

# COLONIAL PEARL.

A VOLUME DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

Published every Friday evening, at 17s. 6d. per Annum.

VOLUME THREE.

FRIDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1839.

NUMBER THREE.

From a New Work, entitled "Travels in Town."  
SCENES AT EPSOM RACES.

Epsom Races were instituted in 1779. Lord Derby gave the stakes which still go by the name of the Derby, immediately on establishing the races. On the following year he instituted the Oaks race, calling the prize by that name because it was the name of his country seat. It is curious enough that his own horse Bridget won the first Oaks. Epsom races take place only once a year. An attempt was made a few years since to establish a race at Epsom in September, but there being no prospect of succeeding, the idea was abandoned.

Epsom races last four days. They take place in June, commencing on Tuesday and ending on Friday. Thursday, being the day of the Derby, is the great, the important day, always big with the fate of thousands of gamblers, some on a large, some on a smaller scale. Friday is the next greatest day in point of importance. On that day the Oaks is run for, but the attendance on that day is not at all to be compared with that which graces the contest for the Derby, in regard to the amount of betting on the result. Beyond the mere circle of the confirmed and recognised Turfites themselves, betting on the result of the Oaks is scarcely known. What the extent of the betting on the Derby is, is a point to which I shall afterwards have occasion to refer. For a full fortnight before the Derby day, you hear of little else than the race that is to be run on that day. Among all classes of society, from the highest aristocrats down to the humblest mechanics in the metropolis, is the Derby the subject of conversation, and among all are bets laid, to a greater or less amount, according to the circumstances of the parties, on the issue of the contest. The morning of the day arrives, and for once in their lives the cockneys get out of bed before six o'clock in the morning. From four to ten, continued streams of persons, in carriages, on horseback, and on foot, are seen pouring in the direction of Epsom. At so early an hour as from four to five, you see nearly the whole of London in commotion, consequent on the determination of its population to be present at the races at Epsom. You see them hovering about you in every direction, previous to a regular start, all busily engaged in making the necessary preparations for the contemplated journey. Some are loading their coach, or phaeton, or gig, or other vehicle, with those provisions which the cravings of their appetites may render necessary before they return home. Others are taking the precaution of filling their vehicles with cloaks, Mackintoshes, umbrellas, and other et cetera, in case St. Swithin should take it into his head to give them a little taste of what he can do in the way of marring holiday enjoyments in the open air. Others are anathematising themselves and everybody else, because there is something wrong in the harness of the cattle which are to drive them to the race-course, or because some other unexpected untoward incident occurs to disconcert their plans or delay their starting. In a word, there is no diversity of circumstances in which the parties are not placed who are preparing to set out for Epsom. So general is the bustle and motion around you, that you can scarcely resist the conviction that every body is out of bed, and that the entire population of London are preparing for a trip to the race-course. How striking the contrast which the appearance of the streets presents on the morning of the Derby, to what it does on any other day, when you only see here and there some lazy apprentice creeping towards his employer's; or, it may be, some solitary chimney-sweep, crawling along, with brush in hand and soot bags on his back. And see the aspect of the various streets and roads which lead to the great road which conducts you to Epsom. See the lines of carriages, cabriolets, carts, and every conceivable vehicle; the rows of horsemen and the streams of pedestrians. You are surprised at as well as gratified with the sight. You ask yourself, where can all the horses and vehicles, to say nothing of the human beings you see before you, have come from? Do not press just yet for an answer to the question. Repeat it when you have got into the great road, a mile or two beyond Brixton, into which all the branch roads have, like tributary streams to a vast river, poured their respective complements of men, women, horses, donkeys, dogs, and vehicles of every kind. When you have fairly got out of town, you will have plenty of time to ask yourself the question. Such is the crowded state of the road, that you will often have difficulty in forcing your way onwards. Such a scene you never before witnessed; and you never dreamt that such a sight was to be seen. You see nothing before or behind you, but a vast promiscuous mass of vehicles, horses, pedestrians, etc., all moving in one direction. The scene has all the appearance of a procession, except that it wants regularity and arrangement. You already feel as if you were in a great measure compensated for the unpleasantness of getting out of bed at so early an hour, and for any

