Gloaming

by Kathleen Jones

Throughout the history of Thoroughbred racing there are many exceptional horses who have been held as examples of heroes whose names would live forever. We call them legends. But somehow, over time, the details of their successes have grown foggy until eventually the memory of these once-legendary animals lives only in the rarely-touched paper leaves of libraries.

One horse in particular who deserves a better fate than anonymity is an Australian-bred gelding named Gloaming. At a time when Americans were celebrating the exploits of Man o'War and Exterminator, Australian and New Zealand race fans were going crazy for Gloaming. He won from 4 furlongs to a mile and half, setting time records at any distance. At one point his streak of victories had reached nineteen in a row. From ages 3 to 9 he began in 67 races, and won 57 of those. He was 2nd on nine other occasions. The one race in which he failed to run either first or second was a race at age 3 in which he fell.

Gloaming was entirely of British descent, and was inbred 4x4 to Two Thousand Guineas runner-up, Sterling. He also carried duplications of Bend Or, Galopin, and Rosebery in his pedigree.

The racing season of 1918/1919 in Australia and New Zealand got off to a slow start owing to an outbreak of influenza which necessitated the closing of several race meetings. So Gloaming's first start was a 9f prep stakes for the AJC Derby. He won his debut by 8 lengths then followed up with a new time record in the Australian Derby. Immediately afterward, he shipped to New Zealand and captured the Champion Plate then a week later, The New Zealand Derby.

His first defeat came five days later, to the five-yr-old Sasanof, but Gloaming reversed the result in their next meeting soon after.

Gloaming may best be remembered for a race he did not win. This was the North Island Challenge Stakes in which he participated late in his sophomore year. On that day he had the misfortune to get his head tangled in the tape barrier at the start, and fell.

It was not the first time he and the barrier had met. A few starts previously, in the 6f Taranaki Stakes, he tried to "beat the tape" at the start and had become tangled in it while the rest of the field got away cleanly. But he kept his feet and when finally freed of the menace, took immediately to the task of chasing the pack. On that day, the grand filly Desert Gold won by a neck, but all in attendance knew that Gloaming in a close second place had been the best in the field.

The following article is taken from the BBR (British Bloodstock Review) from the year 1925:

> *"Another interesting chapter has to be added to the life story of Gloaming, one of the most remarkable horses the Turf has known. It had been intended to send him to Australia once again, so that he might pick up another prize or two, but after all arrangements for the trip had been completed, the shipping strike at Sydney necessitated their cancellation. The old fellow - he is now ten years of age - must have wondered what had happened, because he has crossed and re-crossed the Tasman Sea every year since he was a three-year-old, to say nothing of his journey from Australia (where he was bred) to New Zealand when a yearling. Including journeys to and from racecourses in New Zealand, it is calculated that he has travelled over 35,000 miles."*

"His popularity with racing crowds is greater than ever. This was made apparent when, last May, he and The Hawk were the only runners for the J.D. Ormonde Memorial Gold Cup at Hawke's Bay. The Ormonde Cup "match" - for that's what it resolved itself into - was run the second day of the Hawke's Bay meeting. The first day Gloaming had competed for, and won, the Hawke's Bay S. over 6½ furlongs."

"The two horses got away on equal terms. Both, by the way carried 9 stone 10 lbs. (136 lbs) over the a mile. At the end of 3 furlongs, The Hawk was leading by 2 lengths. A furlong further on, Gloaming had drawn level, and shortly thereafter got his head in front. Whilst traversing the sixth furlong, The Hawk was once more in front, but only slightly. He was now under the whip, whereas Gloaming was being merely hand-ridden. In the final furlong, Gloaming definitely got the upper hand, and gradually drawing away, won readily by a length. The enthusiasm of the great crowd that had assembled to witness the contest was tremendous. The result was in accordance with the desire of the vast majority, but the gallant effort The Hawk had made against his big far-striding conqueror was heartily recognized and so he too received an ovation."

"Everyone is wondering how much longer Gloaming is going to retain his form - none more so than his trainer R.J. Mason, who is anxious to retire, but will not so long as Gloaming is in active service."

As it turned out - the Ormonde "match" would be Gloaming's final race. All in all, not a bad ending to an illustrious career. Gloaming died in May of 1932 and was buried on his owner's property, Teviotdale, in North Canterbury, at a site now called "Gloaming's Hill".

His trainer died a week later, and his owner died within a few months.

