

tobacco from his pocket and was quietly munching a large piece of it. "That's all, Denny."

"You're wantin' Streeter's crooked jock took off Advocate, Erin, for fear he'd out put Creole over the rail?"

Riley nodded.

"Who'll they put up in his place?"

"The best jock at the meetin' of course—the only good boy that hasn't a mount in the race. And that's my doin', too. I had Morley bespoke for Advocate, and I haven't released him. I've paid him a winnin' mount, d'ye mind. He knows the horse and he's a straight boy. I'll just give the stewards word that he's not ridin'—I hate crooked work."

"How did you get on to Carney's game—did Streeter tell you, Erin?" and Dennis laughed.

"A bad-timpered man like Streeter'll always have friends ready to give him away, but a lot of this is out of the back of me own head, but whither I'm right or whither I'm wrong in me sizin' up of it, I have me own reasons for wantin' Advocate to run straight."

"Will you be needin' me to put the wad down on Creole for you?" Dennis asked anxiously.

"Connolly's goin' to bet for me in the poolrooms over the river. I sint him the key in a letter to-day, and whin I wire him one word to-morrow he'll get busy. And you're in on my bet, Denny, so don't be worryin' over what's goin' to win—lave it to me, just."

The Maple City Cup was to be run at 4 o'clock the next day, and fifteen minutes before that hour Riley stood on the stand lawn, his solemn grey eyes fixed on the upper floor of the judge's stand. Presently the burly figure of Dennis came down the steps, and as he brushed past Riley he whispered, "They're on!"

Riley waited a moment; then he ascended to where the stewards sat discussing something of import.

"What can we do for you, Mr. Riley?" the Judge asked.

"There's a rumour all over the paddock that there's somethin' doin' in this race, gentlemen," Erin answered quietly.

"What is it?" one of the stewards asked sharply.

"My horse, Creole, is favourite, and the public's backin' him; I'm backin' him meself—here's my ticket on him for 600 to 500, but he's travelin' out in the bettin'. There's a strong play on Sponsor, and I've got it straight that Advocate's bein' started to put Creole out of business—inferre with him."

"Advocate isn't in the same stable with Sponsor," the steward objected.

"That's right, gentlemn, but he's in the same money bag—Dick Streeter is runnin' that Peter Blake stable, and he's startin' Advocate. He's put up Jockey Carney, him that has been suspended for foul ridin' more times than I have fingers on two hands—that boy'll stop at nothin'."

"What do you wish us to do, Mr. Riley?" one of the stewards asked.

"Protect the public—give them a run for their money. Creole's not at his best, and if he gets interfered with he can't win. Take that crooked boy off Advocate and put a good jockey up. It's no use to warn him, gentlemn; if warnin' would've done any good he wouldn't have had to be set down before. Put a good straight boy on Advocate and tell him to make the runnin' for no man; win if he can; that's the way to give the public a good race."

The steward turned his head and ran his eye over the jockey board across the track. "The good boys are all ridin'," he said.

"Morley's not got a mount, sir,"

Riley suggested; "and he's the straightest boy in America—there never was a whisper agin him. I was goin' to ride him on Advocate, but I lost the horse. And if Streeter was out to win with Advocate why didn't he put Morley up? He only rides Carney when he's lookin' for 'strong arm.' He tried to pull Dewdrop the first day, but he had to win."

"We'll consider it, Mr. Riley—thank you. We're here to protect the public," the steward said.

Riley went down the steps to the lawn, where he stood like a sentinel, the quiet grey eyes keenly alert.

Presently a messenger hurried from the judges' stand to the betting ring, returning almost immediately with a sheaf of bookmaker's betting sheets. Then the messenger darted toward the paddock and returned with Streeter.

Riley turned hurriedly away, muttering, "Faith, they mean business," and at the course telegraph office wrote on a yellow form, "Unbuckle." The telegram was addressed to John Connolly in a city two hundred miles away, and as Riley handed it through the wicket, he said: "Rush that, Billy—it means something to you, too."

"It'll be there in two minutes," the operator answered, his finger clicking the key as he spoke.

The paddock vibrated with the restless questioning mood of its people as Riley passed to the stalls in which Creole was being saddled.

The paddock judge called to Jockey Carney, who stood in Streeter's colours by Advocate's stall, and the boy walked sullenly into the jockey's dressing room. When the black-and-white-barred jacket reappeared it was on the figure of Jockey Morley, and beside him walked the paddock official.

As Morley was lifted to the back of Advocate, Streeter turned to the official and said, sneeringly: "You'd better give him his riding orders—you seem to be running my stable."

The man smiled, and looking up at the jockey, said: "Get away well, Morley, and ride to win." Then he added, with the same quiet smile on his lips: "I guess if the boys had orders like that always we'd have better racing."

"It'll do me, sir," the jockey answered. "I've ridden this fellow before—he just wants leaving alone in a race."

Three stalls away Riley was giving his jockey his final orders. "Sponsor's the horse you've got to beat, Tommy," he said. "Don't let him head you once after you've turned into the stretch. Advocate is in light, a hundred pounds up, and he'll be out in front, but don't go after him and kill your own horse off. Just lie as handy to Sponsor as you can without hustling Creole too much. There, get up now—they're goin' out."

Down at the head of the stretch, a quarter of a mile away, the starting barrier hung like a veil from rail to rail, and soon the eight thoroughbreds were lined up behind its holding mesh. The starter, standing on his platform just within the inner rail, was sending his bull-like voice into the ears of the little men in gaudy silks who looked strangely like decorated imps sitting upon restless demons that plunged, and raced backward, and reared and kicked in an abandon of villainy.

"Now he's got them!" somebody on the stand lawn yelled. The rubber barrier shot into the air, tripped by the foot of the starter; there was a charge as if Bashi-Bazouks had swept into sight over a sandy desert; there was the thundering pound of hoofs onward.

Sweeping past the stand Sponsor was on the rail half a length in front of Creole, and on the outside galloped

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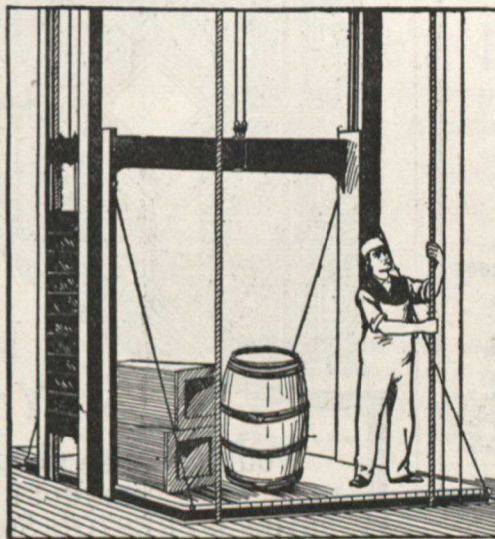
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