

LITERATURE.

[From Chambers' Journal.]

THE MOONLIGHT RIDE.

A number of years ago a gentleman in Clydesdale offered me a situation as head groom, which I accepted. He had one horse which was kept in a stable by himself, and was, without exception, the ugliest and most savage animal of his kind I had ever seen. There was not a single point of a strong or a fast horse about him. He was as black as charcoal; he was named Satan, and richly did he deserve the name. He would fly at you, like a dog, with his teeth; attempt to beat you down with his fore-feet; and strike round a corner at you with his hind ones. He had beaten off all the rough riders, grooms, and jockeys in that part of the country.

After being in the place for a few days, I was asked by the gentleman if I thought I could make anything of Satan. I replied, that if he beat me, he would be the first horse that had ever done so; but still I considered him to be by far the most savage I had ever seen. "Try him to-morrow at one o'clock," said he, as he turned to go away; "I will have a few friends with me, to see how you succeed."

I determined, however, to try him that night, and without any witness to see whether I succeeded or not. My room was over the stables, and as the moon did not rise till eleven o'clock, I threw myself upon the bed-clothes, and, contrary to my intention, fell asleep. When I awoke it was twelve, the moon was shining brightly, and rendering everything as visible as if it were day.

I went down to the stable with a bridle prepared for the purpose, and a heavily-loaded whip in my hand. I knew that it would be impossible to saddle him; and indeed, I should be safer on his bare back, in the event of his throwing himself down. I opened the stable door gently, and there he was prone on his side, his legs and neck stretched out, as I have often seen horses lying after sore fatigue. I clapped my knee upon his head, loosed the collar that bound him, slipped the bit into his mouth, buckled the throat-band, raised him to his feet, backed him out, and leaped upon his back before he had time to get his eyes right opened. But open them now he did, and that with a vengeance; he pawed, and struck the walls with his fore feet, till the fire flashed from the stones; and then he reared till he fell right back upon the pavement. I was prepared for this, and slipped off him as he went down, and then leaped on him again as he rose. I had not as yet touched him with whip, bridle, or spur; but now I gave him the curb and the spurs at the same instant. He gave one mad bound, and then went off at a rate that completely eclipsed the speed of the fleetest horse I had ever ridden. He could not trot, but his gallop was unapproachable, and consisted in a succession of leaps, performed with a precision, velocity, and strength, absolutely bewildering.

He fairly overturned all my preconceived notions of a fast horse. On he thundered, till we came under the shadow of a fir wood, and then, whether out of mischief or dread of the darkness he halted instantaneously, his fore-feet so close that you might put them into a bucket. Owing to the depression of his shoulders—for he had no more withers than an ass—the way that he jerked down his head, and the suddenness of the stop, a monkey, although he had been holding on with his teeth, must have been unseated. For me, I was pitched a long way over his head, but alighted upon a spot so soft and mossy, that it looked as if some kind hand had purposely prepared it for me. Had I been in the slightest degree stunned, or unable to regain my feet, that instant would he have torn me to pieces with his teeth, and beaten my mangled body into the earth with his hoofs. But I at once sprang to my feet, and faced him. I could have escaped by leaping into the wood; but my blood was up, my brain clear, and my heart gave not one extra pulsation. There he stood upon his hind legs, nearly upright, beating the air with his fore-feet, his mouth open, his upper lip curled, his under one drawn down, his large teeth glancing like ivory in the moonlight. As

soon as he saw me upon my feet, he gave a yell such as I had never heard from a horse before, save once, and which I believe is never elicited from that animal, except under the domination of frantic rage or fear.

