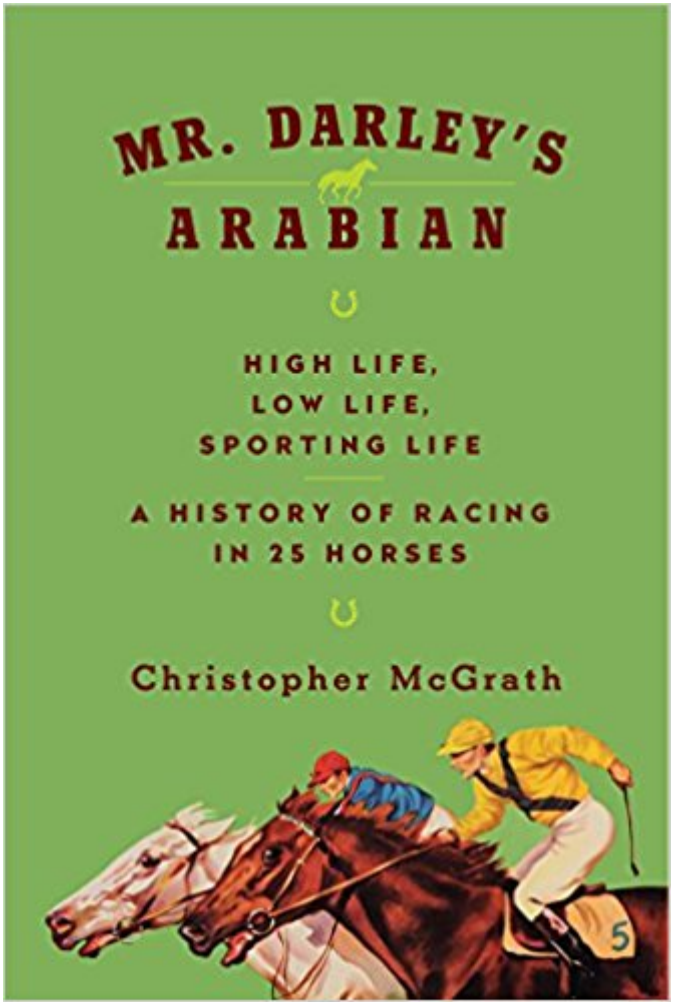
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# Mr. Darley's Arabian: High Life, Low Life, Sporting Life: A History Of Racing In Twenty-Five Horses




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## Synopsis

The audacious and inspired history of horse racing told through the bloodline of twenty-five exceptional Arabian steeds. In 1704 a bankrupt English merchant sent home the colt he had bought from Bedouin tribesmen near the ruins of Palmyra. Thomas Darley hoped this horse might be the ticket to a new life back in Yorkshire. But he turned out to be far more than that, and although Mr. Darley’s Arabian never ran a race, 95% of all thoroughbreds in the world today are descended from him. In this book, for the first time, award-winning racing writer Christopher McGrath traces this extraordinary bloodline through twenty-five generations to our greatest modern racehorse, Frankel. The story of racing is about man’s relationship with horses, and Mr. Darley’s Arabian also celebrates the men and women who owned, trained and traded the stallions that extended the dynasty. The great Eclipse, for instance, was bred by the Duke who foiled Bonnie Prince Charlie’s invasion (with militia gathered from Wakefield races) and went on to lead the Jockey Club. But he only became a success once bought and raced by a card-sharp and brothel-keeper - the racecourse has always brought high and low life together. McGrath expertly guides us through three centuries of scandals, adventures and fortunes won and lost: our sporting life offers a fascinating view into our history. With a canvas that extends from the diamond mines of South Africa to the trenches of the Great War, and a cast ranging from Smithfield meat salesmen to the inspiration for Mr Toad, and from legendary jockeys to not one, but two disreputable Princes of Wales (and a very unamused Queen Victoria), Mr. Darley’s Arabian shows us the many faces of the sport of kings. 16 pages of color illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“McGrath has produced a racing book like no otherÃ¢â ¬â ¢a book of remarkable scope. For the horsemen the racing careers of great horses are there. But McGrathÃ¢â ¬â„¢s book will be read by a much wider public for its lively social history.Ã¢â ¬Â• - The Spectator (UK)Ã¢â ¬Å“Ambitious and unique. McGrath unrolls a remarkable history of thoroughbred racing in England over 300 years.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Wall Street JournalÃ¢â ¬Å“Fascinating. This isnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t just a book about horse lineage. The wonder of it is how McGrath manages to use the bloodline to trace so much else. A stunner of a book, deserving of an audience much beyond horse-racing fans.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Booklist (starred)Ã¢â ¬Å“A fascinating book. McGrathÃ¢â ¬â„¢s book is erudite, his style wry and his descriptions of horses and men astute.Ã¢â ¬Â• - The Sunday Times (London)Ã¢â ¬Å“Devoted subjects of the sport of kings will adore the historical diversions.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Publishers WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å“This is a history about the sport of kingsÃ¢â ¬â ¢horse racingÃ¢â ¬â ¢as told through the bloodlines of 25 horses. But like Seabiscuit, critics say this entertaining work is so filled with memorable characters and details of the distant times in which these champions competed that even those who've never clutched a ticket stub and cheered on a filly will be enthralled.Ã¢â ¬Â• - BookFilterÃ¢â ¬Å“Chris McGrath has provided us with an important addition to the history of horse racing.Ã¢â ¬Â• - The International Journal of the History of Sport

