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Gordon Stables

"Aileen Aroon, A Memoir"

"With other Tales of Faithful Friends and Favourites"

Preface.

Prefaces are not always necessary; but when an author has either to acknowledge a courtesy, or to make an apology, then a preface becomes a duty. I have to do both.

Firstly, then, as regards acknowledgment. I have endeavoured in this book to give sketches—as near to nature as a line could be drawn—of a few of my former friends and favourites in the animal world, and many of these have appeared from time to time in the magazines and periodicals, to which I have the honour to contribute.

I have to thank, then, the good old firm of Messrs Chambers, of Edinburgh, for courteously acceding to my request to be allowed to republish "My Cabin Mates and Bedfellows," and "Blue-Jackets' Pets," from their world-known Journal.

I have also to thank Messrs Cassell and Co., London, for the re-appearance herein of several short stories I wrote for their charming magazine *Little Folks*, on the pages of which, by the way, the sun never sets.

Mr Dean, one of my publishers, kindly permitted me to reprint the story of my dead-and-gone darling "Tyro," and the story of "Blucher." This gentleman I beg to thank. I have also to thank Messrs Routledge and Son for a little tale from my book, "The Domestic Cat."

Nor must I forget to add that I have taken a few sketches, though no complete tales, from some of my contributions to that queen of periodicals yclept *The Girl's Own Paper*, to edit which successfully, requires as much skill and taste, as an artist displays in the culling and arrangement of a bouquet of beautiful flowers.

With the exception of these tales and sketches, all else in the book is original, and, I need hardly add, painted from the life.

Secondly, as regards apology. The wish to have, in a collected form, the life-stories of the creatures one has loved; to have, as it were, the graves of the pets of one's past life arranged side by side, is surely only natural; no need to apologise for that, methinks. But, reader, I have to apologise, and I do so most humbly, for the too frequent appearance of the "*ego*" in this work.

I have had no wish to be autobiographical, but my own life has been as intimately mixed up with the lives of the creatures that have called me "master," as is the narrow yellow stripe, in the tartan plaid of the Scottish clan to which I belong. And so I crave forgiveness.

Gordon Stables.

Gordon Grove, Twyford, Berks.

Chapter One.

Prologistic.

PORTRAIT OF AILEEN.

Scene: A lofty pine wood, from which can be caught distant glimpses of the valley of the Thames. “Aileen Aroon,” a noble Newfoundland, has thrown herself down by her master’s side. All the other dogs at play in the wood.

Aileen’s master (*speaks*): “And so you have come and laid yourself down beside me, Aileen, and left your playmates every one? left your playmates roaming about among the trees, while you stay here by me?

“Yes, you may put your head on my knee, dear, honest Aileen, or your chin at all events, for you yourself, old girl, have no idea of the weight of your whole head. No, Aileen, thank you, not a paw as well; you are really attempting now to take the advantage of my good nature. So be content, ‘Sable’ (Note 1)—my good, old, silly, simple Sable. There, I smooth your bonnie brow to show you that the words ‘old’ and ‘silly’ are truly terms of endearment, and meant neither as a scoff at your age, nor to throw disparagement upon the amount or quality of your intellect. Intellect? Who could glance for a single moment at that splendid head of yours, my Aileen, and doubt it to be the seat of a wisdom almost human, and of a benevolence that might easily put many of our poor fallen race to shame. And so I smooth your bonnie brow thus, and thus. But now, let us understand each other, Aileen. We must have done with endearments for a little time. For beautiful though the day be, blue the sky, and bright the sunshine, I really have come out here to the quiet woods to work. It is for that very purpose I have seated myself beneath this great tree, the branches of which are close and thick enough to defend us against yonder shower, that comes floating up the valley of the Thames, if indeed it can ever reach this height, my Sable.

“No noisy school children, no village cries to disturb and distract one here, and scatter his half-formed ideas to the winds, or banish his best thoughts to the shades of oblivion. Everything is still around us, everything is natural; the twittering of the birds, the dreamy hum of insect life, the sweet breath of the fir-trees, combine to calm the mind and conduce to thought.

“Why do I not come and romp and play? you ask. I cannot explain to you why. There *are* some things, Aileen, that even the vast intellect of a Newfoundland cannot comprehend; the electric telegraph, for instance, the telephone, and why a man must work. You do not doubt the existence of what you do not understand, however, my simple Sable. We poor mortal men do. What a thing faith is even in a Newfoundland!

“No, Sable, I must work. Here look, is proof of the fifteenth chapter of my serial tale, copy of the sixteenth must go to town with that. In this life, Aileen, one must keep ahead of the printer. This is all Greek to you, is it? Well then, for just one minute I will talk to you in language that you do understand.

“There, you know what I mean, don’t you, when I fondle your ear, and smooth it and spread it over my note-book? What a great ear it is, Aileen! No, I positively refuse to have that paw on my knee in addition to your head. Don’t be offended, I know you love me. There, put back that foot on the grass.

“Yes, Aileen, it *was* very good of you, I admit, to leave your fan and your romps, and come and lay your dear kindly head on my lap. The other dogs prefer to play. Even ‘Theodore Nero,’ your husband, is tumbling on the ground on that broad back of his, with his four immense legs pointing skywards, and his whole body convulsed with merriment. The three collies are in chase of a hare, the occasional excited yelp that is borne along on the breeze can tell us that;

we pray they may not meet the keeper. The Dandie Dinmont is hidden away in the dark depths of a rabbit burrow, and the two wiry wee Scotch terriers are eagerly watching the hole ’gainst the rabbit bolts.

“Fun and romps did I say, Aileen? Alas! dear doggie, these are hardly the words to apply to your little games, for you seldom play or romp with much heart, greatly though it rejoices me to see you lively. You seldom play with much heart, mavourneen, and when you do play, you seem but to play to please me and you tire all too soon. I know you have a deep sorrow at your heart, for you lost your former master, Aileen, and you are not likely to forget him. There always is a sad look in those hazel eyes of yours, and forgive me for mentioning it, but you are turning very grey around the lips. Your bright saucy-eyed husband yonder is three years older than you, Sable, and he isn’t grey. But, Aileen, I know something that you don’t know, poor pet, for I’m very learned compared to you. The seeds of that terrible disease, phthisis, are in your blood, I fear, and will one day take you from me, and I’ll have to sit and write under this tree—alone. I’m talking Greek again, am I? It is as well, Aileen, it should be Greek to you. Why do my eyes get a trifle moist, you seem to ask me. Never mind. There! the sad thoughts have all flown away for a time, but, my dear, loving dog, when you have gone to sleep at last and for ever, I’ll find a quiet corner to lay your bones in, and—I’ll write your story. Yes, I promise you that, and it is more than any one will ever do for me, Aileen.

“Don’t sigh like that. You have a habit of sighing, you tell me. Very well, so be it, but I thought at first that it was the wind soughing through this old pine-tree of ours. Yes, *ours*—yours and mine, Aileen. Now, *do* let me work. See, I’ll put my note-book close to your great nose, and your chin shall touch my left hand; you can lie so and gaze all the time in my face. That will help me materially. But by-and-by you’ll fall asleep and dream, and I’ll have to wake you, because you’ll be giving vent to a whole series of little ventriloquistic barks and sobs and sighs, and I will not know whether you are in pain or whether your mind is but reverting to—

“‘Visions of the chase,
Of wild wolves howling over hills of snow,
Slain by your stalwart fathers, long ago.’”

Note 1. The subject of this memoir was called ‘Sable’ before she came into my possession. She is well remembered by all lovers of the true Newfoundland, as Sable One of the show benches, and was generally admitted to be the largest and most handsome of her breed and sex ever exhibited.—The Author.

Chapter Two.

Introducing Aileen Aroon.

> “With eye upraised his master’s looks to scan,
> The joy, the solace, and the aid of man,
> The rich man’s guardian, and the poor man’s friend,
> The only creature faithful to the end.”
>
> Crabbe.

> “The Newfoundland, take him all in all, is unsurpassed, and possibly unequalled as the companion of man.”—*Idstone*.
>
> “These animals are faithful, good-natured, and friendly. They will allow no one to injure either their master or his property, however great be the danger. They only want the faculty of speech to make their good wishes understood.”—“*Newfoundland Dogs*,” in *McGregor’s “Historical and Descriptive Sketches of British America*.”
>
> *Dog Barks*. Shepherd.—“Heavens! I could hae thocht that was ‘Bronte.’”
>
> *Christopher North*.—“No bark like his, James, now belongs to the world of sound.”
>
> *Shepherd*.—“Purple black was he all over, as the raven’s wing. Strength and sagacity emboldened his bounding beauty, but a fierceness lay deep down within the quiet lustre of his eye, that tauld ye, had he been angered he could hae torn in pieces a lion.”
>
> *North*.—“Not a child of three years old and upwards in the neighbourhood that had not hung by his mane, and played with his paws, and been affectionately worried by him on the flowery greensward.”—“*Noctes Ambrosianae*.”

“Heigho!” I sighed, as I sat stirring the fire one evening in our little cosy cottage. “So that little dream is at an end.”

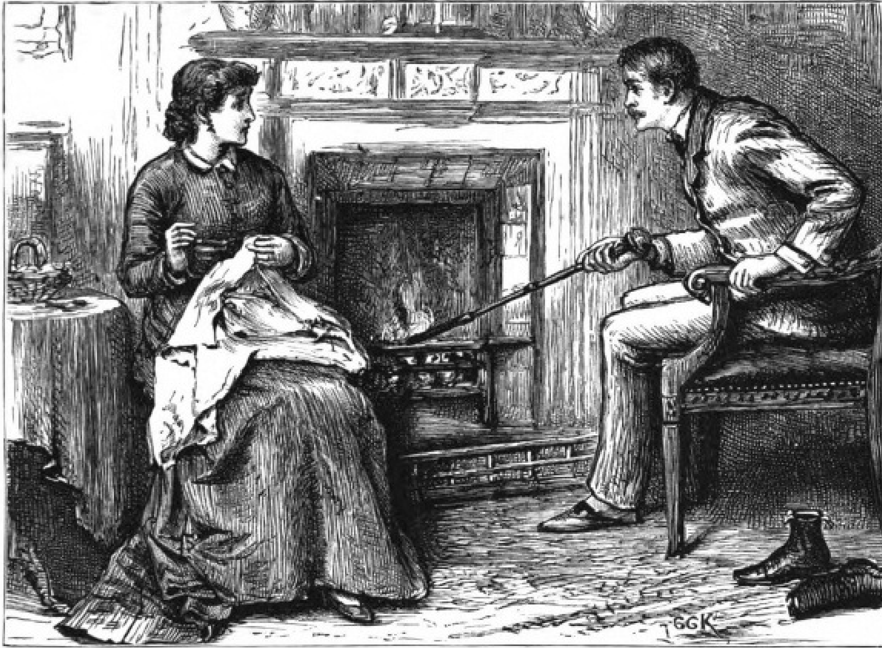
“Twenty guineas,” said my wife, opening her eyes in sad surprise. “Twenty guineas! It is a deal of money, dear.”

“Yes,” I assented, “it is a deal of money for us. Not, mind you, that Sable isn’t worth double. She has taken the highest honours on the show benches; her pedigree is a splendid one, and all the sporting papers are loud in her praises. She is the biggest and grandest Newfoundland ever seen in this country. But twenty guineas! Yes, that is a deal of money.”

“I wish I could make the money with my needle, dear,” my wife remarked, after a few minutes’ silence.

“I wish I could make the money with my pen, Dot,” I replied; “but I fear even pen and needle both together won’t

enable us to afford so great a luxury for some time to come. There are bills that must be paid; both baker and butcher would soon begin to look sour if they didn’t get what they call their little dues.”



“THE DEAR OLD DAYS OF POVERTY AND ROMANCE.” *Vide page* 16.

“Yes,” said Dot, “and there are these rooms to be papered and painted.”

“To say nothing of a new carpet to be bought,” I said, “and oilcloth for the lobby, and seeds for the garden.”

“Yes, dear,” said my wife, “and that American rocking-chair that you’ve set your heart upon.”

“Oh, that can wait, Dot. There are plenty other things needed more than that. But it is quite evident, Sable is out of the question for the present.”

I looked down as I spoke, and patted the head of my champion Newfoundland Theodore Nero, who had entered unseen and was gazing up in my face with his bonnie hazel eyes as if he comprehended every word of the conversation.

“Poor Nero,” I said, “I *should* have liked to have had Sable just to be a mate and companion for you, old boy.”

The great dog looked from me to my wife, and back again at me, and wagged his enormous tail.

“I’ve got you, master,” he seemed to say, “and my dear mistress. What more could I wish?”

Just as I pen these lines, gentle reader, two little toddlers are coming home from forenoon school, with slates under their arms; but when the above conversation took place, no toddlers were on the books, as they say in the navy. We were not long married. It was nine long years ago, or going on that way. The previous ten years of my life had been spent at sea; but service in Africa had temporarily ruined my health, so that invaliding on a modicum of half-pay seemed more desirable than active service on full.

These were the dear old days of poverty and romance. Retirement from active duty afloat and—marriage. It is too often the case that he who marries for love has to work for siller. Henceforward, literature was to be my staff, if not the crutch on which I should limp along until “my talents should be recognised,” as my wife grandly phrased it.

“Poor and content is rich, and rich enough,” says the greatest William that ever lived. There is nothing to be ashamed of in poverty, and just as little to boast about. Naval officers who retire young are all poor. I know some who once upon a time were used to strut the quarter-deck or ship’s bridge in blue and gold, and who are now, God help them, selling tea or taking orders for wine.

“With all my worldly goods I thee endow.” I squeezed the hand of my bride at the altar as I spoke the words, and well she knew the pressure was meant to recall to her mind a fact of which she was already cognisant, that “all my worldly goods” consisted of a Cremona fiddle, and my Newfoundland dog, and my old sea-chest; but the bottom of that was shaky.

But to resume my story.

“Hurrah!” I shouted some mornings after, as I opened the letters. “Here’s news, Dot. We’re going to have Sable after all. Hear how D. O’C writes. He says—

“‘Though I have never met you, judging from what I have seen of your writings, I would rather you accepted Sable as a gift, than that any one else should have my favourite for money,’ and so on and so forth.”

These are not the exact words of the letter, but they convey the exact meaning.

Sable was to come by boat from Ireland, and I was to go to Bristol, a distance of seventy miles, to meet her, for no one who values the life and limbs of a dog, would trust to the tender mercies of the railway companies.

"I'll go with you, Gordon," said my dear friend, Captain D—. Like myself, he had been a sailor, but unmarried, for, as he used to express it, "he had pulled up in time." He had taken *Punch's* advice to people about to marry—"Don't."

Captain D— didn't.

"Well, Frank," I said, "I'll be very glad indeed of your company."

So off we started the night before, for the boat would be in the basin at Hotwells early the next morning. The scene and the din on board that Irish boat beggars description, and I do not know which made the most noise, the men or the pigs. I think if anything the pigs did. It seemed to me that evil spirits had entered into the pigs, and they wanted to throw themselves into the sea. I believe evil spirits had entered into the men, too; some of them, at all events, *smelt* of evil spirits.

"Is it a thremendeous big brute 'av a black dog you've come to meet, sorr?" said the cook to me.

"Yes," I replied, "a big black dog, but not a brute."

"Well, poor baste, sorr, it's in my charge she has been all the way, and she's had lashin's to ate and to drink. Thank you koindly, sir, and God bless your honour. Yonder she is, sorr, tied up foreninst the horse-box, and she's been foighting with the pigs all the noight, sorr."

She certainly had been fighting with the pigs, for she herself was wounded, and the ears of some of the pigs were in tatters.

Sable was looking very sour and sulky. She certainly had not relished the company she had been placed among. She permitted me to lead her on shore; then she gave me one glance, and cast one towards my friend.

"You'll be the *man* that has come for me," she said; she did not say "the gentleman."

"Who is your fat friend?" she added.

We both caressed her without eliciting the slightest token on her part of any desire to improve our acquaintance.

"You may pat me," she told us, "and call me pet names as much as you please. I won't bite you as I did the pigs, but I don't care a bone for either of you, and, what is more, I never intend to. I have left my heart in Ireland; my master is there."

"Come on, Sable," I said; "we'll go now and have some breakfast."

