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ALL ABOUT A DEAD CERT, AND A BAD BRADEURY.

Backed to Win.

Mr Samuel Inkwitch was disposing of a hurried breakfast, when the door opened, to admit the head of his friend Trapley.

"Inky, old man," said the intruder, in a hoarse whisper; "I can't stop, but I've just got a tip for the Cooler Stakes. Do Tealeaf. It's a dead cert!"

He was off before Inkwitch could utter a word.

Sam bolted his breakfast, and rose irresolutely. Unfortunately, he was himself hurrying to catch a train and meet his employer about some transport work. The bookmaker lived in the opposite direction to the railway station. For once Sam decided to trust his wife.

"Sarah," he said to Mrs Inkwitch. "I've just got a grand tip about a horse. I want you to go to Mr Barlow, and put this five shillings on for me. Name of Tealeaf."

Mrs Inkwitch picked up the scrap of paper left behind and her lip curled scornfully as she stirred the baby's barley-water.

"Tealeaf!" she sneered, turning over the money. "About as much as he'll win over it. Grand tip! Silly fool!"

The bookmaker was not at home, but his wife invited Mrs Inkwitch into the parlour. Mr Barlow was not a model husband, and the two ladies were easily able to agree on the evils of betting.

"I ain't many as would be as honest as you, and bring the money, my dear," Mrs Barlow said. "They mostly know what fools men are, and just put it in their pockets. Win? Not likely! Else my husband wouldn't have so much money to throw away in what he calls enjoyment!"

The result of this conversation was that the scrap of paper found its way into the fire, and Mrs Barlow's eldest girl was sent on a short errand that gave much satisfaction to both ladies.

"Don't worry, dear," said the bookmaker's wife, wiping her lips, as they parted. "I hope you'll get many a similar errand."

During the afternoon Mrs Inkwitch had occasion to go to the oilman's for some soap, and received such a shock that she left the shop without her change of twopence-halfpenny.

A young man had been conversing with the oilman.

"All very well for you to talk," he said. "You got to look at results. Now, to-day I put two bob on Tealeaf, and it romps home first, five to one. Consequently I've got ten shillings to take and my two bob back. What do you say to that, old man?"

Mrs Inkwitch didn't wait to hear what the oilman said. The horse had won, and Sam, instead of finding that he had thirty shilling to take, would learn that the money had never been put on. In frantic haste, she sought out the bookmaker's wife.

In these circumstances, Mrs Barlow could only reciprocate by sending her eldest girl on another errand, similar to that of the morning. By this means, and some advice of a confidential nature dealing with the turf, she was able to soothe and send her visitor away in good spirits.

Mr Inkwitch smiled when he opened the door in the evening and heard his wife singing.

"Got a bit of news for you, Sam," she called.

"It's all right," said Sam pleasantly. "I bought the paper, and saw the result. Been round to get the money, have you?"

Mrs Inkwitch shook her head knowingly.

"Been round," she said. "But I didn't get the money. No fear. When you get that money, Sam, it'll be thirty pounds instead of thirty shillings!"

Sam asked for a quick solution to the riddle.

"The luckiest thing!" Mrs Inkwitch said. "I was on my way to Barlow's when a little fellow like a jockey came along. 'Hallo!' says a swell, stopping him. 'That was a grand race to-day. You got Tealeaf home splendid!' Hearing the name I stops. They went on talking about the race, and the little chap said he'd just come from the course. Then he whispered to the other man. 'Put all you've got on Turveytop to-morrow. I'm riding her, and she's bound to win!'"

Mr Inkwitch gasped with excitement.

"So when I got to Barlow's," panted Mrs Inkwitch, "and he said to me, 'Come for the money?' I said, 'Oh, put the winnings on Turveytop to-morrow!'"

"Grand!" cried Sam excitedly.

The household supped that night on a fresh crab salad at Mr Inkwitch's expense. The crisis was over, Mrs Inkwitch began to prepare the way for a disappointment by suddenly casting doubts on the reliability of a jockey's confidence, but her husband was entirely hopeful. Before the evening was out he had planned the disposal of his winnings up to fifteen pounds.

If Sam's excitement to get at the evening newspaper on the following day was intense, it was nothing to that of his wife. And when the news came that Turveytop had been hopelessly beaten she was so relieved that the remainder of the five shilling went in a necessary stimulant.

Sam was thunderstruck. Fearing that one newspaper must be incorrect, he bought another. It was painfully true. Turveytop had lost. With a natural depression, he dropped into the club for consolation.

"It's all right for you," somebody was saying; "I ain't grumbling. What I say is, none of you chaps understand form."

Sam looked on at the billiards in moody silence, while the vociferous individual, who proved to be Barlow, the bookmaker, rated his audience on their inability to understand the intricacies of trials and preliminary gallops.

"Now, there was Tealeaf," he said. "A dead cert, and every backer lets it go by!"

