

## Literature, &amp;c.

## THE GERMAN FREEBOOTER.

Christian Wolf was the son of an innkeeper, at Bielsdorf, who, after the death of his father, continued, till his twentieth year, to assist his mother in the management of the house. The inn was a poor one, and Wolfe had many idle hours. Even before he left school, he was regarded an idle, loose lad; the girls complained of his rudeness, and the boys, when detected in any mischief, were sure to give up him as the ringleader. Nature had neglected his person. His figure was small and unpromising; his hair was of a coarse, greasy black; his nose was flat and his upper lip, originally too thick, and twisted aside by a kick from a horse, was such as to disgust the women, and furnished a perpetual subject of jesting for the men. The contempt showered upon his person was the first thing which wounded his pride, and turned a portion of his blood to gall. He was resolved to gain what was every where denied him; his passions were strong enough, and he soon persuaded himself that he was in love. The girl he selected treated him coldly, and he had reason to fear that his rivals were happier than himself; yet the maiden was poor, and what was refused to his vows might perhaps be granted to his gifts; but he was himself needy, and his vanity soon threw away the little he gained from his share in the profits of the Sun. Too idle and too ignorant to think of supporting his extravagance by speculation; too proud to descend from "mine host" into a plain peasant, he saw only one way to escape from his difficulties—a way to which thousands before him and after him had recourse—theft. Bielsdorf is situated on the edge of the forest; Wolf commenced deer stealing, and poured the gains of his boldness into the lap of his mistress.

Among Hannah's lovers, was one of the forest's men, Robert Horn. This man soon observed the advantage with which Wolf had gained over her by means of his presents, and set himself to detect the source of so much liberality. He began to frequent the Sun; he drank there early and late; and sharpened as his eyes were both by jealousy and poverty, it was not long before he discovered whence all the money came. Not many months before this time, a severe edict had been published against all trespassers on the forest laws. Horn was indefatigable in watching the secret motions of his rival, and at last he was so fortunate as to detect him in the very fact. Wolf was tried, and found guilty, and the fine which he paid in order to avoid the statutory punishment, amounted to the sum total of his property.

Horn triumphed; his rival was driven from the field, for Hannah had no notion of a beggar for a lover. Wolf well knew his enemy, and he knew that his enemy was the happy possessor of his Hannah. Pride, jealousy, rage, were all in arms within him; hunger set the wide world before him, but passion and revenge held him fast at Bielsdorf. A second time he became a deer stealer, and a second time, by the redoubled vigilance of Robert Horn, was he detected in the trespass. This time he experienced the full severity of the law; he had no money to pay a fine, and was sent straightway to the house of chastisement.

The year of punishment drew near its close, and found his passion increased by absence, his confidence buoyant under all the pressure of his calamities. The moment his freedom was given to him, he hastened to Bielsdorf, to throw himself at the feet of Hannah. He appears, and is avoided by every one. The force of necessity at last humbles his pride and overcomes his delicacy. He begs from the wealthy of the place; he offers himself as a day labourer to the farmers, but they despise his slim figure, and do not stop for a moment to compare him with his sturdier competitors. He makes a last attempt—one situation is yet vacant—the last of honest occupations. He offers himself as herdsman of the swine upon the town's common; but even here he is rejected, no man will trust anything to the jail-bird. Meeting with contempt from every eye, chased with scorn from one door to another, he becomes yet the third time a deer stealer, and for the third time his unhappy star places him in the power of his enemy. The double backsliding goes against him at the judgment seat; for every judge can look into the book of the law, but few into the soul of the culprit. The forest edict requires an explanatory punishment, and Wolf is condemned to be branded on the back with the mark of the gallows, and to three years hard labour in the fortress. This period also went by, and he once more dropt his chains; but he was no longer the same man that entered the fortress. Here began a new epoch in the life of Wolf; you shall see the state of his mind from his own words to his confessor—

"I went into the fortress," said he, "an offender, but I came out of it a villain. I had still something in the world that was dear to me, and my pride had not totally sunk under my shame; but here I was thrown into a company of three and twenty convicts; of these, two were murderers, the next were all notorious thieves and vagabonds. They jeered at me if I even uttered the name of the Diety; they sung songs, the atrocity of which at first horrified me, but which I soon learned to echo. No day passed over wherein I did not hear the recital of some profligate life, or the concoction of some audacious villany. At first I avoided these men as much as I could, but I could not bear to be left alone without one face to look upon. The jailor had refused me the company of my dog, so I needed that of men, and by degrees I got accustomed to the only associates allowed me. I quickly learned all the villainy they could learn me, and, in the last quarter of my confinement, I surpassed even my teachers. From this time

I thirsted after revenge with a burning thirst—revenge against all men, for all men had injured me. I gnashed my fetters with my teeth when I beheld the glorious sun rise up against the battlements of my prison; the bird that perched itself upon the grating of my window seemed to be mocking me with its triumphant song of liberty. It was then that I vowed eternal, glowing hatred to every thing that bears the image of man. I have kept my vow.

