ride, though."

"They're to nurse the crack through the squeeze."

"She'll want nursing."

"She's all right if she stands up till Beecher's Brook."

"She'll stand up. Trust Chukkers."

"He's got nothing to beat."

"Only Moonlighter."

"Which *is* the Irish horse?"

"The gray there. Cerise and white."

"Flashy thing."

"Yes. He'll give no trouble though. Three mile and a half is his limit."

"Here's Gee-Woa, the Yorkshireman."

"Looks an old-fashioned sort."

"He can jump a haystack and stay all day; but he can't get a move on."

"If there's grief enough he might get home, though."

"There's Kingfisher. The West-country crack. Bay and two white ducks."

Last but one came Four-Pound-the-Second with his little fair jockey up. The horse was so big, and the jockey so small, that a laugh went up as the pair came by.

"What's this in green, then?"

"Old Mat's horse. Four-Pound-the-Second. Ten stun."

"Anything known of him?"

"Won a small race at Lingfield."

"Who's riding?"

"One o' the Putnam lads. Carries his prayer-book in his pocket. Mar makes 'em—for luck!"

"He can foot it."

"I'd like to see a walkin'-race between that mare and the big un. What's his price?" He leaned over to the ring below and asked.

"Twenties," came the answer.

Jaggers heard and nudged Ikey.

The Putnam horse marched by, blowing his nose, and in front of the Grand Stand gave a playful little buck as much as to say: "I would if I could, but I won't."

Then Chukkers swung round and led the horses back to the starting-point.

"Only one thing I wish," muttered Old Mat in his companion's ear. "I wish there'd been rain in the night. Twelve-stun-three'd steady Miss Mustang through the dirt."

"Our horse has got a little bit in hand," replied the young man.

"You're right, sir," answered the other.

The gossip came and went about the pair. Neither heard nor indeed heeded it. The old man was easy, almost nonchalant; the young man quiet and self-contained.

The horses drew up to the right, their backs to the Grand Stand, a long, swaying line of silken jackets shimmering in the sun.

Old Mat's face became quietly radiant.

"Pretty, ain't it?" he said. "Like a bed o' toolups swaying in the wind. I wish Mar could see that. Worst o' principles, they cuts you off so much."

He raised his glasses.

"Where's Chukkers? Oh, I see. In the middle, and his buffer-hosses not too fur on eether side of him. That's lucky for Chukkers. One thing, my little baa-lamb'll take a bit o' knockin' out."

"Where is he?" asked Silver.

"Away on the right there," answered the old man. "Doin' a cake-walk on the next hoss's toes."

There was very little trouble at the post. The starter got his field away well together at the first drop of the flag.

Only one was left, and that was green.

The great horse who had been sparring with the air as the flag fell came down from aloft and got going a long six lengths behind the field.

Neither he nor his rider seemed the least concerned.

"That's my little beauty," muttered Old Mat. "He'll start his own time, he will. Maybe to-day; maybe to-morrow; maybe not at all. One thing, though: he *has* started."

The brown horse was pulling out to the right to lie on the outside.

The old trainer nodded approvingly.

"That's right, my boy," he said. "You let 'em rattle 'emselves to bits, while you lays easy behind. There'll be plenty o' room in front in a moment or two."

An old hand in a white top-hat just in front turned round.

"That lad o' yours rides cunning, Mr. Woodburn," he said.

"He's a fair card, he is," replied the old man enigmatically.

"Was it deliberate?" asked an ingenious youth.

"Who shall say, my son?" replied the old trainer. "Only the grass-'opper what walketh the tiles by night—same as the Psalmist says."

The scramble and scrimmage at the first few fences resulted in plenty of grief. Jockeys were rising from the ground and running off the course, and loose horses were pursuing their perilous way alone.

Behind the first flight, in the centre of the course, showed conspicuous the Star-spangled Jacket of the favourite.

Chukkers, too, was taking his time, running no risks, his eyes everywhere, calculating his chances, fending off dangers as they loomed up on him one after the other. He was drawing in to the rails on his left flank for security from cannoning horses.

The first few fences behind him, the danger of a knock-out would be greatly lessened. Till then it was most grave. Chukkers was aware of it; so were the tens of thousands watching; so were his stable-mates.

As Chukkers crossed to the rails Jackaroo, who lay in front on the inside, drew away to let the favourite up under his lee. Flibberty-gibbet, on the other hand, the second Dewhurst horse, had been bumped at the first fence, and pecked heavily on landing. Little Boy Braithwaite in the canary jacket had been unshipped, and was scrambling about on his horse's neck. He lay now a distance behind. Chukkers was signalling furiously with his elbow for the boy to come up on his right; and he had cause.

For Kingfisher, the West-country horse, riderless and with trailing reins, was careering alongside

him like a rudderless ship in full sail.

For two fences the loose horse and the favourite rose side by side; and the watchers held their breath.

Then the bay began to close in.

Chukkers turned and screamed over his shoulder. Rushton on Jackaroo still two lengths in front looked round and saw he could do nothing.

Little Boy Braithwaite, who had at last recovered his seat, came up like thunder on the quarters of the mare. The lad drove the filly at the loose horse and rammed him in the flank.

A groan went up from the assembled thousands.

"Good boy!" roared the Americans.

"Dead boy, ye mean," muttered Old Mat. "He's got it."

Horse and boy went down together in headlong ruin. Flibberty-gibbet rose with difficulty and limped away with broken leg and nodding head. The boy rolled over on his face and lay still under the heavens, his canary jacket like a blob of mustard on the green.

The women in the crowd caught their breath.

"Yes, he's done," muttered Mat, "Saved the Three J's a quarter of a million, though."

"But she's through," commented Silver.

"Don't you believe it," grumbled the old man.

The sacrifice, indeed, seemed to have been in vain. Kingfisher staggered under the shock, recovered, and came sailing up once more, as it might have been deliberately, alongside the mare.

Chukkers leaned far out and slashed the oncoming bay across the face; and the crowds on the Embankment and in the saloon-carriages on the railway heard distinctly the swish-swish of the falling whip.

A groan of satisfaction went up from the taut onlookers. Chukkers's action had cleared him. Indeed he had killed two birds with one stone, and nearly a third. Kingfisher shied away over the course and crossed the path of Gee-Woa, who was going steady on the right. Both horses went down. Surging along behind the Yorkshireman, calm and unconcerned by the flurry and rush and confusion in front, came a great brown horse, the last of the galloping rout. He flew the ruin of men and horses broadcast before him on the grass, bounced twice, as Old Mat said, and cleared the fence in front with a foot to spare.

"Double!" roared the crowd, applauding horse and horseman alike.

Jim Silver sighed.

"Nearly bounced you, Mr. Woodburn," said the White Hat in front. "That lad of yours can ride."

"Bounce is the boy," answered the old man. "Nothing like it. Now there's more room."

