

**THE BERKELEYS
AND THEIR
NEIGHBORS**

BY
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**THE BERKELEYS AND THEIR
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CHAPTER I.

A PROVINCIAL Virginia race-course is an excellent place to observe a people which has preserved its distinctiveness as well as the Virginians. So far, they have escaped that general and fatiguing likeness which prevails in most of the universe these days.

Therefore, the Campdown race-course, on a golden day in October, looked like itself and nothing else. The track had started out with the intention of making a perfect ellipse, but meeting a steep incline, it saved the trouble of bringing up the grade, by boldly avoiding the obstacle—so the winning post was considerably nearer the half-mile than the starting post was. Nobody objected to a little thing like this, though. The Virginians are good-natured creatures, and seldom bother about trifles.

It was the fall meeting of the Campdown Jockey Club—a famous institution “befo’ the war.”

At this time the great awakening had not come—the war was not long over. For these people, had they but known it, the end of the war really meant the end of the world—but the change was too stupendous for any human mind to grasp all at once. There came a period of shock before the pain was felt, when the people, groping amid the ruins of their social fabric, patched it up a little here and a little there. They resumed in a dazed and incomplete way their old amusements, their old habits and ways of life. They mortgaged their lands—all that was left to them—with great coolness and a superstitious faith in the future—Virginians are prone to hanker

after mortgages—and spent the money untroubled by any reflections where any more was to come from when that was gone.

They were intense pleasure lovers. In that happy afternoon haze in which they had lived until the storm broke, pleasure was the chief end of man. So now, the whole county turned out to see two or three broken-down hacks, and a green colt or two, race for the mythical stakes. It is true, a green silk bag, embroidered in gold, with the legend “\$300” hung aloft on a tall pole, for the sweepstakes, but it did not contain three hundred dollars, but about one-half of it in gold, and a check drawn by the president of the Jockey Club against the treasurer for the balance. Most of the members had not paid their dues, and the treasurer didn’t know where the money was to come from, nor the president either, for that matter; but it takes a good deal to discount a Virginian’s faith in the future. The public, too, was fully acquainted with the state of affairs, and the fact that there was any gold at all in the bag, would eventually be in the nature of a pleasant surprise.

The people, in carriages, or on horseback, bore little resemblance to the usual country gathering. They were gentlepeople tinged with rusticity. All of them had good, high sounding Anglo-Saxon names. There was some magnificence of an antique pattern. One huge family ark was drawn by four sleek old horses, with a venerable black coachman on the box, and inside a superb old lady with a black veil falling over her white hair. There were but two really correct equipages in the field. One was a trim, chocolate-colored victoria, with brown horses and a chocolate-colored coachman to match. In it sat a showy woman, with a profusion of dazzling blonde hair, and beside her was an immaculately well dressed blonde man. The turnout looked like a finely finished photograph among a lot of dingy old family portraits.

The other carriage that would have passed muster was a large and handsome landau, respectfully called “the Isleham carriage,” and in it sat Colonel Berkeley and his daughter Olivia. The Colonel was a genuine Virginia colonel, and claimed to be the last man in the State to wear a ruffled shirt bosom. A billowy expanse of thread cambric ruffles rushed out of his waistcoat; his snow white hair was carefully combed down upon his coat collar. At the carriage door stood his double—an elderly negro as grizzled as his master, to whom he bore that curious resemblance that comes of fifty years association. This resemblance was very much increased when Colonel Berkeley’s back was turned, and in the privacy of the kitchen, Petrarch—or more commonly Pete—pished and pshawed and railed and swore in the colonel’s most inimitable manner. Each, too, possessed a type of aggressive piety, which in Colonel Berkeley took the form of a loud declaration that a gentleman, in order to be a gentleman, must be a member of the Episcopal Church. This once accomplished, the Colonel was willing to allow liberally for the weaknesses of human nature, and considered too great strictness of behavior as “deuced ungentlemanlike, begad.” Petrarch regarded himself as a second Isaiah the prophet, and a vessel of election—having reached the stage of perfectibility—a usual thing in the experience of a genuine African. The Colonel described Petrarch as “that infernal rascally boy of mine,” and this “boy” was the one individual he had never been able to overawe or silence. Possibly an exception might be made to this in Miss Olivia, who sitting up, slim and straight and pretty, was treated by her father with elaborate old-fashioned courtesy. Colonel Berkeley was in a particularly happy and virtuous frame of mind on this day. This was his first appearance in public since his return from Europe, where a serious bodily injury had kept him during the whole four years of the war. He

