

The Trainer's Ghost

By Lettice Galbraith

The cat and compass was shut in for the night. The front of the house was dark and silent, for it was long past dosing time, but from one of the rear ground-floor windows a thin shaft of yellow light gleamed through the falling rain, and indicated that behind the shutters of the snug bar-parlour, in a cheerful atmosphere of tobacco smoke and the odorous steam of hot "Scotch" Mr Samuel Vicary, licensed victualler, and two other congenial spirits, were "making a night of it".

"It's too late for Downey now," the landlord remarked, with a glance at the clock, as he leaned forward to knock out his pipe on the hob. "Twenty past twelve, and raining like blazes. Damn the weather, if it holds on like this, 'The Ghoul' will have his work cut out to get round the old course on Thursday with 8 stone 9."

"Not with that lot behind him," rejoined a seedy individual who sat on the farther side of the table. "I've watched them pretty careful. The race lies between us and the favourite, and with Downey up, she's safe enough. It's real jam this time—eh, Mr Davis?"

The gentleman indicated drained his glass with an unctuous smile. His exterior suggested the prosperous undertaker. As a matter of fact he was a bookmaker in a big way of business, and suspected, moreover, of having considerable interest in a stable notorious for the in and out running of its horses.

"That's about the size of it," he answered, drawing in his thick lips with a gentle, sucking sound, expressive of inward satisfaction.

"Prime whisky this, Vicary! I'll take another tot. Yes, it is a big thing, and, after this, Davis, Smiles, and Co. must lie quiet for a bit. There'll be plenty of fools to cry over burnt fingers by Monday, and what with stewards meddling where they've no cause to interfere, and the press writing up a lot of rot about 'rings' and such like, and the Jockey Club holding inquiries, a man must mind his P's and Qs in these days. Racing is going to the dogs, and soon there'll be no making a decent living on the turf. How it does rain to be sure! I shouldn't care to find myself abroad tonight."

"Here's some poor devil as has got to face it," said the tout, as the sound of horse-hoofs echoed down the quiet road. "Ain't he coming a lick, too! He's not afraid of bustling his cattle."

"Small blame to him either in weather like this," grunted the landlord, removing his pipe to listen. "Why, that's Downey's hack. I'd swear to her gallop among a thousand. To think, now, of his turning up at this time of night!"

The clatter of hoofs ceased, and the men sprang to their feet. In the silence that followed they heard the muffled slam of a dosing gate, and the clink of shoes on the stones of the yard outside. Vicary snatched up the lamp and hurried to the door, while the visitors looked at each other.

"'Tis Downey sure enough," said the bookmaker, spitting energetically into the fire. "Now, what brings him here so late? He hasn't pelted over from Hawkhurst in the teeth of this storm for the pleasure of our company, I'll go bail."

The newcomer had swung himself off his horse before the landlord could unfasten the door.

"Yes, it's me—Downey," was his answer to that worthy's cautious challenge. "Look sharp with that chain and let me get under cover. I'm stiff with the cold, I can tell you, and the mare is about beat."

The chain fell with a clank, and Vicary flung back the door.

"Come in, come in," he cried, holding the lamp above his head to get a better view of his visitor. "Lord! how it do rain! Get out of that coat and put a tot of whisky inside you, while I see to the mare. 'Tis all right," he added, as the other jerked his head interrogatively in the direction of the bar-parlour, "there's only me and Slimmy and Davis. Go right in and help yourself."

Thus assured, the fresh arrival went forward, the water dripping from his soaked hat and covert coat, and trickling in little black streams over the well-stoned passage; while Vicary, flinging a rug across his shoulders, led the tired horse round to the stables. When he returned to the parlour Downey was drying himself before the fire, a smoking tumbler in his hand, and a good cigar between his lips.

"Well?" inquired the landlord, setting down the lamp with a keen glance at the disturbed countenances of the three men. "I take it, you did not come through this rain for nothing. Is aught the matter?"