"Where's Miss Woodburn?" asked the garrulous White Hat.

"In heaven, my lord, I 'opes," answered the other, wiping his eye.

The old gentleman looked foolish and made a face.

"Oh, dear. I'm sorry. I hadn't heard."

"No 'arm done, sir," replied the trainer gently. "These things will 'appen. Seems we're most of us mortal when our time comes." He adjusted his glasses. "Yes. Mare's through now. Layin' down to it nice."

Indeed, the troubles of the favourite were over for the present. Either Jackaroo was coming back to her, or she was coming up with the old horse. The star-spangled jacket and the purple and gold were together, the mare lying between the rails and her stable-companion.

As the field swung left-handed and passed parallel to the Grand Stand on the far side of the course, the light-weights were still well together in front and bunched like a covey of partridges. Then came the favourite and her stable-companion, rising fence for fence; after them a chain of stragglers; and bringing up the rear, rollicking along with his head in his chest, revelling in his work, the twenty-to-one outsider.

"So far so good," said Mat, "as the man said when he was 'alf-way through cuttin' his throat."

The American contingent breathed afresh, and the bookies were looking glum. Once over Beecher's Brook the first time round, with half the field down, the chance of a knock-out reduced, and Gee-Woa and Kingfisher grazing peacefully under the Embankment, the favourite's chances had greatly increased.

True, the gray Moonlighter in the cerise and white was in the lead and going like a snowstorm;

but not a man among the tens of thousands on the course who did not know that four miles and a half was a mile too much for the Irishman.

"What price the favourite?" roared the Boys.

"Threes," said the bookies, and gave them grudgingly.

"They're settlin' down to it now," muttered Old Mat. "Favourite's goin' strong. Gallops like a engine, don't she? I like to see her."

Those who were watching through their glasses marked that a fence before the Canal Turn the star-spangled jacket and the purple and gold seemed to be taking council together.

"Goin' to turn on the tap now, you'll see," said the old man.

He was right.

Chukkers, indeed, never varied the way he rode his races on the mare. In truth, part of his greatness as a jockey lay in the fact that he adapted his methods to his horse. Very early in his connection with Mocassin he had discovered the unfailing way to make the most of her. It was said of him that he always won his victories on her in the first half-mile. That was an exaggeration; but it was the fact that he invariably sat down to race at a time when other jockeys were just settling in their saddles. At Liverpool he always began to ride the mare after Valentine's Brook first time round, and had beaten his field and won his race long before he began the second lap.

As it chanced, too, the mare's fiery spirit suited exactly the daring temperament of the great horseman. The invincible couple waited behind till the ranks began to thin and then came through with the hurricane rush that had become famous. A consummate judge of pace, sure of himself, sure of his mount, Chukkers never feared to wait in front; and the mare, indeed, was never happy elsewhere. Once established in the pride of place, the fret and fever left her, she settled down to gallop and jump, and jump and gallop, steady as the Gulf Stream, strong as a spring-tide, till she had pounded her field to pieces.

The thousands waiting for the Mocassin rush were not disappointed.

The turn for home once made, and Valentine's Brook with its fatal drop left behind, the mare and her stable-mate came away like arrows from the bow.

She lay on the rails, her guardian angel hard on her right.

Jackaroo might be old, but he was still as good a two-miler as any in England.

The pair caught their horses one after one and left them standing; and the roar of the multitude was like that of the sea as the defeated host melted away behind.

At last only the Irish horse refused to give place to the importunate pair. Twice they challenged, and twice the gray shook them off. They came again; and for a while the star-spangled jacket, the purple and gold, the cerise and white, rose at their fences like one.

The Irish division were in screaming ecstasies.

Then the roar of New England, overwhelming all else, told that the mare was making good.

Moonlighter's jockey saw he was beaten for the moment at least and took a pull.

As Mocassin's swift bobbing head swung round the corner on to the straight, she was alone save for her stable-companion, and his work was done.

"He's seen her through," muttered Old Mat. "Now he can go home to bed."

Indeed, as Jackaroo sprawled down the straight, still hanging to the quarters of the mare, he looked like a towel-rail on which wet clothes had been hung, and Rushton had ceased to ride.

The mare, fresh as the old horse was failing, came along in front of the Grand Stand, clipping the grass with that swift, rhythmical stroke of hers and little fretful snatch at the reins, neat and swift and strong as a startled deer.

Chukkers sat still and absorbed as a cat waiting over a mouse's hole.

All eyes were on him. Nothing else was seen. His race was won. Last year's defeat had been avenged. America had made good. A roar as of an avalanche boomed and billowed about him. The thousands on the stands yelled, stamped and cooeyed.

"Hail, Columbia!" bellowed the triumphant Boys.

"Stand down, England!"

"What price the Yankee-doodlers?"

"Who gives the Mustang best?"

In that tumult of sound, individual voices were lost. The yells of the bookies were indistinguishable. Men saw things through a mist, and more than one woman fainted.

Then through the terrific boom came the discordant blare of a megaphone, faint at first but swiftly overbearing the noise of the tempest.

"Watch it, ye ——!" it screamed. "He's catchin' ye!"

It was the voice of Jaggers.

The thousands heard and hushed. They recognised the voice and the note of terror in it.

Chukkers heard, too, turned, and had a glimpse of a green jacket surging up wide on his right.

There was the sound of a soughing wind as the crowd drew its breath.

What was this great owl-like enemy swooping up out of nowhere?

Chukkers, his head on his shoulders, took the situation in.

What he saw he didn't like.

The mare was going strong beneath him, but the brown horse on his quarter was only beginning: so much his expert eye told him at a glance. Four-Pound-the-Second was coming along like a cataract, easy as an eagle in flight; his great buffeting shoulders were sprayed with foam, his gaping nostrils drinking in oceans of air and spouting them out again with the rhythmical regularity of a steam-pump; and his little jockey sat on his back still as a mouse—a pale face, a gleam of fair hair, and two little brown fists that gave and took with each stride of the galloping horse.

Chukkers was not the only one who seized the situation.

The bookies absorbed it in a flash—the outsider's form, the jockey's colours, the significance of both. It was Old Mat's horse—Old Mat who had sprung surprises on the ring so often in his time. Rumour had always said that the horse was by Berserker. Then they had disbelieved. Now—well, he looked it.

Suddenly the ring went mad.

"Six to four the favourite!" the bookies roared. "Seven to four on the field!"

The English, too, woke to the fact that they had a champion at last. A thirst for vengeance, after all they had endured at the hands of the contumelious foe, carried them away. They stood up and howled. The Americans, who had seen the cup of victory brought to their lips and snatched away again, roused by the threat to their favourite, responded wrathfully. Roar answered roar; New England thundered against Old.

Chukkers, as always, had steadied the mare after her rush. Now he changed his tactics to meet the new situation. As the horses made for the water, the mare on the rails, and the outsider wide on the right, Chukkers began to nibble at her. The action was faint, yet most significant.

