

Billy Blingham was seated in a chair.

"Good evening, colonel," said the bookie. "Want to back Starlight again?" he asked.

"I've half a mind to," replied Colonel Fansham, "but I want to see you privately, Blingham. As soon as you are at liberty, could you spare me a few moments?"

"With pleasure, colonel!" replied the bookie, rising, and leading the way into the deserted smoke-room.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A Great Surprise.

Colonel Fansham had not been at his house very long before he got a message from Joe Lambert to say that Langham, the veterinary surgeon, had arrived. He therefore started for the stables again, which adjoined the little villa which he was accustomed to live in when at the training quarters.

Langham proceeded to make a thorough examination of Starlight's injured limb, the owner and trainer waiting anxiously for the decision.

"Well," asked the colonel, quietly, "is it fatal? I mean as far as his running in the Derby is concerned?"

"Not a bit of it, colonel!" replied the vet., heartily. "It means, certainly, that he'll have to go several days without a gallop, but perhaps that won't do him any harm. Joe, here, tells me he is very forward in condition."

"That's good news, anyhow, Langham. You really think it is not serious?"

"Not so far, at any rate. It's a clean cut, and will soon heal, and I'll stake my reputation that it'll be all right in a week to ten days."

The colonel was delighted at this assurance, and Joe Lambert's honest face betrayed the relief which it had given him.

After Langham had taken his departure, having given Lambert directions for the treatment of his charge, the colonel turned to the trainer.

"Now, what can I do for the lad?" he asked, abruptly.

"Who d'you mean, sir? Dick Carden?" inquired the trainer.

"Of course. If it hadn't been for him Starlight would be lying at the bottom of the quarry at this moment. Just send for him, will you?"

In a few moments Dick appeared, and was standing nervously in front of Colonel Fansham.

"Look here, my lad," said the colonel, kindly. "You risked your life this afternoon to save that of my horse. Now what can I do for you? Is there anything that you want specially?"

Dick appeared considerably confused at the question, then suddenly his face lighted up, and he replied, impulsively, though in a tone as if asking a great deal too much:

"I should like to ride in a race, sir," he replied.

"Ride in a race, eh?" said the colonel genially. "Well, that's not much to ask. Certainly you shall. Let him have a mount on old Humming Top at the Epsom Spring Meeting, Lambert; he's got a light weight in that sprint, you know."

"Very well, colonel," said the trainer, and Dick, mumbling his thanks, went off overjoyed at the prospect of riding in public.

"He seems a decent lad," said the owner of Starlight, gazing after the youngest as he moved away.

"He is a good lad," said Lambert, warmly, "and if he hadn't asked you to let him ride I was going to suggest giving him a chance. He's as plucky as they make 'em, has good hands, and doesn't lose his head. I wish I had a few more like him," he ended, ruefully, "for good stable-boys are very hard to procure."

"I must do something more for him, though," muttered the colonel, musingly; then added, quickly: "Hallo! here's a telegraph boy. He's evidently got something for me, as he came from the house."

The colonel took the buff envelope from the bearer, and seeing it was addressed to him, opened it. As his eyes rested on the flimsy sheet of paper, his face took on a look of the gravest perplexity.

He read the message it contained half aloud, as though trying to understand its meaning. He read:

"Please come at once to 19, Shrimp Street, Peckham. Marion Glover wishes to make a confession to you. She is dying. No time to lose."

The wire was signed by the vicar of a parish in the East-end.

"Glover! Glover!" repeated the colonel over to himself. "I wonder what it means? I must go, anyway," he muttered; then, in a louder voice: "I've got to run up to London, Lambert. I may be back to-morrow, but cannot be sure. Keep me posted as to how Starlight goes on. Good-day," and