



LITERATURE.

THE OLD CHERRY TREE.

Here's the old cherry tree, where in boyhood I sported,
When my heart was as light as the blossoms it bore;
Where the friend that I loved, and the maiden I courted,
Of sat by my side in the days that are o'er;
On this rude oaken bench, 'neath the bending boughs seated,
While the wild bee was humming its song in the tree,
My brothers and I in the summer were treated
To share with the elders their gossip and tea.

In this season of light, that man's spirit rejoices,
While the old cherry tree looks as gay as a bride,
I could fancy I heard every one of their voices,
That so often have sat on this bench at my side;
Look! here are the names of how many now sleeping,
Of parents and kindred, long gone to the tomb;
Yet the old cherry tree, like a true friend, is heaping
The shrine of their relics with beauty and bloom.

Every rudely-carved name has some story to tell me;
That true lover's knot I remember it well—
'Twas carved on that day when my first grief befel me,
The day of my parting with sweet Isabel!
Yes, here we two parted, and parted for ever;
I have wandered since then, like a pilgrim afar,
And have loved too again with some fervour, but never
Shone love on my heart like its first morning star.

And I'm come back to die in the home of my fathers,
And I sit 'neath the blossoms which mock my decay,
And thus my lone heart all the sad harvest gathers
Of friendships and loves that have long passed away;
Yes, the old cherry tree, where in boyhood I sported,
And the rude oaken bench they are still in their place;
But the dear household faces, whose welcome I courted,
They have vanished, and left me the last of my race.

THE RATTLESNAKE HUNTER.

"Until my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns."

During a delightful excursion in the vicinity of the Green Mountains a few years since, I had the good fortune to meet with a singular character, known in many parts of Vermont as the Rattlesnake Hunter.

It was a warm, clear day of sunshine, in the middle of June, I saw him for the first time while engaged in a mineralogical ramble among the hills. His head was bald, and his forehead was deeply marked with the strong lines of care and age. His form was wasted and meagre; but for the fiery vigor of his eye, he might have been supposed incapacitated by age and infirmities for even a slight exertion. Yet he hurried over the huge ledges of rock with a quick and almost youthful tread, and seemed earnestly searching among the crevices and loose crags, and stunted bushes around him. All at once he started suddenly, drew himself back with a sort of shuddering recoil, then snote fiercely with his staff upon the rock before him. Another and another blow, and he lifted the lifeless form of a large rattlesnake upon the end of his rod.

The old man's eye glistened, but his lip trembled as he looked steadfastly upon his writhing victim. "Another of the accursed race!" he muttered between his clenched teeth, apparently unconscious of my presence.

I was now satisfied that the person before me was none other than the famous Rattlesnake Hunter. He was known throughout the neighborhood as an outcast and a wanderer, obtaining a miserable subsistence from the casual charities of the people around him. His time was mostly spent among the rocks and rude hills, where his only object seemed to be the hunting and destroying of the *Crotalus horridus* or rattlesnake. I immediately determined to satisfy my curiosity, which had been strongly excited by the remarkable appearance of the stranger and for this purpose I approached him.

"Are there many of those reptiles in this vicinity?" I enquire, pointing to the crushed serpent.

"They are getting to be scarce," said the old man, lifting his slouched hat and wiping his bald brow; "I have known the time when you could hardly stir ten rods from your door in this part of the State, without hearing their low quick rattle at your side or seeing their many colored bodies coiling up in your path. But as I said before, they are getting to be scarce, the infernal race will be extinct in a few years, and thank God! I have myself been a considerable cause of their extermination."

"You must, of course, know the nature of those creatures perfectly well," said I. "Do you believe in their power of fascination or charming?"

The old man's countenance fell. There was a visible struggle of feeling within him; and his lips quivered, and he dashed his brown hand suddenly across his eyes as if to conceal a tear; but quickly recovering himself, he answered in the low, deep voice of one, that was about to reveal some horrible secret.

"I believe in the rattlesnake's power of fascination as firmly as I believe in my own existence."

"Surely," said I, "you do not believe that they have power over human beings?"

"I do, I know it to be so!" said the old man trembling as he spoke. "You are a stranger to me," he said slowly, after scrutinizing my features for a moment, "but if you will go to the foot of this rock, in the shade there," and

he pointed to a group of leaning oaks that hung over the declivity, "I will tell you a strange and sad story of my own experience."

It may be supposed that I readily assented to this proposal.

Bestowing one more blow upon the rattlesnake, as if to be certain of his death, the old man descended the rock with rapidity that would have endangered the neck of a less practised hunter. After reaching the place which he pointed out, the Rattlesnake Hunter commenced his story in a manner which confirmed what I had previously heard of his education and intellectual strength.