"Matter enough," ejaculated Slimmy. "Here's Coulson got a rod in pickle that is going to upset our pot"

Vicary laughed.

"Go on with you," he said derisively, "they've nothing at Malton as can collar the Ghoul."

"Don't you be so precious sharp," the tout retorted. "Wait till you hear what Downey's got to say."

The jockey shifted his cigar to the other side of his mouth. "It is this way," he began. "One of Coulson's lads was at our place this afternoon, and he let on to me in confidence that they have a colt over there they think a real good thing for the Ebor. It is entered in Berkeley's name -the Captain, him as sold the Malton place to Coulson."

"The Captain's been stony broke this three year," put in Vicary. "How did he come by the colt?"

"Picked him up in the dales, from what I gather (he'd always a rare eye for a horse had the Captain), and fancied him so that he got young Alick to take half-share, and lend the purchase-money into the bargain, I reckon. The Coulsons always thought a lot of the old family. It wouldn't be the first time one of them had helped a Berkeley out of a tight place."

"That's true," assented the landlord. "Markham told me old Alick held enough of the squire's paper to cover a room. There wasn't anything he'd have stuck at to keep him on his legs. I remember him saying once in that very bar there, 'I'd come from hell,' he says, 'to stand by one of the old stock.' Fifteen years ago this very day it was, just before the Ebor, and the last time I ever saw the old chap alive, for Blue Ruin kicked the life out of him in his box at Malton on the morning of the race. Nothing would serve the squire but the horse must be shot the same night lord, what a shindy there was! And if it weren't like one of old Berkeley's fool's-tricks to 'blue' twelve hundred pounds that way, and him not knowing where to turn for the ready! But about this colt; if he's such a clipper, how is it nobody's heard of him before this?"

"Coulson has kept him dark. He's been trained at Beverley, and they only brought him to Malton three weeks back. The lad tells me he has been doing very good work, and he is to be tried in the morning with Cream Cheese—that is schoolmaster to the Leger crack. Now look here, if the colt can beat Cream Cheese at a stone, he's a mortal for the Ebor. On a heavy course he'll walk right away from the Ghoul, and put us in the cart."

The landlord whistled.

"You are sure the lad's square?"

“I’d peel the flesh off his bones if I thought he was putting the double on me; but he daren’t try it Coulson as good as swore the boys over to hold their tongues, but Tom says the stable is that sweet on his chance, they’ll put their shirts on the colt at starting-price.”

“Who’s to ride him?”

“Alick’s head lad. The brute has a temper, and won’t stand much ‘footling’ about; but Jevons and he understand each other, and his orders are to get him off well, and sit still.”

“I suppose now,” suggested the bookmaker, “this Jevons ain’t a reasonable sort of chap?”

Downey grinned. “As well try to square Coulson himself. He is one of your Sunday-school-and-ten-commandments sort, is Jevons. Besides, his father was the old squire’s second horseman, and the lad was brought up in the stables. He swears by the Berkeleys, and would never lend a hand to put a spoke in the Captain’s wheel.”

“Do you know what time the trial is to come oil?”

“About six. I reckoned on Slimmy’s being within call, for there is precious little time to lose. It is light by four.”

“I’m game,” said the tout, “if Mr Vicary will lend me something to take me over.”

The landlord consulted his watch. “Half-past one,” he said. “Let’s see; it’s close on fifteen mile to Coulson’s. I’ll drop you at the Pig and Whistle. You can get over the fields from Gunny’s corner in twenty minutes.”

“You know your way?” queried Davis, uneasily.

“Every yard of it, guv’nor. Coulson and me is old friends so long as we don’t happen to meet. There is a nice bit of cover at the end of the ground where I can lie snug. Will you wait for me, Mr Vicary?”

“Aye, I’ll be on the road by Gunny’s at seven. What for you, Downey can we give you a shakedown here?”

“No thank you; I’m off,” answered the jockey, laughing, “you’re altogether too warm in this corner for a nice young man like me. I’m putting up at the Great Northern, and shall see you and Davis for the first time on the course, and not more than I can help of you then.”

