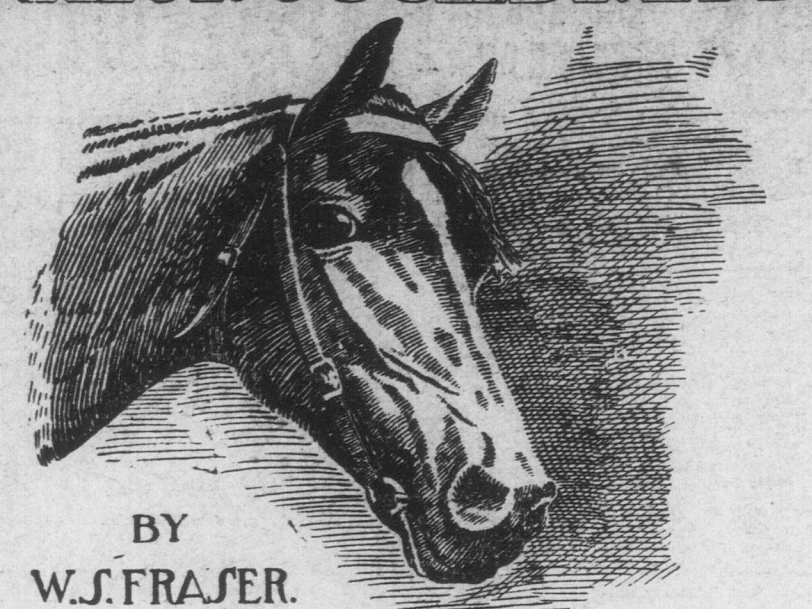


THOROUGHBREDS



BY W.S. FRASER.

CHAPTER IV.

When John Porter left the stand, the horses had just cantered back to weigh in. The jockeys, one after another, with upraised whip, had saluted the judge, received his nod to dismount, pulled the saddles from their steeds, and, in Indian file, were passing over the scales. As Lucretia was led away, Porter turned into the paddock. He saw that Langdon was waiting for him.

"Well, he won, just as I said he would," declared the latter; "you've got a good horse cheap. You'd ought to've had a bet down on him, an' won him out."

"He won," answered Porter, looking straight into the other's shifty eyes, "but he's a long way from being a good horse—no dope horse is a good horse."

"What're you givin' me?" demanded Langdon, angrily.

"Just what every blackguard ought to have—the truth."

"By God!" the trainer began, in fierce blasphemy, but John Porter took a step nearer, and his gray eyes pierced the other man's soul until it shriveled like a dried leaf, and turned its anger into fear.

"Oh, if you want to crawl—if you don't want to take Lauzanne—"

But Porter again interrupted Langdon—"I said I'd take the horse, and I will, but don't think that you're fooling me, Mr. Langdon. You're a blackguard of the first water. Thank God, there are only a few parasites such as you are racing—it's creatures like you that give the sport a black eye. If I can only get at the bottom of what has been done to-day, you'll get ruled off, and you'll stay ruled off. Now turn Lauzanne over to Andy Dixon, and come into the secretary's office, where I'll give you a cheque for him."

"Well, we'll settle about the horse now, an' there'll be somethin' to settle between us, John Porter, at some other time. As for the money, you're fooling me, Mr. Langdon. You're a blackguard of the first water. Thank God, there are only a few parasites such as you are racing—it's creatures like you that give the sport a black eye. If I can only get at the bottom of what has been done to-day, you'll get ruled off, and you'll stay ruled off. Now turn Lauzanne over to Andy Dixon, and come into the secretary's office, where I'll give you a cheque for him."

"The stewards want to speak to you, sir," said Dixon, as they moved toward the steward's box.

"There's trouble on, sir," said Dixon, as they moved toward the steward's box.

"There always is," commented Porter, dryly.

