

CHARLES THORPE ONE OF NEBRASKA'S TRUE SPORTSMEN

Short But Interesting Story of a Boy Who Saved His Money While Riding Racers and Who Can Now Face "Overweight" With the Satisfaction of a Man Who Is Well Fixed.

CHARLES THORPE is one sportsman who knew enough to save his money, and as a consequence is able to spend his declining years on a Nebraska farm in peace, contentment and plenty. For twenty-four years Charles Thorpe was one of the central figures of the turf in Europe and America and during that time he had foresight enough to keep looking ahead and laying by a sufficiency to last him when he should forever quit the excitement of the turf and lead the life of a retired farmer instead of still keeping up with the sporting world. With a large farm, which yearly produces enough to supply the wants of a man who is used to having everything he wants, Mr. Thorpe lives in a large home in town, at Geneva, Neb., where he is surrounded by the trophies of many a hard battle on the turf, and where he has a large library for his spare moments and where he has everything his heart desires.

Putting corn into his cattle and hogs and seeing them turn into money is now more to the liking of this farmer-jockey who has ridden on nearly all of the principal tracks of America and on many of the foreign tracks, who has ridden the winner in the French Derby and piloted many horses of the titled race horse owners of England, France and Germany. At the age of 43 Charles Thorpe has seen enough of the world to satisfy most travelers and is living a contented life near his farm, making an occasional trip to a trap shoot, that he may meet with the "boys" who have been his friends for so many years.

Thorpe was born on the West Side in Chicago, and until he was 8 years old lived in that portion of the city, doing all his riding on a rooking horse. When 9 years of age he moved with his parents to Whiting, Monona county, Iowa, where they lived on a farm. Every farmer's boy at that time had a pony and Thorpe was no exception, and boys' races, steeplechasing and jumping ditches were his hobby. He became recognized as the champion boy rider of the county. He started his long career as a jockey by riding at a county fair in Iowa. It was not a case of riding "Sweet Molasses" to save the mortgage on the farm, but simply a case of a race horse owner wanting some boy who had nerve enough to ride a fractious mare he had entered in the race. The stock of professional riders on hand was small, and when the owner asked Thorpe if he had nerve enough to ride the mare, he found a taker for his banter and won the race. This was a great start for the little fellow and fired him with a desire to ride some more, and ride he did. The number of his mounts since that time has been legion. From January 1 to September 30 of one season he rode 608, of whom he piloted 178 into first place, 120 into second place, 108 into third place and 207 unplaced.

First Ride at Geneva

Following a few county fairs, he found himself in 1887 at Geneva, Neb., his present home, where he rode Belle K. to victory. Thorpe rode at the first state fair held in Omaha and the first state fair held at Lincoln. When he started his career as a jockey he weighed 95 pounds, but now weighs about 132. Farming 260 acres of Fillmore county land does not tend to cut down his weight, neither does the keeping up of his \$15,000 home in Geneva.

February 6, 1893, he was married at Geneva to Miss Alice Bassett and until her death last November Mrs. Thorpe was his constant companion. When he went abroad Mrs. Thorpe was with him, and to his wife more than to any other agency, he gives credit for saving the money he secured for his services on the track. When he received \$500 extra for winning a race, as he often did on the European tracks, he did not immediately set out to squander the money as do so many other youths when they come suddenly upon some unexpected windfall, but he immediately turned over the money to his wife, well knowing that it would be in safe hands.

During his career as a jockey, Thorpe did not have to rely upon windfalls for his reward for riding winners, as he was expected to put the horses to the front. For several years he rode in America for Burns & Waterhouse and during that time his salary from the firm was \$12,000 a year, and besides that he was allowed to ride outside mounts in any race in which his employers did not have a horse entered. Thus his earnings ranged most of the time around the \$20,000 a year mark.