pecuniary sacrifice you may have made to procure a horse or vehicle. And not the least interesting feature in the scene is the motley character of the bipeds and quadrupeds before you. The party in the splendid carriage on your right hand consists of two young noblemen and two dashing cyprians. In the go-cart on your left are three Whitechapel butchers, in the employ of Mr. Alderman Seales. Observe the dandified aristocratic airs of the youthful sprigs of nobility, and see the prudish demeanour and affected modesty of the couple of 'frail fair ones' who sit beside them. Then contrast with this the blunt, unceremonious, 'blow-me-tight' manner of the cattle-slayers in the go-cart. They have no more polish, no more refinement, no more affectation in their deportment, than had the half-dozen bullocks they slaughtered on the previous day. Not less marked is the contrast in the appearance of the horses of the two parties. The steeds in the aristocratic carriage look quite as haughty and as full of airs as their masters. They are the high-mettled sort, and, as if spurning the ordinary speed, the driver finds it a difficult task to restrain them. They are just as pampered in their own way as their masters, and a drive down to Epsom is only diversion to them. Far otherwise is it with the animal that drags the vehicle which contains the trio of butchers. He has all the appearance of a hard-working horse. The 'shine is taken out of him.' His head hangs down, and his whole appearance indicates that his spirits are broken by the conjoint agency of the whip and too much labour. If horses do soliloquise, there can be no question that he is congratulating himself on the crowded state of the road, which prevents his being driven at a more rapid pace. Take care you don't tread on the donkey with the little urchin on its back, which is immediately before you. Donkeys are proverbial for their reluctance to quicken their pace. This one is no exception to the rule.

'He is a donkey wot won't go.'

and, therefore, the little fellow who sits astride on his back, is as busy as he can be in

'Walloping him, so, so, so.'

You little rascal, don't be so cruel. What a pity some one does not seize the cane with which you beat the poor long-eared creature so hard, and apply it to your own shoulders! It would do one's heart good to witness the transfer. A taste of the 'walloping' process applied to himself would teach the young rogue to lay it a little more leniently on the sides of the unfortunate donkey. But where are the officers of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals? Where are they? echoes every humane bosom. They ought to muster strong along the road to Epsom on Derby-day. Do you see that country-looking man in a plain gig, drawn by a still plainer horse? He is a retired gentleman with 100,000*l.* You observe that dashing mustachioed personage in his handsome phaeton, with two beautiful grays? he is not only a beggar in circumstances, but was confined in the Queen's Bench prison so late as last week. That is the Earl of —, two or three yards before you. He is an inveterate gambler on the Turf, and has probably bets to the amount of 20,000*l.* depending on the result of the present Derby. You see a poorly-clad pedestrian on the side of the road about a yard from him: he is a journeyman shoemaker, who, though unable to muster the wherewith to pay for any conveyance down, has staked five shillings against some other son of St. Crispin on the issue of the contest. You are struck with the diversity you observe in the appearance of the crowds who are wending their way to Epsom: far greater is the difference which exists, could we only perceive it in all its extent, in the circumstances of the parties. But I shall have occasion to glance again at this topic when I come to speak of the aspect of the assemblage on the Downs immediately before and after the running of the leading races.

As everybody, always excepting the inveterate gambler, who is bent on plundering as many of his fellow-men as he possibly can, thinks of nothing else; as everybody but him has left London for the purpose of enjoying a holiday, you see nothing but smiling, contented, happy faces around you. They have by this time conquered the drowsiness and want of spirit with which they had to contend—owing to their rising at so unusually early an hour—when setting out on their journey; and now they have all the appearance of persons who are determined to be merry and comfortable. It is true that many of them, besides the systematic gambler, have pretty considerable sums dependent on the issue of the races; but somehow or other they either forget all pecuniary cares and anxieties for the moment, or they all lay the flattering unction to their souls, that they are to be gainers. It never occurs to them that somebody must be a loser. Oh, happy absence of thought! It is only a pity that the blessed delusion does not last a little longer.

