

## The Horse That Never Won.

"Old pop Dakins" had been a highly successful owner and "speculator" in his younger days, but after his beard got snowy his eagle eye more quiescent, and his crown quite bald he seemed to lose all power of impressing his horses with the importance of leading instead of following, on their way to the winning post. As a consequence his stable has not won in five years.

"I can't understand it now," he asserted as he stood watching the stable boy giving them the early morning spin, and noticed how, as usual, all three of his thoroughbreds "worked" in sensational time. "Them fool dogs just burn up the track in the mornin' but when they get in a race they're as dopey as an old mule. They're fine, stock, an' I feed an' train them the same as I ever dope, an' they're good enough in their work to set the rail birds plum dippy over 'em, but by gum themunats they get in a real race they jes' walk like fat steers goin' to the butcher."

Twenty years before Dakins had owned thirty head instead of three, and his colors had won an average of at least once a week the year round. His "roll" in those days had been "big enough to choke an elephant," for the old man was no piker and played his horses liberally. It was common talk that he had won half a million. But, as he was addicted to poker as well, it was not unusual for him to drop at night what he had won in the daytime. Still he could always put his hands on fifty thousand without difficulty.

Now it was different. He had nothing left but the three-head, a modest two-story frame house, and a few hundred in the bank. He had quit playing poker and was trying hard to groom his thoroughbreds for a winning race that would put him on his feet again.

He had employed almost every jockey who had a creditable record, and had used great skill in getting his horses "placed" in races in which, according to handicap figures, they had a splendid chance to win. Often tipsters had picked them and advertised them as specials, but always to their own great sorrow and mortification.

"For the blame horses always come in eighth or ninth," muttered the old man, as he "Early Guy," a noted advertising tipster, mutually conduced with each other one four o'clock A.M.

As Dakins' roll became more and more depleted, he became more and more determined to win, and shuffled around the stable all day long giving his unique charges far better attention than he had ever given those he had owned in the old days of constant success.

For the last few months his wager had been only one hundred dollars to the race, and the races about four weeks apart. Once the papers had headlined his plunging to the tune of nearly a hundred thousand simoleons on his famous winner, New Broom. Nothing else could so well illustrate his fall in the sporting world.

As he drew near his last available hundred, he resolved to concentrate all his efforts on winning with his fastest horse, Fylo, a roan four-year-old that had "worked" three-quarters in 1:11-1-5. If he could succeed in getting this gelding to run the race in that time Dakins knew that there were not

half a dozen horses in training that could beat him provided the weights were satisfactory.

At last he decided that he had Fylo "trained to the minute." Black Sam combination stable boy, assistant trainer and jockey, who had arm muscles like steel from long practice, was almost unable to hold the colt.

Dakins sat on an upturned bushel measure watching the boy bringing Fylo back to the stable after a quick canter, hard-held. He could not remember having seen a horse look quite so competent to rate in easy sheels. In the pink of condition, sleek, rervet as to limb and coat, and showing ginger and devilishness enough to run ten miles without easing up, Fylo looked to be a "cinch" if ever there was one.

After he had returned Fylo to the stable shiny-eyed Sam came and leaned against the jamb waiting for an opening to talk to his master. The old man, deep in thought, ignored him at first, then turned to him with inquiring eyes.

"Pears to me that roan colt's 'bout ready to win, ef he's ever goin' to," observed Sam deferentially.

"It's been 'pearin' that way to me for the past two years," answered Dakins wearily. "I dunno. He always did burn 'up the track in the mornin' only to race like a hobby-hoss when he got in a handicap. He don't seem to have no courage, Sam."

"Dat's it!" affirmed Sam eagerly. "Dat colt quits jes' like a yaller dawg. Jes' like a yaller dawg!" he repeated, shaking his woolly head solemnly.

"Ev'ry durn one of my horses has been that way the past five years," grieved the old man reminiscently. "That there Betsy Bragg which I went away fer \$200 to little Pete Jenkins, she done the same way. She worked five-eighths in the mornin' in less than .59, but the best she ever did in a race was 1:05. An' these other two, Wild Eye and Gofast, they don't even run when they get in a race, they walk!"

In a paroxysm of disgust the old man squirted a flow of tobacco juice across the stable yard as viciously as if he was throwing a missile. Dakins had a peculiar method of spitting when he was upset, one that was more expressive than mere cursing.