"He ain't *ridin'*," muttered Old Mat, watching closely through his glasses—"not yet. I won't say that. But he's spinnin' her."

Indeed it was so. The crowd saw it; the Boys, gnawing their thumbs, saw it; the bookies, red-faced from screaming, saw it, too.

The crowd bellowed their comments.

"She's held!"

"The mare's beat!"

"Brown's only cantering!"

"She's all out!"

In all that riot of voices, and storm of tossing figures, two men kept calm.

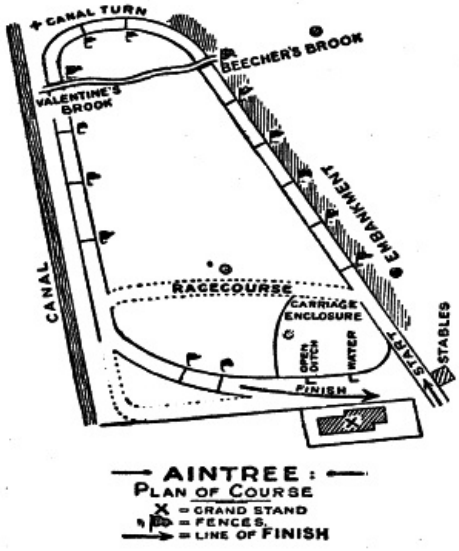
Old Mat was genial; Silver still, his chest heaving beneath his folded arms.

"Like a hare and a greyhound," muttered the old man, apt as always.

"Got it all to themselves now," said Silver. "And the best horse wins."

"Bar the dirty," suggested the trainer.

The warning was timely.



AINTREE: Plan of Course

Just before the water Rushton pulled out suddenly right across the brown horse.

It was a deliberate foul, ably executed.

The crowd saw it and howled, and the bookmakers screamed at the offending jockey as he rode off the course into the Paddock.

"Plucky little effort!" shouted Old Mat in Silver's ear. "He deserved to pull it off."

No harm, in fact, had been done.

Four-Pound-the-Second had missed Jackaroo's quarters by half a length; but the big horse never faltered in his stride, charging on like a bull-buffalo, and rising at the water as the mare landed over it.

The old man dropped his glasses, and settled back on his heels.

"What next?" he said.

"Can't do much now, I guess," answered Silver comfortably.

Old Mat turned in his lips.

"Watch it, sir," he said. "There's millions in it."

As the favourite and the outsider swept away for the second round in a pursuing roar, the width of the course lay between them. The mare hugged the rails; the brown horse swung wide on the right.

"You're giving her plenty of room, Mr. Woodburn," said the White Hat in front.

"Yes, my lord," Mat answered. "'Don't crowd her,' I says. 'She likes a lot o' room. So do Chukkers.'"

Just clear of the course outside the rails, under the Embankment, a little group of police made a dark blue knot about the stretcher on which Boy Braithwaite had been taken from the course. As the brown horse swept hard by the group a blob of yellow thrust up suddenly above the rails amid the blue. It was too much even for Four-Pound. He shied away and crashed into his fence. Only his weight and the speed at which he was travelling carried him through. A soughing groan went up from the Grand Stand, changing to a roar, as the great horse, quick as a goat, recovered himself and settled unconcernedly to his stride again.

"Riz from the dead to do us in," muttered Old Mat. "Now he's goin' 'ome again," as the blob of yellow collapsed once more. "P'raps he'll stop this time."

"I think it was an accident," said Silver.

"I know them accidents," answered Old Mat. "There's more to come."

For the moment it seemed to the watchers as if the mare was forging ahead; and the Americans took heart once again. But the green jacket and the star-spangled rose at Beecher's Brook together; and the young horse, as though chastened by his escape, was fencing like a veteran.

As the horses turned to the left at the Corner, something white detached itself from the stragglers on the Embankment and shot down the slope at the galloping horses like a scurry of foam.

"Dog this time," grunted Old Mat, watching through his glasses. "Lurcher, big as a bull-calf."

Whatever it was, it missed its mark and flashed across the course just clear of the heels of the Putnam horse. He went striding along, magnificently unmoved.

Old Mat nodded grimly.

"You can't upset my little Fo'-Pound—bar only risin's from the dead, which ain't 'ardly accordin' not under National Hunt Rules anyway," he said. "If a tiger was to lep in his backside and chaw him a nice piece, it wouldn't move *him* any."

Many on the Grand Stand had not marked the incident. They were watching now with all their eyes for a more familiar sensation.

Chukkers was leaving the rails to swing for the Canal Turn.

The Englishmen and bookies, their hands to their mouths, were screaming exhortations, warnings, advice, to the little fair jockey far away.

"Canal Turn!"

"Dirty Dago!"

"The old game!"

"Watch him, lad!"

"His only chance!"

"Riding for the bump!"

Old Mat paid no heed.

"Mouse bump a mountain," he grunted. "But Chukkers won't get the chance."

And it seemed he was right.

The fence before the Turn the brown horse was leading by a length and drawing steadily away, as the voices of the triumphant English and the faces of the Americans proclaimed.

Mat stared through his glasses.

"Chukkers is talkin'," he announced. "And he's got somefin to talk about from all I can see of it."

Any danger there might have been had, in fact, been averted by the pressing tactics of the Putnam jockey.

The two horses came round the Turn almost together, the inside berth having brought the mare level again.

Side by side they came over Valentine's Brook, moving together almost automatically, their fore-legs shooting out straight as a cascade, their jockeys swinging back together as though one; stride for stride they came along the green in a roar so steady and enduring that it seemed almost natural as a silence.

Old Mat shut his glasses, clasped his hands behind him, and steadied on his feet.

"Now," he said comfortably. "Ding-dong. 'Ammer and tongs. 'Ow I likes to see it."

He peeped up at the young man, who did not seem to hear. Silver stood unmoved by the uproar all around him, apparently unconscious of it. He was away, dwelling in a far city of pride on heights of snow. His spirit was in his eyes, and his eyes on that bobbing speck of green flowing swiftly toward him with sudden lurches and forward flings at the fences.

All around him men were raging, cheering, and stamping. What the bookies were yelling nobody could hear; but it was clear from their faces that they believed the favourite was beat.

And their faith was based upon reality, since Chukkers for the first time in the history of the mare was using his whip.

Once it fell, and again, in terrible earnest. There was a gasp from the gathered multitudes as they saw and understood. That swift, relentless hand was sounding the knell of doom to the hopes of thousands.

Indeed, it was clear that Chukkers was riding now as he had never ridden before.

And the boy on the brown never moved.

Three fences from home Chukkers rallied the mare and called on her for a final effort.

Game to the last drop, she answered him.

But the outsider held his own without an effort.

