

MODEST WILLOW GROVE FARMER LAD WINS FAME AND SMALL FORTUNE AS "WONDER BOY" OF TURF

15-Year-Old Arnold Blythe Picks Real Thoroughbred at Auction of Derelicts and Collects \$1,400 in Prizes With Nag That Cost Father \$45

WORSHIP OF CROWDS DISTASTEFUL TO YOUTH AFTER TRACK TRIUMPHS

Call of the Soil Is Stronger With Youngster Than Excitement of the Race Track and Winnings Go to Buy Tractor for Home Use

The wonder boy of the turf! A thoroughbred, he rides thoroughbreds! A boy whose keen judgment of horse flesh enabled him to make an "old plug" a winner in eight out of nine starts. A boy who outguessed his father and who convinced him that \$45 was a good investment in this same horse, which eventually won \$1400 in purses in a single season. A boy who loves the farm and who can handle any piece of machinery used in its cultivation.

This sums up Arnold Blythe, fifteen years old, of Willow Grove. Arnold has been racing runners and jumpers since he was eleven. A horse is his hobby. Temperamental, yet modest in the extreme, is this blue-eyed prodigy of the turf. Ever on the alert to detect an opponent's weakness in a race, sportsmanlike and game to the core, he has made friends by the thousands and made admirers of his challengers.

William Blythe, the father, is a horseman and also superintendent of the Carson Simpson Methodist Home at Willow Grove. He smiles, involuntarily, when he mentions the combination, but looks you square in the eye and tells you he is not ashamed of his fondness for the turf.

Arnold has inherited his dad's traits. He first displayed intelligent interest in horses when he was five years old. Instead of romping with other children, he spent his time about the stables watching his father get his mounts in condition for the steeplechase and the "flats."

Took His First Mount When Only Six Years Old

At the age of six he was riding, and he has been at it ever since. Winter before last Arnold's father took him to a horse bazaar in West Philadelphia. Here, scrawny-necked steeds with ring bones, bog spavins and wind puffs were led out, one by one, upon the auction block and sold to the highest bidders. Arnold viewed the proceedings with no particular interest until a bay horse was brought from its stall. "Dad, I like the looks of that horse; buy him, will you?" "That horse? Why, I wouldn't give a nickel for him. He looks as if he had spent his days hitched to a plow. What good is he?" "He looks like a thoroughbred to me. Buy him, please; won't you, dad?"

William Blythe bought the horse for \$45, and Arnold, with halter rope in hand, started home. He was teased by neighbors and members of



"Cyclone" and his trainer

his own household as he led his steed into a stall. "Just you wait and see. You can all have a good laugh, but some day it'll be my turn, and I'll show you where you're wrong." Arnold took better care of that horse for the following four months than some mothers do of their chil-



Arnold Blythe, his father, William Blythe, and "Cyclone"



"Cyclone," Arnold's famous "come-back"

him home from that auction. You win, boy; you win." Fourteen hundred dollars and the reputation that Arnold had won was enough to make any boy stick out his chest till his coat buttons gave away. Not so with Arnold. He banked his winnings, pondered awhile and one night exclaimed to his father: "Dad, I like the farm, every inch of it. I like to work on it and see the results in the crops. We've got a lot of plowing to do and I'm not going to make Cyclone do it, either. I am going to buy a tractor with the money that I won." The tractor was purchased by the boy and given to his father.

Last fall Arnold plowed seventy-six acres. It matters not whether it is a mowing machine, a harrow, a cultivator; Arnold knows how to handle all of them. This farmer-jockey is as difficult to interview as a temperamental prima donna. He hates publicity—the hero stuff. He would much rather fade from the picture to some secluded spot after a noteworthy feat he has performed. He doesn't like to have a crowd make a fuss over him.

He scots for the stables like a streak of lightning after each race. If he happens to have only one mount in a day, he gets out of his bright red-and-white silken colors as quickly as possible, dons his street garb and goes to a far-off corner in the grandstand, there in quietude to view the remaining events on the program.