"Don't pull," said Sable; "I'm big enough to break the chain and bolt if I wish to. I'll go with you, but I'll neither be dragged nor driven."

No dog ever had a better breakfast put before her, but she would not deign even to look at it.

"Yes," she seemed to say, "it is very nice, and smells appetising, and I'm hungry, too; a bite of a sow's ear is all I've had since I left home; but for all that I don't mean to eat; I'm going to starve myself to death, that is what I'm going to do."

It is very wrong and unfair to bring home any animal, whether bird or beast, to one's house without having previously made everything needful ready for its reception. Sable's comfort had not been forgotten, and on her arrival we turned her into the back yard, where, in a small wooden house, was a bed of the cleanest straw, to say nothing of a dish of wholesome food, and a bowl of the purest water. The doors to the yard were locked, but no chain was put on the new pet, for the walls were seven feet high or nearly so, and her safety was thus insured.

So we thought, but, alas for our poor logic! We had yet to learn what Sable's jumping capabilities were. When I wrote next day, and told her old master that Sable had leapt the high wall and fled, the reply was that he regretted very much not having told me, that she was the most wonderful dog to jump ever he had seen or heard tell of.

Meanwhile Sable was gone. But where or whither? The country is well-wooded, but there are plenty of sheep in it. Judging from Sable's pig-fighting qualities, I felt sure she would not starve, if she chose to feed on sheep. But one sheep a day, even for a week, would make a hole in my quarter's half-pay, and I shuddered to think of the little bill Sable might in a very short time run me up. No one had seen Sable. So days passed; then came a rumour that some school children had been frightened nearly out of their little wits by the appearance of an enormous bear, in a wood some miles from our cottage.

My hopes rose; the bear must be Sable. So an expedition was organised to go in search of her. The rank and file of this expedition consisted of schoolboys. I myself was captain, and Theodore Nero, the Newfoundland, was first lieutenant.

We were successful. My heart jumped for joy as I saw the great dog in the distance. But she would not suffer any one to come near her. That was not her form. I must walk on and whistle, and she would follow. I was glad enough to close with the offer, and gladder still when we reached home before she changed her mind and went off again.

Chaining now became imperative until Sable became reconciled to her situation in life, until I had succeeded in taming her by kindness.

This was by no means an easy task. For weeks she never responded to either kind word or caress, but one day Sable walked up to me as I sat writing, and, much to my surprise, offered me her great paw.

“Shake hands,” she seemed to say as she wagged her tail, “Shake hands. You’re not half such a bad fellow as I first took you for.”

My friend, Captain D—, was delighted, and we must needs write at once to Sable’s old master to inform him of the unprecedented event.

Sable became every day more friendly and loving in her own gentle undemonstrative and quiet fashion. But as yet she had never barked.

One day, however, on throwing a stick to Nero, she too ran after it, and on making pretence to throw it again, Sable began to caper. Not gracefully perhaps, but still it was capering, and finally she barked.

When I told friend Frank he was as much overjoyed as I was. I suggested writing at once to Ireland and making the tidings known.

“A letter, Gordon,” said my friend emphatically, “will not meet the requirements of the case. Let us telegraph. Let us wire, thus—‘*Sable has barked*.’”

The good dog’s former master was much pleased at the receipt of the information.

“She will do now,” he wrote; “and I’m quite easy in my mind about her.”

Now all this may appear very trivial to some of my readers, but there really was for a time, a probability that Sable would die of sheer grief, as, poor dog, she eventually succumbed to consumption.

We were, if possible, kinder to Sable, or Aileen Aroon, as she was now called, than ever. She became the constant companion of all our walks and rambles, and developed more and more excellences every week. Without being what might be called brilliant, Aileen was clever and most teachable. She never had been a trained or educated dog. Theodore Nero had, and whether he took pity on his wife’s ignorance or not, I cannot say, but he taught her a very great deal she never knew anything about before.

Here is a proof that Aileen’s reasoning powers were of no mean order. When Master Nero wanted a tit-bit he was in the habit of making a bow for it. The bow consisted in a graceful inclination or lowering of the chest and head between the outstretched fore-paws. Well, Aileen was not long in perceiving that the performing of this little ceremony always procured for her husband a morsel of something nice to eat, that “To boo, and to boo, and to boo,” was the best of policies.

She therefore took to it without any tuition, and to see those “twa dogs,” standing in front of me when a biscuit or two were on the board, and booing, and booing, and booing, was a sight to have made a dray-horse smile.

I am sure that Nero soon grew exceedingly fond of his new companion, and she of him in her quiet way.

I may state here parenthetically, that Master Nero had had a companion before Aileen. His previous experience of the married state, however, had not been a happy one. His wife, “Bessie” to name, had taken to habits of intemperance. She had been used to one glass of beer a day before she came to me, and it was thought it might injure her to stop it. If she had kept to this, it would not have mattered, but she used to run away in the evenings, and go to a public-house, where she would always find people willing to treat her for the mere curiosity of seeing a dog drink. When she came home she was not always so steady as she might be, but foolishly affectionate. She would sit down by me and insist upon shaking hands about fifteen times every minute, or she would annoy Nero by pawing him till he growled at her, and told her, or seemed to tell her, she ought to be ashamed of herself for being in the state she was. She was very fat, and after drinking beer used to take Nero’s bed from him and sleep on her back snoring, much to his disgust. This dog was afterwards sold to Mr Montgomery, of Oxford, who stopped her allowance for some months, after which she would neither look at ale nor gin-and-water, of which latter she used to be passionately fond.

Aileen and Nero used to be coupled together in the street with a short chain attached to their collars. But not always; they used to walk together jowl to jowl, whether they were coupled or not, and these two splendid black dogs were the wonder and admiration of all who beheld them. Whatever one did the other did, they worked in couple. When I gave my stick to Nero to carry, Aileen must have one end of it. When we went shopping they carried the stick thus between them, with a bag or basket slung between, and their steadiness could be depended on.

They used to spring into the river or into the sea from a boat both together, and both together bring out whatever was thrown to them. Their immense heads above the water both in friendly juxta-position, were very pretty to look at.

They were in the habit of hunting rats or rabbits in couples, one going up one side of the hedge, the other along the other side.

I am sorry to say they used at times, for the mere fun of the thing, and out of no real spirit of ill-nature, to hunt horses as well as rabbits, one at one side of the horse the other at the other, and likewise bicyclists; this was great fun for the dogs, but the bicyclists looked at the matter from quite another point of view. But I never managed to break them altogether of these evil habits.

It has often seemed to me surprising how one dog will encourage another in doing mischief. A few dogs together will conceive and execute deeds of daring, that an animal by himself would never even dream of attempting.

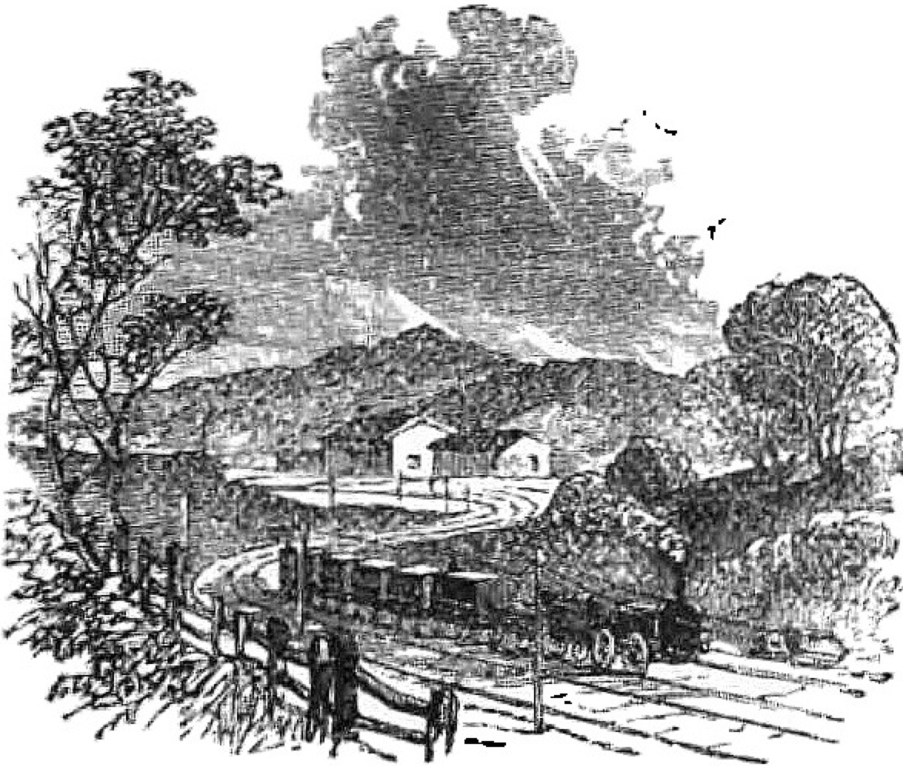
As I travelled a good deal by train at that time, and always took my two dogs with me, it was more convenient to go into the guard's van with my pets, than take a first or second class carriage by storm. I shall never forget being put one day with the two dogs into a large almost empty van. It was almost empty, but not quite. There was a ram tied up at the far end of it.

Now if this ram had chosen to behave himself, as a ram in respectable society ought to, it would have saved me a deal of trouble, and the ram some danger. But no sooner had the train started than the obstreperous brute began to bob his head and stamp his feet at me and my companions in the most ominous way.

Luckily the dogs were coupled; I could thus more easily command them. But no sooner had the ram begun to stamp and bob, than both dogs commenced to growl, and wanted to fly straight at him. "Let us kill that insolent ram," said Nero, "who dares to stamp and nod at us."

"Yes," cried Aileen, "happy thought! let us kill him."

I was ten minutes in that van before the train pulled up, ten minutes during which I had to exercise all the tact of a great general in order to keep the peace. Had the ram, who was just as eager for the fray as the dogs, succeeded in breaking his fastenings, hostilities would have commenced instantly, and I would have been powerless.



By good luck the train stopped in time to prevent a catastrophe, and we got out, but for nearly a week, as a result of my struggle with the dogs, I ached all over and felt as limp as a stranded jelly-fish.

Chapter Three.

Containing the Story of One of Aileen's Friends.

> "The straw-thatched cottage, or the desert air,
> To him's a palace if his master's there."

Just eighteen months after the events mentioned in last chapter, as novelists say, things took a turn for the better, and we retired a little farther into the country into a larger house. A bigger house, though certainly not a mansion; but here are gardens and lawn and paddock, kennels for dogs, home for cats, and aviaries for birds, many a shady nook in which to hang a hammock in the summer months, and a garden wigwam, which makes a cool study even in hot weather, bedraped as it is in evergreens, and looks a cosy wee room in winter, when the fire is lighted and the curtains are drawn. "Ah! Gordon," dear old Frank used to say—and there was probably a grain of truth in the remark—"there is something about the quiet contented life you lead in your cottage, with its pleasant surroundings, that reminds me forcibly of the idyllic existence of your favourite bard, Horace, in his home by the banks of the Anio.

> "'Beatus ille qui procul negotiis,
>   Ut prisca gens mortalium,
> Patenta rure bubus exercet suis
>   Solutus omni fenore,
> Neque excitatur classico miles truci

Neque horret iratum mare.'"

"True, Frank," I replied, "at sea I often thought I would dearly love a country life. My ambition—and I believe I represent quite a large majority of my class—used to be, that one day I might be able to retire on a comfortable allowance—half-pay, for instance—take a house with a morsel of land, and keep a cow and a pony, and go in for rearing poultry, fruit, and all that sort of thing. Such was my dream.

"There were six of us in our mess in the saucy little 'Pen-gun.'

"It was hot out there on the East Coast of Africa, where we were stationed, and we did our best to make it hotter—for the dhows which we captured, at all events, because we burned them. Nearly all day, and every day, we were in chase, mostly of slave dhows, but sometimes of jolly three-masters.

"Away out in the broad channel of the blue Mozambique, with never a cloud in the sky, nor a ripple on the ocean's breast, tearing along at the rate of twelve knots an hour, with the chase two miles ahead, and happy in the thoughts of quite a haul of prize-money, it wasn't half bad fun, I can assure you. Then we could whistle 'A sailor's life is the life for me,' and feel the mariner all over.

"But, when the chase turned out to be no prize, but only a legitimate trader, when the night closed in dark and stormy, with a roaring wind and a chopping sea, then, it must be confessed, things did not look quite so much *couleur de rose*, dot a mariner's life so merry-o!

"On nights like these, when the fiddles were shipped across the table to keep things straight—for a lively lass was the saucy 'Pen-gun,' and thought no more of breaking half-a-dozen wine-glasses, than she did of going stem first in under a wave she was too lazy to mount—when the fiddles were shipped, when we had wedged ourselves into all sorts of corners, so as we shouldn't slip about and fall, when the steward had brought the coffee and the biscuits called ships', then it was our wont to sit and sip and talk and build our castles in the air.

"'It's all very fine,' one of us would say, 'to talk of the pleasures of a sailor's life, it's all very well in songs; but, if I could only get on shore now, on retired pay—'

"'Why, what would you do?'—a chorus.

"'Why, go in for the wine trade like a shot,' from the first speaker. 'That's the way to make money. Derogatory, is it? Well, I don't see it; I'd take to tea—'

"Chorus again: 'Oh! come, I say!'

"Some one, more seriously and thoughtfully: 'No; but wouldn't you like to be a farmer?' The ship kicks, a green sea breaks over her. We are used to it, but don't like it, even although we do take the cigars from our lips, as we complacently view the water pouring down the hatchway and rising around our chairs' legs.

"'A farmer, you know, somewhere in the midland counties; green fields and lowing kine; a nice stream, meandering—no not meandering, but—

> "'Chattering over stony ways,
> In little sharps and trebles,
> Bubbling into eddying bays.
> Babbling o'er the pebbles;
> Winding about, and in and out,
> With here a blossom sailing,
> And here and there a lusty trout,
> And here and there a grayling.'

"'Yes,' from another fellow, 'and of course a comfortable house of solid English masonry, and hounds not very far off, so as one could cut away to a hunt whenever he liked.'

"'And of course balls and parties, and a good dinner *every* day.'

"'And picnics often, and the seaside in season, and shooting all the year round.'

"'And I'd go in for bees.'

"'Oh! yes, I think every fellow would go in for bees.'

"'And have a field of Scottish heather planted on purpose for them: fancy how nice that would look in summer!'

"'And I'd have a rose garden.'

"'Certainly; nothing could be done without a rose garden.'

"'Then one could go in for poultry, and grow one's own eggs.'

"'Hear the fellow!—fancy *growing* eggs!'

"'Well, lay them, then—it's all the same. I'm not so green as to imagine eggs grow on trees.'

"'And think of the fruit one might have.'

"'And the mushroom beds.'

"'And brew one's own beer and cider.'

"'And of course one could go in for dogs.'

"'Oh! la! yes—have them all about the place. Elegant Irish setters, dainty greyhounds, cobby wee fox-terriers, a noble Newfoundland or two, and a princely bloodhound at each side of the hall-door.'

"'That's the style!'

"'Now, give us a song, Pelham!'

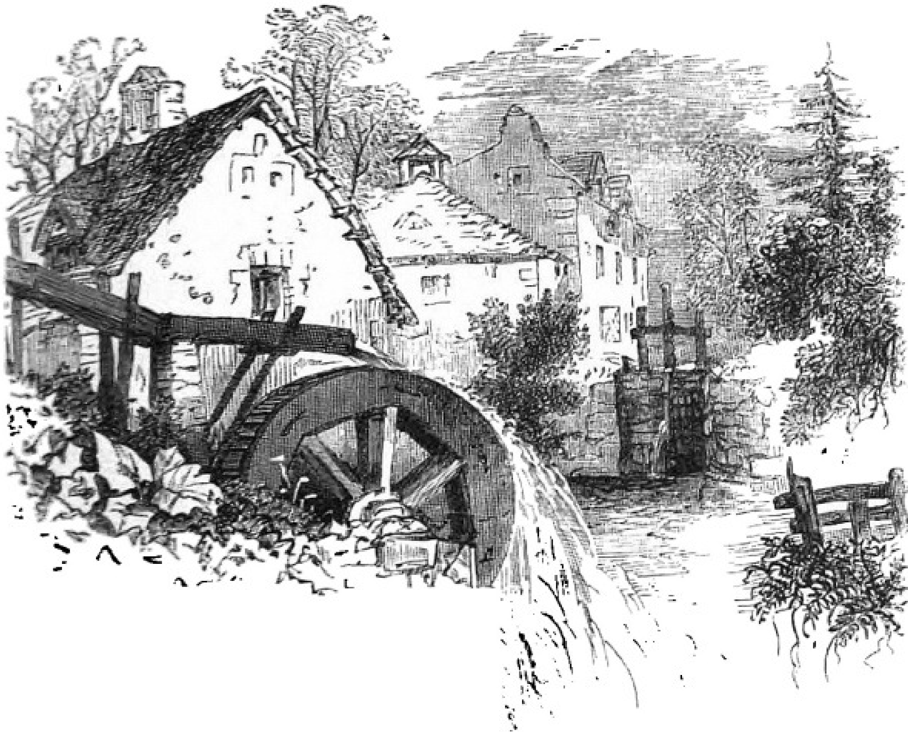
"'What shall it be—Dibdin?'