The rain had cleared off, and the first pale rifts in the eastern sky were broadening into grey dawn before Slimmy, from the convenient elevation of a friendly elder-bush, caught sight of a line of dark specks moving across the wold, and gradually resolving themselves into a string of horses.

“Here they come,” he murmured, pocketing the flat bottle from which he had been refreshing his inner man, and working himself cautiously forward on the stout bough, while he parted the leaves with his left hand to command a better view. “And here’s young Alick and the Captain. I thought as much,” he added, triumphantly, for the trainer and Berkeley had cantered up and reined in their hacks within ten paces of his hiding-place.

In a very few minutes the horses were stripped and got into line. “They will start themselves,” said Coulson, “and take it easy for the first half mile. Then you’ll see, Captain, that there is very little fear but what the colt will give a good account of himself tomorrow. There they go, and a good start too.”

The horses jumped off together, a big chestnut, which even in the half light Slimmy had recognized as Cream Cheese, coming to the front, with a clear lead. The soft drum of the hoof on the moist ground died away, and the two men stood up in their stirrups, following with keen eyes the dim outline of the horses as they rounded the curve and swept into the straight, the chestnut still showing the way, with his stable companion and a powerful-looking bay in dose attendance. “There he goes!” was the tout’s mental ejaculation, for, at the bend for home, a dark horse crept

up on the inside, and, taking up the running at half distance, came on and finished easily with a couple of lengths to spare.

Coulson turned to his companion with a smile.

“He’ll do, Captain. The money is as good as banked. You can put on his clothes, Jevons, and take him home. He’s a clipper, and no mistake. He came up the straight like a—”

“Rocket,” suggested Berkeley. “How’s that for a name? By Gunpowder out of Falling Star—not bad, I think.”

“Couldn’t be better,” was the hearty answer.

“A few more of his sort, and we’ll soon have you back at the Hall, Master Charles. I shall live to lead in a Derby winner for you yet Lord! I think it would almost bring the old man out of his grave to know the Berkeleys had their own again.”

The words were hardly past his lips when a crack, like the report of a pistol, dose behind them, made both men jump as if they had been shot.

Mr Slimmy, who, having heard and seen all he wanted, was in the act of beating a masterly retreat, had unfortunately set his foot on a rotten branch, which instantly snapped beneath his weight. Taken by surprise, the tout lost his foothold and his balance at the same time, made an ineffectual grab at the swinging boughs, pitched forward, and, despite his wild endeavours to recover himself, descended precipitately in a shower of leaves and dry twigs on the wrong side of the hedge.

“Where the deuce did the fellow come from?” ejaculated Berkeley, as he gazed blankly at the heap on the ground. Coulson’s only answer was to swing himself off his horse and fling the bridle to his companion. The quick-witted trainer had reckoned up the situation in a moment, and before the luckless Slimmy could gather himself together Coulson’s hand was on his collar, and Coulson’s “crop” was cracking and curling about his person, picking out the tenderest parts with a scientific precision that made him writhe and twist in frantic efforts to free himself from that iron grip. But the trainer stood six feet in his socks, and was well built. He held his victim like a rat, while his strong right arm brought the lash whistling down again and again with a force that cut through the tout’s seedy clothing like a knife.

“For God’s sake, Coulson,” cried Captain Berkeley, “hold hard, or you will kill the man.”

“And a good thing, too,” said the trainer, relinquishing his hold on Slimmy with a suddenness that sent him sprawling into the muddy ditch. “I know him, and I’ll have no touting on my place. If he shows his face here again, he’ll find himself in the horsepond. Stop that row,” he went on, turning to where Slimmy lay in the ditch, crying and cursing alternately, “and get off my ground before I chuck you over the fence.”

White with rage and pain, the tout picked himself up and scrambled through the gap in the hedge as fast as his aching limbs could carry him. But when he had put a safe distance between himself and Coulson, he turned and shook his fist at the trainer’s retreating figure.

