

old he was sold for 200 guineas. In forty-nine races he won twenty-one firsts, eight seconds, and eight thirds; his stake money amounted to nearly £20,000. Each of the pair earned high racing honours in Australia as well as in New Zealand.

We sat under the walnut tree and listened to stories of the *Beaux Vite* and *Livre*. Their pedigrees, on both sides, go back for, it seems, centuries of years and through hundreds of horses—sprinters and stayers, record-breakers and champions: it's not hard to imagine William the Conqueror, Ben Hur, and Richard the Lionheart bouncing the bidding along for these ancestors at the yearling sales of those days. We heard mentioned such famous names as Son-in-Law (founder of one, if not the best, line of stayers in the world), Dominant, Martian, Passbook, Paper Money, and Musket. We heard of their track records, Australian records, and New Zealand records; we heard of races run and won with 2 stone given away to the field; we heard of attempts in the night to kill *Beau Vite* (in Australia shortly before one Melbourne Cup a horse in the next stall to *Beau Vite* was shot by mistake for this champion). We heard all the stories. It was time we had a look at these two *Beaux*.

*Beau Vite*, undisputed champion of Australia and New Zealand at the time of his retirement from the turf, was having an argument with a black cock pheasant. And such a noise they were making:



rearing, stamping, ears-back snorts from *Beau Vite*; feathers-ruffled squawking, beak pecking, and wings flapping from the pheasant. The owner of the stud has as one of his hobbies an aviary, the cages of which are beside the stallion's pen. The pheasant and the stallion don't like each other at all, and they make no bones about their feelings. It's just as well from the sound of things there is a 6 ft. fence and wire netting between them.

From the days before he was broken and right through his brilliant racing career, *Beau Vite* has been working with the owner of the stud. When the owner looked over the high wooden fence round the pen, the champion came trotting over; he knew that voice, he wanted his nose rubbed. Like his half-brother in another pen a chain or two away, *Beau Vite* is quiet and friendly. But you have to be careful: those nips may be meant as an afternoon greeting, but the teeth are sharp and the jaws strong. We moved back a pace from the fence. *Beau Vite* and *Beau-livre* are beautiful horses: models of symmetry and conformation, with magnificent physique. *Beau Vite* stands at a fee of 75 guineas and *Beaulivre* at 50 guineas.

The work of the horse breeder is measured by the seasons. The first foals are dropped in August; they continue to come in increasing numbers through September and October, tailing off in November. For racing purposes all horses, regardless of when they were born, have an official birthday on the 1st of August. Breeders try to get them early in the spring—not so early that there will be a chance of having them born in July (it would be disastrous for a horse's racing career to be counted a yearling before it is weaned), but not so late that they will be small for their age group.

Breeding is in the same months as foaling; if mares are not served about nine or ten days after delivering a foal, there is a period of wasted time before there is another chance. It is usual for a mare to have a foal at foot and to be in foal again for the next season. Normal gestation is 315 days, but with different mares this period varies.