The stewards think Lucretia didn't run to her form. They've had me up, an' her jock, McKay, is there now. Starter Carson swears he couldn't get her away from the post—says McKay fair anchored the mare. He fined the boy fifty dollars at the start. I guess the cheque will close out all deals between us; it will pay you to keep out of my way, I think."

every trivial happening was laid hold of, and Alan's trifling bet on Lauzanne had been magnified into a heavy plunge—no doubt the father's money had been put up by the boy. A race course is like a household, everything is known, absolutely everything. Porter was aghast. "Were all the Furies in league against him? He was more or less a believer in lucky and unlucky days, but he had never experienced anything quite so bad as this. He, the one innocent man in the transaction, having lost almost his last dollar, and having been saddled with a bad horse, was now accused of being the perpetrator of the villainy; and the incident was backed up by such a mass of circumstantial evidence. No wonder he flushed and stood silent, lost for words to express his indignation.

"Speak up, Mr. Porter," said the steward, kindly. "Those that lost on Lucretia are swearing the mare was pulled."

"And they're right," blurted out Porter. "I know what the mare can do; she can make hacks of that bunch. She was stopped, and interfered with, and given all the worst of it from start to finish; but my money was burnt up with the public's. I never pulled a horse in my life, and I'm too old to begin horses."

"I believe that," declared the steward, emphatically. "I've known you, John Porter, for forty years, man and boy, and there never was anything crooked. But we've got to clear this up. Racing isn't what it used to be—it's on the square now, and we want the public to understand that."

"What does the boy say," asked Porter; "you've had him up?"

"He says the mare was helped; that she ran like a drunken man—swayed all over the course, and he couldn't pull her together at all."

"Does he mean she was doped?"

"You've guessed it," answered the Steward, laconically.

"That's nonsense, sir; and he knows it. Why, the little mare is as sweet as a lamb, and as game as a beast as ever looked through a bridle. Somebody got at the boy, I can prove by Deo—it's on the square now, and we want the public to understand that."

"What about Lucretia?"

"She carries the number; besides I know Mr. Porter—I remember laying it to him."

"Thank you, that will do. Hit you pretty hard," he said, turning to Porter. "And you hadn't a savor on Lauzanne?"

"Not a dollar."

result that McKay was suspended for the balance of the meeting, pending a further investigation into his methods.

During the carpeting of Porter and Dixon, the sea of upturned faces, furrowed by lines of anxious interest, had surrounded the judge's box. Wave on wave the living waters reached back over the grassed lawn to the betting ring. An indefinable feeling, "All something" was wrong had crept into the minds of the waiting people, tense with excitement.

As the horses had flashed past the post, and, after a brief wait for a decision, Lauzanne had gone up, his backers had hastened eagerly to the money mart, and lined up in waiting rows behind the bookmakers' stands. They waited, fighting, impatient souls into submission, for the brief wait would end in the acquiring of gold. Why did not the stentorian-voiced crier send through the ring the joyful cry "All right!" The minutes went by, and the delay became an age. A whisper vibrated the throng, as a breeze stirred slender branches, that the winner had been disqualified, that there had been an objection. First one dropped out of line; then another; one by one, until all stood, an army of expectant speculators, waiting for the verdict that had its birthplace up in that tiny square behind the stewards' stand.

"It was the most barefaced job I ever saw," declared another; "it's even better than the stable gets ruled off. He had backed Porter's mare, and was vindictive."

"Not on your life," sneered a tout, wolfishly; "a big owner always gets off. The jock'll get it in the neck if they've been caught."

"Why don't they pay?" whined the fourth. "What's the pulling of the mare got to do with it? The best horse won." He was a backer of Lauzanne.

"Bet yer life the bookies won't part till the numbers of the placed horses an' riders are up on that board again. They've run them down, don't you see?" chimed in the tout.

"I'll take two to one the Dutchman gets it," said a backer of that horse. "There's a job on, and they'll both get disqualified. Porter's kid won ten thousand over Lauzanne, and that's what he's taken away for crooked work."

"That's what the public are up against in this game," sneered the backer of Lucretia.

"And the jock'll have to stand the beating I know he goes," asserted the tout.

