

# COSMOPOLITAN

*America's Greatest Magazine*



**I**F anyone has crowded existence with adventure and romance it is Cynthia Stockley. This picture of her abstracting her car from an African river bears it out. In August, COSMOPOLITAN begins her new serial—*Ponjola*—a story of love and gold and a woman's fight for a strong man's soul, laid in the glamorous African veldt country. A treat for lovers of stirring fiction, *Ponjola* has the touch of the master of Romance.

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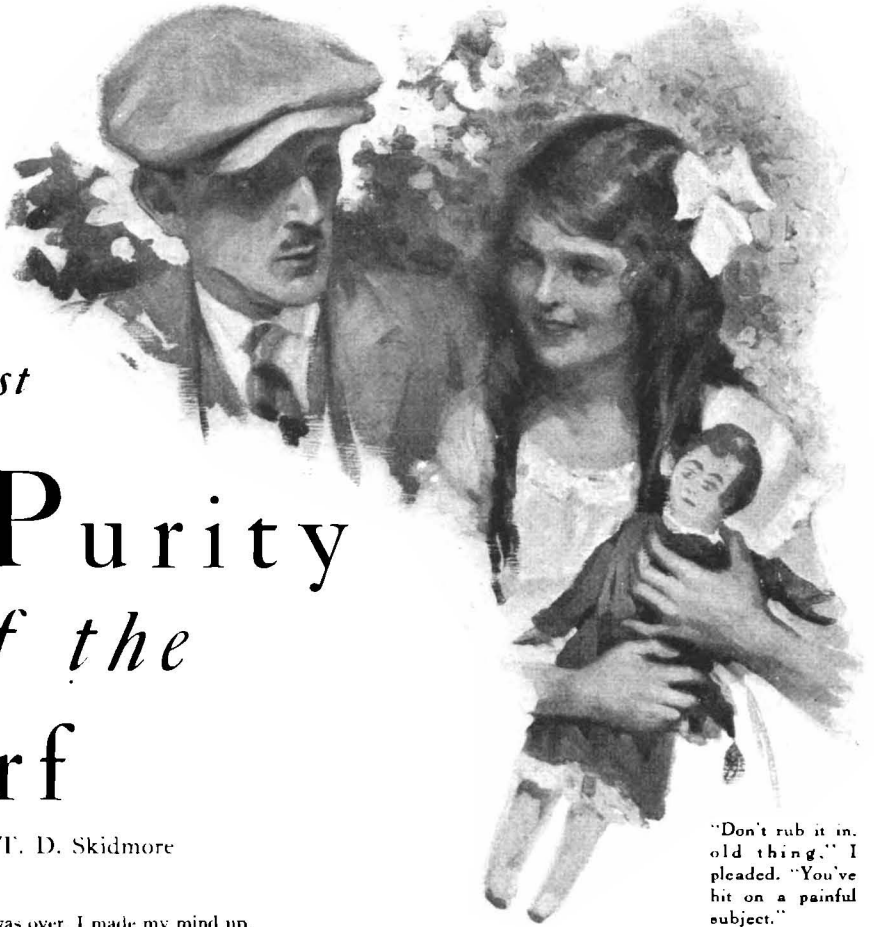
*The Harrison Fisher cover of this issue without lettering mailed on receipt of 25 cents*

# Another P. G. Wodehouse Story

In which,  
as usual,  
Jeeves  
and the  
Reader  
Laugh Last

## The Purity of the Turf

Illustrations by T. D. Skidmore



"Don't rub it in, old thing," I pleaded. "You've hit on a painful subject."

**W**HEN the thing was over, I made my mind up. "Jeeves," I said.

"Sir?"  
"Never again! The strain is too great. I don't say I shall chuck betting altogether—if I get hold of a good thing for one of the big races no doubt I shall have my bit on as aforetime—but you won't catch me mixing myself up with one of these minor meetings again. They're too hot."

"I think perhaps you are right, sir," said Jeeves.  
It was young Bingo Little who lured me into the thing. About the third week of my visit at Twing Hall, he blew into my bedroom one morning while I was toying with a bit of breakfast and thinking of this and that.

