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## Foreword by Peter Rossdale

*Like father, like son is my impression having known Bill for most of his life; a chip off the old block. I was privileged to serve as veterinary clinician to Bill's father, Paddy. He had just started training at Harraton Lodge in Exning and included in his string a number of horses belonging to Jack Gerber, the South African millionaire who had bred and raced the redoubtable Bebe Grande who finished second in the 2000 Guineas (to Nearula) and third in the 1000 Guineas, in the same week, to Happy Laughter. Gerber had a 2-year-old filly, Palm Court, that suffered a severe fracture of the pelvis and required to be put in slings. I remember Paddy sitting all night in the box alongside the filly, over a period of several days. It was this dedication to his charges that distinguished Paddy, along with his depth of knowledge of and insight into the needs, behavioural quirks and factors involving health and disease of horses. Palm Court eventually won a maiden race at Newmarket and, I believe, Jack Gerber told the jockey, Willie Snaith, before the race that if he won he would give him the stake money. Whether or not he ever received this, I do not know.*

Paddy came from a farming background in County Cork, moving to England in 1934 and taking various jobs including schooling polo ponies. He also worked with Bertram Mills' Circus, which probably influenced his future approach to horsemanship. Whilst working for the Ministry of Agriculture in Scotland, he married Marie McLeod. When they moved to Burwell he worked at Marshalls and she taught at Soham Village College. Paddy returned to working with horses when he joined Jack Colling at Newmarket and was put in charge of Scaltback Stud. He received his first training licence in 1953 and had considerable success with a small string of inexpensive animals, including Majority Rule, Golden Horus and Drumbeat.

Paddy's son, Bill, was born in 1948 and attended the local Grammar School. He rode as an amateur on the Flat and was twice successful in the Amateur Derby over the Epsom Derby course. He rode Henry Cecil's first winner as a trainer, Celestial Cloud. On his father's death, he was granted his training licence at the age of 21. He trained a small string with moderate success for some years until applying for a jockey's licence, being the first person in the UK to be licensed both as a jockey and a trainer concurrently. He concentrated on precocious and inexpensive yearlings with notable successes, including Provideo and Timeless Times (USA) who both won 16 races at 2-year-olds to equal the record set by The Bard in 1885. Superpower and Mac's Imp (USA) were both champion 2-year-olds in Ireland trained by Bill.

Raymond Hopes, my colleague, who was veterinary advisor to Bill for many years, recounts the background to Bill's first big race winner. Royal Smoke, owned by Irving Allen, the American film producer who owned the Derisley Wood Studfarm, Newmarket, won the Stewards' Cup at Goodwood shortly after Bill's father died. The horse had been returned to Irving's studfarm by his trainer in Epsom as being too lame to train for the cup. Raymond was asked to examine him and could not find him to be lame. He was therefore sent to Bill and, having worked and not gone lame, ran in the cup 5 days later ridden by Taffy Thomas. Bill lavished praise on his previous trainer, but Bill's name is in the record book.

In Racing Horses, Bill O'Gorman sets down the techniques of racehorse training that have stood his family in such good stead over the past 50 years. Concerned by what he sees as the gradual demise of good old-fashioned horsemanship, he was anxious to record for posterity the philosophies handed down to him by his late father, who in turn had been the beneficiary of centuries of horse wisdom when growing up in Ireland. As Bill relates, there is no great mystique to the art of training horses;

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commonsense attributes such as hard work, patience and empathy with your subject will take you a long way. His sadness is that these days, with racing increasingly a numbers game and its staff crisis growing year by year, those fundamental qualities seem to be in decline.

Of course, Bill O’Gorman’s success as a trainer was based on more than old-school values. He was shrewd enough to ally these methods to a commercial awareness, appreciating that in modern-day British racing, with its relatively poor prize money, the best hope of turning a profit was to invest primarily in speed and precocity. It is no coincidence that his best horses were 2-year-olds and sprinters. The fact that within these pages he advocates concentrating on this type of animal to the exclusion of more classically-bred sorts may not please the traditionalists, but his coherently-put reasoning is that the contemporary trainer cannot afford to waste time and his owners’ money producing late-developing stayers with

little resale value and no prospect of recouping their cost through prize money. It is not an argument that can be lightly dismissed.

Sadly, Bill has all but retired from training, but now perhaps racing’s loss will be publishing’s gain. At times wise, contentious and instructive, this book is a unique contribution to the literature of the subject and deserves to be read by anyone with an interest in British horse racing in the 21st century.

It is a privilege and pleasure to write this Foreword to Bill’s book which highlights the potential for success and failure for those brave enough to take on the task of training racehorses. Bill is, as they say, his own man; and this is reflected in the text through which his spirit shines. “We stand upon the shoulders of giants”, as Isaac Newton and others have noted; and both Paddy and Bill were giants in their chosen profession.