Mr Inkwitch removed his pipe from his mouth.

"Except one," he said briefly.

"Except none," asserted Barlow. "You all missed it!"

"Except one!" repeated Sam.

The bookmaker paused, and politely informed the company that he had not had a single backer. Mr Inkwitch observed that it was not his custom to call anybody a liar, but he could put his hand on one in that room, accompanying the insinuation with a bold stare at Barlow. Hostilities threatened to break out, it was unanimously agreed that he should prove his words. He endeavoured to do so.

"A lie!" Barlow asserted.

"My missis give you the money," said Sam, indignantly pointing the stem of his pipe at Barlow, "and called round in the afternoon to tell you to put the lot on Turveytop. It went down, so I lost it all!"

A voice in the rear ventured the opinion that anyone who put money on Turveytop must be off his nutcracker. Barlow just curled his lip, and appealed to the club steward.

"George," he said anxiously, "don't give him any more of that lemonade of yours. It's affecting his head!"

This being tantamount to a reflection on Mr Inkwitch's sanity and his wife's veracity, that gentleman's coat was off in an instant and lying on the seat. With an equal celerity, the club steward joined in, and Sam went outside hurriedly, followed by his coat. A good Samaritan took the coat and its owner at a swift pace into the next street, in time to escape the attention of a constable.

"Hold up, old man!" said Trapley. "Here! Put it on sharp, or you may get run in!"

When Sam had properly got his breath, he poured out his grievance.

Trapley shook his head doubtfully.

"Used to get my missus to do the same thing," he said, smiling. "No more! Women don't understand these affairs."

Having been further instructed in the ways of the sex, Mr Inkwitch began to see light, and expressed himself accordingly.

"Talking of bad luck," said Trapley, "look at that." He handed over what appeared to be a one pound note. "A wrong 'un! Looks good, doesn't it? But just bad enough to get you pinched if you should try to change it."

Sam fingered the note absently, and was about to hand it back when an idea came into his head. A little later the two men parted, the spurious note reposing in Mr Inkwitch's pocket.

Sam's wife was surprised and gratified to find that her husband took it so well. She declared tearfully that she would never believe in a jockey again, and gratuitously took the blame on herself.

"That's all right, old girl," said Sam, controlling himself. "I got something better for to-morrow. Not sure it'll win,

but it's worth trying. I'm going to make a splash on it."

The splash amazed Mrs Inkwitch when it was revealed in the morning. She stared from the pound note placed in her hand to her husband, and back again. Sam explained that he had taken a bit extra for overtime. He could afford to lose it, and if the horse happened to win, it would make up for the other disappointment.

Mrs Inkwitch was sorely tempted to repeat her experiment, but a pound note frightened her. She sought counsel of Mrs Barlow.

"Parted with it easy, did he?" said that lady curiously.

"Quite casual," said Mrs Inkwitch. "Said he could afford to lose it."

"I should think he could!" said the other heatedly. "And anybody else, too! It's a bad 'un, my dear. You'll get locked up if you're not careful."

The bookmaker's wife fathomed the unmanly designs of Mr Inkwitch, and when she gave voice to them Sarah grew purple with indignation. Mr Barlow, entering in a good humour at this juncture, was consulted. He saw in this ruse a deliberate attempt to bring trouble on him, and traced it to the affair of the previous evening. He at once devised a scheme for the proper chastisement of Mr Inkwitch, in which Sarah was enrolled as a conspirator.

"I'll leave it with you, then," she said.

"Not much," said Mr Barlow, handling the note like an unclean thing. "Take it away! I might forget it ain't a good 'un!"

Much to the astonishment of Samuel Inkwitch, the horse on which the spurious note had been placed came home an easy winner. When he saw the result he regretted that he had stooped to motives of paltry revenge, and hoped by some chance that the note had found a safe destination with the bookmaker.

"Money went on all right, I suppose?" he said to his wife, putting a bold face on the matter.

"Yes, dear," said Mrs Inkwitch. "I'm so glad it won. He wasn't in when I left the money; but, to make sure, I put a little mark on the note, in case of any dispute."

Sam considered this in silence, but made no remark.

"Better run round after tea, and get your winnings," suggested Mrs Inkwitch.

"No hurry," said Sam. "To-morrow will do."

Half an hour later, in response to a knock, Mrs Inkwitch opened the front door and was confronted by Mr Barlow and another man.

"Husband in?" said the bookmaker.

"Sam!" called the lady. "Here's Mr Barlow wants to see you! Step inside," she said to the visitors.

Mr Inkwitch was painting a water-can. The brush dropped from his nervous fingers to the floor. But he was humming a tune when at length he sauntered into the parlour.

"You needn't have bothered to bring it round to-night, old man," he said cheerfully. "The morning would have done."

"The morning wouldn't do for this business," said the bookmaker ominously. "Officer, this gentleman is Mr Inkwitch."