Then the note of the thundering multitudes changed again with dramatic suddenness. Hope, that had died away, and Fear, that had vanished utterly, were a-wing once more. In the air they met and clashed tumultuously. America was soaring into the blue; England fluttering earthward again. And the cause was not far to seek.

The boy on the brown was tiring. He was swaying in his saddle.

A thousand glasses fixed on his face confirmed the impression.

"Nipper's beat for the distance!" came the cry.

"Brown horse wins! Green jacket loses!"

The Grand Stand saw it. Chukkers saw it, too. His eyes were fixed on his rival's face like the talons of a vulture in his prey. They never stirred; they never lifted. He came pressing up alongside his enemy—insistent, clinging, ruthless as a stoat. Silver could have screamed. That foul, insistent creature was the Evil One pouring his poisonous suggestions into the ears of Innocence, undoing her, fascinating her, thrusting in upon her virgin mind, invading the sanctuary, polluting the Holy of Holies, seizing it, obsessing it.

And the emotion roused was not peculiar to the young man alone. It seemed to be contagious. Swift as it was unseen, it ran from mind to mind, infecting all with a horror of fear and loathing.

"He's swearing at him!" cried the White Hat, aghast.

"B—— shame!" shouted another.

"Tryin' to rattle the lad!"

And a howl of indignation went up to the unheeding heavens.

To Silver it was no longer a race: it was the world-struggle, old as time—Right against Wrong, Light against Dark. He was watching it like God; and, like God, he could do nothing. His voice was lost in his throat. Outwardly calm, he was dumb, tormented, and heaving like a sea in travail. A tumult of waters surged and trampled and foamed within him.

Then the nightmare passed.

The boy on the brown rallied; and, it seemed, a fainting nation rallied with him.

He steadied himself, sat still as a cloud for a moment, and then stirred deliberately and of set purpose.

He was asking his horse the question. There was no doubt of the reply.

Four-Pound shot to the front like a long-dammed stream.

His vampire enemy clung for a desperate moment, and then faded away behind amid the groans of his maddened supporters and the acclamations of the triumphant Englishmen.

"Got her dead to the world!" cried Old Mat, a note of battle resounding deeply through his voice. "What price Putnam's now!" And he thumped the rail.

But the end was not even yet. The great English horse came moving like a flood round the corner and swooped gloriously over the last fence.

The roar that had held the air toppled away into a sound as of a world-avalanche, shot with screams.

The jockey in green had pitched forward as his horse landed.

He scrambled for a moment, and somehow wriggled back into his seat—short of his whip.

The Grand Stand became a maelstrom.

Men were fighting, women fainting. The Americans were screaming to Chukkers to press; the English yelling to the nipper to ride—for the Almighty's sake.

The brown horse and his jockey came past the Open Ditch and down the straight in a hurricane that might not have been, so little did either heed it.

The little jockey was far away, riding as in a death-swoon, his face silvery beneath his cap. His reins were in both hands, and he was stirring with them faintly as one who would ride a finish and cannot.

"That's a little bit o' better," said Old Mat cheerfully, preparing to move. "My little Fo'-Pound'll see us 'ome."

And indeed the young horse, with the judgment of a veteran who knows to a yard when he may shut up, had eased away into a canter, and broke into a trot as he passed the post.

CHAPTER XLIX
The Last Card

Chukkers was beaten out of sight. The Oriental in him blurted to the top. He lost his head and his temper and began to butcher his mount.

As he drove the mare down the run home, foaming and bloody, he was flaying her.

The Americans had all lost money, some of them fortunes: that didn't matter so much. Their idol had been beaten fair and square: that mattered a great deal. But she was still their idol, and Chukkers had butchered her before their eyes.

And he was Chukkers!—the greaser!

They rose up in wrath like a vast, avenging cloud, and went raving over the barrier on to the course in tumultuous black flood. The ruck of beaten horses, bobbing home one by one, crashed into them. The mob, without regard for its shattered atoms, moved on like one. A roaring sea of humanity swung on its blind way. Above the dark waters jockeys in silken jackets and on sweating thoroughbreds drifted to and fro like helpless butterflies. While in contrast to these many-coloured creatures of faerie, the great-coated and helmeted police in blue, on horses, hairy and solid as themselves, butted their way through the clamorous deeps, as they made for the rock round which the angry waves were breaking.

They had their work cut out, and used their bludgeons with a will.

Round the man upon the beaten favourite the mob swirled and screamed like a hyena-pack at the kill.

Chukkers was a brute; but to do him justice he was not a coward.

The high-cheeked Mongolian, yellow with anger and chagrin, was using his whip without mercy.

The hub-bub was as of a battle the most horrible, for there were women in it, screaming for blood.

"Lynch him!" came the roar.

"Pull him off!"

"Trample him!"

"Stick him with this!"

Monkey Brand, who had suddenly come to life, had hold of the winner, sweating, amiable, entirely unmoved by the pandemonium around, and was leading him away into the Paddock through the outskirts of the howling mob.

The crowd was too maddened to pay attention to the little man and his great charge. Those who were not bent on murdering Chukkers were absorbed in watching those who were.

Old Mat, trotting at Silver's side, was chuckling and cooing to himself like a complacent baby, as the pair descended the Grand Stand and made for the Paddock.

"Yes," he was saying, "my bankers'll be please—very please, they will. And good cause why. That's a hundud thousand quid, Mr. Silver, in my pocket—all a-jinglin' and a-tinglin'. 'Ark to em!—like 'erald angels on the go." He paused, touched the other's arm, and panted huskily: "Funny thing! A minute since it was in the h'air—ewaporated, as the sayin' is. Now it's here—froze tight." He slapped his pocket. "Makes the 'ead to think and the 'eart to rejoice, as the Psalmist said on much a similar occasion. Only we'd best not tell Mar. Wonderful woman, Mar, Mr. Silver, and grows all the while more wonderfulerer. Only where it is is—there it is." He lifted his rogue-eye to the young man's face and cried in an ecstasy of glee. "Oh, how glorioushly does the wicked flourish—if only so be they'll keep their eyeballs skinned!"

At the gate the White Hat stopped him.

"So you've got up on 'em again, Mr. Woodburn," he said. "Congratulations, Mr. Silver."

On the course the pair ran into Monkey Brand, leading the winner home.

"Here, sir!" he cried, seeming excited for the first time in his life. "All O.K. Bit giddified like. That's all. Take the horse. The Three J's mean business, I tell ye. I must be moving."

Silver looked up at the little jockey perched aloft upon the brown.

"All right?" he asked keenly.

The other, whose peaked cap was drawn far over his eyes, nodded down through the tumult, saying no word.

At the moment Jaggers ran past, trying to get at his jockey. Joses, slobbering at the mouth, was shouting in the trainer's ear.

Both men plunged into the vortex.

"Easy all!" came Jaggers's priest-like voice. "Give him a chance, boys. We aren't beat yet."

