

A MILLION BUCKS--ON PAPER



"H, PIPE!" chortled the Bay Hoss Kid, pointing across the street, "th' ol' guy with th' sun-cheaters! See 'im?"

My glance, following the indicating finger, discovered a little old man with a typical "Zim" face, partially disguised by an enormous pair of smoked glasses. He was standing before Jack Wolff's cigar store, peering earnestly into the faces of the idlers.

"Who is he?" I asked. But the Bay Hoss was crossing the street.

"Come on!" he called. "Watch me round 'im."

I was newly returned to San Francisco after an absence of years, and the Bay Hoss was the first one of the old race track bunch I had unearthed. Under his able guidance I was touring the downtown district, endeavoring to reconstruct from the enormous piles of the new city the Tenderloin of the old.

Bay Hoss, never a mental heavy-weight, was taking a childish delight in the time-honored pastime of "rounding" his friends and acquaintances by one of two simple expedients: hiding in a convenient doorway and calling the victim by name, or stopping up beside him and tapping him on the opposite shoulder. The look of puzzlement or chagrin on the face of him who "fell" was payment enough for the merry Hoss. I must confess that I also, possessed by the holiday spirit, became so enthused as to perpetrate the same senseless joke on an occasional old-timer. Therefore, I immediately followed my guide.

The old gentleman left the cigar stand and sturdily plodded up Eddy street, gazing intently at the throngs of visiting pleasure seekers. We caught up with him in the middle of the block. Bay Hoss stepped close behind him, calling, "Oh, Casey!" in his right ear, tapping him at the same time on the right shoulder. Hoss then dodged swiftly to the left, intending to pass by on that side, leaving the old fellow gaping the other way, mystified.

Casey fooled us. He had been "rounded" too often. With almost incredible speed he wheeled to the left and seized Bay Hoss by the arm. Before that worthy had recovered from his surprise the old man swung a crushing right-hander full to the ex-tout's ingrowing chin.

Startled, I hastened to interfere, but the old man, after a searching glance, shoved the dazed joker into my arms. Snarling, "Ar-rh! Go t' th' devil!" he hastened away, muttering to himself.

"Who is it? What is it?" I asked excitedly. "Did you—?" But the Bay Hoss raised a shaking hand.

"Nix!" he gasped, ambiguously, his face gradually regaining its normal shade of brick-red. "I'm off that gent! No more fer little Oswald! Le's go into th' Dutchman's an' lick up a plate o' Bismarcks an' a schuper. Say, lissen! That guy pulls a awful wallop fer a' ol' Turk."

We found a table in the famous home of "Dutch lunches," and were presently served a plate each of succulent herrings and two enormous glasses of golden brew.

"Just who," I asked, striving to restrain my mirth at the recollection of that punch, "is your friend Casey?"

"He ain't my friend," mumbled Bay Hoss, his mouth full of herring bones. "He b'longs t' Niggerfoot—or did, before th' Foot cashed in."

"Niggerfoot!" I exclaimed. "Tall, skinny young fellow—nose like the Jew Albert? Is he dead?"

"Yeah, long time ago," answered Bay Hoss, "officing" the kidney-footed waiter for more beer. "That's what makes it so funny."

"It was funny to me," I admitted. "But I didn't think you found it so."

"Oh, that! I ain't talkin' about that." He grinned foolishly. "You never heard about Foot an' Casey? Well, I'll tell yuh.

By Edward Isaac Wheeler

Illustrated by R. Tandler.

"Niggerfoot was one o' th' ol-time touts, yuh know—got ruled off before your time, I guess. Well, Casey, there, was th' cause o' him gettin' set down.

"Ol' Casey had an express stand down near th' ferry—has yet, I reckon—an' he used t' haul tack an' such like junk fer th' owners around th' tracks. All this time, though, he ain't never been on a race track—only in th' mornin's; he ain't never seen th' bangtails go round. One day he does some haulin' fer Kernel Dan, or Williams, or some one connected with th' Jockey Club, an' whoever it is gives 'im three passes t' th' races.

"Gettin' somethin' fer nothin' that-away, he natcherly feels like he's gotta use it; so he declares a holiday fer hisself. He searches out a coupla o' cronies o' hisn an' tells 'em t' if they'll buy forty tickets an' drinks an' pay all overheads he'll take 'em t' th' races. They fall fer it an' th' three o' 'em land in a bunch at Oakland.

"The's a few o' th' best of us hangin' out down by th' gate—Plum Puddin' Tommy, Threeesey, Nosey Dick an' th' Coffee Kid—each waitin' fer a client he's expectin'. We all know Casey, but none of us figgers 'im good fer a bet, so they get by us. Niggerfoot, standin' up by th' bettin' ring, spots 'em an' nails 'em. Casey knows Foot by sight from seein' 'im go back an' forth fer years, but he don't know a tout from Barney Schreiber. If Foot tells 'im he owns th' track, Casey ain't a-goin' t' conterdict 'im.