"You ought to know," drawled Lauzanne's backer. The racing men without in earshot smiled, for the tout had been a jockey before his license had been taken away for crooked work.

"Hello! here it comes," cried Lauzanne's backer, as a fat, red-faced man came swiftly down from the stewards' stand, ran to the betting ring, and pushing his way through the crowd, called with the roar of a gorilla: "All—l! right! Lauzanne, first! The Dutchman, second! Lucretia, third! They're all—l! weighed in!"

"They're all—l! weighed in!" some one guessed it, and things poured from the lawn to the ring; they ran as though the course was on fire and they sought to escape.

"What about Lucretia?" some one asked, and the man replied: "They've broke McKay," the red-faced crier answered; "suspended him, but he'll be back in a week. 'What did I tell you?' sneered the tout, maliciously; 'it's the under dog gets the worst of it every time.'"

A Celt is an outspoken man when the prod of his hot temper has loosened his tongue, and Mike Gaynor was a Celt in excess.

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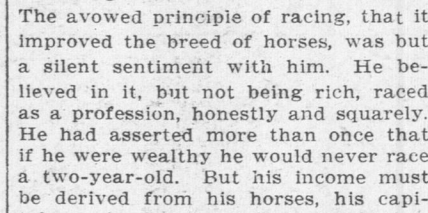
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CHAPTER V.

For weeks John Porter brooded over Lucretia's defeat, and, worse still, over the unjust suspicion of the unthinking public. Touched in its pocket, the public responded in unsavory references to Lucretia's race. Porter loved a good horse, and liked to see him win. The confidence of the public in his honesty was as great a reward as the stakes.

The avowed principle of racing, that it improved the breed of horses, was but a sentimental sentiment with him. He believed in it, but not being rich, raced as a profession, honestly and squarely. He had asserted more than once that if he were wealthy he would never race a two-year-old. But his income must be derived from his horses, his capital was in them, and just at that time he was sitting in a particularly hard streak of bad luck; financially, he was in a hole; morally, he stood ill with the public.

"It's reason told him that the ill-fortune could not last; he had one great little mare, good enough to win, an honest trainer—there the inventory stopped short; his stock in trade was comprised in—he had not a trusty jockey. In a dilemma, he threshed it out with Dixon.

"How's the mare doing, Andy?" he asked. "What did the race do to her?"

"The mare was better in her life," the trainer answered; "suspended him, but he'll be back in a week. 'What did I tell you?' sneered the tout, maliciously; 'it's the under dog gets the worst of it every time.'"

"She's the best I ever had," said Porter, proudly. "That's what the public are up against in this game," sneered the backer of Lucretia.

"And the jock'll have to stand the beating I know he goes," asserted the tout.

"You ought to know," drawled Lauzanne's backer. The racing men without in earshot smiled, for the tout had been a jockey before his license had been taken away for crooked work.

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Porter, Crane had been a tolerant financier, taking the man's honesty liberally as a security; not but what Ringwood had been called upon as a tangible asset. So that day, following his conversation with Dixon, the master of Ringwood had an interview with his banker. It was natural that he should speak of his prospects—his hopes of winning the Eclipse with Lucretia, and, corroboratively, mention her good trial.

"I think that's a good mare of yours, Mr. Porter," said Crane, sympathetically. "I only race myself in a small way, just for the outdoor relaxation it gives me, you know so I'm not much of a judge. The other horse you bought—the winner of the race, I mean, Lauzanne—will also help you right, I should say."

Porter hesitated, uneasily. He disliked to talk about a man behind his back, but he knew that Langdon trained for Crane, and longed to give the banker a friendly word of warning; he knew nothing of the latter's manipulation of the trainer.

With a touch of rustic quaintness he said, with seeming irrelevance to the subject, "Have you ever picked wild strawberries in the fields, Mr. Crane?"

"I have," answered the other man, showing no surprise at the break for life in Brookfield had accustomed him to disjointed details.