"Win, tie, or wrangle!" muttered Old Mat. "That's the Three J's all right."

The mounted police were shepherding Chukkers off the course into the Paddock. There was murder in his face. He swung about and showed his yellow fangs like a mobbed wolf at the pack baying at his heels.

Once inside the Paddock he was just going to dismount, when Jaggers, Joses, and Ikey Aaronsohnn rushed at him and held him on.

"Stick to her!" screamed Joses.

The little group drifted past Old Mat and Jim Silver, who was holding the winner. Four-Pound-the Second's jockey had already disappeared into the weighing-room.

"Ain't done yet," screamed the jockey vengefully as he passed.

"You're never done," said Silver quietly, as he stroked the muzzle of the reeking brown. "Never could take a licking like a gentleman!"

The jockey, beside himself, leaned out toward the other.

"Want it across the —— mug, do ye, Silver?" he yelled. "One way o' winnin'!"

"Come, then, Mr. Woodburn. This won't do!" cried Jaggers austerely as he passed.

"Of course it won't," answered Old Mat. "Dropped a rare packet among you, ain't you? Think you're goin' to let that pass without tryin' on the dirty?"

The White Hat leaned down from the Grand Stand.

"What's the trouble, Mr. Jaggers?" he cried.

"Miss Woodburn rode the winner, my lord," answered the trainer at the top of his voice.

The words ran like a flame along the top of the crowd.

They leapt from mouth to mouth, out of the Paddock, on to the course, and round it. And where they fell there was instant hush followed by a roar, in which a new note sounded: *All was not lost.* The Americans, cast down to earth a moment since, rose like a wild-maned breaker towering before it falls in thunder and foam upon the beach. There was wrath still in their clamour; but their cry now was for Justice and not for Revenge.

John Bull had been at it again. The fair jockey was a girl. Some had known it all along. Others had guessed it from the first. All had been sure there would be hanky-panky.

As they came shoving off the course into the Paddock, and heaved about the weighing-room, the howl subdued into a buzz as of a swarm of angry bees.

The thousands were waiting for a sign, and the growl that rose from them was broken only by groans, cat-calls, whistles, and vengeful bursts of

Hands off and no hanky-panky!

Old Mat, Jim Silver, and the great horse stood on the edge of the throng, quite unconcerned.

Many noticed them; not a few essayed enquiries.

"Is your jockey a gal, Mr. Woodburn?"

"So they says," answered Old Mat.

"Where's Miss Woodburn then?"

"Inside, they tell me."

He nodded to the door of the weighing-room, which opened at the moment.

In it, above the crowd, appeared the jockey with the green jacket, his cap well over his eyes.

There was an instant hush. Then English and Americans, bookies and backers, began to bawl against each other.

"Are you a gal?" screamed some one in the crowd.

"No, I ain't," came the shrill, defiant answer.

The voice did not satisfy the crowd.

"Take off your cap, Miss!" yelled another.

"Let's see your face!"

Joses, who was standing by the steps that led up to the weighing-room, leapt on to them and snatched the cap from the jockey's head.

He stood displayed before them, fair-haired, close-cropped, shy, and a little sullen.

There was a moment's pause. Then divergent voices shot heavenward and clashed against each other.

"It is!"

"It's her!"

"That's Miss Woodburn!"

"No, it ain't!"

Words were becoming blows, and there were altercations everywhere, when the Clerk of the Scales appeared on the steps and held up his hand for silence.

"Where *is* Miss Woodburn?" he called.

The words confirmed suspicion, and brought forth a roar of cheering from the Americans.

"Here, sir!" panted a voice.

Monkey Brand was forcing his way through the crowd, heralded by the police. Behind him followed a slight figure in dark blue.

"Is that Miss Woodburn?" called the Clerk.

"Yes," replied a deep voice. "Here I am."

"Would you step up here?"

The girl ran up the steps, and took her place by the little jockey. Whoever else was disconcerted, it was not she.

A sound that was not quite a groan rose from the watching crowd and died away.

The girl gave her hand to the jockey.

"Well ridden, Albert," she said, and in the silence her words were heard by thousands.

The lad touched his forehead, and took her hand sheepishly.

"Thank you, Miss," he answered.

Then the storm broke, and the bookies who had made millions over the defeat of the favourite led the roar.

There was no mistaking the matter now. The Boys had been sold again.

The rougher elements amongst Ikey's Own sought a scape-goat.

They found him in Joses.

Chukkers came out of the weighing-room and deliberately struck the fat man. That started it: the crowd did the rest.

Old Mat and Jim Silver waited on the outskirts of the hub-bub.

The American Ambassador and his tall dark daughter stood near by.

"What stories they tell," said the great man in his gentle way.

"Don't they, sir?" answered Old Mat, wiping an innocent blue eye. "And they gets no better as the years go by. They saddens me and Mar. They does reelly."

Boy Woodburn, making her way through the crowd, joined the little group.

"Congratulations, Miss Woodburn," said the Ambassador's daughter shyly. "The best horse won."

The fair girl beamed on the dark.

"Thank you, Miss Whitney," she answered. "A good race. You were giving us a ton of weight."

Perhaps the girl was a little paler than her wont; but there was no touch of lyrical excitement about her. Outwardly she was the least-moved person in the Paddock.

Jim Silver's eyes were shining down on her.

"Well," he said.

She led away. He followed at her shoulder, the horse's bridle over his arm.

"You've won your hundred thousand," she said.

His eyes were wistful and smiling as they dwelt upon her figure that drooped a little.

"Hadn't a bean on," he said.

She did not seem surprised.

Her hand was on the wet neck of the horse, her eyes on her hand.

Then she raised them to his, and they were shining with rainbow beauty.

"I know you hadn't," she said.

Her hand touched his.

Close by them a black mass was seething round something upon the ground.

"That's Joses," she said. "Stop the worry, will you?—and send Monkey Brand to take the horse."

Jim Silver turned. Somewhere in the middle of that tossing mass was a human being.

Using his strength remorselessly, the young man broke his way through. By the time he reached the centre of the maelstrom the police had cleared a space round the fallen man.

He lay panting in the mud, a desolate and dreadful figure, his waistcoat burst open, and shirt protruding, his shock of red hair a-loose on the ground.

Jim was not the first to get to the fallen man.

Monkey Brand was already kneeling at his side, bottle in hand.

"Oh, my! Mr. Joses, my!" the little jockey was saying. "What you want is just a drop o' comfort out o' me bottle. Open a little, and I'll pour."

Silver was just in time.

"That'll do, Brand," he said. "I'll see to this. Give me the bottle. You go to Miss Boy."

A doctor was called in and reported that the fat man's condition was serious. An ambulance was brought, and Joses removed.

Silver saw it off the ground.

As it came to the gate, Chukkers, on his way to his motor, passed it.

"He deserves all he's got," he said. "He's a bad un."

