

The World is a Race Course

By D. S. EDWARDS

"Sigh and you win nothing;
Work and the prize is won;
For the nervy man
With backbone can
By nothing be outdone.

Hustle and fortune awaits you;
Shirk and defeat is sure;
For there is no place
In this old world,
For the man who can't endure."

ON a race track we see a bunch of running horses at the post ready for the start of a race, the winning of which means money and glory. To the casual or inexperienced onlooker these horses are all very much alike. All are eager for the barrier to be raised. With ears pointing forward, with bright eyes and distended nostrils they prance and caper about. The racing spirit is in them all and all are eager for the contest.

Then the starter gives the word. The barrier is raised, and away rush the whole bunch. For a short distance all keep together. Then they begin to string out. At the quarter mile post there is a perceptible difference in their positions. The weaklings are showing their lack of breeding, training or condition. At the half mile the field of horses has divided into two separate groups, with a considerable distance separating one group from the other. The leading group is dashing along with no apparent diminution of their speed, while those forming the rear group are giving every evidence of being in distress. At the three-quarters the rear group are left hopelessly behind while the leading group has divided again, with three or four of the horses leading the others and travelling neck and neck with unabated speed. This little group of leaders enter the home stretch, and then begins the real struggle of the race. Urged on by whip and spur, and encouraged by the shouts of their admirers in the grand stand, this little group out of all that so proudly left the post when the barrier was raised struggle for the coveted position of first place. Down the stretch they rush. With blazing eyes and flaming nostrils these thoroughbreds strain every nerve to land the prize. At one hundred yards from the finish they are still travelling neck and neck, and then the terrific pace begins to tell. One of these mighty racers is seen to falter. It is only an almost imperceptible hesitation, but it is enough. By his momentary weakness he has lost a stride, and at the pace they are travelling the loss of even this one stride puts him hopelessly out of the race for first place. He made a gallant effort but he could not stand the killing pace and he must be satisfied with third position.

At fifty yards from the wire the two remaining leaders are fighting desperately to land the money. Stride for stride they fight it out, but in the last few strides the training, breeding, condition and gameness of one caused him to make a last spurt. By this last desperate effort he gains a foot on his competitor, and amidst the cheering plaudits of the spectators he goes under the wire just a nose ahead of his gallant competitor; but the lead of a nose means the difference between the blue ribbon of success, to which is attached the big purse of money, and second place which, while it carries with it a small reward in money and fame, also carries with it the gall and wormwood of the knowledge of failure to reach the coveted goal.

Had the riders of the horses which had to be satisfied with second or third place exercised better judgment the story of the race might have been different. The fact of these horses racing almost to the wire neck and neck with the winner, proved beyond a doubt that their breeding, training, courage and endurance were of the right sort.

Now, isn't the above an exact counterpart of everyday human life?

We see a group of young men just past their majority ready to start in the great race of life. To the casual observer they all look very much alike. They are all sound of wind and limb. All have had opportunities in education and training. The fire of youth is in their blood. To them everything looks rosy. All seem to be ambitious. All are eager to get away from the restraining barrier of home. All are ready and eager to start out in the race for the goal that brings fame and fortune to the winner; and while under the restraint of the home barrier and with the admiring and encourag-

ing words of friends ever in their ears each one is confident that he of all the competitors will be the winner.

Finally the barrier is raised. With a warm clasp of the hand and a hearty "good luck" to each from his relatives and friends this group of young men get started in the race of life.

For a time, like the horses, they keep pretty well together; but in a little while their education, home training, natural abilities, strength of purpose, ambition and moral courage begin to make themselves felt. One and another of this group begin to lag behind in the contest on which they had entered with such confidence. The weakness of temptation in the form of liquor grips one and causes him to falter. Weakness for the company of lewd women grips another. The weakness of pilfering from his employer checks the speed of still another. Late hours and gambling saps the strength and vitality of another. Carelessness grips another, and causes him to lose time and distance, and when half the race has been run the victims of all these different forms of weaknesses are left hopelessly behind. They are out of the race. Slowly but surely they drift to the rear, until finally they are smothered up in the ruck, and each one becomes simply a unit in the flotsam and jetsam of the great masses of humanity who drift hither and thither in the stream of life, and who, one by one, waterlogged with vice and corruption, sink beneath the surface.

Those of the starters who remain in the race are still fighting for first place. Urged on by the knowledge that

"Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
To scorn delights and live laborious days."

These men who have safely reached mid-distance in the struggle for the first place fight on, each one exerting himself to the utmost to shake off his competitors. Under the terrific physical and mental strain here again, as with the horses, the field of contestants split up. The three-quarter distance has been reached and at this distance the powers of endurance of some of the racers yield to the gruelling work they are called on to do in order to keep up with their stronger opponents. Under the strain, these weaker ones go down. The limit of their endurance has been reached. At the entrance of the home stretch they give up the struggle and drop back into the ranks of the plodders; those who work day after day, week after week, and year after year in the subordinate and inferior positions of life. Their intentions were good. Their courage was good. They made a gallant effort, but they lacked the indescribable something which is the main spring and moving power of the men who make a complete success of life. No disgrace attaches to them. Nature broke down at the critical moment of their lives, and as a result they became units in the millions who must ever and always work at the bidding of others.

And now, with these out of the race for first place, only three of all the gallant, hopeful and ambitious group that started are left. The goal of the men's ambitions is in sight. Each one of this little group of leaders has proved himself a man of mettle. By coming strong in the home stretch he has proven to the world that he is a man to be reckoned with. He will not be shaken off or turned from his purpose. He has fixed his eye on the goal, and with squared jaw, compressed lips, and clenched hands he strains every fibre of his body, both mental and physical, to the task he has set himself. The strain is tremendous. With the applauding shouts of friends ringing in their ears, urged on by their natural ambition to be winners, and supported by their magnificent mental and physical abilities, the three men go rushing towards the goal which every moment now looms up larger and brighter before them. But here again, as with the first flight of the gallant race horses, the superiority of one over the other asserts itself. With only a few yards to go, the grim determination, the early training, and the superior mental and physical condition are all brought into play for a last desperate spurt. Under the impetus of his concentrated energies this one man is forced to the front and he goes under the wire just ahead of his competitors who have been trying desperately to get there first. His margin is only a small one, but it is enough. As the length of a nose will land the horse a winner, so will the difference of a few minutes between two men grasping the same opportunity and using it, make all the difference between success and failure.