

## AN ASTEROID.

## Interesting Career of an Unbeaten Turf Performer.

It is an old maxim among breeders that excellence on the turf, size, breeding, and the highest qualifications of a thoroughbred horse do not always form a guarantee of a successful sire. In other words, that while a horse of the very highest type in every way, embodying all of the merits named, is generally safe to breed to for reproduction of his like, that there have been some notable exceptions to the rule. The great French horse, Gladiateur, who reigned at Epsom and Doncaster, was the turf wonder of his day, and his blood the finest in the French and English stud books. But at the stud he was one of the most conspicuous failures of modern times.

## SOME FAMOUS BREEDERS OF BREEDING.

Some, too, on this side of the water, some of the great race horses have failed at the stud to beget their like. Kentucky Tom Bowling had Asteroid as three instances in point, all three practically unbeatable at their best and of illustrious lineage. Yet the student of breeding will see that their descendants of note are Dublin fair between. Kentucky did sire Sublim and a few other fair horses. Tom Bowling's few representatives on the turf were mostly selling platters: while Asteroid, with Ballanck, Artist, Bingham and others did better. On either of the tris, but even he was voted a failure at producing his like.

When the late R. A. Alexander, of Woodburn, or "Sir Robert," as I believe he was entitled to call himself, bred three such horses as Norfolk, Kentucky and Asteroid in one year, he did what few breeders have recorded before or since. Kentucky was the first sold. Then after Norfolk had won the Jersey Derby, at Paterson, Alexander sold the son of Lexington for \$15,000.

## A CURIOSUS WAGER WON.

When the odd dollar was tucked on to Norfolk's price, the master of Woodburn sold Theodore Winters, his purchaser, from California, that he had a better horse left in his (Alexander's) stable, and that the extra dollar was charged in order to win a wager made, if memory serves me, with Richard Ten Broeck, that one of Lexington's sons would sell for more money than the \$15,000 he (Alexander) had paid for the old son of Boston and Alice Carnal.

Norfolk had just then (1864) won the Jersey Derby at Paterson and was looked on as the best horse in training by long odds, and after he was shipped to California by sea via the Isthmus route that fall, at Los Angeles, the former was all that was claimed for him. Therefore his breeder's statement that he had left a better horse than Norfolk was taken with a big grain of salt. Yet, after developments showed that in Asteroid, the younger, to his one-year-old, he had a turf performer of the first water, in his three years' career on the turf Asteroid never lost a race, and when he broke down at Jerome Park was unbeaten. That he was as good a horse as Norfolk, however, looked been able to do with the former when the two were stable companions.

## A SENSATIONAL BIT OF TURF HISTORY.

Nelsa, daughter of imported Glencoe, foaled Asteroid to Lexington at Woodburn in the spring of 1861, and the youngster from the first gave promise of being a turf performer of note. Her race record as a two-year-old, a three-year-old, Asteroid made his debut as a five-year-old and won all his races that year at the Wood-

lawn course, Louisville, the La Cleave course at St. Louis, and elsewhere. All his races in 1864 were in the west, as Norfolk was more than upholding the credit of the Alexander "blue, white cap" in the east. So Asteroid was the western mainstay of the stable.

## GUERRILLA WARFARE IN KENTUCKY.

In the fall of that year, 1864, the guerrillas began getting in their work at the stock farms of Woodford and other counties. Horses were held "conscripted" and where they could the freedmen to recognize the right of the rebels to take their stock rested, frequent bloody conflicts took place. Adam Harper, brother of John Harper, breeder of Longfellow, was shot down in cold blood at Midway, Ky., while at his own gate, resisting an attempt of guerrillas to "press" his stock. This band was led by a woman in male attire and she was afterward hanged for her "irregular" warfare. While at Big Spring another band had a pitched battle with the Alexander farm help and retreated, carrying with them, however, half-a-dozen of the best thoroughbreds on the place. As among the stoutest (brother was to Norfolk) and the great Asteroid, it can be imagined that consternation was created at Big Spring.

## A BATTLE WITH BUSHWHACKERS.

If space permitted, I could relate a very interesting portion of Kentucky warfare in detail. How the fleeing bushwhackers, chased by the Alexander reprobucks, the edge of a high bluff overlooking the Kentucky River, saw that stream amid a shower of bullets from the pursuers. How a pursuing party kept up the chase until the rebels covered all the horses, but the star of the Asteroid, Asteroid. How a pair of Breeder Alexander's most trusty friends—Messrs. Warren Viley and Zeke Clay, I think, Spring another band had a pitched battle with the Alexander farm help and retreated, carrying with them, however, half-a-dozen of the best thoroughbreds on the place. As among the stoutest (brother was to Norfolk) and the great Asteroid, it can be imagined that consternation was created at Big Spring.

How they came up with the bushwhackers astride of Asteroid, and by parley and stratagem recovered the colt by a ransom of \$300 without resort to force, and how the whole of Woodford county united in an ovation to the two rescuers as they returned to Big Spring with Asteroid in triumph, very little the worse for their bare-handed mile trip.

