Written especially for the Kent News.

HORSE RACING.

The Two Sides of the Sport—A Good View of the Inside—Large Winnings, Etc

Like all sports horse-racing has two sides.

First; as to the bad side.

Of all the evils in horse racing, betting is probably the greatest; yet there are others that merit passing attention Of the main evils at a race track, drinking probably leads; in fact no track would be complete without it in the eyes "of the sport." Besides this, there is the marked coarseness a man or boy shows after frequenting a track. Race tracks near a great city indeed have a most demoralizing influence. Of this truth there is no better example than the track at Point Breeze, Philadelphia. This track, however, was closed several years ago when flat racing was forced out of existence in Pennsylvania, and the much milder sport of trotting races has taken its place. The effect of "following the races" to the poor man, is probably worse than the effect on the rich man. The term, "Poor Man" is used in a comparative sense and includes clerks, book-keepers, and other men of the same station in life. As soon as he gets any money, if he has the gambling fever, he will rush off to a race track; and if he returns to his family with as much money as when he left, he is a very lucky man. This was one of the reasons why the Point Breeze track was abolished, as almost every clerk that went to the track in Philadelphia very soon either became bankrupt, deserted his family, or was a confirmed drunkard.

The good influences are exemplified in the case of the rich man, as he is the man who owns the horse that the "poor" man puts the money on. Men like Whitney, Belmont, and James Keene are influenced purely by the love of sport, and by the desire to better the thoroughbred horse in America. Some of them in fact, as in the case of a man named Connolly, a very successful contractor in New York, go into racing either as a pastime or to follow the vogue. This story is told of Mr. Connelly when he first procured his race horses He had gone out to the race track to see his horse run, and was standing in the grand stand with a large field glass to his eye, watching one of the races in which he had entries. A friend standing by asked him where his horse was running. Connolly replied, "Why, I can't very well see whether he is running last in the third race, or first in the fourth."

There are many others who not only follow the races for a living but follow them successfully. The best case of this kind is Ryan from the West, who is noted as the "Get-rich-quick-man." Indeed one day last summer when backing two of Smather's horses, one of which was the famous Champion of the West "McChesney," he was reported to have won $40,000, not a half bad amount for one man. There is another side of the question, for the same man lost upwards of $50,000 on the American Futurity.

Now let us take a bird's eye view of the interior of the track. The most important thing next to the horses and the track is probably the betting ring, which adjoins the paddock. Here centres the chief attraction of horse racing The most important personage in the betting ring is the "Bookie," in other words the man with whom the bets are made. Of course there are many "Bookies" with whom you may place your bets, since frequently one man will have in his employ as many as four or five assistants. The "Bookies" sets the odds on the horses in all the races, and he is at liberty to raise and lower them as he wishes. One may easily imagine that he more ofter wins than loses The "Bookies" at the reputable tracks like Sheepshead Bay, Bennings and New Orleans are wholly trustworthy. Indeed few cases are on record where one at these tracks has failed to make his obligations at the end of the races. At the minor tracks, however, it is a very different story. Nine times out of ten when the "Bookie" at such places loses heavily he will slink off, leaving his creditors to whistle for their money.

The following anecdote gives insight to the character of the man known in the betting ring as the "tout." This occurred to an old acquaintance of mine. One day while at the race track he wished to find a friend of his, and knowing the man's fondness for betting rightly thought he would find him in the betting ring. Hardly had he stepped inside when he was accosted by a pleasant looking sort of a chap, who declared, "I have a dead sure thing here. I'll give you the tip, if I get a share of the winnings." My friend (purely out of curiosity, as he neve bets) asked the name of the horse, and was informed, "Starlight." Realizing at once the nature of the man he was dealing with, he smilingly retorted that he was not a betting man, and did not intend to begin then. When the "Tout" walked off for a "Tout" it was, my friend followed him, and saw him button-hole many other people in the same way; in every case, however, giving the name of a different horse, every horse in fact that ran that day. In this way he enticed enough men to bet, to secure himself a good winning for that day. Of course, at the end of each race, he would "show up" only to the winning men; and the losers would never get a glance at him.