Is the reader fond of contrasts? See then the altered aspect of the crowds who have been to Epsom, as they return to town in the evening. You can hardly believe them to be the same persons you saw proceeding to the Derby in the morning. Where is all their gaiety? Where the loud laugh and the felicitous joke? Where the liveliness of manner—where the abundant flow of spirits? They are all gone. See how sad and dispirited, with comparatively few exceptions, the streams of people seem. Loss of money in many cases, and exhaustion in others, have worked the change. But I am partly anticipating what will be said with greater propriety in an after part of the chapter.

Until twelve o'clock crowds continue to arrive on the race-course, not only from London, but from all parts of the country within a circuit of twenty or thirty miles. What an immense course of human beings! There cannot be less than 250,000 persons there. And see how well dressed the vast majority of them are! Ragged coats or faded silks are but rarely witnessed. Whatever may be the condition of the pocket or the belly, there is no cause of complaint, with very few exceptions, on the score of the back. If there be a lack of money or of food, there is no lack of raiment. And how elegantly dressed are a very large proportion of the immense assemblage! The women are gorgeously so. You would find it a task of some difficulty to point out a score of ill-dressed females within a moderate distance of the place at which you stand. Witness the forest of waving plumes of feathers. You wonder where they all came from; you had no idea before, that London could have furnished such a supply. How brilliant the aspect which the vast numbers of ladies who are present give to the immense assemblage! Their attire is elegance and splendour combined—their persons are handsome—and the charm caused by such display of beauty and fashion would be complete, but for the unpleasant fact obtruding on your mind, that a very considerable portion of them are of exceptionable character. But let that pass. The face of the adjoining hill, extensive as is the space it embraces, appears as if instinct with life. Persons of all ranks and classes are there crowded together as densely as it is possible for them to be. See also both sides of the race-course, fully a mile and a half in length. Carriages, coaches, phaetons, cabs, carts; vehicles of all sorts, in short, are there ranged as closely as they can be, three or four deep, from nearly one extremity of the course to the other. And so thickly tenanted are they chiefly with elegantly-attired ladies, that it is with difficulty the parties can find standing-room.

The people on the ground are so closely wedged together along the margins of the course, that one might as soon hope to make his way through a stone erection as to force through them. On the outside are donkeys without number, some of them with and others without carts, but all are there with the view of being, in some way or other, turned to profitable account. Many of them draw fruit, gingerbread, and other eatables to the stand; while others carry the materials out of which stalls of various kinds and for various purposes are constructed. The 'show' party muster strong. There is not a sight on earth you could wish to see which you may not see here; or rather which the showmen do not assure you is to be seen. Prodiges of nature are so numerous, that one could have had no idea before, that she had ever made so many, even had all been collected from the time of Adam downwards, and from all parts of the world. As for legerdemain tricks, there is literally no end to them. The conjurers do so much, and promise such a great deal more, that one is surprised they cannot, by some slight of hand expedient, convert the stones or the grass under their feet into money, and by thus enriching themselves at once, do away with all future necessity of asking the public to pay for their exhibitions. In the theatrical world, great things are always done at Epsom on the Derby day. Macbeth, or anything else you please, either in the tragic or comic department of the drama, will be performed before your wondering eyes in about five minutes' time. And see the actors and the actresses: the scenes and the dresses! Did any one ever witness anything half so theatrical? I never did. Then see a great many small tables, of very plain appearance, scattered about you in all directions; and see those tables, surrounded by twelve or fifteen persons. Don't these persons look very simple like? Do you not fancy you see stupidity in their countenances? They are very simple and stupid, for they are playing at the game called thimble-rigging, and the rogues who are the owners of the tables are victimising them; in other words, are cheating them of their money with astonishing expedition. Those large tents you see here and there, and everywhere, are so many portable hells or gambling places, in which the work of plunder is going on at a fearful rate. Thousands are on the eve of ruin by