"'No, Pelham, give us, "Sweet Jessie, the Flower o' Dumblane," or something in that style. Let us fancy we are farmers. Doesn't she pitch and roll, though! Dibdin and Russell are all very well on shore, or sitting under an awning in fine weather when homeward bound. We're not homeward bound—worse luck!—so heave round with the "Flower o' Dumblane."'

"My dream has in some measure been fulfilled, my good friend Frank; I can sit now under my own vine and my own fig-tree, but still look back with a certain degree of pleasure to many a night spent on board that heaving, pitching, saucy, wee ship."

Our new home nestles among trees not far from a very primitive wee town indeed. We have only to descend along the hill-side through the pine-trees, wind some way round the knoll, and there at our feet lies *our* village—Fernydale, to wit. It might just as well be called Sleepy Hollow, such a dreamy little spot it is. Not very far from a great line of rails—just far enough to subdue the roar of the trains, that night and day go whirling past in a drowsy monotone, like the distant sound of falling water. Everything and everybody about our little village looks quiet and drowsy; the little church itself, that nestles among the wealth of foliage, looks the picture of drowsiness, and the very smoke seems as if it preferred lingering in Fernydale to ascending upwards and joining the clouds. We have a mill here—oh! such a drowsy old mill! No one was ever known to be able to pass that mill without nodding. Intoxicated lieges, who have lain down to rest opposite that mill, have been known to sleep the sleep that knows no waking; and if at any time you stop your horse for a moment on the road, while you talk to the miller, the animal soon begins to nod; and he nods, and nods, and nid-nid-nods, and finally goes to sleep entirely, and it takes no end of trouble to start him off again.

Our very birds are drowsy. The larks don't care to sing a bit more than suffices for conjugal felicity, and the starlings are constantly tumbling down our bedroom chimney, and making such a row that we think the burglars have come.



The bees are drowsy; they don't gather honey with any degree of activity; they don't seem to care whether they gather it or not. They are often too lazy to fly back to hive, and don't go home till morning; and if you were to take a walk along our road at early dawn—say 11:45 a.m.—you would often find these bees sitting limp-winged and half asleep on fragrant thistle-tops, and if you poked at them with a stalk of hay, and tried to reason with them, they would just lift one lazy fore-leg and beckon you off, as much as to say, peevishly—

"Oh! what was I born for? *Can't* you leave a poor fellow alone? What do ye come pottering around here at midnight for?"

Such is the hum-drum drowsiness of little Fernydale.

But bonny is our cottage in spring and summer, when the pink-eyed chestnuts are all ablaze at the foot of the lawn, when flowers bloom white on the scented rowans, when the yellow gorse on the knoll beyond glints through the green of the trees, when the merlin sings among the drooping limes, and the croodling pigeons make soft-eyed love on the eaves; and there is beauty about it, too, even in winter, when the world is robed in snow, when the leafless branches point to leaden skies, and the robin, tired of his sweet little song, taps on the panes with his tiny bill, for the crumbs he has never to ask for in vain.

It was one winter's evening in the year eighteen hundred and seventy something, that Frank stood holding our parlour-door in his hand, while he gazed with a pleased smile at the group around the fire. It wasn't a large group. There were Dot and Ida knitting: and my humble self sitting, book in hand and pipe in mouth. Then there were the Newfoundland dogs on the hearth, and pussy singing on the footstool, singing a duet with the kettle on the hob. And I must not forget to mention "Poll," the parrot. Nobody knew how old Polly was, but with her extreme wisdom you couldn't help associating age. She didn't speak much at a time; like many another sage, she went in for being laconic, pithy, and to the point. I think, however, that some day or other Polly will tell us quite a long story, for she often clears her throat and says, "*Now*," in quite an emphatic manner; then she cocks her head, and says "Are you listening?"

"We are all attention, Polly," we reply. So Polly begins again with her decided "*Now*;" but up to this date she has not succeeded in advancing one single sentence farther towards the completion of her story.

Well, upon the winter's evening in question Frank stood there, holding the door and smiling to himself, and any one could see at a glance that Frank was pregnant with an idea.

"I've been thinking," said Frank, "that there is nothing needed to complete the happiness of the delightful evenings we spend here, except a story-teller."

"No one better able than yourself, Frank, to fill the post," I remarked.

"Well, now," said Frank, "for that piece of arrant flattery, I fine you a story."

"Read us that little sketch about 'Dandie,'" my wife said.

"Yes, do," cried Ida, looking up from her work.

If a man is asked to do anything like this he ought to do it heartily.

Dandie, I may premise, is, or rather was, a contemporary of Aileen Aroon.

Our Dandie.

A very long doggie is Dandie, with little short bits of legs, nice close hanging ears, hair as strong and rough as the brush you use for your hair, and a face—well, some say it is ugly; I myself, and all my friends, think it is most engaging. To be sure, it is partially hidden with bonnie soft locks of an ambery or golden hue; but push those locks aside, and you will see nothing in those beautiful dark hazel eyes but love and fun. For Dandie is fall of fun. Oh! doesn't she enjoy a run out with the children! On the road she goes feathering, here, there, and everywhere. Her legs

are hardly straight, you must understand—the legs of very few Dandies are, for they are so accustomed to go down drains, and all sorts of holes, and go scraping here, and scraping there, that their feet and fore-legs turn at last something like a mole's.

Dandie wasn't always the gentle loving creature she is now, and this is the reason I am writing her story. Here, then, is how I came by Dandie.

I was sitting in my study one morning, writing as usual, when a carriage stopped at the door, and presently a friend was announced.

"Why, Dawson, my boy!" I cried, getting up to greet him, "what wind blew you all the way here?"

"Not a good one, by any means," said Dawson; "I came to see you."

"Well, well, sit down, and tell me all about it. I sincerely hope Miss Hall is well."

"Well! yes," he replied abstractedly. "I think I've done all for the best; though that policeman nearly had her. But she left her mark on him. Ha! ha!"

I began to think my friend was going out of his mind.

"Dawson," I said, "what have you done with her?"

"She's outside in the carriage," replied Dawson.

I jumped up to ring the bell, saying, "Why, Dawson, pray have the young lady in. It is cruel to leave her by herself."

Dawson jumped up too, and placing his hand on my arm, prevented me from touching the bell-rope.

"Nay, nay!" he cried, almost wildly, I thought; "pray do not think of it. She would bite you, tear you, rend you. Oh, she is a *vixen*!" This last word he pronounced with great emphasis, and sinking once more into the chair, and gazing abstractedly at the fire, he added, "And still I love her, good little thing!"

I now felt quite sorry for Dawson. A moment ago I merely *thought* he was out of his mind, now I felt perfectly sure of it.

There was a few minutes' silence; and then suddenly my friend rushed to the window, exclaiming—

"There, there! She's at it again! She has got the cabby by the coat-tails, and she'll eat her way through him in five minutes, if I don't go."

And out he ran; and I followed, more mystified than ever; and there in the carriage was no young lady at all, but only the dear little Dandie whose story I am writing. She was most earnestly engaged in tearing the driver's blue coat into the narrowest strips, and growling all the while most vigorously.

She quieted down, however, immediately on perceiving her master, jumped into his arms, and began to lick his face.

So the mystery was cleared up; and half an hour afterwards I was persuaded to become the owner of that savage Dandie, and Dawson had kissed her, and left lighter in heart than when he had come.

I set aside one of the best barrel kennels for her, had a quantity of nice dry straw placed therein, and gave her two dishes, one to be filled daily with pure clean water—without which, remember, no dog can be healthy—and the other to hold her food.

Now, I am not afraid of any dog. I have owned many scores in my time, and by treating them gently and firmly, I always managed to subdue even the most vicious among them, and get them to love me. But I must confess that this Dandie was the most savage animal that I had ever yet met.

When I went to take her dish away next morning, to wash and replenish it, only my own celerity in beating a retreat prevented my legs from being viciously bitten. I then endeavoured to remove the dish with the stable besom. Alas for the besom! Howling and growling with passion, with scintillating eyes and flashing teeth, she tore that broom to atoms, and then attacked the handle. But I succeeded in feeding her, after which she was quieter.

Now, dogs, to keep them in health, need daily exercise, and I determined Dandie should not want that, wild though she seemed to be. There was another scene when I went to unloose her; and I found the only chance of doing so was to treat her as they do wild bulls in some parts of the country. I got a hook and attached it to the end of a pole the same length as the chain. I could then keep her at a safe distance. And thus for a whole week I had to lead her out for exercise. I lost no opportunity of making friends with her, and in about a fortnight's time I could both take her dish away without a broom and lead her out without the pole.

She was still the vixen, however, which her former master had called her. When she was presented with a biscuit, she wouldn't think of eating it, before she had had her own peculiar game with it. She would lay it first against the back of the barrel, and for a time pretend not to see it, then suddenly she would look round, next fly at it, growling and yelping with rage, and shake it as she would a rat. Into such a perfect fury and frenzy did she work herself during her battle with the biscuit, that sometimes on hearing her chain rattle she would turn round and seize and shake it viciously. I have often, too, at these times seen her bite her tail because it dared to wag—bite it till the blood sprang, then with a howl of pain bite and bite it again and again. At last I made up my mind to feed her only on soil food, and that resolution I have since stuck to.

Poor Dandie had now been with us many months, and upon the whole her life, being almost constantly on the chain, was by no means a very happy one. Her hair, too, got matted, and she looked altogether morose and dirty, and it was then that the thought occurred to my wife and me that she would be much better *dead*. I considered the matter in all its bearings for fully half an hour, and it was then I suddenly jumped up from my chair.

“What *are* you going to do?” asked my wife.

“I’m going to wash Dandie; wash her, comb out all her mats, dry her, and brush her, for, do you know, I feel quite guilty in having neglected her.”

My wife, in terror of the consequences of washing so vicious a dog, tried to dissuade me. But my mind was made up, and shortly after so was Dandie’s bed—of clean dry straw in a warm loft above the stable. “Firmly and kindly does it,” I had said to myself, as I seized the vixen by the nape of the neck, and in spite of her efforts to rend any part of my person she could lay hold of, I popped her into the tub.

Vixen, did I say? She was popped into the tub a vixen, sure enough, but I soon found out I had “tamed the shrew,” and after she was rinsed in cold water, well dried, combed, and brushed, the poor little thing jumped on my knee and kissed me. Then I took her for a run—a thing one ought never to neglect after washing a dog. And you wouldn’t have known Dandie now, so beautiful did she look.

Dandie is still alive, and lies at my feet as I write, a living example of the power of kindness. She loves us all, and will let my sister, wife, or little niece do anything with her, but she is still most viciously savage to nearly all strangers. She is the best guard-dog that I ever possessed, and a terror to tramps. She is very wise too, this Dandie of mine, for when out walking with any one of my relations, she is as gentle as a lamb, and will let anybody fondle her. She may thus be taken along with us with impunity when making calls upon friends, but very few indeed of those friends dare go near her when in her own garden or kennel. We have been well rewarded for our kindness to Dandie, for although her usual residence by day is her own barrel, and by night she has a share of the straw with the other dogs, she is often taken into the house, and in spite of our residence being in a somewhat lonely situation, whenever I go from home for the night she becomes a parlour boarder, and I feel quite easy in my mind because *Dandie is in the house*.

“Well,” said Frank, when I had finished, “if that little story proves anything, it proves, I think, that almost any dog can be won by kindness.”

“Or any animal of almost any kind,” I added.

“Ah!” cried Frank, laughing, “but you failed with your hyaena. Didn’t you?”

“Gratitude,” I replied, smiling, “does not occupy a very large corner in a hyaena’s heart, Frank.”

Note. Since writing the above, poor Dandie has gone to her little grave in the orchard.

Chapter Four.

Dedicated to Girls and Boys Only.

“A little maiden, frank and fair,
With rosy lips apart,
And sunbeams glinting in her hair,
And sunshine at her heart.”

In my last chapter I mentioned the name of Ida. Ida Graham was my little niece. Alas! she no longer brightens our home with the sunshine of her smile. Poor child, she was very beautiful. We all thought so, and every one else who saw her. I have but to close my eyes for a moment and I see her again knitting quietly by the fire on a winter’s evening, or reading by the open window in the cool of a summer’s day; or, reticule in hand, tripping across the clovery lea, the two great dogs, Aileen and Nero, bounding in front of her; or blithely singing as she feeds her canaries; or out in the yard beyond, surrounded by hens and cocks, pigeons, ducks, and geese, laughing gaily as she scatters the barley she carries in her little apron.

It was not a bit strange that every creature loved Ida Graham, from the dogs to the bees. We lost her one day, I remember, in summer-time, and found her at last sound asleep by the foot of a tree, with deer browsing quietly near her, a hare washing its face within a yard of her, and wild birds hopping around and on her.

Such was Ida. It is no wonder, then, that we miss the dear child.

Very often I would have Ida all to myself for a whole day, when my wife was in town or visiting, and Frank was gardening or had the gout, for he suffered at times from that aristocratic but tantalising ailment.

On these occasions, when the weather was fine, we always took the dogs and went off to spend an hour or two in the woods. If it rained we stayed indoors, seated by the open window in order to be near the birds. But wet day or fine, Ida generally managed to get a story from me. It was in the wood, and seated beneath the old pine-tree, that I told her the following. I called it—

Puff: The Autobiography of a Persian Pussy.

I am one of seven. Very much to the grief and sorrow of my poor patient mother, all the rest of my little brothers and sisters met with a watery grave. I did not know what mother meant when she told me this, with tears in her eyes. I was too young then, but I think I know now. But I was left to comfort my parent’s heart. This was humane at least in my mistress, because, although it seems the fate of us poor pussies that very many of us come into the world to be speedily drowned, it is cruel, for many reasons, to destroy all a mother’s darlings at once.

WE LOST HER ONE DAY IN SUMMER-TIME.

Well, the very earliest thing that I can remember is being taken up in the arms of a pretty young lady. I was two months old then, and had been playing with a ball of worsted, which I had succeeded in getting entangled among the chair-legs.

“Oh, what a dear, beautiful, wee puss!” said this young miss, holding me round, so that she might look at my face. “And, oh!” she added, “it has such lovely eyes, and such a nice long coat.”

“You may have it, Laura dear,” said my mistress, “if you will be kind to it.”

“Thank you so very much,” said Laura, “and I know I shall be fond of it always.”

And I do not doubt for a moment that Laura meant what she said. Her fault, however, and my misfortune lay, as you shall see, in the fact that she did not know a bit how to treat a pussy in order to make it happy.

Laura liked me, and romped with me morning and night, it is true; but although cats are ever so fond of attention and of romps, they cannot live upon either, and often and often I have gone hungry to my saucer and found it empty, which made me feel very cold and sad and dispirited. Yet, in spite of this, I grew to be very fond indeed of my new mistress, and as I sometimes managed to catch a mouse I was not so very badly off after all.

When I gazed at Miss Laura’s gentle face and her sweet eyes—they were just like my own—I could not help thinking that if she only knew how hungry and cold I often was, she would surely feed me twice a day at least. But my crowning sorrow was to come; and this was nothing less than the loss, I fear entirely, of my mistress’s affection.