Pedigree:

GLOAMING (Aus) b.g. 1915	The Welkin (GB) 1904	Flying Fox (GB) 1896	Orme (GB) 1889	Ormonde, 1883 Angelica, 1879
			Vampire (GB) 1889	Galopin, 1872 Irony, 1881
		Woodbury (GB) 1895	Crowberry (GB) 1885	Rosebery, 1872 Lizzie Lindsay, 1877
			The Widgeon (GB) 1878	Uncas, 1865 unknown
	Light (GB) 1907	Eager (GB) 1894	Enthusiast (GB) 1886	Sterling, 1868 Cherry Duchess, 1871
			Greeba (GB) 1890	Melton, 1882 Sunrise, 1883
		No Trumps (GB) 1896	Orvieto (GB) 1888	Bend Or, 1877 Napoli, 1878
			Electric Light (GB) 1876	Sterling, 1868 Beachy Head, 1865

Race Record:

	# starts	1st	2nd	3rd	unplaced
age 3	16	13	2	0	1
age 4	7	6	1	0	0
age 5	12	12	0	0	0
age 6	12	11	1	0	0
age 7	5	3	2	0	0
age 8	5	4	1	0	0
age 9	10	8	2	0	0
total	67	57	9	0	1

At age 3 (1918-1919)

WON	AUS	Tatts NSW Chelmsford S.	9 f	NSR
WON	AUS	AJC Derby	12 f	NSR
WON	NZ	Champion Plate (WFA)	10 f	

WON	NZ	New Zealand Derby	12 f	
2nd	NZ	G.G. Stead Memorial S. (WFA)	10 f	
WON	NZ	Islington Plate	8 f	NZR
WON	NZ	Great Northern Derby	12 f	
WON	NZ	Wellington S.	5 f	
WON	NZ	Kelburne Plate	4 f	
2nd	NZ	Taranaki S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	Egmont S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	Egmont Hawera S.	8 f	
WON	NZ	Wanganui Jackson S. (WFA)	6 f	
WON	NZ	Wanganui Guineas	8 f	
WON	NZ	CJC Challenge S.	7 f	
fell	NZ	North Island Challenge S.	7 f	

At age 4 (1919-1920)

WON	AUS	RRC Spring S.	8 f	
2nd	AUS	AJC Spring S.	12 f	
WON	AUS	AJC Craven Plate	10 f	
WON	NZ	WeRC Champion Plate	10 f	NSR
WON	NZ	G.G. Stead Memorial Cup	10 f	
WON	NZ	Islington Plate	9 f	
WON	NZ	Royal S.	6 f	NSR

At age 5 (1920-1921)

WON	NZ	CJC Electric Plate	4 f	
WON	NZ	Feilding S.	5 f	
WON	NZ	Feilding Oroura S.	5½ f	
WON	NZ	Islington Plate	8 f	
WON	NZ	Auckland Plate	12 f	
WON	NZ	Kleburn Plate	4 f	Aus/NZ rec

WON	NZ	Waterloo S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	Taranaki S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	Egmont S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	Egmont Hawera S.	8 f	
WON	NZ	Wanganui Jackson S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	CJC Challenge S.	7 f	

At age 6 (1921-1922)

WON	NZ	Feilding S.	5 f	
WON	NZ	Feilding Oroura S.	5½ f	
2nd	NZ	Islington Plate	8 f	NSR
WON	NZ	Egmont S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	Egmont Hawera S.	8 f	
WON	NZ	Taranaki S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	Wanganui Jackson S.	6 f	NSR
WON	NZ	North Island Challenge S.	7 f	
WON	NZ	CJC Challenge S.	7 f	
WON	NZ	Hawke's Bay S.	6½ f	
WON	NZ	J.D. Ormonde Memorial Gold Cup	8 f	

At age 7 (1922-1923)

2nd	AUS	Tatts NSW Chelmsford S.	9 f	
WON	AUS	The Hill S.	8 f	
2nd	AUS	AJC Spring S.	12 f	
WON	AUS	AJC Craven Plate	10 f	
WON	NZ	Wellington Champion Plate	10 f	NSR

At age 8 (1923-1924)

WON	NZ	Waterloo S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	CJC Middle Park Plate	6 f	
WON	NZ	Wanganui Jackson S.	6 f	
WON	NZ	North Island Challenge S.	7 f	
2nd	NZ	CJC Challenge S.	7 f	

At age 9 (1924-1925)

2nd	AUS	Tatts NSW Chelmsford S.	9 f	
2nd	AUS	The Hill S.	8 f	
WON	AUS	AJC Spring S.	12 f	
WON	AUS	AJC Craven S.	10 f	
WON	AUS	VRC Melbourne S.	10 f	
WON	NZ	CJC Middle Park Plate	6 f	
WON	NZ	North Island Challenge S.	7 f	
WON	NZ	CJC Challenge S.	7 f	
WON	NZ	Hawke's Bay S.	6½ f	
WON	NZ	J.D. Ormonde Memorial Gold Cup	8 f	NSR