

MURDER? SAYS ALY KHAN:

Biggest news of Tattersall's December blood-stock sales at Newmarket is Aly Khan's disposal of nearly half of the string of racehorses he inherited from his father, the old Aga Khan. American buyers are interested, as the sale begins, Sir Gordon Richards casts an expert eye on the proceedings. Sixteen brood mares are being auctioned on the first day - including Double Race, who realises 10,000 guineas. The string of the late Aga Khan was probably the greatest horse-racing empire in the world, and he and the Begum were familiar figures at every major meeting. Remember 1948 at Epsom, when he led in My Love, his fourth Derby winner in 19 years.

But there was more to come. Four years later, at his Newmarket stables Marcus Marsh trained Tulyar, and here's Charlie Squirke his jockey, making much of the Aga Khan's 1952 Derby hope, which was destined to win the tripple crown of 2,000 guineas, Derby and St. Leger - perhaps the horse of the century.

On Derby Day, there were plenty to wish Charlie Squirke luck - for an Aga Khan win was always popular. Tulyar didn't let his backers down. Leading Gay Time and Fairbourg II, he romped home to win comfortably by three quarters of a length.

As the years began to tell on the Aga Khan, it was his son Aly Khan who led in the winners and took an ever greater interest in the Aga's stud farms in France and Ireland. So it was natural for Aly to inherit his father's racing empire. But huge death duties lead inevitably to the auction ring and here Aly doesn't do so well. Back at Newmarket, Mahmany is led out unsold at 14,500 guineas because she failed to reach the reserve price; and she isn't the only one. A disappointing day for Aly, who sums it up - "Its not a sale - it's murder!"