"My first thought, after I was set at liberty, was once more my native town, for there I had dear hope of revenge. My heart beat quick and high against my bosom, when I beheld afar off, the spire arising out of the trees; the recollection of all the misery, of all the persecution I had experienced there aroused my faculties from a terrible, dead slumber of sullenness, set all my wounds bleeding, and every nerve jarring within me. I redoubled my pace. The clocks were striking the hour of vespers as I reached the market place; the crowd was rushing to the church door; I was immediately recognized; every man that knew me shrunk from meeting me. Of old, I had loved the little children, and even now, seeking in their innocence a refuge from the scorn of others, I threw a small piece of money to the first I saw. The boy stared at me for a moment, and then dashed the coin in my face. Had any blood boiled less furiously, I might have still recollected that I still wore my prison beard, but as it was, the boy's treatment tortured me more than all my three years' slavery. I sat down in a wood yard near the church, until the yard was about to be locked up, and then I stole out to seek a lodging. In turning the corner of a street I ran against my Hannah." "You here again, my dear Wolf!" cried she, opening her arms as if to embrace me. "God be thanked for your return." Hunger was visible in her wan and hollow cheeks, and abject poverty in her torn and scanty clothing, while a shameful disease had marred her countenance, telling all the world what a wretched creature she had become. I saw two or three dragoons laughing at her from a window, and turned my back with a laugh louder than theirs, upon the soldiers' trull. I had never loved her, and now it did me good to find that there was something in the scale of life yet lower than myself.

"Onward I hastened into the town. I found that my mother was dead. My small house had been sold to pay my creditors. I asked nothing more. I drew near to no man. All the world fled from me like a pestilence; but I had at last forgotten shame. Formerly, I hated the sight of men, because their contempt was insufferable to me; now, I threw myself in the way, and found a savage delight in scattering horror around me. I had nothing more to lose: my infamy was the only capital I now possessed—a capital, the interest of which was not easily to be exhausted. Contempt and shame had taken from me even the desire of seeming to be honest. Had my vanity and pride survived my infamy, I must have died by my own hand. What I was to do I knew not; I was determined, however, to do evil—I was resolved to see the worst of my destiny. The laws, said I to myself, are benefits to the world, and, therefore, it is fit that I should offend them. Formerly I had sinned from levity and necessity, but I now sinned from free choice and for my pleasure. My first step was to the woods, where I slew every animal that came near me, and sold as many of them as I could beyond the barriers. I lived wickedly; and, except on powder and shot I expended nothing. For some months I existed in this way, without appearing to excite the least suspicion; though indeed the chance of being taken no longer troubled me, for I was well armed, and felt a perfect confidence in the certainty of my aim.

"It chanced that, on the morning, I had pursued a stag for many miles through the wood. For two hours I had in vain exerted every nerve, and, at last, I had begun to despair of my booty, when, all at once, I perceived the stately animal exactly at the proper distance for my gun: my finger was already on the trigger, when my eye caught sight of a hat lying on the ground, a few paces before me. I looked round and perceived the huntsman, Robert Horn, lurking behind a massy oak, and taking deliberate aim at the very stag I had been pursuing. At the sight a deadly coldness crept through all my limbs. Here was the man I hated above all living things: here he was, and within the reach of my bullet. As if under the impulse of some overpowering agency, I involuntarily raised my gun; my arm shook, my teeth chattered, and I scarcely had power to breathe. For a minute I held my gun wavering between the man and the stag; conscience and revenge struggled fiercely within me; but the demon triumphed, and the huntsman fell dead upon the ground. I rushed towards him as he fell, and, for a long time I stood speechless gazing on the corpse. At last I forced a wild laugh, and cried—"No more tales from the wood now, my friend." I drew him into the thicket with his face upwards. The eyes stood stiff and gazing upon me. While yet I gazed, there came upon me a bewildered vision of ropes, and swords, and the dying agonies of a child murderer, which I had witnessed when a boy; and with this, there came a certain dim and tearful feeling that my life was forfeited. I was horrified at the deed I had committed, and which had been done so suddenly, so entirely from the irresistible impulse of the moment, that I could not conceive how or why I had become a murderer.

