THE GREAT RACING CARNIVAL.

CUP DAY AT FLEMINGTON.

A BRILLIANT GATHERING.

A NOTABLE CONTEST.

INTRODUCTION.

BY DAVID CHRISTIE MURRAY.

What is this prodigious noise which thunders on the ear? Has some unheard-of magician transhipped Niagara, and is this the sound of the concussion of its many waters? Is it old Ocean lashing a pebbly beach? Is it a crushing mill with a thousand sand stamps in operation? It is none of these things. It is the combined and multitudinous howl of the modest "bookie" as he plies his trade—hoarse and cacophonous, and as persistent as a frog in a marsh or a cicala on the bough. Four to one on the field! What a row he makes about it! How the deep roar rolls from the ring to the flat and back again! He is betting in hundreds of pounds in the ring and in shillings on the flat, as I presently discover, but if he bet in thousands and in halfpence he and his brethren would be brethren still, wearing the same characteristics of modesty, and quiet and retirement. Not slothful in business is the bookmaker, but fervent in spirit, serving, shall we say, the universal enemy, or shall we leave the theological element out of sight altogether?

Driving from Melbourne to the course there are few things more noticeable than the placards offered by that same theological element to the public view. The road lacks the jollity, the variety, the high spirits which distinguish the way to Epsom or that to Ascot on the days of our old racing carnivals at home. It is only fair to add that the spirit of rowdyism which does almost always distinguish an out-of-door holiday at home is also lacking here. The want of variety is conspicuous, not only in the crowd itself but in the make and character of the vehicles patronised by the public. The four-wheeled shandrydan, so familiar to the streets of Melbourne, is out in prodigious numbers, and only an occasional brake or carriage disturbs the vehicular monotony. Once or twice we passed "furniture delivered on the cheapest terms," and once a gilded circus chariot offered its quota to variety. The Salvation Army musters strong along the route, and bombards the giddy racegoer with solemn but silent admonition from four-sided transparencies. "Turn and burn," says one, "Or look and live." Hard by a bill-poster is flattening out upon a bare wall the word "Eternity" in black letters upon a white ground with a black border, as if the religious sentiment had gone into mourning. "Remember," says another printed admonition, "that for all these things God shall bring you into judgement." The original text begins, as I remember, "Rejoice, oh young man, in thy youth;" but the grim religious pleasure-spoiler, here as elsewhere, would seem to have no share in the earlier phrase of the great poet-philosopher, though he is ready enough to hurl its latter half at the head of any meddling passer-by.

The skies are dull, and seem to threaten rain, but yesterday's slight sprinkling has done nothing more than clear the air and freshen the green growth of the trees and herbage. What an astonishing spectacle we find on the course! In spite of the evil promise of the weather, the ladies bloom like flowers in their attire. Seen from the members' stand, they blossom like a parterre, and the sight needs but a gleam of brilliant sunlight to make it wholly and completely charming. But from the lawn, or, better still, from the members' enclosure, the *coup d'œil* is nothing more or less than amazing. The twelve acres of the hill are crammed so thick with heads that from a little distance it looks as though it were impossible to thrust the point of a walking stick between them anywhere. On the flat, at the bend between the river and the straight, the non-paying public swarm like ants. The prevailing dark grey tone is broken here and there by the gleam of scarlet and amber, green and blue, where the flags of the cheap-book makers wave, or the fantastic costumes of the owners of the flags make themselves visible for a moment in the breaks of the dense and shifting crowd.

Talking of that monotony of the road on which I remarked just now, I am reminded of a quite pointless anecdote which was related to me many years ago by the late great Tom Sayers, the then champion of England. "His Lordship came up to me," said Tom, "in old Jim Shaw's place." (I have forgotten who his Lordship was, but even if I had not it would add nothing to the point of the narrative.) "He claps me on the shoulder, and says he, Tom, he says, I've got a notion. I've bought a coster-monger's shallow, says his Lordship; I've had it upholstered in white satin picked out with gold, he says. I've had it painted white, picked out with gold all over. I've got a couple of white smokes to draw it, regular snow-balls, with not a dark hair about 'em. I've got white harness, says his Lordship, and white reins. And now I'll tell you what it is, Tom. You and me is going down in white hats, white shirts, white ties, white waistcoats, white coats, white kickseys, white socks, white shoes, white gloves—a regular pair of blooming lilies." I had not thought of this stirring episode in the career of a great man for half a score of years, perhaps, until the paucity of vehicular variety brought it to mind as I drove to the Melbourne Cup this morning.