gloried in the consciousness that he was no renegade, but had returned to the sacred soil as soon as he possibly could, when he might have been enjoying himself elsewhere. When the Colonel said “the State of Virginia,” he really meant the whole planetary system. Nevertheless, two weeks in his beloved Virginia had bored him dreadfully, and he was “more orkarder,” as Petrarch expressed it, than any other two weeks of his whole life. The Campdown races he hailed as a godsend. He had a good competence left, in spite of having sent orders to his agents to convert lands, stocks, bonds, and everything, into Confederate securities—cotton bonds, Confederate gunboat stock, anything in which the State of Virginia was bound up. As far as in him lay, he had made ducks and drakes of a splendid fortune, from the finest and most disinterested motives that ever inspired a mistaken old gentleman, but fate had befriended him against his will. An investment at the North that the colonel had vainly tried to throw in the general wreck, had escaped confiscation, and had increased, a hundredfold in value. His orders to sell half of Isleham, his family place, for Confederate money, had arrived too late for his agent to carry it out. He had done the handsome thing, as it was esteemed, and after having practiced the strictest virtue, he was rewarded with all the pleasures that are commonly supposed to be the reward of vice.

“Don’t you think, papa,” the young girl said to him at once, “that we should go up on the grand stand? It might look a little—a little standoffish for us to remain here—and the county people—”

The Virginians inherit from their English ancestry, a vast and preposterous respect for their county people—and Miss Olivia Berkeley, fresh from Paris and London, was more anxious that no fault should be found with her by these out-of-the-way provincials than any of the fine people she had met during a considerable

transatlantic experience. So was Colonel Berkeley—but there was a fly in his ointment.

“I would with pleasure, my love, but damme if those Hibbses are not sitting up on the stand along with their betters—and I won’t rub elbows with the Hibbses. It’s everywhere the same. Society is so infernally mixed now that I am always expecting to meet my tailor at dinner. I thought certainly, in old Virginia, the people would know how to keep the canaille in their places, and there, by George, sits a family like the Hibbses staring me in the face.”

“Yes,” replied Olivia, smiling. “It’s everywhere the same—you are bound to meet some of the Hibbses everywhere in the world—so we might as well do the right thing in spite of them. Petrarch, open the carriage door.”

The Colonel, with old-fashioned gallantry, assisted his daughter to alight, and giving her his arm, they crossed the track in full view of the grand stand, and went up the rickety wooden stairs at the end.

At no period in her life had Olivia Berkeley felt herself so thoroughly on exhibition as then. Her figure, her air—both of which were singularly graceful and refined—her gown which was Paris-made—all were minutely examined by hundreds of eyes that had not seen her since, as a pretty, half-grown girl, she went to church and paid visits under the charge of a demure governess. After they had crossed the white track, they were greeted by numerous gentlemen who sauntered back and forth about the quarter-stretch. Colonel Berkeley was elaborately gracious, and Olivia was by nature affable—to all except the Hibbses. But when they passed that inoffending family, the Colonel stalked on

pointedly oblivious, and Olivia's slight bow was not warming or cheering.

People moved up to shake hands with them—girls of Olivia's age, soft voiced, matronly women, elderly men, a little shaky and broken, as all the old men looked after the war—and young men with something of the camp hanging to them still. Olivia was all grace, kindness, and tact. She had forgotten nobody.

Meanwhile Petrarch, who had followed them, managed to edge up to her and whisper:

“Miss 'Livy, ain't dat ar Marse French Pembroke an' he b'rer Miles? Look a-yander by de aige o' de bench.”

Olivia glanced that way, and a slight wave of color swept over her face—and at that moment “Marse French's b'rer Miles” turned his full face toward her.

