

apprentice Shaw engaged in earnest conversation with a tall, dark man, whom he addressed as Mr. Blinker.

"What do you want me to do? I dare not lame the horse or give him a bucketful of water just before the race; it's as much as my life is worth to do that," Shaw was saying to the other.

"I don't want you to take on any of those old fakes," replied Mr. Blinker. "Look here; the case stands thus: I have a share in a horse called Whitestar that runs in the Derby. He stands a great chance, but I am afraid of your Merryboy; he must be made safe, and it is for you to do it in this way—providing you have the mount, as you say you will—when you are at the starting-post, get away and hold a front position until you near Tattenham Corner; then give your horse a pull and get shut in—keep shut in until too late, then make a pretence of trying to win. They will only say it's your inexperience that has lost them the race. You will be all right, and a rich man."

"I understand; but suppose I refuse to do what you want," said the apprentice.

"Refuse and I'll—" Here the other bent down and whispered something in Shaw's ear, who turned deathly pale but said nothing. And then Mr. Blinker added, "now don't forget what I have said, because I shall not see you again until after the race. It will arouse suspicion if I am so on with you, so consider the arrangements final, and now good-night, and happy be thy dreams," and without another word he left the stables, and I breathed free again.

It was Derby day, and a beastly day it was—cold, dirty and miserable; and Epsom, where I was located, looked wretched. Very early in the morning my master and the trainer paid me a visit, and from what I could catch of their conversation I understood that Mr. Purton was trying to persuade Mr. Clarence to engage a more experienced jockey to pilot me in the race; but my master was very obstinate and would not hear of any alteration in the jockeys.

"The boy Shaw is a good lad and has ridden Merrybody every morning at exercise, and besides, I have promised him the mount. I don't like to put a stranger up for fear that he might be got at," exclaimed Mr. Clarence, sharply.

Mr. Purton seemed annoyed, but dropped the subject, and gave instructions to Shaw, who had just returned from some errand, to take me to the paddock and get himself ready for riding.

At last everything was ready, and I was under the starter's orders. Down went the flag. The bell rang, and we were on our journey to the winning-post.

Shaw immediately sent me to the front, and I made most of the running, closely attended by a big chestnut horse with a large white patch on his face, and when we reached the bend for home I felt a pull at my rein, and I instantly remembered Mr. Blinker's words "to get me shut in," then I made up my mind to defeat the plans of the two villains, but Master Shaw was too much for me. He had put a patent bit on me, and gave my mouth such a wrench with it that I thought all my teeth were being pulled out of my head, and, before I was aware of it, I was hemmed in on all sides, and had about a thousand to one chance of winning the great race.

I struggled furiously to get an opening, and at last succeeded, but how near the winning post we were!

The horse with the white patch between his eyes was three lengths in front of me, and appeared to be winning easily. I thought of my master and the ruin which awaited him if I got beaten, and of the villainy of Blinker and Shaw, and I strained every nerve to get nearer the big chestnut. My legs felt like red-hot irons being drawn tight, my eyeballs seemed bursting, and a great buzzing sound rang through my head.

"Another stride and I win," I thought. I put out all my strength, and gave a great jump, and the next instant I heard a terrific roar from the Grand Stand and shouts of "Whitestar wins for a monkey." "No, Merryboy wins." "Whitestar," "Merryboy," and then all was hushed.

Alas! with breaking heart I saw by the number on the telegraph-board that I am only second, "Whitestar has got home by a short head," I hear a man remark.

With hanging head I am led into the weighing-enclosure, and, whilst waiting there, not caring what became of me, I hear the ominous word "objection" shouted in loud tones throughout the betting rings. I stand there trembling with excitement, and at that moment my trainer and Mr. Clarence walk up.

The former is cool, but the latter is terribly excited, and says, "Do you think you can sustain the objection, Purton?"

"Yes sir," answered the trainer, "while the race was being run Barrone, the bookmaker, who owes Blinker a grudge, came to me and said if Whitestar won he could prove that the horse was really Victor, a four-year old, and he would bring several persons to prove it, if you made it worth their while."

Then, turning to Shaw, Mr. Purton gave him orders to take me to the stables, and both gentlemen made their way to the stewards' room.

I afterwards heard that so clear was the evidence of Whitestar being a four-year-old, and consequently not qualified to run for the Derby, that the stewards took an exceptional course and disqualified him at once and awarded the prize to me; so I am pleased to say my master won the money after all, and was set upon his legs again.

Mr. Blinker and several others, including the apprentice Shaw, who were concerned in the fraudulent entry of Whitestar for the Derby, decamped during the inquiry, and in spite of the endeavors of the police to catch and punish them they got clear away, and have not been heard of since.

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