"*Autres temps, autres mœurs*," says the old proverb. We English have been reported to go about our pleasures sadly. Young Australia goes about her's business-like. One is certainly not sorry to miss the silly and brutal diversions of the Epsom crowd, the impertinent nuisance called "the fun of the fair," the squirt of dirty water, the insane wooden dolls stuck in the bands of hats; and all the rest of the non sense. Australia seems to go out to see the racing, and is satisfied with that, without making a stupid orgie of it, either in the coming and the going, or during the sport itself.

To venture on a stroke of candour, there is nothing more surprising in the presence of the vast crowd than that purpose of serious business which seems to bring them all together. Somehow it happens that all sorts and conditions of men are called into Melbourne by urgent private affairs somewhere in or about Cup-week. Doctors, attorneys, barristers, merchants, miners, squatters, farmers, members of the Legislature, Cabinet Ministers, all have business in Melbourne in the first or second week in November. It is quite possible—anybody with the faintest knowledge of human nature will admit it—that in odd places a man may *fib* to the wife of his bosom or to the sharer of his joys and anxieties in business. But surely a whole continent can't fib, and anybody who, as I have done, has spent a quarter of a year here, knows solidly and fixedly that the moneyed stranger who finds himself within the Melbourne gates at Cup-time is actually chivvied and harried by the most pressing and important business. One or two valorous souls have openly confessed to me that they were going to see the run for the Cup, but the vast majority by far came unwillingly. The brain whirls to think at what a speed the wheels of business must spin in the capital of Victoria on the days that intervene between those set apart for pleasure. Tasmanians, New South Welshmen, Victorians, New Zealanders, Queenslanders and South Australians, men from north and south and east and west, are here to prosecute their affairs, and for three days in the week Melbourne is an idle desert, as empty as Sahara, and as lazy as the swim below a mill wheel. I have seen many gatherings of men, and none so remarkable as that of to-day. The crop of humanity per acre on the Hill ran between four and five thousand. The terrace, though less crowded, would have been remarkable anywhere else in the world for the momentary density of its population. The Betting Ring alone held before every race a male adult population such as could only be turned out by a considerable city. I had been warned beforehand of the differences which would exist between this and any English carnival of pleasure, and in the true British spirit of contradiction I looked out all day long for evidences against the evidence. There could scarcely have been fewer than one hundred and twenty thousand people present, and in all that vast assembly I saw one drunken man. He was not amongst the *oi polloi* on the flat, but was on the terrace and was respectably attired.

I was promised the guidance and guardianship of a plain-clothes detective before I visited the non-paying portion of the public, and out of complaisance to the gentlemen who were good enough to offer me that courtesy I waited for an hour or two. Nobody was successful in finding the desired protector, and at last I even wandered forth without him, crossed the course, and found myself alone and unfriended on the flat. I am a little loth to say it (because I have noticed that when the modest stranger dares to praise Australia, he is charged with carrying favor, and when he dares to blame he is told that he is a meddling fool); but I never in my life saw a crowd so orderly, so sober, or so generally well behaved. I did not see a ragged coat. I wandered for an hour and was never accosted by a beggar. That, I daresay, may be a commonplace for an Australian, but it is a wonder to a man accustomed to European ways. I questioned a policeman, and learnt from him that there was a place licensed for alcoholic drinks, but I saw not one. Ginger beer, lemonade, ginger ale, and tonic water were there by the thousand bottles. There was orange peel enough strewn upon the grass to have started a marmalade manufactory. There was waste paper enough torn from *ad freeze* luncheon parcels to have kept a paper mill in pulp for a day or two if it were in a large way of business. There were corks enough upon the sward—evidence of popular thirst—to have built a most pyramidal grotto, but not a cork of all the corks had popped over anything more harmful to blood and brain than sodawater. He is a dirty bird who defiles his own nest, and I am not going to speak ill of England to please anybody; but I remember a meeting of Good Templars at the Crystal Palace—and the Good Templars are Knights of Temperance—where every twentieth man seemed, to my unwearied eye at least, to show signs of having taken too much of the cup that does not cheer but does inebriate.