This unearthly cry roused every living thing within hearing. An army of rooks, startled from their encampment in the wood, circled and wheeled between us and the moon, shading her light, and filling the midnight air with their discordant screams. This attracted the attention of Satan, and, bringing his fore-feet to the ground, he pricked up his ear and listened. I sprang forward, seized him by the mane, and vaulted upon his back. As I stooped forward to gather up the reins, which were dangling from his head, he caught me by the cuff of the jacket—luckily it was but the cuff!—and tore up to the shoulder. Instantly he seized me again; but this time he succeeded rather better, having a small portion of the skin and flesh of my thigh between his teeth. The intense pain occasioned by the bite, or rather bruise, of a horse's mouth, can only be properly judged of by those who have felt it. I was the madder of the two now; and of animals, an enraged man is the most dangerous and the most fearless. I gave him a blow between the ears with the end of the whip, and he went down at once, stunned and senseless, with his legs doubled up under him, and his nose buried in the ground. I drew his fore legs from under him, that he might rise the more readily, and then lashed him into life.—He turned his head slowly round and looked at me, and then I saw that the savage glare of his eye was nearly quenched, and that, if I could follow up the advantage I had gained, I should ultimately be the conqueror. I now assisted him to rise, mounted him, and struck at once with whip and spur. He gave a few bounds forward, a stagger or two, and then fell heavily upon his side. I was nearly under him; however, I did save my distance, although that was all. I now began to feel sorry for him; his wonderful speed had won my respect; and as I was far from being naturally cruel, whip or spur I never used except in cases of necessity; so I thought I would allow him to lie for a few minutes, if he did not incline to get up of himself. However, as I had no faith in the creature, I sat down upon him, and watched him intently. He lay motionless, with his eyes shut; and had it not been for the firm and fast beat of his heart, I should have considered him dying from the effects of the blow; but the strong pulsation told me that there was plenty of life in him; and I suspected that he was lying quiet, meditating mischief. I was right. Every muscle began presently to quiver with suppressed rage. He opened his eyes, and gave me a look in which fear and fury were strangely blended. I am not without superstition, and for an instant I quailed under that look, as the thought struck me, that the black, unshapely brute before me might actually be the spirit indicated by his name.—With a muttered growl at my folly, I threw the idea from me—leaped up—seized the reins—with a lash and a cry made him spring to his feet—mounted him as he rose, and struck the spurs into his sides. He reared and wheeled; but finding that he could not get rid of me, and being unable to stand the torture of the spurs, which I used freely (it was no time for mercy!) he gave two or three plunges, and then bounded away at that dreadful leaping gallop—that pace which seemed peculiarly his own. I tried to moderate his speed with the bridle; but found, to my surprise that I had no command over him. I knew at once that something was wrong, as with the bit I had in his mouth I ought to have had the power to have broken his jaw-bone.—I stooped forward to ascertain the cause; the loose curb dangling at the side of his head gave a satisfactory explanation.

He had it all his own way now; he was fairly off with me; and all I could do was to bear his head as well as I could, to prevent him from stumbling. However, as it would have been bad policy to let him know how much he was master, I gave him an occasional touch with the spur, as if wishing him to accelerate his pace; and when he made an extra bound, I patted him on the neck, as if pleased with the performance.

A watery cloud was passing over the face of the moon, which rendered everything dim and

indistinct, as we tore away down a grassy slope; the view terminating in a grove of tall trees, situated upon a rising ground. Beyond the dark outline of the trees, I saw nothing.

As we neared the grove, Satan slackened his speed; this I thought he did with a view to crush me against the trunks of the trees. To prevent him from having time to do this, I struck him with the spurs, and away he went again like fury. As he burst through the trees, I flung my head forward upon his neck, to prevent myself from being swept off by the lower branches. In doing this, the spurs accidentally came in contact with his sides. He gave one tremendous leap forward—the ground sank under his feet—the horse was thrown over his own head—I was jerked into the air—and, amid an avalanche of earth and stones, we were hurled down a perpendicular bank into the brown swollen waters of the Clyde.

Owing to the bend in the river, the force of the current was directed against this particular spot, and had undermined it; and although strong enough to bear a man or a horse, under ordinary circumstances, yet down at once it thundered under the desperate leap of Satan. However, it did not signify, as nothing could have prevented us from surging into the water at the next bound.

A large quantity of rain had fallen in the upper part of the shire; and in consequence the river was full from bank to brae. I was nearly a stranger to the place; indeed, so much so, that I had supposed we were running from the river. This, combined with the suddenness of the shock, and the appearance of a turbid, rapid river—sweeping down trees, brushwood, branches, hay, corn, and straw, before it with resistless force—was so foreign to my idea of the calm, peaceful Clyde, that when I rose to the surface, I was quite bewildered, and had very serious doubts as to my own identity.

I was roused from this state of bewilderment by the snorting and splashing of the horse; he was making a bold attempt to scale the perpendicular bank. Had I been thrown into the body of the stream, I should have been swept away, and the animal must have perished; but in all heavy rapid runs of water, salt or fresh, there is what is termed an eddy stream, running close in shore, in a contrary direction to the main body of the water. I have seen Highlanders in their boats catching fish in the eddy stream of the Gulf of Corrievrekin, within a short distance of the main tide, which, had it but got the slightest hold on their boat, would have swept them with fearful velocity into the jaws of the roaring gulf. I was caught by this eddy, which kept me stationary, and enabled me by a few strokes to reach the horse's side. To cross the river, or to land here, was alike impossible; so I took the reins in my right hand, wheeled the horse from the bank, and dashed at once with him into the strength of the current. Away we went, Satan and I, in capital spirits both; not a doubt of our effecting a safe landing ever crossing my mind. And the horse evinced his certainty upon that subject, by snatching a bite out of a heap of hay that floated at his side, and eating it as composedly as if he had been in the stable.