My grief was all the more bitter in that I was in some measure to blame for it myself. You see, I was a growing cat, and every day the pangs of hunger seemed more difficult to bear; so one day, when left by myself in the kitchen, I found out a way to open the cupboard, and—pray do not blame me; I do think if you had seen all the nice things therein, and felt as hungry as I felt, you would have tasted them too.

One little sin begets another, and before two months were over I was known in the kitchen as “that thief of a cat.” I do not think Miss Laura knew of my depredations downstairs, for I was always honest in the parlour, and she would, I feel certain, have forgiven me even if she had known. As I could not be trusted in the kitchen, I was nearly always tamed out-of-doors of a night. This was exceedingly unkind, for it was often dark and rainy and cold, and I could find but little shelter. On dry moonlight nights I did not mind being out, for there was fun to be got—fun and field-mice. Alas! I wish now I had kept to fun and field-mice; but I met with evil company, vagrant outdoor cats, who took a delight in mewing beneath the windows of nervous invalids; who despised indoor life, looked upon theft as a fine art, and robbed pigeon-lofts right and left.

Is it any wonder, then, that I soon turned as reckless as any of them? I always came home at the time the milk arrived in the morning, however; and even now, had my young mistress only fed me, I would have changed my evil courses at once. But she did not.

Now this constant stopping out in all weathers began to tell on my beautiful coat; it was no longer silky and beautiful. It became matted and harsh, and did show the dirt, so much so that I was quite ashamed to look in the glass. And always, too, I was so tired, all through my wanderings, when I returned of a morning, that I did nothing all day but nod drowsily over the fire. No wonder Miss Laura said one day—

“Oh, pussy, pussy! you do look dirty and disreputable. You are no longer the lovely creature you once were; I cannot care for such a cat as you have grown.”

But I still loved her, and a kind word from her lips, or a casual caress was sure to make me happy, even in my dullest of moods.

The end came sooner than I expected, for one day Miss Laura went from home very early in the morning. As soon as she was gone, Mary Jane, the servant, seized me rudely by the neck. I thought she was going to kill me outright.

“I’ll take good care, my lady,” she said, “that you don’t steal anything, at any rate for four-and-twenty hours to come.”

Then she marched upstairs with me, popped me into my mistress’s bedroom, locked the door, and went away chuckling. There was no one else in the room, only just myself and the canary. And all that long day no one ever came near me with so much as a drop of milk. When night came I tried to sleep on Miss Laura’s bed, but the pangs of hunger effectually banished slumber. When day broke I felt certain somebody would come to the door. But no. I thought this was so cruel of Mary Jane, especially as I had no language in which to tell my mistress, on her return, of my sufferings. Towards the afternoon I felt famishing, and then my eyes fell upon the canary.

“Poor little thing!” said I; “you, too, are neglected and starving.”

“Tweet, tweet!” said the bird, looking down at me with one eye.

“Now, dicky,” I continued, “I’m going to do you a great kindness. If you were a very, very large bird, I should ask you to eat me and put me out of all this misery.”

“Tweet, tweet!” said the bird very knowingly, as much as to say, “I would do it without the slightest hesitation.”

“Well,” said I, “I mean to perform the same good office for you. I cannot see you starving there without trying to ease your sufferings, and so—”

Here I sprang at the cage. I draw a veil over what followed.

And now my appetite was appeased, but my conscience was awakened. How ever should I be able to face my mistress again? Hark! what is that? It is Miss Laura’s footstep on the stair. She is singing as sweetly as only Laura can. She approaches the door; her hand is on the latch. I can stand it no longer. With one bound, with one wild cry, I dash through a pane of glass, and drop almost senseless on to the lawn beneath the window.

It was sad enough to have to leave my dear mistress and my dear old home, which, despite all I had endured, I had learned to love, as only we poor pussies can love our homes. But my mind was made up. I had eaten Miss Laura’s pet canary, and I dare never, never look her in the face again.

Till this time I had lived in the sweet green country, but I now wandered on and on, caring little where I went or what became of me. By day I hid myself in burrows and rat-haunted drains, and at night came forth to seek for food and continue my wanderings. So long as the grass and trees were all around me, I was never in want of anything to eat; but in time all this changed, and gradually I found myself caning nearer and nearer to some great city or town. First, rows upon rows of neatly-built villas and cottages came into view, and by-and-by these gave place to long streets where never a green thing grew, and I passed lofty, many-windowed workshops, from which issued smoke and steam, and much noise and confusion. I met with many cats in this city, who, like myself, seemed to be outcasts, and had never known the pleasures of home and love. They told me they lived entirely by stealing, at which they were great adepts, and on such food as they picked out of the gutter. They listened attentively to my tales of the far-off country, where many a rippling stream meandered through meadows green, in which the daisies and the yellow cowslips grew; of beautiful flowers, and of birds in every bush. Very much of what I told them was so very new to them that they could not understand it; but they listened attentively, nevertheless, and many a night kept me talking to them until I was so tired I felt ready to drop. In return for my stories they taught me—or rather, tried to teach me—to steal cleverly, not clumsily, as country cats do. But, alas! I could not learn, and do as I would I barely picked up a living; then my sufferings were increased by the cruelty of boys, who often pelted me with stones and set wild wicked dogs to chase me. I got so thin at last that I could barely totter along.

One evening a large black tom-cat who was a great favourite of mine, and often brought me tit-bits, said to me, “There’s a few of us going out shopping to-night; will you come?”

“I’ll try,” I answered feebly, “for I do feel faint and sick and hungry.”

We tried some fishmongers’ shops first, and were very successful; then we went to another shop. Ill as I was, I could not help admiring the nimble way my Tom, as I called him, sprang on to a counter and helped himself to a whole string of delicious sausages. I tried to emulate Tom’s agility, but oh, dear! I missed my footing and fell down into the very jaws of a terrible dog.

How I got away I never could tell, but I did; and wounded and bleeding sorely, I managed to drag myself down a quiet street and into a garden, and there, under a bush, I lay down to die. It was pitilessly cold, and the rain beat heavily down, and the great drops fell through the bush and drenched me to the skin. Then the cold and pain seemed all at once to leave me. I had fallen into an uneasy doze, and I was being chased once more by dogs with large eyes and faces, up and down in long wet streets where the gas flickered, through many a muddy pool. Then I thought I found myself once again in the fields near my own home, with the sun brightly shining and the birds making the air ring with their music. Then I heard a gentle voice saying—

“Now, Mary, I think that will do. The cheese-box and cushion make such a fine bed for her; and when she awakes give the poor thing that drop of warm milk and sugar.”

I did awake, and was as much surprised as pleased to find myself in a nice snug room, and lying not far from the fire. A neatly-dressed servant-girl was kneeling near me, and not far off a lady dressed in black sat sewing.

This, then, was my new mistress, and—*I was saved*. How different she was from poor Miss Laura, who, you know, did not *mean* to be cruel to me. This lady was very, very kind to me, though she made but little fuss about it. Her thoughtfulness for all my comforts and her quiet caresses soon wooed me back again to life, and now I feel sure I am one of the happiest cats alive. I am not dirty and disreputable now, nor is my fur matted. I am no longer a thief, for I do not need to steal. My mistress has a canary, but I would not touch it for worlds—indeed, I love to hear it sing, although its music is not half so sweet to me as that of the teakettle. Of an evening when the gas is lighted, and a bright fire burning in the grate, we all sing together—that is, the kettle, canary, and myself. They say I am very beautiful, and I believe they are right, for I have twice taken a prize at a cat show, and hope to win another. And if you go to the next great exhibition of cats, be sure to look for me. I am gentle in face and short in ears, my fur is long, and soft, and silky, and my eyes are as blue as the sea in summer. So you are sure to know me.

Ida sat silent, but evidently thinking, for some time after I had finished.

“That is quite a child’s story, isn’t it?” she said at last.

“Yes,” I replied; “but don’t you like it?”

“Oh yes, I do,” she said—“I like all your stories; so now just tell me one more.”

“No, no,” I cried, “it is quite time we returned; your auntie will be back, and dinner waiting; besides, we have about three miles to walk.”

“Just one little, little tale,” she pleaded.

“Well,” I replied, “it must be a very little, little one, and then we’ll have to run. I shall call the story—”

Lost; or, Little Nellie’s Favourite.

“It was a bitterly cold morning in the month of February, several years ago. How the time does fly, to be sure! Snow had been lying on the ground for weeks, and more had fallen during the night; the wind, too, blew high from the east, and the few passengers who were abroad made the best of their way along the street, I can assure you, and looked as though they would rather be at home and at the fireside. I myself was out in the cold from force of habit. It had long been my custom to take a short walk before breakfast, and as the post-office of our village was only half a mile from my residence, going down for the letters that arrived by the first mail afforded me just sufficient excuse for my early ramble. But on this particular morning, as I was returning homewards, I was very much surprised to find my little friend Nellie May standing at her gate bare-headed, and with her pretty auburn hair blowing hither and thither in the wind.

“‘Why, Nellie, dear!’ I exclaimed, ‘what can have sent you out of the house so early? It is hardly eight o’clock, and the cold will kill you, child.’

“‘I was watching for you, sir,’ said Nellie, looking as serious as a little judge. ‘Do come and tell me what I shall do with this poor dog. He was out in the snow, looking so unhappy, and has now taken up his abode in the shed, and neither Miss Smith nor I can entice him out, or get him to go away. And we are afraid to go near him.’

“I followed Nellie readily enough, and there, lying on a sack, which he had taken possession of, was the dog in question. To all intents and purposes he was of a very common kind. Nobody in his senses would have given sixpence for him, except perhaps his owner, and who that might be was at present a mystery.

“‘Will you turn him out and send him away?’ asked Nellie.

“The dog looked in my face, oh, so pleadingly!

“‘Kind sir,’ he seemed to say, ‘do speak a word for me; I’m so tired, my feet are sore, I’ve wandered far from home, and I am full of grief.’

“‘Send him away?’ I replied to Nellie. ‘No, dear; you wouldn’t, would you, if you thought he was weary, hungry, and in sorrow for his lost mistress? Look how thin he is.’

“‘Oh!’ cried Nellie, her eyes filling with tears, ‘I’ll run and bring him part of my own breakfast.’

“‘Nellie,’ I said, as we parted, ‘be kind to that poor dog; he may bring you good fortune.’

“I do not know even now why I should have made that remark, but events proved that my words were almost prophetic. It was evident that the dog had travelled a very long way; but under Nellie’s tender care he soon recovered health and strength and spirits as well, and from that day for three long years you never would have met the girl unaccompanied by ‘Tray,’ as we called him.

“Now it came to pass that a certain young nobleman came of age, and a great fête was given to his tenantry at P— Park, and people came from quite a long distance to join in it. I saw Nellie the same evening. It had been a day of sorrow for her. Tray had found his long lost mistress.

“‘And, oh, such an ugly little old woman!’ said Nellie almost spitefully, through her tears. ‘Oh, my poor Tray, I’ll never, never see him more!’

“Facts are stranger than fiction, however, and the little old lady whom Nellie thought so ugly adopted her (for she was an orphan), and Nellie became in time very fond of her. The dog Tray, whose real name by the way was Jumbo, had something to do with this fondness, no doubt.

“The old lady is not alive now; but Nellie has been left all she possessed, Jumbo included. He is by this time very, very old; his lips are white with age, he is stiff too, and his back seems all one bone. As to his temper—well, the less I say about that the better, but he is always cross with everybody—except Nellie.”

Chapter Five.

Embodying a Little Tale and a Little Adventure.

> “Reason raise o’er instinct as you can—
> In this ’tis Heaven directs, in that ’tis man.”

If ever two days passed by without my seeing the portly form of my friend Captain D—, that is Frank, heaving in sight about twelve o’clock noon, round the corner of the road that led towards our cottage, then I at once concluded that Frank either had the gout or was gardening, and whether it were the fit of the gout or merely a fit of gardening, I felt it incumbent upon me to walk over to his house, a distance of little more than two miles, and see him.

Welcome? Yes; I never saw the man yet who could give one a heartier welcome than poor Frank did. He was passionately fond of my two dogs, Nero and Aileen Aroon, and the love was mutual.

But Frank had a dog of his own, “Meg Merrilees” to name, a beautiful and kind-hearted Scotch collie. Most jealous though she was of her master’s affections, she never begrudged the pat and the caress Nero and Aileen had, and, indeed, she used to bound across the lawn to meet and be the first to welcome the three of us.

On the occasion of my visits to Frank, I always stopped and dined with him, spending the evening in merry chatter, and tales of “auld lang syne,” until it was time for me to start off on the return journey.

When I had written anything for the magazines during the day, I made a practice of taking it with me, and reading over the manuscript to my friend, and a most attentive and amused listener he used to be. The following is a little *jeu d'esprit* which I insert here, for no other reason in the world than that Frank liked it, so I think there *must* be a little, *little* bit of humour in it. It is, as will be readily seen, a kind of burlesque upon the show-points and properties of the Skye-terrier. I called the sketch—

"That Skye-Terrier."—A Burlesque.

"He's a good bred 'un, sir." This is the somewhat unclassical English with which "Wasp's" Yorkshire master introduced the puppy to me as he consigned it to my care, in return for which I crossed his hand five times with yellow gold. "And," he added, "he's a game 'un besides."

I knew the former of these statements was quite correct from young Wasp's pedigree, and of the latter I was so convinced, before a week was over, that I consented to sell him to a parson for the same money I gave for him—and glad enough to get rid of him even then. At this time the youthful Wasp was a mere bundle of black fluff, with wicked blue eyes, and flashing teeth of unusually piercing properties. He dwelt in a distant corner of the parson's kitchen, in a little square basket or creel, and a servant was told off to attend upon him; and, indeed, that servant had about enough to do. Wasp seemed to know that Annie was his own particular "slavey," and insisted on her being constantly within hail of him. If she dared to go upstairs, or even to attend the door-bell, Wasp let all the house hear of it, and the poor good-natured girl was glad to run back for peace' sake. Another thing he insisted on was being conveyed, basket and all, to Annie's bedroom when she retired for the night. He also intimated to her that he preferred eating the first of his breakfasts at three o'clock every morning sharp, upon pain of waking the parson; his second at four; third at five, and so on until further notice.

I was sorry for Annie.

From the back of his little basket, where he had formed a fortress, garrisoned by Wasp himself, and provisioned with bones, boots, and slippers enough to stand a siege of any length of time, he used to be always making raids and forays on something. Even at this early age the whole aim of his existence seemed to be doing mischief. If he wasn't tearing Annie's Sunday boots, it was because he was dissecting the footstool; footstool failing, it was the cat. The poor cat hadn't a dog's life with him. He didn't mind pussy's claws a bit; he had a way of his own of backing stern on to her which defied her and saved his eyes. When close up he would seize her by the paw, and shake it till she screamed with pain.

I was sorry for the cat.

If you lifted Wasp up in your arms to have a look at him, he flashed his alabaster teeth in your face one moment, and fleshed them in your nose the next. He never looked you straight in the face, but aslant, from the corners of his wicked wee eyes.

In course of time—not Pollok's—Wasp's black puppy-hair fell off, and discovered underneath the most beautiful silvery-blue coat ever you saw in your life; but his puppy-manners did not mend in the least. In his case the puppy was the father of the dog, and if anything the son was worse than the father.

Talk of growing, oh! he did grow: not to the height—don’t make any mistake, please; Wasp calculated he was plenty high enough already—but to the length, if you like. And every day when I went down to see him Annie would innocently ask me—

“See any odds on him this morning, doctor?”

“Well, Annie,” I would say, “he really does seem to get a little longer about every second day.”

“La! yes, sir, he do grow,” Annie would reply—“’specially when I puts him before the fire awhile.”

Indeed, Annie assured me she could see him grow, and that the little blanket with which she covered him of a night would never fit in the morning, so that she had to keep putting pieces to it.

As he got older, Wasp used to make a flying visit upstairs to see the parson, but generally came flying down again; for the parson isn’t blessed with the best of tempers, anyhow. Quickly as he returned, Wasp was never down in time to avoid a kick from the clergyman’s boot, for the simple reason that when Wasp’s fore-feet were at the kitchen-door his hindquarters were never much more than half-way down the stairs.

N.B.—I forgot to say that this story may be taken with a grain of salt, if not found spicy enough to the taste.

