

The Recollections of a Horse.

"HOW I WON MY FIRST RACE."

"From my point of view at the immature age of two and a half years, a race was the delirium of my young ambition. In the pasture I ran with the same wild instinct that prompts a bird to scar into the sunlight. I ran for joy, in blind obedience to the blood of the desert that coursed in my veins. I ran to tease Botherum, who scrambled after me through the clover, and then gave up the chase in despair. I ran for the entertainment of the row of screaming pickaninies hanging on the gate and ehying apples at me.

When I had been three months in training, on dry feed, the hard gallop over the colonel's private course was the only purely satisfactory half hour of the day. If the weather was bad I had the heart to kick down my box in my eagerness to get out, and I trod impatiently around the border of my enclosure like a caged lion, until I had trailed a deep path in the straw.

I had my own ideas about the conduct of my rider. A pair of bare black heels rattling on my ribs tickled me to a frenzy of effort, while the touch of a spur maddened me. The colonel at this time had secured an English groom, and installed him at the head of the stable. The darkies listened, incredulous, to this lad's boasts of his prowess, and turned the whites of their eyes scornfully on the glory of his racing togs.

One evening, after tea, a race was made up in which I was pitted against Miss Eunice's cart pony, ridden by my own groom, while I was to be mounted by the brilliant chief of the stable in all his finery. The family and servants had congregated along the fence at the starting point, and every black groom had his tongue in his cheek. We were off at the word, the pony at his best pace, and I galloping at his side, in proud contempt of his powers, the darky drumming on his ribs with his black heels, and mocking across at my rider. We had gone half around the course at this easy pace, when I felt the reins tighten, and at the same moment, the cruel spurs struck my flanks. My blood was up like a flash. From the inner side of the track I bolted into the ploughed ground, as dry and light as a bed of ashes. I heard the shouts and laughter of the spectators. I saw stars through the chaos of dust, and at the end of a series of mad plunges and kicks, I emerged from the red cloud on the opposite side of the track, and galloped riderless in ahead of my rival.

The new groom had been added to the stable for the express purpose of riding me in the two-year-old stakes at the approaching Kentucky Derby. I took a vicious dislike to him from my first experience in his hands. If he left off his spurs I permitted him to ride me, but I took care to do my best work when my old groom, Butternut Jim, was in the stable.

The excitement increased daily about the stable as the time for the race drew on. When they were off duty, the boys roiled about on the straw outside my window, basking in the sun, and laying their small bets.

"What make yo' ain' bettin' nuffin' on Selim, yo' Jim?" I heard a voice ask.

"What fo' I ain'? I is got a half a dolla' onto that colt afo' I knewed dat cockney gwine ride 'im. I ain' no fool nigger, I ain'. Soon's I yer dat news I done hedge long o' Mose, see? An' I doubled dat hedge. I done lay ever' nickel I got 'gin de colt—bigges' kind o' odds." And true to his words, when Jim found the riding was settled, he laid every dollar he could raise against my success. He bet all his personal property on the outside favorite, and staked his next month's wages against me at such odds as he could get.

Jim was unusually sociable when he rubbed me down, and the night pending the great event he stood before me with tears in his eyes, in the seclusion of the box.

"It ain' yo' fault, Selim, boy; yo's got easy winner rit in yo' eye, if ever Butternut Jim was in de saddle, see? What fo' was we is to-gedder, me an' yo'? Ain' I done rub yo' an' wait on yo' eber since yo' was weaned, see? Ain' I done lub yo' since the mawnin' yo' was folded? Ain' ole Marse Colonel done gone clean back on yo' own stable, see, a-mountin' o' white trash on yo', honey, an' him got mo' spurs an' sense? Kyaryin' he brains on he heel instead of in he head, see? Selim, boy yo' done loss dat race afo' yo' saddled up an' weighed in. Dat fool jockey gwine tote yo' un'er de wire, on de tale en' ob de string, honey, boo, hoo—" and Jim broke down completely and wept on my neck.