“Curse you,” he said, with a horrible imprecation. “I’ll pay you out for this. I’ll be even with you, if I swing for it, swelp me if I ain’t”

Owner and trainer rode home in silence.

Coulson was a good deal upset by the discovery that his horse was being watched. He had recognized Slimmy, and Slimmy was known to be in the employ of a party popularly supposed to stick at nothing, and quite capable of trying to get at a horse that threatened to upset their game. Then, again, the arrangements and time of the trial had been kept so quiet that it seemed impossible the tout could get wind of it, except from one directly connected with the stables. Altogether Coulson felt uneasy, and, after some consideration, he mentioned his suspicions to his

head lad, in whom he had the most implicit confidence. Jevons thought things over for a bit. Then he suggested the colt's box should be changed, and that he should sit up with him.

"Put him in the end box next the saddle-room, sir; it is so seldom used that an outsider would not think of trying it, and there isn't many of the lads as would like to nix about in there tonight, leastways not one as has a bad conscience."

Coulson knew what he meant. In the box next the saddle-room his father, old Alick Coulson, had come by his end, kicked to death by the Ebor favourite on the very eve of the race. A training-stable is not exactly a hot-bed of superstition, but, without doubt, a feeling did exist in connection with that particular box, and, as Jevons had said, it was very rarely used.

"Shall you like to sit up there yourself?" the trainer asked bluntly.

Jevons did not mind at all. He said he did not hold with ghosts and such like, and he was sure a sportsman like the old master would know better than to come upsetting the colt and spoiling his, Jevons's, nerve just before the race. Still, as there was gas in the saddle-room and a fire, if Mr Coulson had no objection, he might as well sit there, and look in every now and again to see his charge next door was getting on all right.

The trainer readily agreed. He had a high opinion of the lad's coolness and common sense, but he also felt that to pass the night alone and without a light in a place which, however undeservedly, had the reputation of being haunted, and that, too, on the very anniversary of the tragedy from which the superstition took its rise, was a performance calculated to try the strongest nerves, and he preferred that Jevons should not face the ordeal.

Indeed, it struck him as he left the lad for the night that he would scarcely have cared to undertake the watch himself. It might be fancy, but there was a queer feel about the place.

"Fifteen years ago tonight," thought Coulson, "since an Ebor crack stood in that box. It was a dark horse, too, and owned by the squire. It is a coincidence anyway. No, I shouldn't care to take on Jevons's job."

Nor was he alone in his conclusions. Several other people expressed a similar conviction, notably Jevons's subordinate, who had heard of the arrangement in the morning.

"I wouldn't be in Bill's shoes tonight—no, not for fifty down," he said, and slipped off unobserved to the nearest box to post a letter.

The communication he despatched was addressed to "S Downey, Esq., Great Northern Hotel, York," and was marked "immediate". The lad was going over to the races in the afternoon, and felt tolerably certain of getting speech with the jockey, but he was a careful young man, and wisely left nothing to chance.

It wanted fifteen minutes to midnight. Outside, the night was as black as your hat not a vestige of a moon, not a single star to break the uniform darkness of the sky. With sunset a noisy blustering wind had sprung up, rattling about the chimneys, clashing the wet branches, and deadening the sound of cautious footfalls creeping across the paddock in the direction of the stables. Jevons was sitting over the saddle-room fire, with his pipe and the *Sporting Life* for company, and the remains of his supper-beer on the table beside him. From time to time he took a lantern and went to look at his charge. The colt had been quiet enough all the earlier part of the evening, but for the last half-hour Jevons fancied he could hear him fidgeting about on the other side of the wall.

"What ails the brute?" he said to himself, laying down his pipe to listen.

The wind dropped suddenly, making the silence all the more intense by contrast with the previous roar; and through the stillness Jevons heard the dink of a bucket, and the sound of someone moving about in the loose-box.

