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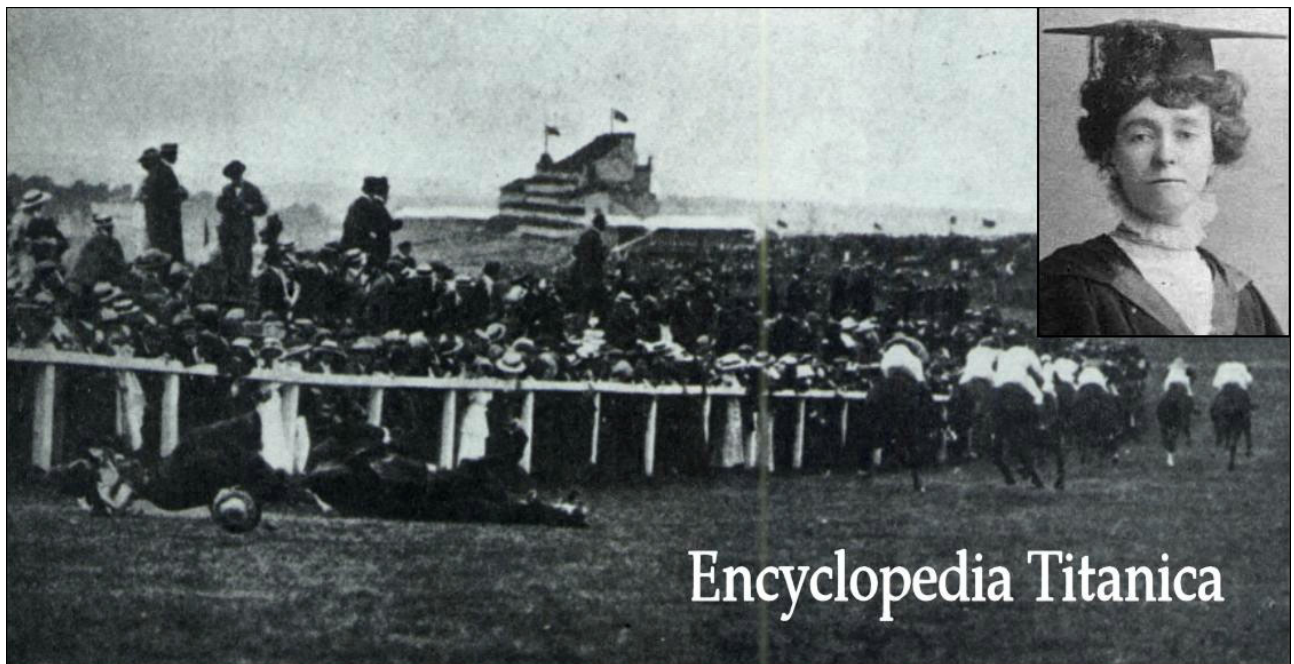
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A Race Through A Nightmare

by Senan Molony

“The English racing establishment would never let a horse owned by Ismay win the hallowed Derby...”

IF the 1913 Derby at Epsom is remembered for anything, it is the shocking protest by a suffragette who dashed from the rails at Tattenham Corner to bring down the King’s horse, *Anmer*.



The tragedy at Tattenham Corner (Emily Davison inset)

Courtesy of Senan Molony

Emily Davison broke her skull in the incident and died a few days later. Her act was widely misinterpreted at the time as being that of a lunatic. The newspapers of the time certainly seemed more concerned with the jockey, the horse, the sensibilities of the King – and a separate sensation in the same race.

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That sensation was the disqualification of the winner, the heavy favourite *Craganour*, owned by Charles Bower Ismay, younger brother of J. Bruce Ismay of the *Titanic*.

In his book *The Night Lives On*, Walter Lord considers whether the *Titanic* connection of a year earlier could have been the motive for what was undoubtedly an extraordinary denial of victory to a horse that had already been escorted to the Winner's Circle, given by flag signal as "Winner All Right," and on which the bookmakers were already paying out.



