



THE bidding was over; the sale at an end. Carnation Queen, stake-horse and winner of the last race of the day, impatient to be off to her stall, tossed her dainty head and pawed the scanty turf with first one white-stockinged forefoot and then the other. Meanwhile, Ready Money Kendrick, her new owner, gave his check for a cool three thousand, then turned with a satisfied smile to run his eyes over the heaving flanks and glistening, brown back of his purchase.

The stand was emptying of its sea of straw hats as Kendrick bit deep into a thin plug of tobacco and nodded at the grinning Negro standing just behind him. The black stable-hand stepped forward, fingering a new halter, and presently Carnation Queen danced away to join her new stable-mates.

His object accomplished, the grizzled racing veteran headed for the veranda of the clubhouse, intent on a cool drink and a long smoke. But a pompous individual immaculate

in Palm Beach linen and costly Panama soon blocked his way. "What are you going to do with the Queen, Mr. Kendrick?" he asked.

"Dunno. Maybe I'll race her here; maybe I'll ship her to Juarez." Kendrick's tone was gruff, his bearing far from gracious, for of all the tribe of touts and bookmakers that littered the metropolitan tracks, fat Sol Cramp appealed the least to him.

"You'll probably be able to pick up a good horse or two to-morrow. Tom Chatfield has to sell something, else be closed out. We cleaned him to-day." Cramp chuckled boastfully.

"So?" Kendrick's tone was even, though his fist tingled.

"Yep," the bookmaker nodded. "He had a nice bet down on his entry in the steeplechase, and the best horse, too. Too bad about the busted saddle-girth." Cramp's thin lips showed what might have been intended for a sympathetic smile.

"Dry-rot, or acid?" snapped the Kentuckian.

He waited for no reply, but pressed on to the clubhouse and joined a seated group of lingering members and owners.

The minutes fled. Wine flowed and good tobacco was burned as winners and losers discussed the events of the day, but Kendrick sat unmoved, his mind dwelling on days long past.

Again he saw in fancy two adjoining farms in the Blue Grass region, two boys with patched trousers and sunburnt feet and legs. Again he played truant with his chum, plunged into the brown waters of the old swimming hole, and rode bareback to fetch the cows.

"Damme for a stupid old fool!" he growled abruptly as his thoughts came back to the living present. For it occurred to him that Tom, Senior, had passed out, and that Tom, Junior, might welcome a helping hand in his hour of need.

Five minutes later found the old man at the stables, where he hunted up a well-built young fellow with level, gray eyes and a straw dangling from the corner of his wholesome mouth.

"Son," began Kendrick as he clapped the younger man on the shoulder, "I hear you're cuttin' down your string."

Tom Chatfield nodded gravely and pointed toward the tubful of bran-mash his man was stirring up.

"Feed costs money," he remarked. "I'm sellin' out Ripper and one other no-account. Got a note to meet shortly."

Kendrick understood. Furthermore, he knew Ripper for the unmanageable beast she was, always crashing against the rail immediately the back stretch was entered. A promising young mare showing phenomenal speed, she had degenerated into a crowder and rail-runner of the worst type, endangering not only her own life and limb at each entry, but also the limbs if not the lives of those who

rode on and beside her.

"I'd like to look over that Ripper mare," Kendrick ventured after a few moments of thought. An idea had occurred to him.

"Help yourself," said Tom with a wave of his hand toward the open door of the stable.

Leisurely he followed the elder horseman and watched with some curiosity the proceedings which ensued. For instead of examining the feet and legs of the outlaw, Kendrick contented himself with a survey of her teeth and eyes.

"She's the height and color o' that Carnation Queen mare I bid in to-day," pronounced Kendrick as he came forth from the stall wiping his hands on a wisp of straw.

"That's right," Chatfield agreed. "The pair might be sisters as far as color and looks are concerned."

