

From the Archives

Fifty years of sport by Colonel Miler – part ix

This is the continuing story of Colonel Edward Darley Miller and his recollections. He was one of the three brothers who founded Roehampton Club in 1901 and in 1923, he published a retrospective account of his sporting life over a period of 50 years and the people he met along the way. The book was serialised in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News Magazine* from January to April in the same year.



James Whitbread Lee Glaisher

This instalment continues his recollections of his time at Cambridge University and the characters that drew his attention. The ending of the previous article referred to his respect for one of his tutors. His name was James Whitbread Lee Glaisher – a prolific English mathematician and astronomer who indulged the Colonel by listening to his stories of sporting excellence despite having no experiences of his own. The Colonel thought of him at the time as an elderly man, but it was forty years later that his brother arrived at the University to enter one of his sons, to find that the tutor was still around.

This prompted the Colonel to make a return visit to the University where he found his old tutor in good spirits recalling in detail his previous knowledge of the Colonel and his brothers. He had previously told his brother of the many old pupils who had distinguished themselves in every walk of life and with a twinkle in his eye said there was one, who in the last recent months of the Colonel's visit had been more talked about than any man in Europe.

The old tutor continued his account of this individual by saying that he had always had a great opinion of this man's capacity but had never expected him to rise to such a pitch of celebrity. As the Colonel's brother listened to the story, he was guessing the possible identity of the man as one of the great political notorieties or a soldier of distinction. The tutor took great pleasure in telling the Colonel's brother that it was the financier Bevan. In recounting this story, the Colonel reflected on his appreciation for the tutor and his unexpected views.

At this point in his recollections, the Colonel changes topic by referring to his fondness for horse racing at the time he was at Cambridge and never seldom missed a big race in the autumn. These were the days, he says, when the great jockeys were also great horsemen too in that they could not only ride in races but were finished horsemen in every way. He goes on to list a number of contemporary characters involved in the racing world towards the end of the nineteenth century.



Trinity College Cambridge

He also goes on to recount the story of the Derby in 1884 which resulted in a dead heat. It was the only dead heat in the history of the Derby in which the judge was unable to separate Mr J Hammond's St Gatien from Sir J Willoughby's Harvester. They were both awarded an equal share in the prize money amounting to £4,000 (equivalent to approximately £636,000 in today's money).

Both owners had never previously run a horse in the Derby and the latter of the two owners was also the owner of the favourite in the race, Queen Adelaide who finished third. The climax to the finish of the race proved to be a disappointment for Sir Willoughby and his horse Harvester stumbling in his last few strides allowing St Gatien to make up the distance in the last few strides. Following the race, there seemed to be a considerable doubt as to the pedigree of the horse, St Gatien. One of the sports writers of the day was of the opinion that he was the son of another horse who, for many years was 'in the shafts of an Epsom cab'.

The Colonel continues to reminisce in the article with his knowledge of racing and the names of the various horses and their jockeys involved in the big racing events. He also mentions his approach to gambling in which he refers to the economic use of his stake money. He confirms that his normal bet was five shillings with an occasional amount of ten shillings depending on the odds. These amounts are equivalent to approximately £40 and £80 respectively if these bets were made today. If he was 'feeling rich' he would increase this amount to one pound or £160 today.

The Colonel concludes this account of his time at Cambridge by reflecting on the considerable number of his contemporaries who had distinguished themselves in the sporting world but also making reference to the 'eight individuals he had lost'. In the next article, the Colonel looks back at his move of address from Hertfordshire to Surrey in 1883.

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COLONEL ED MILLER 1922