"How many times them newspaper clocckers has spouted a lot of monkey-doodle rot about holdin' the clock on a pippin that burnt the track to a cinder, an' was fit as one of the shrewdest manipulators in the game could make him, an' was goin' to clean up the bookies for a wagon load of the long green, an' all that kind of bull, an' when the damn dog got to the post he'd crawl like a lizard an' get so far behind he didn't know there was any racin' goin' on? By gum, I'm gettin' tired of it!"

"I don't know, Boss! Seems to me ole Fylo's got more courage on he auster have," protested Sam. "He ain't so bad hoss ef he gets nerve!"

Dakins again expectorated discontentedly as proof that Sam was too enthusiastic.

"A hoss can't git nerve!" he roared in exasperation. "It's born in him or else he's always a dog."

"When you goin' to start him again?" asked the darkey, timidly.

"To-morrow," answered Dakins.

"An' I'm pectin' my last hundred on him, though I ain't dreamin' he'll win, but just because I ain't a quitter, an' I got the habit of playin' my own hosses." His voice was hopeless and sullen. Plainly, he did not expect to win, but wanted to live up to his reputation for consistency.

"Boss!" exclaimed the black boy desperately, after fidgeting around from one foot to the other for quite a spell. "Ah wish you'd let me ride him to-morrow."

Dakins turned on him in wrath. Then another thought struck him and he remained silent. Finally, he looked at the quaking darkey attentively.

"All the good I can see that that would do would be to save payin' a stylish jockey's fees," Dakins grumbled. "Which, of course, as finances is slim, amounts to somethin'. I believe I'll do it! If you can push him ahead as hard as you hold him back when you work him you might keep from comin' in last, anyhow." And he smiled grimly.

"I dunno, Boss! I dunno!" exclaimed the little negro. "Ah'll do my best sure!"

"Well, I know," replied Dakins, moseonly. "No use a-foolin' ourselves. That there Fylo's a horse that ain't never won, an' never goin' to win. That's how I figure it out. But to-morrow will be his last chance to win for Silas C. Dakins." And the old man got up and went to the house in search of breakfast.

Having in his time lost half a million after winning it, Dakins was philosophic enough to refuse to let his worries interfere with regular eating and sleeping. So the next day found him as pink-cheeked and keen-eyed and easy-gaited as usual.

But when, just before race time he remembered that he had forgotten to give Fylo his daily portion of the condition powders that the old man invented and used with great success years before, he groaned.

"Now I can't bet on him!" he exclaimed. "Now he'll lose, sure! No use to risk a durn cent on a dopey hoss. He'll go to sleep the minute the starter lifts the barrier."

But when the horses paraded to the post of the third race that afternoon, and Fylo pranced past the paddock fence giving the old man a quick, fiery look of recognition, Dakins forgot his resolve, and, as from habit, rushed to the ring to get his money up.

"I reckon I'll take a hundred on Fylo to win," he draveled, addressing Joe Weinstein, a bookmaker, who had acquired most of the old man's wealth in installments of one and two hundred dollar bets. "That is, if you give me a fair price, Joe!"

"I'll give you a foolish price," responded Joe good naturedly, convinced in his own mind that no Dakins horse would ever win again. "All the other books have got him fifteen to one. I'll take your bet at twenty-five to one. All right?"

"Joe," replied the old man, "don't you know that that horse has never won a race in his life? In my opinion he never will win a race, neither. I'm just bettin' 'cause I got the habit. You ought to give me a hundred to one. Abe Sullivan down the line has chalked up twenty-five to one, same as you offer me."

"Has he?" Joe peered over to the Sullivan "slate" and saw that it was true. "Well," he said, moved to extreme generosity. "If Sullivan's offering twenty-five to one I'll go double and give you fifty to one for your

money. That's good enough, ain't it?"

The old man nodded his satisfaction at the odds and handed Joe a "century." Then he unslinging his glass and made for the grandstand to watch the race.

"Nothin' but a bunch of onry dogs in this race, I ain't bettin'," he heard a flashily dressed, bristle-mustached little man say to a big, rangy man beside him, right in front of Dakins.

"Better peel off an even hundred an' put it on Fylo straight," counseled the old man maliciously, suddenly actuated by a strange desire to have somebody else lose on Fylo beside himself. The small man looked up sharply.

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