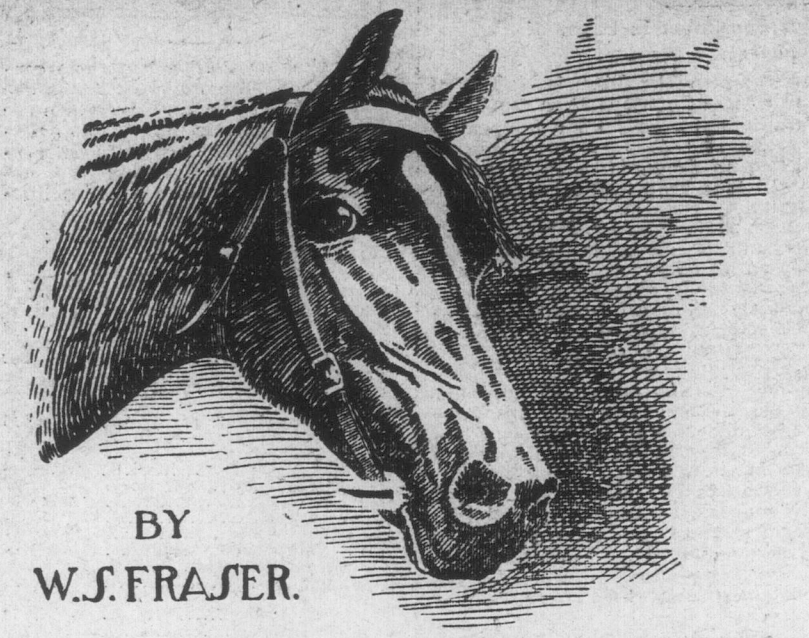


# THOROUGHBREDS



BY  
W. J. FRASER.

## CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

"Must've bought him for a work horse, I guess," the trainer answered. "Is he any good?"

"He can eat; that's all I see from him yet."

"What did he buy him for?"

"To help a snoozer that was sittin' in bad luck."

Faust had an odd habit of causing his fat sides to ripple like troubled water when he was amused; he never laughed, just the rib ripple.

"What's funny?" Langdon asked, eying Jakey, with querulous disfavor.

"Crane buying a horse to help a man," answered the cherub, wondering if Langdon was so devoid of humor.

"Crane told me so himself," said the trainer. "Porter's hurt, an' I guess they're in a hole, an' the boss took over Diablo."

"Say, Dick," and Faust edged close enough to tap the other man's ribs with his thumb, "were you born yesterday?" I say," continued the cherub, for Langdon had turned away somewhat impatiently, "what's the good of givin' me that gup; you didn't stand for it yourself—not on yer life. Th' old man's pretty slick; buys a bad horse to help a poor mutt, an' enters him in the Brooklyn, eh?"

"The Brooklyn," exclaimed Langdon, thrown off his guard.

With compunctious intensity the cherub melodramatically drew from his pocket the Telegraph clipping and tendered it to Langdon, watching the latter's face closely. "That's the pea, Dick, eh?" he asked.

Langdon was thinking. Was Crane doubling on him all around? Why the devil hadn't he told him?

"Now you ain't takin' in that fairy tale of Crane's any more'n I am, Dick. Why can't we do a bit for ourselves over this; it won't hurt the boss none. Won't throw him down. This horse was a good youngster, an' Crane didn't get him without seein' him do some-thing. You just keep me posted, an' if he shapes good I can back 'm fer an old-time killin', see? I'll divvy up straight."

Langdon didn't answer at once—not with satisfaction to Faust; he knew that Crane held the butter for his bread, even the bread itself; but here was a man with cake, and he loved cake. Finally, in the glamor of Jakey's talk of untold wealth to be acquired, Langdon, swayed by the cupid's self-interest flickered clearly in view, and he promised Mr. Jakey, mentally, a long trip to a very hot place, indeed, rather than a surreptitious partnership over Diablo.

It was some little time after this, while Faust was feeling somewhat irritated at the absence of information from Langdon, that he had an interview with Crane.

"I want you back The Dutchman to win fifty thousand for me over the Brooklyn Derby," the latter said.

"But there's no winner book on it," objected Faust.

"That's just where your cleverness will come in," saucily answered Crane. "There's no hurry, and there are always people looking for foolish money. There's one such in Chicago, O'Leary; and I fancy they could even be found in New York. But you ought to get fifty to one, about it, if you put it on easy."

"I see you have Diablo entered for the Brooklyn," Faust put out as a feeler. "Don't you want a commission worked on him?"

"I didn't enter him; that was somebody else's foolishness, and I don't want to back him."

"He's a hundred to one."

"A thousand would be short odds, I should say," answered Crane. "But wait a bit. I bought him just to—well, I took him from some people who were tired of his cannibal ways, and promised to have a small bet on him the first time he ran, for—the man."

The equivocation was really a touch of delicacy. "You must take the odds to fifty for me; there's not one chance in a million of his starting, but I might forget all about this little matter of the bet, even if I were foolish enough to pay post-money on him."