"Bertie!" he said in an earnest kind of voice.  
I decided to take a firm line from the start. Young Bingo, if you remember, was at a pretty low ebb at about this juncture. He had not only failed to put his finances on a sound basis over the recent Sermon Handicap, but he had also discovered that Cynthia Wick loved another. These things had jarred the unfortunate mutt, and he had developed a habit of dropping in on me at all hours and decanting his anguished soul on me. I could stand this all right after dinner and even after lunch: but after breakfast, no. We Woosters are amiability itself, but there is a limit.

"Now look here, old friend," I said, "I know your bally heart is broken and all that, and at some future time I shall be delighted to hear all about it, but——"

"I didn't come to talk about that."  
"No? Good egg!"  
"The past," said young Bingo, "is dead. Let us say no more about it."

"Right-o!"  
"I have been wounded to the very depths of my soul, but don't speak about it."

"I won't."  
"Ignore it. Forget it."  
"Absolutely!"  
I hadn't seen him so dashed reasonable for weeks.  
"What I came to see you about this morning, Bertie," he said, fishing a sheet of paper out of his pocket, "was to ask if you would care to come in on another little flutter."  
If there is one thing we Woosters are simply dripping with, it is sporting blood.

I bolted the rest of my sausage and sat up and took notice immediately.  
"Proceed," I said. "You interest me strangely, old bird."  
Bingo laid the paper on the bed.

"On Monday week," he said, "you may or may not know, the annual village school treat takes place. Lord Wickhammersley lends the Hall grounds for the purpose. There will be games and a conjurer and cocoanut shies and tea in a tent. And also sports."

"I know. Cynthia was telling me."  
Young Bingo winced.  
"Would you mind not mentioning that name? I am not made of marble."

"Sorry."  
"Well, as I was saying, this jamboree is slated for Monday week. The question is, are we on?"

"How do you mean, are we on?"  
"I am referring to the sports. Steggles did so well out of the Sermon Handicap that he has decided to make a book on these sports. Punters can be accommodated at ante-post odds or starting price, according to their preference."

Steggles, I don't know if you remember, was one of the gang of youths who were reading for some examination or other with

old Heppenstall down at the vicarage. He was the fellow who had promoted the Sermon Handicap. A bird of considerable enterprise and vast riches, being the only son of one of the biggest bookies in London, but no pal of mine. I never liked the chap. He was a ferret-faced egg with a shifty eye and not a few pimples. On the whole, a nasty growth.

"I think we ought to look into it," said young Bingo.

I pressed the bell.

"I'll consult Jeeves. I don't touch any sporting proposition without his advice. Jeeves," I said, as he drifted in, "rally round."

"Sir?"

"What's that?"

"Rather sporting," said young Bingo. "The competitors enter in couples, each couple being assigned an animal cry and a potato. For instance, let's suppose that you and Jeeves entered. Jeeves would stand at a fixed point holding a potato. You would have your head in a sack and you would grope about trying to find Jeeves and making a noise like a cat. Jeeves also making a noise like a cat. Other competitors would be making noises like cows and pigs and dogs and so on and groping about for *their* potato holders, who would also be making noises like cows and pigs and dogs and so on——"

I stopped the poor fish.

"Jolly, if you're fond of animals," I said, "but on the whole——"

"Precisely, sir," said Jeeves. "I wouldn't touch it."

"Too open, what?"

"Exactly, sir. Very hard to estimate form."

"Carry on, Bingo. Where do we go from there?"

"'Mothers' sack race."



The red haired kid tripped and shot her egg on to the turf thirty yards from the tape.

"Stand by. We want your advice."

"Very good, sir."

"State your case, Bingo."

Bingo stated his case.

"What about it, Jeeves?" I said.

"Do we go in?"

Jeeves pondered to some extent.

"I am inclined to favor the idea, sir."

That was good enough for me.

"Right," I said. "Then we will form

a syndicate and bust the ring.

I supply the money, you supply

the brains, and Bingo—what

do you supply, Bingo?"

"If you will carry me and let

me settle up later," said young

Bingo, "I think I can put you

in the way of winning a parcel

on the mothers' sack race."