There was a stove-pipe that lay in a back room; the pipe was about two yards long, more or less. Wasp used to amuse himself by running in at one end of it and out at the other. Well, one day he was amusing himself in this sort of way, when just as he entered one end for the second time, what should he perceive but the hindquarters of a pure-bred Skye just disappearing at the other. (You will please to remember that the stove-pipe was two yards long, more or less.) Day after day Wasp set himself to pursue this phantom Skye, through the pipe and through the pipe, for Wasp couldn’t for the life of him make out why the animal always managed to keep just a *little* way ahead of him. Still he was happy to think that day after day he was gaining on his foe, so he kept the pot a-boiling. And one day, to his intense joy, he actually caught the phantom by the tail, in the pipe. Joy, did I say? I ought to have said sorrow, for the tail was his own; but, being a game ’un, he wouldn’t give in, but hung on like grim death until the plumber came and split the pipe and relieved him. (Don’t forget the length of the pipe, please.) Even after he *was* clear he spun round and round like a Saint Catherine’s wheel, until he had to give in from sheer exhaustion. Yes, he was a long dog.

And it came to pass, or was always coming to pass, that he grew, and he grew, and he grew, and the more he grew, the longer and thicker his hair grew, till, when he had grown his full length—and I shouldn’t like to say how long that was—you couldn’t have told which was his head and which was his tail till he barked; and even Annie confessed that she frequently placed his dish down at the wrong end of him. It was funny. If you take half a dozen goat-skins and roll them separately, in cylinders, with the hairy side out, and place them end to end on the floor, you will have about as good an idea of Wasp’s shape and appearance as any I can think about. You know those circular sweeping-machines with which they clean the mud off the country roads? Well, Wasp would have done excellently well as the roller of one of those; and indeed, he just looked like one of them—especially when he was returning from a walk on a muddy morning. It was funny, too, that any time he was particularly wet and dirty, he always came to the front door, and made it a point of duty always to visit the drawing-room to have a roll on the carpet previously to being kicked downstairs.

Getting kicked downstairs was Wasp’s usual method of going below. I believe he came at last to prefer it—it saved time.

Wasp’s virtues as a house-dog were of a very high order: he always barked at the postman, to begin with; he robbed the milkman and the butcher, and bit a half-pound piece out of the baker’s leg. No policeman was safe who dared to live within a hundred yards of him. One day he caught one of the servants of the gas company stooping down taking the state of the metre. This man departed in a very great hurry to buy sticking-plaster and visit his tailor.

I lost sight of Wasp for about six months. At the end of that time I paid the parson a visit. When I inquired after my longitudinal friend, that clergyman looked very grave indeed. He did not answer me immediately, but took two or three vigorous draws at his meerschaum, allowing the smoke to curl upwards towards the roof of his study, and following it thoughtfully with his eyes; then he slowly rose and extracted a long sheet of blue foolscap from his desk, and I imagined he was going to read me a sermon or something.

“Ahem!” said the parson. “I’ll read you one or two casual items of Wasp’s bill, and then you can judge for yourself how he is getting on.”

Wasp's Little Bill.

		£	s.	d.
To three pairs of slippers, at 10/-	.. ..	£1	10	
Tearing surplice and gown	.. .. ..	0	15	0
Demolishing a flowerpot-stand	.. ..	1	5	0
Ditto hardware	.. ..	0	10	6
Killing fowls (minus salvage)	.. ..	0	10	0
Killing a neighbour's cat	.. .. ..	1	1	0
New Sunday's bonnet for Annie	.. ..	0	15	0
Pair of Sunday's boots for Annie	.. ..	0	12	0
New muff for Annie	.. ..	0	7	6
Sundries for Annie	.. ..	0	5	6
Solatium to a father for his bitten brat	..	2	2	0
License for Wasp	.. ..	0	5	0
Total	.. ..	£9	18	6

There is no mistake about it—

Wasp was a "well bred 'un and a game 'un." At the same time, I was sorry for the parson.

"I am really vexed that it is so dark and wet," said Frank that night, as he came to the lawn-gate to say good-bye. "I wish I could walk in with you, but my naughty toe forbids; or, I wish I could ask you to stay, but I know your wife and Ida would feel anxious."

"Indeed they would," I replied; "they would both be out here in the pony and trap. Good-night; I'll find my way, and I've been wet before to-night."

"Good-night; God bless you," from Frank.

Now the lanes of Berkshire are most confusing even by daylight, and cabmen who have known them for years often go astray after dark, and experience considerable difficulty in finding their way to their destination. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that I, almost a stranger to them, should have lost myself on so dark a night.

Aileen Aroon and Nero were coupled together, and from the centre of the short chain depended a small bicycle lamp, which rendered the darkness visible if it did nothing else.

I led the dogs with a leathern strap.

"It is the fourth turning to the right, then the second to the left, and second to the right again; so you are not going that way."

I made this remark to the dogs, who had stopped at a turning, and wanted to drag me in what I considered the wrong direction.

"The fourth turning, Aileen," I repeated, forcing them to come with me.

The night seemed to get darker, and the rain heavier every moment, and that fourth turning seemed to have been spirited away. I found it at last, or thought I had done so, then the second to the left, and finally the second to the right.

By this time the lights of the station should have appeared.

They did not. We were lost, and evidently long miles from home. Lost, and it was near midnight. We were cold and wet and weary; at least I was, and I naturally concluded the poor dogs were so likewise.

We tried back, but I very wisely left it to the two Newfoundlands now to find the way if they could.

"Go home," I cried, getting behind them; and off they went willingly, and at a very rapid pace too.

Over and over again, I felt sure that the poor animals were bewildered, and were going farther and farther astray.

Well, at all events, I was bewildered, and felt still more so when I found myself on the brow of a hill, looking down towards station lights on the right instead of on the left, they ought to have been. They were our station lights, nevertheless, and a quarter of an hour afterwards we were all having supper together, the Newfoundlands having been previously carefully dried with towels. Did ever dogs deserve supper more? I hardly think so.

Chapter Six.

Aileen and Nero—A Dog’s Receipt for Keeping Well—Dog’s in the Snow in Greenland—The Life-Story of Aileen’s Pet, “Fairy Mary.”

> “Give me a look, give me a face,
> That makes simplicity a grace.”

Simplicity was one of the most prominent traits of Aileen’s character. In some matters she really was so simple and innocent, that she could hardly take her own part. Indeed, in the matter of food, her own part was often taken from her, for any of the cats, or the smaller dogs, thought nothing of helping the noble creature to drink her drop of milk of a morning.

Aileen, when they came to her assistance in this way, would raise her own head from the dish, and look down at them for a time in her kindly way.

“You appear to be very hungry,” she would seem to say, “perhaps more so than I am, and so I’ll leave you to drink it all.”

Then Aileen would walk gently away, and throw herself down beneath the table with a sigh.

There was a time when illness prevented me from leaving my room for many days, but as I had some serials going on in magazines, I could not afford to leave off working; I used, therefore, to write in my bedroom. As soon as she got up of a morning, often and often before she had her breakfast, Aileen would come slowly upstairs. I knew her quiet but heavy footsteps. Presently she would open the door about half-way, and look in. If I said nothing she would make a low and apologetic bow, and when I smiled she advanced.

“I’m not sure if my feet be over clean,” she would seem to say as she put her head on my lap with the usual deep-drawn sigh, “but I really could not help coming upstairs to see how you were this morning.”

Presently I would hear more padded footsteps on the stairs. This was the saucy champion Theodore Nero himself, there could be no mistake about that. He came upstairs two or three steps at a time, and flung the half-open door wide against the wall, then bounded into the room like a June thunderstorm. He would give one quick glance at Aileen.

“Hallo!” he would say, talking with eyes and tail, “you’re here, are you, old girl? Keeping the master company, eh? Well, I’m not very jealous. How goes it this morning, master?”

Nero always brought into the sick-room about a hundredweight at least of jollity, sprightliness, life, and love. It used to make me better to see him, and make me long to be up and about, and out in the dear old pine woods again.

“You always seem to be well and happy, Nero,” I said to him one day; “how do you manage it?”

“Wait,” said Nero, “till I’ve finished this chop bone, and I’ll tell you what you should do in order to be always the same

as I am now."

As there is some good in master Nero's receipt, I give it here in fall.

A Dog's Receipt for Keeping Well.

"Get up in the morning as soon as the birds begin to sing, and if you're not on chain, take a good run round the garden. Always sleep in the open air. Don't eat more breakfast than is good for you, and take the same amount of dinner. Don't eat at all if you're not hungry. Eat plenty of grass, or green vegetables, if you like that better. Take plenty of exercise. Running is best; but if you don't run, walk, and walk, and walk till you're tired; you will sleep all the better for it. One hour's sleep after exercise is deeper, and sweeter, and sounder, and more refreshing than five hours induced by port-wine negus. Don't neglect the bath; I never do. Whenever I see a hole with water in it, I just jump in and swim around, then come out and dance myself dry. Do good whenever you can; I always do. Be brave, yet peaceful. Be generous, charitable, and honest. Never refuse a bit to a beggar, and never steal a bone from a butcher; so shall you live healthfully and happy, and die of the only disease anybody has any right to die of—sheer old age."

I never saw a dog appreciate a joke better than did poor Nero. He had that habit of showing his teeth in a broad smile, which is common to the Newfoundland and collie.

Here is a little joke that Nero once unintentionally perpetrated. He had a habit of throwing up the gravel with his two immense hinder paws, quite regardless of consequences. A poor little innocent mite of a terrier happened one day to be behind master Nero, when he commenced to scrape. The shower of stones and gravel came like the discharge from a *mitrailleuse* on the little dog, and fairly threw him on his back. Nero happened to look about at the same time, and noticed what he had done.

"Oh!" he seemed to say as he broke into a broad grin, "this is really too ridiculous, too utterly absurd."

Then bounding across a ditch and through a hedge, he got into a green field, where he at once commenced his usual plan of working off steam, when anything extra-amusing tickled him, namely, that of running round and round and round in a wide circle. Many dogs race like this, no doubt for this reason: they can by so doing enjoy all the advantages of a good ran, without going any appreciable distance away from where master is. *Apropos* of dogs gambolling and racing for the evident purpose of getting rid of an extra amount of animal electricity, I give an extract here from a recent book of mine (Note 1). The sketch is painted from real life.

Dogs in the Snow in Greenland.

"The exuberance of great 'Oscar's' joy when out with his master for a walk was very comical to witness. Out for a *walk* did I say? Nay, that word but poorly expresses the nature of Oscar's pedal progression. It was not a walk, but a glorious compound of dance, scamper, race, gallop, and gambol. Had you been ever so old it would have made you feel young again to behold him. He knew while Allan was dressing that he meant to go out, and began at once to exhibit signs of impatience. He would yawn and stretch himself, and wriggle and shake; then he would open his mouth, and try to round a sentence in real verbal English, and tailing in this, fall back upon dog language, pure and simple, or he would stand looking at Allan with his beautiful head turned on one side, and his mouth a little open, just sufficiently so to show the tip of his bright pink tongue, and his brown eyes would speak to his master. 'Couldn't you,' the dog would seem to ask—'couldn't you get on your coat a little—oh, *ever* so little—faster? What can you want with a muffler? *I* don't wear a muffler. And now you are looking for your fur cap, and there it is right before your very eyes!'

"'And,' the dog would add, 'I daresay we are off at last,' and he would hardly give his master time to open the companion door for him.

"But once over the side, 'Hurrah!' he would seem to say, then away he would bound, and away, and away, and away, straight ahead as crow could fly, through the snow and through the snow, which rose around him in feathery clouds, till he appeared but a little dark speck in the distance. This race straight ahead was meant to get rid of his super-extra steam. Having expended this, back he would come with a rush, and a run, make pretence to jump his master down, but dive past him at the last moment. Then he would gambol in front of his master in such a daft and comical fashion that made Allan laugh aloud; and, seeing his master laughing, Oscar would laugh too, showing such a double regiment of white, flashing, pearly teeth, that, with the quickness of the dog's motions, they seemed to begin at his lips and go right away down both sides of him as far as the tail.

"Hurroosh! hurroosh! Each exclamation, reader, is meant to represent a kind of a double-somersault, which I verily believe Oscar invented himself. He performed it by leaping off the ground, bending sideways, and going right round like a top, without touching the snow, with a spring like that of a five-year-old salmon getting over a weir.

"Hurroosh! hurroosh!

"Then Allan would make a grab at his tail.

"'Oh, that's your game!' Oscar would say; 'then down *you* go!'

"And down Allan would roll, half buried in the powdery snow, and not be able to get up again for laughing; then away Oscar would rush wildly round and round in a complete circle, having a radius of some fifty yards, with Allan

McGregor on his broad back for a centre.”

Theodore Nero was as full of sauciness and *chique* as ever was an Eton boy home for the holidays, or a midshipman on shore for a cruise. The following anecdote will illustrate his merry sauciness and Aileen’s good-natured simplicity at the same time.

Nero was much quicker in all his motions than Aileen, so that although she never failed to run after my walking-stick, she was never quick enough to find first. Now one day in throwing my stick it fell among a bed of nettles. Nero sprang after it as light as a cork, and brought it out; but having done so, he was fain to put it down on the road till he should rub his nose and sneeze, for the nettles had stung him in a tender part. To see what he would do, I threw the stick again among the nettles. But mark the slyness of the dog: he pretended not to see where it had fallen, and to look for it in quite another place, until poor simple Aileen had found it and fetched it. As soon as she got on to the road she must needs put down the stick to rub her nose, when, laughing all over, he bounded on it and brought it back to me. I repeated the experiment several times, with precisely the same result. Aileen was too simple and too good-natured to refuse to fetch the stick from the nettle-bed.

About five minutes afterwards the fun was over. Nero happened to look at Aileen, who had stopped once more to rub her still stinging nose. Then the whole humour of the joke seemed to burst upon his imagination. Simply to smile was not enough; he must needs burst through a hedge, and get into a field, and it took ten minutes good racing round and round, as hard as his four legs could carry him, to restore this saucy rascal’s mental equilibrium.

Aileen Aroon was as fond of the lower animals, pet mice, cats, and rats, as any dog could be. Our pet rats used to eat out of her dish, run all over her, sit on her head while washing their faces, and go asleep under her chin.

I saw her one day looking quite unhappy. She wanted to get up from the place where she was lying, but two piebald rats had gone to sleep in the bend of her forearm, and she was afraid to move, either for fear of hurting the little pets or of offending me.

Seeing the situation, I at once took the rats away and put them in the cage; then Aileen got up, made a low and grateful bow, and walked out.

The following is the life-story of one of Aileen’s especial favourites:—

“Fairy Mary.”

My Mary is a rat. It is just as well to state this much at the outset. Candour, indeed, necessitates my doing so, because I know the very name of “rat” carries with it feelings which are far from pleasing to many. And now, having broken the ice, I may tell you that Mary is not an ordinary black or brown rat, but a rat of high, high caste indeed, having come from a far-away Oriental clime—Java, to wit. If you had never seen one of the same breed before, you would hardly take Mary to be a rat at all. Children are exceedingly fond of her; gentlemen admire her; old ladies dote on her, and young ones love her. I think even my black tom-cat is especially fond of her, judging from the notice he takes of her; he will sit for hours, and hardly ever take his green eyes off her cage.

Black Tom once paid Mary a domiciliary visit, by way of appearing neighbourly. It was a grand spring, but missed by an inch, so Tom returned, looking inglorious.

Having so far introduced my Mary, and confident you will like her better as you read on, let me try to describe the winsome wee thing. Mary—my rodent, let me call her—is smaller than a rat, and not quite the same in shape, for Mary’s symmetry is elegance itself. Her eyes round, protrusive, but loving withal, are living burning garnets—garnets that speak. Her whole body is covered with long snowy fur, far richer than the finest ermine, and with an almost imperceptible golden tint at the tips, this tint being only seen in certain lights. Her tail is perhaps one of her principal points of beauty—long, sweeping, and graceful; she positively seems to talk with it. The forearms are very short and delicate, the hind-legs strong and muscular. Sitting on one end is Mary’s almost constant position—kangaroo-like; then she holds up her little hands beseechingly before her. These latter are almost human in shape, and when she gives you her delicate, cold, transparent paw, you might easily fancy you were shaking hands with a fairy; and thus she is often called “Fairy Mary.” Mary’s hands are bare and pink, and the wrists are covered with very short downy fur, after which the coat suddenly elongates, so much so, that when she stands on end to watch a fly on the ceiling, you would imagine she wore a gown tight at the wrist, and with drooping sleeves.