"He's served you pretty well, anyway," answered Jim angrily.

CHAPTER L
The Fat Man Takes His Ticket

In Cuckmere, that quiet village between the Weald and the sea, in which there was the normal amount of lying, thieving, drunkenness, low-living, back-biting, and slander, there dwelt two souls who had fought steadfastly and unobtrusively for twenty years to raise the moral and material standards of the community.

One was the vicar of the parish, and the other Mrs. Woodburn. The two worked together for the common end unknown except to each other and those they helped.

Mr. Haggard was something of a saint and something of a scholar. Mrs. Woodburn had been born among the people, knew them, their family histories, and failings; was wise, tolerant, and liberal alike in purse and judgment. Her practical capacity made a good counterpoise to the other's benevolence and generous impetuosity.

When the vicar was in trouble about a case, he always went to Mrs. Woodburn long before he went to the Duke; and he rarely went in vain.

The parlour at Putnam's had seen much intimate communion between these two high and tranquil spirits over causes that were going ill and souls reluctant to be saved. The vicar always came to Putnam's: Mrs. Woodburn never went to the Vicarage. That was partly because the vicar's wife was a stout and strenuous churchwoman who cherished a genuine horror of what she called "chapel" as the most insidious and deadly foe of the spirit, and still more because Mrs. Haggard was a woman, and a jealous one at that.

It was a few days after the National that the vicar made one of his calls at Putnam's.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Woodburn in her direct and simple way after the first greeting.

She knew he never came except on business.

"It's that wretched fellow Joses," he answered. "He's been in some scrape at the National, I gather, and got himself knocked about. Somehow he crawled back to his earth. I rather believe Mr. Silver paid his train-fare and saw him through."

"Is he dying?" asked Mrs. Woodburn.

The vicar replied that the parish nurse thought he was in a very bad way.

"Is she seeing to him?"

"She's doing what she can."

"We'd better ask Dr. Pollock to go round and look at him," said Mrs. Woodburn. "Don't you bother any more, Mr. Haggard. I'll see that the best is done."

She telephoned to the Polefax doctor.

That afternoon he called at Putnam's and made his report.

"He's in a very bad way, Mrs. Woodburn," he said. "Advanced arterial deterioration. And the condition is complicated by some deep-seated fear-complex."

The doctor was young, up-to-date, and dabbling in psycho-therapy.

"Fear of death?" asked Mrs. Woodburn.

"Fear of life, I think," the other answered. "He wouldn't talk to me. And I can't, of course, attempt a mental analysis."

Mrs. Woodburn had no notion what he meant, and believed, perhaps rightly, that he did not know himself.

"He's been unfortunate," she said.

"So I guessed," answered the young man. "He asked me who sent me, and when I told him said he'd be grateful if you'd call on him."

"I'll go round."

Toward evening she called at the cottage.

Mrs. Boam showed her up.

Joses lay on a bed under the slope of the roof, his head at the window so that he could look out.

His face was faintly livid, and he breathed with difficulty.

Mrs. Woodburn's heart went out to him at the first glance.

"I'm sorry to see you like this, Mr. Joses," she said gently. "You wanted to see me?"

"Well," he answered, "it was *Miss* Woodburn I wanted to see." He looked at her wistfully out of eyes that women had once held beautiful. "D'you think she'd come?"

"I'm sure she will," the other answered reassuringly.

Joses lay with his mop of red hair like a dingy and graying aureole against the pillow.

"D'you mind?" he asked.

Her eyes filled with kindness. He seemed to her so much a child.

"What! Her coming to see you here?"

"Yes."

She smiled at him in her large and loving way.

"Of course I don't," she said, and added almost archly: "And if I did I'm not sure it would make much difference."

He found himself laughing.

She moved about the room, ordering it.

Then she returned to Putnam's to seek her daughter.

After the National Boy had emerged from the cloud which had long covered her.

She returned home, radiant and impenitent.

"I've been thinking things over," she said on the morning after her return. "And I'll forgive you, mother, for your lack of faith."

"Thank you, my dear," replied the other laconically.

"This once," added Boy firmly. "Now, mind!"

Mrs. Woodburn now gave her daughter Joses's message.

The girl said nothing, but visited the cottage next morning.

She stood in the door, firm and fresh, the colour in her hair, the bloom on her cheeks, and looked at that mass of decaying man upon the bed.

"Are you bad?" she asked, anxious as a child.

"I suppose I'm not very good," he answered.

She snatched her eyes away.

"Well, I congratulate you," he said at last, quietly.

She sought for irony in his voice and eyes, and detected none.

"What on?"

"Your victory."

Her face softened.

"Thank you."

"You deserved to win," continued the other, with genuine admiration. "You rode a great race. I couldn't have believed a girl could have got the course if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes." His gaze met hers quite honestly. "You see I didn't count on the double fake. I knew you were going to ride as Albert, but I'd quite forgotten the corollary—that Albert might dress as you. That's where you beat me."

The girl's chest was rising and falling.

"Mr. Joses," she said, "I didn't ride the horse."

His eyes sought hers, dissatisfied, and then wandered to the window.

"Well, well," he said. "We won't argue about it. Anyway, you won."

Boy looked out of the window.

"I *did* try and deceive you into thinking I was going to ride," she said with a quake in her voice. "That was partly deviltry and partly to put you off. I thought if you believed you could get back on us *after* the race you'd not try it on before. Besides, I could never ride the course. Three miles was my limit over fences at racing speed when I was at my best, and that's some years since."

He was quite unconvinced.

"I give you best, Miss Woodburn," he said. "But Albert could never have ridden that race. Never! It was a good win. And you deserved it. But it wasn't that I wanted to see you about." He looked round the little room. "It's not much of a place perhaps, you may think. But there's the window, and the sight of grass, and cows grazing and folks passing on the path. And in this house there's Mrs. Boam, and Jenny, and the pussy-cat. I should miss it." He lifted those suffering eyes of his. "I don't want to pass what little time I've left in the cage."

"But they won't hurt you now," cried Boy. "They couldn't."

The other laughed his dreadful laughter.

"Couldn't they?" he said. "You don't know 'em. It's the cat-and-mouse business all the time. I'm the mouse. I've been there."

"But you've done nothing," said Boy.

Joses moved his head on the pillow.

"There's just one thing," he said, dropping his voice. "Mr. Silver's got a little bit of paper that might make trouble for me."

"But he shall give it up!" cried the girl.

"Will he?" grunted the other.

"Of course he will. He's as kind as kind."

Joses shook a dubious head.

"Men are men," he said. "And when men get across each other they are tigers."

"He's a tame one," said the girl. "I'll see to that."

"He might be," muttered the other. "In the hands of the right tamer."

Boy went straight back to Putnam's and discovered Mr. Silver smoking in the saddle-room.

She told him what had passed.