"All right. We will put you down

as Inside Information. Now, what

are the events?"

Bingo reached for his paper and

consulted it.

"'Girls' under fourteen fifty yard

dash' seems to open the proceedings."

"Anything to say about that,

Jeeves?"

"No sir. I have no information."

"What's the next?"

"'Boys' and girls' mixed animal

potato race, all ages."

This was a new one to me. I had

never heard of it at any of the big

meetings.

"Ah! That's better. This is where you know something."

"A gift for Mrs. Penworthy, the tobacconist's wife," said Bingo confidently. "I was in at her shop yesterday buying cigarettes, and she told me she had won three times at fairs in Worcestershire. She only moved to these parts a short time ago, so nobody knows about her. She promised me she would keep herself dark. And I think we could get a good price."

"Risk a tenner each way, Jeeves, what?"

"I think so, sir."

"Girls' open egg and spoon race," read Bingo.

"How about that?"

"I doubt if it would be worth while to invest, sir," said Jeeves.

"I am told it is a certainty for last year's winner, Sarah Mills, who will doubtless start an odds-on favorite."

"Good, is she?"

"They tell me in the village that she carries a beautiful egg, sir."

"Then there's the obstacle race," said Bingo. "Risky, in my opinion. Like betting on the Grand National. 'Fathers' hat trimming contest'—another speculative event. That's all, except the choir boys' hundred yards handicap for a pewter mug presented by the vicar—open to all whose voices have not broken before the second Sunday in Epiphany. Willie Chambers won last year, in a canter, receiving fifteen yards. This time he will probably be handicapped out of the race. I don't know what to advise."

"If I might make a suggestion, sir."

I eyed Jeeves with interest. I don't know that I'd ever seen him look so nearly excited.

"You've got something up your sleeve?"

"I have, sir."

"Red-hot?"

"That precisely describes it, sir. I think I may confidently assert that we have the winner of the choir boys' handicap under this very roof, sir. Harold, the page boy."

"Page boy? Do you mean the tubby little chap in buttons one sees bobbing about here and there? Why, dash it, Jeeves, nobody has a greater respect for your knowledge of form than I have, but I'm hanged if I can see Harold catching the judge's eye. He's practically circular, and every time I've seen him he's been leaning up against something, half asleep."

"He receives thirty yards, sir, and could win from scratch. The boy is a flier."

"How do you know?"

Jeeves coughed and there was a dreamy look in his eye.

"I was as much astonished as yourself, sir, when I first became aware of the lad's capabilities. I happened to pursue him one morning with the intention of fetching him a clip on the side of the head—"

"Great Scott, Jeeves! You!"

"Yes, sir. The boy is of an outspoken disposition and had made an opprobrious remark respecting my personal appearance."

"What did he say about your appearance?"

"I have forgotten, sir," said Jeeves with a touch of austerity. "But it was opprobrious. I endeavored to correct him, but he outdistanced me by yards and made good his escape."

"But I say, Jeeves, this is sensational. And yet—if he's such a sprinter, why hasn't anybody in the village found it out? Surely he plays with the other boys?"

"No, sir. As his lordship's page boy, Harold does not mix with the village lads."

"Bit of a snob, what?"

"He is somewhat acutely alive to the existence of class distinctions, sir."

"You're absolutely certain he's such a wonder?" said Bingo. "I mean, it wouldn't do to plunge unless you're sure."

"If you desire to ascertain the boy's form by personal inspection, sir, it will be a simple matter to arrange a secret trial."

"I'm bound to say I should feel easier in my mind," I said.

"Then if I may take a shilling from the money on your dressing table—"

"What for?"

"I propose to bribe the lad to speak slightly of the second footman's squint, sir. Charles is somewhat sensitive on the point and should undoubtedly make the lad extend himself. If you will be at the first floor passage window, overlooking the back door, in half an hour's time—"

I don't know when I've dressed in such a hurry. As a rule I'm what you might call a slow and careful dresser—I like to linger over the tie and see that the trousers are just so—but this morning I was all worked up. I just shoved on my things anyhow and joined Bingo at the window with a quarter of an hour to spare.

