

# Tales of Old Newton Races

Contributed by Steven Dowd

Mr. Rylance is a born raconteur, as the many admirers of his angling yarns and other stories, which have appeared in "The Warrington Examiner," have long realised. These reminiscences of Newton Races, presenting telling word-pictures in minute detail of the sordid, the pathetic, and the seamy side of the racecourse, written by the master-hand of a keen observer of Nature, who is also a clean and unerring humorist, will give permanence to nineteenth century scenes that must inevitably pass before the advent of improvements and inventions that affect even the fair ground entertainer and the racecourse swindler.

## FOREWORD.

This little book, written by Mr. William Rylance, will gain in value as the years roll on. The customs he records have changed, are changing, and will continue to change; and these descriptions of what has been, presented in graphic language by one who had first-hand knowledge of the things of which he spoke, will provide reliable material for the future historian of our social life. Moreover, the stories have a present interest and worth. They cannot but make a strong appeal to all who love to read of passing events, especially when they are dressed in the familiar language and the rough-and-ready philosophy of which Mr. Rylance is a complete master.

T. W.

## THE LIGHT OF DAY : Tales of Old Newton Races

IT will be fifty years ago since my father took me and several of my brothers from Earlestown to Liverpool to see a cart go along the street without a horse. When we arrived in Liverpool we were fortunate to see the so-called cart (which was, of course, a motor-car), going along the street, and everybody stopping to watch its progress until it got round the corner. Well do I remember hansom-cab drivers pointing to the car and ridiculing it as it passed by them. Don't forget, reader, to connect hansom to cab, as the present generation may think that the cab-drivers of those days were handsome. I don't say they were ugly, but you couldn't call them handsome, because of their calling. You see, they all had to wear great long beards to keep the cold off their chests. If a hansom-cab came through the streets of Warrington to-morrow I can fancy seeing the young folk stare at it, and saying amongst themselves : "Its marvellous how the driver keeps his balance on that high seat." Compared with the low motor-cars of to-day the driver of the hansom-cab would certainly look up in the clouds. As a lad, I was always afraid of the seat of the hansom giving way and the driver falling backwards into the roadway.

I have no intention of writing here of the changes of vehicles of transport fifty years ago, I only mention the hansom-cab to prove to you that I was living fifty years ago, and I am going to try and tell you of some real and true stories of characters who attended the Newton Races of that period. Newton Racecourse was recognised as one of the finest in the country, and it was also a free course, which was the cause of the scum of the underworld visiting it. I have seen detectives take the suspects to the Police Station as soon as they landed off the train. Before I forget, I would like to mention that I went to Chester Races to try and get some material for a new story. I might as well have stayed at home ; it was no different from going to a football match. True, the bookies were there with their boards up, as of yore, shouting the odds, or I should say, trying to shout. They were not to be compared with the lads of fifty years ago, and it is a fact that when the bookies at Newton commenced their " Even money the field, even money the field, six to four bar one, six to four bar one," they could be distinctly heard on Bank Quay Station, providing the wind was in that direction. I think the bookies of to-day require a lesson or two on shouting, and for that they could do worse than come to Wilderspool and hear our lads on the stand (members stand) give vent to their feelings when the referee displeases. There was more life to the square yard at the old Newton Races than there was to the square mile at Chester.

## EARLESTOWN STATION.

On emerging from the station you were confronted with drivers of vehicles of every description for passenger carrying,

except motor-cars, shouting : "Cab, sir?" "Hansom, sir?" "Four-wheeler, sir?" The cabbies kept the call up from the first train arriving in the morning.

We prefer to walk from the station to the course, just to revive old memories. Up Queen Street, then Market Street, leaving the Market Square on the right, almost covered over with side-shows, which I hope to tell you about later on, and dont forget that I am speaking of the year 1882. Fifty years ago.

As we proceed along Market Street, we pass the Police Station on the right, and St. Johns Church on the left, then the Market fields, which are now covered with houses. On leaving Market Street, which in those days was called the New Road, we enter the back line which has not been in use for sixty years at least.

## THE GAMBLERS.

Along this back line from end to end the gamblers were always busy catching mugs. There is a lamp post near to the entrance of the back line, and it was here I saw the vision of the first character I am going to tell you about, before I proceed with the gamblers. This man would stand with his back to the lamp post and would allow anyone to tie him up with the length of rope which he supplied, providing they did not go above his shoulders. After being tied up he would appeal to the bystanders for coppers, before proceeding to release himself. His cap was placed on the ground in front of him to receive the money, and when he thought he had sufficient he would proceed to extricate himself. Many times have I seen this performance, and often he would say: "Another threepence, gentlemen, please, you know we all have to live."

I once saw the same character nearly die. A big, rough chap said he would tie him so that he couldnt release himself. He tied the mans two feet together to the lamp post, then wound the rope around his body, and somehow or other, it got round his neck and he switched a knot on it like a flash. In a flash the mans tongue shot out, and he would certainly have choked if some chap hadnt cut the rope.

On another occasion, I saw a sailor tie him up, and I think he would have been there until now, if the police hadnt released him.

The first group on the back line are around a man who has a piece of cloth about eighteen inches long by nine inches wide and marked out into three parts, each of a different colour, On one is marked a large U, the other end part has an O on it, and the centre part has a 7 painted on it. The man has a couple of dice in a box, and while he is shaking the dice he is continually calling: "Under seven, over seven, or seven, three to) one seven. Now gentlemen back your fancy, under seven, over seven, or seven, three to one seven." It was even money on under or over seven, but if the man threw seven and you had your bob on that number you would receive four shillings back. The gambling done on that strip of canvas was surprising, and nine bets out of ten were on number seven. The only reason I could account for that, was the odds of three to one, which, in my opinion, should have been greater, because number seven could only come up three times, that is 4-3, 5-2 and 6-1, whereas under seven could come up nine times, and also over seven.

I have seen sovereigns put on (there were no notes in these days) number seven far oftener than shillings on under seven or over seven. Not only sovereigns have I seen, but halfpennies, also; yes, the man who throws the dice was like the bookmaker, no bets too large and none too small.

We now leave him, throwing his dice and raking in the shekels as fast as he can, and see what is doing in the next group of men, only a few yards away.

## THE STICK AND THE BUTTON.

"Three to one you dont knock the button off the clay." That is the call you hear as you approach the next little group of gamblers. The man running this little concern has a stick about eight or nine inches long standing perpendicular in a piece of clay about four inches in diameter. On the top of the stick rests a shirt button. You are then given a piece of umbrella wire about six inches long. The idea is to throw the wire at the stick to knock the button off, but in doing so, the button must fall clear of the clay. It is a penny a throw, and if you knock the button clear of the clay you get fourpence. There is only one way to throw it to win, and, that is by throwing the wire in a perpendicular position. You then have a chance to hit the button. If you knock the stick down a thousand times without hitting the button, the button will surely fall on the, clay. This is really a game of skill, and I have seen many pounds won and lost at it during the many years I attended the races.

## "PICKING THE LADY."

The next group is round one who is running the three-card trick. This is not a game of skill, and if you win anything off this gentleman you may consider yourself lucky. On the other hand, I honestly think he deserves all he wins. Should you happen to be in company and the three-card trick is introduced, take my advice, leave it alone, and resist all temptations. The one who manipulates the cards has one or two confederates in the group around him. He takes a numbered card and a queen in one hand and a numbered card in the other. The queen card is held below the numbered card, he shows you the three cards, then makes a pass with them by throwing the one card through the other two and letting them fall face down. It is even money you dont pick the lady. You have been watching so keen that you are sure you could pick it, but you hesitate, until one man puts half a crown on the card you think is the queen. Of course, he is one of the lads; but before you have time to put your bit on, the card is turned up, and sure enough, it is the queen, and five shillings is promptly paid over.

Once again the cards are taken up and thrown down again. This time the confederate is first down with his half-crown, but on a card which has fallen in a different position to the previous throw. The reason the confederate put his money down first is so that you will follow his lead. All the same, you have been again watching keenly and feel sure the card with the half-crown on is the queen. You put a shilling on the card just to chance it, as a shilling is neither here nor there, and one or two others are tempted the same way and also put the same stake on. The card is then turned up, and sure enough, it is the queen. The winnings are paid over to you quite cheerfully, and the card-sharper, once more takes up the three cards, shows you the queen, makes the usual pass, and again you are asked to pick the " lady." This is the time the sharper rakes in the shekels from the mugs.

Before the confederate puts his money on what he thinks is the "lady," the sharper says a word or two to the group around him in this manner: " You know, gentlemen, it is illegal to play this game, and although I only do it for a pastime and a little interest between ourselves, I cannot afford to let the police catch me, because a heavy fine is inflicted if we are caught playing this game. You therefore understand, gentlemen, why I must keep a sharp look-out for the police." He then deliberately turns his back on the cards and looks the other way, making you believe he is on the lookout for the police.

While his back is turned, the confederate takes a hand. He turns the corner of one of the cards up, so that all in the group can see it. Although he only turns the corner up, it undoubtedly looks to be the queen. Of course, the sharper has given him time to do the trick, as when he turns round he says: " Has anyone touched these cards?" All the mugs cry out in unison: " No, nobodys touched em."

It is once more the confederate who is first to put his money on, but this time he puts a half-sovereign on, and doesnt forget to give the mugs a knowing wink as he does so. As it certainly looks a " cert," no odd shillings go on, oh no, half-sovereigns and sovereigns this time. Often four or five pounds have I seen on a card. Before the card is turned up the sharper once more says to the group: " Now, gentlemen, lets be fair to one another. You are sure no one has touched the cards?"

"Certainly not," they answer him. "That being so, gentlemen, will one of you kindly turn the card up?" Note all the money

is on the card his confederate turned up, to show you it was the queen. Then one of the crowd turns up the card, but it is not the " lady." The sharper himself turns up the other two cards, one of which is the queen, saying: " Hard lines, gentlemen," and rakes in the shekels. Not a word is spoken among the little group, and it melts away like snow, sadder men undoubtedly, but I cannot say wiser men, because they dont know how it is done; neither do I. The card-sharpers then wait for a fresh lot of " mugs."

#### ONE WHO "PICKED THE LADY."

I can vouch for this little anecdote:

In a certain office in Earlestown there were eight clerks working and not one of them could get off to attend the races. A horse named Kim Bolton came to Earlestown as a strong tip for the Manor Cup. Almost everybody in Earlestown and Newton backed it. Green and plum cap were its colours. Now these eight clerks put five shillings each down, and it was arranged that one of them would slip out of the office, a quarter of an hour before the race, go up to the course, back Kim Bolton with the two pounds, return with winnings, all inside half an hour.

The race was timed for three oclock, and at 2.45 the clerk chosen for the job left the office. His nearest way was up New Road and along the back line where, as I have previously mentioned all the gamblers gather together. He could not resist having a look at the three-card trick being done, and it so happened that the sharper had only just got together another little lot of mugs. Consequently, when the clerk pushed his nose in, the sharper was throwing the cards on the board for the first time, when the confederate always puts the usual half-crown on the queen and before anyone has a chance to back it, the sharper turns the card up, which, of course, is the queen, and the confederate receives five shillings. On this occasion it so happened that the clerk was quicker than the confederate (to start with at any rate), for he planks the two pounds down on the queen.

Of course, it is very easy to pick the queen on the sharpers first throw, though he only allows his confederate to put any money on; yet in this case the clerk had his on. Then it happened like lightning. Before anyone else put any money down, someone from behind shouted, " Police," and at the same time the clerks billycock was pressed over his ears and he got a smack across the jaw and a good hard kick in the stern. By the time the clerk had forced his hat back over his ears, the sharper, cards, money, and the little group had fled. He was back at the office before the race was run. Its a fact; and Kim Bolton won at three to one against. Hed picked the "lady " all right.