"I know," he said. "Here it is." He produced the bit of paper. "I'll burn it," and he held it to the bowl of his pipe.

"No!" cried the girl. "Give it me."

She took it straight back to the sick man.

He lit a match and watched it burn with eyes that were almost covetous.

"That's the last of 'em," he said. "Now I shall die in the open like a gentleman."

He was, in fact, dying very fast.

It did not need Dr. Pollock's assurance to make the girl aware of that.

She longed to help him.

"Would you like to see Mr. Haggard?" she asked awkwardly.

He shook his head, amused.

"He'd come the parson over me."

"I don't think he would."

"He couldn't help it if he was true to his cloth."

"I'm not sure he is," said Boy doubtfully.

"You're the same," he said.

She glanced up at him swiftly.

His eyes were mischievous, almost roguish.

"What d'you mean?"

"You want me to repent."

She coloured guiltily, and he laughed like a boy, delighted with his own cleverness.

"There's one thing Mr. Haggard might do for me," he said. "Lend me Clutton Brock's *Shelley*, if he would. He's got it, I know."

The girl made a mental note, wrinkling her brow.

"Shelley's *Clutton Brock*," she said. "I'll remember."

She sat beside his bed. His eyes dwelt on her keen, earnest young face, and the blue eyes gazing thoughtfully out of the window.

"You're a Philistine," he said at last. "But you're clean. Philistines are. That's the best of them."

"What's a Philistine?" she asked.

He did not answer her.

"You're the cleanest thing I've met," he continued. "There's a flame burning in you all the time that devours all your rubbish. Mine accumulates and corrupts."

"I don't like you to talk like that," said the girl, withdrawing.

"There's only one thing that'll purge me," the other continued.

"What's that?"

"Fire."

The girl's eyes darkened.

"Are you afraid?" she asked swiftly.

"Of Hell with a large H?"

She nodded, and he laughed.

"What I've had I've paid for across the counter and got the receipt stamped and signed by the Almighty. No, it's not the fires of Hell; it's the power of the old sun working on my vile body through the ages that'll renew me with beauty and youth in time. Life's eternal, sure enough; but not on the lines the parsons tell us."

A little later she rose to go.

He detained her.

"Shall you come and see me again?" he asked her.

She gave him a shy and brilliant smile.

"Rather," she said. "So'll mother."

He kissed her hand, and there was beauty in his eyes.

Next day she called with the book from Mr. Haggard.

Dr. Pollock was coming down the path.

"He's out of pain," he said gravely.

Boy returned to Putnam's and picked some violets.

Then she came back to the cottage.

Mrs. Boam was weeping as she opened.

"May I see him?" said the girl.

"Yes, Miss," answered the other. "We shall miss him, Jenny and me. He were that lovable."

Boy went upstairs and entered.

Joses was at peace: the dignity of death upon him.

She laid the violets on his breast.

CHAPTER LI
Old Mat on Heaven and Earth

When Old Mat returned home from Liverpool he hung his hat on the peg and informed Silver that he had undergone conversion—for good this time.

"Nebber no more," he announced solemnly. "I done with bettin'—now I got the cash. Always promised Mar I'd be God's good man soon as I could afford it. Moreover, besides I might lose some o' what I made. And then I might have another backslide." He settled himself in his leather chair, drew his feet out of his slippers, and his pass-book out of his pocket.

"It's cash spells conwersion, Mr. Silver," he panted. "I've often seen it in others, and now I knows it for meself. A noo-er, tru-er and bootifler h'outlook upon life, as Mr. 'Aggard said last Sunday—hall the houtcome o' cash in 'and. Yes, sir, if you wants to conwert the world, the way's clear—*Pay cash down.* That's why these 'ere Socialists are on the grow; because they talks common-sense. 'It's dollars as does it,' they says. 'Give every chap a bankin'-account, and you'll see.' What's Church h'up and h'answer to that? Church says: 'It's all in conwersion. Bank on conwersion. Cash is but wrath and must that corrupts,' says the clergy. 'Leave the cash to us,' they says. 'We'll see to that for you, while you keeps out o' temptation and saves your souls alive.'"

When Mrs. Woodburn told the old man the news about Joses, he received it gravely.

"Moved on, has he?" he said. "I'm sorry. I shall miss him. I always misses that sort. Shouldn't feel at home like without some of them around. Well, Mar, we shall all meet in the yappy yappy land, plea Gob in his goodness." He burst into a sort of chaunt, wagging his head, and beating time with his fist—

"*Ho, won't that be jiy-ful?*
Jam for the fythe-ful.

I wouldn't miss that meetin', Mar, not for all the nuts on Iceland's greasy mountains, the Psalmist made the song about. I sees it all like in a wision." His eyes closed, and his hands and feet swam vaguely. "Me and Monkey o' the one side, and the Three J's o' tother, pitchin' the tale a treat at tops of our voices." He opened his eyes slowly, ogled Ma, tapped her knee, winked, and ended confidentially: "One thing, old dear. I'll lay they'll give Putnam's best same there as here. Now then!"

CHAPTER LII
Putnam's Once More

It was Sunday morning at Putnam's, and in Maudie's estimation things were more *comme il faut* than they had been for long past.

About a fortnight since there had been trouble in the yard during the night, and after it, for some hours before he went away, the Monster-without-Manners had been subdued almost to gentlemanliness.

Then two of the fan-tails had been taken ill. Maudie from the top of the ladder had watched their dying contortions with the cynical interest of a Roman matron criticizing the death-agonies of a gladiator in the arena. When after staggering about the fan-tails turned over on their backs and flopped, Maudie descended from her perch and toyed with them daintily during their last moments, finally carrying their corpses up into the loft.

After that, Maudie felt queer herself, and not only from the results of a stricken conscience. Indeed, but for the urgent and instant ministrations of Putnam's Only Gentleman she would have followed where the good fan-tails had gone.

Thereafter, for a space of a week, there had fallen on the yard a hallowed time of peace very

different from the period of oppression and irritable energy which had preceded it. Maudie attributed the change to the absence of the Monster-without-Manners who had departed quietly with the Four-legs there was all the fuss about.

True, both had now returned, but in chastened mood, the result perhaps of well-deserved affliction experienced in foreign lands.

This morning things were much as of old. The fan-tails puffed and pouted and sidled on the roofs. Across the Paddock Close came the sound of church-bells, and from the Lads' Barn the voices of the boys singing a hymn.

The Bible Class was in full swing.

All the lads were there but one. That one was Albert. He stood in lofty isolation in the door of the stable, a cigarette in his mouth, his arms folded and his face stiff with the self-consciousness that had obsessed him since his ride in the National. Jerry and Stanley, once the friends of Albert, and now his critics, swore that he never took that look off even when he went to bed.

"Wears it in his sleep," said Jerry, "same as his pidgearmours."

