

Thoroughbreds.

By W. A. FRASER.

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CHAPTER V.

John Porter sat in the grandstand with his usual companion, Allie, beside him, and the Dutchman, Lucretia and the other Eclipse horses passed down the broad spread of the straight Eclipse course to the five-and-one-half-furlong post.

Though Porter had missed the betting, he intuitively felt the joy of anticipated win. Only a true lover of thoroughbreds can know aught of the mad tumult of exultation that twangs and vibrates the heart-strings as a loved horse comes bravely, gallantly, out from the surging throng of his rivals, peerless and king of them all, stretching his heaving neck with eager striving, and goes onward, past the tribunal, first and alone, the leader, the winner, the one to be cheered of the many thousands wrought to frenzy by his conquest.

"Surely Lucretia will win today, father—don't you think so?" asked Allie. "I feel that she will," said the old man, and he answered, "She's a little bit of a thing, and it may drive her into the ground coming down the Eclipse hill. I expect they'll come at a terrible jog, too; they don't often hang back on that course."

Now that the betting worry and the worry of getting an upset of stephanotis was over—the horse had gone to the post, and that the race rested with Lucretia herself, Porter's mind had relaxed. Even at the time of the struggle itself tension had gone from him; he was in a meditative mood, as usual, weighing the chances, with Allie as audience.

"But they'll have to move some to beat the little mare's trial—they'll make it in record time if they head her, I think."

"Isn't the horse that beat her the other day in, too, father?"

"The Dutchman—yes, but I fancy his owner is backing my mare."

"Father!"

"It wouldn't make any difference, though; she'd beat him anyway. If I'm any judge, he's short."

Allie felt a rustle at her elbow as though someone wished to pass between the seats. The faintest whiff of stephanotis came to her on the lazy summer air. Involuntarily she turned her head and looked for the harsh-voiced woman who had been verily stepped in the aggressive odor of the day of Lucretia's triumph. Two burly men sat behind her. They surely did not affect perfume—there was even a fair gale of cigar smoke, homing in their clothes. Higher up the stand her eye searched—four rows back sat the woman Alan had said was Langdon's sister. There was no forgetting the buoyant brilliancy of her apparel. But the alluring glimmer of stephanotis was mingling with the rustle at her elbow; she turned her head inquiringly in that direction, and Crane's eyes peeped at her over the stone wall of their narrow lids. He was standing in the passage just beyond her father, now looking wistfully at the vacant seat on her left.

"Good afternoon, Miss Porter—how are you, Porter? May I sit here with you and see Lucretia win?"

"Come in, come in!" answered Porter, frankly.

"I was sitting with some friends higher up in the stand, when I saw you here and thought I'd like to make one of the victorious party."

Allie knew who the friends were; the clinging touch of stephanotis had come with him, a faint-voiced mentor that suggested to her an evil supremacy.

The discrepancy in Crane's sentiments jarred on Allie's ears; she had despised and betrayed him most emphatically; that other day this woman had been his trainer's sister, to be recognized for polite purposes; today he had been sitting with "friends."

Topping the rail in the distance, just where the course kinked a little to the left, Allie could see the blur of many colored silks in the sunlight. Then it seemed to flatten down almost level with the rail, as the horses broadened out to the earth in facing spread, and the riders clog long to the galloping coils—for they had started.

"There they come," said Crane. "What's in the lead, Porter?"

Porter did not answer. A man could have counted thirty before he said: "The Dutchman's out in front—a length, and they're coming down the hill like mad."

Allie felt her heart sink. Was it to be the same old story—was there always to be something in front of Lucretia?

"Where is your mare?" Crane asked.

His own glasses lay idly in his lap. Though he spoke of the race, it was curious that his eyes were watching the play of Allie's features—was that desire for their old human-torturing fight over again in her heart?

"Now she's coming!" Porter's voice made Crane jump; he had almost forgotten the race. To his close-calculating mind it had been sitting days before. The Dutchman would not win, and Lucretia was the best of the others—why worry?

They were standing now—everybody was. "Now, my beauty, they'll have to gallop," Porter was saying.

They were close up, and Crane could see that Lucretia had got to the bay colt's head, and he was dying away. He smiled cynically as he watched Westley go to the whip on the Dutchman, with Lucretia half a length in the lead. Most certainly Langdon was an excellent trainer; the Dutchman was just good enough to last into second place, and Lucretia had won handsomely. What a win Crane had had.

A little smothered gasp distracted his momentary thought of success, and, turning quickly, he saw tears in a pair of gray eyes that were set in a smiling face.

"Like a babe on his neck I was sobbing," came back to Crane out of the poem Allie had recited.

"I congratulate you, Miss Porter," he said, raising his hat. Then he turned and held out his hand to her father, saying, "I'm glad you've won, Porter—I thought you would. The Dutchman quit when he was plucked."

"It wasn't the colt's fault—he was short," said Porter. "I shouldn't like to have horses in that man's stable—he's too good a trainer for me."

