

barefooted as a colt? 'A pound off his feet is 4 lbs. off his back,' the saying is; and that horse is out for the guineas to-day."

Then I told him what I knew.

"We'll have to hurry, if we mean to back him," he said. "The odds will soon be cut when the owner's money comes into the ring."

We made a pilgrimage to the bookmakers. Sir Michael was a strong favourite. The Count was 40 to 1.

"How much do you wish to bet?" my companion asked.

"I'm going to make the only bet of my life just now," I answered. "I can afford to lose 500 rupees if the horse doesn't win. If it comes off—well and good."

Steel got the money on; judicious investments here and there among the different bookmakers in moderate sums made it possible. He was an artist at that sort of thing. He also backed the horse for himself.

I was sitting in the stand when Steel came over, having finished his financial transactions. "The owner's money is going on now," he said, "and the odds are being cut. I shouldn't wonder if the brute would win."

"Win, win, win!" The Thing kept jingling in my ear; or perhaps it was the crazy, unnerving excitement of my first bet.

Almost as he had looked in the street the night of the riot, appeared Little Griff, crouched monkey-like over the withers of the big chestnut at the post. It was only three-quarters of a mile, the race, and in less than two minutes I should be rich—rich for a Griffin; or full of the knowledge that two months' salary had been dropped in the sea.

The white-stockinged legs of the chestnut flicked in and out among the dark shins of the other horses, as they cotillioned in and out in their fight for the premier place when the bunting should drop.

Several times the kaleidoscope of colours lined up and shot forward as the first flag kissed the earth. Each time the white legs twinkled in front; each time the scarlet-slashed blue

drove out in the lead of the other colours.

"Good boy, Griff!" Steel was saying, as he watched them through his glass. "You'll buy the watch for him, Kinnaird, if he wins, and I'll furnish the chain—I'll throw in a charm too."

Steel was getting excited, evidently. I was also worked up; but I kept it out of evidence.

"*There they go!*" my friend cried. The Count's in the lead! Good old Griff! he's got a head on his shoulders, that boy has."

I could see that the big chestnut had opened up a flattering lead of at least two lengths.

"They'll nev—er catch him!" they'll nev—er catch him!" Steel was saying in a cheerful monotone. He was excited.

Gracious! what would I do with 20,000 rupees I was wondering. What if the bookmakers should go broke and welsh me out of the lot. The race seemed already won, with Griffith away in the lead.

"They'll nev—er catch him—nev—er catch him!" Steel kept on in that isolated drawl. "They'll nev—er catch him—The Count's light—seven stuns two; and he's got the foot of all of them, for he's as fast as greased lightning. They'll nev—er catch him."

It was a cheerful bulletin, in spite of the monotony of the expression. It not only announced that our horse was in premier place, but it was optimistic of the future. I prayed that Steel might not be a dishonoured prophet; also that the bookmakers might not welsh me.

I took out the tickets and looked at them; there might have been some mistake made in the horse. But they were all right; the various sums in the lined margin all stood against the name "Count." I shoved them back in my pocket and listened to my friend. "He's choking them off in the heavy going—they'll nev—er catch him!"

They had swung into the stretch now. To my unpractised eye they were all winning, each horse seemed galloping as fast as the other; there