[*Written for the Christmas Number.*]

THE FIRST TO TROT BETTER THAN 2:30.

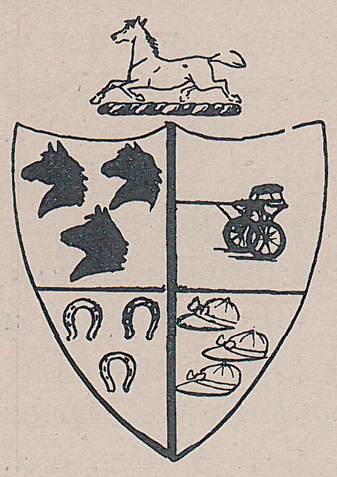
AN ENGLISH STORY.

FROM DOWNMERE, LONDON.

TO FRANK DEANE, Chicago, U. S. A.:

Martyr Boy wins fourth heat in 2:22 at Alexandria Park. First to go better than 2:30.

(Signed) "DOWNMERE."



I have just been handed this cable message and thereby hangs a tale. As I lay it down I feel full of the pleasurable sensations that spring from a feeling of deserved success, and which I enjoy in sympathy with the distant writer of this exultant message.

Some years ago, during a trip to Europe, I was staying for a few days in London, when at the house of a mutual friend—an American lady who had married a titled Englishman—I met the Honorable Plantagenet Charles Orchester, commonly known as "Orchie" by his more intimate friends. This young gentleman, who certainly did not look much past his majority, with his fair Saxon hair and blue eyes, was the eldest son of the old Earl of Downmere, and consequently heir to considerable wealth, as well as the title and what goes with it—a seat in the House of Lords.

During a conversation we had over the cigars after dinner, Orchester asked a great many questions regarding the American trotting horse, a breed that was then but little known in England. Like most Englishmen he instituted comparisons between the Yorkshire hackney and our light harness horse. I finally succeeded in persuading him that while the former is a useful, stylish and sturdy animal, yet withal somewhat ponderous, the latter makes the ideal roadster, possessing great speed and stamina, with beauty and lightness of conformation. We also discussed the merits of English rigs as compared with the light American buggies so well adapted for easy running, and I promised that should the Honorable Plantagenet Charles Orchester ever cross the herring pond I would show him what it felt like to sit behind an American roadster, that could show a 2:40 clip on the road.

On other occasions we continued our discussion, and when I finally sailed for home I had left seeds in his mind which subsequently bore fruit.

During the spring of the following year I received a letter from England from my friend Orchester, which informed me that, his father having died, he was thinking of visiting this country, and reminding me of the promise made him in London. In July he arrived, and I found the new Lord Downmere more interested than ever in the American trotter. Together we attended the principal meetings in the Grand Circuit, and visited some of the large breeding establishments in the East. "Deane's Englishman," as he was called at the race tracks, took a marvelous interest in everything connected with breeding and stock farm life, and puzzled many of the "know-alls" with his pointed and shrewd questionings. From the knowledge he displayed after but a few weeks I began to think he must sit up nights studying pedigrees and blood lines.

After attending the most important race meetings of the year, and meeting many of our most prominent breeders and horsemen, Lord Downmere was invited to spend a few weeks at Mr. S——'s celebrated stock farm in California. I was pressed to accompany him, but business in the east prevented my doing so.

About the last of September an urgent message came, and I packed up my traps and started for San Francisco. On my arrival at the farm I found that Lord Downmere had decided to purchase one or two well-bred young sires, half a dozen brood mares, and as many fashionably bred youngsters as I should recommend. It was for the purpose of commissioning me to look after this matter that he had so urgently requested my visit to P——, for "My Englishman" had decided to extend the length of his stay in California until the time of his return to Europe in November. The reason for this sudden change of plan was, I shrewdly guessed, a certain attraction to be looked for in the person of the charming daughter of Mr. S——, a beautiful and talented young lady of twenty. Subsequent events proved me right in my surmise. Temporarily, at least, all interest in trotting horses seemed to have left my friend's breast, probably having been ousted by a stronger sentiment, and I was given *carte blanche*, as far as the purchase of stock went.

After a few weeks spent among the breeding establishments in California, I went East again with a few good brood mares I had picked up, and a promising young horse, a son of Electioneer, out of a full sister to the great producing mare Columbine. This fellow, who had already a mark of 2:25, I intended should be the premier at the new trotting stock farm that was to be established on the other side of the water. The rest of the stock I selected East and engaged a competent trainer to go with them, and soon was waiting in New York.

I then heard that Mr. S—— and his daughter intended visiting Europe, and that Lord Downmere was traveling back with them. At the wharf we parted, after I had promised soon to visit England again and see how the venture prospered. I remember that B——, the trainer, at the time showed considerable reluctance at leaving this country, but as he was a first-class and successful man at his business, we finally persuaded him to go for a year at any rate.

Not long after this I heard of Lord Downmere's brilliant wedding in London with Miss S——, and then I knew