"I was among the earliest settlers in this part of the country, I had just finished my education at Harvard, when I was induced by the flattering representations of some of the earliest pioneers into the wild lands beyond the Connecticut, to seek my fortune in the new settlement. My wife—the old man's eyes glistened in an instant, and then a tear crossed his brown cheek—"my wife accompanied me, young and delicate and beautiful as she was, to this wild and rude country. I never shall forgive myself for bringing her hither, never. "Young man," continued he, "you look like one who could pity. You shall see the image of the girl who followed me to the new country." And he unbound as he spoke a ribbon from his neck, with a small miniature attached to it.

It was that of a beautiful female, but there was an almost childish expression in her countenance, a softness, a delicacy, and a sweetness of smile, which I have seldom seen in the features of those who have tasted even slightly the bitter waters of existence. The old man watched my countenance intently, as I surveyed the image of his early love.

"She must have been beautiful," I said as I returned the picture.

"Beautiful!" he repeated, "you may as well say so—But this avails nothing. I have a fearful story to tell—would to God I had not attempted it; but I will go on. My heart has been too often stretched on the rack of memory to suffer any new pang."

"We had resided in the new country nearly a year. Our settlement had increased rapidly, and the comforts and delicacies of life were beginning to be felt, after the very privations and severe trials to which we had been subjected. The red men were few and feeble, and did not molest us. The beasts of the forest and mountain were ferocious, but we suffered little from them. The only immediate danger to which we were exposed resulted from the rattlesnakes which infested our neighbourhood. Three or four of the settlers were bitten by them, and died in terrible agonies. The Indians often told us frightful stories of this snake, and its power of fascination, and although they were generally believed, yet for myself, I confess, I was rather amused than convinced by their marvellous legends.

"In one of my hunting excursions abroad, on a fine morning, it was just at this time of the year, I was accompanied by my wife. 'Twas a beautiful morning. The sunshine was warm, but the atmosphere was perfectly clear; and a fine breeze from the north-west shook the bright green leaves which clothed to profusion the wreathing branches above us. I had left my companion for a short time in the pursuit of game, and in climbing a rugged ledge of rock, interspersed with shrubs and dwarfish trees, I was startled by a quick, grating rattle. I looked forward. On the edge of a loosened rock lay a rattlesnake, coiling himself as if for the deadly spring. He was within a few feet of me, and I paused for an instant to survey him. I know not why, but I stood still, and looked at the deadly serpent with a strange feeling of curiosity. Suddenly he uncoiled his coil, as if relenting from his purpose of hostility, and raising his head, he fixed his bright fiery eye directly on my own. A chilling and indescribable sensation, totally different from anything I had ever before experienced, followed this movement of the serpent; but I stood still, and gazed steadily and earnestly, for at that moment there was a visible change in the reptile. His form seemed to grow larger and his colors brighter. His body moved with a slow almost imperceptible motion towards me, and a low hum of music came from him, or at least, it sounded in my ear a strange sweet melody, faint as that which melts from the throat of a hummingbird. Then the tints of his body deepened, and changed and glowed, like the changes of a beautiful kalioscope; green, purple, and gold, until I lost sight of the serpent entirely, and saw only wild and curiously woven circles of strange colors, quivering around me like an atmosphere of rainbows. I seemed in the centre of a great prison, a world of mysterious colors and tints, varied and darkened, and lighted up again around me; and the low music went on without ceasing, until my brain reeled; and fear for the first time, came over me. The new sensation gained upon me rapidly, and I could feel the cold sweat gushing from my brow. I had no certainty of danger in my mind, no definite idea of peril, all was vague and clouded, like unaccountable terrors of a dream, and yet my limbs shook, and I fancied I could feel the blood stiffening with cold as it passed along my veins. I would have given worlds to have been able to tear myself from the spot—I even attempted to do so, but the body obeyed not the impulse of the mind, not a muscle stirred; and I stood still as if my feet had grown to the solid rock, with the infernal music of the tempter in my ear, and the baleful colorings of his enchantment before me.

"Suddenly a new sound came on my ear. It was a human voice, but it seemed strange and awful. Again, again, but I stirred not and then a white form plunged before me and grasped my arm. The horrible spell was broken. The strange colors passed from before my vision. The rattlesnake was coiling at my very feet, with glowing eyes and uplifted fangs; and my wife was clinging in terror upon me. The next instant the serpent threw himself upon us. My wife was the victim. The fangs pierced deeply into her hand; and her scream of agony, as she staggered backward from me, told me the dreadful truth.