"I was still standing beside the corpse, when I heard the crack of a whip, and the creaking of a fruit waggon passing through the wood, and they aroused me to a sense of danger. I turned to fly, but suddenly it struck me that the deceased used to have a watch, and also that, in order to pass the barriers, I had need of money. I knelt upon the earth and took

from the person of the deceased his watch, and a dollar or two that I found in a green silk purse. At first I took all, but a sudden thought seized me—I wish to consider myself the personal enemy, not as the robber of the deceased and therefore, I threw back the watch and half the silver. With the remainder in my possession, I rushed towards the depths of the forest, and continued my flight till the morning sun was high in the horizon, and then I laid myself down upon the grass to sleep, but the torments of my conscience presented before me an endless succession of horrid visions, and with a yell of terror I awoke. Again I started on my feet. I drew my hat over my eyes, and was rushing instinctively along the line of a small foot path, which drew me into the very heart of the wilderness, when a rough, stern voice immediately in front of me, cried "halt." I lifted my hat from over my eyes, and looking up, beheld a tall, savage-looking man advancing towards me with a ponderous club in his hand. His figure was of gigantic size, so, at least, I thought on my first alarm, and his skin of a dark mulatto yellow, in which the white of his fierce eyes stood fearfully prominent. Instead of a girdle he had a piece of sail cloth twisted over his green woolen coat, and in it I saw a broad, bare, butcher's knife, and a pistol. The summons was repeated, and a strong arm held me fast. The sound of a human voice terrified me, but the sight of an evil doer gave me heart again. I had reason to fear a good man, but none at all to tremble before a ruffian.

"Whom have we here?" said the ruffian; "Such another as yourself," was the answer; "that is, if your looks don't belie you."

"The man surveyed me leisurely, from head to foot, as if he were comparing my figure with his own, and my answer with my figure.

"May I be d—d," said he, "if you have not rubbed shouldis with the gallows, ere now."

"It may be so replied I; "farewell, till we meet again."

"Stop, comrade," shouted he, as he pulled a tin flash from his pouch, and handed it to me "drink! you seem to need it."

"I seized the flask and put it to my lips. New strength seemed to rush, with the liquor, into my limbs, and with it came fresh courage to my heart and hope, and love of life. Such was the power of the welcome draught, that I began to believe I might not be forever wretched. There was something pleasant in finding myself in company with a man of my own stamp. In the state in which I was, I would have pledged a devil, that I might once more have a companion. The man stretched himself on the grass, and I followed his example.

"Your drink has done me good," said I, "we must get better acquainted." He struck his flint and lighted his pipe. "Are you old in the trade?" said I. He looked sternly at me. "Has that often been bloody?" said I, pointing to a knife in his girdle.

"Who art thou?" cried he fiercely, and threw down his pipe.

"A murderer, friend, like yourself," replied I, "but only a beginner."

He took up his pipe again.

"Did you ever hear of the landlord of the Sun, at Bielsdorf?" said I.

"What! the poacher Wolf?" exclaimed he.

I nodded assent. He seized my hand, eagerly exclaiming—"Welcome! comrade, welcome! Year and day have I sought for thee. I know thee well—I know all—I have long reckoned upon thee, Wolf."

"Reckoned on me, and wherefore?" inquired I.

He answered—"The whole country is full of you; you have had enemies; you have been hardly dealt with; your treatment has been shameful. Was it because you shot a pair of boars, or stags, here in the forest, that you should be chased from your house and home, confined three years in the castle, and made a beggar of? Is it come to this, that a man is less worth than a hare? Are we nothing better than the beasts of the field, brother?"

"Who can alter these things?" said I.

"Ha! that we shall presently see, was his reply; "but tell me whence came you, and what are you about?"

I told him my whole story, and when I had finished, he leaped up, and dragged me along with him.

"Come, mine host of the Sun," said he, "now you are ripe, now I have you. I shall look for honor from you, Wolf! follow me."

"Whither will you lead me?" inquired I.

"Ask no questions," replied he, "but come along," and clutching my arm, with the grasp of a giant, he pulled me forward with him.

We had advanced some quarter of a mile; the road was becoming at every step more thick, wild, and impassible. Neither of us spoke a word. I was roused from my reverie by the whistle of my guide. I looked up and perceived that we were standing on the edge of a rock, which hung over a steep dark ravine. A second whistle answered from the root of the precipice, and a ladder rose, as of its own motion, from below. My guide stepped upon it and desired me to await his return.