## MORE GUERRILLA RAIDSON RACEDORSERS.

That same fall the guerrillas became again so troublesome and of such large numbers that all the Alexander horses at Big Spring were taken to Illinois, where they remained until the spring of 1865. It was at St. Louis, winning a four-year-old stake at mile heats in three heats, after losing the first heat.

The horse was troubled with "luck-shins" a good deal that season, but went through the year unbeaten. Strong efforts were made to induce Mr. Alexander to bring Asteroid to Saratoga to meet Kentucky, but none of them came to a head, and the two brothers in blood sons of the same sire, were yet to meet each other in the arena.

## ASTEROID AT LAST GETS EAST.

But in 1866, when practically barred out in training for an eastern campaign. The great meeting at Jerome Park, when the new course was formally opened for the first time, was the loadstone that drew the unbeaten West-racer on, and the horse was put on the steady parade. But it had to be gone about carefully, as, like many other racehorses, Asteroid had a "leg," one that had given his trainer no little trouble.

But Asteroid progressed well in his training, and three weeks before the date set for Jerome's opening he and Idlewild were shipped from Kentucky to Fordham, where they met the rest of the stable that had son of Saratoga, Hays-two-year-olds. That week the Woodburn yearlings were sold in Kentucky and a full brother to Asteroid brought \$7,000, then the largest price ever paid for an American yearling.

## ARRIVAL OF THE KENTUCKY CRACK AT JEROME.

Asteroid's arrival at Jerome Park the first week in September was made the scene of a perfect ovation. The entire colony at the track and many others as well, several hundred people in all, turned out to welcome the great horse and his equally celebrated companion Idlewild.

Both were in charge of Robert Coyle and each looked well after their trip on the cars. Asteroid was not what could be called very "slimy" horse. He showed a deal of quality, but leg bodied with a fine back, great depth through the heart and fine legs, his muscular development and driving power behind being a sight to see. With a very game looking horse—one that looked equal to any rooster. After looking at him one could easily relate the remark of his bushwhacker captor two years before when Messrs. Clay and Viley told him they wanted to ransom that "colt." Said the guerrilla: "colt be!—d, he's no three-year-old, but one of the stoutest horses I ever threw a leg over."

## ASTEROID'S WORK PLEASES THE TALENT.

After he was put to work at Jerome Park for his four-mile heat race with Kentucky, in the Inauguration Stakes, no horse could have done better. He was asked to do his best, although, of course, the fact that he was a bit "dicky" in his high fore leg naturally caused his work to be attended with more or less concern to his people. Two days before the Inauguration Stakes was to be run, when Asteroid was to be given his final trial for the great event, all connected with the stable believed the race as good as track for a bruiser gallop, the last he was to get before he was saddled for the fray. Much "chaffing" had been indulged with in the rival factions, and the "mail birds" were in force as Asteroid came on the track for his last gallop.

## A GOOD HORSE BREAKS DOWNS.

It was Sunday morning, the 23rd of September, and a beautiful day it was. Asteroid was sent two miles in about 3:50 as a pip-opener, and after being "cooled out" was started for a two mile gallop designed to be a "stiff" run. Going away like an arrow from a box with the stable mate Merrill as a helper, Asteroid reeled off a mile in 1:48, going like clockwork and fighting for his head. At the second mile Hayeswater took Merrill's place and the pace sharpened the mile and three-quarters in 5:08, the best work at the distance yet recorded at Jerome. So fast was it and so easily was Asteroid going that Ford, his jockey, was signalled to pull up and he had got the horse down to a gallop at the last furlong post. Then, however, the long dreaded catastrophe happened. A tendon gave way and the horse stopped very suddenly Ford getting off without completing the two miles, Asteroid limping badly to the post on three legs.

## A GALLANT HORSE AND SYMPATHETIC JOCKEY.

As Jockey Ford led the gallant horse up to his trainer the latter's eyes were full of tears, and he soon began to cry as if

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his heart would break. An exhumate revealed that it was the sound leg that had gone. As often happens in such cases, the horse, probably realizing his infirmities, had favored the weak leg in his work, to the consequent throwing of extra strain and weight upon the sound leg. His people were critical in giving him such sharp work under the circumstances, but all eye-witnesses of his fast trial agreed that the horse was not pressed at any part of the trip, and that being the case, there seemed little reason for blaming anyone. Very little reason would probably have happened in the race two days later, and there was very little use crying over spilt milk.

## ASTEROID RIDES FARWELL TO THE TURF.

So decided was the injury to Asteroid that further attempts at training him were given up. His rival, Kentucky, as is well-known, won the great race of Jerome in straight heats, beating Ford, Gray and Idlewild, the latter not being at her best by any means. Between the heats of that race Asteroid was shown at the track and 25,000 people cheered the lame hero that had come far for naught. It was a most impressive score, and just sentiment in racing can again be aroused if those in charge about it the right way. The days of a man short sprains should now be relegated to the past. Let distance be increased and public interest will be sure keep pace with a return to the sportsmanlike methods of a score of years ago.

Jimmy.—"What would you do if you were a king?"

Zouze.—"I know. I'd make a law punish everybody what wanted to be a king."

Jimmy.—"An' I'd fix it so no beggars were sick from eating would have to die medicine."

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