He was a mere lad, of eighteen at the utmost. One side of his face, as she had first seen his profile, was of the purest Greek beauty. But on the other side, a shot had done dreadful work. One eye was drawn out of place. A horrid gash in the cheek remained, and one side of the mouth was painfully disfigured. On the same side, an arm was missing.

A torrent of pity almost overwhelmed Olivia as she looked at the boy—her little playmate in years gone by. And then the elder brother caught her eye, and bowed and smiled. He did not possess the beauty that had once belonged to Miles. He was dark and tanned, and his features had a manly irregularity. But he stood up straight and tall, and had the figure of a soldier. In a moment or two Olivia was shaking hands with Miles, looking straight and

boldly into his face, as if there was nothing remarkable there. But just as she touched French Pembroke's hand, the blonde woman in the victoria came within her line of vision.

Olivia threw up her head, and greeted Pembroke with a kind of chilling sweetness. But this all dissolved toward Miles.

"How delightful to see you again," she said. "I suppose I shall have to say Mr. Miles now, although I never can think of you as anything but a dear little tormenting boy."

The ghost of a smile—his smile was a mere contortion—came into Miles' face—and while he talked, he thrust his one hand into his trousers pocket with a gesture of boyish shyness. Olivia thought she heard the tell-tale rattle of marbles in the pocket.

"I've—I've been a soldier since I saw you," he said, with a boy's mixture of pride and diffidence.

"So I hear," answered Olivia, with a pretty air of severity, "ran away from school, I believe."

"Yes," said Miles, his diffidence disappearing before his pride. "I was big enough to carry a musket. Though I wasn't but sixteen, I was taller than the captain of my company. Soldiering was fun until—until—" He began to blush furiously, but kept on after a moment. "I didn't mind sleeping in the mud, or anything. A man oughtn't to mind that sort of thing, Olivia—if you'll let me call you Olivia."

"Of course I will," replied Olivia gayly. "Do you think I want to appear any older than I am?" Then she turned to Pembroke and said, "I was sorry not to have seen you the day you came to Isleham. We met last in Paris."

“I hope to see as much of Isleham as we did in the old days,” answered Pembroke. His voice was rather remarkable, it was so clear and well modulated.

“I hope,” began Miles, stammering a little, “that—that you and the Colonel understood my not—why I didn’t come to see you in Paris.”

“Not fully,” answered Olivia, pleasantly. “You must come over to Isleham and explain it—if you can. Have you seen papa yet?”

“I see him now,” said Pembroke with a smile, “shaking hands with Mrs. Peyton.”

Olivia smiled too. There had been a flirtation between Mrs. Peyton and Colonel Berkeley forty odd years before, and as everything that happened in the community was perfectly well known by everybody else, the episode had crystallized into a tradition. Colonel Berkeley had been known to swear that Sally Peyton in her youth was a jilt. Mrs. Peyton always said that Tom Berkeley was not to be depended on. The Colonel was saying to Mrs. Peyton in his grandest tones:

“Madam, Time has passed you by.”

“Ah, my dear Colonel,” responded Mrs. Peyton with a quizzical look at Colonel Berkeley’s elaborate toilet and flamboyant shirt ruffles, “we can’t cross the dead line of sixty without showing it. Even art cannot conceal it.”

“Just like Sally Peyton’s sharp tongue,” the colonel growled sotto voce—while a suppressed guffaw from Pete on the verge of the group, showed the remark was not lost on that factotum.

“And Petrarch too,” cried Mrs. Peyton in her fine, jovial old voice, holding out her hand.

Pete shuffled up and took her hand in his black paw.

“Howdy, Miss Sally. Lordy, marster done tole de truf—you looks jes ez young an’ chipper—How’s Mandy?”

“Mandy has lost her senses since old Abe Lincoln made you all free. She’s left me and gone to Richmond to go to school—the old idiot.”

“Hi! I allers did like Mandy, but I ain’t got no use fer dem niggers dat kin read ’n write. Readin’ an’ writin’ is fer white folks.”