#### "THE PALMER."

The next little group we come to is all head and ears watching a man selling half-crowns. This gentleman is a Palmer, and another of the gambling fraternity who, I believe, deserve all the money they get. He stands on a raised platform with a table in front of him, and to get his audience he puts a couple of handfuls of half-crowns on the table, then calls out : " Now, gentlemen, Ive got to give these half-crowns away, and at the same time, I have to see that only the deserving people get them. Should I throw them haphazard amongst you it would not only cause a commotion, but a free fight would certainly ensue. I am going to distribute these half-crowns in such a manner that it will give each and everyone of you an equal chance, and I may tell you, gentlemen, that each and every half-crown on this table is a genuine coin of the realm."

At that, he picks several of them up and rings them on the table, one at a time, of course, and there is not the slightest doubt but that they are all good ones. He then once more proceeds: " Now, gentlemen, there is just one condition that I ask you to comply with before I commence to. distribute these half-crowns. Ah, I fancy one or two of you are saying to yourselves, I thought there was a catch in it. Believe me, gentlemen, there is no catch whatever. I have here a number of purses (at that he takes a purse out of a boxful he has on the table) which I am going to sell to you to keep your half-crowns in. Of course, I know you are sportsmen enough not to expect me to give you the purses as well as the half-crowns. The only condition that I want you to comply with is: that whoever buys a purse, he does not open it while he is standing here, as it would not be fair to himself or me either and, gentlemen, as one Englishman to another, I ask you to

comply with that one condition."

He then takes up one of the purses, opens it and holds it in his left hand. He next proceeds to take up four half-crowns and drops then one at a time into the open purse and, after closing it, he commences: " Now, gentlemen, who will give me five shillings for the purse? I am selling the purse only. Who will give me five shillings for the purse?" No response. By this time he has quite a good crowd around him and most of them hardly know what he is selling, not being there at the commencement. He knows this, and before anyone has a chance to buy the four half-crowns and purse for five shillings he empties them on to the table, saying: " There you are, gentlemen, four half-crowns along with the purse I wanted to sell you for five shillings, and not one of you had the courage to buy it."

Of course, he has the crowd round him now and he plays on their feelings as he proceeds in a rather low but confidential tone: " Gentlemen, if I were to offer you those cheap, German-made watches which I can buy at 24s. a dozen, you would tumble over each other to buy them from me at 30s. each. Believe me, gentlemen, these half-crowns are each and everyone genuine. All I ask you to buy is the purse, but on no condition must you open it while standing here."

He once more baits his hook in this manner. Holds an open purse up with his left hand, then drops eight half-crowns one after the other into the purse, saying: "One, two, three," etc., until he has dropped the eight in. " Now, gentlemen, Ill take fifteen shillings for the purse." After a very slight hesitation, he says: " Will anyone give me ten shillings for the purse?" Like a flash, one man standing in the centre of the crowd calls out, " Here you are, Ill buy it."

No doubt, dear reader, you have twigged by now that the man who buys the first purse is a confederate, and this is the reason why he stands in the centre of the crowd and buys the first purse. The confederate hands his half-sovereign up and receives the purse, which he at once opens in full view of those around him.

Of course, there are eight half-crowns in it, which he displays, at the same time saying: "Im well satisfied, these are good half-crowns all right."

Heres where the Palmer once more comes in and gets the sympathy of the crowd by saying, in that low, plaintive voice of his: "Now, gentlemen, Ill leave it to you. Do you honestly think I have had a square deal with my first customer?" "No, you havent," comes from several in the crowd.

"Thank you, gentlemen, it is good to know there are a few sports left in England yet. All I ask is, that each one who buys a purse does not open it while standing around here, yet the first one who buys opens thq purse straightaway."

The confederate then calls out: " Im awfully sorry, mister, but I clean forgot about it, and I wouldnt have opened it on any condition if Id only thought about it." "Ill accept your apology, sir," says the Palmer, "and as I only sell one purse to each man, he cant open a second one."

He once more proceeds with the purse and half-crowns as before. You not only see the coins drop into the purse, but you hear them jink as they drop on each other. After closing the purse, he once more says: " Now, gentlemen, who will give me ten shillings for the purse?"

Several hands go up in different parts of the crowd and, at the same time, calls of " Ill have it," can be heard. "Gentlemen, Ill serve you all in your turn, and I do hope you will observe the , condition of not opening the purse," cries the Palmer. Had the confederate not opened his purse, the Palmer would not have sold one in a blue moon; yet he commenced to do good business. Into every purse he sold, eight half-crowns were dropped, one after the other. Well, it appeared they did, and the one condition of not opening the purse while standing there was only a gag. There was not the least doubt many of them opened the purse on the sly, and when they saw that it contained eight pennies, not a word of protest was said to the Palmer, but to themselves they whispered, "Muggins."

I happen to know how this palming trick is accomplished, but as one sport to another, I hardly think it fair to explain it, so I will content myself by saying once more: "The Palmer deserves all the money he gets."

## BASKET CHAIR ROGUE.

The next character we come across is the man with the basket chair made into a table. Dont forget that all these men, without exception, are gifted with the gab, and would be useless without it. They make black look white, and he is a strong-willed man who can resist having an odd tanners worth after he has listened to one of these characters extolling the virtues of his particular, calling.

The Palmer, I pointed out to you, is worthy of his hire, but I am sorry I cannot say the same of the basket-chair man. In fact, he is another of the rogues attending the races and making a living out of the " mugs."

Ill try and explain his stock-in-trade. He has a stand made similar to one of those old-fashioned basket-chairs without a back. It has a flat top about two feet diameter and stands about twenty-eight inches high. There are no legs to it, as it is closely-woven twig-work all round it, except for a portion which is left -open for the convenience of the rogue. He sits at this basket table and the opening allows him to get his legs well under the table. It is by his legs and feet that he controls the " doings." On the top of the basket table is a flat board marked out into six equal spaces and all differently coloured. There is a centre peg fixed on the board and on which revolves a pointed arrow about eighteen inches long, the point being the heaviest. It shouldnt be, I know, but it is. It is impossible for me to remember this gentlemans opening speech to get his audience, as you -are quite aware that it was in the eighties these things happened, and thats a long while ago. I know it went something like t his: " Now, gentlemen, this is the only game on the board where each and everyone has an equal chance. (Liar.) It is known as the royal roulette, and you know, gentlemen, as well as I do, that when you are allowed to use the word royal to any game, it is like Caesars wife, above suspicion." Pointing to the other group of gamblers down the back line, he continues: "Theres not one of them dare use the word royal to their games. To use the word royal, the game must have been played by royalty and, believe me, gentlemen, this game has been played by most of the crowned heads of Europe. All you have to do, gentlemen, is to back your fancy. There are only six colours, and I will lay you three to one you dont pick the winning colour. Should the point of the arrow stop on one of the black marks dividing the different colours it is spun round again. No bets, too large and none too small. All money to be on the board before I spin the arrow."

Straightaway the little group that he has gathered round commence to back the different colours they fancy, and the arrow is then spun round. On the colour the arrow stops on he places three coins to each of the coins on that colour. Should there be four half-crowns on he puts three to each and, of course, if you have backed it you pick your winnings up before anybody else does it for you. I have seen very little money won on this game, but I have seen plenty lost. When he is paying the winnings out and gathering the losings in he calls out: " Reds the winner " (thats if it stops at red) " and badly backed; one for the old man this time. Now, gentlemen, back your fancy, no colour barred, and dont forget this is the game of royal roulette. When the Prince of Wales visited the Continent he said the only game in which each and everyone had an equal chance was the game of roulette, and what the Prince of Wales doesnt know about roulette isnt worth knowing. Now, gentlemen, back your fancy."

As soon as the six colours are backed he once more gives the arrow a twist, and as it goes spinning round he calls out: " Little red rover from Paris to Dover and off she goes again! Heres where you come in your horses and traps and go away in your stocking feet. Faint heart never won a fair lady." So he continues in much the same strain as long as he can hold the audience. When he first commences to get a group round him, it is us kids, full of inquisitiveness, that are the first to gather round, and he, like the rest of the racing characters, allows us to be the first line of defence. They are glad of us, because as soon as we gathered round, the nosey-parkers would soon come and look over our heads to see what was going on.

He would allow us to watch for a time or two, then he would say: "Now, you kids, run away and let the gentlemen have a chance ; go away, will you? Three to one you dont pick the winning colour, gentlemen; theres only blue not backed, gentlemen ; is anyone backing blue?"

He wouldnt waste much time if no one seemed to be backing blue, and he would say: "For the last time, gentlemen, is anyone backing blue? No one? You may be sorry, gentlemen, but dont blame me if blue turns up."

At that he would give the arrow a twist, and sure enough, blue would be the winner. How is it done? Very simple when

you know, and I will now try to explain it. On the inside of the basket there are two blocks of wood about four inches long and an inch thick, fastened firmly three inches from the bottom and about a foot or so apart. He can reach these blocks with his feet, and the basket where the space is left for his convenience just rests on his thighs. He is on a very level piece of ground, of course. When the bets are made, we will say that blue is the colour with the least money on it and it is the farthest from him. You can gamble that will be the colour that will win, for when the arrow is spinning round he raises the table with his thighs ever so slightly, and sure enough, it stops on blue. If he wants red to win and it is the nearest to him, he simply puts his toes under the two blocks and raises that side of the table. He now wants yellow to win, and it is on the right-hand side of red from where he sits. All he has to do is to press on the block with his right foot, put his toe under the left block, raising the table ever so slightly, and sure enough, the point of the arrow will rest at the yellow. Black is the next colour he wants to win, and this is on his right-hand side between the blue and the yellow. Very gently he raises his left thigh and the point of the arrow cannot rest anywhere else only on the black colour.

You see how simple it is for him to rogue you. Dont run away with the idea that very few know the trick; oh no, plenty know and there are plenty of " mugs " who dont. It is the " mugs " he thrives on.

I dare say you are saying to yourself : "Anyone in the know could back the winning colour every time by putting their money on the least backed colour." You only think so. The man who spins the arrow can tell if you are in the know the second bet you make. You are then gently told to take a walk, and a wise .man does so. Ive seen a rough house or two when they have refused to go, as all these gamblers have confederates around them.

There are several more groups to pass before we leave the back line, but for the time being, at least, we will give them a miss. As we emerge from the back line we come to the point of a triangular piece of grass land, and this point was the stand of the oldest tipster in the world.

"OLD JACK DICKENSON."

Every year Old Jack was to be seen here selling his tips, and I dont think he could have selected a better stand, as the majority had to pass that point to get to the course. He hadno trouble to sell his tips, and all that he would call out wouldbe: " Old Jacks finals a shilling; Old Jacks finals a shilling." I believe he was a Manchester man, and I think there was only one man who was better known at Newton Races than Old Jack " and that was Johnnie Osborne, the jockey. Johnnie and his side-whiskers will always be mentioned when and wherever old Newton races are being discussed.

"THE CONJURER"

It was on this grass land that a conjurer would give open-air performances at intervals throughout the race meeting.

Every year he came, and a right good show he gave. There was always a large audience round him (of course there would be while it was free), and his tricks were every bit as good as I see on the music-hall stage of to-day, though he had not the advantage of trap doors and darkening of the stage. I used to enjoy the tricks of this conjurer, though I couldnt tell how any one of them was accomplished, simple as some must have been. The trick I enjoyed best was the tossing for drinks, and he did this at almost every performance as a wind up.

By the way, a confederate was continually going around with the collecting box?" Thank you." Before performing the last trick the conjurer would call out: " Is there any man who would like to toss me for drinks? Now, gentlemen, dont be afraid, just for the fun of the thing. It wont cost you anything. I thank you very much for the collection you have given me, and Im sure there must be one among you who would like to toss me for drinks." One of his confederates would then call out: " Ill toss you. " Very good, sir, will you please come into the ring?"