The 1913 Derby

Courtesy of Senan Molony

In his brief treatment, Lord rejects as implausible the notion that a Titanic stigma might have attached to the brother with the horse becoming an instrument of retribution. But his alternative suggestion – that the other riders might have taken advantage of a stewards' inquiry to denigrate an "immensely unpopular" winning jockey – cannot be relied upon either.

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There is no evidence whatever that the jockey was disliked, nor that the inquiry was an “ideal opportunity to discredit” him. No suggestion of the kind was made at the time.

So what did happen in the Derby of 1913, a race that lasted only two minutes 37.6 seconds? Why was it that *Craganour* was disqualified?

The story begins in the lush pastures of Adare, Co Limerick, Ireland, where *Craganour* was born the son of champion racehorse Desmond out of Veneration II.

He was bred by one Major Eustace Loder, who sold him as a foal. The same Major Loder would later become one of just three men faced with ruling on whether *Craganour* should be adjudged winner of the blue riband of the turf.

The second owner of the bay colt was Sir Tatton Sykes, who placed him at Sledmere Stud in Driffield, East Yorkshire. *Craganour* was next sent up to the Doncaster sales in 1911 with the rest of the Sledmere yearlings, and bought by C. Bower Ismay for 3,200 guineas.

He immediately impressed in training, and then began to take the track by storm. *Craganour* won six prestige races as a two year old – the New Stakes at Ascot, Exeter Stakes at Newmarket, Molecomb Stakes at Goodwood, Prince of Wales Stakes at York, Champagne Stakes at York, and finished the 1912 season with a triumph at Newmarket -

The Middle Park Plate

Victory of Mr C. B. Ismay's *Craganour*

Craganour almost at once took the lead, and without being called upon to exert himself, won by three lengths from *Shogun*, with *Louvois* beaten by the same distance for second place. The superiority of *Craganour* is unmistakable...

(*Times*, Saturday October 13, 1912, p. 12)

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The same newspaper wondered nine days later whether it might have been too fulsome in its praise -

A generous enthusiasm is apt to induce admirers of the last notable winner to exaggerate his merit, and this may be done in the case of Mr C. Bower Ismay's *Craganour*. His Middle Park Plate victory was, however, distinctly impressive. He is beyond question a remarkably handsome colt, distinguished by that attribute of quality which is not quite easy to define.

(*Times*, Tuesday October 22, 1912, p.13)

A month later, the most distinguished newspaper in Britain was already beginning to ruminate about *Craganour's* chances of landing the highest laurels of all:

It is interesting to know something of the disposition of animals of note. *Craganour*, the son of *Desmond* and *Veneration II*, is described as a colt of character, good tempered, but requiring firm treatment, and disinclined to allow liberties to be taken. One of his strong points as a racehorse is the remarkable length of his stride. There is always a question as to whether a leading two-year-old winner may be able to stay, and unless he shows extraordinary speed the doubt is accentuated.

It is premature, therefore, to conclude that *Craganour* can hardly fail to win the [1913] Derby if all continues to go well, although there is no reason why he should not stay.

(*Times*, Tuesday November 5, 1912, p.15)

The New Year began badly however, and *Craganour* found himself beaten by *Flippant* in the Union Jack Stakes at Liverpool. Another calamity followed when he appeared to have the Two Thousand Guineas in the bag but pulled up too early, allowing the previously trounced *Louvois* to beat him by a short head at the post.

Yet these errors were largely dispelled by the form he next displayed when winning the Newmarket Stakes easily on May 21, 1913 -

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Craganour, not inconvenienced in the least by the extra distance, shot to the front when Maher encouraged him to do so, and in particularly impressive style led past the post by a length and a half from *Sun Yat*.

As regards the Derby, it will now naturally be concluded that *Craganour* should again beat *Louvois*.

(*Times*, Monday March 22, 1913, p. 13)

THE DERBY

An Estimate of Form

Great things were expected of Mr C. Bower Ismay's *Craganour*, and no small sensation was caused at Liverpool by his failure to beat Mr Holton's *Flippant*, a colt not reckoned as in the first class.