Christopher McGrath has won multiple awards as a racing correspondent, for seven years with the Independent (London). He has been voted Racing Journalist of the Year and commended as Specialist Correspondent at the UK Sports Journalism Awards. He has interviewed many leading figures on the international Turf, and also contributes a regular column on other sports. This is his first book. He lives in England.

For anyone interested in horses and the history of horse racing in England, this is a wonderful book. It is full of vignettes that illustrate with humor and sympathy the evolution of horse racing, "the sport of kings and scoundrels," and those involved in the sport, the temper of the times, and so much more. I had trouble following the lineage of the horses and could have used an illustrated genealogy, but in the end that isn't what I loved most about the book. The author brings the times to life.. including the professionalization of the sport and those involved in it. The evolution of the thoroughbred is also wonderful... we take so much for granted today... but all has evolved.. and the

story is fascinating....

I give myself permission to bail on a book and this book falls into that category. I got out early when I did not feel that there was promise.

Good on the history, on racing, and on personalities

actually was for someone else who liked it

Good history. Would.like to be engaged more in the whole book. Not consistently engaging.

You needn’t be a fan of horse racing to read this book, but it helps.Chris McGrath is a racing journalist and he’s penned an interesting history of the sport and a line of remarkable horses, focusing on the UK but also examining the sport’s spread to the United States and other countries around the world.Even if you have only a cursory interest in horses, the cast of characters--from monarchs to mountebanks--involved in the history and their follies and foibles offer intriguing diversion and make the book worthy of a reader’s time.McGrath reveals that all thoroughbreds descend from just three stallions imported to England some 300 years ago and the Darley Arabian has the distinction of having provided a majority of the champions in the last century.The story of this line began when a bankrupt merchant shipped a colt purchased from a Bedouin tribesman home in 1704. Thomas Darley did not live to join his Arabian in England and the horse never ran a race. Yet 95 percent of today’s thoroughbreds descend from this animal.That in itself makes for fascinating history. He traces the sport from its beginning in the 16th century to the present.Horse lovers may be offended by some accounts of the brutality exhibited by trainers in the early days. This is compensated for in at least one case where a horse took its revenge for mistreatment.McGrath has done an astounding amount of research and the tales of the horses, their owners, trainers and jockeys and the evolution of the sport add spice to the narrative. There are some chapters where his enthusiasm for his subject overwhelms and he deluges the reader with a host of names, making it difficult to keep the people and horses straight.A glossary of terms, bibliography and a good selection of photos help sort things out.

This book is a treasure! Just by chance, my local library here in a Denver suburb had it in their "new books" display. Otherwise, I might have missed it and been much the worse without it. It is truly a

"panorama stretching over three centuries and four continents."I am a thoroughbred fan, but this book is much, much more than just a history of some racehorses. It is a work of genius; I do not know how Mr. McGrath possibly researched it--it must have taken years. And his writing is superb--e.g., "The magnetism of racehorses has always been weighed against a moral cost, whether in public disorder or private ruin." Too true, too true.The staging and scenes he presents are mesmerizing: one moment I am in the Levant, searching out Arabians with English businessmen, the next in the seedy coffeehouses of 18th century Covent Garden, figuring out how to be a tout.And I thought I knew all there was to know about Eclipse. Yet Mr. McGrath surprises and delights. And he has some amazing color plates and prints that I have never seen before.The problem with this book is that you can only read about 5 pages at a time--it is so good that you have to dole it out so you won't finish it too quickly.I haven't been this happy and excited since Hollywood Park was running!

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