Speaking of windfalls, Thorpe has reason to remember one in particular. While riding the horses of Count de Harcourt in Paris for the salary of \$10,000 a year, he was one day approached by Count de Portailles, who had a horse entered in the French Derby. As Thorpe's employer did not have a horse entered in this event, Thorpe was privileged to ride for an outsider, so he took the mount, little expecting to win. When he pushed that 100 to 1 shot in a winner none were more surprised than Thorpe and the owner of the horse. Thorpe was even more surprised when the owner handed him a package of bank notes containing \$5,000. The race was worth \$65,000 to the winner. Thorpe's one ambition while on the American turf was to ride a winner in the American Derby, but this he was never permitted to do. He has won the Tennessee Derby, the Arkansas Derby and numerous other derbies, but never the American.

Nerve His Great Asset

One of the great assets of any jockey is his nerve, and Thorpe was not lacking in that qualification. He had it in abundance. Nor was the fact that he has had nearly every bone in his body broken at some time in his career sufficient to stop him from engaging in the dangerous occupation which he had chosen. He has had both legs broken, one of them several times, his fingers broken, his ribs shattered, and been in bed on numerous occasions packed with ice bags to head off concussion of the brain, but none of these have been sufficient to stop his efforts to push his horse through any opening in the bunch which might present itself. And after it is all over, Charles Thorpe shows few effects from the numerous bumps he has received on many tracks. When earning \$15,000 a year as a jockey, Thorpe was still a mercurial boy, both in age and stature. In his prime as a rider he weighed from 95 to 98 pounds, but nature was trying to raise the ante on him, and it was a continual fight to keep down the weight. To hold the desired place as premier jockey, he had to keep below the five-stone mark, and to do this had to forego such food as tends to make a traveling man sleek and well-fed.

Charley was called "lucky," and for years he carried in his pocket his own obituary notice, written and published in three St. Louis papers. The report which was sent out from that city many years ago that he had fallen in front of the grandstand and had the life crushed out of him is still fresh in the minds of many followers of the turf. Charley himself tells that, as he was run into and he was lifted skyward, his only recollection is that of women screaming in the stands and wondering what the result would be when he reached the ground and was run over by the horses following behind. For the next twenty-four hours the world is a blank to him except as the hospital nurses told it to him afterward. To many it seems strange that such experiences did not drive him from the turf, but, like the true soldier who has smelt the powder and heard the whiz of the bullets, he seemed to enter the contest with more zest than ever when he was again able to ride. It is said of a rider that he, like a poet, is born, not made, and no accident, no matter how severe, can quench his desire to again enter the lists as soon as the doctors say he is able.

Looked Like His Last

Another serious accident to Thorpe is recorded from St. Paul, where, after winning a race and the admiration of the assembled thousands, his horse fell and carried its rider down with him, to be trampled under the feet of the other horses following close behind the winner. He lifted his head from the dust, only to be knocked back again by another horse, and then it was thought his end had come and that he had rode his last race, for the blood was streaming from his wounds. He says that the thought entered his head that his last race had been won. A couple of weeks of careful nursing again sent him back to the track.

In the late years of Thorpe's career as a jockey it was by the



CHARLES THORPE.

hardest kind of an effort that he was able to keep within weight. On returning from a camping trip in the mountains one spring he found that he weighed 120 pounds and that it was necessary to cut his weight fifteen pounds before he could ride. He had a Chinese cook named Dick Lo Lee, who was in the Thorpe family for years and who knew just what to prepare for the little jockey when he was trying to get within the weight limit. While on these summer outings Thorpe always ate to the limit of his appetite and then when the time for training came he had to pay up for it all by denying himself all the good things which others around him were permitted to eat.

Thorpe tells of a most thrilling experience he had in Paris in an automobile before those machines were as common as they are in the days of the New York to Paris race. He and Lester Reiff, Harry Vernon and Eddie Spencer, four American jockeys racing on the English tracks, decided to spend Sunday in Paris. "We took the night boat to spend Sunday in Paris," said Thorpe, "and Vernon claimed he knew all about running automobiles. So we took a racing machine to go to Longchamps. Well, I think I have ridden as fast as

most people, but that ride seemed to me to be the fastest I ever took. I made up my mind then never to get into an automobile again, not even if the man who made them was to run them. We ran on the sidewalks, over ditches and through fences, and after trying for what seemed a month to stop the cursed thing we ran right in the Arc de Triomphe, boosting all of us poor jockeys higher than we were ever thrown from horses. Gendarmes surrounded us and we were about to go to the bastille, when along came W. K. Vanderbilt, and I don't know how he did it, but he squared the whole mixup. Mr. Vanderbilt offered to take us in his machine, but we were all scared and beat it to the nearest cab."