He sprang to his feet and snatched up the lantern. His sole idea was that someone was trying to get at the horse, and his hand was on the revolver in his breast-pocket when he opened the door. So strong was the impression that he was positively surprised to find no sign of an intruder. The colt was lying in the farthest corner and perfectly quiet. Jevons looked all round. There was certainly nothing to see, but it struck him that the air felt very cold, and he shut the door. The instant it closed behind him, a dark shadow fell across the square of light issuing from the entrance to the saddle-room.

"Now's your time, Slimmy," whispered Mr Vicary. "Nip in and doctor his liquor. This is getting precious slow."

The beer stood on a table barely two paces from the door. Stretching out his arm, the tout emptied the contents of a small bottle into the jug, and crept noiselessly back to his hiding-place.

"There's a deuce of a draught in here," said Jevons to himself, "and where it comes from fairly beats me."

He held up his hand at different heights, trying to test the direction of the chill current of air. But it seemed to come from every quarter at once, and shifted continually.

The lad struck a lucifer, and held it level with his shoulder. To his utter astonishment the flame burned clear and steady, though he could feel the cold draught blowing on his face, and even stirring the hair on his closely cropped head.

"That's a rum go," he said, staring at the match as it died out. He backed a few steps towards the wall, the draught was fainter; when he came level with the horse it ceased altogether.

"You are wise, my lad, to stick to this corner," Jevons remarked as he looked at the colt, "it's enough to blow your head off on the other side. Well, it must have been the wind I heard, for there ain't nothing here."

He locked the door and went back to the saddle-room. The hands of the American clock on the narrow mantelpiece pointed to twelve. Jevons loaded his pipe, poured out the rest of the beer, and took a long pull. Then he kicked the fire together, and looked about for a match.

"Now, where did I put that box," he said, staring stupidly round. "Where did I put that—what is it I'm looking for? What's got my head? It's all of a swim."

He felt for a chair and sat down, holding his hand to his heavy eyes. The lids felt as if they were weighted with lead. The gas danced in a golden mist that blinded him, and the whole room was spinning round and round. Then the pipe dropped from his nerveless fingers, and his head forward on the table.

"He's safe," muttered Vicary, as he softly pushed the door ajar and surveyed the unconscious lad. "That's prime stuff to keep the baby quiet. Here's the key, Slimmy; I'll bring the light. When we've damped the powder in that there rocket, Coulson will wish he hadn't been so handy with his crop this morning."

Slimmy turned the key in the lock and looked into the box; then he gave a slight start, and drew quickly back.

"What's up?" inquired the landlord. "Go on, it's all right"

"Sh!" whispered the tout, "he might hear you."

"Hear us? not he, nor the last day neither, if it come now."

He was thinking of Jevons, but Slimmy pulled to the door and held it "There's someone in there," he muttered, "an old chap. He's sitting on a bucket right in front of the horse."

"Did he see you?"

"I don't know, his back was turned and he looked asleep like."

He leaned forward, listening intently, but not a sound came from behind the closed door.

“Coulson didn’t mean to be caught napping,” said Vicary, under his breath. “Is it a stable hand?”

“A cut above that,” returned the other, in the same tone.

“Tins queer he should keep so quiet”

They waited a few minutes, but everything was still.

“See here,” whispered Slimmy, untwisting the muffler he wore round his neck, “there ain’t no manner of use standing here all night Give me the stick. If I can get past him quiet, I will but if he moves, you be ready to slip the handkerchief over his head. He can’t make much of a fight agen the two of us, and we ain’t got this far to be stalled off by an old crock like him; keep well behind him. Nevermind the lantern. He’s got a light inside.”

There was a light inside, but where it came from would have been difficult to say. It fell dear as a limelight over half the box, and beyond the shadow lay black and impenetrable, a wall of darkness.

As he crossed the threshold Slimmy felt a blast of cold air sweep towards him, striking a strange chill into his very bones.