The passage window looked down on to a broad sort of paved courtyard which ended after

about twenty yards in an archway through a high wall. Beyond this archway you got on to a strip of the drive, which curved round for another thirty yards or so till it was lost behind a thick shrubbery. I put myself in

the stripling's place and thought what steps I would take with a second footman after me. There was only one thing to do—leg it for the shrubbery and take cover, which meant that at least fifty yards would have to be covered—an excellent test. If good old Harold could fight off the second footman's challenge long enough to allow him to reach the bushes, there wasn't a choir boy in England who could give him thirty yards in the hundred. I waited, all of a twitter, for what seemed hours, and then suddenly there was a confused noise without and something round and blue and buttony shot through the back door and buzzed for the archway like a mustang. And about two seconds later out came the second footman, going his hardest.

There was nothing to it. Absolutely nothing. The field never had a chance. Long before the footman reached the half way mark, Harold was in the bushes, throwing stones. I came away from the window thrilled to the marrow; and when I met Jeeves on the stairs I was so moved that I nearly grasped his hand.

"Jeeves," I said, "no discussion! The Wooster shirt goes on this boy!"

"Very good, sir," said Jeeves.



The worst of these country meetings is that you can't plunge as heavily as you would like when you get a good thing because it alarms the ring. Steggle, though pimply, was, as I have indicated, no chump, and if I had invested all I wanted to he would have put two and two together. I managed to get a good solid bet down for the syndicate, however, though it did make him look thoughtful. I heard in the next few days that he had been making searching inquiries in the village concerning Harold; but nobody could tell him anything and eventually he came to the conclusion, I suppose, that I must be having a long shot on the strength of that thirty yards' start. Public opinion wavered between Jimmy Goode, receiving ten yards, at seven to two, and Alexander Bartlett, with six yards' start, at eleven to four. Willie Chambers, scratch, was offered to the public at two to one but found no takers.

We were taking no chances on the big event, and directly we had got our money on at a nice hundred to twelve Harold was put into strict training. It was a wearing business, and I can understand now why most of the big trainers are grim, silent men who look as though they had suffered. The kid wanted constant watching. It was no good talking to him about honor and glory and how proud his mother would be when he wrote and told her he had won a real cup—the moment blighted Harold discovered that training meant knocking off pastry, taking exercise and keeping away from the cigarettes, he was all against it; and it was only by unceasing vigilance that we managed to keep him in any shape at all. It was the diet that was the stumbling block. As far as exercise went, we could generally arrange for a sharp dash every morning with the assistance of the second footman. It ran into money, of course, but that couldn't be helped. Still, when a kid has simply to wait till the butler's back is turned to have the run of the pantry and has only to nip into the smoking room to collect a handful of the best Turkish, training becomes a rocky job. We could only hope that on the day his natural stamina would pull him through.

And then one evening young Bingo came back from the links with a disturbing story. He had been in the habit of giving Harold mild exercise in the afternoons by taking him out as a caddy.

At first he seemed to think it humorous, the poor chump. He bubbled over with merry mirth as he began his tale.

"I say, rather funny this afternoon," he said. "You ought to have seen Steggle's face!"

"Seen Steggle's face? What for?"

"When he saw young Harold sprint, I mean."

I was filled with a grim foreboding of an awful doom.

"Good heavens! You didn't let Harold sprint in front of Steggle!"

Young Bingo's jaw dropped.

"I never thought of that," he said gloomily. "It wasn't my fault. I was playing a round with Steggle, and after we'd finished we went into the club house for a drink, leaving Harold with the clubs outside. In about five minutes we came out and there was the kid on the gravel practicing swings with Steggle's driver and a stone. When he saw us coming the kid dropped the club and was over the horizon like a streak. Steggle was absolutely dumbfounded. And I must say it was a revelation even to me. The kid certainly gave of his best. Of course it's a nuisance in a way, but I don't see on second thoughts," said Bingo, brightening up, "what it matters. We're on at a good price. We've nothing to lose by the kid's form becoming known. I take it he will start odds-on, but that doesn't affect us."

I looked at Jeeves. Jeeves looked at me.

"It affects us all right if he doesn't start at all."

"Precisely, sir."