"I 'clar' to Moses, honey, fo' Gawd, ef yo' win de stakes, an' Jim goes broke on de Calamity favorite, he'll be der joyfulest coon in Kaintuck; an' i'm sleepin' rite yer in de straw 'long yo', ca'se I done trus' nobody, an' I ain' gwine ter tell yo' good-by dis ebe'nin'."

There were few eyes closed in sleep among the excited stable boys who sat bolt upright and polished bits by the glimmer of lanterns, and sowed scraps of orange and black—the colonel's racing colors—on hats and coats. Even Jim tossed about in the straw, and talked in his broken sleep, and was up before day, bemoaning his fate.

Before the sun touched the highest weather vane on the stables, the colonel's string was on the road, blanketed and hooded. I was led by Butternut Jim, radiant in his tightest and loosest jockey outfit, for Jim was sure to be in demand as a rider, though he was for the moment, eclipsed by the imported professional hand. So near were we to the great track that we were shut up in our snug quarters before the dew was off the grass. Botherum was with me, and there was no love lost between him and the English groom. The goat seemed to absorb my temper, for I was in the worst of humors, and determined to fight my rider. The box was close and hot. By the voices outside I knew that there was the greatest activity on the grounds. When Jim looked in I was pleased and calm, but when he was away, and the cheering from the grand stand sounded like distant thunder, just a background of murmur to the shouting and clatter of hoofs by the stables, I kicked at Botherum, and struck out with my fore feet at the walls.

When, at last, Jim led me out into the sunlight to saddle, I forgot my temper in the sweet, open air, on the fragrant turf, in the midst of the glitter

and color and excitement—and Jim. I tossed my head for joy, and felt the flutter of the wind in my nerves.

I was the prime favorite in my class, and, as we passed down towards the track, I heard many a wager placed to my credit. "Two to one on Selim Blanche against Calamity." "Selim even against the field." It was old-fashioned betting in those days. When the cloth was stripped off, a great shout went up from the crowd of my admirers. In the midst of my pride and joy at this ovation from fair women and critical men, the small English jockey came forward and took my reins from Jim. When my eye fell on his spurs and goad, a surge of passion ran through my blood. A few other colts were out for their warming-up runs, and Calamity was moving handsomely, as docile as a sheep.

There was a fine scramble before my jockey was got into his seat, in which I sidled away, then rushed against the grooms, and reared and bit and struck out, to the disgust of my backers, and to the amusement of everybody else.

"Plenty of temper." "There's nerve for you." "He can't win," were some of the comments heard. And then the calm voice of the colonel: "Have patience, gentlemen, until the colt gets warmed up, and he'll show you a pace."

"Not with this outfit," I thought; and the twinkle in Jim's eye, over by the palings, told me that he thought so too.

The worse I behaved the smaller my odds dwindled on my chances, until it was even money against the Calamity colt before I had started for my exercise. I made a handsome rush down the track, and then whirled and came back, and got whip and spur for my reward. Then the fight was on. I plunged and bolted from side to side of the track. I sheared against the palings, and reared and kicked like a demon, during which my tormentor stuck fast to the saddle, and I was forced to have some respect for his skill. Now I tried another school of tactics, and shot half around the course at a pace that brought a ringing cheer from the multitude, and then, with a desperate bolt, I cleared the inner rail; and, after a frantic series of plunges on the turf, I shook off my plucky rider, giving him such a serious fall that he lay still on the ground until the crowd rushed over and picked him up.

While this entertainment had been in progress, my stock among the bookmakers had fallen away below par, and the colonel, confident in my ultimate tractableness, had booked the bets recklessly at handsome odds against me.

A dozen grooms were after me in the field, but I eluded them all and trotted over to Jim, who fell on my neck for joy. When we came up to the colonel, Jim, who had not dared to mount me without orders, addressed him, cap in hand.

"I kin ride him, Marse Colonel. He won't cut up no monkey shines long o' Jim. Selim an' me unerstands on 'ner—see?"

There was nothing for it but to toss up Jim into the saddle, who was fluttering with orange and black, and away we went with an easy gallop, making the circuit of the course in the midst of an ovation to Jim. Then we took half the track at a flying pace, during which I