

in ould Ireland; an' they're the best in the world, sor, but I don't like him."

"Why, Dick?"

"Well, sor, if a woman wid an eye in her head like that chap's got wanted to marry me, I wouldn't have her if she was rich as Brian Boru. He's shifty; he have notions; an' I'll take me oath he has the divil's own timper."

"Put him in the stall, Dick; give him a bran-mash; let him loaf for a couple of days, and then we'll give you a chance to find out over the jumps whether you're right or not."

Raeburn and Leigh returned to the house. Alone in his room, Raeburn drew two letters from a drawer in his desk, saying in thought: "Let's see just what Kathleen writes."

"Pretty good performance that," he muttered, after perusing one letter; "won the qualified hunters' Mile-on-the-Flat in a canter—his first start in a race, too. Won the Belmont Stake; then the Open Steeplechase, beating Silvermist, that had been brought there as a good thing. No wonder Kathleen thinks he's worth trying among the cracks; he is, now that I've seen him, Dick's talk about his restless eye notwithstanding. I wonder who Mr. Bender is that offered two thousand for the horse at Belmont."

Raeburn sat turning the letter over in his fingers, as though its mute pages, agitated, might answer his query. The letter did not know that Bender was the slick villain, Cusick, so it answered nothing.

"I guess ten thousand wouldn't have taken Ben Ali—under the circumstances," Raeburn mused; "and so Bender did not get him."

Raeburn ran through the four closely written pages of the second letter. "What a sublime ass the gentle Leigh is, to be sure. He can't see, or he doesn't want to see—he's poverty blind. Just because Kathleen's rich, and he's poor, he runs out as soon as he's shown a hurdle. Gad! she's clever, though; and determined—which is better still."

Within the letter lay a pink check for a thousand dollars. "My rosy little friend," Raeburn said, "yours is a labor of love. You ought to net the obstinate Leigh twenty thousand if he captures the International, and I believe he will. And I'm to play the fairy godfather with the girl's money. What's the use of swearing a fellow to secrecy, though," he muttered querulously, as he put the letter back in the drawer.

Kathleen had written that the thousand dollars was to be bet on Ben Ali to recompense Leigh for his training and riding of the horse, but Leigh must think that it was Raeburn's money.

For a week the quondam Ben Ali was treated like a convalescent, his supposed journey in the train from Belmont earning him a rest. He was cantered about the half-mile training course with Dick in the saddle. Perhaps it was the let-up that had exorcised the hoodoo Johnston had stated was over the horse, for his easy, swinging stride and gentle mouth on the bit were winning over Dick's prejudice.

"We'll try Ben Ali at the real thing to-day," Raeburn said one morning, as Dick sat perched on the horse waiting for orders. "Take him around once, then put him at the rails. Let him negotiate the mud walls, too."

After the circuit of the course, Dick checked Ben Ali, walked him up to the brush-topped, white-paneled jump, saying: "There, ye spalpeen, smell of that. Sure, in Ireland it wouldn't be thought big enough fer a goat."

Then he took Ben Ali back a hundred yards and drove him at the jump with a chirrup. Once the horse lunged viciously at the bit. Dick let the reins slip through his fingers, saying: "Try it yer own way—ye've notions, ye devil. Up-p-p!"

The bay answered to the lifting call with never a tickle from his hoofs on the feathered cedar that plumed the jump. "Well done, ye darlint!" Dick grunted, as the broad, clean leap thrilled him to forgetfulness of his distrust. The wind shrieked Dick's voice into a wail as the horse, breasting to the bit, raced over the sward till it blurred smooth, and up from its beaten breast came, like the hoarse laugh of a viking, the sonorous echo of the pounding hoofs.

"He can gallop a bit!" Raeburn cried exultingly to Leigh, as he watched. Now he's at the mud wall. Gad, what a pace! Well done! Heavens, such a jumper! I guess Kathleen is right. That fellow'll put you on your feet—" Raeburn checked his speech, a smile dying quickly from his lips as Leigh asked: "Put me on my feet—what do you mean?"