"Did you ever notice that going down wind you could see the berries better?" Crane thought for a moment. "Yes, that's right, coming up wind the leaves hid them."

"Just so," commented Porter, "and when a man's got a trainer he's nearly always working up wind with him."

"The trainer hides things," quipped Crane.

"Some do. But the outsiders walking down wind see the berries," Porter answered, evasively.

"I see," said the other, meditatively. "I understand, I'm much obliged. If I thought for an instant that any trainer wasn't dealing perfectly straightforward with me, I'd have nothing more to do with him—nothing whatever."

Crane sat looking through the open window at John Porter, as the latter went down the street. About his thin, square-shouldered mouth hovered an expression that might have been a smile, or an intense look of interest, or a look of avowed hostility. The gray eyes peeped over the wall of their lower lids, and in them, too, was the unfathomable something.

"Yes," he repeated, as though Porter still stood beside him, "if Langdon still dooed me, I'd crush him. Poor old Porter with his story of the strawberries! If he were as clever as he is honest, he wouldn't have been stuck with a horse like Lauzanne. I told Langdon to get rid of that quitter, but he wouldn't do it."

"And a hush came over the clamorous like a babe on his neck I was sobbing. 'She's cleverer than her father.'"

Crane sat for an hour. Porter had vanished from the landscape, but still the banker's thoughts clung to his personality as though the peeping eyes were still looking through the open window.

From the time of the first loan obtained upon Ringwood, Crane had coveted the place. It appeared to him with its elm-bordered, sweeping driveway, leading from gate to old colonial mansion. Its thick-grassed fields, and the running water made it just the place for a man who tempered his passion for racing with common sense. And it would pass from Porter's hands right into his own.

"Oh, the lots of the boys are straight!" "I know that," Porter answered, "but all the straight ones are tied hand and foot with another straight one."

"I've been thinking it over," hazarded Dixon, tentatively—"Boston Bill's got a good lad—there's none of them can put it over him, an' his boss ain't got nothin' in the Eclipse, I know."

"That means the same old game, Andy; we nurse the horse, get him in condition, place him where he can win, and then turn him over to a plunger and take the small end of the stick. Boston Bill would back her off the boards."

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Notice is hereby given that, 30 days after date, I intend to apply to the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works for special licenses to cut and carry away timber from the following lands, situated on Naas river, Coast District. Claim No. 1.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about four miles below the canyon, thence south 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to branch of river, thence along bank of river to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 2.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about five miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 3.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about six miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 4.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seven miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 5.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eight miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 6.—Commencing at the south-east corner of B. S. C.'s Lot 44, thence west 80 chains, thence south 100 chains, thence east to the bank of river, thence along bank of river to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 7.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about nine miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 8.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about ten miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 9.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eleven miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 10.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about twelve miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 11.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about thirteen miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 12.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about fourteen miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 13.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about fifteen miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 14.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixteen miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 15.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventeen miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 16.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighteen miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 17.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about nineteen miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 18.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about twenty miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 19.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about twenty-one miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. 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Claim No. 60.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-two miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 61.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-three miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 62.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-four miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 63.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-five miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 64.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-six miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 65.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-seven miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 66.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-eight miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 67.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about sixty-nine miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 68.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 69.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-one miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 70.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-two miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 71.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-three miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 72.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-four miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 73.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-five miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 74.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-six miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 75.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-seven miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 76.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-eight miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 77.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about seventy-nine miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 78.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 79.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-one miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 80.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-two miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 81.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-three miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 82.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-four miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 83.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-five miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 84.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-six miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 85.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-seven miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 86.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-eight miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 87.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about eighty-nine miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 88.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about ninety miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 89.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about ninety-one miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point of commencement. Containing 60 acres more or less. Claim No. 90.—Commencing at a post on the bank of Naas river about ninety-two miles below the canyon, thence north 80 chains, thence east 30 chains, thence north to point