"I must first tie up the hounds," said he; "you are a stranger here, and the beasts would tear you to pieces." He left me, for a few moments, standing upon the edge of the precipice, but presently he returned, and bade me come down. I obeyed him. A few yards from the top of the precipice the ground widened a little, and some huts became visible. In the midst of these there was a little plot of smooth turf, and there about eighteen or

twenty figures lay scattered around a coal fire. "Here, comrades!" cried my guide, leading me into the middle of the group, "here, get up and bid the landlord welcome." "Welcome, good landlord!" shouted all at once, and both men and women crowded around me. Their joy appeared hearty and honest, and my reception was such as might have been expected by some old and valued friends. Our arrival had interrupted their repast. We joined it, and I was compelled to pledge my new friends in a bumper. The meal consisted of game of all kinds, and the bottle, filled with good Rhenish, was not allowed to rest for an instant. The company seemed to be full of affection towards each other, and of good will towards me.

I had been made to make my seat between two women, and this seemed to be considered as a place of honor. I expected to find these the refuse of their sex, but how great was my astonishment when I perceived, clad in their close garments, two of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. Margaret, the elder and handsomest of the two, was addressed by the name of Miss, and might be 25. Her language was free, and her looks were still more eloquent. Mary, the younger, was married, but her husband had treated her cruelly, and deserted her. Her features were perhaps prettier, but she was pale and thin, and less striking on the whole, than her neighbour. They both endeavoured to please me. Mary was the beauty, but my heart was more taken with the womanly gentle Mary.

"Brother Wolf," cried my guide, "you see how we live here, with us every day is alike. Is it not so, comrades?"

"It is! it is!" exclaimed they all.

"If you like our way or life," continued the man, "strike in and be one of us; be our captain. I bear the dignity for the present, but I will yield it to Wolf. Say I right, comrades?"

A hearty "Yes, yes!" was the answer. My brain was on fire; wine and passion had inflamed my blood. The world had thrown me out like a leper: here were brotherly welcome, good cheer, and honor. Whatever choice I might make, I knew death was before me; but here, at least, I might sell my life dearly. Where, at least, I might sell my life dearly. Wolf was nectar to my soul.

"I remain with you, comrades!" cried I, loudly and firmly; and as I spoke, I stepped into the midst of the band. "I remain with you my good friends, provided you give me my pretty neighbour."

They all consented to gratify my wish, and I sat down contented, a Captain of banditti.

And here we will throw aside Wolf's confession, and give in our own way a more condensed account of the remaining part of his career. Having thus become a leader of banditti, so great was his daring, and so extraordinary were his exploits, that his name became the terror of the Province. The highways were unsafe, nocturnal robberies kept the citizens in constant alarm. Justice set every device at work to ensnare Wolf, and a premium was set upon his person, and craft resorted to to convert the superstition of the peasantry into an engine of defence. It was universally given out that Wolf was in league with the devil; that his whole band were wizzards. The ignorance of the people inducing them to believe this, not a single person could be found willing to come to close quarters with such a fire-and-brimstone enemy. For a full year did Wolf persist in this terrible trade, but at last it began to be intolerable to him. The men at whose head he placed himself were not what he supposed. They had received him at first with an exterior of profusion, but he soon discovered that they had deceived him. Hunger and want appeared in the room of abundance; he was often obliged to venture his life for a booty, which when won, was scarcely sufficient to support his existence for a single day. The veil of brotherly affection, also, had passed away, and beneath it he found the lurking paltriness of thieves and harpies. A large reward had been proclaimed for him that should deliver Wolf alive into the hands of justice, and if the discoverer should be one of his own party, a free pardon was promised in addition. Wolf was sensible of this danger, and from this time the ghost of suspicion haunted him, watching his pillow and disturbing his dreams. Just at this time the seven years' war broke out in Germany, and the German Princes where every where making great levies of troops. The unhappy Wolf determined to make a desperate effort to save himself, and from the awful fate that awaited him, which he boldly sent in a petition to his sovereign, after expressing deep contrition for his offence, ended in these words—"If you give me my life, it shall be dedicated to your service. A single word in the Gazette shall bring me immediately to your feet. If otherwise you have determined, let justice do her part, I must do mine."

This petition remained without an answer, and so did a second and third, in which Wolf begged to be permitted to serve as a hussar in the army of the prince. At last, losing all hope of a pardon, he resolved to fly from the country, and die a brave soldier in the service of King Frederick. He gave his companions the slip, and set out on his journey. The first day brought him to a small country town, where he resolved to spend the night.

The circumstances of the times made the officers at every port doubly vigilant in observing travellers. The gate keeper of the town had received a particular command to be attentive. The appearance of Wolf had something imposing about it, but at the same time, swarthy, terrible, and savage. The meagre bony horse he rode, and the grotesque and scanty arrangement of his apparel, formed a strange contrast with a countenance wherein a thousand fierce passions had left their deep marked furrows. The gate keeper started at the apparition, and