Straight opposite stood a horse, and before him an old man was sitting on a reversed bucket, his elbow resting on his knee, his head on his hand. To all appearances he was asleep. But even in that intense stillness the tout could catch no sound of breathing. His own heart was thumping against his ribs with the force of a sledge-hammer. He felt his flesh creeping with a sensation of fear that was almost sickening. Fear? Yes, that was the word; he was horribly afraid. And of what? Of a weak old man, for whom he would have been more than a match single-handed, and they were two to one. What a fool he was, to be sure! With desperate effort he pulled himself together and went forward, his eye warily fixed on the silent figure. Neither man nor horse moved. Slimmy thrust his hand into his pocket and felt for the bottle which was to settle the Rocket’s chances for the Ebor! His fingers were on the cork, when the silence was broken by a sound that brought a cold sweat out on his forehead and lifted the hair on his head. It was a low chuckling laugh. The man on the bucket was looking at him. The gleaming eyes fixed on him with a sort of mesmeric power, and the bottle fell from his trembling fingers.

“Quick with the rag, Sam,” he gasped, “he’s seen me.” But Vicary stood like one turned to stone. His gaze fastened on the seated figure, taking in every item of the quaint dress, the high gill collar and ample bird’s-eye stock, the drab coat and antiquated breeches and gaiters. His mouth was open, but for the life of him he could not speak. He was waiting in the helpless fascination of horror to see the face of a man who had been dead and buried for fifteen years.

Slowly, like an automaton, that strange watcher turned his head. The square, resolute mouth was open as if to speak, the shrunken skin was a greenish yellow colour, like the skin of a corpse; along the temple ran a dull blue mark in the shape of a horse’s hoof but the eyes burned like two living coals, as they fixed themselves on the face of the terrified publican.

With a single yell of “Lord ha’ mercy on us! ’tis old Alick himself!”

Vicary turned and fled.

Slimmy heard the crash of the lantern on the stones and the sound of his flying feet, and an awful terror came upon him, a great fear, which made his teeth chatter in his head and curdled the blood in his veins.

The place seemed full of an unnatural light—the blue flames that dance at night over deserted graveyards. The air was foul with the horrible odours of decay. Above all, he felt the fearful presence of that which was neither living nor dead—the semblance of a man whose human body had for fifteen years been rotting in the grave. It was not living, but it moved. Its cold, shining

eyes were looking into his, were coming nearer. Now they were close to him. With the energy of despair, Slimmy grasped his stick by the thin end and struck with his full force at the horror before him. The loaded knob whistled through empty air, and, overbalanced by the force of his own blow, the wretched tout pitched forward, and with one piercing shriek fell prone on the straw.

“Did you hear that?”

“What the deuce was it?”

The two men, who were sitting over the fire in the comfortable smoking-room, sprang to their feet. Coulson put down his pipe and went into the hail. Some one was moving about in the kitchen.

“Is that you, Martin?” he called. “What was that row?”

The man came out at once.

“Did you hear it too, sir? It made me jump, it came so sudden. Sounded like some one hollering out in the stables.”

“Get a lantern. I must go across and see what it was. Are you coming, too, Captain? Then bring that shillelagh in your hand. It might be useful.”

Martin unbolted the side door, which opened on the garden, and the three men crossed the gravel path and went through the yard.

Here they saw the gleam of another lantern. Some one was running towards them. It was one of the lads, half dressed, and evidently just out of bed.

“Is that you, Mr Coulson?” he said breathlessly. “Did you hear that scream? It woke us all up. Bryant can see the saddle-room from his window, and he says the door is wide open.”

“Come on,” was Coulson’s answer, as they hurried across to the stables. The square of light from the saddle-room showed dearly through the darkness.

“Here’s Jevons,” said the trainer, who was the first to enter. “He is only asleep,” he added, as he lifted the lad’s head and listened to the regular breathing. He shook him roughly, trying to arouse him, but Jevons was beyond being awakened by any ordinary method; he made an inarticulate grunt, and dropped back into his former attitude.

“Drunk?” ejaculated Martin, blankly.

“Drugged, by gad!” Captain Berkeley had taken the empty jug from the table and smelt it. The sickly odour of the powerful opiate hung about the pitcher and told its own tale.