"What do you mean?" asked Bingo.

"If you ask me," I said, "I think Steggle will try to nobble him before the race."

"Good Lord! I never thought of that." Bingo blanched. "You don't think he would really do it?"

"I think he would have a jolly good try. Steggle is a bad man. From now on, Jeeves, we must watch Harold like hawks."

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"Ceaseless vigilance, what?"

"Precisely, sir."

"You wouldn't care to sleep in his room, Jeeves?"

"No, sir, I should not."

"No, nor would I if it comes to that. But dash it all," I said, "we're letting ourselves get rattled. We're losing our nerve. This won't do. How can Steggle possibly get at Harold, even if he wants to?"

There was no cheering young Bingo up. He's one of those birds who simply leap at the morbid view if you give them half a chance.

"There are all sorts of ways of nobbling favorites," he said in a sort of death bed voice. "You ought to read some of these racing novels. In 'Pipped on the Post,' Lord Jasper Mauleverer as near as a toucher outed Bonny Betsy by bribing the head lad to slip a cobra into her stable the night before the Derby."

"What are the chances of a cobra biting Harold, Jeeves?"

"Slight, I should imagine, sir. And in such an event, knowing the boy as intimately as I do, my anxiety would be entirely for the snake."

"Still, unceasing vigilance, Jeeves."

"Most certainly, sir."

I must say I got a bit fed with young Bingo in the next few days. It's all very well for a fellow with a big winner in his stable to exercise proper care, but in my opinion Bingo overdid it. The blighter's mind appeared to be absolutely saturated with racing fiction; and in stories of that kind, as far as I could make out, no horse is ever allowed to start in a race without at least a dozen attempts to put it out of action. He stuck to Harold like a plaster. Never let the unfortunate kid out of his sight. Of course it meant a lot to the poor old egg if he could collect on this race, because it would give him enough money to chuck his tutoring job and get back to London; but all the same he needn't have waked me up at three in the morning twice running—once to tell me we ought to cook Harold's food ourselves to prevent doping; the other time to say that he had heard mysterious noises in the shrubbery. But he reached the limit, in my opinion, when he insisted on my going to evening service on Sunday, the day before the sports.

"Why on earth?" I said, never being much of a lad for even-song.

"Well, I can't go myself. I shan't be here. I've got to go to London today with young Egbert." Egbert was Lord Wickhammersley's son, the one Bingo was tutoring. "He's going for a visit down in Kent, and I've got to see him off at Charing Cross. It's an infernal nuisance. I shan't be back till Monday afternoon. In fact, I shall miss most of the sports, I expect. Everything, therefore, depends on you, Bertie."

"But why should either of us go to evening service?"

"Ass! Harold sings in the choir, doesn't he?"

"What about it? I can't stop him dislocating his neck over a high note, if that's what you're afraid of."

"Fool! Steggle sings in the choir too. There may be dirty work after the service."

"What absolute rot!"

"Is it!" said young Bingo. "Well, let me tell you that in 'Jenny, the Girl Jockey,' the villain kidnapped the boy who was to ride the favorite the night before the big race, and he was the only one who understood and could control the horse, and if the heroine hadn't dressed up in riding things and—"

"Oh, all right, all right. But if there's any danger it seems to me the simplest thing would be for Harold not to turn out on Sunday evening."

"He must turn out. You seem to think the infernal kid is a monument of rectitude, beloved by all. He's got the shakiest reputation of any kid in the village. His name is as near being mud as it can jolly well stick. He's played hookey from the choir so often that the vicar told him if one more thing happened he would fire him out. Nice chumps we should look if he was scratched the night before the race!"

Well, of course, that being so there was nothing for it but to toddle along.

There's something about evening service in a country church that makes a fellow feel drowsy and peaceful. Sort of end of a perfect day feeling. Old Heppenstall, the vicar, was up in the pulpit, and he has a kind of regular, bleating delivery that assists thought. They had left the door open and the air was full of a mixed scent of trees and honeysuckle and mildew and villagers' Sunday clothes. As far as the eye could reach you could see farmers propped up in restful attitudes, breathing heavily; and the children in the congregation who had sidged during the earlier part of the proceedings were now lying back in a surfeited sort of coma. The last rays of the setting sun shone through the stained glass windows; birds were twittering in the trees; the women's dresses crackled gently in the stillness. Peaceful. That's what I'm driving at. I felt peaceful. Everybody felt peaceful. And that is why the explosion, when it came, sounded like the end of all things.

