

POEMS IN PINK

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Poems in Pink by W. Phillipotts Williams

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W. PHILLPOTTS WILLIAMS

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PREFACE.

Owing to the kindness of *Baily's Magazine*, *The Sportsman*, *Land and Water*, and *The County Gentleman*, I have been able to reproduce such of these poems as have already been in print before. "The Flea-bitten Grey," "The Squire," and "The Sporting Parson" appeared in *Baily's*; "Dairymaid," "A Day in the Vale," "Twelve Miles in the Open," "The Pace was Too Good to Inquire," and "Riding and Reason," in *Land and Water*; "There's Life in the Old Horse Yet," "Foreman," "A Deal with an Irish Horse Dealer, &c.," and "The Grave in the Vale," in the *County Gentleman*; "Lord Lonsdale's Drive," "The Senators' Race," and "A Plea for the Royal Buckhounds," in *The Sportsman*; the rest, eleven in number, have never been in print before.

If the reader should perchance find anything worthy of merit in this book I would request him to give credit where it is due, namely, to Horse and Hound. When I go into the kennel in the morning I find more poetry in Nancy's beautiful face than in a whole library, and when I am riding alone over these wild downs I find the chestnut mare's saddle flap such a wonderful writing desk that I really feel as if I was "writing at a gallop." One by one the lines

come as I stand by her side and look at her clear brown eye and shapely form. Surely these creatures are sent to lead us in all that is noble and good, surely the chase is given us for a high and noble purpose ; does it not bring all our best qualities to the front—bravery, harmony, love and good fellowship—its very existence rests on these. Pride and exclusiveness are cast to the winds, the chase knows no place for them : no, the littlenesses of life are forgotten the moment hounds begin to run, and every man breathes freely in the broad atmosphere of the hunting field. For my part when the narrow walls that divide us are cast down, and I am sailing away over the open in the wake of the chiming pack, I feel a freer and a better man.

LLANGARRAN,
SALISBURY.

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THE FLEA-BITTEN GREY.

The pick of the stable, good, honest, and sound ;
How eager he was at the note of a hound !
But verses can never describe or convey
The value I placed on the flea-bitten grey.

I bought him at Lincoln, right out of the drove ;
The coper who sold him—a rum looking cove—
Took his oath he was everything man could require,
And swore he could jump every gate in the shire.

I doubted his word, it is needless to say,
And gave thirty sovs. for the flea-bitten grey ;
His coat was so rough that it seemed to be plain
The horse was brought up in perpetual rain.

His bones could be counted, each one in its place,
And everyone said he was quite a disgrace.
The clever ones all, who had mustered in force,
Said, "Why did you buy such a beast of a horse?"

We fed him with judgment and gave him his corn,
And taught him to gallop each day with the morn
And quickly he grew, as his skin became full,
With a head like a snake and a back like a bull.

As he mended his outlines I, next, did incline
To try him with hounds, to see what was his line.
We met at the village ; we found in the vale ;
The bruisers came thickly by road and by rail.

How quickly they found and went streaming away,
The first day I rode him, the flea-bitten grey !
He went like a hunter ; I fancied his stride,
So I sent him along and went on with the tide.

And soon I discovered he knew how to go ;
He knew all about it, the quick and the slow.
Through the gap in the covert he crept like a snail,
And galloped as fast as you liked at the rail.

There were five of us up when we checked in the road ;
The pace was a "huster," as most of them showed.
The grey was as cool and as fresh as could be ;
He was going at ease, and was galloping free.

I knew I had one who could gallop and stay,
The first time I hunted the flea-bitten grey ;
Then five of us quickly went down to the brook—
We none of us had any time for a look.

Four horses were seen in a terrible plight ;
Four riders were all more or less in a fright.
One shouted aloud, "It is useless to try ;
No horse in the world can do this at a fly."

Then down in his turn without further delay
 Came the one who was riding the flea-bitten grey ;
 The brook it was deep, and the brook it was wide,
 The flea-bitten took the whole thing in his stride.

The brook it was wide, and the brook it was deep,
 The banks were all rotten and ever so steep ;
 When the country was worst, he was happy and gay—
 This marvellous hunter, the flea-bitten grey.

Through the best of the vale, quite alone with the hounds,
 Still fleeting along with those silvery sounds ;
 What rapture such moments disclose to the mind !
 What words can describe all the feelings combined !

All those who have taken their part in the fun
 Say the essence of life is a foxhunting run ;
 And still for an hour we hunted and ran,
 And still had it all to ourselves in the van.

Till they marked him to ground, every hound in his place !
 'Twas honours divided all round in the race !
 Two hours and a bit from the time that we found,
 As fast as you liked, till we ran him to ground.

For twenty good minutes I waited alone
 Till the master came up, looking frightfully done ;
 And a squad of hard riders (one minus his hat),
 With the marks of the soil upon which they had sat.