

**PLAIN TALES  
FROM THE HILLS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649183562

Plain tales from the hills by Rudyard Kipling

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**RUDYARD KIPLING**

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BY  
RUDYARD KIPLING

IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOL. II

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON  
1914



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## THE BROKEN-LINK HANDICAP

While the snaffle holds, or the long-neck stings,  
While the big beam tilts, or the last bell rings,  
While horses are horses to train and to race,  
Then women and wine take a second place

For me—for me—

While a short 'ten-three'

Has a field to squander or fence to face!

*Song of the G. R.*

**T**HERE are more ways of running a horse to suit your book than pulling his head off in the straight. Some men forget this. Understand clearly that all racing is rotten—as everything connected with losing money must be. In India, in addition to its inherent rottenness, it has the merit of being two-thirds sham; looking pretty on paper only. Every one knows every one else far too well for business purposes. How on earth can you rack and harry and post a man for his losings, when you are fond of his wife, and live in the same

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Station with him? He says, 'On the Monday following,' 'I can't settle just yet.' You say, 'All right, old man,' and think yourself lucky if you pull off nine hundred out of a two-thousand-rupee debt. Any way you look at it, Indian racing is immoral, and expensively immoral; which is much worse. If a man wants your money he ought to ask for it, or send round a subscription-list, instead of juggling about the country with an Australian larrikin; a 'brumby,' with as much breed as the boy; a brace of *chumars* in gold-laced caps; three or four *ekka*-ponies with hogged manes, and a switch-tailed demirep of a mare called Arab because she has a kink in her flag. Racing leads to the *shroff* quicker than anything else. But if you have no conscience and no sentiments, and good hands, and some knowledge of pace, and ten years' experience of horses, and several thousand rupees a month, I believe that you can occasionally contrive to pay your shoeing-bills.

Did you ever know Shackles—b. w. g., 15. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ —coarse, loose, mule-like ears—barrel as long as a gate-post—tough as a telegraph-wire—and the queerest brute that ever looked through a bridle? He was of no brand, being one of an ear-nicked mob taken into the *Bucephalus* at £4:10s. a head to make up freight, and sold raw and out of condition at Calcutta for Rs. 275. People who lost money

## THE BROKEN-LINK HANDICAP

on him called him a 'brumby'; but if ever any horse had Harpoon's shoulders and The Gin's temper, Shackles was that horse. Two miles was his own particular distance. He trained himself, ran himself, and rode himself; and, if his jockey insulted him by giving him hints, he shut up at once and bucked the boy off. He objected to dictation. Two or three of his owners did not understand this, and lost money in consequence. At last he was bought by a man who discovered that, if a race was to be won, Shackles, and Shackles only, would win it in his own way, so long as his jockey sat still. This man had a riding-boy called Brunt—a lad from Perth, West Australia—and he taught Brunt, with a trainer's whip, the hardest thing a jock can learn—to sit still, to sit still, and to keep on sitting still. When Brunt fairly grasped this truth, Shackles devastated the country. No weight could stop him at his own distance; and the fame of Shackles spread from Ajmir in the South, to Chedputter in the North. There was no horse like Shackles, so long as he was allowed to do his work in his own way. But he was beaten in the end; and the story of his fall is enough to make angels weep.

At the lower end of the Chedputter race-course, just before the turn into the straight, the track passes close to a couple of old brick-mounds