

If the horse is jumping badly Cavalier may give him a tremendous run for it yet! What's your opinion, Win?"

"I think Corisan must win," answered Medecis.

"Must win! How d'ye mean?" asked Walkor.

"Well, in the first place, he's got two shows to Crofts' one."

"Good gracious, you don't mean to say that you fancy your mount?" cried Walkor.

"I don't dislike him. For a young 'un he is a magnificent fencer. I can hang him over anything literally at top, and he has never yet laid a hoof on even a twig of gorse. He has pace, but of that I am as yet in the dark. At anyrate, he can be of invaluable assistance to Doubloon in the race itself—if he doesn't very nearly win."

"But Crofts is backing his horse against Doubloon, I thought?" said Walkor.

"No, old Corisan distinctly said nomination. I noticed his Scotch caution when he made the bet. He would give his opponent no advantage," replied Medecis.

"By Jove, Win! can we get the strength of the pair—your young 'un and Doubloon?" asked Walkor eagerly.

"Not much hope. Corisan says they must both run on their merits. He feels certain of Doubloon. You see, I've never let on what a good 'un the youngster is. In all our gallops together Doubloon has always been well in front at the finish. But—and again the amateur jock hesitated—"I've always had seven pounds in hands, Angus. And I'll tell you why: Corisan will give me a free hand; I know. He doesn't dream of Demigod winning, so I'm going to try and bring off a coup!"

"Hurrah!" cried Walker. "Then I'm with you, old pal. I've been thinking my old brains full for some idea to put you on to a good thing, and here it is at last. I say, couldn't we arrange a trial between yours and mine?"

"Oh, I say, Angus! would you do that for me, old man?" cried Medecis, excitedly.

"Most certainly, Win. I'm in this affair of yours heart and soul and would help you a lot more if you would only let me. But if you can get an idea of Demigod's chance through a trial with my horse you are welcome to it at any time," said Walkor.

"Oh, thanks! It is most good of you. Old Corisan would never allow it, but I can arrange that. Edith hacks Demigod out every afternoon. I'll get her to meet us on the Napier Park course on the Saturday before the Steeplechase. We can try them there on the quiet and Corisan will know nothing."

"Right you are. And if it's good enough we will both throw in for a good stake, Win. I will do anything for you, and as for getting a clear run—well, Black Diamond is the biggest horse in the race, and if I cannot ensure a clear course nobody can. I only hope this youngster turns out as good as you think," said Walkor.

"So do I. I'll put up the biggest try of my life if I've got a show, and I think the trial with your horse will prove what chance I have got," replied Medecis.

The Napier Park course was deserted on the Saturday afternoon when Walkor on Black Diamond and Medecis on Sudden Death rode in at the gates and joined Edith Corisan under the trees by the sheds.

"This is going to be a queer trial," said Walkor, after they had exchanged greetings. "Do you mind acting as pacemaker, Miss Corisan on Sudden Death? He will carry you perfectly for a couple of rounds."

"I shall be delighted. It seems like a conspiracy, doesn't it?" she said, casting a shy appealing glance at Medecis, who was busily changing the saddles on Demigod and Sudden Death.

"I am riding my weight in the race, and Medecis is 3lb over his, so we shall be able to tell very nearly what our chance is," said Walkor.

The side saddle was put on Sudden Death, an ex-Grand National winner, who was hard as nails from regular hunting, and the trio cantered down to the 3-mile post.

"Go!" shouted Walkor, and Edith Corisan dashed out on Sudden Death, and the trial began. Sudden Death fenced faultlessly, and his fair pilot sent him at his jumps like a battering ram. Black Diamond lay three lengths behind, and Demigod, tearing at his bit, a length behind him. After the first round Sudden Death came back to Black Diamond, and Demigod closed up to them. In the second round the trial pair got well away from Sudden Death, who was stopping to nothing. The third round was

taken at racing pace, both amateurs riding hard over every fence. Edith Corisan was waiting at the winning post, and Demigod sailed past her a good three lengths ahead of Black Diamond, both horses finishing strongly. Quickly they cantered over to the sheds, and both the men and Edith Corisan were soon strapping down the horses, the girl just as much at home at the work as a stable lad. Then, re-saddling the horses, they rode off together, separating at the gates, Edith Corisan riding towards the Grange and Napier and Walkor and Medecis making for Hastings.