The confederate would then walk into the ring, and he always wore a billycock. In case you dont know what a billy-cock is, I will tell you. It is a hard felt hat, and it was necessary in the performing of the trick. Now, gentlemen," the conjurer began, "I want you to watch very closely how I perform this trick. Five pounds will I give to any charitable institution if anyone can explain how I do it. I claim to be the only man in the British Isles who can perform this trick." Taking a coin from his pocket, he holds it up to the full view of the audience, saying, " This is the coin, two-shilling piece, that I am going to toss with. We will have two out of three wins, and it is his first shout."

The confederate then calls out so that all the audience can hear: " Head." And, by the way, have you noticed how few call " Tail " when there is any tossing being done? The conjurer then tosses the coin very high into the air and, of course, it comes down head up. It has to do whether it does or not. Thats one to you," calls out the conjurer, and it is my call now." Once more he tosses the coin very high, and calls out: " I must be in the fashion, Ill have head." Sure enough it comes down head up again. "Now, gentlemen this is exciting; one each and his call." There are always one or two in a crowd who cant keep their mouths shut, and you could hear from several parts: " Dont call head. It wont come head three times running. Have tail, mister."

The conjurer would then answer them by saying: " Will you kindly let the gentleman choose for himself. All of you had the chance to come into the ring; you refused, and now you want this gentleman to take an unfair advantage of me by taking your advice. Now come, be sports, let him please himself." "Hear, hear," from the audience greeted the last remarks.

The conjurer then for the third and last time tossed the coin very high into the air, and at the same time the man with the hard hat on called out: " Tail." Just as the coin was reaching the ground the conjurer took off the mans hard hat and placed it over the coin and then said: " Now, gentlemen to show you that everything I do is fair and square above the board, I will allow this gentleman to pick his own hat up and see for himself whether it is head or tail."

The conjurer then stands away from the hat, while the man goes and picks it up, and there, instead of a two-shilling piece, sits a full-grown guinea pig. Of course, the conjurer won, because a guinea pig has no tail. The crowd then disperses, and we make our way to the course, a distance of about fifty yards, yet in that short distance there are several groups around individuals, all of whom are getting a livelihood out of the race-going public. In fact, there is not a square yard of that triangular piece of grassland that is not occupied during the whole time of the race meeting. The last group we come to before going on to the course is around one of the oldest side-shows that travel England. I refer to the old

## PUNCH AND JUDY.

Yes, the old Punch and Judy show attended Newton Races, and this one was similar to the others. As I stood watching the performance I thought what a nice old English picture it made. The outside of the framework of the show was covered all over with a red and white striped material, and on each of the four corners flew a small Union Jack. The front part of the show, where the performance takes place, was draped in royal blue, the lion and the unicorn was worked in

silk in beautiful colours as were also the words, "The Royal Punch and Judy." What an audience he had, children, of course, all in front, with the grown-ups standing behind, and it is a question which of the two laughed most. I rather think the grown-ups had it. The Punch and Judy show is always worth supporting, even more so now than fifty years ago, as it is one of the very few shows that we have in England to-day of real English production. May the Punch and Judy show never die out.

## NEWTON RACE COURSE.

The course is on a piece of land called Newton Common, and is situated half-way between Liverpool and Manchester in a direct line between the two cities. It is a pear-shaped course with a very long straight, and a straight half-mile race used to be run on it. The turf on it was second to none. Newton cricket field was laid with turf taken off the course; and, by the way, I played many years on that field. Well do I recollect Alec Watson, the old Lancashire cricketer, who had come to Newton to give advice regarding the turf, say: " You could prepare a wicket on this ground equal to any in England. The races extended over three days at one time, then dropped down to two, and I had the pleasure of seeing the last race run on the course in the year 1899.

We are now in the middle of the course, and what a conglomeration of humanity is gathered together. Black men, white men, yellow men, women and all, of all nationalities. Ive even seen the North American Red Indian represented there. Apart from rogues, thieves and vagabonds, religious bodies of almost every denomination were there carrying on the good work. First of all we gather round..

## "THE TIPSTER."

It was always interesting to listen to a tipster, and quite good number of them visited Newton year after year. Old Jack Dickenson, as I have previously mentioned, was a tipster on the quiet side, and being so well known, always having the same stand, he had no need to dress and act as these other tipsters had to do. Most of these tipsters wore a full jockeys riding kit, and to get his audience one would take off his long, light dust coat, spread it out on the ground, take a race card and " The Sporting Chronicle " out of one of the pockets, then commence:

"Gentlemen, Ive come all the way from Newmarket to put money in your pockets. I need no introduction to you, as most of you gentlemen standing around know that I am the brother of that famous jockey, Fred Shiel, who rides for that dark and dangerous stable, Alec Taylors of Manton. According to " The Sporting Chronicle " here, the first race on the card is so open that every horse in the race has been tipped to win it. Believe me, gentlemen, there is only one horse, and one horse only that will win that race and I know it. At five oclock this morning I was here on this course and watched that horse Ado its final gallop, and although I shouldnt really tell you, but I know it wont go any further, the trainer came up to me and said: Joe, its a one-horse wire, cant lose; in fact, I think we will be weighed-in before the others have passed the post. For further proof, gentlemen, I have a telegram, and for the benefit of you all, I will read it: Shiel, Post Office, Earlestown. Dont miss for first race, dead cert, cant lose. Fred. Thats from my own brother at Manton. He doesnt happen to be riding at this meeting or I would have seen him personally, and there would have been no need for this telegram. Surely, gentlemen, you require no further proof that I have the goods, straight from the horses mouth."

He then holds up a handful of envelopes, saying: "Gentlemen, in each and every one of these envelopes is the name of the winner of the first race this afternoon. I dont give two or three horses for one race; one horse and one only. I dont send different horses to different clients, as many of the so-called tipsters who advertise in the sporting papers. Believe me, gentlemen, most of those fellows couldnt tell a cow from a racehorse if it had a cover over its horns."

Of course, that causes a bit of a laugh, and while he has his audience in a good humour, he calls out: "Now, gentlemen,

my price for this tip is sixpence; sixpence only do I ask. I am tipping on only two more races after this, and I guarantee you will be falling over each other to buy them when you have drawn your winnings on the first race. All I charge is sixpence."

"Thank you, sir; thank you, sir; thank you, sir," you hear him say as he receives the sixpences for the envelopes, and quite a good trade he does.

For the benefit of any young sportsman who happens to be reading this, I would like to warn him, that all the talk these tipsters come out with is nothing but bluff, yet it is surprising how easily we can be gulled. In the foregoing, I have only given you a very short pen-sketch of one of the many tipsters; in fact, he comes out with three or four times as much talk as I've told you, only I thought it might get too dry for you if I prolonged the agony. Many times I've seen old-time racegoers buy tips from a tipster, not that they believe he has the goods, but just to see if his tip tallies with their own opinion. Having just warned the young sportsman against believing what these tipsters (or any tipsters for a matter of fact) say, I would like at this juncture to give him a more serious warning, which is:

Never take up betting with the idea of making money on the make-haste. I'm not against betting in a reasonable manner, and I am certain that a heavy gambler will have no more to account for when he meets his Maker, than those who pose as pious and religious, yet never fail week in week out to fill in football, racing, picture coupons, etc., in which newspaper proprietors back you ?1,000 to lid. you don't pick the winners. Take my tip, young man, don't bet with any money you can't afford to lose, and I claim to know what I am talking about, as there are very few games on the board I've not had a do at. My two eldest brothers were bookmakers, and for many years attended most of the race meetings in England. The backer can carry all that he is going to lose in his pockets, but the bookmaker requires a satchel, and a "bigun" at that, to bring his winnings away.

On leaving the tipsters, I would like to say, that although -they don't speak the truth, many of them earn all the coppers they get. Many incidents occur in the inside of the course during the .afternoons racing, as there are plenty of gambling plots, such as those carried on down the back railway line, I have previously mentioned.

"THE FIRST RACE."

The numbers are going up for the first race. How am I going to describe it? It was fifty years ago, and that's a tidy while to throw one's mind back. Anyway, I'll try.

It is the Golborne Park Stakes, I believe; it doesn't matter if it isn't. A five furlong race, and they are going to start from the Red House.

The shouts from the bookmakers are deafening: "Even money the field. Even money the field. Three to one bar one. Three to one bar one. Even money the field. Four to one Nightcap. Six to one Chapeltown. Six to one Chapeltown." These are the calls you hear from almost all the bookmakers for the first few minutes.

The tick-tackers are busy now. Their calling is a work of art; each can do his job, and the bookmakers understand them. Their job is to get to know what they are backing in the big-priced rings, then, as they stand on a box, signal by motioning with their hands and arms the odds of the favourites from one ring to another, and also across the course to the various bookmakers. If the favourite is being well backed its price is shortened, and then you hear the bookies calling: "I'll take six to four Cream o Tarter" (the favourite); "Four to one bar one"; "Four to one bar one." "Eight to one Chapeltown." "Eight to one Chapeltown." "Twenty to one bar three." "Twenty to one bar three." "I'll take six to four Cream o Tarter." "Here, I'll lay five to one bar one." "Five to one bar one." The five to one bar one goes to show that Cream o Tarter is a red-hot favourite. The shouting goes on incessantly, and as loud as human lungs can shout.

In the middle of the course the favourite, Cream o Tarter, is not backed in the same proportion as it is in the ten-shilling

and five-shilling rings. What I mean to say is, that the gamblers in the centre of the course do not believe in buying money, and when a favourite is odds-on, it amounts to that. No, they would sooner have a shilling on an outsider, than lay six shillings to win four, providing, of course, the favourite won. So you see there is far more money on the outsiders, in the free portion of the course (the middle) than on the favourite.

In those days there were no starting gates, flags were used to start them off. One man stood with a red flag, and as the horses were lined up and approached him, down the red flag would go, but it didnt constitute an official start until the white flag (which was held by the starter a short distance further up the course) went down.

Now, if you want to hear real silence and, at the same time, be surrounded by thousands of live human beings, go to a race meeting. I notice Ive written?" to hear real silence "of course, you cant hear silence, but you know what I mean.

Just as the horses are gathered together to start, a deathlike silence reigns supreme throughout the whole concourse of spectators. You dont even hear the shout of "ices." It is as though all are saving their breath until the flag goes down then you hear one mighty shout: "THEYRE OFF!"

I will relate to you a little anecdote here which I can vouch for, and I dont think it will be out of place.

In the year 1861 a certain young man walked from Warrington to Newton Race Course to back a certain horse, and he was going to put a sovereign on it. Friday was the day he walked, and this horse had to win, because he was going to be married on the Saturday at St. Pauls Church, and all he had in the whole world was a pound. Fancy a young man, only nineteen. years of age, risking all he had on a horse race! And I know he didnt understand horse-racing at that time, at any rate, as you will see.

He had been given a good tip, and his idea was to put on it all he possessed, in order to increase it to three or four pounds, so that he could get married in comfort. He arrived on the racecourse in good time, and as soon as the betting opened out at " Three to one the field," he put his sovereign on the "tip" he had been given, and it turned out to start a hot favourite. In fact, you had to lay two to one at the finish. Of course, this young man had got his money on early, and stood to get four pounds. I can just imagine the state of mind this young man would be in, because I had a lot to do with him some years after. It was the first bet on a race horse he had made, and it was some years after before he had another bet. It was only natural for him to stand beside the bookmaker in case of him. being a " welsher." The race started and, as usual, the bookmakers had their field-glasses on the horses, at the same time calling out the positions of the various horses, and how they were running at the various stages of the race.