A precautionary glance at the feed-mixer outside, and Kendrick drew close to Tom. "Mum's the word," he breathed, "and don't you dream o' partin' with Ripper. I'll help you meet that note, and 'fore long you'll have a bale o' money and won't have to worry about feed bills."

Chatfield stared, unbelieving, but as Kendrick went on speaking softly, pointing occasionally at Ripper, he began to understand that here, indeed, was a man who knew horses "with the saddles off."

For nearly half an hour Kendrick continued advising and instructing, and minute by minute Tom's heavy heart grew lighter. The stamping of the feet of his thoroughbreds, the swishing of their tails, was again music in his ears. For there was a way out of his financial difficulties—unless the bookmakers should learn of what he was about to do.

A fortnight passed, and if the bookmakers suspected that anything mysterious was afoot in the Chatfield stable they gave no sign. Odds

against Ripper, entered one fair day in the fifth race, opened at 20 to 1 and with the heavy play on the favorites rose quickly to 40 to 1.

"I'll take a hundred o' that at forty," chuckled Kendrick as Sol Cramp gave him the price.

"Easy money," the bookmaker smiled as he noted the bet. But a few minutes later when he learned that five hundred dollars had been placed on the rail-runner in five other books, he looked grave.

Immediately Ripper's price was cut to 20, and closed at 10 to 1. Chatfield had half his bank balance on the brown mare at the top odds, while Ready Money Kendrick stood to win the price of a small farm.

The distance was a mile, the track fast, and although Ripper broke badly, she was abreast of the leader at the far turn and seemed to have overcome her old weakness for smashing into the rail. Neck and neck Ripper and the favorite flew down the stretch until the eighth pole was reached, when an observant onlooker, were he close enough, might have seen the iron fingers of the brown mare's jockey relax a trifle.

She responded and pressed forward, winning by half a length.

The sporting writers treated Ripper's performance as a non-explicable "reversal of form"; Chatfield, who trained his own string, received his share of congratulations and black looks, and Ready Money's Negro halter-holder, known far and wide as "The Undertaker," got gloriously drunk on the proceeds of a two-dollar bet.

The bookmakers took their losses philosophically and made no audible complaint, but when three days later Ripper beat out a field of class and finished six furlongs in close to record time, questions were put to Kendrick which seemed to nettle him.

"Did you ever notice how much Carnation

Queen looked like this reformed Ripper?" he was asked by a friend who winked as he spoke.

"What if the mares *do* look alike?" he returned uneasily yet defiantly.

"Heard you shipped Carnation Queen t' Juarez," put in "Hoppy" Holmes, a trainer who owed his nickname to a propensity for invariably settling his bar bills—a proceeding which always compelled him to "hop" his board bills.

Kendrick caught the sarcastic note in the utterance, and put on a bold front. "I did," he asserted loudly. "What of it?"

"Nothin' much," said Holmes softly. He snickered, then added: "Only some of us were a wonderin' if you shipped the right mare. Figurin', y' know, that the Queen and Ripper might 'a' got mixed—strictly unintentional, o' course."

Kendrick hastened away from the grounds, and in the cool of the evening sought Chatfield in the old-fashioned hotel near the track.

"Come in," a voice bade him when he rapped on Tom's door.

He entered and found Ripper's owner seated at a small table. At least a dozen piles of banknotes were arranged in orderly fashion before him, and as Kendrick approached, Tom snapped a rubber band around a thick stack of tens, checked off the last of a column of figures and leaned back in his chair.

"Curious thing," he smiled up at the veteran, "but my winnings on the two races balance the sum the bookies took away from dad the year he died."

Kendrick clapped the younger man on the shoulder. "Now for a little interest." he proposed, "but if you don't grab it tomorrow you may never get it."

Chatfield looked thoughtful.

"We're the talk o' the track." Ready Money went on. "Sol Cramp looked hard at

the mare's ankles this afternoon, and at least five Weisenheimers asked me how Carnation Queen was enjoyin' the weather in Juarez."

"Something's due to drop soon. I heard a plenty myself."