Faith in *Craganour* has become greatly strengthened [since], although *Shogun* is said to be completing a perfectly satisfactory preparation. *Louvois*, after alarming his trainer by slovenly work at exercise, won the Two Thousand Guineas by a head from *Craganour*, which in the estimation of many people left the point between them still unsettled, as it was it said that *Craganour*'s jockey took things too easily at the finish, under the impression that there was no risk of his being caught.

(*Times*, Tuesday May 27, 1913, p. 13)

THE DERBY

PROSPECTS OF TODAY'S RACE

Craganour and *Shogun*

Last words on the Derby can be summarised by what has previously been written. Mr C. Bower Ismay's *Craganour* was beyond all question the best of his age last season; he has shown – after preliminary failure at Liverpool and an encounter at Newmarket which barely missed success – that he has retained his form, and there is strong reason therefore to conclude that last year's superiority will again be displayed.

His trainer is convinced that he can scarcely fail, except by some stroke of bad luck impossible to foresee. The question is which of the others can with any reasonable possibility be expected to beat him.

Twice last year *Craganour* met Mr Holton's *Shogun* and the result was always the same: *Craganour* won by three lengths. Both appear to be perfectly genuine horses, ready that is to do their best, for Mr Bower Ismay's colt may be held to have indicated his character in this respect, and if he should lose the most coveted of races it must apparently be because *Shogun* or one of the others is the better stayer.

(*Times*, Wednesday June 4, 1913, p. 13)

ABOYEUR'S DERBY

Desperate Act of a Suffragist

Fall of the King's Horse

Disqualification of the Favourite.

The race for the Derby yesterday was marked by two incidents for which it will be long remembered, not only by the vast gathering at Epsom, but by all who take an interest in any sport.

The King's horse was brought to the ground by a woman suffragist who rushed from the crowd at Tattenham Corner, apparently with the object of seizing the reins. The horse fell and rolled on the jockey, who, however, was not seriously hurt. The woman was knocked down and received such serious injuries that it was reported at first that she had been killed.

The second incident – there has been no parallel to it for about 70 years – was the disqualification of the favourite, *Craganour*, after the horse had passed the post leading by a neck, and the declaration by the stewards that the race had been won by *Aboyeur*, a horse which had been deemed so little worthy of consideration that the odds against it were 100 to one.

As the distance post was reached, to the general amazement *Aboyeur* still retained his place, and Reiff on *Craganour* evidently felt that the moment for decisive action had arrived. He called on his mount for an effort and the colt responded.

Aboyeur was galloping on the rails, *Craganour* on his whip hand, and as they neared the winning post *Aboyeur* seemed to be driving his rival diagonally to the middle of the course.

There was some bumping, the responsibility for which it would be hard to apportion, and so they swerved past the judge, Mr Bower Ismay's Neapolitan violet and primrose hoops narrowly in advance of Mr Cunliffe's white with black seams.

Craganour had won by a head [from *Aboyeur*], *Louvois* only a neck behind, *Great Sport* next, *Shogun* unlucky in being shut in, and *Day Comet* bringing up.

Great surprise was created by the rumour, speedily confirmed, that though Mr Cunliffe had laid no objection, the stewards were requesting explanations of the jockeys' riding, and news of *Craganour*'s disqualification speedily followed.

To deprive the winner of the Derby of his race is so serious and unprecedented an occurrence that without overwhelming evidence an objection would surely never have been taken.

The following is the official statement of the disqualification of *Craganour* –
“The stewards objected to the winner on the grounds that he jostled the second horse. After hearing the evidence of the judge and several of the jockeys riding in the race, they found that *Craganour*, the winner, did not keep a straight course and interfered with *Shogun*, *Day Comet* and *Aboyeur*, having bumped the second horse.

They disqualified *Craganour* and awarded the race to *Aboyeur*.”

(*Times*, Thursday June 5, 1913, p. 8)

EDITORIAL

The Derby of 1913 will long remain memorable in the annals of the turf. In an open race, splendidly contested, the favourite passed the winning post first by a head, to be disqualified by the stewards.

No Derby winner has been disqualified since 1844, the year of the notorious "Running Rein" scandal, and the occurrence of an event so exceptional is itself enough to make yesterday's race a landmark in the recollection of the racing community.