When the horses came round the bend and entered the straight for the winning post, this young mans bookmaker called out: "The favourites walking it. "Then this inexperienced young man (to the amusement of those around), shouted at the top of his voice: "For Gods sake, mister, tell it to run."

He drew his four pounds; got married, and lived happy ever afterwards.

Now, dont think because this little story is finished by the young man living happy ever afterwards, it is not true. It is true. If that horse had lost and the young man had changed his mind with regard to his marriage, I am certain I should never have seen the light of day, and enjoyed the very happy life, I have up to now lived.

I was just thinking that some of my readers who know me (but not too well) would say: "You ought to be happy as you have nothing to trouble you. You are your own boss and you can go fishing when you like."

True enough, I know, but it was just out of the fullness of my heart that I wrote: I have enjoyed a very happy life, for which I render my thanks to God. All the same, I know what trouble is, and I firmly believe that no man, or woman, can enjoy a real, happy life, unless they know what real trouble is. There are different kinds of happiness and trouble. The passing away of anyone or anything you love is one kind of trouble, and to be loved, even if it is only in your own family circle, is one kind of happiness you can enjoy.

We will now go back to that part of my story where they " are off," and a good start it is.

Different calls can be heard from the bookies as they have their field-glasses fixed on the horses: "Chapeltown is making the running "; " Star of Eve is second "; " The favourite is lying handy "; "Golden Dawn is among them " ; "Nightcaps in a good position." These are some of the many calls you hear as the horses race along. They have now turned the corner and are in the straight for home. Talk about excitement! There is no doubt you see it with a vengeance at a race meeting. As the horses turn the corner, the one that has the rails always has a chance to win, and in this case up goes the shout: "The favourites beaten." "Its odds on Chapeltown." " Nightcaps coining." " So is Star of Eve." " Its anybodys race."

The favourite, Cream o Tarter, is on the outside, and from the position where we are, he appears to be well out of it, but from the other side of the course (the ring side) he would appear to be holding his own. The horses are now nearing the winning post, and louder still shout the bookies: " Chapeltown wins," " Chapeltown wins." Chapeltown, who has the rails, seems a certain winner until a tremendous shout goes up: " The favourite romps home." "Lombard Street to a china orange on Cream o Tarter." "Cream o Tarter," "Cream o Tarter " in a canter," you can hear from all around, and sure enough, Cream o Tarter wins the race.

Now I have tried to describe to the uninitiated, in an amateur way, some of the things you hear and see during an ordinary race at an ordinary race meeting.

"THE CONFIDENCE TRICK."

The men who work the confidence trick are pests to any society. Parasites will live on anything, or anybody and do anything but real work. The confidence men go about their job according to the circumstances they find themselves in. For instance, you will perhaps be looking at your race-card when you are addressed by a very smartly dressed man: "Excuse me, but would you mind lending me your pencil for a moment or two? Unfortunately, I must have lost mine. They are such elusive things pencils. Dont you think so?"

You hand him your pencil saying: "You can use this with pleasure." "Thanks awfully. By the way, did you touch the last winner?"

If you answer "No," it makes the going all the easier for him, as he proceeds: "Im not surprised, few backed it, but we, that is, my pal and I, touched out. Of course, we get the goods, not too often bear in mind, but what we do get we can rely on it. You see, my pal has a brother-in-law who owns horses, in fact, he has a couple at this meeting." Then he lowers his voice as he whispers in your ear, ever so low : " But they are not trying. Of course, I wouldnt tell anybody. Understand?"

If you are a "mug," you certainly understand. If you are not a "mug," you?well, you ask for your pencil back.

Yes, get your pencil off him, as he wont even offer it you back. Alls fish that comes to the net, with the confidence trickster. In this case you are a " mug " and you certainly understand. He proceeds: "Im just waiting for my pal to bring the " doings " off the last race; hes rather late, I know, but you see he goes across to the guinea ring; he can get better prices there, and his brother-in-law comes out of the paddock to him on the quiet. He puts on for him, as you know as well as I do that it wouldnt do for an owner to back another horse in a race in which he has one running. It wouldnt. Now

would it?"

Like a "mug " you answer, "It wouldnt."

And "mug"-like you think youve struck oil. At this juncture the pal appears on the scene. The new arrival appears not to notice you as he says in rather a loud voice for your benefit: " I've drawn it all right; you see with having to put such a lot on I had to go to two bookies." "By the way," says the man who still has your pencil, "Let me introduce you to my new-found benefactor. I had lost my pencil, so he very kindly lent me his. This is Mr.?" "Brown," you answer. "Mr. Brown, Mr. Smith, and Im Mr. Jones; so now we all know each other. Well go and have a quiet drink as we settle over the last race." "It does look a bit off settling out in the open," says Mr. Smith, who has rolled up with the winnings. Into a quiet corner of one of the drinking saloons the two settle, and its in this corner the pigeon gets plucked. "I put five pounds for a win and one for a place for each of us," says Mr. Smith to Mr. Jones. " I would have put more on, only when so-an-so, you know, came out of the paddock." "Its quite all right," interrupts Mr. Jones, who still has your pencil. " You neednt be afraid of saying names, Tom. Our friend here is a John Bull and he knows whatever is said between us it is in strict confidence. Isnt that so, friend?" " I wont turn it over to anyone," says the "mug."

At that the name of one of the race-horse owners is whispered in his ear by Mr. Smith (otherwise Tom), who then proceeds: "We will call my brother-in-law Tony, and you will know who I mean. Well Tony came out of the paddock and handed me twenty pounds to put on for him, that with the six pounds each of ours made thirty-two in all. You know it doesnt do to put all on with one bookie, so I spread it, and that is why I was rather late in getting back to you." "Here, waiter, the same again for these three." Of course, the "mug " offers to pay, but they appear insulted at the offer, as Tom proceeds: "You are our guest, old boy, wouldnt dream of letting you pay for anything. Here, have a smoke. Well, as I was saying, I would certainly have put more on only for Tony." "Why didnt you put the whole ten pounds on I gave, for me, and never mind Tony?" asks Mr. Jones, who still has your pencil.

"For the simple reason," answers Tom, "that Tony has a cast-iron one for the last race and he says we must plunge on it. You know what Tony means by a plunge."

"Did he tell you what it was?" "No, he didnt. Said it was too dangerous even to whisper its name, but I must get across to the paddock as soon as the numbers for the last race go up. Five pounds for a win at four to one and one pound for a shop at evens makes it twenty-seven pounds each. Isnt that correct?" asks Tom.

"Quite correct," answers Mr. Jones.

Then Tom pulls a handful of silver out of his pocket and perhaps a sovereign or a half-sovereign and makes the "mug " believe he is going to pay Mr. Jones the twenty-seven pounds. He gets no further than showing the silver, as Mr. Jones, who still has your pencil, exclaims: "Just a minute, Tom, whats the use of giving me the twenty-seven pounds, Ill only have to give it you back and more besides to put on the last race, because you know, if Tony has a "cert" it is a "cert," and Im having all on. I could risk my shirt on it when Tony says so."

You can scarcely credit it, but there are "mugs " even now with all our expensive education who believe such rubbish as confidence tricksters dish up. This "mug " believes they are going to put more than, the twenty-seven pounds on his "dead cert" and he intends to have as much on as he can raise. They will see to that before they have finished with him.

The stock-in-trade of the confidence men is guile and deception. It has even been known that they have talked in such a manner to a victim as to make him believe that it is with great condescension they are letting him have any money on at all. The man that still has the "mugs" pencil says, "Ill tell you what well do, Tom. Another three pounds each well put to it, and perhaps our friend here would like to avail himself of having a bit on." "I dont know whether it would be wise for us to let our friend have any on," says Tom. " You know as well as I do,. that if it leaked out in any shape or form that Tony was giving secret information away, they would have him warned off the turf. Dont think for a moment, my dear friend," continues Tom, addressing the "mug" now, " that we cant trust you, but Tony has such information, valuable information, that it behoves him to be very, very careful to whom he gives it. In fact, he is even going to write down the name of the winner of this last race that I have to back for him, so that he can truthfully say he told no one. Now you understand why we have to work so secretly." "Ill give you my word," says the " mug," " that I will not tell a living soul, so long as I can have a bit on; thats all I care about." "Well, what do you say about having thirty on with us?" asks Tom, "but for heavens sake, keep it secret. Its money for old rags."

The "mug " may not have thirty shillings and, of course, he may have more than thirty pounds. Whatever amount of money he has it does not matter. These two twisters, rogues, or whatever you like to call them, have told the tale so well that the " mug " is induced to part with all the money he has. Having done that, arrangements are made where the three shall meet to divide the winnings. It being the last race, and everybody rushing away at the finish, a pub in the town is selected. The "mug " waits there to receive his winnings; while the two tricksters catch the first train away from town and divide their ill-gotten gains. The "mug " even loses his pencil.

## THE JOCKEYS.

I cant remember the names of all the jockeys who rode at Newton in those far-off days, but I do remember Tom Cannon, Kempton Cannon, Tommy Loates, Sammy Loates, Jack Watts, Fred Allsop, Jimmy Fagan and Johnnie Osborne. Honest John as he was often called.

Fifty years ago, Johnnie Osborne was nearing his end as a jockey, for he was close on forty years of age. Some forty years after, at the age of eighty-two, he trained and rode in its mornings gallop, The Guller, winner of the Chester Cup. I have it on reliable authority that Johnnie Osborne never missed attending a place of worship on the Sabbath, if it was at all possible. For years he attended Holy Communion at St. Johns Church, Earlestown.

I wonder what the race-going public of to-day would think if the jockeys of to-day grew side-whiskers. Johnnie had a very prominent set. He was very popular as a model for us school lads to draw on our slates. I dont think there was a lad in the school who couldnt draw Johnnie Osborne. He often rode the winner of the last race at Newton. A thorough gentleman both on and off the turf.

I cannot leave the jockeys without mentioning the name of the most famous jockey the world has ever known, Fred Archer. He did ride at Newton, I believe, but I dont recollect him and, as I am only writing pen pictures as I saw them, I am sorry I cannot tell you anything about him riding at Newton. He rode and won the Newton Cup on Anchorite, so I was informed, and he also rode sixteen winners out of twenty races in one week. Poor Fred Archer, he met an untimely end.

There was always plenty to pass your time away on the course, even if you did not back horses. Any amount of small, gambling things you could have a go at. One would have small seive erected on the angle and you had to throw a marble into it. You had three tries for a penny, and you got threepence back if you threw one in. It was no trouble to throw the marbles in it, the trouble was getting them to stay in. It wasnt as easy as it looked; yet there was a way of getting them in. The seive being tight, if you hit the hair part at all, outs would bounce the marble. To win you had to hit the inside of the rim at the top very hard so that the marble would then hit the inside of the bottom of the rim, bounce a bit and then settle in the seive. This was another game in which you were told to take a walk when the proprietor could see you could do it.

The seive game was a game of skill, but I cannot say that of the next show to it, for if ever there was a swindle, this was one. It consists of a small goal post about twelve inches wide and about nine inches high. From the crossbar hangs a small wooden ball tied on a string; then there is a wooden cone about three inches high, two inches diameter at the bottom and tapered to a point. You take the ball, then let it swing past the cone, but you must knock it down with the ball as it swings back. A penny a try, and you get threepence back if you knock the cone down. To draw you on he lets you have a try for nothing and, of course, you are successful, simply because he has set the cone out of centre. You then put your penny down, he puts the cone on the centre; which puts paid to your penny. You go very close to knocking it down, I admit, and to keep you at it he sets it at intervals (but very rare) so that you can knock it down. When its on the centre theres nothing doing. While we are having a go at these different games the atmosphere is disturbed by cries of:

"A WELSHER!"