Arnold has his own ideas about life for a boy on the farm. And as this fifteen-year-old youngster expresses these, as well as other ideas, the listener marvels at his diction—not that of the racetrack nor that of the usual

rough-and-tumble boy. He talks almost like a high school teacher. He says that there must be attraction, other than just work. He is a firm believer in the doctrine that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." "Farmers today often wonder why it is their boys pack up and hike for the city as soon as they've reached the age of eighteen," Arnold says. "The answer is simple. If a boy has a hobby he should be allowed to ride it. Too many fathers think boys should drudge, day in and day out, without ever having any pleasure. They're narrow-minded. They must wake up. They're behind the times."

Real Sportsmanship Is One Characteristic

"I DON'T like publicity—this hero stuff. I had much rather the crowd would not make such a fuss when I ride a horse," says Arnold. This blonde-haired idol of turf fans is modest in the extreme. He brags not about his riding feats. As soon as a race is over he gets away from the grandstand as soon as possible. He is more concerned over the care of his mount than the cheers of the throngs. His sportsmanship on or off the track is the source of admiration not only from his followers but his challengers. He rides horses because he likes them. He has been at it since he was eleven years old. He has had two chances to ride for prominent turfmen in New York, but his mother objected. He likes the farm, can drive any piece of machinery on it. He's a thoroughbred, every inch of him.

Quiet "Chat" With Horse Decides Fate of Racer

"Well, dad, what will we do, try and get him in shape to race again this year or will we 'pin fire' him?" asked the boy. "He's your horse, and what you say goes, my boy," replied the father. Arnold led the horse back into the stall and for fifteen minutes he was in whispered conversation with the groom. "I have decided, dad, that Cyclone is too good a horse to take chances with. His trouble now is not serious, and with a long rest and good care he will

15-Year-Old Boy Better "Picker" Than His Father

FIFTEEN years old and a keener judge of horseflesh than many veterans is Arnold Blythe. He outguessed his father at an auction, pleaded with him to pay \$45 for a horse that apparently had no breeding and then went out and won \$1400 in purse money in a single season. He started in nine races against riders who have been in the game for years, won eight of them and was second in the other start. He was teased by his parents and friends when he brought the horse home. He took the joshing good-naturedly, but back of it all he was determined. He made up his mind that his judgment as to the horse's breeding would be vindicated. It was. Instead of being a selling plater, Cyclone, proved to be Holiday, a thoroughbred, just as this youthful jockey had said.

He schools jumpers for his father and is a trainer par excellence. He likes books, is a prominent athlete in his school and is among the leaders in his classes.

come back into form again. I think I will take the horse home and turn him out for the remainder of the season. This winter I can work on him and get him in shape for next year." And so Cyclone went home, his racing ended for the year. William Blythe never questions his son's judgment whether it be regarding the condition of a horse or how to ride him.

"That boy's ability to detect the slightest fault with a runner or jumper is almost uncanny," said Mr. Blythe. "He has the cleverest hand I have ever seen in the saddle. He always plans before a race just what he is going to do. He has yet to get left at the barrier. He's up there all the time, and when the barrier drops he's off."

A group of veterans of the turf were seated on feed boxes near Cyclone's stall swapping stories when they learned that Arnold had decided to lay his horse up for the year. Holiday, with ears cocked and eyes gleaming, was eating sugar from the hand of his trainer. "I swear, I don't think it's beat all," exclaimed one. "Here's a kid in his early teens racing against some of the craftiest in the business. It's remarkable when you stop to think of it. He is the coolest bird I ever saw. Never gets excited and gets out of some pretty tight places when some of his opponents try to box him on the turns. If he gets out of the trap, all right; if not he never grumbles. But all the time he is doing some tall thinking. He never forgets if he is once tricked. He keeps his eyes on the jock that did it when he is in the next race and he outguesses them every time."