The flag was raised after the weighing-in, and *Craganour*'s supposed victory was hailed with enthusiasm by the crowd, which was as large and as varied as usual. Soon however rumours began to circulate that the stewards were asking for an explanation of the winning jockey, and at the end of half an hour it was known that they had awarded the race to *Aboyeur*.

The stewards, it should be noted, took action upon their own initiative. No objection was raised by Mr Cunliffe, the owner of *Aboyeur*. The official report which they have issued declares that their objection to Reiff, the rider of the first horse, was made upon the ground that he had jostled the second horse.

They heard the evidence of the judge and the jockeys who had taken part in the race, and upon it they found that *Craganour* did not keep a straight course and that he had interfered with *Shogun*, *Day Comet* and *Aboyeur*.

It is explained that the "All Right" signal was put up by an irresponsible person without official instructions – a circumstance which seems to show a certain want of discipline somewhere. The sensation which this decision caused must have been of the liveliest order.

Some of the bookmakers had actually begun paying out money on the supposition that *Craganour* had won, and as the news of his victory was at once telegraphed all over the world, there must have been many men in many lands yesterday who, for a brief spell, rejoiced in the glad illusion that they had made a good thing of the Derby.

Their disappointment was the more bitter when they learned the full truth. On the other hand, the backers who had put their money on *Aboyeur* had a day more exciting still. Their horse, against whom odds of 100/1 were laid, made a magnificent struggle for victory from start to finish. For half an hour they thought that he had just missed it, and then came the joyful surprise that after all he, and not *Craganour*, was the Derby winner.

(*Times*, Thursday June 5, 1913, p. 9)

The Derby Decision

Novel Points Raised by the Disqualification

A Case for a Full Statement

Discussion on the most eventful of races for the Derby continues, and as a matter of course strong differences of opinion were expressed yesterday as to the action of the stewards in disqualifying *Craganour* and awarding the race to *Aboyeur*.

It was certain to be so, for the reason that enormous pecuniary interests were at stake. Mr Bower Ismay's *Craganour* had for a long time been the favourite for the race; and a colt does not keep his place in the Derby market unless large sums of money are coming in on his behalf.

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By far the best view of the race was obtained by the occupants of the little private stand, on the far side of the course, that looks down on the horses who pass, it may almost be said, close to them. Profound astonishment at the stewards' warning was expressed by many of those who were in this particularly favourable situation for observing.

Their idea was that both jockeys were at fault, insofar as fault was to be found. Indeed it is stated that *Aboyeur* made an attempt to savage *Craganour*, and that the bumping, at this stage at any rate, was due to the horses themselves.

It is held to be strange, moreover, that if there were grounds for an objection one was not made by Mr A.P. Cunliffe, the owner of the colt originally placed second.

This is one side of the of the subject; the other is that the stewards were convinced that the riding had been culpably reckless if not actually foul, and the evidence they called was held to confirm their impression.

The great question is of what this evidence consisted. In the ordinary way it is undesirable that what witnesses say when stewards are conducting an investigation should be reported, but in such an altogether exceptional case as the disqualification of a Derby winner who was also the Derby favourite – it would be absurd to ignore the importance of this latter consideration – it seems urgently necessary that the multitude of those who are concerned, the world in general indeed, should know precisely what was alleged and by whom, and what reply was forthcoming to the allegations.

A curious fact is that though the colt ridden by the French jockey Reiff was disqualified, no caution or reprimand seems to have been given by the stewards. The horse's owner is deprived of the race which few men have an opportunity of winning twice in a lifetime; but so far as what has come to light reveals, no blame is bestowed upon the rider, who is nevertheless accused of having done dangerous mischief throughout the contest.

(*Times*, Friday June 6, 1913, p.8)

Problems in Payment

All manner of problems have been created by the disqualification of *Craganour*. Much of the trouble that has arisen over the settlement of bets and sweepstakes would have been avoided if it had not been for the irresponsible person who gave the unauthorised “[Winner] All Right” signal, which was thereupon transmitted all over the course some minutes before it became generally known that an objection had been made by the stewards to *Craganour*.