I dont suppose these gentry are often met with nowadays, but I have seen a few dealt with at Newton. A genuine "welsher" is a man who will take all the bets he can procure and has not the least intention of paying out. More often than not, it was on the last race it used to occur. He would call slightly better odds than the other bookies, consequently receiving more bets.

Now, I will only take the case of one "welsher " among many I saw during the twenty-five years of racing. Polly Duck was the favourite for this particular race, and it was one of those favourites that all Earlestown knew about. It started at six to four on, and this bookie was shouting, " Ill take five to four," and he took some money, I can tell you, far more than his book could stand. He was " sweating " on the favourite getting beaten, but it didnt. It was he who was beaten. In this case it happened to be the last race, and as soon as the horses entered the straight it was as if all the bookies and backers shouted at the top of their voices, "A million to one on Polly Duck." While the excitement was at its height this " welsher " made a bolt for it, or rather was going to bolt, but it didnt come off. The odds he had shouted roused the suspicions of several who had backed with him, and I can tell you they didnt let the ball come out of the pack. His card-board frame was bashed over his head, umbrella torn into shreds, hard hat split in two, stand broken, and he was made into a rag shop in no time. There was no money in his satchel, for his clerk had very cunningly made good his escape with the dough.

After handling the bookie in such a manner and making him so mucky, it was only natural he would require a bath, which the enraged backers saw that he got. Down to the pit he was dragged, and as far as two hefty men could throw him, into the pit he went ; then was left to get out the best way he could.

You must draw your own conclusions how the " welsher " derived his name. I have my own opinion, and I think he would have had a different calling than a " welsher " if he had been called a " scotcher." Bookmakers, even in those days, were looked upon by some folk, as men who were out for all the money they could get, which is quite true, yet I would like you to know that I dont think there is a more generous set of men in any other calling. Never be afraid of asking a bookmaker for a donation in the cause of religion or charity.

"LEAVING THE COURSE."

We will now leave the course, as the last race is over, and what a rush there is; oh yes, they could get a move on with horses and cabs in those days. When I went to Chester last Cup Day I saw hundreds of motor-cars and coaches, yet not a solitary horse, but when I was rushing off Newton Race Course there was not a solitary motor-car or coach. Wouldnt there be a contrast in the two pictures? In the old days at Newton were vehicles of almost every description. Hansom cabs, four-wheelers, dog-carts, wagonettes and Irish jaunting-cars, all drawn by horses, and there were some good animals amongst them. I believe Manifesto, the winner of one of the Grand Nationals, was picked out from amongst the horses that worked between race course and station.

The horse-drawn vehicles coming from the races made a far prettier and more interesting picture than the present-day cars would make. I think so at any rate, and I have seen both. No variety could I see at Chester ; the cars looked just like a lot of creeping cockroaches and all alike ; whereas at Newton, besides the many different shapes of things on wheels, you could see far more variety in the animal world than ever paraded Rotten Row. That can be easily understood, as Newton Races only came once a year, and every animal that could drag anything on wheels was brought out, to help to keep the snow off the roof. I have seen heavy cart horses drawing dogcarts, and Shetland ponies drawing wagonettes; mules pulling hansoms and donkeys in the shafts of four-wheelers; to say nothing of seeing a worn-out racehorse in the shafts of a heavy coal-cart which carried ten men besides the driver. The horse looked a bit on the thin side, I admit, but that was on account of its breed, and as it was hot weather and nobody buying coal, what was the use of the cart lying idle?

I think the most comical turnout I recollect was a large wagonette, which ought to have been drawn by four horses in place of which were a very tall, thin horse and a little fat donkey. Besides being able to count every rib of the horse, you could hang your hat on the hip bones. It was thin, and I well remember us lads shouting, " Old tin-ribs." I will now take you over to

## "EARLESTOWN MARKET."

If I lived to be a hundred and wrote of nothing else in my spare time, I wouldnt finish telling you of the incidents, and describing the various characters that visited Earlestown Market. Roughly speaking, the Market Place is about a hundred yards square, not a covered market, bear in mind, just a big, open space, and a man of the name of Bob Carlisle, the champion walker of the world, used to walk round it four times to the mile. Bob would make wagers of walking so many miles in so many hours. He had a blackboard fixed up on the corner of the Market nearest to Billy Mellings Hotel, Market Inn. The referee would sit on a chair and chalk up every time Bob came round, four chalks to the mile. Every evening the state of Bobs progress would be chalked up.

How we used to enjoy walking behind him. It being a goas-you-please contest, many a time as we came out of school, we would walk round with him before going home for our dinner or tea, as the case may be. I dont think Bob ever lost a wager. You see he was such a favourite with the school lads that, when he and the referee went into Billy Mellings for a small lemon, one of us invariably had a piece of teachers chalk in our pocket. I dont suppose Bob was set as hard a task in those days as he would be called upon to do now. Everything and everybody were slow in those days; so you can understand that Bobs feats were not performed with the same speed as, for instance, the roller skaters go at. I believe their speed forces the spectators to hold their hats on, and the camera-men find it impossible to get a slow-motion picture of them. Speed was only a secondary consideration fifty years ago, and Bobs tasks were more of stamina than speed.

He was usually set to walk 600 miles in six days. Start on Monday morning and finish on the Saturday evening. Never varied his speed from start to finish . just ambled along as our present-day hikers do. Quite content he seemed to do the 600 miles, and I have often thought that he could have done 700 at a push. You know, he wasnt walking only twelve hours, twenty-four hours constituted the day. There was no room for Bob Carlisle on the Market at race time, as every inch of the ground was occupied by the various stalls, shows and amusements.

## THE "FIRE-EATER."

He was a big, black negro and every year as the races came round he was to be seen with his frying pan. This " nig " worked on his own. He would soon get a crowd round with his shouting and bawling, then set fire to what appeared a pan full of light cotton waste. It would blaze up, then with a fork he would eat it all with a relish, at the same time showing a splendid set of teeth.

I once saw a trick played on him, and Ill bet he never forgot it. Before he set fire to the stuff in the frying pan, he would ask one of us lads to hold the pan, while he went round with his hat. During his collecting on this particular occasion a good dose of cayenne was sprinkled over the contents in the pan. To see the tears roll down that " nigs " face was a sight, and how we enjoyed it. Of course, you couldnt expect lads to have any sympathy. Could you? He finished the pan-full off without a tremor, but he couldnt stop the tears, and his big eyes rolled and showed their whites. He usually took two collections at each performance, one before and one after, but not so on this occasion, for he had no sooner finished, than straight to the water tap he flew. Those who werent in the know said the police must be after him. I dont think a camel could have drunk any more water than he did.

## "THE SANDSTONE BREAKER."

Another character who only visited Earlestown Market during race week, was the Sandstone Breaker. This chap did not

work on his: own, as he was forced to have a partner on account of the lifting that had to be done. You will notice I have called him the sandstone breaker, which is hardly a correct trade name for him, as you will see. His stock-in-trade consisted of a huge heap of sandstones and a fourteen-pound sledge hammer. Each stone was as much as two men could lift. The strong man, who was stripped to the waist, would take his coat off and then his partner would begin:

"Ladies and gentlemen, here you see the strongest chested man in the world, and by your kind permission and attention he will show you a performance with these sandstones that will astound you. He will lie on his back, I will then ask three or four of you gentlemen to take one of these sandstones, any of them, and place it on his chest. He will then raise his body off the ground, with the sandstone still on his chest, and only his two feet and hands on the ground. Having done that, any man standing around here is invited to take this fourteen-pound hammer and break the stone with it."

There was no doubt about the strength of the man, as when a stone was laid on his chest, he would easily force his body -up and hold the stone until it was broken by one of the audience. The cap would then go round. It went round every time a stone was broken. They werent all soft sandstones. Ive seen some hard ones that required some slogging at to break them. Never have I seen the man give way at the knees or wrists, although I once saw the hammer slip off the hands of a big Irishman. It was a miracle no one was killed; in fact, no one was even hurt. You see, the man took a swing blow and the hammer flew out of his hands and over the heads of the little knot of onlookers. Of course, they all ducked, but they would have been too late if the hammer had kept low. As it was, the hammer passed harmlessly over them, but when it dropped there was a row. It so happened that there was a " quack " doctors stall next pitch to this sandstone man. The hammer found the stall, and you talk about a mess!

Packets of herbs and cough lozenges, bottles of embrocation, boxes of pills, bottles containing tape worms, and glass cases with corns in them, and I dont know what, with one fell swoop the hammer and its long shaft scattered in all directions. That was the only time I saw the sandstone man get up off the floor without the stone being broken. What a commotion it caused; the old " quack " had the " bobby " there before you could say " Jack Robinson," claiming that the sandstone man was liable for all the damage.

Of course, the sandstoner said the Irishman was responsible for letting the hammer slip. When the Irishman was confronted with it he replied: " No doubt the hammer slipped, but come now, lets have another try, and Ill spit on me hands this time." "No more tries for you, Paddy," said the sandstoner. " And for why?" asked Paddy. "Well," replied the sandstoner, "you might miss the stone the next time."

We leave them settling the dispute, and the next little group we come across, is watching a man performing feats of strength, which would have done credit to any music-hall stage. There was any quantity of these open-air side-shows on the Market, and the artistes depended on what they got in the hat.

This strong man could juggle with iron balls as easily as you see them juggle with billiard balls. He always finished his little performance by the same item, which was in this manner: An iron cup about three inches inside diameter, with the base hollowed to fit his forehead, to which it was firmly fastened. He would then take an iron ball, pitch it high up in the air and catch in the cup. It was a tight fit in the cup and there was no fear of it bouncing out. He never had any occasion to ask the crowd to stand away and give him room to throw the ball up, neither did he always throw it up straight; yet I never saw him fail to catch it.

## THE KNIFE. THROWER.

It was on Earlestown Market that I first saw the knife thrower, you know, where a woman stands against a board with arms outstretched, and a man throws axes and knives around her form from head to toe. When this knife-throwing business was in fashion on the music-hall stage this little chestnut derived its being from it. The performance was being

given as a turn in a music-hall in Lancashire. The curtain went up and the orchestra struck up with a loud clash heralding the two performers on the stage. In this case it looked impossible to get a more disreputable-looking woman, bleared-eyed, no doubt with drink, red faced and blotchy. A regular apples and pears or lemons. She stands against the boards with arms outstretched, while the man takes up the first knife to throw. The orchestra ceases and a death-like silence prevails. Whizz, goes the knife through the air, and ping, it sticks in the board ; then a rough voice shouted from the gallery: "Good God, hes missed her!"

## THE BOXING SHOWS.

The boxing booths were always a great attraction. Many a good battle have I seen, and many a surprise have I seen, in the manner of one of the men belonging to the show being taken in. Most of you know the usual routine of the boxing booth.

The proprietor has his men arrayed on a raised platform outside the show, introduces them to the crowd, then issues invitations for anyone to come and have the mits on with any of his lads. On one occasion an officer of the Salvation Army was standing on the fringe of the crowd, appearing to be listening to the talk of the show. The proprietor thought he had a chance of making a bit of capital at the expense of the "Army " man, so he called out: "Gentlemen, we have a captain of the Salvation Army amongst us, wouldnt it be fun to see him in the ring. Now, captain, what do you say about coming in and having three rounds with the Slogger? He wont hurt you." The officer took not the slightest notice of him, and this seemed to get the showmans "goat."

"Ill tell you what Ill do with you, if you will only just come in and have three rounds. Ill give you half-a-crown and throw you two shillings on the drum."

At the mention of the drum, the captain appeared to become interested in the showman. If the showman could only get the Salvationist into the show he was assured of a good gate, and thats what he was after. Once more he appealed to the captain, but it didnt come off, and he then started ridiculing the " Army " and, of course, even Salvation Army officers are only human and apt to stray like the rest of us.