But the loftiest of us cannot live forever on the Heights of Make-Believe. And Albert, as he breathed the Spring, and remembered that no one was by to see, relaxed, became himself, and began to warble not unmelodiously—

"*When the ruddy sun-shine*
Beats the ruddy rain,
Then the ruddy sparrow
'Gins to chirp again."

Mr. Silver came out of the house.

Albert straightway resumed his air of a Roman Emperor turned stable-boy.

The other listened to the singing that came from the barn.

"Not inside, then, Albert?" he said.

"No, sir," answered the other. "I leave that to the lads."

Mr. Silver looked at his watch.

"You'd better do a bolt before Miss Boy catches you," he said.

Albert redoubled his frozen Emperor mien.

The other passed into the saddle-room; and Albert revealed the bitterness of his soul to Maudie on the ladder.

"He's all right now," he told his confidante. "Goin' to start the Bank again, and all on what I won him. And all the return he can make is to insultify me. That's the way of 'em, that is."

A door opened at the back, and a rush of sound emerged.

The lads were tumbling out of the Barn.

Boy Woodburn came swiftly into the yard, her troop at her heels.

She marked the truant in the door.

"Well, Albert," she said. "We missed you."

"He's too stuck up wiv 'isself to pray to Gob any more," mocked Jerry, stopping while the girl went on into the stable.

"He thinks he can do it all on his own wivout no 'elp from no one," sneered Stanley. "Albert does."

Albert swaggered forward.

"Say!" he said to Jerry. "Was it you or me won the National?"

"Neever," answered Jerry. "It was Miss Boy."

"Did she ride him, then?" asked Albert.

Jerry shot his face forward. All the other lads were at his back.

"She did then," he said.

Albert was white and blinking, but in complete control of himself.

"Who says so?"

"Everyone. You're a plucky fine actor and a mighty pore 'orseman, Albert Edward," continued the tormentor.

Albert was a lad of character. He had sworn to his mistress that if he won the race he would henceforth drop the boy and don the man. And the sign of his emancipation was to be that never

again would he use his dukes except in self-defence. Now in the hour of trial he was true to his word.

Happily the strain was relieved, for at the moment Boy, scenting trouble, came out into the yard. Monkey Brand with her.

Albert approached her.

"Beg pardon, Miss, was it you or me won the National?" he asked. "These 'ere genelmen say it was you."

"It was neither," replied the girl. "It was Four-Pound-the-Second. Come in with me, Albert. I want to change his bandages."

She reëntered the stable.

Albert followed at a distance, slow and sullen.

Boy entered the loose-box, and Billy Bluff rose to greet her with a yawn.

The door of the loose-box closed.

The girl bent to her task.

A hand was laid upon her shoulder.

She looked up sharply.

Jim Silver was standing above her, and the door was shut.

"It's you, is it?" she said.

He took her quivering life into his arms.

"Now," she sighed.

She raised her lips, and he laid his own upon them.

"Again," she said with closed eyes.

His own drank in her face.

"You've been a patient old man," she whispered.

"It was worth it," he answered.

"I'll make it so," she said. "Please God!" she added with delightful inconsequence. "I'm glad you didn't bet."

The great brown horse turned his head and breathed on them.

Boy disengaged, patting her hair. "I'm glad you didn't bet," she repeated.

"We shall have enough to farm on without that," he said. "And to breed a few 'chasers."

Her hand was moving up and down the horse's smooth, hard neck.

"I don't want to breed 'chasers," she said.

He laughed softly.

"Don't you?"

"No," she said. "I'm tired of it. I'm like mother. It's all right when you're quite young. But it doesn't last—if you've got anything in you. It's froth."

He nodded.

"You're right," he said. "What shall we breed?"

"Shire horses," the girl replied. "Great, strong, useful creatures that'll work all day and every day —"

"Bar Sunday," he said. "Remember grand-pa, please."

"—without a fuss," she continued, ignoring his impertinence, "shifting trucks, drawing the plough, and carrying the wheat, and come home tired of evenings with wet coats and healthy appetites."

"My old love," he said. "You're right, my dear, of course. But he's a beauty all the same."

"He is that," replied Boy, with a friendly slap.

They left the loose-box, Billy Bluff attending them.

Monkey Brand, his back ostentatiously toward them, was on watch at the door.

He heard them coming down the gangway and turned shyly.

Then he touched his hat.

The girl took his hand and shook it with a will.

Jim Silver followed suit.

"Very please, Miss, I'm sure," gulped the old jockey.

The little man drew Silver mysteriously aside.

"Only one thing, sir," he said. "That little mistake o' yours about the copper's nark. I'm goin' to forget *all* about that now."

"Thank you, Brand," answered Jim earnestly. "We all make mistakes, don't we?"

"That's right, sir," said Monkey. "Only that's a mistake I never made—and never would."

Some of the lads were still hanging about the yard. They knew, too. Maudie knew. Even the fantails, splashing in mid-air, were not deceived.

Albert came forward and ventured a shy and sullen word of congratulation.

"That hundred thousand you won for me made it possible, no doubt," replied Silver gravely.

Albert was still on his pinnacle.

"Very glad to 'elp in such a good cause, sir," he answered. "Only one thing, if I might make so bold: I 'ope you won't forget young Jerry's alf-dollar come Christmas. Means a lot to a little feller like that."

The pair passed out into the Paddock Close.

Old Mat and his missus were coming down the hill from church.

The young couple strolled to meet them.

"He's been making amends for what he did amiss at Liverpool, dad has," said Mrs. Woodburn comfortably.

Mat lifted a dull eye to the blue.

"Yes," he said. "I put a sovereign in the plate. That should square the account, de we, accordin' to my reckonin'."

He pursed his lips firmly, almost defiantly, as he looked the heavens in the face.

A sudden shyness fell on the little group.

Then Boy went to her mother, lifted the old lady's veil, and kissed her.

"Mother," she said.

Mrs. Woodburn took Jim Silver's hand in both of hers, and kneaded it in just the way her daughter would do in moments of deep emotion.

She said nothing, but her eyes were beautiful.

Old Mat swallowed, touched his hat, and looked away.

"That's a little bit o' better," he muttered to himself.

A minute later the old man was walking down the hill, Mrs. Woodburn on his arm.

The young couple strolled on up the slope.

Boy looked across the Paddock Close to Joses's window.

Mrs. Boam was pulling up the blind, and the sun was pouring in splendid torrents on to the dead man within.

The girl was glad.

They came to the quiet church.

"Shall we go in?" she said.

"Let's," he answered.

Together they entered the silence and stood looking up toward the Figure in the dim east window.

Mr. Haggard, in his cassock, was arranging the narcissi on the altar.

As he saw them, he turned and came slowly down the aisle in the quiet.

For Boy it was almost as if the Figure in the window had come to life and was drawing near to

her and Jim.

THE END

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BOY WOODBURN: A STORY OF THE SUSSEX DOWNS ***

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