“Then,” cried the trainer, “as I’m a living man, they’ve got at the colt” His face was white and set as he seized the lantern and ran to the loose-box. The door was open; the key was in the lock. The men crowded up. There was scarcely a doubt in their minds but that the mischief was already done. Coulson held up the lantern and looked round. The colt was standing up in the corner, snorting and sniffing the air. He, too, had been startled by that terrible cry.

On the ground, straight in front of the door, a man lay prone on his face. There was no mistaking the look of that helpless body, the limp flaccidity of those outstretched arms.

“He’s dead, sir,” said Martin, as he turned up the white face; “hold the light down, his coat’s all wet with—something.”

It was not blood, only a sticky, dark-coloured fluid, the contents of a broken bottle lying underneath the body. Just beyond the reach of the clenched right hand was a heavy loaded-stick, and near the door they found a thick woollen handkerchief. Berkeley bent down and looked at the drawn features.

“Surely,” he said, in a low voice, “it is the same man you thrashed this morning?”

Coulson nodded. "He meant squaring accounts with me and he has had to settle his own instead. It is strange that there should be no marks of violence about him, and yet he looks as if he had died hard."

And truly, the dead man's face was terrible in its fixed expression of mortal fear. The eyes were staring and wide open, the teeth clenched, a little froth hung about the blue lips. It was a horrid sight. They satisfied themselves that life was absolutely extinct. Then Coulson gave orders for the colt to be taken back to his old box, locked the door on the corpse until the police could arrive, and spent the remainder of the night in the saddle-room, waiting until Jevons should have slept off the effects of the opiate.

But when the lad awoke he could throw very little light on the matter. He swore positively there was no one in the box when he paid his last visit at five minutes to twelve, and he could remember nothing after returning to the saddle-room. How the tout had effected an entrance, by what means his purpose had been frustrated and his life destroyed, remained for ever a mystery. The only living man who knew the truth held his tongue, and the dead can tell no tales. But Mr Vicary, as he watched Captain Berkeley's colt walk away from his field next day, and, cleverly avoiding a collision with the favourite on the rails, pass the post a winner by three lengths, was struck by the fact that the "Rocket" had grown smaller during the night, and he could have sworn the horse he saw in the loose-box had some white about him somewhere.

"He's one o' raight sort," exclaimed a stalwart Yorkshireman who stood at Vicary's elbow. "When an seed him i' t' paddock, an said aa'l hev a pound on th' squoire's 'oss for t' sake of ould toimes, for he's strange and loike Blue Ruin, as won th' Ebor in seventy-foive. 'Twas fust race as aver aa'd clapped eyes on, and aa'd backed him for ivery penny aa'd got."

The publican turned involuntarily to the speaker, "Did you say yon colt was like Blue Ruin?" he asked hoarsely.

"The very moral of him, barring he ain't quite so thick, and ain't got no white stocking. I reckon you'll remember Blue Ruin," added the farmer, referring to a friend on the other side, "him as killed ould Coulson?"

Vicary was a strong man, but at the mention of that name a strange, sickly sensation crept over him. The colour forsook his face, and when, a few minutes later he called for a brandy "straight", the hand he stretched out for the glass was shaking visibly.

Once, and once only, did the landlord allude to the events of that fatal night. It was when Mr David, loudly deploring his losses, expressed an opinion that Slimmy was "a clumsy fool, and matters would have come out very differently if he had been there."

"You may thank your stars," was Vicary's energetic rejoinder, "that you never set foot in the cursed place. The poor chap is dead, and there ain't no call for me to get myself mixed up in the business. Least said, soonest mended, say I; but you mind the story I told you the night Downey brought the news of that blooming colt, about ould Coulson swearing he'd come back from the dead, if need be, to do a Berkeley a good turn."

"I remember right enough. What's that got to do with it?"

The landlord glanced nervously over his shoulder. "Only this," he answered, sinking his voice to a whisper, "*he kept his word!*"