The showman wasnt slow in noticing that his ridiculing the " Army " was having effect on the captain, and it was here the showman made the mistake of daring the captain to have a go. "Who are you to dare anyone? You have said quite sufficient against the Army, now Im coming in to show you what the Army can do." Just what the proprietor wanted. You had a job to get in the show. The captain said he would like to have a go at his best man. " You will be obliged, captain," said the showman, in rather a sarcastic manner.

Into the ring the captain climbed, and what a contrast he looked with his uniform on, compared with the "Slogger," who was already in the ring. What made the contrast more marked was that the captain was a good-looking chap and had a pleasant smile, whereas the "Slogger" was a typical old-time fighter, with the usual kink in the bridge of his nose, and nostrils spread over his face. A real work of art.

## "THE FALLEN CRUSADER."

When the captain quietly divested himself of his coat and hat he said to the proprietor: " Will you be as quick as you can, please?" "Anything to oblige a captain," he replied. Then turning to the " Slogger " he said, " Now, ` Slogger, attend to this gentlemans wants as soon as you possibly can."

I must give the "Slogger" credit for being able to smile, as with a smile all over his tender-skinned face, he answered: " Jam on both sides of it this time, boss."

Of course, that remark suited most of the audience, knowing that they were going to enjoy a real slam. On the other hand, it didnt suit one or two of us who knew the captain for the good fellow he was, and we had no desire to see him knocked about by this regular bruiser. Often had we stood on the Market, round the captains ring, listening to his testimony of his fighting the Devil, and little did I think we would stand round the ring watching him fight the "Slogger."

The gloves were put on the captain in no time and, my word, they were gloves compared with the " Sloggers "; they looked three times the size. Into the middle of the ring the proprietor called them both for the introduction. When asked for his name, the captain replied, " You had better call me the Fallen Crusader. " How the proprietor laughed at that, and he could hardly keep his face straight as he called out: "Gentlemen, on my right, I have Jim Muldoon, alias The Slogger, 10-stone champion of Ireland, hero of a hundred fights and never been knocked out."

Of course, in those days in the boxing booths they were always introduced as champions. The only real champion that ever I saw introduced on Earlestown Market was Jem Mace. "On my left, I have The Fallen Crusader. " At that quite a laugh came from the audience, which swelled into a roar on hearing " The Slogger " start singing in a jocular manner, "Yes, let me like a soldier fall."

That just about put the "tin hat" on the captain, as I took particular notice of his face, and I saw his lips tighten, which made me think " The Slogger" wasnt going to have it all his own way.

"THE FIGHT."

"Time," shouted the referee. When they advanced to meet, a wag in the audience called out, "Beauty and the Beast." Another called out, " Dont forget, Slogger, hes in a hurry."The captain was in a hurry, as he explained afterwards to the audience. It certainly looked odds-on " The Slogger," but once more the " dead cert " failed to come up, and the fight turned out a complete frost. The captain made no more to do than walk (no not straight into " The Sloggers " deadly left)?straight up to " The Slogger," feinted with his left, which brought "The Slogger " off his guard, then up came his right with as nice a timed clout as it has been my lot to see, and bump, on the floor "The Slogger " lay.

I dont know whether it was the same wag who had called out, " Beauty and the Beast," but a voice somewhat similar started to sing as " The Slogger " fell: " I saw the old homestead and faces I love." The captain was the very first to attend to " The Slogger," helping to carry him to his corner. He then asked them to take his gloves off, and he put his hat and coat on.

I have missed one bit out. I should have told you, that when "The Slogger " had had the " shutters put up," the referee started to count, when the captain said in a gentle voice, " Not necessary, my friend."

It was some little time before "The Slogger" came round, yet the captain remained in the ring until he hat, properly revived. There was no grievance between the captain and " The Slogger," as was plainly seen, when "The Slogger" came to, for he said to the captain, "You took me by surprise, mate."

To which the captain replied smilingly, " Theres nothing like doing it on em quick." He then turned to the audience, and said: " Brethren, I think it only right that I should explain matters in fairness to my opponent. He has just remarked that I surprised him, and I have. No doubt most of you have been surprised." To which the audience readily assented. He then told them who he was. (I wont mention his name). He certainly had taken " The Slogger " by surprise, because he was an

aspirant for the 10-stone championship of England, but on marrying a Salvation Army lassie he had thrown up fighting man and taken to fighting the Devil. " I have fought a few times in various parts of England and I dare say, there may be one or two of you that have watched me," continued the captain.

When I stood in front of the show listening to the proprietor expounding the abilities of his boxers, the old yearning came over me, and I thought, are they as good as he says they are? It was in that brief moment I was tempted by the Devil, and I fell. I struggled against it, but it was of no avail, and that is why I asked the referee to call me The Fallen Crusader. The reason why I asked him to hurry up with the preliminaries was because I had borrowed five minutes, and five minutes only, from God." A round of applause greeted his little speech. and I musnt forget to tell you, that the showman turned out trumps.

While the captain was speaking, the showman quietly slipped out, went to the " Army " who were having service on the Market, explained his visit, brought one of the lassies back with her tambourine, and a bumping collection was taken.

Whilst I am on about boxing, I will tell you of one character, who not only visited Earlestown Market at race-time, but other times throughout the year. He was a coloured man, not a negro; nevertheless, if ever a white man lived, he was one. .He had a boxing booth in an assumed name, which was "FELIX SCOTT."

I dont think there was anybody in Earlestown who didnt know him. He was our hero, and I will try and explain why he was. I would be about ten years old when I first recollect Felix coming to Earlestown, and I would be about eighteen when he last visited the Market. There were three of us, proper mates, Sam Lloyd, the policemen's son (there was only one bobby then), my brother Jack and I, and whenever a circus, side-show, menagerie, cheap-jack or boxing booth came on the Market, we were always on the look-out for little jobs to do for them, such as bringing sawdust for the boxing ring, paraffin oil for their hanging blazers, or coke for the hot-pea man, and by so doing we got free admittance to most of the shows.

It was in this manner we got to know Felix. There was nothing we would not do for him and, true enough, he would let us in his show for nothing whenever we wanted. It wasnt so much the free admittance that attracted us to him, as the splendid tales he used to tell us. You know, any lad up to leaving school loves a tale, and generally on a Saturday morning he would tell us yarns in his tent. Many exciting episodes he told us, and only once does he remember ever having lost his temper in real earnest in the boxing ring. He had been beaten many times during his career by noted boxers, but it wasnt a boxer that beat him on this occasion of his losing his temper.

It happened in South Wales, I believe in Pontypridd. Felix had been having crowded audiences at almost every show, and as he had some good lads, the Welshmen who were pitted against them generally came off second best. No one was ever afraid of having the gloves on with Felix, as it was known that throughout his whole career he was never known to take advantage of an opponent.

One night, a man wanted to have Felix a fight, but Felix refused, as he thought the man was not altogether sober. This annoyed the man and also his followers, who declared that Felix was afraid. "Nothing of the sort," Felix assured them, "but come when he is sober and Ill oblige." On the Saturday he came, and also brought a gang with him. It was these who beat Felix, for things got to such a pitch during the fight, with the gang throwing at Felix and threatening him, that he lost his temper and knocked the fellow out, and for so doing, he and his lads had to make a fight to get out of the show with whole skins. The police were powerless, and Felix had his show completely wrecked. In fact, they had to run for it to save their lives.

For the time being I will leave Felix, and tell you of one or two other characters who honoured the Market Place with a visit.

## "JOE DARBY."

Joe Darby, the champion jumper of the world, performed some wonderful feats in a side-show, and I think the charge was only twopence, but I am not sure, as my two pals and myself did a job or two for Joe and, of course, we got in for nothing. I saw him jump over a full-grown horse, also over a cab, and then a 6-foot high jump with his ankles tied. After jumping over a dozen chairs placed back to back, he gave exhibition stand jumps, both forward and backward, and wound up with jumping on a mans face and off again without the man hardly knowing it. The bottom of Joes jumping shoes were covered with blacking and clearly showed on the mans face. All that for twopence, and certainly Joe gave value for money. I cannot say the same about the man who owned:

## THE COCONUT SHY.

If ever there was a twister with a stall on the Market, he was one. In those days the coconuts were not placed on wooden pegs as you see them nowadays ; oh, dear no! There were no such things as pegs, each and every nut was in irons, so to speak. Iron rings were welded on to stems about two feet long, which were driven into the ground, and then the coconuts were jammed very hard into the rings. You had to throw with all your might to get a nut. It was quite a common occurence for tops of nuts to be handed to the throwers, while the major portion was still fast in the ring. On the top of all that, there were plenty of cast-iron nuts used, which were got up to imitate the real article.

The police got the wind of this; prosecutions took place which put a stop to the practice. In those days you did not see anything like the number of fellows carrying coconuts round the fair, as you saw in later years, after the wooden peg had been introduced. I well recollect the introduction of the wooden peg. It was about a foot high and an inch and a half or two inches in diameter at the top, which was hollowed out, and the coconut simply placed on it. Of course, I was much older then and working, so I had money to spend on the fairs.

The first night the coconut stalls opened with the wooden pegs, we were falling over each other to have a go at knocking them off. In our eagerness, my brother Jack caused a scene that Ill never forget. As I said, we were all eager, and Jack didnt give the fellow time to put the nut on, before he let fly. He hit the nut all right, but it was the mans, who fell as if he had been shot, flattened out to the wide, and Ill bet he was days before he could wear a cap, never mind a hard hat.

## "THE LOST FIRE ENGINE."

I dont think it will be out of place at this juncture, to tell you about the lost fire engine, because it was through a sideshow getting on fire that the comedy came to light. We could boast of a fire engine, but not of an official or recognised brigade. Neither had we a fire bell or buzzer to give the alarm. The engine was kept at the gas works, and if anyone required it, they would have to run to the gas works and inform the manager, who would then send you round to the houses of the men who worked in connection with the gas works, providing it was during the night the fire took place ; if in the day time, you would have to go to where they were excavating and laying gas-pipes on the road. It was a manual engine. It had a long, wooden rail on each side, with five or six men to each rail, which was worked up and down to do the pumping.

When the show got on fire, of course, the Market was up, and a dash was made for the engine and brigade. Ill give the brigade their due, they turned up to a man, and prompt at that. It was the engine that let them down. When they rushed to bring it out of the house it was kept in, no engine was to be seen.

"Somebodys been quicker than us," remarked the "Chief," "and we had better get to the market as soon as we can." "You are mistaken," said the "Sergeant." "Nobodys opened that door before I did and its years since it was opened." "Where can the engine be then?" asked the Chief. "You ought to know that, you are responsible," answered the Sergeant. "Has it been lent out?" asked one of the understrappers. "Lent out be damned," roared the Chief. "And, besides, it would have been brought back as soon as they had finished with it, on account of the heavy charge we make for hiring it. Its a pound a day for the use of it."

A general look round the gas works took place, every conceivable nook and corner was searched, but no trace of the engine could be found. In the meantime, the fire was having all its own way, and the Chief of the brigade was going hairless. A second search was made without success, and then a second conference took place between the officers and men.

"Im beginning to think someone has hired it out," said the Chief. "You can soon prove that, sir," said one of the file, "by looking in the log book." "Very well thought of," answered the Chief.

A rush was then made to the office to search the record book, but no item was found showing that the engine had been lent out. "Excuse me, sir," said one of the file, addressing his chief, "dont you think we had better go to the fire without the engine? Show willing, you know, as we cant expect them to keep the fire in much longer to suit us."

I had better not tell you how the Chief answered the ranker, and there would certainly have been bother if the Sergeant hadnt intervened by saying: "Now, boys, you know it is a year or two since we had a fire practice; are you all sure that we put it back in the shed after we had finished with it?"