It is always delightful and instructive to meet John Chinaman. John's enemies, who are as numerous as the best Christian amongst us could wish them to be, say that he hides such vices as he has at home, and pays his devotions to the heathen deities in the dark, whereby he sets upright a model for the imitation of all European peoples. I meet his inscrutable countenance here on the Flat in Melbourne, and I meet it often. It expresses, as Walter Besant years ago discovered, all the conflicting passions of humanity at once—ambition, vanity, self respect, humor, satire, avarice, resignation, patience, revenge, meekness, long suffering, remembrance, and a thousand others. No Aryan comes within a thousand miles of it. John is John, however he may attire himself: that impenetrable, expressionless face, as expressionless as an orange, bewrayeth him. What brings John to a racecourse? Why should he be here? What have the disciples of Confucius to do with the victory or the failure of Rudolph, Abercorn, Clare or Steelrap? Yet, in his celestial way, John seems to be interested in what goes on about him.

It was an easy thing—detective or no detective—to make one's ways through that wonderfully orderly crowd on the Flat. But the Melbourne Cup was to be run in 10 minutes, and it was no easy matter to get back to the point of vantage I had chosen in my own mind before the race began. A crowd, however good humored, is still a crowd, and what might be a mile's walk under ordinary circumstances may measure five fold when one has to dodge hither and hither to avoid the unconscious elbowings of 50,000 or 60,000 people, each one of whom is as righteously bent on oneself on seeing the event of the week. Viewed through a field glass from the opposite side the Flat appeared to be thickly sown with the white helmets of the Melbourne police, upon whom one can usually rely for courtesy and attention. In the middle of the crowd itself the number of the white helmets appeared strangely to diminish. One intelligent and well-meaning member of the force directed me to the right, when I happened by good fortune to meet him, and the next, a special Providence cast him in my way, directed me to the left. All the swarming groups of men and women were making for the railings as the bell rang, and at last the hapless foreigner, compelled to violate all rule, was forced to scramble over a fence of barbed wire, or to choose between that and the loss of the sporting event of the year. He climbed the fence and left behind so small a portion of his raiment that no man knew of his damage save himself.

'Twas but a little thing, but oh!
The difference to me.

So Wordsworth sang on a subject which was not cognate.

Tradition, which is always untrustworthy, declares that a literary person from England, being paid a special price to write about the Melbourne Cup, devoted all his attention to the crowd, and wound up his article with an expression of his belief that there had been some racing in the neighborhood. I can only suppose myself less callous to the charms of horseflesh than that apocryphyal personage, for from start to finish nothing interested me so much as the actual business of the meeting. One admits certain social excellencies which no man who frequents the race meetings at home can claim, whether for the Derby, or for Ascot, or for Doncaster, or even for the Grand Prix at Paris. The outlook presented by the Melbourne crowd is probably unrivalled in the world, but this is not half so much the result of the actual number present as of the unique advantages presented by the ground. We cannot plant our 5000 to the acre, as you can on the Hill which so fortunately overlooks Flemington racecourse. An English observer of Australian sport may be forgiven for thinking we can ride as well, or maybe even a trifle better, than the Australian. One hears, and one is bound in his travels through the Island Continent to learn so much of the Australian larrikin, that his sobriety and decency at a great public meeting like that which celebrates the Melbourne Cup may very well seem something of a surprise. It may be said with certainty that there is no popular gathering in the world in which the rowdy element so little declares itself, at which there are so few disposed to be roysterous, and so few who are out at elbows as at the Melbourne Cup. That noble animal, the horse, has been said to draw his nobility from the fact that he absorbs all the higher virtues of the people who surround him, and leaves them just a trifle less than worthless. There is always a little hint of truth in this outspoken satire, but, taking it by and large, as sailors say, I am disposed to think that it is less true at the great Victorian meeting than it is in most other places.

REVIEW AND IMPRESSIONS.

BY "THE VAGABOND."