I call it an explosion because that was what it seemed like



Five minutes before the race that blighter Stegless so weighed her down with cake and tea that she blew up in the first fifty yards.

T. D. SHANNON

when it broke loose. One moment a dreamy hush was all over the place, broken only by old Heppenstall talking about our duty to our neighbors; and then suddenly a sort of piercing, shrieking squeal that got you right between the eyes and ran all the way down to your spine and out at the soles of the feet.

"Ee-ee-ee-ee-ee! Oo-ee! Ee-ee-ee-ee!"

It sounded like about six hundred pigs having their tails twisted simultaneously, but it was simply the kid Harold, who appeared to be having some species of fit. He was jumping up and down and slapping at the back of his neck. And about every other second he would take a deep breath and give out another of the squeals.

Well, I mean, you can't do that sort of thing in the middle of the sermon during evening service without exciting remark. The congregation came out of its trance with a jerk and climbed on the pews to get a better view. Old Heppenstall stopped in the middle of a sentence and spun round. And a couple of vergers with great presence of mind bounded up the aisle like

leopards, collected Harold, still squealing, and marched him out. They disappeared into the vestry and I grabbed my hat and legged it round to the stage door, full of apprehension and what not. I couldn't think what the deuce could have happened, but somewhere dimly behind the proceedings there seemed to me to lurk the hand of the blighter Stegless.

By the time I got there and managed to get someone to open the door, which was locked, the service seemed to be over. Old Heppenstall was standing in the middle of a crowd of choir boys and vergers and sextons and what not, putting the wretched Harold through it with no little vim. I had come in at the tail end of what must have been a fairly fruity oration.

"Wretched boy! How dare you——"

"I got a sensitive skin!"

"This is no time to talk about your skin——"

"Somebody put a beetle down my back!"

"Absurd!"

"I felt it wriggling——"

(Continued on page 158)

## The Purity of the Turf

(Continued from page 107)

"Nonsense!"

"Sounds pretty thin, doesn't it?" said someone at my side.

It was Steggle, dash him. Clad in a snowy surplice or cassock or whatever they call it, and wearing an expression of grave concern, the blighter had the cold, cynical crust to look me straight in the eyeball.

"Did you put a beetle down his neck?" I cried.

"Me!" said Steggle. "Me!"

Old Heppenstall was putting on the black cap.

"I do not credit a word of your story, wretched boy! I have warned you before and now the time has come to act. You cease from this moment to be a member of my choir. Go, miserable child!"

Steggles plucked at my sleeve.

"In that case," he said, "those bets, you know. I'm afraid you lose your money. It's a pity you didn't put it on S. P. I always think S. P.'s the only safe way."

I gave him one look. Not a bit of good, of course.

"And they talk about the purity of the turf!" I said. And I meant it to sting!

Jeeves received the news bravely but I think the man was a bit rattled beneath the surface.

"An ingenious young gentleman, Mr. Steggle, sir."

"A bally swindler, you mean."

"Perhaps that would be a more exact description. However, these things will happen on the turf, and it is useless to complain."

"I wish I had your sunny disposition, Jeeves!" Jeeves bowed.

"We now rely, then, it would seem, sir, almost entirely on Mrs. Penworthy. Should she justify Mr. Little's encomiums and show real class in the mothers' sack race, our gains will balance our losses."

"Yes, but that's not much consolation when you've been looking forward to a big win."

"It is just possible that we may still find ourselves on the right side of the ledger after all, sir. Before Mr. Little left, I persuaded him to invest a small sum for the syndicate of which you were kind enough to make me a member, sir, on the girls' egg and spoon race."

"On Sarah Mills?"

"No, sir. On a long priced outsider. Little Prudence Baxter, sir, the child of his lordship's head gardener. Her father assures me she has a very steady hand. She is accustomed to bring him his mug

of beer from the cottage each afternoon and she has never spilled a drop."