"Ive got it," said one of the rankers. "Its over three years since our last practice, and when we came back there was a coke cart in the shed, and the Chief said, put the engine in yonder corner for the time being."

Sure enough, the engine was found in the corner covered over with about twenty tons of coke. Shovels were speedily brought and the coke cleared away. Everything was now ready, and just as they were about to make a triumphal procession, word was received that the fire had burnt itself out, and there was no need for the fire engine. I may have omitted some of the details regarding the foregoing episode, but I can say without fear of contradiction, that the fire engine was lost under a bed of coke.

## THE GYPSIES.

It wouldnt be Race Week if the gypsies did not put in an appearance and, of course, the Market fields were usually covered over with them. I cant say that they were looked upon with any degree of pleasure by the Earlestown folk. Many times have I watched them at work making baskets, chairs, clothes pegs, etc. Whenever or wherever I see gypsies my mind always goes back to the feud I once saw during Race Week. It was between two rival camps. It was learned that this feud had been going on between them long before they came to Earlestown, but I think it reached its head and also its finish before they left the Market fields.

It commenced the first night the rivals met, and often have I thought since then, what little regard they had for each other. I could have understood it if they had fought with bare fists, which they didnt do. The rival camps were pitched about fifty yards apart, and a combatant from each side would meet in the space between the camps and commence to fight. They were stripped to the waist and armed with a stick each. It was then a case of the survival of the fittest. The feud lasted three or four nights, and some terrible encounters ensued, and I would rather not harrow your feelings by telling you what

I saw and how some of those fellows suffered. "What were the police doing?" did you say. Our police force did the right thing, he knew the feud was on so he kept away.

Another feud I once saw took place between two rival boxing shows on the Market. It may have been a made-up job between the two proprietors for money-making. That may have been so, but when the boxers were in the ring, all thoughts of faking were thrown to the winds, and some good battles took place. It commenced on the Monday night with a fight between a light-weight of each show and, of course, the usual sparring exhibitions took place, but only one fight between the rivals each night. They took it in turns which show they fought in and there were packed houses at every fight. The feud finished on the Saturday night, and the fight was between the two heavy-weights. One camp had won three fights against the others two, and it looked odds on them winning four against two, as their champion was almost a stone heavier than his opponent.

It was a ten-round contest, and from start to finish there was no quarter asked and none given. The man from the show which had only two victories to its credit, was given the verdict, and judging from the applause, it was no doubt a popular decision. Both sets of boxers appeared in the ring after the fight, and their respective proprietors each gave a little speech, so the hatchet was buried, and they parted the best of pals.

#### I RETURN TO FELIX SCOTT.

I will now return and tell you a little more about our hero, Felix Scott. As I have previously said, Felix Scott told us many yarns, and I will now relate the one I thought was the most interesting.

"Now, boys, make yourselves comfortable, and I will tell you a story," said Felix to the three of us. We had just brought him a sack of sawdust, on which the three of us sat in his booth, while he sat on a box and began as follows:

"I was born in Australia and was the eldest of a family of six, five boys and one girl. My sister was the youngest of the family, and I was nineteen years old when she was born. There were great rejoicings amongst us when we were told we had a baby sister and, of course, we were all anxious to see her. In due course we saw her and made quite a fuss about her, yet I noticed my dad looked anything but happy. My dad and I always confided in each other, and as I noticed the serious look on his face, I asked him if anything was wrong. He drew me aside and told me that my little sister was blind., Born blind.

"But that cannot be, dad, she has her eyes open." " That may be so, Felix, but she will never be able to see, so you understand why I look so serious; it would make anyone. You are too young to understand what a terrible affliction it is, and old as I am, I can only surmise what it must be never to, see any of the beautiful things on this earth." "I said, Dad, you forget that I am growing up now and will soon be a man, and I quite understand what an affliction it must be to be born blind, but what I cant understand is, why should she be born blind? Surely something can be done to restore her sight; I dont think God intended her to be blind." "It is not for us to question His work, Felix, and we must make the best of it," said my dad.

"We did make the best of it, and when my little sister (Nellie we called her) was about three years of age, I dont think anyone would have thought she was blind, the way she could trot about the house and play with her toys. She had a name for each of her dolls, and we used to tease her- by saying that she couldnt tell Maggie from Jenny or Mary.

Ill just show you I can, she would say, and taking up her four dolls she would put each one down and say, Thats Mary; thats Maggie; thats Jenny, and this is Nellie. We would then quietly change the positions of the dolls and say, This isnt Nellie. We would be pointing to Mary at the time. She would answer very seriously, I know thats not Nellie, silly, thats

Mary. You could change the dolls how you liked, it made no difference to Nellie, she never made a mistake with the names of them.

"At seven or eight years of age she could sew and knit like any other little girl, play hop-scotch or skip; in fact, it was only when she went in town that any of us went with her. My mother wouldnt trust her by herself. It was when Nellie had reached eight years of age that we scented trouble was to come over our happy family. Up to that age she was the happiest and brightest amongst us, and one day an uncle and aunt came over to persuade mother and dad to send Nellie to a blind institution. On no account would dad agree to it, although mother seemed to think it would be best in the end that Nellie should go and learn at this institution. My brothers and I said we would do anything rather than let Nellie leave home, and thats what it meant by going to be educated at this institution." It is all right for you lads to say that, my mother said, but you must not forget that when your wings grow you will all leave the nest and dad and I will not always be here to look after Nellie. We will have her come home on holidays and also have the satisfaction of knowing she is being prepared to battle in this world even after we are gone. "Certainly my aunt and uncle had given us something to think about. There is not the slightest doubt, it was with the best intentions that they had put the proposition of Nellie being properly educated.

"Now I must tell you that before I started out on the road with my boxing Show, I was a first-rate amateur boxer. Many cups and medals I had won, also many a thick ear and fat eye. The doctor of our little town used often to come to the gymnasium and have the gloves on with us, as he told us it kept him in condition, and I might tell you he kept us on the lookout when we had the mits on with him. It was during the week of my aunt and uncles visit that the doctor put in an appearance at the gymnasium for a bit of exercise. I had the gloves on with him, after which we got chatting, and I told him about us considering sending Nellie away.

"Its going to take money you know, doctor," I said, and its hard enough to make both ends meet as it is, although we will get the money for her education no doubt. The worst part of it is leaving home. I dont think anything can be done, Felix, said the doctor, in answer to my question, Could anything be done to restore her sight ; You see, Felix, she was born blind.

" I went home that night Very disconsolate, and I can remember it was Friday, night, because on the Saturday a thing occurred that gave me new hope. In the afternoon the children were all playing about, as it was summer time, when a couple of street-singers entered our street. Our house was about half-way, and right in front of our door they commenced their performance. One had a banjo and the other had the bones, or clappers some folk call them. They played a rousing tune first, just to let the people know they were there and, of course, all the kids gathered in front of them, while parents stood at their doors listening to the band. Dad and I stood at our door with Nellie. After the tune, the man with the bones sang The Lily of Laguna, both joining in the chorus. He was certainly a lot above the ordinary street-singer, and seemed to enjoy singing as much as we did listening. They played another selection, after which he sang

## THE LIGHT OF DAY.

Never shall I forget it as he sang: "Whats the reason, daddy, that I cant see like you? I often wonder what youre like, I know youre kind and true. Mother says, Gods will be done, and every night I pray, That he will give me back my sight, to see the light of day." "For the first time in my life it was then I saw my dad cry, but Nellie it was who saw it first, blind though she was. "Dont cry, Daddy, said Nellie. The man doesnt know, or he wouldnt sing that, would he, Felix? "He would not, Nellie, I said. Nobody would hurt dad if they, could avoid it. "It certainly had hurt dad, as he went in the house and left Nellie with me. Not only had the kiddies heard Nellie asking dad not to cry, but the singer had also noticed it, as he at once stopped and came to me for an explanation. I soon enlightened him, and he asked could he have a word with dad, so I went and asked dad. "Lets hear what hes got to say, Felix, answered dad. He cant make things harder for me to bear.

"I invited the two street artistes in, while Nellie went playing with the other children in the street; mother, dad and I listened to what the singer had to tell us. He commenced by telling us that in England they would be looked upon as a couple of buskers," and no doubt, he said, we are buskers, but with a difference.

From a monetary point we have no need to do busking, it is so that I might Jive we have taken it up. I was in the first stage of consumption when my doctor ordered me away, and where I went everything possible was done for me. I wanted for nothing, yet I seemed to be going gradually worse. Medicine was no use, and specialists said all that was possible was being done for me. It was evident money was not going to save me. One day my best pal here (he pointed to his mate) came to see me at the sanatorium and explained a way that he thought would save me. What you want, Jim, is an interest in life, but a different interest altogether from what you have been brought up to. Reverse things completely. No use being a director of a company or a manager of some department in the many works you could get into, these positions would be of no interest to you after about a fortnight. Let us take up an interest that will take you out of yourself for a twelvemonth or so. Im willing to try anything, Joe, I said. Now what do you suggest? "Busking, Joe replied. "Busking? I said. Joe, our people would never listen to it. You know, Joe, I thank you for doing your best for me, but is there nothing else besides busking? What would be thought of me singing in the streets after all the money that has been spent on my singing lessons. It was then that Joe took the bull by the horns, so to speak, as he replied: If you dont go singing on the streets, Jim, you will be singing in heaven long before Ill be there to accompany you on the harp. We shall go out to Australia ; Ill bring my banjo, you the bones, and you must sing to live. Every day will be different, and the mode of living will be the reverse of what you are used to. Above all, I firmly believe you will return a cured man. "I thought Joes scheme over and decided to give it a trial, and I also got my parents to agree that Joe and I should have an extended holiday in Australia. "Of course, we told no one about us going to do busking, as it was Joes secret remedy, and we intended to keep it secret. "Our twelve months is almost up, but we have decided to spend this next winter here, and I feel confident I will be completely cured." After telling you that little bit about ourselves, I think you will understand why I sing that song, The Light of Day. "Some people, in fact, nearly everyone, would think that I sing it merely to touch them or get on the soft side of them before we make our collection. Believe me, it is nothing of the sort; money is no object to either of us. I sing the song with the full conviction that as God has given back my health to me He can give to others their sight back to see the light of day. "O YE OF LITTLE FAITH." "ut you see, mister, my mother said, Nellie was born blind. "My good woman, replied the singer, one of the lines runs Mother says Gods Will be done. "Please dont let it be said of mother, O ye of little faith. Without faith very little can be accomplished, and although I cannot suggest to you any ways or means to get back her sight, I honestly believe that by prayer and faith God will reveal one of his wondrous ways in performing another of His every-day miracles and she will see the light of day. "What I am going to tell you now, continued the singer, I dont suppose many people would agree with me, and that is I dont believe it is Gods fault that any child is born blind, deformed, or deficient in any shape or form. His work is perfect. Did you ever hear of a cow or a horse being born blind? True enough, such things as kittens, puppies, rabbits, etc., and birds are all born blind in a sense, but God sees to it to give them their sight to see the light of day. " You dont see born-blind dogs running about the streets or blind birds flying in the air, and from these alone I arrive at my own conclusion?that it is not Gods fault anyone is born blind. Faith will move mountains. "After dad and mother had expressed their gratitude to the. singer for his encouraging words, the two buskers went on their way rejoicing. "That very night," continued Felix (who was still telling us three lads this story in his tent, dont forget), " I went to our doctor and told him almost word for word what the street singer had told us. " The only thing I can suggest, Felix, is to have her examined by a specialist, said the doctor, and I can arrange for her to go to one in Sydney if you like, but I think it is throwing money away. The fee would, of course, have to be paid beforehand, so you might think about it and then let me know. "Ill let you know, doctor, in the course of a few days. "At that I left him, and as I was coming home I saw a bill on the hoardings announcing that Frank Slavin, one of the worlds champion prize-fighters, would give anyone ?5 whom he failed to knock out in three rounds.