"Niggerfoot dukes th' ol' man an' calls 'im Mr. Casey, swellin' 'im up t' his pals, an' invites 'em up t' have a drink at th' bar. After that, th' ol' Turk's just th' same as branded; he belongs t' Foot. Foot buys two or three rounds an' then steers 'em up t' th' grand stand, settin' 'em down near th' paddock end.

"Th' first race is a half mile fer 2-year-olds. Burns an' Waterhouse has a trick in it that looks like a mortal cinch—she's 1 to 4 in th' bettin'. 'Course, the's ain't no use tryin' t' lay Casey at them odds, so Niggerfoot just tells 'em what's a-goin' t' win, fer a clincher, an' lets 'em alone till th' startin' bell rings. When th' B. an' W. filly romps home alone, he's in solid with his 'prospect.' Casey thinks Foot's a wiz.

"An' how did yez know what harse was a-goin' t' win?" he asts Foot.

"Aha!" says Foot, all mysterious. "That's my business. That's why I'm a millionaire—because I know them things. If everybody knowed what I know, the'd be no bettin'; th' books'd all be out o' th' game."

"Have ye no harses of yer own that's runnin' t'day?" Casey wants t' know.

"Sure, I have," says Foot. "I'm startin' one in this next race."

"An' is it a-goin' t' win?" asts th' ol' chaw, his eyes poppin' out.

"He's a-goin' t' win!" swears Niggerfoot. "But I ain't bettin' on 'im here. I sent my money away t' be bet in th' big eastern poolrooms. They won't let me play my hosses at th' tracks," he says. "I'd put all th' bookies out o' business."

"Casey starts mournin' at that, 'cause he can't make a bet on a sure winner, but Foot tells 'im t' dry up—he'll fix that all right.

"Give me your coin," he says, 'an' I'll send it in by my regular bettin' commissioner, an' no one th' wiser."

"How much do Oi have t' put up t' win money on this harse o' yourn?"

"I dunno what th' odds 'll be yet," says Foot, "but say he's 10 t' 1: Yuh put up a hundred dollars, an' yuh get back 'leven hundred; that is if he wins,' an' he winks at Casey.

"An' if Oi put up a thousan' darlers, what do Oi get?"

"If yuh put up a thousan' bucks I don't know what you'll get," answers th' Foot, "but I'll get heart failure. C'me on, Casey, quit kiddin' an' give me your coin."

"Well, in that case, Oi'll save ye th' doctor bill," says Casey. "Here's tin bones. It's all Oi'll chance, so be off."

"Niggerfoot argues, but it ain't no use. Casey's stubborn, an' a little sore with th' kiddin', so finally Foot blows down with th' ten seeds. O' course, if th' ol' ginny makes a good bet, Foot's a-goin' t' try t' pick a winner fer 'im an' declare hisself in with th' winnin's; but with a lousy little ol' ten-spot the's ain't no chance—specially as th' favorite's even money. Foot never could see anythin' but th' favorite in a hoss race, nohow.

"He knows Casey won't make another bet if he loses th' ten, an' chances is he'll pocket th' twenty if he wins an' give Foot th' hoot if he asts for a split. He ain't a-goin' t' waste no time on a tight ol' chaw fer nothin', so he bets th' ten on th' favorite fer hisself an' writes a phony ticket fer Casey.

"How does he do that? Why, yuh poor boob, ain't yuh wise t' that ol' grift? An' you mixin' in with th' push fer years. Why, that stuff's older'n Chalk Roberts. Looky!"

"Yuh take a losin' ticket on some past race—any tout on th' track's got them a-plenty—an' rub out th' figgers an' name o' th' hoss it's wrote on original, an' there yuh got a blank ticket just th' same as they use in th' books; name o' th' book an' number of th' ticket an' everythin'. Then yuh pick out th' mutt yuh think is sure to lose an' fill in your blank with th' amount o' th' bet, th' amount o' th' odds against it, an' th' initials o' th' hoss. O' course, that ticket won't tally with th' sheet on that race, but what sucker's a-goin' t' go buskin' around after th' hoss loses t' see whether he really loses his coin or whether th' tout sticks it in his kick? If he's that wise, he ain't a-goin' t' let no one bet his kale but hisself. If he wins? Oh, well, th's a lot o' different things yuh can do. Wait an' hear what Foot does with Casey, an' yuh won't have t' ast so many questions.

"Well, as I was sayin', Niggerfoot picks out an ol' skate that ain't win a race since Bill Donathan was a' exercise boy, an' writes a phony callin' fer 100 t' 10. He takes it up t' Casey, an' when th' hosses parades past th' stand he points out th' hoss an' sets back, waitin' fer th' favorite t' tin-can home with his little ol' ten plunks rootin' fer 'im. Sure, th' owners' names was on th' programs; but what'd that ol' pelican know about them? If some one slipped 'im one he'd think it was a bill o' fare.