There was a marked emphasis on Porter's words; he was trying to give Crane a friendly hint.

"You mean it's a case of strawberries?" questioned Crane.

"Well, I know it takes a lot of candles to find a lost quarter," remarked Porter, somewhat ambiguously. Then he added, "I must go down and thank Dixon; I guess this is his annual day for smiling."

"I'm coming, too, father," said Allie. "I want to thank Lucretia and give her a kiss, brave little sweetheart."

After Allie and her father had left Crane he sat for a minute or two waiting for the crowd of people that blocked the passage after each race to filter down on the lawn. The way seemed clearer presently, and Crane, rising, fell in behind a knot of loud-talking men. The two of large proportions, who had sat behind Allie, were like huge gate posts jammed there in the

narrow way. As he moved along slowly he presently had knowledge of a presence at his side—a familiar presence. Raising his eyes from a contemplation of the heels in front of him he saw Belle Langdon. She nodded with patronizing freedom.

"I lost you," she said.

"I was sitting with some friends here," he explained.

"Yes, I saw her," she commented, pointedly.

At that instant one of the stout men in front said, with a bear's snarl: "Well, that's the worst ever. I've seen some jobs in my time, but this puts it over anything yet."

"Didn't you back the little mare?" a thin voice squeaked. It was the tout.

"Back nothing! The last time out this narrow way. As he moved along slowly he presently had knowledge of a presence at his side—a familiar presence. Raising his eyes from a contemplation of the heels in front of him he saw Belle Langdon. She nodded with patronizing freedom.

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the wine-man, "an' soon's I saw a move today from the mare foot sweet."

"What an extraordinary thing manipulation was, Crane mused, as he listened; also how considerable of an ass the public was in its theoretical wisdom.

Then the three men drifted away to follow some new toy balloon of erratic possibilities, and Crane wound through the narrow passage which led to the paddock. There he encountered Langdon.

"He didn't run a very good horse, sir," began the trainer.

"I thought otherwise," replied Crane, measuring the immediate vicinity of Lisianski.

"I had to draw it a bit fine," declared Langdon, with apologetic remonstrance.

"Running second is always bad business, except in a selling race," retorted his master.

"I've got to think of myself," growled Langdon. "If he'd been beat off, there'd been trouble, the stewards have got the other race in their crop a bit yet."

"I'm not blaming you, Langdon; only I was a trifle afraid that you were going to beat Porter's mare. He's a friend of mine and needed a win badly. I'm not exactly his father confessor, but I'm his banker, which amounts to pretty much the same thing."

"What about the horse, sir?" asked the trainer.

they stop. I bet Diablo 'll quit right there; he's done it three or four times."

"He was the making of a great horse as a 2-year-old, wasn't he, Andy?"

"They paid a long price for him, if that's any line; but I think he never was no good. It don't matter how fast a horse is if he won't try."

"I've an idea Diablo 'll be a good horse yet," mused Porter. "You can't make a slow horse gallop, but there's a chance of curing a horse's temper by kind treatment. I've noticed that a squealing pig generally runs like the devil when he takes it into his head."

"Diablo's a squealing pig if there ever was one," growled Dixon.

They had reached the track stable, and, as by mutual instinct, the two men walked on till they stood in front of Lausanne's stall.

"He's a good enough looker, ain't he?" commented Dixon, as he dipped under the door bar, went into the stall and turned the horse about. "He's the picture of his old sire, Lazzarone," he continued, looking the horse over critically; "an' a damned sight bigger rogue, though the old one was bad enough. Lazzarone won the Suburban with blinkers on his head, bandages on his legs, an' God knows what in his stomach. He was second in the Brooklyn that same year. I've always heard he was a mule, an' I guess this one got it all, an' none of the

"How does he work with the others?" queried Porter.

"Runs 'em 'n' then cuts 'em—won't try a yard. Of course he's sick from that dope, an' the others are a bit fast for him. If we put him in a selling race, cheap, he'd have a lightweight an' might do better."

Porter walked on to Lucretia's stall and the trainer continued in a monologue to Lausanne: "You big slab! You're a counter-fet, if there ever was one. But I'll stand you a drink just to get rid of you; I'll put a bottle of whiskey inside your vest day after tomorrow, an' if you win prrs somebody 'll buy you."

Lausanne did not answer—it's a mind horse have. It is doubtful if his mind quite grasped the situation, even. That neither Dixon, nor Langdon, nor the jockey boys understood him he knew—not clearly, but approximately enough to increase his stubbornness, to rouse his resentment. They had not even studied out the pathology of his disease, and he was not a patient, but a fair show—to train him intelligently. They remembered that his sire, Lazzarone, had a bad temper; but they forgot that he was a stayer—not given to sprinting. Even Lausanne's dam, Brie-a-Brac, was fond of a long route, was better at a mile and a half than five furlongs.