On his return from his first trip to the foreign tracks Mr. Thorpe gave an interview to The Bee in which he expressed a preference for the English style of racing, saying it was fairer and cleaner than the American style. He said that while a crack could command \$12,000 a year in either America or Europe, riding in England was more profitable because the English noblemen for whom he rode were more generous with their tips after a ride on a winning mount. As a proof

of his assertion he had a roll of \$18,000 which had been his savings for the year, and in addition his wife had numerous large diamonds which would be the envy of wealthy aristocrats if they should see them.

Terror to Bookmakers

While in California Thorpe was the bugbear to the bookmakers. While he was riding the Burns & Waterhouse horses it seemed as though Thorpe and the stable was a hard combination to beat. An old-timer tells of a race he saw there when Bee Bee, a horse no one thought had a chance, was sent to the post with Thorpe in the saddle. Someone started the hunch that Bee Bee was to win and all the pickers around the ring commenced to lay on Bee Bee. Finally the price was forced to the bottom and one bookmaker was heard to say, "I can't see anything to that Bee Bee except that Thorpe is going to ride." The race was on and as Bee Bee came home four lengths to the good one bookmaker was heard to say, "If there's a picker in this lot that is not on Bee Bee I would like to see him."

An idea of some of the ovations Charles Thorpe received while riding in this country is given by this report of a win he made at Oakley, one of the old tracks at Cincinnati:

Perhaps no jockey on any track was ever made the recipient of such a demonstration as was accorded Charles Thorpe at Oakley yesterday. How the ears of those who have maligned this jockey must have tingled when they heard the tumult that greeted Thorpe's victory on Captain Drane in the third race. Yesterday Thorpe sported silk for the first time since he last came with his former trainer for an alleged bad ride on Tobin. He finished second with Sir Dille in the first race, and there was a ripple of applause. When he landed Captain Drane first under the wire in the third race the crowd fairly lifted him from his seat in the saddle in its eagerness to pay tribute. There was a great volley of shouts and hand-clapping when he dismounted. This was continued until he lifted his cap. After he had weighed out and returned to the open air the crowd again greeted him. He was cheered all the way up the track until he disappeared in the paddock. Thorpe has been sick, and he was nearly exhausted at the end of his ride. He was short of wind, but between gasps he banaged to say: "That greeting was more to me than a thousand dollars cash in hand. It shows that the people believe in me. I have always tried to do the right thing, and I am glad that my straightforward course is appreciated. It demonstrates that the public never took any stock in the story that I rode dishonestly. This is a great hour for me."

Charles Thorpe has reason to feel proud of that reception. It was simply a tribute to an honest boy. Money couldn't buy what was accorded him. Few statesmen and political chiefs rarely ever receive such an ovation. It came from the hearts of the people, who were anxious to show that they believed in him. It was the first time the public had an opportunity to endorse Thorpe and rebuke his managers, and they did not let the opportunity pass by unaccepted.

Riding Yo Tambien.

All followers of the turf remember the name of Yo Tambien. Thorpe made that filly famous and one of the best known on the American turf. Many a win he made with her, and those who have seen her race remember how she would make a side glance at the grandstand as though she understood the applause which was being showered upon her and her jockey. Thorpe would talk to the filly and she would respond in a way that left no doubt as to her sagacity. "Tis said that when he won a great race at Washington park one day on Yo Tambien, Thorpe simply sat upright for the first mile and chewed gum, but when two contestants began to press him he swallowed the gum and drew his whip, but not to use it unless it came to a brushing finish. He simply leaned over and whispered to the wonderful filly, "Steady now, Yoey, steady," and in a twinkling almost the race was won. Mrs. Smith, wife of the owner, handed Thorpe \$500 and Thorpe with tears in his eyes said, "Thank you, Mrs. Smith, I did not have to urge her, she is as good as gold."