"The's a awful bunch o' hay hounds lined up fer that seven furlong sprint, an' Dwyer's a long time gettin' 'em off. Finally he springs th' barrier on th' bumpest start o' th' meetin', with th' ol' crab Foot writes th' ticket on beatin' th' gate ten len'ths, an' th' favorite left at th' post. Th' badge hoss must a been all hopped up that day, fer he don't curl up at th' paddock like he usually does, but keeps peltin' along an' staggers under th' wire a winner by a eyelash.

"Casey an' his friends are bustin' their lungs an' doin' a war dance.

"Niggerfoot stalls Casey that his commissioner has t' cash th' ticket, so th' three tads stays in th' stand, an' he beats it fer th' bettin' ring. O' course, he can't pay that bet, even if he wents t'. The's ain't no out but t' write another phony on a dead one in th' next race, calling fer th' full amount, an' take chances o' Casey bustin' 'im one in th' beezzer fer makin' another bet. He sticks around down in th' ring till post time, an' then frames his ticket.

"Th' third race o' th' day is a mile an' a eighth. The's five starters, an' th' rank outsider's posted at 20 t' 1 on th' blackboards. Foot don't think it's possible fer two long shots t' cop in succession, so he writes his ticket on that one, callin' fer

twenty-two hundred t' a hundred an' ten. Then he breezes back into th' stand square it with Casey.

"Th' two henchmen near throw a f when Foot flashes th' ducat; Casey nal 'im an' grunts:

"Th' harse better win!"

"T' show yuh th' luck Niggerfoot play in, th's a form upset in that race that send one owner up t' th' judges t' alibi hisself. Th' outsider rolls home with his ear pricked up, ahead o' th' favorite. Foot he t' help th' jock ride th' hoss, fer th' look o' things, but us guys on th' lawn know his heart ain't in them yells. We know he never bet on no 20 t' 1 shot in his life, an' th' whole race track's wise that somethin' gone wrong; that is, all but th' judge. They hears Foot's 'Come on with 'im boy!' an' figgerin' he has somethin' t' do with that awful form somersault, order 'im tailed. They do 'im wrong! He rath see that hoss drop dead than win.

"Ol' Casey's shakin' like a leaf.

"Me bhoy," he says, "O! thrust ye, a belave ye know what ye're doin', but more fer me! Don't ye bet anither cin Do ye cash that ticket an' bring th' mon straight back t' me. Oi cudn't stand a ither wan; th' suspinse wud kill n Moind, now, no more!"

"But th' ain't nothing to it! Foot's too far t' do anythin' but write another fink; an' he's just got t' pick a loser th' time. O' course, he can make a lam if he wants t'; but if he does, ol' Casey's bound t' make a roar yuh could hear in San Jo an' Foot'll be warned away from th' tracks, at least. That's where he makes his livin', an' he'll stick it out if he can. Then again, on th' other hand, it's almost cinch th' micks'll holler an' half kill 'im boot. The's ain't much choice, but Foot decides t' take another chance an' he that ol' Casey's got enough sportin' blood in 'm t' make 'im swaller his loss like genelmun. He's gamblin', too, that he have a chance t' make a getaway wh th' chums is interested in th' race. ain't trustin' his own judgment no more though.

"I'm poison!" he tells Plum Puddin Tommy. "I can't pick a loser t'day. He I go an' parlay a phony broad on th' l two winners fer that ol' human hy-e an' I ain't even got th' tenner he slips t' start with. I know you ain't picked a winner since th' meetin' started, so fer love o' Pete, Pud, tell me what yuh like this next race, an' I'll give 'im a paper that!"

"Tommy's th' little cockney that a gr copper pinches that time fer smugglin' after he hears 'im kiddin' a coupla Swed Tommy tells th' square-heads he's go big stone ship, layin' in th' offn', with hold full o' English plum puddin's, an bullin' 'em t' meet 'im at midnight help 'im smuggle th' puddin's ashore, bobby steps in an' pinches th' three o' an' th' next day th' papers has a big lan over it. That's how Tommy gets his miker. Th' jondarm? Oh, they make chief o' police a few years back."

Bay Hoss paused to borrow my "m in's" and roll himself a "pill." Then continued:

"Ow much does th' bleedin' sue think 'e's got comin'?" asts Puddin'.

"Twenty-three hundred an' ten-bon walls Foot, keepin' a' eye out fer Ca or th' Pinks."

"Well, tyke another chawnce," off Tommy, grinnin'. "Put 'im on that bro trick o' Baldwin's; 'e cawn't win."

"Th' Puddin' beats it t' hep up th' o' th' bunch so's we can see th' fin Baldwin's hoss is around 50 t' 1, an' F thinks that hunch's good as any, so slips out t' th' paddock t' frame his tie Out there he meets up with Sam Me wether, that's startin' his ol' hoss, De raux, in this race.

"Sam is one o' them hard luck own He's had some pretty fair platers in time, an' has packed a few 'grand' on hip a dozen times; but somehow, th won't break right fer 'im very long a