Well, that sounded as though young Prudence's control was good. But how about speed? With seasoned performers like Sarah Mills entered, the thing practically amounted to a classic race, and in these big events you must have speed.

"I am aware that it is what is termed a long shot, sir. Still, I thought it judicious."

"Well, I suppose it's all right. I've never known you make a blunder yet."

"Thank you very much, sir."

I'm bound to say that, as a general rule, my idea of a large afternoon would be to keep as far away from a village school treat as possible. A sticky business. But with such grave issues toward, if you know what I mean, I sank my prejudices on this occasion and rolled up. I found the proceedings about as scaly as I had expected. It was a warm day and the Hall grounds were a dense, practically liquid mass of peasantry. Kids seethed to and fro. One of them, a small girl of sorts, grabbed my hand and hung on to it as I clove my way through the jam to where the mothers' sack race was to finish. We hadn't been introduced but she seemed to think I would do as well as anyone else to talk to about the rag doll she had won in the "lucky dip," and she rather spread herself on the topic.

"I'm going to call it Gertrude," she said. "And I shall undress it every night and put it to bed and wake it up in the morning and dress it and put it to bed at night and wake it up next morning—"

"I say, old thing," I said, "I don't want to hurry you and all that, but you couldn't condense it a bit, could you? I'm rather anxious to see the finish of this race. The Wooster fortunes are by way of hanging on it."

"I'm going to run in a race soon," she said, shelving the doll for the nonce and descending to ordinary chit chat.

"Yes?" I said. Distract, if you know what I mean, and trying to peer through the chinks in the crowd. "What race?"

"Egg'n spoon."

"No, really! Are you Sarah Mills?"

"Na-ow!" Registering scorn. "I'm Prudence Baxter."

Naturally this put our relations on a different footing. I gazed at her with considerable interest. One of the stable. I must say she didn't look much of a flier. She was short and round. Bit out of condition, I thought.

"I say," I said, "that being so, you mustn't dash about in the hot sun and take the edge off yourself. You must conserve your energies, old friend. Sit down here in the shade."

"Don't want to sit down."

"Well, take it easy anyhow."

The kid flitted to another topic.

"I'm a good girl," she said.

"I bet you are. I hope you're a good egg and spoon racer, too."

"Harold's a bad boy. Harold squealed in church and isn't allowed to come to the treat. I'm glad," continued this ornament of her sex, wrinkling her nose virtuously, "because he's a bad boy. He pulled my hair Friday. Harold isn't coming to the treat! Harold isn't coming to the treat! Harold isn't coming to the treat!" she chanted, making a regular song of it.

"Don't rub it in, my dear old gardener's daughter," I pleaded. "You don't know it, but you've hit on a painful subject."

"Ah, Wooster, my dear fellow! So you have made friends with this little lady?"

It was old Heppenstall, beaming pretty profusely. Life and soul of the party.

"I am delighted, my dear Wooster," he went on, "quite delighted at the way you young men are throwing yourselves into the spirit of this little festivity of ours."

"Oh, yes?" I said.

"Oh, yes. Even Rupert Steggle. I must confess that my opinion of Rupert Steggle has materially altered for the better this afternoon."

Mine hadn't. But I didn't say so.

"I had always considered Rupert Steggle, between ourselves, a rather self-centered youth, by no means the kind who would put himself out to further the enjoyment of his fellows. And yet twice within the last half hour I have observed him escorting Mrs. Penworthy, our worthy tobacconist's wife, to the refreshment tent—"

I left him standing. I shook off the clutching hand of the Baxter kid and hared it rapidly to the spot where the mothers' sack race was just finishing. I had a horrid presentiment that there had been more dirty work at the cross-roads. The first person I ran into was young Bingo. I grabbed him by the arm.

"Who won?"

"I don't know. I didn't notice." There was bitterness in the chappie's voice. "It wasn't Mrs. Penworthy, dash her! Bertie, that hound Steggle is nothing more nor less than one of our leading snakes. I don't know how he heard about her but

he must have got on to it that she was dangerous. Do you know what he did? He lured that miserable woman into the refreshment tent five minutes before the race, and brought her out so weighed down with cake and tea that she blew up in the first twenty yards. Just rolled over and lay there! Well, thank goodness we still have Harold."