“Shut up, you black rascal,” roared the Colonel, nevertheless highly delighted. “Madam, may I present my daughter—Olivia, my child.”

Olivia came up, and Mrs. Peyton kissed her affectionately, but not before a rapid glance which took in all there was of her.

“Like her sainted mother,” began the Colonel, dramatically.

“Not a bit,” briskly answered Mrs. Peyton. “A Berkeley all over, if ever I saw one. Child, I hope you are as nice as you are pretty.”

“Nobody ever told me I wasn’t nice,” responded Olivia with a smile.

“And not spoiled by your foreign travels?”

“Not in the least.”

Clang! Clang! Clang! goes the saddling bell.

“What do you think?” says Olivia laughing. “Papa has entered Dashaway. You know he is twelve years old, and as Petrarch says, he hasn’t any wind left—but papa wouldn’t listen to anybody.”

“Yes, that’s Tom Berkeley all over. Ah, my dear, I could tell you something that happened forty-two years ago, in which I promise you, I got the better of your father.”

The horses by this time are coming out. They are an ordinary looking lot except one spanking roan, the property of the despised Hibbses, and Dashaway, a gray thoroughbred, a good deal like Colonel Berkeley himself, but like him, with certain physical defects. The gray has a terrific wheeze, and the hair on his fetlocks is perfectly white. But he holds his head up gallantly, and gives a tremendous snort which nearly shakes the mite of a darkey off his back. All the jockeys are negro boys. There is no pool-selling, but the gentlemen make bets among themselves and with the ladies. The transactions if small, are exciting.

Colonel Berkeley’s presence hardly prevents a laugh as the gray ambles past the grand stand, snorting and blowing like a porpoise. The Colonel, however, has unshaken confidence in Dashaway. Is he not of the best blood of Sir Henry, and didn’t he win fourteen hundred dollars for the Colonel on the Campdown course the year before the war? Colonel Berkeley knows a horse well enough—but to know horses and to know one’s own horse are two things.

Colonel Berkeley, leaning over the fence, is giving his directions, in a loud voice, to the little darkey, who is nearly ashy with fright. He knows what is expected of him, and he knows Dashaway’s deficiencies.

“Now, sir, you are to make the running from the half-mile post. Keep well up with the horse in the lead, but don’t attempt to pass him until you have turned the half-mile.”

“Yes, sah,” answers the small jockey, trembling. “But Dashaway, he c’yarn run much, sah, ’thout blowin’, an’—an’—”

“Zounds, sirrah, do you mean to instruct me about my own horse? Now listen you young imp. Use the whip moderately, Dashaway comes of stock that won’t stand whip and spur. If he runs away, just give him his head, and if you don’t remember every word I tell you, by the Lord Harry, I’ll make you dance by the time you are out of the saddle!”

“Good Gord A’mighty, marster,” puts in Petrarch. “Dashaway, he ain’ never gwi’ run away. He too ole, an’ he ain’t strong ’nuff—”

“Good Gad, sir, was ever a man so tormented by such a set of black rascals? Hold your tongue—don’t let me hear another word from you, not another word, sir.”

The jockey, who takes the Colonel’s words at their full value, which Petrarch discounts liberally, begins to stutter with fright.

“M—m—marster, ef I jes’ kin git Dashaway ’long wid de res’—”

“Silence, sir,” shouts the Colonel, “and remember every word I tell you, or——” Colonel Berkeley’s appalling countenance and uplifted cane complete the rest.

Dashaway is not only conspicuously the worst of the lot, but the most troublesome. Half a dozen good starts might be made but for Dashaway. At last the flag drops. “Go!” yells the starter, and the horses are off. Dashaway takes his place promptly in the rear, and

daylight steadily widens between him and the last horse. As the field comes thundering down the homestretch the spanking roan well in the lead, Dashaway is at least a quarter of a mile behind, blowing like a whale, and the jockey is whipping furiously, his arm flying around like a windmill. The Colonel is fairly dancing with rage.

Colonel Berkeley is not the man to lose a race to the Hibbses with composure, and Petrarch's condolences, reminiscences, prophecies and deductions were not of a consolatory character.