The V.R.C. has done more to promote the federation of Australia than any utterance of the statesmen of the day. The great racing festival, the Cup week, has year by year attracted more of our friends from the other colonies, who enjoy themselves thoroughly in Melbourne, and in friendly communion with our people lose their own sectional prejudices. The rivalry on the turf between New South Wales and Victoria has yearly brought hither thousands of people from the sister colony who otherwise, it may be safely said, would never have crossed the border. The Melbourne Cup is distinctly an Australasian institution. It has been won by horses from New Zealand and South Australia, and more often by horses owned in New South Wales. I naturally have a slight prejudice in favor of the St. Albans and Mr. Donald Wallace's stables; but everyone must see that it is a very good thing that Mr. White and Mr. Gannon should occasionally carry off a Melbourne Cup. All New South Wales sportsmen must feel kindly disposed towards the people who furnish them with such magnificent stakes and give them such a good time. We, in Victoria, I am sure, do not grudge the success of honest Sydney sportsmen. They are Australians; their horses are Australian horses; we have part and lot in their success. I have cheered the victories of Messrs. W. and G. as much as anyone; and should one of Mr. White's horses win next year's English Derby, we may be sure all Victorians will be as proud as if the prize fell to an owner residing south of the Murray. Whilst that prince of political charlatans, Sir Henry Parkes has for years been opposing Federation, Mr. Byron Moore and his committee have been practically paying the way for such by the attractions they have held out to the other colonists to yearly make high festival at Flemington on the first week of November.

"The Melbourne Cup celebrations commence in Sydney," says Mr. Christie Murray to me. "If you wanted to write about it you ought to have come overland with me. It is the most wonderful thing I have seen of its kind in the world. People crowding in hundreds into the trains, packed closely together for 16 hours, flying across mountain and river and plain, just to see a race run." I tell my distinguished confrere that I have not the slightest wish to write about the Melbourne Cup except in the stern pursuance of duty, but that I am glad he sees something to astonish and admire in the railway arrangements between Sydney and Melbourne. If he should travel by the Adelaide express he will be even more astonished. I, too, am surprised when, meeting Mr. Christie Murray at the Spencer-street station, I see the crowded trains come in filled with well known Sydney faces. The habitual black loungers of George-street appear to have migrated here *en masse*. The principal hotelkeepers are here, their own hostelries being empty. The saloons and theatres and pleasure places generally of Sydney suffer much during this race week. All the leading owners and sportsmen of New South Wales, Mr. White, the English bookmaker of Sydney; Mr. Jack Thompson, once of the Northern Army; and a crowd of the children of Yiddish who make up the rank of Sydney ruffles, come by rail. Lawyers and doctors and Government officials and squatters and mining speculators, all with their wives and daughters, have deserted New South Wales for Victoria. In the current of humanity set towards Victoria at this Cup week there must necessarily be some foul scum. I recognise some "squeers" in the cars. And Mr. Christie Murray tells me how, when shut up with a carriage full of turfites from Albury, he was astonished at their moderate language and gentlemanly demeanour—so different to that of the same class in Europe—until one of them said quietly to his neighbor, "You remember my brother Jack?" "Yes!" "Well, he got three months at Corowa." "Three months! Did he!" And no one seemed to think it an extraordinary occurrence! But the English novelist was very much staggered at finding relations of gaol birds his companions in a first class carriage. In England they would have been in a third class compartment, with one of them very possibly under the seat to cheat the railway company of a fare. Phryne too has followed the sportsmen and sporters from Sydney, and made our Block in Collins-street not so respectable as it might be during this Cup week.