Anybody who has ever been on a racecourse knows that there is always an interval of two or three minutes before the bookmakers begin to pay out their losses. They are waiting for the “All Right” signal. Once that is given to them, they resume their business. Naturally, therefore, when they received the orthodox signal on Wednesday, some of the bookmakers began to pay the large numbers of people who had backed the favourite.

Those who appear in regular attendance at race meetings and are best qualified to judge say that from seven to eight minutes passed between the hoisting of the “All Right” signal and the general circulation of the news on the course that *Craganour* had been objected to.

Within those seven or eight minutes a good deal of money was paid out by bookmakers to those who honestly believed that they had won with *Craganour*. In Tattersall's ring, however, the news of the objection was known almost immediately; but in Barnard's ring, which is some distance from the heart of things, a large amount of money had been paid out on bets ranging from one shilling to fifteen pounds before it was even suspected that anything was wrong.

One bookmaker illustrates the difference between the two rings by a narrative of his own experience. He does business in both rings. He paid out no money at all on *Craganour* in

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Tattersall's ring, and over eighty pounds in Barnard's ring. Only two pounds and ten shillings of the eighty pounds had been repaid to him by last night.

Other bookmakers who were also paying out when the news of *Craganour's* disqualification arrived had better fortune. One who had paid out more than a hundred pounds had practically the whole amount refunded. Another was astonished to receive seven pounds back after the last race yesterday.

No very large amounts can have been paid out in these circumstances. Much of the big betting business is not done of the course at all, and even in Tattersall's ring, at least 75pc of the bets made on the race yesterday were by persons not known to the bookmaker.

One main bookmaker is known however to have paid out more than 300 pounds before he discovered his mistake. Probably therefore several thousands of pounds were paid out by the smaller bookmakers over *Craganour*.

The result of the Derby has given rise to serious problems in the settlement of sweepstakes. Such matters are of course subject to the rules of racing. In some sweepstakes it is common to award a prize to the last horse. *Craganour* was the last horse as the following rule of racing shows –

“If an objection to a horse which has won or been placed in a race is declared valid, the horse shall be regarded as coming last, and the other horses shall take positions according.”

(*Times*, Friday June 6, 1913, p.8)

It is important at this stage to note that only three men adjudicated in the case of *Craganour's* alleged interference with three other horses.

They were Lord Rosebery, a former Prime Minister, whose horses had three times won the Derby, and two stewards of the Jockey Club, the previously mentioned Major Eustace Loder and one Lord Wolverton.

The objection to *Craganour* came from within these three, who then consulted their colleague, race judge F. W. Lambton, in the course of their deliberations. For the purposes of the decision, however, Rosebery, Loder and Wolverton were judge, jury and plaintiff rolled into one.

It is a very fine thing, and one of considerable financial importance, to have bred the winner of the English Derby. One might thus imagine that Major Loder would not have been the instigator of action against what had been, after all, “his” horse.

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This supposition leaves only Lords Rosebery and Wolverton as possible sources of the initial objection. And if one member of the House of Lords persuades the other, they then have a natural majority over Loder.

Of the three, Rosebery was the towering figure. He held certain strong views on the “formation of character,” and it might be interesting to note that he had made a donation of one hundred pounds to the Lord Mayor’s *Titanic* Fund while the survivors were still aboard the *Carpathia*.

A staunch advocate of noble values and moral fibre, Rosebery had paid tribute to Captain Scott of the Antarctic in February 1913, saying the late explorer’s appeal to posterity (through the medium of losing his life in icy wastes) would prove as strong “as any work of art.”

If anyone could hold a man to account as being his brother’s keeper in the matter of a ‘failure’ of self-sacrifice more than a year earlier, might it be Lord Rosebery?

The opaque nature of the stewards inquiry was meanwhile unsatisfactory not just to the leader writers of the London *Times*. Many newspapers and their correspondents complained about it. Only C. Bower Ismay maintained a public silence, although privately he was enraged.