The man pulled out a note-book. A cold chill ran up the spine of Mr Inkwitch. "Serious affair this," said the bookmaker's companion. "Tendered a pound note in payment of a bet to-day, I believe?"

"What's this?" asked Sam, shaking.

"I think you know," said the man scribbling down something. "We've been on the look-out for a long time to see where the bad money came from. What occupation, did you say?"

Mr Inkwitch tried a show of virtuous indignation, but not a ray of hope appeared on the faces of the two men.

"It's shocking to see a man come down to this," said Barlow. "But in the interests of justice it had to be done. Got the handcuffs, officer?"

"Oh, Sam!"

Mrs Inkwitch, whose features had been concealed behind a white apron, now uttered a shriek.

"I didn't know it was bad!" whined Sam. "I was took in myself. You know me, Barlow; I wouldn't do such a thing!"

Mrs Inkwitch interposed with tearful anxiety.

"You must have got the wrong note," she said. "I know Sam's note. I put a little cross on it."

Quite right," said the man with the book. "The note's under lock and key at the station, cross and all. Better take him in a cab, I suppose?" he said to Barlow.

The miserable Inkwitch gave one glance at his wife's covered face, groaned, as the baby began to wail, and made a frantic appeal to the bookmaker. He declared that he had been imposed upon. He drew a wretched picture of the ruin this exposure would mean to him, and

generally made a degrading exhibition of himself.

"Wait a minute," said Barlow at last. He took the other man aside, and, after a whispered colloquy, let him out at the front door. "For the sake of your family," he said to Inkwitch, "I'll settle it, if I can. But -- may cost you five pounds. It'll be a bit of a job to stop the mouths of the police."

"I'll pay," said Sam, much relieved. "You'll give me a bit of time, won't you? It wasn't my fault. I ought to have been more careful."

He stood by in perspiring humiliation while Barlow took upon himself to make some caustic remarks about his character. But for the bookmaker's soft-heartedness and sympathy for the wife and children, he certainly would not have escaped.

Inkwitch breathed freely when he was at last alone. Anxious to avoid his wife's comments, he presently put on his hat and went out. The shock had been so great that he made for the nearest hostelry to treat himself to a stimulant.

He paused with his hand on the door, as a loud laugh reached him.

"He won't forget that for a bit, I guess," said a voice. "I was afraid the missus would give the game away, but she played her part up to the knocker."

Another laugh followed.

As the laughter and conversation proceeded, the brow of Mr Inkwitch grew black as thunder. He needed no stimulant now, but returned home. Once inside, he locked the door and removed his coat, a proceeding that his wife witnessed with a dumb nervousness. When he threw his hat in a corner, she started to whimper.

"I just had the luck to hear all about it," he said, with a leer. "You and those two have been having a fine game with me, haven't you? Now I'm going to have a game with you, because you're the ring-leader."

Mrs Inkwitch made a dart into the kitchen, and seized a saucepan.

"You dare hit me!" she screamed. "You didn't care if I got locked up, did you?"

"There's another score," he said, pointing an ominous finger. "You done me over that five shillings and the winnings. A solid thirty bob gone. And you bring in a dirty bookie and his tyke to try to frighten me, do you? I'll teach you to play tricks! Talking to me about handcuffs! Hand over that pound note!"

"I haven't got it! And if I had, what's the good of it to you? It was a bad one."

Mr Inkwitch approached threateningly.

"You do!" cried his wife. "You lay a hand on me, and I'll throw the blessed lot down the sink. You sha'n't have a farthing of it!"

Sam paused and stared.

"Farthing of what?" he asked. "It was a bad 'un."

Mrs Inkwitch looked into her husband's eyes for a minute, and then put down the saucepan. Gaining courage by his calmness, she warily approached the table, and drew from her pocket a handful of silver, which she put down and retreated.

"I changed it," she said, with mild triumph. "Chemist was talking to some people, and didn't notice. It was the new shop, just opened."

Sam's bellicose attitude weakened perceptibly. He turned towards the money with a look of satisfaction, and began to test the silver pieces with his teeth. Finding them genuine, he slipped them one by one into his pocket. His wife made a dart at the last coin, and narrowly escaped a cuff of the head. Picking it up, he dropped it after the others; then started to put on his coat again.

"Lucky you did change it," he said, breathing heavily. "Saved your life! You play a game like that with me again, and I'll be hanged for you!"

The End.

"ENSHRINED."

You left me in the splendour of your youth—

Strong, brave, erect, your keen blue eyes aglow!

The soul within you questing after truth—

To find the heart of things! to see—to know.

High hope, high courage writ upon your brow!

I watched you as some gallant knight depart,

And tho' you come back broken—shattered now,

I hold that vision of you in my heart!

—Helen Stewart.

The mills of the United States consumed 67,000,000lbs of wool during April.

It is intended to bring down an amendment to the Motor Regulation Act next session providing, among other things, for the licensing of motor drivers, states the Minister for Internal Affairs.