

## THE BOOKMAKER

“THERE’S lots of chaps,” said Smithy, “who are walkin’ about the streets without keepers who ought by rights to be down at the master tailor’s bein’ measured for strait weskets.”

It was Smithy’s Saturday to Monday vacation, which he had agreed to spend at my house. Smithy takes a delight in the discussion of all kinds of gloomy subjects. He revels in the Positively Dreadful and is keenly interested in the Indescribably Ghastly.

‘ We had spent a pleasant Saturday evening. Starting with How it Feels to be Hung, we had moved by easy stages to Murder as a Fine Art ; thence to the vexed question, Should Executions be Public ? which I think we threshed

out very thoroughly. We drifted to Criminal Lunacy, taking a short cut by way of Suicide, and it was at this point that Smithy expressed his doubt regarding the sanity of the majority of his fellow-creatures.

“With some chaps it’s gels,” philosophized Smithy; “they get quite balmy about ’em. I know one chap—a very good character, too, with a couple of badges—who writes poetry to his gel.

“There’s a chap!” said Smithy hopelessly, “plays the concertina like—like Paddyrisky,” he illustrated daringly, “an’ you see him sittin’ down night after night chewin’ his pen like—anything.

“There he sits—Cole’s his name—thinkin’ an’ frownin’ and writin’ an’ scratchin’ out again.

“‘Wot rhymes with “dear”?’ he sez to Nobby Clark.

" 'Beer,' sez Nobby as quick as lightnin'.

" 'That won't do,' sez poor Cole. 'Wot rhymes with "waken" ?'

" 'Eggs an' bacon,' sez Nobby.

" 'That won't do, either,' sez poor old Cole, and goes on scribblin' an' scratchin' out. Bimeby he sez :

" 'What rhymes with "bell" ?'

" So Nobby tells him, an' old Cole gets offended. 'I'm writin' to my gel,' he sez, 'an' I can't use that sort of language.'

" So he goes on writin' an' arskin' advice an' not takin' it. He spends nights an' nights writin' a poem about love, an' when his gel gets it, she thinks old Cole's been drinkin', an' she don't notice the words come in rhyme at the end of the lines till she's read it twice— an' then she thinks it's an accident."

Private Cole was evidently one of

Smithy's eligibles for an Institute of Restraint.

"Then there's Yatesey—Yatesey of 'C'—he's another of 'em," resumed Smithy indignantly, "no, Yatesey don't write poetry, far from it. Yatesey is wot I call a dangerous lunatic. I don't so much mind a chap wot writes poetry, or even a chap wot collects stamps an' is always tryin' to swap a blue Cape of Good Hope for a pink Channel Island, but Yatesey is worse."

"Yatesey" is Smithyesque for "Yates," I may remark in passing.

"Yatesey's got a bit of money wot his father sends him from time to time. Some weeks it's a dollar, some weeks it's a couple of shillin's, just how the coke business happens to be.

"Yatesey wouldn't be a bad chap if it wasn't for his system.

"When Nobby Clark is short of money,

he lures old Yatesey into the wet canteen and gets him to talk about it.

" ' I think I'd like you to talk about that system of yours, Yatesey,' sez Nobby—I tell you Nobby's one of the artfullest chaps goin' — ' I've got an idea I'd like to have it explained, I've got a little bit of money left me by an uncle wot went abroad.'

" Yatesey's system is a sort of mixture. You back a first favourite for a shillin' an' if it don't come orf you back a second favourite next day for two shillin's, if that don't come orf you back the third favourite the next day for four shillin's, and by that time you've got no money left, so you can't lose much money at it,' explained Smithy lucidly.

" Nobby comes to me one day an' sez :

" ' I'm gettin' fed up with this chap an' his bloomin' system. It's no joke, Smithy, listenin' for an hour about how

Nazzems could beat Pretty Bertie if the distance wasn't so far an' the weights was different.'

"Yatesey," explained Smithy, "used to sit down' with a book of form an' a ready reckoner, an' work out how much money he'd make if he only had a startin' capital of a hundred pounds, but he never used to do no bettin' hisself till Nobby persuaded him. Some days he'd sit down with his little books an' his pint of beer an' buy a pub, an' a dogcart, an' marry a young lady in the High Street. Another day he'd go round the world on a motor car, smokin' shillin' cigars; another day he'd buy his discharge an' then go an' give a bit of his mind to the sergeant-major, an' drive out of barracks in his own carriage throwin' five-pound notes away out of the winder.

"I must say," confessed Smithy, "his

system looked all right on paper, but I found out afterwards that when it didn't exactly work out he used to pretend to hisself that the horse he ought 've backed accordin' to his system was 'another one altogether.

" Well, to get back to Nobby :

" ' Smithy,' sez he, lookin' round to see if nobody was listenin', ' Smithy, you've come into a tidy bit of money.'

" ' Have I ? ' I sez.

" ' Yes,' he sez, ' your grandmother's left you a small fortune,' he sez with 'a wink.

" ' Go to ! ' I sez.

" ' Wot's more,' sez Nobby, ' you're goin' to make a book.'

" ' Wot sort of a book ? ' I sez, puzzled, an' then Nobby tells me, an' next mornin' when Yatesey comes along an' slips a bit of paper into my hand with a couple of bob I thanked him kindly.

“Nonsuch 2s. to win,’ sez the paper, so I gave a shillin’ to Nobby an’ kept one for myself an’ tore the paper up.

“Nobby comes up to me that night—

“‘It’s all right,’ he sez, ‘Nonsuch was a bād ninth,’ so we spent the two shillin’s.

“Next day Yatesey gives me another paper an’ four shillin’s.

“‘Sooner, 4s. to win,’ sez the paper, so me and Nobby divided the money.

“‘Sooner didn’t win,’ sez Nobby that night. ‘He stopped to scratch his ear an’ dead-heated with the starter.’ So we had a very pleasant evenin’.

“Old Yatesey looked a bit tired next mornin’, but he turned up with a bit of paper an’ eight shillin’s, an’ I shook hands with him, an’ Nobby called him a true sportsman.

“‘Pride of Devonshire, 8s. to win,’ sez the paper. So me an’ Nobby had four shillin’s each.”



Smithy helped himself to a fill of Craven.

"That night Nobby comes up lookin' ill. 'Pride of Devonshire won,' he sez, 'at ten to one,' he sez.

"An', sure enough, along comes 'old Yatesey, lookin' as pleased as Punch.

"'I'll trouble you for four pound eight,' he sez.

"'Wait a bit, young feller,' I sez sternly. 'Saturday's my settlin' day,' I sez, an' Nobby chips in :

"'I'm surprised at you, Yatesey, a true sportsman like you, come worryin' Smithy for a paltry four quid,' he sez, 'it'd serve you right if Smithy wouldn't bet with you again,' he sez, and Yatesey begged pardon an' hoped no offence was taken where none was meant.

"Me an' Nobby went down town to think it out," continued Smithy.

"Let's give him back his eight shillin's

an' owe him the rest,' I sez, 'tell him it was a joke.'

"Nobby was readin' the sportin' in the *Evening News*, an' bimeby he gave a yell.

"'Pride of Devonshire's disqualified,' he sez, 'for borin' an' crossin',' he sez.

"So we spent the eight shillin's and went back to barracks to break the news to Yatesey.

"Next mornin' Yatesey didn't turn up with his paper, so me an' Nobby went down to see him.

"'No,' sez Yatesey, 'that system wasp't much good—it don't make no allowances for a horse bein' disqualified,' he sez. 'I'm workin' out a new system altogether.'

"'When you've got it worked out,' I sez, 'let's hear from you.'"