'Twas a common saying amongst the railbirds that the Old Man earned his money easily and that it looked like falling off a log for Thorpe. If the talent had seen the Old Man before a big race trying to cut off four or five pounds they would have thought he had to work hard for his money. "It was pretty hard work for me to cut down from 111 pounds one day to 105 the next, but that is what I have had to do several times," said Mr. Thorpe the other day. Bergen had the reputation of being the waiting jockey and James Rowe the accomplished finisher, as was also Snapper Garrison, while Dogget had no style in riding, but relied upon main strength and awkwardness. It was hard for Littlefield to whip and ride at the same time, and Hamilton was noticeable for the short stirrup with which he rode. Taral was always laughing, while Midgley never smiled, but had a judicial look at all times. Britton was long on "rushes," but Charles Thorpe was said to have been the most clever at all branches of the game than any of the others.

Thorpe is a thorough sportsman and is doing what he can in the way of promoting legitimate sport in Nebraska, his principle line being at the trap. He has presented a costly trophy which is being shot for by the shooters of the state and the winner will have something pretty fine to place in his trophy room.

National Prejudice Checks Steel Industry of China

ANYONE with the usual Occidental conception of the Chinese may have a little difficulty in believing that they make steel in China, using their own ore, their own coal and coke and Chinese labor exclusively. All this sounds as if the Chinese were really up to date and realized, like other folks, that the present is an age of steel. But, on the other hand, there is today practically only one steel plant in the great Chinese empire.

This solitary steel plant has been in operation since 1894, but its output has been increased so little in the fourteen years since that today about the most it can do is to turn out 50,000 tons of steel yearly. When this is compared with the 23,000,000 tons produced in a year in this country some idea may be gained of how far the Chinese really are behind the present age in steel making as in other things.

In this matter of making steel the Chinese have shown, more than in any other field perhaps, that antipathy to foreigners which has been fatal to Chinese development, for steel-making requires methods distinctly foreign to China. Efforts of foreigners to get the government to allow them to develop the steel industry of the empire have been thwarted repeatedly, and today the curious spectacle is presented of the Chinese selling their best ore to the Japanese instead of making it into steel themselves.

At the present time the very company that owns the steel plant is under contract to furnish the Japanese government steel works at Waka-matsa, Japan, with 100,000 tons of the best magnetic ore every year, the Japanese paying \$1.50 a ton for the ore at the point of shipping. This contract was made in 1900 and is to last for thirty years.

Beside the enormous steel works at Pittsburg the only steel plant in China, which is situated near the city of Hankow, looks like a pygmy. The Hangyang Iron and Steel Works is the name of it.

Situated on the Yangtze river, which is one of the great commercial highways of China, and only eighteen miles from deposits of ore estimated to amount to over 100,000,000 tons, these steel

works in the opinion of foreign experts possess opportunities for development rivaling any in the world. In fact, Hankow could easily become another Pittsburg were it not for Chinese prejudices.

It was Chang Chi Tung, a Chinaman with western ideas and governor of the province of Hupoh, who started these steel works in 1891. He had engineers brought from England to erect a plant for him, which for a time was his own personal property.

A few years later he leased the plant, such as it was, to a Chinese company. At the present time the plant is owned principally by Sheng Kung Pao, who is a director of Chinese railways. He has shown more push than his predecessors, but the great obstacle that stands in the way of the development of the industry is the law in China under which no foreign capital can be invested directly in mining.

Under this law foreigners are allowed to become stockholders in Chinese mining companies, but that is all. It is said to be impossible to infuse modern methods into the management of these Chinese companies as long as they are controlled by the Chinese, and the lot of a foreigner investing in a Chinese company is not a happy one. Strangely enough, this law, which seems to stand so much in the way of the development of what might be one of China's leading industries, was enacted only a year ago, at a time when China was said to be opening up to western influences.