Father Gave Him Leeway to Ride His One Hobby

"Dad was quick to realize this. Instead of putting his foot down he encourages me. He promised that just as soon as I got big enough to ride I would have the chance. He has kept his word, and you couldn't drag me off the old farm with a steam roller. "Mother was a bit opposed to my being a jockey. She saw evils in the game and feared that because of my associations with older riders I would fall into some of their ways. She even asked Dad to forbid me to ride in races. "I had my own ideas about riding when I first started in. I said to myself, 'If you ride thoroughbreds you must be a thoroughbred yourself.' I have always followed that motto. "I don't consider myself above riders who have been in the game for years, but I just don't associate with them. After I have ridden a race I look after my mount and then I get away from the bunch as quickly as I can. "I have ridden many runners and jumpers. My father has more than sixty horses now. I school all of the jumpers. Have I ever been spilt? Yes, many times, but that's part of the game. There is danger in almost any sport. If there wasn't it wouldn't be a sport. You have to take chances, and that's the thrilling part of it. "A short time ago I was working a horse on the track to get her ready for a race. Coming around the turn into the stretch she faltered, two streams of blood spurted from her nostrils, and she fell dead. I was thrown over the mare's head when she tumbled, but I unlight and I wasn't hurt. "It is hard to say which I like better, the runners or jumpers. Of course there is more action 'going over the brushes.' But you can get plenty of excitement out of the 'flats.' Arnold rode Holiday, as now officially calls "Cyclone," in a race at Byberry Fair. He was pitted against veteran jockeys. It had rained for three hours before the race and the track was deep in mud. When the barrier was sprung Cyclone and his youthful jockey were away like a shot. For a time it looked as though the kid was going to keep up with the spectacular work started in 1921. But Cyclone, as the boy explained later, is not a mud horse. He finished fourth. However, that made no difference. Arnold Blythe got an ovation second to none. Crowds rushed onto the track, half-dragged half-carried the boy to the enclosure. But before many had a chance to congratulate him for his showing he had run for the stable inter.

Green Boy Made Veteran Race on Green Horse

The remarkable part of the boy's exhibition I did not learn until after the race. The horse had had some schooling, but had never raced. Here was a fifteen-year-old kid with a green horse in a big field and he handled him like a veteran. Arnold had had chances to go to New York to ride for two prominent turfmen, according to his father. The boy was eager to accept, but his mother objected. The boy's racing for this year is about over. He will soon enter the Junior High School at Willow Grove. He has been a star athlete from the time he entered grammar school. He played second base and captained his school baseball team, is a good swimmer and is a flash on the basketball floor. In addition, he is an excellent student, always ranking among the leaders in his classes. "Do I like school. Certainly. I intend to get the best education possible. I never allow anything to interfere with my studies. I have often heard older boys and men say, 'If I only had a good education.' In most cases there is no excuse for this. Any boy can at least go through high school if he only makes up his mind. "I always loved books and I have got my nose stuck into one at every opportunity."

The Blythe farm in Willow Grove is one of the most picturesque in the neighborhood. Broad, green fields stretch for acres on all sides of the buildings. It is under excellent cultivation. Trees with long sweeping branches murmur a greeting as you enter the spacious yard. It is just the sort of a place one would pick for a summer vacation.

Sister Likes Horses Like Her Father and Brother

Arnold Blythe has a sister, Ethel May, six years old. Like her brother, she is fond of horses. She spends almost as much time around the stables as does Arnold. She likes to ride and when the jumpers have finished their schooling for the day Ethel gallops them to the barn. Mr. Blythe has a difficult time in preserving the sugar supply, for Ethel always has her pockets stuffed. She makes the rounds of the stalls of her favorite horses and treats them.

There isn't a vicious horse in the Blythe stables. If Mr. Blythe gets one he proceeds to get rid of it as soon as possible. "Animals aren't given half the credit for intelligence due them," said Mr. Blythe. "You can make a horse do almost anything but talk. Of course, the greatest asset in training is kindness. No animal is trustworthy if it is beaten. I have had several grooms and if I catch one abusing an animal out he goes. Abuse isn't necessary. "Occasionally you will find a horse that is just naturally mean. I work easy with him and try to teach him to be kind. In such a method fails, I sell him. I have owned horses and I probably will for the remainder of my days. And after that—it will be Arnold."