"Why, you'll make a big reputation winning on his back," Raeburn lied, with ready ingenuity.

That gallop was the beginning of Ben Ali's preparation for the International. It was also the commencement of a season of troublous uncertainty at Clover Bar. Ben Ali developed curious streaks of unreliability; irritating acts of unconventionality, such as lifting the back out of Dick's shirt with his teeth, as the little Irishman dug the hard clay from the horse's hoofs. Once he stopped with stiff-propped forefeet at the post-and-rails, and stared with wide-eyed surprise at the parabolical flight of Jockey Richard. The first day he was galloped through the field with reliable Drummer as a trial horse. Ben Ali won with the greatest ease, fencing perfectly. A week later, tried again with Drummer, he sulked, hung heavy on the bit—tried to savage the other horse, and refused the mud wall.

There were many repetitions of just such days of trial. Of course this led to pessimistic letters to Kathleen Braund; Raeburn telling her candidly that she needn't come up to see Ben Ali win the great steeplechase, as no dependence was to be placed upon the horse. Denton, who still thought that if Leigh were discredited, he might yet have a chance with Kathleen, got to know of this adverse report about Ben Ali, and caustically insinuated that Raeburn was giving the horse a bad reputation, so that he might acquire him as a good vehicle for his plunges on the turf. Denton still harboured resentment against both Raeburn and Leigh over the race for the Glove Stakes at Belmont, and also he had tried to buy Ben Ali from Kathleen.

A week before the International, Raeburn took Ben Ali and Drummer to Sheephead. He expressed his lack of faith in the animal to Leigh.

"If he'll only try, I believe he'll win," Leigh said, when Raeburn expressed his determination not to bet on the horse.

"The 'if' shuts me out," Raeburn rejoined. "Dick was right about the brute; he is too capricious for me. His kind always chuck it just when you're down on them to win a fortune. I won't bet Kathleen's—I won't advise Kathleen to back him," he continued, with a lame attempt to put his slip right.

"Kathleen doesn't bet, does she? I thought you said that she'd sent Ben Ali up just for the pleasure of having a horse out of the Belmont Hunt win the International."

"Well, he won't win, anyway," Raeburn answered dejectedly; "he galloped like a pig this morning again."

"I haven't lost all confidence in him. He won't try a yard for Dick; he seems to know the Irishman doesn't like him, but he does better for me. If I get off in front with him he may stick there, out of sheer cussedness."

"Well, I hope he does. Kathleen is coming up to see the race in spite of my advice. By Jove! that will be the worst part of it, to see her disappointment will be worse than losing the race. There's a little party of Belmont Hunt people coming, too; that boulder Denton is one of them."

Half an hour before the great steeple-chase Denton was in the paddock. He had a sinister idea that he should find Kathleen's horse purposely out of condition; that Raeburn would have the horse short of work, too high in flesh, or else gaunted up thin—too finely drawn. Presently the real Ben Ali caught his searching eye.

To Denton's surprise, the horse had developed—was a picture of condition. Between the muscles of his mighty quarters lay little ravines, where the useless flesh had been eroded by sweating gallops; his full, placid eyes were clear and bright—polished mirrors of courage that reflected no nervous fear of the coming battle; his satin coat shimmered the sun's rays like watered-silk.

"All a damn lie about that horse developing temper!" Denton muttered. "He's got the self-reliant content of a bulldog. They're playing a risky game, for Leigh will have to pull his head off if they don't mean to win—and they don't."

Denton looked cautiously about, but neither Raeburn nor Leigh was near; he stepped close to the negro, who was superintending the saddling of the horse, nodded pleasantly, and, with a casual smile on his lips, said: "Ben Ali looks good enough to win. You've taken good care of him."

The darky shot a quick, frightened look at Denton, turned away surlily without answering, and hastily threw a blanket over the horse, and ordered the boy to lead him around.

"That nigger knows what his master's up to," Denton muttered; "he thinks I'm trying to find out something."

As Denton walked moodily past the row of stalls he saw Raeburn and Leigh standing in front of No. 3. Leigh