This truth is disclosed by the revelation that Ismay prepared a High Court writ against the organisers of the Derby and the governing body of the Sport of Kings, seeking to have the official result set aside and *Craganour* restored to his befitting glory.

In the end, Ismay was persuaded not to proceed with what would have been an apocalyptic society duel. The reason for this change of heart very probably lies in the virtual certainty that he would lose, since the English law eschews interference with the rules and internal workings of sporting clubs and bodies.

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The underlying principle is akin to the suggestion that those who can't stand the heat should get out of the kitchen. Nonetheless, the fact that Ismay was prepared to countenance asserting his rights in the Royal Court of Justice shows just how much the decision rankled.

From the *Times* –

THE DERBY STAKES

Mr Bower Ismay's Application Withdrawn

As we published yesterday, on the authority of the Press Association, a motion was to be brought in the Chancery Division asking that Messrs Weatherby and the owners of the horses placed after the objection to *Craganour* should be restrained from parting with or receiving any part of the Derby Stakes.

The plaintiff in the case was Mr Charles Bower Ismay, who owned *Craganour*, and the defendants were Lord Rosebery, Lord Wolverton, and Major Eustace Loder of the Jockey Club; Messrs Weatherby; Mr A. P. Cunliffe, the owner of *Aboyeur*, to whom the race was awarded; Mr Walter Raphael, owner of *Louvois*, who was placed second, and Mr W. Hall Walker, owner of *Great Sport*, who was placed third.

We are informed by the same authority that, on consideration, Mr Bower Ismay has decided to take no further action on the motion.

(June 19, 1913, p.9)

C. B. Ismay may have believed an animus existed against him personally. But the question remains open as to possible motive.

It is perhaps notable that Ismay, whose horse *Bloodstone* had previously been runner-up in the Grand National of April 1912, should have previously had run-ins with the Jockey Club.

In 1912 he was told in no uncertain terms that he should remove his string of horses from a particular trainer whom the club held to be engaged in race-fixing and betting irregularities through the manipulation of the performance of Ismay's horses.

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A glimpse of such a cloud over the sport generally might perhaps be seen from a reference in an extract above to the effect that both *Shogun* and *Craganour* “appear to be perfectly genuine horses, ready that is to do their best.” Why should it be otherwise?

In the end, whether Ismay had “bumped” either Lord Rosebery or Lord Wolverton, or both, (or even Loder) in the course of life’s run will never be known. No background story ever emerged.

In fact it was only through a cigarette card that the first public *Titanic* connection was made, as late as 1925, when a card dealing with the 1913 Derby claimed in error that *Craganour* was owned by “Ismay, who escaped from the *Titanic*.”

Gossip to the same effect was very likely abroad in 1913, but the newspapers of the time did not report unsubstantiated rumour. And try as they might, the substance of the matter always proved elusive.

One might also yield to the possibility that men of honour behaved honourably – that they took a difficult decision for the loftiest of reasons. That *Craganour*, the 6/4 favourite, not only interfered with *Aboyeur*, but did so also with two horses Walter Lord fails to mention – *Shogun* (6/1) and *Day Comet* (100/9) – as the stewards ruled.

And yet there is a niggling doubt, one highlighted by the unusually strong language used in the “top people’s paper” that prime eyewitnesses on the course had seen an attempt to savage *Craganour*. Was that savaging completed afterwards?

The Irish horse *Craganour* garnered a total of £11,565 in prizemoney from the seven races he won and the two in which he was placed second, to be added to the £30,000 for which he was eventually sold.

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The sale came just five days after the Derby, when the stallion was transferred into the ownership of Senor Martinez De Hoz, of Chapadmatal Stud, Argentina. It was a condition of the transaction that *Craganour* would never race again, but only stand at stud.

The horse thus crossed the Atlantic by ship, something the vendor and his brother were fated never again to do, with C.B. Ismay dead by 1924.

Craganour went on to become a champion sire.

His line endures to this day, and such was his standing that a lucrative race was named in his honour. The *Craganour* Handicap is run annually in San Isidro, Argentina.

The 2003 winner was *Espanol II*, a horse hailed by the newspaper *La Capital* as superior to all his rivals...