

Lap. It is a hope the auctioneer is always ready to encourage; for every horse he has a special plea. Some, to use his own veteran phrase, are "bred in the purple"; upon their pedigree he gives little lectures, with the usual references to the untold thousands earned by the "own brother" to this colt or that filly and to the performances on the course and at the stud of sire and dam, of grandsire and grandam through Heaven knows how many generations. Of the others, less promisingly bred, he knows how to talk. His patter here is different; unblushingly he contradicts flatly his arguments of a few bare minutes before. "Never mind lineage, think of the individual. Look at the stance of him. That chest will never let you down, plenty of room to breathe there; here's a colt in a thousand. Back your own judgment!"

The fascinating thing is that that is just what these quiet men around the ring are doing—backing their own judgment, and backing it not for a few pounds but for many hundreds of pounds. And the risk they take is a long-distance risk. It will be twelve months at least until the horse is raced as a two year old; it may be three years or longer until the wisdom of the purchase is proved. They are quiet and efficient, these men who take such risks. About the ring there is much bustle and more noise, but it is not the buyers who make it. They are so quiet, so undemonstrative, that an outsider cannot see who is bidding—here a catalogue is quietly raised and another £100 goes on to the price of a colt which perhaps already stands at £500 or £600; from another direction there is a slight nod and the price is up another £50; a raised pencil somewhere towards the back of the crowd and it's up another £100. In a matter of minutes it's all over. The Foxbridge colt was sold in under seven minutes; bidding began at 1,000 guineas and raced through the hundreds to 3,000 guineas before the crowd caught its breath. Another Foxbridge brought 1,500 guineas in three minutes.

Of course, it is not all so easy as that. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that the Foxbridges were sold before they entered the ring. There are fashions in racehorses just as there are fashions in

hats, and Foxbridges are in the fashion just now. It is a fashion, however, that has a solid basis of performance and pedigree, which is more than can be said of hats. The black colt which brought the top price was by Foxbridge out of Ann Acre and a full brother to Bridge Acre and Al-Sirat. Zetes, for whom 2,400 guineas, the previous record, was paid at the 1929 sales, was by Limond from Water Wings; and Oratorian, for whom also 2,400 guineas was paid in 1930, was by Hunting Song from Oratress. In other words, they had the trade-mark of quality—but these are big sums of money to pay for one colt who may break a leg or sicken and die before he has time to prove himself on the course or at the stud. It's a chancy business, and it is not surprising that during the eighteen years of the sale only seven horses have brought over 2,000 guineas.

The Foxbridges dominated the sale. The fourteen colts and the five fillies sold brought in all 23,610 guineas; only six sold at under 1,000 guineas, and one, a black colt out of Gay Blonde, brought 1,750 guineas, with Mr. Andrew Grant, of Fairlie, as the buyer. The top price for the Foxbridge fillies was 1,300 guineas, which was brought by two, one out of Card Player and one out of April Fool. This bidding is easy to understand. Foxbridge for five years has led the winning sires list in New Zealand, and he still leads it. At the Auckland Cup meeting he was represented by the winners of the Auckland Cup, Railway Handicap, Great Northern Foal Stakes, Queen's Plate, Christmas Handicap, and Nursery Handicap. The catalogue carried this enticing note about him: "Half brother to Cresta Run, winner of three races valued at £14,540, including One Thousand Guineas in record time, and Imperial Produce Stakes. Sire of Foxmond (Great Northern Oaks), Fearless Fox (Queensland Derby), Lou Rosa (Great Northern Foal Stakes, Royal Stakes, &c.), Regal Fox (Great Northern Derby), Black Ace (A.R.C. Welcome Stakes, 1944), Bridge Acre (Wellington R.C. Guineas, 1944), and Al Sirat (Wellington Racing Club Karitane Handicap, 1944), &c." His stock would certainly seem to be a good buy.