"FELIX FIGHTS SLAVIN."

"I am going to have a do for that ?5, I said to myself, and if I win it Nellie will be able to go to the specialist without my parents being pulled for the money. "When I reached home I explained to mother and dad what. the doctor had said, and the three of us agreed that Nellie must go by hook or by crook. "I then got dad away quietly and told him of my intention of standing up to Slavin. My dad wouldnt listen to it on any account. "Why, Felix, hed kill you, and do you know that his next. fight is with Peter Jackson for the championship of the world?" "I know that, Dad, I replied, but you know Ive never been knocked out in any of my fights, and I feel sure I can keep out of his way. Its only for three rounds. Im in training and almost as big in every way as Slavin. Do let me have a try, Dad. "In the end Dad agreed, but we didnt let Mother know that. I was going to fight Slavin. We put her off by saying it was another amateur contest. "I sent my name up to the music hall where Slavin was appearing for the week, and I got on answer saying that I had to appear at Saturday nights show. " Of course, that suited me down to the ground, and the lads at the Gymnasium put me through my facings that week, I can tell you. "We went to Sydney on the Saturday afternoon, and after a light tea my mates, four of them (Dad wouldnt come) and I made our way to the music hall. "The stage was set out exactly the same as a boxing ring?ropes, sawdust, buckets and sponges all complete for the last turn, as Slavin was the chief attraction?top of the bill. None of my mates allowed even to go in the dressing-room, never mind act as second. Seconds and dressers were provided by the management. It made not the slightest difference to me not having my mates with me, as I had fought too many battles

to be nervous. All I thought about was to get that ?5 for Nellie.

There were five of us to be knocked out at that last show, and we drew lots for places. I drew No. 4. Very well satisfied I was, for it gave me a good chance of seeing how he knocked them out. After Slavin had been introduced to the audience, who rose to their feet, he gave a three-round exhibition with one of his sparring partners. It was a tame affair I noticed, and gave me very little to work off. Then came our turn; what the audience wanted to see?the real stuff. Slavin putting them to sleep, as the referee announced. "The first chap went on, while I was all head and ears watching to see if I could gather any moss from the fight, but what a surprise I got. Dont forget, boys, we were all heavyweights, and very little difference in weight in any of the six of us, including Slavin. As I said, the first chap went on, was introduced to the audience, shook hands with Slavin, went back to his corner, then walked out to meet Slavin in the centre of the ring, and I am certain he remembered no more. He simply put up his guard, while Slavin made a pretence with his left, then brought up his right, smartly, no doubt, and with force. Plonk, the fellow fell, and to all appearance looked dead. "Rounds of applause greeted this, and they didnt carry him to his corner to get him round. Oh, dear no! Two men with a stretcher came in, put him on it, and carried him past us four who were waiting to go on. As they passed us, one stretcher-bearer said to the other: This is No. 1, Tom. Dont forget theres four others! That was all done to put the wind up us, but it didnt upset my programme. "No. 2 went on and exactly the same thing occurred. "No. 3 was treated in the same manner ; a feint with his left, Slavin had done in all three cases, then a smart right uppercut. "I must avoid that, said I to myself, and true enough, boys, avoid it I, did. "As soon as we met, after the introduction in the centre of the ring for me to receive the usual K.O., as everybody thought, a surprise took place, for, as Slavin pretended with his left, I let drive with my right, with all the force I could command. "Slavin fell like a nine-pin. "The place was in a death-like silence for a moment or so, as no one ever expected that happening ; but when the audience had realised that it happened I received their unstinted applause. "There was no doubt Slavin was taken by surprise. All the same, it was fair and square, above the board. He was badly shaken I could see. When he rose to resume the fight he fought very warily until the end of the first round. I could also see he had no intention of trying to knock me out in this round, as I had frustrated his plans, and at the time upset him a little. "And I can tell I had no intention whatever of mixing it with Slavin, because I knew I was no match for him, but to keep out of his way for the three rounds was all I cared about, and the reason I hit him was to let him know he was up against no dud, which made him very careful how he treated me. "When the first round ended I received a good round of applause, but I didnt let it go to my head, as I knew Slavin would not leave himself open again in the next two rounds. One of my mates must have been reading my thoughts, as, when we advanced for the second round, he shouted out : Keep out of his way, Felix. "It was that remark which caused Slavin to show me what a thorough gentleman he was. He chuckled with a laugh that showed not only me, but the whole of the audience, that he hadnt an ounce of malice in him.

"The second round was similar to the first, except that he dealt more punishment out to me towards the end of the round, and some of the blows hurt me without a doubt, but I managed to avoid the K.O. So the round ended, and as I went to my corner I felt that I would win the ?5 which I intended to spend on Nellies benefit. "As the seconds were fanning me, one of them said in rather a sarcastic manner : Franks been playing with you like a cat with a mouse, so look out for the usual wallop in this last round. That wasnt going to disturb me, and, just to show him so, I whispered in his ear : Tell the stretcher-bearers theyll not be wanted this time round. "The referee called Time and Finish. "Slavin at once sailed into me, and I parried his blows as well as I could. Be it to my credit also that I got one or two on him, at the same time taking care not to leave myself open. These blows from me no doubt made him cautious and also gave me more courage to try and last the round out. I thought it was never going to end, but after him beating a tattoo on my body, the gong sounded and I was still on my feet.

"Frank was the first man to congratulate me, the referee was the next, but the second who told me to look out for the usual wallop, didnt offer to wipe me down. "Slavin made the presentation of the ?5 to me himself, at the same time informing the audience that he would send me a gold medal which would have inscribed on it : Presented to Felix Scott by Frank Slavin." Felix then took out of his pocket the gold medal, which was in a case, and showed it to us. " Why dont you wear it on your watch-chain, Felix?" Sam Lloyd asked him. "I am not given that way, sonny," replied Felix, " and, besides, amongst the race folk I have to mix with it might get snatched, and it was too dearly bought to lose it in that way." I can quite believe it was, because Frank Slavin was a strong, powerful fighter, although Peter Jackson beat him for the worlds championship. It was believed that this fight was the cause of both Jackson and Slavin dying, as they had hurt each other to that extent. Personally, Ive never seen Slavin, but I saw Jackson give an exhibition after he won the championship of the world.

To resume Felix Scotts tale to us three lads :?" I went home with the ?5, and arrangements were made for Nellie to visit this eye specialist. I went with her, as I intended to tell the specialist what the street singer had told us, providing, of

course, the specialist gave me no hope. "A fifty shillings fee was paid in advance, and I dont think the specialist was fifty seconds in arriving at his decision. He took me in another room after examining Nellie, and said : Im very sorry, young man, very sorry, but nothing can be done. You see, she was born blind. "Had it been either my Mother or Dad instead of me I think they would have come away crying. Not so with me, as I at once began to tell him what the street singer told us. He listened quite patiently to all I told and I took good care to leave none out. "After I had finished, the specialist said : No doubt, my young man, miracles do happen, and will happen every day of our lives, but it is a case of finding that source from which a miracle can spring that will give your sister sight. " At that my heart gave a lean for joy as I said : Then you believe, doctor, that it is possible for my sister to have her sight given her? " Yes, answered the specialist. All things are possible to those that believe. " Dont you believe? I pleaded with him, and I noticed the specialist had a very serious look when he answered: Certainly I believe. The trouble \_with me is that I dont know the way. Yet I have a friend in England, an eve specialist, who would no doubt take an interest in your sisters case, as I have just thought of the last letter I had from him, in which have writes in the same strain as the street singer talked to you. My friend not only believes, but he thinks he knows the way. One sentence in the letter particularly reminds me of your street singer, and it is : The Creator never intended anyone to be born blind and not enjoy seeing the beautiful flowers of the earth. Now, if you like, he continued, I will give you my friends name and address, then you can write him ; he may be able to do something. I should tell him exactly as you have told me about the street singer, and I feel sure something will be done. In any case, there will be nothing lost, only a little money, perhaps, and what is that compared with having a chance for someone to see the light?

"I took my sister home again, and, as we were travelling in the train, Nellie asked me if there was any hone for her. " There are great hopes, Nellie, I answered. "Then why are you so quiet, Felix? " Well, I was thinking, Nellie, you may have to go to London, in England, and leave us all for quite a long time. "What does it matter how long I am away from you if only God gives me back my sight? replied my sister. And, besides, when I come back from England I will be able to tell you all about London. Fancy, Im going to see London. "She certainly had more faith than I had, although I was very hopeful after leaving the specialist.

"On arriving home we had many a consultation as to what we were going to do. One thing was definite with us all, and that was Nellie would go and visit this great London specialist. It was the money question that troubled us most ; so I proposed that 1 should go on tour with a boxing booth and would send my weekly takings home to them. "I started touring Australia with my show, and we soon had quite a good sum of money before we made arrangements with the London specialist.

#### ON A VOYAGE OF HOPE.

"Well do I remember when the time came for Nellie to make the voyage of hope to England. I was to bring her, leave her with the specialist at his nursing home, and then travel England with a new boxing show. "Of course, all the street came to the station to see us off, -all the kiddies cheering and the women crying. Nellie seemed the happiest of the lot. "We eventually arrived in London, and, as I left Nellie in the nursing home, I felt she was in safe hands, and I had confidence in the specialist. Every week there was a letter sent from the home stating the progress of Nellie, and I also received a copy of it, no matter what Dart a the British Isles I was in.

"It was quite three months before an operation was performed on her. It was bad enough waiting for that, but it was nothing compared with waiting for the verdict. Im certain Mother and Dad must have been completely fed up with friends inquiries months before they got to know. "It was almost twelve months after the operation that my Mother and Dad received a letter, of which I received a copy from the specialist himself, in which he said: With my faith in God, I hope your daughter will be able to write you the next letter. "When I received my copy I was at Newcastle, and I couldnt wait for the next letter, so I made my way to London and straight to the nursing home I went. The specialist received me with joyfulness written all over his face. In three days your sister will be able to go home with you, in full possession of her eyesight. He then took me to see Nellie, who was in a shaded room. Although it was mid-day, the light of the room was a kind of twilight. "The first thing that Nellie said to me was : You have not altered a bit, Felix ; you are just as I always pictured you. See, this is my first letter to Mam and Dad, and they will get it before we get home." "Of course, I had to wait three days before the specialist would let her go home, and it was like waiting three years. However, the three days passed, and Nellie and I were soon homeward bound. And what a homecoming we received! Not only was the street up, but all the town seemed to be at the station, and Im sure if the specialist had been with us he would have been hugged to

death. "Our street and adjoining streets were gaily decorated, and a social on an immense scale was organised. It was at the social-concert that Nellie was called upon to speak to us. The room was packed to the doors, and what a reception she got as she stepped on the platform. " Dear friends, she began. I know you are all glad to see me as I am to see you, and we are all glad the street singer came into our street to sing, for if he hadnt, I dont think I should be able to see you to-day. His song made my Daddy cry, and I am going to recite a verse of the same song, but with a different ending:

"THE LIGHT OF DAY."

"I know the reason, Daddy, that I can see like you. Now I can see that you are nice and also kind and true. Mother said Gods Will be done, and to Him Ill always pray, Because He gave me back my sight, to see the light of day." "Now that is the end of my story, boys, and I may not come to Earlestown again, as I am going home to Australia at the end of this summer." We thanked Felix for his story, and as the three of us came out of his tent I happened to turn round, and, sure enough, Felix was using his handkerchief,

[THE END.]

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This text is transcribed by Steven Dowd from original material, published by The Warrington Examiner, 1935

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