Now Mary is not only beautiful, but she is winning and graceful as well, for every one says so who sees her. And in under her soft fur Mary’s skin is as clean and white and pure as mother-of-pearl. It only remains to say of this little pet, that in all her ways and manners she is as cleanly as the best-bred Persian cat, and her fur has not the faintest odour, musky or otherwise.

Fairy Mary was originally one of three which came to me as a present. Alas for the fate of Mary’s twin sister and only brother! A vagrant cat one evening in summer, while I was absent, entered by the open window, broke into the cage, and Mary alone was left alive. For a long time after this Mary was missing. She was seen at times, of an evening, flitting ghost-like across the kitchen floor, but she persistently refused to return to her desolated cage-home. She much preferred leading a free and easy vagrant kind of life between the cellar, the pantry, and the kitchen. She came out at times, however, and took her food when she thought nobody was looking, and she was known to have taken up her abode in one corner of the pantry, where once a mouse had lived. When she took this new house, I suppose she found it hardly large enough for her needs, because she speedily took to cleaning it out, and judging from the shovelfuls of rags, paper, shavings, and litter of all sorts, very industrious indeed must have been the lives of the “wee, tim’rous, cowerin’ beasties” who formerly lived there. Then Mary built unto herself a new home in that sweet

retirement, and very happy she seemed to be.

Not happening to possess a cat just then, the mice had it all their own way; they increased and multiplied, if they didn't replenish the kitchen, and Mary reigned among them—a Bohemian princess, a gipsy queen. I used to leave a lamp burning in the kitchen on purpose to watch their antics, and before going to bed, and when all the house was still, I used to go and peep carefully through a little hole in the door. And there Fairy Mary would be, sure enough, racing round and round the kitchen like a mad thing, chased by at least a dozen mice, and every one of them squeaking with glee. But if I did but laugh—which, for the life of me, I could not sometimes help—off bolted the mice, leaving Fairy Mary to do an attitude wherever she might be. Then Mary would sniff the air, and listen, and so, scenting danger, hop off, kangaroo fashion, to her home in the pantry corner.

It really did seem a pity to break up this pleasant existence of Mary's, but it had to be done. Mice eat so much, and destroy more. My mice, with Mary at their head, were perfect sappers and miners. They thought nothing of gutting a loaf one night, and holding a ball in it the next. So, eventually, Mary was captured, and once more confined to her cage, which she insisted upon having hung up in our sitting-room, where she could see all that went on. Here she never attempted, even once, to nibble her cage, but if hung out in the kitchen nothing could keep her in.

At this stage of her existence, the arrangements for Mary's comfort were as follows: she dwelt in a nice roomy cage, with two perches in it, which she very much enjoyed. She had a glass dish for her food, and another for her milk, and the floor of the cage was covered with pine shavings, regularly changed once in two days, and among which Mary built her nest.

Now, Fairy Mary has a very strong resemblance to a miniature polar bear, that is, she has all the motions of one, and does all his attitudes—in fact, acts the part of Bruin to perfection. This first gave me the notion—which I can highly recommend to the reader—of making Mary not only amusing, but ornamental to our sitting-room as well, for it must be confessed that a plain wooden cage in one's room is neither graceful nor pretty, however lovely the inmate may be. And here is how I managed it. At the back of our sitting-room is the kitchen, the two apartments being separated by a brick wall. Right through this wall a hole or tunnel was drilled big enough for Mary to run through with ease. The kitchen end of this tunnel was closed by means of a little door, which was so constructed that by merely touching an unseen spring in the sitting-room, it could be opened at will. Against the kitchen end of the tunnel a cage for Mary was hung. This was to be her dining-room, her nest, and sleeping-berth. Now, for the sitting-room end of the tunnel, I had a painting made on a sheet of glass, over two feet long by eighteen inches high. The scene represented is from a sketch in North Greenland, which I myself had made, a scene in the frozen sea—the usual blue sky which you always find over the ice, an expanse of snow, a bear in the distance, and a ship frozen in and lying nearly on her beam ends. A dreary enough look-out, in all conscience, but true to nature.

There was a hole cut in the lower end of this glass picture, to match the diameter of the tunnel, and the picture was then fastened close against the wall. So far you will have followed me. The next thing was to frame this glass picture in a kind of cage, nine inches deep; the peculiarity of this cage being, that the front of it was a sheet of clear white glass, the sides only being of brass wire; the floor and top were of wood, the former being painted white, like the snow, and the latter blue, to form a continuation of the sky; a few imitation icebergs were glued on here and there, and one of these completely hides the entrance to the tunnel, forming a kind of rude cave—Fairy Mary's cave.

In the centre of this cage was raised a small bear's pole steps and all complete. We call it the North Pole. The whole forms a very pretty ornament indeed, especially when Mary is acting on this little Greenland stage.

Mary knows her name, and never fails to come to call, and indeed she knows a very great deal that is said to her. Whenever she pops through her tunnel, the little door at the kitchen end closes behind her, and she is a prisoner in Greenland until I choose to send her off. If she is in her kitchen cage, and I wish her to come north, and disport herself to the amusement of myself or friends—one touch to the spring, one cabalistic word, and there comes the little performer, all alive and full of fun.

Now I wish the reader to remember that Fairy Mary is not only the very essence of cleanliness, but the pink of politeness as well. Hence, Mary is sometimes permitted to come to table. And Mary is an honest rat. She has been taught to look at everything, but handle nothing. Therefore there cannot be the slightest possible objection to her either sitting on my shoulder on one end, and gazing wonderingly around her, or examining my ear, or making a nest of my beard, or running down my arm, and having a dance over the tablecloth. I think I said Mary was an honest rat, but she has just one tiny failing in the way of honesty, which, as her biographer, I am bound to mention. She can't quite resist the temptation of a bit of butter. But she helps herself to just one little handful, and does it, too, with such a graceful air, that, for the life of me, I couldn't be angry with her.

Well, except a morsel of butter, Mary will touch nothing on the table, nor will she take anything from your hand, if you offer it to her ever so coaxingly. She prefers to eat her meals in Greenland, or on the North Pole itself.

Mary's tastes as regards food are various. She is partial to a bit of cheese, but would not touch bacon for the world. This is rather strange, because it was exactly the other way with her brother and sister.

The great treat of the twenty-four hours with Mary is to get down in the evening, when the lamps are lighted, to have a scamper on the table. Her cage is brought in from the kitchen, and set down, and the door of it thrown open. This cage thus becomes Mary's harbour of refuge, from which she can sally forth and play tricks. Anything you place on the table is seized forthwith, and carried inside. She will carry an apple nearly as big as herself, and there will not be much of it left in the morning; for one of Mary's chief delights is to have a little feast all to herself, when the lights are out. Lettuce leaves she is partial to, and will carry them to her cage as fast as you can throw them down to her. She rummages the work-basket, and hops off with every thimble she can find.

After Fairy Mary's private establishment was broken up in the kitchen, it became necessary to clean up the corner of

the pantry where she had dwelt. Then was Mary's frugality and prudence as a housewife made clear to the light of day I could hardly be supposed to tell you everything she had stored up, but I remember there were crusts of bread, bits of cheese, lumps of dog-biscuit, halves of apples, small potatoes, and crumbs of sugar, and candle ends, and bones and herrings' heads, besides one pair of gold sleeve-links, an odd shirt-stud, a glass stopper from a scent-bottle, brass buttons, and, to crown the lot, one silver threepenny-piece of the sterling coin of the realm.

And that is the story of my rat; and I'm sure if you knew her you, too, would like her. She is such a funny, wee, sweet little *mite* of a Mary.

Note 1. "The Cruise of the *Snowbird*" published by Messrs Hodder and Stoughton, Paternoster Row.

Chapter Seven.

Only a Dog.

"Old dog, you are dead—we must all of us die—
  You are gone, and gone whither? Can any one say?
I trust you may live again, somewhat as I,
  And haply, 'go on to perfection'—some way!"

Tupper.

Poor little Fairy Mary, the favourite pet of Aileen Aroon, went the way of all rats at last. She was not killed. No cat took her. Our own cats were better-mannered than to touch a pet. But we all went away on a summer holiday, and as it was not convenient to take every one of our pets with us, Mary was left at home in charge of the servants. When we returned she was gone, dead and buried. She had succumbed to a tumour in the head which was commencing ere we started.

I think Aileen missed her very much, for she used to lie and watch the empty cage for an hour at a time, thinking no doubt that by-and-by Fairy Mary would pop out of some of her usual haunts.

"Dolls" was one of Aileen's contemporaries, and one that she had no small regard for. Dolls was a dog, and a very independent little fellow he was, as his story which I here give will show.

Dolls: His Little Story.

There was a look in the dark-brown eyes of Dolls that was very captivating when you saw it. I say when you saw it, because it wasn't always you could see it, for Dolls' face was so covered with his dishevelled locks, that the only wonder was that he could find his way about at all.

Dolls was a Scotch terrier—a *real* Scotch terrier. Reddish or sandy was he all over—in fact, he was just about the colour of gravel in the gloaming; I am quite sure of this, because when he went out with me about the twilight hour, I couldn't see him any more than if he wasn't in existence; when it grew a little darker, strange to say, Dolls became visible once more.

Plenty of coat had Dolls too. You could have hidden a glove under his mane, and nobody been a bit the wiser. When he sat on one end, gazing steadfastly up into a tree, from which some independent pussy stared saucily down upon him, Dolls looked for all the world like a doggie image draped in a little blanket.

Dolls had a habit of treeing pussies. This, indeed, was about the only bad trait in Dolls' character. He hated a pussy

more than sour milk, and nobody knew this better than the pussies themselves. Probably, indeed, they were partly to blame for maintaining the warfare. I've seen a cat in a tree, apparently trying her very best to mesmerise poor Dolls—Dolls blinking funnily up at her, she gazing cunningly down. There they would sit and sit, till suddenly down to the ground would spring pussy, and with a warlike and startling "Fuss!" that quite took the doggie's breath away, and made all his hair stand on end, clout Master Dolls in the face, and before that queer wee specimen of caninity could recover his equanimity, disappear through a neighbouring hedgerow.

Now cats have a good deal more patience than dogs. Sometimes on coming trotting home of an evening, Dolls would find a cat perched up in the pear-tree sparrow-expectant.

"Oh! *you're* there, are you?" Dolls would say. "Well, I'm not in any particular hurry, I can easily wait a bit." And down he would sit, with his head in the air.

"All right, Dolls, my doggie," Pussy would reply. "I've just eaten a sparrow, and not long ago I had a fine fat mouse, and, milk with it, and now I'll have a nap. Nice evening, isn't it?"

Well, Master Dolls would watch there, maybe for one hour and maybe for two, by which time his patience would become completely exhausted.

"You're not worth a wag of my tail," Dolls would say. "So good-night." Then off he would trot.

But Dolls wasn't a beauty, by any manner of means. I don't think anybody who wasn't an admirer of doormats, and a connoisseur in heather besoms could have found much about Dolls to go into raptures over, but, somehow or other, the little chap always managed to find friends wherever he went.

Dolls was a safe doggie with children, that is, with well-dressed, clean-looking children, but with the gutter portion of the population Dolls waged continual warfare. Doubtless, because they teased him, and made believe to throw pebbles at him, though I don't think they ever did in reality.

Dolls was a great believer in the virtues of fresh air, and spent much of his time out of doors. He had three or four houses, too, in the village which he used to visit regularly once, and sometimes twice, a day. He would trot into a kitchen with a friendly wag or two of his little tail, which said, plainly enough, "Isn't it wet, though?" or "Here is jolly weather just!"

"Come away, Dolls," was his usual greeting.

Thus welcomed, Dolls would toddle farther in, and seat himself by the fire, and gaze dreamily in through the bars at the burning coals, looking all the while as serious as possible.

I've often wondered, and other people used to wonder too, what Dolls could have been thinking about as he sat thus. Perhaps—like many a wiser head—he was building little morsels of castles in the air, castles that would have just the same silly ending as yours or mine, reader—wondering what he should do if he came to be a great big bouncing dog like Wolf the mastiff; how all the little doggies would crouch before him, and how dignified he would look as he strode haughtily away from them; and so on, and so forth. But perhaps, after all, Dolls was merely warming his mite of a nose, and not giving himself up to any line of thought in particular.

Now, it wasn't with human beings alone that this doggie was a favourite; and what I am now going to mention is rather strange, if not funny. You see, Dolls always got out early in the morning. There was a great number of other little dogs in the village besides himself—poodles, Pomeranians, and Skyes, doggies of every denomination and all shades of colour, and many of these got up early too. There is no doubt early morn is the best time for small dogs, because little boys are not yet up, and so can't molest them. Well, it did seem that each of these doggies, almost every morning, made up its mind to come and visit Dolls. At all events, most of them *did* come, and, therefore, Dolls was wont to hold quite a tiny *levée* on the lawn shortly after sunrise.

After making obeisance to General Dolls, these doggies would form themselves into a *conversazione*, and go promenading round the rose-trees in twos and twos.

Goodness only knows what they talked about; but I must tell you that these meetings were nearly always of a peaceable, amicable nature. Only once do I remember a *conversazione* ending in a general conflict.

"Well," said Dolls, "if it *is* going to be a free fight, I'm in with you." Then Dolls threw himself into it heart and soul.

But to draw the story of Dolls to a conclusion, there came to live near my cottage home an old sailor, one of Frank's friends. This ancient mariner was one of the Tom Bowling type, for the darling of many a crew he had been in his time, without doubt. There was good-nature, combined with pluck, in every lineament of his manly, well-worn, red and rosy countenance, and his hair was whitened—not by the snows of well-nigh sixty winters, for I rather fancy it was the summers that did it, the summers' heat, and the *bearing of* the brunt of many a tempest, and the anxiety inseparable from a merchant skipper's pillow. There was a merry twinkle in his eyes, that put you mightily in mind of the monks of old. And when he gave you his hand, it was none of your half-and-half shakes, let me tell you; that there was honesty in every throb of that man's heart you could tell from that very grasp.

Yes, he was a jolly old tar, and a good old tar; and he hadn't seen Dolls and been in his company for two hours, before he fell in love with the dog downright, and, says he, "Doctor, you want a good home for Dolls; there is something in the little man's eye that I a sort of like. As long as he sails with me, he'll never want a good bed, nor a good dinner; so, if you'll give him to me, I'll be glad to take him."

We shook hands.

Now this was to be the last voyage that ever that ancient mariner meant to make, until he made that long voyage which we all must do one of these days. And it *was* his last too; not, however, in the way you generally read of in stories, for the ship didn't go down, and he wasn't drowned, neither was Dolls. On the contrary, my friend returned, looking as hale and hearty as ever, and took a cottage in the country, meaning to live happily and comfortably ever after. And almost the first intimation I received of his return was carried by the doggie himself, for going out one fine morning, I found Dolls on the lawn, surrounded as usual, by about a dozen other wee doggies, to whom, from their spellbound look, I haven't a doubt he was telling the story of his wonderful adventures by sea and by land, for, mind you, Dolls had been all the way to Calcutta. And Dolls was so happy to see me again, and the lawn, and the rose-trees, and vagrant pussies, and no change in anything, that he was fain to throw himself at my feet and weep in the exuberance of his joy.

Dolls' new home was at H—, just three miles from mine; and this is somewhat strange—regularly, once a month the little fellow would trot over, all by himself, and see me. He remained in the garden one whole day, and slept on the doormat one whole night, but could never be induced either to *enter the house or to partake of food*. So no one could accuse Dolls of cupboard love. When the twenty-four hours which he allotted to himself for the visit were over, Dolls simply trotted home again, but, as sure as the moon, he returned again in another month.

A bitter, bitter winter followed quickly on the heels of that pleasant summer of 187—. The snow fell fast, and the cold was intense, thermometer at times sinking below zero. You could ran the thrushes down, and catch them by hand, so lifeless were they; and I could show you the bushes any day where blackbirds dropped lifeless on their perches. Even rooks came on to the lawn to beg; they said there wasn't a hip nor a haw to be found in all the countryside. And robin said he couldn't sing at all on his usual perch, the frost and the wind quite took his breath away; so he came inside to warm his toes.