Melbourne is *en fête* this morning. Carriages and drags and cabs congregate at the clubs and hotels, and the palaces. Shops are closed, work in factories is suspended. People who are not going to the races throng the streets looking at those who are. "One Cup Day is like another," says a candid critic to me, "You can find nothing new to write about." It has been my fortune to describe several Melbourne Cup days—fortune which now is a misfortune, as necessarily things do not strike one with the freshness which they display to a new hand. Yet in the 14 years since I first saw the Cup I have at least acquired a knowledge of and sympathy with the Australian community, and inspired with the *raison* of the bush which it takes new charms so long to experience. I have known a generation of globe-trotters of all sorts and conditions, and the Rev. Edwyn Jackson, Mr. Edward Greenfell and Mr. H. Reynolds are the only English gentlemen I remember who at once thoroughly appreciated our Australian life. Mrs. Howard Vincent as the only lady who has not come the Superior Person over us. Our first Cup day is without doubt a great event. But the others which follow it have all their separate interest. One Cup Day is not like another. The weather alone makes a great difference. I can never forget Assyrian's year, when the rain fell in torrents, and the lawn became a bog, and the Stand a forest of umbrellas. The worst thing I remember in Australia, too, was the stampede on that day for the railway platform, when palings were broken down, and dresses torn off their wearers' backs, and women fainted, and men swore and fought. That was a sight I would not have liked to have shown any distinguished visitors. Flemington on a wet day and Flemington on a fine day, like this, are quite different places. Every year, too, there is a change to be seen in the people starting from the city and suburbs, and those watching them start. And if those who go by road cannot see the change still it is there—in the number of houses, in the number of spectators, and especially little children, who cheer the drags as they pass, and in the increasing foliage in the Royal Park and Flemington reserves. An early colonist, who for years past has been residing in England, but who is not here to-day, tells me that after long years absence from Melbourne, nothing strikes him so much as the manner in which the parks and reserves of the city have been planted and become wooded over. Melbourne at this season is now embowered in foliage instead of being a mere chessboard of houses, across which dust storms swept. In the diminution of dust on the Flemington road of late years there is a distinct and satisfactory change.

The majority of people go down by rail. I like to be with the ordinary majority instead of the select. The society of my fellow man in Australia is not distasteful to me. The crush at Spencer-street more than equals my expectations. The extra traffic on Cup Day is rapidly collaring the traffic arrangements. I manage to safely put into a carriage three ladies, one of them, like Rosamond, more than common tall, like, in fact, unto those young "giantesses" whom Mr. Christie Murray has had the good luck to take in to dinner. In my 15 years in the colonies I have never had the same experience. Nor have I had the same experience on a railway platform before. The crowd is so great that it is with much difficulty that I can pick up and restore to some unknown lady, the stand ticket which she has dropped. Trains come empty and go away crowded, and the Countess and the Beggar Student and myself think that we shall miss the first race. But as everything comes to those who wait we in time get seats and soon after noon are safe at Flemington. I am prepared to see a large attendance, but am staggered at the masses on the Hill and in the Stand. "A larger attendance than on previous years" has been said about every Cup that I remember. This year I believe there is no mistake that it is the very largest.

Years ago I remember that there was always ample room on the Hill. Now an hour before the first race every seat in the stand and every cage of vantage has been taken possession of. The half-crown patrons of the Hill really get the full value of their money. The rustic arbor and pagoda are quite equal to anything provided for the half-guinea patrons of the Lawn. The Hill is a splendid place for picnicking, and it is fully taken advantage of by simple people who are already making *al fresco* meals, paterfamilias looking after the beer bottle, the "missis" after the bread and meat, and the children, playing on the grass, reserving themselves for the beg of lollies which they know is in the corner of the basket. Strather's luncheon rooms and bars are thronged with hungry and thirsty people. Many of the girls on the hill here are just as pretty and as neatly if not as expensively dressed as the ladies on the lawn below. The men here as a rule do not pretend to make any addition to their everyday costume. It is a thoroughly Australian, and therefore democratic, throng. The majority of people here take just as much interest, and know as much about the racing, as the sportsmen on the lawn below. The small cash bookmakers and sweep promoters are doing well. In years gone by I used to know by sight the "sportsmen" on the Hill, even as I know now their more ambitious confrères in the saddling paddock. But there is quite a new crowd now. I cannot "spot" a single man. I suppose the majority are now dead or in gaol, or have become members of the Victorian Club. One brown faced individual catches my eye. Where did I see him last? I feel vexed that I cannot recognise the "Rat." And it is more vexing still when he recognises me and says "You did me a good turn at Claremont one, Sir. We all looks up to you, Sir." Is this the result of 15 years hard journalistic work in Australia? A Queenslander! "Rat" claims me as an object of respect!