"Win that trial makes Demigod out to be nearly seven pounds better than Doubloon, from whom he is getting two stone three pounds in the actual race. How does your chance strike you?" asked Walkor.

"I can hardly tell you how jubilant I feel. This is as good a thing as Sudden Death was," said Medecis.

"Every bit. I wonder what price we can get about him?"

"Oh! tens easily. But we must go to work carefully or the layers of odds will smell a rat."

"Well, how much shall I put in commission for you? It will have to be put on on the day of the race or old Corisan will want to know things. He's bound to come to a short price on the machine when the bookies' saving money comes back."

"Oh! I think I can raise a hundred," said Medecis, meditatively.

"Hundred be blowed!" cried Walkor. "I'm going to put on five hundred for you and the same for myself. I'll get my agents to put it on in the four big cities at 10 o'clock on the day of the race."

"But I can never pay you, Angus, if I lose," cried Medecis anxiously.

"Oh, yes you will! Besides, you're not going to lose. This race means Edith Corisan for you, remember that. By Gad! if a girl loved me as that girl loves you, I'd feel a happy man, Win. She looks at you as if the world were centred in that body of yours!"

"Oh don't chaff! We must think of nothing but winning this race now."

Herbert Crofts knew his man. He knew that the more money he won from Walter Corisan the better his chance of winning Edith Corisan would be. For Walter Corisan would never allow the bawbees to go out of the family. But Crofts didn't half like his horse's chance against Doubloon. He had a safer method of beating Corisan.

Two days before the races he indited a wire to "W. Ducker, Jockey, Blue Horse Hotel, Hastings.—Give me a call, and the same day Ducker was closeted with him in his study at Croftscourt.

"Look here, Ducker," he said, "I stand to win £6000 and Doubloon if Cavalier beats Doubloon. Have I got a chance? or should I hedge? Tell me straight—I'll make it worth your while!"

"Well, blime! I think Doubloon can bury your bloke fur pace. Who's ridin' for ye?" asked the jockey.

"Oh! I'm going to ride myself," answered Crofts.

"Then I'll lay yer a million to a fat gooseberry that I beat yer," said Ducker, contemptuously. They knew each other well and Crofts was perfectly able to gauge his chance of winning from the jockey's outspoken opinions.

"I'll give you five hundred to stop Doubloon," said Crofts.

"Five hundred! Five hundred!" cried Ducker scornfully. "Is five hundred goin' to keep me an' me mis-sus an' me kids if I get blown out, eh? S'welp, me bobs! You do come it liberal, you do!" and he chewed reflectively at a cigarette as he glanced contemptuously at Crofts.

"Well, I'll make it a thousand. Will that suit you?" asked Crofts.

"No, nor two thousand either," replied the jockey. "I'm too bloomin' straight an' too blankety virtuous to stiffen any 'orse for a paltry two thousand pounds. Nice I'd look if I got blown out for life with two thousand condemned quid to keep me for ever!"

"Great Scott! Then how much do you want?" cried Crofts angrily.

"Fair halves! You don't get me stopping no dashed prad for a stiver under three thousand pounds. And I don't 'alf like takin' chances on that neither!" added Ducker dubiously.

"Very well, then, you shall have the three thousand. That's a bargain. As soon as Cavalier weighs in a winner I'll give you my cheque for £3000."

"Rightum!" said Mr. Ducker. The deal had been an eminently satisfactory one for him. For three thousand pounds he would have risked his neck half a dozen times. And he'd brought a mount down for a paltry tenner before now. So he was highly

delighted with his bargain with Herbert Crofts.