Kendrick's eyes sought the ceiling and he lost himself in thought. "Silver Shilling is our trouble to-morrow," he said presently. "She's the best at the distance, and unless I can get Treadwell to scratch her you'd best back the mare for the place."

"And then wait for the fireworks," grinned Tom.

"You said it, son; there'll surely be somethin' doin' after the third race."

And there was, for after Treadwell had turned a deaf ear to Kendrick's suggestion that he accept an amount the size of the purse and withdraw Silver Shilling, there followed a race worth while.

The distance was a mile and a sixteenth: the Treadwell entry the favorite at even money. Odds against Ripper, now entered with five of the best stake-horses in America, opened at 10 to 1, but were quickly cut to 4 to 1 in the face of the flood of Ripper money which seemed to pour in from all sides. When the bugle sounded, the odds had shortened to 7 to 5 in the few remaining books which would accept bets on the reformed rail-runner.

Both Silver Shilling and Ripper broke on their toes and flew around the near turn neck and neck, followed closely by Black Rock, the DuMont entry. Down the back stretch Black Rock slipped in on the rail and took the lead by half a length. To those in the stand it looked as if a blanket might cover the three leaders.

Tom Chatfield's chances looked slim for placing his mare as the three thundered down the home stretch and Silver Shilling gained slightly. But Ripper's jockey was a little man, full of resourceful energy. Leaning still further over the neck of his mount he urged her on

with voice and hand.

The mare answered by putting forth the strength till then held in reserve. Her feet twinkled still faster, her speed increased perceptibly, and in the final drive she nosed past her rivals and finished a clean length in the lead.

But almost immediately the stand was in an uproar as the words flew from tongue to tongue: "All bets off; the winner's a ringer!" All eyes were turned to the number board and to the knot of excited and gesticulating men in from of the judges' stand.

"I protest!" Sol Cramp cried. "The horse that ran first is Carnation Queen with her white ankles painted over! Pull Ripper's number down! All bets off!"

"Hold on, Mr. Cramp," the judge broke in, "you're not running this track."

Calmly he went about his weighing in. That operation completed, he motioned to the number board man, and an instant later the red "official" bobbed up and the stand buzzed with excitement.

"It's robbery!" fairly screamed the bookmaker, "I'll prove it!"

Before any one could sense what he was about to do he fumbled in his pocket and produced a bottle. The pungent odor of ether arose as with moistened handkerchief Cramp approached the brown mare and stooped at her forefeet.

No one barred his way or offered objection. Chatfield, a sober expression on his usually cheerful face, stood by, and near him, watching every movement of the bookmaker, stood Ready Money Kendrick. There was a quizzical look on the veteran horseman's face as Cramp stood erect and shouted:

"There's the proof. See the paint?"

Sure enough, the handkerchief he held aloft was smeared with a brown stain, and the near pastern of the mare showed a light streak where the ether had taken effect.

For an instant Judge Martinson considered the advisability of rescinding his action, but as the thought recurred to him that a certain butcher had telephoned him from the city that he had placed a fifty-dollar bet on Ripper at 6 to 1, he stood pat. Knowing that the wager was half in his own interest, he declared firmly:

"All bets stand; but I shall investigate and punish if necessary."

He crooked his finger at two gray-uniformed track police standing near by, "Tie that mare up in the paddock." he bade them sternly. "Don't let her out of your sight, and don't allow anybody to meddle with her."

He was at a loss to know whether to postpone the fourth race or whether to conduct the investigation after the last race, and was considering the point when Chatfield spoke up.

"Might I suggest, judge, that you get the New York Jockey Club offices on the long distance and have 'em give you the registered markings of both Carnation Queen and Ripper?"

It was a reasonable request, and Judge Martinson granted it. Sol Cramp fumed at the delay, but he was powerless to do more.

Both Chatfield and Kendrick seemed to take the matter coolly, and after the final race of the day had been run, joined the crowd in the paddock.