One wild stormy night, I had retired a full hour sooner to rest, for the wind had kept moaning so, as it does around a country house. The wind moaned, and fiercely shook the windows, and the powdery snow sifted in under the hall-door, in spite of every arrangement to prevent it. I must have been nearly asleep, but I opened my eyes and started at *that*—a plaintive cry, rising high over the voice of the wind, and dying away again in mournful cadence. Twice it was repeated, then I heard no more. It must have been the wind whistling through the keyhole, I thought, as I sunk to sleep. Perhaps it was, reader; but early next morning I found poor wee Dolls dead on the doorstep.

Chapter Eight.

A Tale Told by the Old Pine-Tree.

> "Dumb innocents, often too cruelly treated,
> May well for their patience find future reward."
>
> Tupper.

Bonnie Berkshire! It is an expression we often make use of. Bonnie Berks—bonnie even in winter, when the fields are robed in starry snow; bonnie in spring-time, when the fields are rolling clouds of tenderest green, when the young wheat is peeping through the brown earth, when primroses cluster beneath the hedgerows, and everything is so gay and so happy and hopeful that one's very soul soars heavenwards with the lark.

But Berks I thought never looked more bonnie than it did one lovely autumn morning, when Ida and I and the dogs walked up the hill towards our favourite seat in the old pine wood. It was bright and cool and clear. The hedges alone were a sight, for blackthorn and brambles had taken leave of their senses in summer-time, and gone trailing here and climbing there, and playing all sorts of fantastic tricks, and now with the autumn tints upon them, they formed the prettiest patches of light and shade imaginable; and though few were the flowers that still peeped through the green moss as if determined to see the last of the sunshine, who could miss them with such gorgeous colour on thorn and tree? The leaves were still on the trees; only whenever a light gust of wind swept through the tall hedge with a sound like ocean shells, Ida and I were quite lost for a time, in a shower as of scented yellow snow.

My niece put her soft little hand in mine, as she said—“You haven’t forgotten the manuscript, have you?”

“Oh! no,” I said, smiling, “I haven’t forgotten it.”

“Because,” she added, “I do like you to tell me a story when we are all by ourselves.”

“Thank you,” said I, “but this story, Ida, is one I’m going to tell to Aileen, because it is all about a Newfoundland dog.”

“Oh! never mind,” she cried, “Nero and I shall sit and listen, and it will be all the same.”

“Well, Ida,” I said, when we were seated at last, “I shall call my tale—”

Blucher: The Story of a Newfoundland.

“We usually speak of four-in-hands rattling along the road. There was no rattling about the mail-coach, however, that morning, as she seemed to glide along towards the granite city, as fast as the steaming horses could tool her. For the snow lay deep on the ground, and but for the rattle of harness, and champing of bits, you might have taken her for one of Dickens’s phantom mails. It was a bitter winter’s morning. The driver’s face was buried to the eyes in the upturned neck of his fear-nothing coat; the passengers snoozed and hibernated behind the folds of their tartan plaids; the guard, poor man! had to look abroad on the desolate scene and his face was like a parboiled lobster in appearance. He stamped in his seat to keep his feet warm, although it was merely by reasoning from analogy that he could get himself to believe that he had any feet at all, for, as far as feeling went, his body seemed to end suddenly just below the knees, and when he attempted to emit some cheering notes from the bugle, the very notes seemed to freeze in the instrument. Presently, the coach pulled up at the eighth-milehouse to change horses, and every one was glad to come down if only for a few moments.

“The landlord,—remember, reader, I’m speaking of the far north, where mail-coaches are still extant, and the landlords of hostelries still visible to the naked eye. The landlord was there himself to welcome the coach, and he rubbed his hands and hastened to tell everybody that it was a stormy morning, that there would, no doubt, be a fresh fall ere long, and that there was a roaring fire in the room, and oceans of mulled porter. Few were able to resist hints like these, and orders for mulled porter and soft biscuits became general.

“Big flakes of snow began to fall slowly earthward, as the coach once more resumed its journey, and before long so thick and fast did it come down that nothing could be seen a single yard before the horses’ heads.

“Well, there was something or other down there in the road that didn’t seem to mind the snow a bit, something large, and round, and black, feathering round and round the coach, and under the horses’ noses—here, there, and everywhere. But its gambols, whatever it was, came to a very sudden termination, as that howl of anguish fully testified. The driver was a humane man, and pulled up at once.

“‘I’ve driven over a bairn, or a dog, or some o’ that fraternity,’ he said; ‘some o’ them’s continually gettin’ in the road at the wrang time. Gang doon, guard, and see aboot it. It howls for a’ the warld like a young warlock.’

"SHE SEEMED TO GLIDE ALONG TOWARDS THE GRANITE CITY." p. 83.

"Down went the guard, and presently remounted, holding in his arms the recipient of the accident. It was a jet-black Newfoundland puppy, who was whining in a most mournful manner, for one of his paws had been badly crushed.

"'Now,' cried the guard, 'I'll sell the wee warlock cheap. Wha'll gie an auld sang for him? He is onybody's dog for a gill of whuskey.'

"'I'll gie ye twa gills for him, and chance it,' said a quiet-looking farmer in one of the hinder seats. The puppy was handed over at once, and both seemed pleased with the transfer. The farmer nursed his purchase inside a fold of his plaid until the coach drew up before the door of the city hotel, when he ordered warm water, and bathed the little creature's wounded paw.

"Little did the farmer then know how intimately connected that dog was yet to be, with one of the darkest periods of his life's history.

"Taken home with the farmer to the country, carefully nursed and tended, and regularly fed, 'Blucher,' as he was called, soon grew up into a very fine dog, although always more celebrated for his extreme fidelity to his master, than for any large amount of good looks.

"One day the farmer's shepherd brought in a poor little lamb, wrapped up in the corner of his plaid. He had found it in a distant nook of a field, apparently quite deserted by its mother. The lamb was brought up on the bottle by the farmer's little daughter, and as time wore on grew quite a handsome fellow.

"The lamb was Blucher's only companion. The lamb used to follow Blucher wherever he went, romped and played with him, and at night the two companions used to sleep together in the kitchen; the lamb's head pillowed on the dog's neck, or *vice versa*, just as the case might be. Blucher and his friend used to take long rambles together over the country; they always came back safe enough, and looking pleased and happy, but for a considerable time nobody was able to tell where they had been to. It all came out in good time, however. Blucher, it seems, in his capacity of *chaperon* to his young friend, led the poor lamb into mischief. It was proved, beyond a doubt, that Blucher was in the daily habit of leading 'Bonny' to different cabbage gardens, showing him how to break through, and evidently rejoicing to see the lamb enjoying himself. I do not believe that poor Blucher knew that he was doing any injury or committing a crime. 'At all events,' he might reason with himself, 'it isn't I who eat the cabbage, and why shouldn't poor Bonny have a morsel when he seems to like it so much?'

"But Blucher suffered indirectly from his kindness to Bonny, for complaints from the neighbours of the depredations committed in their gardens by the 'twa thieves,' as they were called, became so numerous, that at last poor Bonny had to pay the penalty for his crimes with his life. He became mutton. A very disconsolate dog now was poor Blucher, moaning mournfully about the place, and refusing his food, and, in a word, just behaving as you and I would, reader, if we lost the only one we loved. But I should not say the only one that Blucher loved, for he still had his master, the farmer, and to him he seemed to attach himself more than ever, since the death of the lamb; he would hardly ever leave him, especially when the farmer's calling took him anywhere abroad.

"About one year after Bonny's demise, the farmer began to notice a peculiar numbness in the limbs, but paid little attention to it, thinking that no doubt time—the poor man's physician—would cure it. Supper among the peasantry of these northern latitudes is generally laid about half-past six. Well, one dark December's day, at the accustomed hour, both the dog and his master were missed from the table. For some time little notice was taken of this, but as time flew by, and the night grew darker, his family began to get exceedingly anxious.

"'Here comes father at last,' cried little Mary, the farmer's daughter.

"Her remark was occasioned by hearing Blucher scraping at the door, and demanding admittance. Little Mary opened the door, and there stood Blucher, sure enough; but although the night was clear and starlight, there wasn't a sign of father. The strange conduct of Blucher now attracted Mary's attention. He never had much affection for her, or for any one save his master, but now he was speaking to her, as plain as a dog could speak. He was running round her, barking in loud sharp tones, as he gazed into her face, and after every bark pointing out into the night, and vehemently wagging his tail. There was no mistaking such language. Any one could understand his meaning. Even

one of those *strange people, who hate dogs*, would have understood him. Mary did, anyhow, and followed Blucher at once. On trotted the honest fellow, keeping Mary trotting too, and many an anxious glance he cast over his shoulder to her, saying plainly enough, ‘Don’t you think you could manage to run just a *leetle* faster?’ Through many a devious path he led her, and Mary was getting very tired, yet fear for her father kept her up. After a walk, or rather run, of fully half an hour, honest Blucher brought the daughter to the father’s side.

“He was lying on the cold ground, insensible and helpless, struck down by that dreadful disease—paralysis. But for the sagacity and intelligence of his faithful dog, death from cold and exposure would certainly have ended his sufferings ere morning dawned. But Blucher’s work was not yet over for the night, for no sooner did he see Mary kneeling down by her father’s side, than he started off home again at full speed, and in less than half an hour was back once more, accompanied by two of the servants.

“The rest of this dog’s history can be told in very few words, and I am sorry it had so tragic an ending.

“During all the illness which supervened on the paralysis, Blucher could seldom, if ever, be prevailed on to leave his master’s bedside, and every one who approached the patient was eyed with extreme suspicion. I think I have already mentioned that Mary was no great favourite with Blucher, and Mary, if she reads these lines, must excuse me for saying, I believe it was her own fault, for if you are half frightened at a dog he always thinks you harbour some ill-will to him, and would do him an injury if you could. However, one day poor Mary came running in great haste to her father’s bedside. Most incautious haste as it turned out, for the dog sprang up at once and bit her in the leg. For this, honest Blucher was *condemned to death*. I think, taking into consideration his former services, and the great love he bore to his afflicted master, he might have been forgiven just for this once.

“That his friends afterwards repented of their rashness I do not doubt, for they have erected a monument over his grave. This monument tells how faithfully he served his master, and how he loved him, and saved his life, and although fifty years have passed since its erection, it still stands to mark the spot where faithful Blucher lies.”

Chapter Nine.

Tea on the Lawn, and the Story of a Starling.

> “Thy spangled breast bright sprinkled specks adorn,
> Each plume imbibes the rosy-tinted morn.”

“Sit down, Frank,” said I; “my wife and Ida will be here presently. It is so pleasant to have tea out of doors.”

“Yes,” said Frank, “especially such tea as this. But,” he added, fishing a flower-spray from his cup with his spoon, “I do not want jasmine in mine.”

“Good wine needs no bush,” I remarked.

“Nor good tea no scent,” said my friend.

“Although, Frank, the Chinese do scent some of their Souchongs with jasmine, the *Jasminum Sambuc*.”

“Oh! dear uncle,” cried Ida, “don’t talk Latin. Maggie the magpie will be doing it next.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed the pie called Maggie, who was very busy in the bottom of her cage. I never, by the way, heard any bird or human being laugh in such a cuttingly tantalising way as that magpie did.

It was a sneering laugh, which made you feel that the remark you had just made previously was ridiculously absurd. As she laughed she kept on pegging away at whatever she was doing.

“Go on,” she seemed to say. “I am listening to all you are saying, but I really can’t help laughing, even with my mouth full. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Well, Ida dear,” I said, “I certainly shall not talk Latin if there be the slightest chance of that impudent bird catching it up. Is this better?

> “‘My slight and slender jasmine tree,
> That bloomest on my border tower,
> Thou art more dearly loved by me
> Than all the wealth of fairy bower.
> I ask not, while I near thee dwell,
> Arabia’s spice or Syria’s rose;
> Thy light festoons more freshly smell,
> Thy virgin white more freshly glows.’”

“And now,” said my wife, “what about the story?”

“Yes, tea and a tale,” cried Frank.

“Do you know,” I replied, “that the starling is the best of all talking pets? And I do wonder why people don’t keep them more often than they do?”

“They are difficult to rear, are they not?”

“Somewhat, Frank, when young, as my story will show.”

“These,” I continued, “are some kindly directions I have written about the treatment of these charming birds.”

“Dear me!” cried the magpie.

“Hold your tongue, Maggie,” I said, “or you’ll go into the house, cage and all.”

Maggie laughed sneeringly, and all throughout the story she kept interrupting me with impudent remarks, which quite spoiled the effect of my eloquence.

The Starling’s Cage.—This should be as large and as roomy as possible, or else the bird will break his tail and lose other feathers, to the great detriment of his plumage and beauty. The cage may be a wicker-work one, or simply wire, but the bars must not be too wide. However much liberty you allow Master Dick in your presence, during your absence it will generally be as well to have him inside his dwelling-place; let the fastening of its door, then, be one which he cannot pick. Any ordinary wire fastening is of no use; the starling will find the cue to it in a single day. Tin dishes for the bird’s food will be found best, and they must be well shipped, or else he will speedily tear them down. A large porcelain water fountain should be placed outside the cage; he will try to bathe even in this, and I hardly know how it can be prevented. Starlings are very fond of splashing about in the water, and ought to have a bath on the kitchen floor every day, unless you give them a proper bathing cage. After the bath place him in the sun or near the fire to dry and preen himself.

Cleanliness.—This is most essential. The cage and his feeding and drinking utensils should be washed every day. The drawers beneath must be taken out, cleaned, washed, and *dried* before being put back, and a little rough gravel scattered over the bottom of it. If you would wish your bird to enjoy proper health—and without that he will never be a good speaker or musician—keep all his surroundings dry and sweet, and never leave yesterday’s food for to-day’s consumption.

Food.—Do not give the bird salt food, but a little of anything else that is going can always be allowed him. Perhaps bread soaked in water, the water squeezed out, and a little new milk poured over, forms the best staple of diet. But, in addition to this, shreds of raw meat should be given, garden worms, slugs, etc. Carry him round the room on your finger, stopping when you see a fly on the wall or a picture-frame, and holding the starling near it. He will thus soon learn to catch his own flies, and take such delight in this kind of stalking that, as soon as he can speak, he will pester you with his importunities to be thus carried round.

White fish these birds are very fond of, and also fresh salmon. Fruit should be given to them now and then, a fig being considered by them an especial delicacy. A little chickweed or other green food is also relished. This may be placed on the top of the cage. Finally starlings, no matter how well you feed them, will not thrive without plenty of exercise. The male bird is the better talker, and more active and saucy, as well as more beautiful and graceful in shape and plumage. Be assured the bird is very young before purchasing it.

My Starling “Dick.”

I feel very lonely now since my starling is gone. I could not bear to look upon his empty cage, his bath and playthings, so I have had them all stowed away; but the bird will dwell in my memory for many a day. The way in which that starling managed to insinuate itself into my heart and entwine its affections with mine, I can never rightly tell; and it is only now when it is gone that I really know how much it is possible for a human creature to love a little bird. The

creature was nearly always with me, talking to me, whistling to me, or even doing mischief in a small way, to amuse me; and to throw down my pen, straighten my back, and have a romp with "Dick," was often the best relaxation I could have had.

The rearing of a nest of starlings is always a very difficult task, and I found it peculiarly so. In fact, one young starling would require half-a-dozen servants at least to attend it. I was not master of those starlings, not a bit of it; they were masters of me. I had to get out of bed and stuff them with food at three o'clock every morning. They lived in a bandbox in a closet off my bedroom. I had to get up again at four o'clock to feed them, again at five, and again at six; in fact, I saw more sunrises during the infancy of that nest of starlings than ever I did before or since. By day, and all day long, I stuffed them, and at intervals the servant relieved me of that duty. In fact, it was pretty near all stuffing; but even then they were not satisfied, and made several ineffectual attempts to swallow my finger as well. At length—and how happy I felt!—they could both feed themselves and fly. This last accomplishment, however, was anything but agreeable to me, for no sooner did I open their door than out they would all come, one after the other, and seat themselves on my head and shoulders, each one trying to make more noise than all the rest and outdo his brothers in din.