Perhaps the most interesting study on the track is the jockey. There are two steps to the position of jockey, the stable boy and the exercise boy. The age of the stable boy ranges from five to eight at the greatest. During this time his duties are to look after the horses, and they endeavor to keep their own weight down as much as possible. He learns nothing of reading, writing, arithmetic, or anything else relating to books. Instead he learns to be absolutely fearless of a horse and possibly to sit on one once in a white. The next step is the exercise boy; his age ranges from seven to twelve, and his chief duties are to ride the horses in order to give them exercise and help generally around the stable. Just before he becomes a jockey he is allowed to start in one or two of the minor races. All this time they have learned nothing outside of track routine, and their physical growth is very much below normal. Their weight at this time is between forty and eighty, as much in fact as it will be during their career as a jockey. When the exercise boy has reached the age of twelve he is given several months in the minor races, and if he proves a success he is turned over to some manager, and from then on is a jockey.

An American jock ey, at his best, commands a very large salary, Tod Sloane, it is said, getting as high as $50,000 a year. The life of a jockey is very hard and his habits extremely dissipated, yet the successful jockey is probably the most popular of modern American heroes. After many great races, such as the "Brooklyn Handicap," the winning jockey is placed in a large floral horseshoe and paraded before the grand stand. Riding on the race track is also dangerous, especially steeple chase riding. Taking all in all, the typical American jockey makes a very interesting study. There are many authorities on the subject of a jockey's training, and no matter how these experts vary on minor points, yet they all agree that the jockey should begin his education when young.

More interest is displayed at a track in a flat race than in any other. On these races more betting is done than on a steeple chase, and there are probably twice as many flat race horses than steeple chase horses. The usual flat race is six furlongs or less. The horses are first lined up at the "barrier," where they are made to stand as nearly even as it is possible to get thoroughbred horses, so they will get to the "wire" abreast. The American jockey in a flat race rides with very short stirrups, and rides low on his horse's neck. This way is far superior to the English way of sitting deep in the saddle, with long stirrups, for it lifts a vast amount of weight off the saddle. On the other hand a steeple chase jockey, although he rides with fairly short stirrups, does not ride so low on his horse as a "flat" jockey does

Steeple chasing is very much more dangerous than flat racing, and especially so if the horses are not well schooled, as was the case at Sheepshead Bay, Morris Park and Bennings a year ago. Last season, however, the horses were much better in their jumping. Through the season of 1902 it was an extraordinary thing if the entire field finished, yet this year it was a daily occurrence. Not only is racing attended with peril to the riders, but many horses are also injured. One horse of Mr. Belmont's named "Minute Man," the only horse that ever defeated the famous McChesney, broke his hind pasturn last year while running in a flat race and had to be shot thirty minutes afterward—a calamity all the harder for the reason that the horse was young.

The Chief of the track officials are the starter, and the stewards. The starter must be a man of great nerve to keep his place even for one season. For the strain of the duty to get off twenty young thoroughbreds, as in the Futurity, with all the great track men of the country contesting for the honor of first place, may easily be imagined Although his pay is a hundred dollars a week, yet it really does not compensate him for his work and responsibility. Out of this too he has to pay his assistants so that his pay is greatly reduced. Besides this he runs a daily risk of his life from the heels of the horses he starts four times a day. The duty of the stewards of the track is to rule off any jockey riding foul. Tod Sloan was ruled off not only from the American tracks some years ago, but also from the French tracks. There are others such as Reiff, who owe their dismissal from the tracks to the steward, and foul riding.

There is no doubt that the growth of horse racing has never been so great as in the last twenty five years. The development has probably been much more marked in American than in England. Some races, such as the Derby, have been run for over a century. The Derby, first run in 1780, was started by the Earle of Derby at Epson. This race is for three-year-olds and is run the last Wednesday in May, (sometimes the first of June) This is the great Cockney Holiday, as many as thirty hundred thousand attending each year. The three great races which form the "Triple Crown," are the St. Leger, the "2,000 Guineas," and the Derby. Since 1780 there have only been five horses that have won all three. Horse racing is looked upon with perhaps more favor in England than in America. The present King when he was the Prince of Wales, was very enthusiastic indeed over the sport. His horse was one of the five that won the "Triple Crown." There is probable much stronger feeling among the middle and lower classes in England in favor of racing than in America. The only really large race we have is the American Futurity, a race for three year olds, run sometime in the latter part of July. This race is warmly contested by Whitney, Belmont, James Keene, and other men high in track experience. Their incentive is not so much the rich purse, (as these men are mostly millionaires) but the great honor of winning the contest. DAVID DESHLER.

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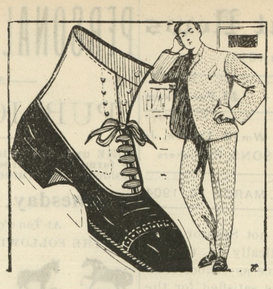

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