We go to the Lawn to see the Vice-Regal party drive down the course. There is some cheering, and a few hats are raised when the National Anthem is played, but there is no intense feeling of excitement or curiosity except amongst the ladies, who are all anxious to know what Lady Loch and the Countess of Kintore are wearing. Dress is in fact one of the greatest attractions at the Cup. Women go to see what other women wear, and to outshine them if possible. Years ago we remember when Cup day was the culminating epoch of the year with our womankind. Ball dresses might be splendid and costly, but they were nothing to the Cup costumes worn before the eyes of thousands, and in which the most gorgeously dressed women queened it like Cleopatra or Semiramus. Dresses were then imported from Paris and kept in bankers' safes with the family diamonds—the first diamonds in the family, be it understood. Dresses which cost hundreds of pounds were worn but for four hours. The most week leading actresses would receive letters from Tourak of the following import:—"My Cup dress cost me £200. I will sell it you for £50." We have altered all that now. Yearly the dresses at the Cup have become more simple and of better taste. One year I remember the "Bas Lamb" style was supreme—all white, with colored sashes. Then we had a red year. A cunning hand will deal with the dresses as well as the racing, but in writing impressions of the Cup it is impossible to avoid touching on the subject. It is only female dress, however, which is worth noticing. The males, as a rule, are not particularly conspicuous for elegance of attire, and the black hats, which are the chief head gear, do not meet with my approval. Yet, after all, our men, if not masters, are seen. Perhaps the best dressed youth on the lawn to-day is one who has proved his prowess on the Isis and the Thames.

This is a green year. There are greens of every shade of this color. "Apple green" is perhaps the favorite. "Sea foam" and "copper bronze" are largely worn, as also is russet hair. This is a charming tint, and when trimmed with white or black lace makes a most elegant costume. But the apple green trimmed with black lace, worn by one well known Toorak lady, one of the belles at the naval and military ball, is, to my mind, the most "fetching" thing in dresses I have seen for a long time. But then it is always the wearer who accentuates the attire. My friends amongst the Samoan ladies look stately in plain *lava lavas*, which would hardly suit our Victorian beauties. On the other hand, Fauna and Faatola would look very absurd in apple green or "duck egg" or old rose. Perhaps the most perfectly dressed woman on the lawn is Mrs. ——, whose costume presents no special feature or prominent color. She is so well dressed that you do not notice her dress. All society fees will recognise who I mean. I will not incur the undying hatred of hundreds of ladies by mentioning the name of her whom men consider takes the prize of that which is, to a woman's heart dearer than Beauty, Dress. "Liberty silk" is the material mostly used in the costumes seen on the lawn. This soft fabric easily adapts itself to outlines and is suited to graceful women. Amongst the younger girls there are still a good many white dresses, which give a light tone to the moving throng. Very pretty and innocent looking are these white gowns, but after all not so adapted to display a woman's charms as darker shades. There is nothing defined in white. It neutralises a woman's graces. Look at this magnificent Junoesque lady in black silk and bead lace trimmings. You feel thankful that there are still such Englishwomen in the world. The matrons in black on the course to-day are better looking than the maids in white. Black is the true wear for a beautiful woman. Artists, perhaps, may be against me in this, but I stick to my opinion that in black only you get the true outline. The portrait in the Grosvenor Gallery collection which aroused the most admiration was of a figure entirely in black. If the lady depicted had been in white her charms would all have been neutralised. On the same grounds I maintain that male modern evening dress, which some call ugly, is the most suitable in the world.

This may also be called the year of flowers. Old and young womanhood wear in profusion artificial flowers of almost every variety known to the horticulturist in hats and bonnets. Nature's real bouquets, roses and lilies of the valley, are plentifully worn on buttonholes and in belts, to match the artificial flowers. Paton and other florists have done well on this Cup morning. The crowd on the Lawn at times looks like a moving garden of flowers. Viewed from the Hill the scene is not perhaps so picturesque as when I was here last, when the red sunshades swaying over the heads of the white clad figures made the lawn look like a field of waving poppies. "Husband beaters" this year are often of colors to match the gowns. The gowns are very trying indeed for the complexion when viewed near at hand. From afar off the darker and more sober colors do not look so picturesque as the reds and whites of former years. Indeed at a distance the most outrageous costumes of the Seventies, colors and blends like unto nothing in the heavens above, the earth beneath or the waters under the earth, formed a picturesque and striking ensemble. Nearer at hand to-day one admired most the parasols trimmed with white lace. Even a man could not help noticing that this year the sunshades, instead of being plain, have gone into many flounces, and that "husband beaters" are becoming things of the past. Also that ex Lady Mayoresses are increasing in number and are setting a good example in fashion. It is very amusing to listen to the scraps of conversation on