There were seven starters for the Hawke's Bay Steeplechase of 189—, and few of the public who witnessed that sensational race will ever forget it. Old Chemist carried the top weight (13.4), and after him came Norton 12.10, Whalebone 12.7, Black Diamond 12.5, Doubloon 12.5, Cavalier 11.7, and Demigod 10.2. The public quickly picked Doubloon as the best treated horse, and he was installed favourite. But a whole pile of money appeared to come from outside on Demigod, the untried maiden outsider of the Grange stable. In those days all horses belonging to the same owner were not bracketed on the machine, so Demigod rapidly overhauled Doubloon, and half-an-hour before the race was firmly established at two's to one at the head of the betting. Black Diamond and Cavalier were well backed, and Norton and Whalebone also had many friends. The old battler Chemist was looked upon as anchored, and he was at the bottom of the betting.

To say that Walter Corisan was astonished would be but to faintly describe his mental paralysis. And to all the anxious inquiries of his friends he could only reply.

"Aw'm dum—fair dumfounded! Thae public must be goin' daft—aye, clean daft. The cuddy hasna got a possible!"

Walkor sauntered quietly along by Medecis on the lawn. "Those books have taken fright, or else there has been a leakage somewhere. I wonder if any of my infernal agents have been helping themselves."

"Heaven knows!" replied Medecis. "Demigod is firmly first favourite, and it's all outside money. The public seem inclined to back Cavalier or Doubloon."

"Well, old chap; I hope you win. I'll ensure you a clear run. Stick to my quarters, and do as I tell you, and you'll find a clear passage cut out for you. Now I'm going to change."

"What the devil's the meaning of this Ducker?" asked Crofts in a white heat; "who is backing the Grange second string?"

"Blowed if I know. This here Demigod is bred good enough fur anybody to back, but, strike me lucky! 'e ain't never raced before. Who could be chump enough to back 'im I'd like to know?"

"What about that cursed amateur that's riding him? Do you think he's coming the double on the stable?"

"What—Medicine? He's as cunning' as they make 'em, an' I wouldn't put nothin' past 'im. He's a shine horse-man, too, an' if that there Ahua gelding has got any of the sire's go in 'im I wooden' be at all surprised to see 'im 'op 'ome on his bloomin' own—stiffen me if I would!" replied Ducker.

"Well, I've got to win," cried Crofts, decisively, stopping under the grand stand, near the totalisator, "and if you see Demigod is likely to beat me, take care to stop him, or you'll get nothing from me."

"Oh, I'll stop 'im fast enough even if I've to turn 'im a seven; I ain't going to let you lose this 'ere blanky race. Don't you make no mistake about that."

Up above them, anxiously watching the machine, was Edith Corisan. Her face grew white, and she nervously clasped the stand railing as she heard the conversation below her.

The saddling bell had rung, the horses were being led about the paddock, the hum of the racecourse grew louder and louder, and the ting-ting-ting of the machine was incessant over all. A misty shadow floated before Edith's eyes; she seemed to be fainting, when a deep voice at her side said:

"Wish me good luck, Edith, won't you—"

She recovered herself with an effort, and, clasping Winford Medecis by the arm, said agitatedly: "Oh! Win that wicked man Crofts has told Ducker to ride you down if you are winning. Do, do take care of him and watch him. Don't give him a chance to hurt you."

"Rather not! You watch me in the race. I know too much for Ducker. Don't be nervous, dear. I'm on a winning hazard this time."

As Walkor rode down to the post he was joined by Medecis.

"Crofts has put Ducker up to spill me, Angus. Watch Ducker, and if you see any signs of dirty work bore a hole through him and let me pass. He'll never catch me again!"

"Very well. What orders did Corisan give you?"

"Let me go as long as the horse lasted. He did not fancy Demigod would have any pace at the finish."

"I hope he'll be disagreeably disappointed. There must be a mint of money on him by now!"