We soon swept round the high bank that had caused our misfortune, and came to a level part of the country, which was flooded far up into the fields. I then struck strongly out in a slanting direction for the shore, and soon had the satisfaction of finding myself once more upon the green turf. Satan shook himself, pricked up his ears, and gave a low neigh. I then stroked him, and spoke kindly to him. He returned the caress by licking my hand. Poor fellow! he had contracted a friendship for me in the water—a friendship which terminated only with his life; and which was rendered the more valuable by his never extending it to another living thing.

"The fire is going out, Miss Filkins."

"I know it, Mr. Green; and if you would act wisely, you would follow its example."

It is unnecessary to add that Green never "axed" to set up with that gal again.

FORGET-ME-NOTS.—The best "forget-me-not" a man can leave his wife is a baby. It beats wedding rings all hollow. People about leaving for California will please notice.

THE LADY AND THE ROBBERS.

In a charming village, situated in a truly romantic country, but at a considerable distance from the high road, Baron R. was accustomed to spend the summer. His mansion, built on an eminence, was perfectly adapted to his fortune. It was a spacious building, elegant within and without, and displayed a good style of architecture. It was about 200 paces from the village.

Business obliged the Baron to take a journey of a few days. His wife, a young and beautiful woman—scarcely twenty years of age—remained at home. He took with him two of his servants, and two others were left with the baroness. No violation of the public security had ever been heard of in that part of the country; and as the baroness did not belong to the timid portion of her sex, the idea of danger was far from entering her mind.

The second evening after the baron's departure, as she was stepping into bed, she heard an alarming noise in an apartment near the chamber. She called, but received no answer. The noise, screaming and confusion grew louder every minute. She was at a loss to conceive what was the matter, and hastily putting on a garment, went to the door to discover the cause. What a horrid spectacle presented itself! *Her two servants, half naked, were extended lifeless on the floor!!!* The room was full of strange and ferocious-looking men, the baroness' chambermaid was kneeling before one of them—and instead of the mercy she implored, received the fatal stroke. No sooner did the door open, than two of the barbarians, with drawn swords, rushed towards it. What man—not to say what woman—would not have been struck with the utmost terror—and have given up life, and everything as lost! A loud shriek of despair—a flight of a few paces—would, probably, be the last resource of many. The baroness, however, conducted herself in a different manner.

"And you have come at last!" exclaimed she, with a tone of heartfelt joy, and advancing towards her two assailants, with a haste that highly astonished them both, and fortunately stopped their uplifted weapons.

"Are you come at last!" repeated she, "such visitors as you I have long wished to see."

"Wished," muttered one of the assassins; "what do you mean by that? But stay, I will—"

He had already raised his cutlass, but his comrade averted the stroke: "Stop a moment, brother," said he, "let us first hear what she would have."

"Nothing, but what is your pleasure, brave comrades. You have made charming work here, I see. You are men after my own heart, and neither you nor I shall have any reason to repent it, if you will listen for two minutes to what I have to say."

"Speak! speak!" cried the whole company.

"But be quick," added one of the fiercest of them, "for we shall not make much ceremony with you, either."

"Nevertheless, I hope you may, if you but grant me hearing. Know then, that I am, to be sure, the wife of the richest gentleman in the country—but the wife of the meanest beggar, cannot be more unhappy than I am. My husband is one of the most jealous and niggardly wretches on the face of the earth. I hate him as I hate the —, and it has long been the fervent wish of my heart to get out of his clutches, and at the same time to pay him off old scores. All my servants were his spies—and that fellow, whose business you have done so completely, was the worst of them all. I am scarcely twenty-two, and, as I flatter myself, at least not ugly. If any of you choose to take me along with you, I will accompany him to the woods or to the village alehouse. Nor shall any of you have reason to repent sparing my life. You are in a well stored mansion, but it is impossible you should be acquainted with all its secret corners. These I will show you, and if I do not make you richer by 6,000 dollars, then serve me as you have done my chambermaid."

Robbers of this kind are certainly villains, but, nevertheless, they are still men. The wholly unexpected tendency of the baroness' address—added to the unaffected tone with which she spoke, and the more than ordinary beauty of the female—altogether produced a powerful effect on men whose hands were yet