I gaped at the poor chump.

"Harold! Haven't you heard?"

"Heard?" Bingo turned a delicate green. "Heard what? I haven't heard anything. I only arrived five minutes ago. Came here straight from the station. What has happened? Tell me!"

I slipped him the information. He stared at me for a moment in a ghastly sort of way, then with a hollow groan tottered away and was lost in the crowd. A nasty knock, poor chap.

They were clearing the decks now for the egg and spoon race, and I thought I might as well stay where I was and watch the finish. Not that I had much hope. Young Prudence was a good conversationalist, but she didn't seem to me to be the build for a winner.

As far as I could see through the mob they got off to a good start. A short, red haired child was making the running, with a freckled blonde second and Sarah Mills lying up an easy third. Our nominee was straggling along with the field, well behind the leaders. It was not hard even as early as this to spot the winner. There was a grace, a practiced precision, in the way Sarah Mills held her spoon that told its own story. She was cutting out a good pace, but her egg didn't even wobble. A natural egg and spooner if ever there was one.

Class will tell. Thirty yards from the tape, the red haired kid tripped over her feet and shot her egg on to the turf. The freckled blonde fought gamely, but she had run herself out half way down the straight, and Sarah Mills came past and home on a tight rein by several lengths, a popular winner. The blonde was second. A sniffing female in blue gingham beat a pie-faced kid in pink for the place money, and Prudence Baxter, Jeeves's long shot, was either fifth or sixth, I couldn't see which.

And then I was carried along with the crowd to where old Heppenstall was going to present the prizes. I found myself standing next to the man Steggles.

"Hullo, old chap," he said, very bright and cheery. "You've had a bad day, I'm afraid."

I looked at him with silent scorn. Lost on the blighter, of course.

"It's not been a good meeting for any of the big punters," he went on. "Poor old Bingo Little went down badly over that egg and spoon race."

I hadn't been meaning to chat with the fellow but I was startled.

"How do you mean badly?" I said. "We—he only had a small bet on."

"I don't know what you call small. He had thirty quid each way on the Baxter kid."

The landscaper eered before me. "What!"

"Thirty quid at ten to one. I thought he must have heard something, but apparently not. The race went by the form book all right."

I was trying to do sums in my head. I was just in the middle of working out the syndicate's losses when old Heppenstall's voice came sort of faintly to me out of the



distance. He had been pretty fatherly and debonair when ladling out the prizes for the other events, but now he had suddenly grown all pained and grieved. He peered sorrowfully at the multitude.

"With regard to the girls' egg and spoon race, which has just concluded," he said, "I have a painful duty to perform. Circumstances have arisen which it is impossible to ignore. It is not too much to say that I am stunned."

He gave the populace about five seconds to wonder why he was stunned, then went on.

"Three years ago, as you are aware, I was compelled to expunge from the list of events at this annual festi- the fathers'

quarter mile, owing to reports coming to my ears of wagers taken and given on the result at the village inn and a strong suspicion that on at least one occasion the race had actually been sold by the speediest runner. That unfortunate occurrence shook my faith in human nature, I admit—but still there was one event at least which I confidently expected to remain untainted by the miasma of professionalism. I allude to the girls' egg and spoon race. It seems, alas, that I was too sanguine."

He stopped again and wrestled with his feelings.

"I will not weary you with the unpleasant details. I will merely say that before the race was run a stranger in our midst,

the man servant of one of the guests at the Hall—I will not specify with more particularity—approached several of the competitors and presented each of them with five shillings on condition that they—er—finished. A belated sense of remorse has led him to confess to me what he did, but it is too late. The evil is accomplished, and retribution must take its course. It is no time for half measures. I must be firm. I rule that Sarah Mills, Jane Parker, Bessie Clay, and Rosie Jukes, the first four to pass the winning post, have forfeited their amateur status and are disqualified, and this handsome work bag, presented by Lord Wickhammersley, goes to Prudence Baxter. Prudence, step forward!"