

and then his cry becomes "Even it up, even it up, make it the thousand. What's an extra 50 at this price?" and, the cunning of this is amusing, "No need to count the cost now. It's against you, sir. Surely you're not going to let a 1,000 guinea colt go for want of a miserable fifty." Usually he gets his thousand. But he will fight just as hard for 150 guineas, labouring his way through rises as small as £2 10s. And there lies the great secret of his art; he knows when to reduce the rises from 50 guineas at a time to 25, to 10, to 5, and in the last resort to £2 10s. Very seldom is he beaten; it is a rare occasion indeed when a yearling is led out of the ring unpurchased to the accompaniment of his firm comment: "I'm not hawking him, gentlemen. It's a rotten price we're getting, and I'm not going to hawk an animal like this. You'll have to do better if you want him."

The scene as he sells is fascinating. In the ring is the yearling, shy, sensitive, leggy, and beautiful. His coat glistens in the rain or shines in the sun; sometimes he jerks impatiently at his lead as his staring eyes show his dislike of crowds. In the ring, too, stand the spotters, three of them, to watch the bidding, shout the rises to the auctioneer, and identify the purchasers. Tucked away in a corner ready to leap forward the moment his services are needed is the small boy with his bucket and broom.

Round the small ring is gathered the crowd, some sitting on the tiered stands, others moving restlessly about. Facing the semi-circle is the auctioneer in his small raised stand, microphone in front of him, loud-speakers at each side. In the rear, an anxious figure tucked away in a corner of the tiny contraption, is the breeder of the yearling on sale at the moment. With him the auctioneer consults occasionally, offering a word of congratulation or putting a question, to return with the decision to sell or not to sell. This is the tense moment for the highest bidder; the yearling will be his at the price he has offered, it will be passed in, or if the owner and auctioneer decide to try a little longer he may, if he wants it badly enough, have to give another 50 or 100 guineas and his bargain

may become expensive. So in this brief interlude there are three anxious people, buyer, seller, and the auctioneer who doesn't want his sale to lag.

It is in these few seconds of decision as though the actors on this small stage were frozen into their typical attitudes. The spotters peer anxiously round the buyers ready to shout to the auctioneer should a catalogue be raised or a head nodded. The clerks below the box continue making their notes, professionally imperturbable. The reporters at the long table to the right of the box and below it are mildly amused by the tricks of the trade which they have seen practised too often for them to be any novelty. Then the silence is broken either by a new bid—and that happens quite often—or by the horse being passed in. That pause may be worth quite a few guineas to the owner. It is good tactics.

From the more light-hearted and less-dignified members of the crowd there sometimes comes a ribald piece of advice. It is a curious mixture, this crowd. Scattered through it are numbers of country people, most of them in what has become almost the uniform of the sheep-farmer come to town—tweeds, always good, usually well cut, and sometimes with that pleasantly worn appearance, a rather careless soft hat with the brim down all round, and so on. With them are wives or daughters or just friends, some in jhodpurs and stock, others in tweeds or, if the day is fine some sort of linen frock. Then there are the racing folk, smarter, nattier, with something about the tilt of the hat, some extra stripe in the suit, some rakishness about the pin in the tie that makes them unmistakeable. There is even something about the tone of the voice. And to finish it off there are the curious odds and ends which any crowd produces—a few art students struggling to get the long legs of the yearlings to look right in their rough notes, a few men in uniform, most of them obviously absent without leave, the inevitable Waac with even a Waaf and perhaps a Wren, and the boy with the bucket and broom who carefully follows the careless yearlings round the ring.

On a fine day it is a very pleasant scene indeed; there is about it all the atmos-