"Then it was that a feeling of madness came upon me; and when I saw the foul serpent stealing away from his

work, reckless of danger, I sprang forward and crushed him under my feet, grinding him upon the ragged rock. The groans of my wife now recalled me to her side, and to the horrible reality of her situation. There was a dark, livid spot on her hand; and it deepened into blackness, as I led her away. We were at a considerable distance from any dwelling; and after wandering for a short time, the pain of her wound became insupportable to my wife, and she swooned away in my arms. Weak and exhausted as I was, I yet had strength enough to carry her to the nearest rivulet, and bathe her brow in the cool water. She partially recovered, and sat down upon the bank, while I supported her head upon my bosom. Hour after hour passed away, and none came near us, and there, alone in the great wilderness, I watched over her, and prayed with her, and she died!"

The old man groaned audibly as he uttered these words, and as he closed his long bony hands over his eyes, I could see the tears falling thickly through his gaunt fingers. After a momentary struggle with his feeling, he lifted his head once more, and there was a fierce light in his eye as he spoke.

"But I have had my revenge. From that fatal moment I have felt myself fitted and set apart by the terrible ordeal of my affliction, to rid the place of my abode of its foulest curse. And I have well nigh succeeded. The fascinating demons are already few and powerless. "Do not imagine," said he, earnestly regarding the somewhat equivocal expression of my countenance, "that I consider these creatures as serpents—only creeping serpents—they are serpents of the fallen angels—the immediate ministers of the infernal gulf!"

Years have passed, since my interview with the Rattlesnake Hunter; the place of his abode has changed—a beautiful village rises near the spot of conference, and the grass of the churchyard is green over the grave of the old hunter. But this story is fixed upon my mind, and Time, like enamel, only burns deeper the first impression. It comes up before me like a vividly remembered dream, whose features are too horrible for reality.—*The Rover.*

ROMANCE IN SHIPWRECK.

Many interesting as well as painful incidents connected with the explosion and wreck of the Pulaski steamer, (which occurred some ten or fifteen years ago) are related by those who were saved from destruction. Amongst others, the following is told of a Mr. Ridge, of New Orleans, and a Miss Onslow, from some of the Southern States, two of the unfortunates who were picked up on the fifth day, about fifty miles from land. It is stated of the gentleman that he had been sitting on the deck alone for half an hour previous to the accident. Another gentleman, who was walking near him at the time of the explosion, was blown overboard, and himself was precipitated nearly over the side and stunned. He recovered immediately, as he supposed, when he heard some one remark—"Get out the boat—she is sinking." He was not acquainted with a solitary individual in the boat.—Under such circumstances it was natural to suppose that he would feel quite as much concern for himself as for any one else. He was consequently among those who sought the small boat for safety, and was about to step into it, when he discovered a young lady whose appearance had sundry times during the passage arrested his attention. Her protector was the gentleman who was walking on deck and blown overboard. He sprang towards her to take her into the small boat; but in the crowd and confusion he lost sight of her, and he supposed she was with some other friend. During his fruitless search, the boat shoved off. The night rang with the prayers and shrieks of the helpless and drowning. He turned away in despair, and tumbled over a coil of rope. Hope, like the aspiring spark, brightened again. He caught up the rope—lashed together a couple of settees—threw them upon the piece of an old sail, and a small empty cask, and thus equipped, launched upon the element.

It was all the work of a moment. He believed death inevitable, and that effort was his last grasp for life. His vessel bore him up better than he expected, and he was consoling himself with his escape, such as it was, while others were perishing all around him, when he discovered a female struggling for life almost within his grasp.—He left his ark—swam but twice his length, seized his object, and returned safely to his craft again, which proved sufficient to sustain them both, but with their heads and shoulders only above the water. The female was the young lady for whom he had lost a passage in the small boat. She fancied their float would not support them both, and said—"you will have to let me go to save yourself." He replied—"We live, or we die together." Soon after they drifted upon a piece of the wreck, probably a part of the same floor or partition, torn asunder by the explosion. This, with the aid of the settees fastened beneath it, proved sufficient to keep them out of the water. About this time, one of the small boats came towards them, but already heavily loaded. He implored them to take the young lady. But she said no, she could not leave him. They were fairly at sea, without the least prospect to eat or drink, in a scorching climate. Of the boat which bore them all in quiet and safety but half an hour before, nothing was to be seen but scattered pieces of the wreck. The small boats were on their way towards the shore—their own craft being light and lightly loaded, drifted far away from a scene undeniably heart-rending, and which he still shudders to think of.

At daylight nothing was visible to them but the heavens and a waste of waters. In the course of the day they came in sight of land, and for a time were confident of reaching it; but during the succeeding night the wind changed, and soon after daylight next morning it vanished again, and with it all their lively hopes of escaping their dreadful dilemma. On the third day a sail hove in sight, but she was entirely beyond hailing distance. When found, they were sadly burned by the sun—starved and exhausted, though still in possession of their faculties, and able to move and talk. But their pain and suffering was