It was not long before the starter sent the field away. The two top-weights pulled back last, with Demigod next, hanging on to Black Diamond's flanks; then Whalebone, Cavalier, and Doubloon in the lead. The first round was slow, but in the second round Whalebone joined Doubloon and the pace improved wonderfully. Round the back of the course, over the sod wall, Chemist, Norton, Whalebone, Cavalier, and Doubloon went in that order, followed by Black Diamond and Demigod. At the double they were all racing, and coming down the straight the leaders took the post-and-rails together, Norton and Whalebone going ahead as the last round commenced. Cavalier also passed Chemist, and Doubloon closed up to Cavalier.

"You'll have to sail if you want to beat Norton!" yelled Ducker to Crofts.

"Why don't you go on yourself?" cried Walkor at his girths. "You are deliberately stopping Mr. Corisan's horse!"

"Mind your own interference," said Ducker, trying to get away from Black Diamond. But Walkor had him hard against the rails, and as they cleared the jump leading into the back of the course he signalled Demigod up on the outside, at the same time driving the hooks home and keeping Doubloon on the rails. With a rare dash Medecis raced up on the outside of Black Diamond, and down the back stretch the three horses raced neck and neck.

"Pull out!" yelled Ducker as they neared the sod wall. "You're driving me over the rails!"

"Go on, Win!" cried Walkor. "Get ahead now!"

But Crofts heard them, and, glancing over his shoulder, he pulled out wide and blocked Demigod, just as Doubloon and Black Diamond thundered up alongside of Whalebone.

"Keey going, you blarmey goat!" shouted Ducker to Crofts. "Leave that blanked amateur alone. He can't get through. If you get ridin' funny you'll lose the race!"

Doubloon, Black Diamond, and Cavalier rose at the sod wall together, and Cavalier struck heavily; but the horse recovered himself well, and galloped on, with Demigod at his girths, Norton and Whalebone falling behind, and Chemist well in the rear. Here Cavalier went to the front, and with Doubloon, charged the double. Black Diamond and Demigod just behind. Again Cavalier struck, and, faltering in between the jumps, refused the second fence. Doubloon smashed through the second post-and-rails, and was immediately joined by Black Diamond and Demigod on the outside, Cavalier resolutely refusing to come out of the double. And so they came on to the last fence.

Ducker looked back quickly. He was a magnificent horseman, and he had made up his mind to win that £3000 bribe. He just caught sight of Cavalier coming over the second of the double, then, riding his horse hard, he drove him at the last fence, dropped his outside rein, as if accidentally, swayed in the saddle, and then the horror-stricken crowd saw Doubloon turn right across the fence, broadside on, and Black Diamond and Demigod charge into him as they rose together at the last fence. There was a sickening thud as the three horses crashed together and fell in a crumpled mass through the fence, which collapsed under them. An agonised scream rang out from the stand; three stewards rushed to the ambulance room, and came down the course with a doctor and three stretchers; while the police with difficulty kept back the crowd that swayed against the racecourse fence.

Crofts, on Cavalier, sat down and drove his horse along for all he was worth, to get past the post first. Medecis, though stunned, did not lose hold of his reins, and was quickly on his feet, trying in vain to slip the reins over his startled horse's head. Black Diamond had fallen right on top of Ducker, who lay under the struggling horses with a badly-smashed leg, shrieking imprecations and curses on everybody and everything in his agony. Angus Walkor struggled to his legs with a broken collar-bone, and immediately fell back in a dead faint into a policeman's arms. Crofts came charging at the fence shouting out to the officials to "Look out!" as he came riding over the gap made by the falling horses.

But a Nemesis was on his track! Just as Cavalier reached the fence Doubloon staggered to his feet, right across him. Cavalier immediately balked; Crofts made an ineffectual effort to retain his seat, and ended by going right over his horse's head, the horse going past the winning post by himself. All this had occurred within a few seconds, and before Norton had reached the last fence Medecis