Although the Chinese steel works at Hankow may look pretty large now to the Chinese, measured by western ideas of steel plants, they are absurdly small and inadequate. The English engineers whom Governor Chang Chi Tung employed back in 1891 to build his plant erected two blast furnaces, two Bessemer converters, one twelve-ton open hearth furnace, two rolling mills and a foundry.

The plant made some steel rails for the railroad built from Hankow to Peking, but at times the Chinese governor shut it down entirely, and under him its output never exceeded in a year 20,000 tons. Then Chang Chi Tung concluded

that he had had enough of steel-making and leased it to a Chinese company.

About the first thing the company did was to make the agreement with the Japanese to sell them the only ore which the Bessemer plant erected by the English engineers could use in making steel. That part of the plant thereafter was useless. That Japan has been making a good thing out of this contract there is no doubt.

The mountains where this ore occurs have been connected with the Yangtze river by a fifteen-mile railroad, and from April to October the biggest ocean steamers from the Japanese can sail up the river and load directly from this railroad. The Chinese coolies who put the ore on board get 60 cents a day for their work.

Sheng Kung Pao, the present owner, is now trying to repair the damage done by his predecessors. One of the first things he did, after he found that the Japanese had contracted for the best ore, was to send experts to study the plants in this country, Germany and England, and see what could be done toward remodeling the plant, so that he could use some of the ore that the Japanese did not have the right to take away.

Since the visit of these experts Sheng Kung Pao has built practically a new steel plant. The Bessemer plant has been discarded and now all Chinese steel is made by the open hearth process, for that is the process that the experts reported to Sheng Kung Pao it would be wise to adopt.

This new plant of the Hangyang Iron and Steel Works started up recently. It has three blast furnaces, five open hearth furnaces and three large rolling mills. Next year it is expected that it will be able to turn out 100,000 tons of steel.

The plant is now run by electricity, an electric power plant able to generate 800 kilowatts having been installed. In fact the plant today resembles any other steel works, and with its tall chimneys and its furnaces lighting up the sky at night, it has impressed the Chinese greatly and has delighted its owner, Sheng Kung Pao, who is really entitled to be called the Chinese Carnegie.

Not only is the plant manned by Chinese, but the present general manager of the works is a Chinaman who before reaching his present posi-

tion spent many years in Japan and England gaining knowledge of the steel-making industry. To be sure, Sheng Kung Pao employs engineers who are not Chinese. The engineering staff has on it representatives of nearly all the steel-making countries.

While coolie labor is cheap in China, it must not be understood that all labor is cheap there, but it is a good deal cheaper than here. For instance, foremen in the Chinese steel works get from \$10 to \$47.50 a month and good machinists from \$4 to \$25 a month.

There are times in the year when steel-making in China is accomplished under great difficulties. Even the Chinese themselves are unable to stand the heat in the months of July and August, when the thermometer in that part of China keeps above 90 degrees for weeks at a time and frequently rises over 100. Even with the ventilating system, which is one of the improvements installed by the present management, the plant frequently has to shut down on account of the heat in summer.

While these Chinese steel works are fortunate in having the ore almost at their very door, as compared with the distances over which ore must be hauled in this country, they are not so fortunate with regard to their coke supply, almost equally essential. The nearest coal and coke that can be obtained is at Ping Hsueh, 300 miles away. The coke is transported sixty miles over a railway and the rest of the distance on the river.

That China might become a great steel-producing country with a change in its laws and in the mental attitude of its people there is no reason to doubt. Besides the mountains of ore from which the supply is at present being taken rich iron ore deposits have been found in many provinces of China. Recently an engineer expressed the opinion that there was fully as much iron ore available for steel and iron production in China as in the United States.

It is said to be the ambition of Sheng Kung Pao to keep on enlarging his steel works until China shall produce all the steel necessary for the extension of its railways at least. And perhaps in time China may have skyscrapers.