"I protest the result of the third race," Cramp began pompously as the judge and the stewards halted near the guarded mare. He held up the brown-stained handkerchief and concluded dramatically:

"This is the proof that Carnation Queen has been masquerading as Ripper. Her four white stockings have been daubed over with brown paint."

A murmur went around the paddock. The evidence seemed convincing, and here and there surprise was expressed that the guilty

parties should take the matter so calmly.

"I demand that—"

"Shut up!" broke in Kendrick on Cramp's demand. He whirled on Judge Martinson. "What markin's did y' get on Carnation Queen?" he snapped.

"Solid brown, foaled in the spring of 1912, and with a white sock on each foot from fetlock to hoof," the judge quoted from memory.

"Right-o!" admitted Ready Money heartily. He waved a paper toward the judge. "Here's the bill-o'-lardin' through to Juarez for that same lady hoss."

"And what markings did you get over the phone on *my* mare?" asked Chatfield at this juncture.

Judge Martinson looked up from the document he had taken from Kendrick. "Same description, practically — except Ripper has but two white socks, both on his forefeet."

Every human eye in the paddock was turned upon Cramp as he knelt at the mare's hind heels and rubbed frantically at her ankles. But not so much as a tinge of color stained the white handkerchief handed him by a fellow bookmaker.

"Look out!" warned Chatfield when he thought the farce had run long enough. He pointed at the flattened ears of the mare, who was gathering herself for a kick at the man who was so strangely freezing her hind pasterns.

Cramp got up without loss of time. The mare's hind ankles were naturally brown, he was satisfied of that, but he sensed that in some strange way he was being hoaxed.

"It seems that this animal *is* Ripper." the judge declared, "although for some unknown reason her owner saw fit to paint her front ankles brown."

He gazed sternly at Chatfield as he spoke. But Ready Money interrupted again. "That was by my advice," he said defiantly. "Iodine

and glycerin paint beats fire-punchin' for osselets. You all know there's no law compellin' us to bandage over it with oiled silk. And none o' you seen Ripper runnin' without boots for such a spell back that you all plumb forgot that the mare had two white socks of her own."

"And there ain't no law or rule against mixing in a little burnt umber along with the iodine and other stuff," Chatfield supplemented with a grin. "It makes a more artistic job of matching, so to speak."

A roar of laughter ran around the paddock. It was growing late, but the crowd lingered, waiting to hear what iodine paint had to do with the regeneration of the worst rail-runner of modern times.

"How about the change of form?" some one asked.

"Simple as claimin' a foul in a five-furlong dash for two-year-olds." Kendrick answered. "It's our secret—Tom's and mine—and we don't have to tell, but if Tom ain't got any objections I'm sure *I* ain't."

"Might 's well spill the beans," consented Ripper's owner, his fingers twisted in the mane of the animal that had brought him a small fortune.

"I knew," Kendrick began, "that with the

sire and dam Ripper had she must have speed to burn and then some. So when I got to mullin' it over why she always bolted into the rail, it struck me that maybe the mare had a bad tooth, causin' her to bear away from the bit. I reasoned it out that a horse with a tender molar on the right side would bolt plumb off the track—'cept at Belmont, where they run with the sun—and that a sore one on the left side would make an animal shoot into the rail at the least touch o' the bit."

A murmur went around the paddock as the speaker paused and spat at a bumblebee buzzing lazily over the dust of a near-by box-stall. The insect dried itself and flew angrily away, whereupon Kendrick resumed:

"I was dead right about the tooth, for when I got a peep at Ripper and brought my good eye to bear on her mouth I spotted the cause of her rail-bumpin'. Twas a bad lower molar—the first one on the left side. So I had a long talk with Tom, and that same night we got old Doc MacCarthy to yank out the tooth that caused the trouble, and keep his mouth shut about it.

"And that's all, 'xcept after what Ripper did to-day I wouldn't be surprised to see Tom win the Suburban with her— painted or *unpainted*."