"Ole Marse, I done tole you, Dashaway warn't fitten ter run, at de very startment. He been a mighty good horse, but he c'yarn snuffle de battle fum befo', an' say Hay! hay! like de horse in de Bible no mo'."

"Shut up, sir—shut up. Religion and horse racing don't mix," roars the Colonel.

"Naw suh, dey doan! When de horse racin' folks is burnin' in de lake full er brimstone an' sulphur, de 'ligious folks will be rastlin' wid de golden harps—" Petrarch's sermon is cut ruthlessly short by Colonel Berkeley suddenly catching sight of the unfortunate jockey in a vain attempt to get out of the way. But his day of reckoning had come. Petrarch had collared him, and the Colonel proceeded to give him what he called a dressing-down, liberally punctuated with flourishes of a bamboo cane.

"Didn't I tell you," he was shouting to the unhappy youngster, "to make the running—to *make the running, hay?*"

"M—m—marster, I 'clar to Gord, I thot' Dashaway wuz gw'in' to drap 'fo I git him to de half-mile pos'—"

“*Drap*—you scoundrel, *drap*! The blood of Sir Henry *drap*! You confounded rascal, you pulled that horse,” etc., etc., etc.

Mrs. Peyton laughed. “It does my heart good to hear Tom Berkeley raging like that. It reminds me that we are not all dead or changed, as it seems to me sometimes. Your father and I have had passages-at-arms in *my* time, I can tell you, Olivia.”

Clang! presently again. It is the saddling bell once more. But there is no Dashaway in this race. Nevertheless it is very exciting. There are half a dozen horses, and after the start is made it looks to be anybody’s race. Even as they come pounding down the straight sweep of the last two furlongs, it would be hard to pick out the probable winner. The people on the grand stand have gone wild—they are shouting names, the men waving their hats, the women standing up on benches to see as two or three horses gradually draw away from the others, and a desperate struggle is promised within the last thirty lengths. And just at this moment, when everybody’s attention is fixed on the incoming horses, French Pembroke has slipped across the track and is speaking to the blonde woman in the victoria. His face does not look pleasant. He has chosen this moment, when all attention is fixed on something else to speak to her, so that it will not be observed—and although he adopts the subterfuge, he despises it. Nor does the blonde woman fail to see through it. She does not relish being spoken to on the sly as it were. Nothing, however, disturbs the cheerful urbanity of the gentleman by her side. He gets out of the carriage and grasps Pembroke by the hand. He calls him “*mon cher*” a vulgar mode of address which Pembroke resents with a curt “Good-morning, Mr. Ahlberg,” and then he lifts his hat to the lady whom he calls Madame Koller. “Why did you not come before?” she asks, “you might have known it would be dull enough.”

“Don’t you know everybody here?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Madame Koller, sighing profoundly. “I remember all of them—and most of the men have called. Some of them are so strange. They stay all day when they come. And such queer carriages.”

“And the costumes. The costumes!” adds Mr. Ahlberg on the ground.

Pembroke felt a sense of helpless indignation. He answered Mr. Ahlberg by turning his back, and completely ignoring that excessively stylish person.

“You must remember the four years’ harrowing they have been through,” he says to Madame Koller. “But they are so thoroughly established in their own esteem,” he adds with a little malice, “that they are indifferent even to the disapproval of Madame Koller. I am glad to see you looking so well. I must, however, leave you now, as I am one of the managers, and must look after the weighing.”

“Now you are going away because I have been disagreeable,” remarked Madame Koller reproachfully. “And poor Ahlberg—”

“Must take care of you, and do his best to amuse you,” answered Pembroke with a laugh and a look that classed Ahlberg with Madame’s poodle or her parrot. “Good-bye,” and in a minute he was gone. Madame Koller looked sulky. Mr. Ahlberg’s good humor and composure were perfectly unruffled.

Hardly any one noticed Pembroke’s little expedition except Mrs. Peyton and Olivia Berkeley. Mrs. Peyton mounted a pair of large gold spectacles, and then remarked to Olivia:

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