Lausanne knew what had come to him of generality, not in his mind so much as in his muscles. They were strong but sluggish, not active but non-tiring. Langdon had raced Lausanne with sprinting colts, and when they ran away from him at the start he had been unequal to the task of overhauling them in the short 3-year-old run of half a mile. Then the wise man had said that Lausanne's courage was at fault; the jockeys had called it laziness, and applied the whip. And out of all this uselessness, this unthinking philosophy, the colt had come with a soured temper, a broken belief in his masters—"Lausanne, the Despaired."

Porter's trust that his ill-luck had been changed by a win was a faith of short life, for Diablo was most emphatically beaten in his race.

And then came the day of forlorn hope, the day of Lausanne's disgrace, inasmuch as it degraded him into the selling-plater class.

Bad horse as Lausanne knew Lausanne to be it occurred to him that Porter had planned a clever coup. He had an interview with Crane over the subject, but his master did not at all share the trainer's belief.

"What price would Lucretia or the Dutchman give for the same lot?" Langdon asked, argumentatively.

"About one to ten," Crane replied. "But the chestnut's beating them all on bearing on this race. From what I see of Mr. Dixon, I don't at all class him with you as a trainer—he hasn't the same sense."

Langdon stood silent, sullenly turning over in his mind this doubtful compliment.

"I'm not sure," continued the banker, "but that having stuck Porter with Lausanne, you shouldn't give him a hint about—well, as to what course of preparation would make Lausanne win a race for him. The ordinary diet of oats is hardly stimulating enough for such a sluggish animal."

Langdon frowned. If Crane had not been quite so strong, quite so full of unexpressed power, he would have rebuked at the assertion that he had stuck Porter; but he answered him and his voice struggled between asperity and deprecation. "There ain't no call for me to give that stable any pointers; Porter put it to me pretty straight that the horse had been helped."

"And what did you say?" blandly inquired Crane.

"Told him to go to hell."

This wasn't exactly truthful as we remember the interview, but its terseness appealed to Crane, and he smiled as he said: "Porter probably won't take your advice, Langdon; he's stubborn enough at times. And even if he does know that—that Lausanne requires special treatment, he won't indulge him—he's got a lot of old-fashioned ideas about racing. So you see, Lausanne is a bad betting proposition."

After Langdon had left, Crane's thought dwelt on the subject; they had just discussed a baker's point of view Lausanne

"We'll see later on. Let him go easy to the present."

"I wonder what he meant by that," Langdon mused to himself, as Crane moved away. "He don't make nobody a present of a race for love." Suddenly he stumbled upon a solution of the enigma. "Well I'm damned if that wasn't slick; he give me the straight tip to leave Porter to him—to let him do the planning; I see."

CHAPTER VI.

Porter was an easy man with his horses. Though he could not afford, because of his needs, to work out his theory, that two-year-olds should not be raced yet, he utilized it as far as possible, by running them at longer intervals than was general.

"I'll start the little mare about once more this season," he told Dixon. "The babes can't cut teeth and grow, and fight it out in punishing races, on dusty hay and hard-shelled oats, when they ought to be picking grass in an open field. She's too good a beast to do up in her young days. The Assanina made good 3-year-olds and the little mare's dam, Maid of Rome, wasn't much her first year out—only won once—but as a 3-year-old she won three out of four starts and the fourth year never lost a race. Lucretia ought to be a great mare next year, if I lay her by early this season. She's in a couple of stakes at Gravesend and Sheepshead, and we'll just fit her into the softest spot."

"What about Lausanne?" asked the trainer; "I'm afraid he's a bad horse."

"How is he doing?"

"He's stale. He's a bad doer—doesn't clean up his oats, an' mopes."

"I guess that killing Smith with the Dutchman took the life out of him. That sort of thing often settles a soft-hearted horse for all time."

"I don't think it was the race, sir," Dixon replied; "they just pumped the cocaine into him till he was fair blind drunk; he must swallow the bottle. I give him a ball, an' the poison's works out of him. He's all broken out in lumps; you'd think he'd been stung by bees."

"I never heard of such a thing," commented Porter. "A man that would dope a 2-year-old ought to be ruled out, sure."

"I think you oughter make a kick, sir," said Dixon, hesitatingly.

"I don't. When I squeal, Andy, it'll be when there's nothing but the voice left. I bought a horse from a man once, just as he stood. I happened to know the horse, and said I didn't want any inspection; didn't want to see him, but bought him as I say, just as he stood. When I went to the stable to get him he wasn't worth much. Andy—he was dead. Perhaps I might have made a kick about his not standing up, but I didn't."

"Well, sir, I'm thinkin' Lausanne's a deuced sight worse'n a dead horse; he'll cost more trying to win with him."

"I dare say you're right, but he can gallop a bit—"

"No hope for me, Andy. I never ran a dope horse and never will—I'm too fond of them to poison them."

"I'll freshen him up a bit, sir, and we'll give him a try in a day or two. Would you mind putting him in a selling race—he cost a bit—"

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