"Hadn't I better dribble on more from time to time, if he has a chance?"

"Not of my money, thanks!" The "banks" clipped like a steel trap, and the business was completed.

Faust went away more than ever suspicious of Crane and Diablo. That fifty dollars being put on for anybody else was bunkum. "That was Crane up to anyway?" he really meant to back the horse he would not have started with such a trifle. Perhaps Diablo had been stuck in the Brooklyn simply to see how the handicapper would rate him.

Faust was convinced that Crane had some big coup in view; he would wait a little, and at the first move have a strong pull.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Langdon was a consummate trainer, a student of horse character. He knew that while binoculars of mercury would blister and put right a bowed tendon, or the firing iron take life out of a splint, that a much finer knowledge than this was requisite to get full-

hearted work out of a thoroughbred. Brain must be pitted against brain; so he studied his horses; and when Diablo came into his hands, possessed of a mind, he worked over him with considerable intelligent patience.

This study of horse character was the very thing that had caused him to go wrong over Lausanne. He had not done so, Crane had already decided to go to time to demonstrate clearly the horse's temperament, but had recourse to a cocaine stimulant. But with him Lausanne's case had been exceptional.

At first, Crane had been disappointed over Diablo, but almost by accident Langdon discovered that the black's bad temper was always fanned into a blaze by the sight of the boy Shandy.

Then came a glint of hope. Diablo took a fancy to Westley, the jockey, who was experimentally put on his back in the working gallop. After that Shandy was kept out of the way; Westley took Diablo under his care, and the big horse began to show a surprising improvement.

Crane had been quite honest in his statement that he thought Diablo a bad horse. His having been entered by Porter for the "Brooklyn" suggested the possibility that his former owner must have seen some merit in the horse. At any rate, he advised Langdon to give Diablo a patient trial. He really had very little idea that the melodramatically drawn from his pocket the Telegraph clipping and tendered it to Langdon, watching the latter's face closely. "That's the pea, Dick, eh?" he asked.

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all. You make him believe you're on the square, an' he'll do what's right. But he hasn't got a use for any of the guys that gets a cranky play in on the work, an' he's standin' around in put Westley on him to-day."

"What about The Dutchman?"

"Colley'll do. Any kid can ride him, if they sit still. He's just the easiest-tempered horse ever looked through a bridle; he knows what's doin' all the time. But Colley ain't no good on Diablo, an' if he can smell Shandy, that settles it—it's all over. I'll put Westley up; it takes a man to ride that horse."

"What about this gallop?" asked Crane; "there'll be spies about trying to find out things, won't there?"

"Bet yer life, there'll be somebody, sir. It's just like when I was out in Colorado; you couldn't see a vulture if you traveled forty days; perhaps, but plant a dead thing anywhere and in an hour the sky's simply filled with 'em. These touts in most like vultures of anything I know; you've just got to work your stunt to give 'em the go-by, that's all."

Crane took but a half-hour to get the matters that held full away over the trainer's mind; looking after these incidents was Langdon's part of the contract. That was why they were so strong together. Langdon could do it. Just how the trial was to be held, alone, with the inevitable tout at hand, Crane knew not, neither did he investigate; that was up to the trainer.

They drove into the paddock. Westley, mounted on the black, was there, and the two stable lads were there.

"Shall we bring out the horses?" asked Westley, as Langdon sat swinging a leg loosely over the end of the buggy.

"Any of the talent about, Bill?"

"Quite likely, though I haven't seen none."

"Well, we'll slip 'em now. Just saddle up careless like, an' no prelude. You mind you, the Dutchman's got a brush till you've gone around once. Take your mounts down the stretch to the quarter post, an' then come away the first break; if there's anyone touts' you off, they'll think it's just a pipe opener, an' won't catch the time. Run out the mile-an-a-quarter, make a race of it, but don't go to the bat, Diablo an' The Dutchman don't mind no who, but give us about the best they've got."

"All right, sir," answered Westley. "If I'm a judge, when the black's through puddin', he's done racin', 'cause he's a keen one, so there won't be no grand old best time, 'cause he'll show the rail birds is lookin' they'll think we're goin' under a strong wrap, even when we're all out."

Langdon nodded his head. He was a man not given to exuberant appreciation, but he did aver that the big, black with the firm pull of a grizzly, Diablo squirmed under the torture of the tightening web on his sensitive skin, and crouched as though he would fall.

"I've tipped the scales at a hundred-and-thirty in my sweater."

"One hundred and three," mused the trainer, making a mental calculation. "What's Colley's weight?"

"He's as near a hundred as you can make it."

"Did you bring over a saddle?"

"Yes; two of 'em; one a piece for the horses."

"Tell Colley to take one, and some leads, and weigh out a hundred and a hundred and twelve, too. We'll get the scale for May, weight for age, for the three-year-old, The Dutchman. I guess he won't need more'n seven pounds dead weight, for it's a five-pounder, I think. Let me see, you said a hundred and three, you were."

"Yes, sir; in the sweater; I can take that off—"

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