I got so tired of this sort of thing at last, that one day I determined to set them all at liberty. I accordingly hung their cage outside the window and opened their door, and out they all flew, but back they came into the room again, and settled on me as usual. "Then," said I, "I'm going gardening." By the way they clung to me it was evident their answer was: "And so are we." And so they did. And as soon as I commenced operations with the spade they commenced operations too, by searching for and eating every worm I turned up, evidently thinking I was merely working for their benefit and pleasure. I got tired of this. "O bother you all!" I cried; "I'm sick of you." I threw down my spade in disgust; and before they could divine my intention, I had leaped the fence and disappeared in the plantation beyond.

"Now," said I to myself, as I entered the garden that evening after my return, and could see no signs of starlings, "I'm rid of you plagues at last;" and I smiled with satisfaction. It was short-lived, for just at that moment "Skraigh, skraigh, skraigh" sounded from the trees adjoining; and before I could turn foot, my tormentors, seemingly mad with joy, were all sitting on me as usual. Two of them died about a week after this; and the others, being cock and hen, I resolved to keep.

Both Dick and his wife soon grew to be very fine birds. I procured them a large roomy cage, with plenty of sand and a layer of straw in the bottom of it, a dish or two, a bath, a drinking fountain, and always a supply of fresh green weeds on the roof of their domicile. Besides their usual food of soaked bread, etc, they had slugs occasionally, and flies, and earthworms. Once a day the cage-door was thrown open, and out they both would fly with joyful "skraigh" to enjoy the luxury of a bath on the kitchen floor. One would have imagined that, being only two, they would not have stood on the order of their going; but they did, at least Dick did, for he insisted upon using the bath first, and his wife had to wait patiently until his lordship had finished. This was part of Dick's domestic discipline. When they were both thoroughly wet and draggled, and everything within a radius of two yards was in the same condition, their next move was to hop on to the fender, and flatter and gaze pensively into the fire; and two more melancholy-looking, ragged wretches you never saw. When they began to dry, then they began to dress, and in a few minutes "Richard was himself again," and so was his wife.

Starlings have their own natural song, and a strange noise they make too. Their great faculty, however, is the gift of

imitation, which they have in a wonderful degree of perfection. The first thing that Dick learned to imitate was the rumbling of carts and carriages on the street, and very proud he was of the accomplishment. Then he learned to pronounce his own name, with the prefix “Pretty,” which he never omitted, and to which he was justly entitled. Except when sitting on their perch singing or piping, these two little pets were never tired engineering about their cage, and everything was minutely examined. They were perfect adepts at boring holes; by inserting the bill closed, and opening it like a pair of scissors, lo! the thing was done. Dick’s rule of conduct was that he himself should have the first of everything, and be allowed to examine first into everything, to have the highest perch and all the tit-bits; in a word, to rule, king and priest, in his own cage. I don’t suppose he hated his wife, but he kept her in a state of inglorious subjection to his royal will and pleasure. “Hezekiah” was the name he gave his wife. I don’t know why, but I am sure no one taught him this, for he first used the name himself, and then I merely corrected his pronunciation.

Sometimes Dick would sit himself down to sing a song; and presently his wife would join in with a few simple notes of melody; upon which Dick would stop singing instantly, and look round at her with indignation. “Hezekiah! Hezekiah!” he would say, which being interpreted, clearly meant: “Hezekiah, my dear, how can you so far forget yourself as to presume to interrupt your lord and master, with that cracked and quavering voice of yours?” Then he would commence anew; and Hezekiah being so good-natured, would soon forget her scolding and again join in. This was too much for Dick’s temper; and Hezekiah was accordingly chased round and round the cage and soundly thrashed. His conduct altogether as a husband, I am sorry to say, was very far from satisfactory. I have said he always retained the highest perch for himself; but sometimes he would turn one eye downwards, and seeing Hezekiah sitting so cosily and contentedly on her humble perch, would at once conclude that her seat was more comfortable than his; so down he would hop and send her off at once.

It was Dick’s orders that Hezekiah should only eat at meal-times; that meant at all times when he chose to feed, *after he was done*. But I suppose his poor wife was often a little hungry in the interim, for she would watch till she got Dick fairly into the middle of a song and quite oblivions of surrounding circumstances, then she would hop down and snatch a meal on the sly. But dire was the punishment far the deceit if Dick found her out. Sometimes I think she used to long for a little love and affection, and at such times she would jump up on the perch beside her husband, and with a fond cry sidle close to him.

“Hezekiah! Hezekiah!” he would exclaim; and if she didn’t take that hint, she was soon knocked to the bottom of the cage. In fact, Dick was a domestic tyrant, but in all other respects a dear affectionate little pet.

One morning Dick got out of his cage by undoing the fastening, and flew through the open window, determined to see what the world was like, leaving Hezekiah to mourn. It was before five on a summer’s morning that he escaped; and I saw no more of him until, coming out of church that day, the people were greatly astonished to see a bird fly down from the steeple and alight upon my shoulder. He retained his perch all the way home. He got so well up to opening the fastening of his cage-door that I had to get a small spring padlock, which defied him, although he studied it for months, and finally gave it up, as being one of those things which no fellow could understand.

Dick soon began to talk, and before long had quite a large vocabulary of words, which he was never tired using. As he grew very tame, he was allowed to live either out of his cage or in it all day long as he pleased. Often he would be out in the garden all alone for hours together, running about catching flies, or sitting up in a tree repeating his lessons to himself, both verbal and musical. The cat and her kittens were his especial favourites, although he used to play with the dogs as well, and often go to sleep on their backs. He took his lessons with great regularity, was an arduous student, and soon learned to pipe “Duncan Grey” and “The Sprig of Shillelah” without a single wrong note. I used to whistle these tunes over to him, and it was quite amusing to mark his air of rapt attention as he crouched down to listen. When I had finished, he did not at once begin to try the tune himself, but sat quiet and still for some time, evidently thinking it over in his own mind. In piping it, if he forgot a part of the air, he would cry: “Doctor, doctor!” and repeat the last note once or twice, as much as to say: “What comes after that?” and I would finish the tune for him.

“Tse! tse! tse!” was a favourite exclamation of his, indicative of surprise. When I played a tune on the fiddle to him, he would crouch down with breathless attention. Sometimes when he saw me take up the fiddle, he would go at once and peck at Hezekiah. I don’t know why he did so, unless to secure her keeping quiet. As soon as I had finished he would say “Bravo!” with three distinct intonations of the word, thus: “Bravo! doctor; br-r-ravo! bra-vo!”

Dick was extremely inquisitive and must see into everything. He used to annoy the cat very much by opening out her toes, or even her nostrils, to examine; and at times pussy used to lose patience, and pat him on the back.

“Eh?” he would say. “What is it? You rascal!” If two people were talking together underneath his cage, he would cock his head, lengthen his neck, and looking down quizzingly, say: “Eh? *What* is it? *What* do you say?”

He frequently began a sentence with the verb, “Is,” putting great emphasis on it. “Is?” he would say musingly.

“Is what, Dick?” I would ask.

“Is,” he would repeat—“Is the darling starling a pretty pet?”

“No question about it,” I would answer.

He certainly made the best of his vocabulary, for he trotted out all his nouns and all his adjectives time about in pairs, and formed a hundred curious combinations.

“*Is*,” he asked one day, “the darling doctor a rascal?”

“Just as you think,” I replied.

"Tse! tse! tse! Whew! whew! whew!" said Dick; and finished off with "Duncan Grey" and the first half of "The Sprig of Shillelah."

"Love is the soul of a nate Irishman," he had been taught to say; but it was as frequently, "Love is the soul of a nate Irish starling;" or, "*Is* love the soul of a darling pretty Dick?" and so on.

One curious thing is worth noting: he never pronounced my dog's name—Theodore Nero—once while awake; but he often startled us at night by calling the dog in clear ringing tones—talking in his sleep. He used to be chattering and singing without intermission all day long; and if ever he was silent then I knew he was doing mischief; and if I went quietly into the kitchen, I was sure to find him either tracing patterns on a bar of soap, or examining and tearing to pieces a parcel of newly-arrived groceries. He was very fond of wines and spirits, but knew when he had enough. He was not permitted to come into the parlour without his cage; but sometimes at dinner, if the door were left ajar, he would silently enter like a little thief; when once fairly in, he would fly on to the table, scream, and defy me. He was very fond of a pretty child that used to come to see me. If Matty was lying on the sofa reading, Dick would come and sing on her head; then he would go through all the motions of washing and bathing on Matty's bonnie hair; which was, I thought, paying her a very pretty compliment.

When the sun shone in at my study window, I used to hang Dick's cage there, as a treat to him. Dick would remain quiet for perhaps twenty minutes, then the stillness would feel irksome to him, and presently he would stretch his head down towards me in a confidential sort of way, and begin to pester me with his silly questions.

"Doctor," he would commence, "*is* it, is it a nate Irish pet?"

"Silence, and go asleep," I would make answer. "I want to write."

"Eh?" he would say. "*What* is it? *What* d'ye say?"

Then, if I didn't answer—

"*Is* it sugar—snails—sugar, snails, and brandy?" Then, "Doctor, doctor!"

"Well, Dickie, what is it now?" I would answer.

"Doctor—whew." That meant I was to whistle to him.

"Shan't," I would say sulkily.

"Tse! tse! tse!" Dickie would say, and continue, "Doctor, will you go a-clinking?" I never could resist that. Going a-clinking meant going fly-hawking. Dick always called a fly a clink; and this invitation I would receive a dozen times a day, and seldom refused. I would open the cage-door, and Dick would perch himself on my finger, and I would carry him round the room, holding him up to the flies on the picture-frames. And he never missed one.

Once Dick fell into a bucket of water, and called lustily for the "doctor;" and I was only just in time to save him from a watery grave. When I got him out, he did not speak a word until he had gone to the fire and opened his wings and feathers out to dry, then he said: "Bravo! B-r-ravo" several times, and went forthwith and attacked Hezekiah.

Dick had a little travelling cage, for he often had to go with me by train; and no sooner did the train start than Dick used to commence to talk and whistle, very much to the astonishment of the passengers, for the bird was up in the umbrella rack. Everybody was at once made aware of both my profession and character, for the jolting of the carriage not pleasing him, he used always to prelude his performance with, "Doctor, doctor, you r-r-rascal. What *is* it, eh?" As Dick got older, I am sorry, as his biographer, to be compelled to say he grew more and more unkind to his wife—attacked her regularly every morning and the last thing at night, and half-starred her besides. Poor Hezekiah! She could do nothing in the world to please him. Sometimes, now, she used to peck him back again; she was driven to it. I was sorry for Hezekiah, and determined to play pretty Dick a little trick. So one day, when he had been bullying her worse than ever, I took Hezekiah out of the cage, and fastened a small pin to her bill, so as to protrude just a very little way, and returned her. Dick walked up to her at once. "What," he wanted to know, "did she mean by going on shore without leave?" Hezekiah didn't answer, and accordingly received a dig in the back, then another, then a third; and then Hezekiah turned, and let him have one sharp attack. It was very amusing to see how Dick jumped, and his look of astonishment as he said: "Eh? *What* d'ye say? Hezekiah! Hezekiah!"

Hezekiah followed up her advantage. It was quite a new sensation for her to have the upper hand, and so she courageously chased him round and round the cage, until I opened the door and let Dick out.

But Hezekiah could not live always with a pin tied to her bill; so, for peace' sake, I gave her away to a friend, and Dick was left alone in his glory.

Poor Dickie! One day he was shelling peas to himself in the garden, when some boys startled him, and he flew away. I suppose he lost himself, and couldn't find his way back. At all events I only saw him once again. I was going down through an avenue of trees about a mile from the house, when a voice above in a tree hailed me: "Doctor! doctor! What *is* it?" That was Dick; but a rook flew past and scared him again, and away he flew—for ever.

That same evening, Ida, who had been absent for some little time, returned, and shyly handed me a letter.

"Whom is it from, I wonder, Ida," I said; "so late in the evening, too?"

"Oh, it is from Maggie," Ida replied.

"What!" I exclaimed; "from that impudent bird? Well, let us see what she has to say;" and opening the note, I read as

follows:—

> "Dear Master,—I fully endorse all you have written about the starling, especially as regards their treatment, and if you had added that they are pert, perky things, you wouldn't have been far out. Well, we magpies build our nests of sticks on the tops of tall trees, lining it first with clay, then with grass; our eggs are five in number, and if they weren't so like to a rook's they might be mistaken for a blackbird's. The nests are so big that before the little boys climb up the trees they think they have found a hawk's. In some parts of the country we are looked upon with a kind of superstitious awe. This is nonsense; there is nothing wrong about us; we may bring joy to people, as I do to you, dear Doctor, by my gentle loving ways, but we never bring grief. We like solitude, and keep ourselves in the wild state to ourselves. Perhaps if we went in flocks, and had as much to say for ourselves as those noisy brutes of rooks, we would be more thought of. Even in the domestic state we like our liberty, and think it terribly cruel to be obliged to mope all day long in a wicker cage. It is crueller still to hang us in draughts, or in too strong a sun; while to keep our cage damp and dirty cramps our legs and gives us such twinges of rheumatism in our poor unused wings, that we often long to die and be at rest.
>
> "The treatment, Doctor, you prescribe for starlings will do nicely for us, and you know how easily we are taught to talk; and I'm sure I *do* love you, Doctor, and haven't I, all for your sake, made friends with your black Persian cat and your big Newfoundland dog?
>
> "No, I'm not a thief; I deny the charge. Only if you do leave silver spoons about, and gold pens, and shillings and sixpenny-bits—why—I—I borrow them, that is all, and you can always find them in Maggie's cage.
>
> "We can eat all that starlings eat; yes, and a great many things they would turn up their supercilious bills at. But, remember, we do like a little larger allowance of animal food than starlings do.
>
> "No more at present, dear Doctor, but remains your loving and affectionate Magpie, Maggie."

N.b.—The grammatical error in the last sentence is Maggie's, not mine.

Chapter Ten.

The Life and Death of Rook Toby.

> "A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
> No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
> Breaks the serene of heaven:
> In full-orbed glory, yonder moon divine
> Rolls through the dark-blue depths.
>   Beneath her steady ray
>   The desert-circle spreads;
> Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.
>   How beautiful is night?"

"It most have been on just such another night as this, Frank, that Southey penned these lines," I began.

"How about the dewy freshness?" said my wife, who is usually more practical than poetic. "Don't you think, dear, that Ida had better go in?"

"Oh! no, auntie," cried Ida; "I must stay and hear the story. It isn't nine o'clock."

"No," Frank remarked, "barely nine o'clock, and yet the stars are all out; why, up in the north of Scotland people at this season of the year can see to read all night."

"How delightful!" cried Ida.

The nodding lilacs and starry syringas were mingling their perfume in the evening air.

"Listen," said my wife; "yonder, close by us in the Portugal laurel, is the nightingale."

"Yes," I replied, "but to-morrow morning will find the bird just a trifle farther afield, for some instinct tells him that our dark-haired Persian pussy is an epicure in her way, and would prefer philomel to fish for her matutinal meal."

I am more convinced than ever that for the first two or three nights after their arrival in this country the nightingales do not go to sleep at all, but sing on all day as well as all night, the marvel being that they do not get hoarse. But after a week the night-song is not nearly so brilliant nor so prolonged, nor does it attain its pristine wild joyfulness until spring once more gilds the fields with buttercups. By day the song is not so noticeable, though ever and anon it sounds high over the Babel of other birds' voices. But, of course, the thrush must sing, the blackbird must pipe, and vulgar sparrows bicker and shriek, and talk Billingsgate to each other, for sparrows having but little music in their

own nature, have just as little appreciation for the gift in others.

“Look!” cried Frank; “yonder goes a bat.”

“Yes,” I said, “the bats are abroad every night now in full force. What a wonderful power of flight is theirs; how quickly they can turn and wheel, and how nimbly gyrate!”

“I much prefer the martin-swallow,” said Ida.

“We have no more welcome summer, or rather spring visitor, Ida, than the martin.

> “‘He twitters on the apple-trees,
> He hails me at the dawn of day,
> Each morn the recollected proof
> Of time, that swiftly fleets away.
> Fond of sunshine, fond of shade,
> Fond of skies serene and clear,
> E’en transient storms his joys invade,
> In fairest seasons of the year.’”

“But I must be allowed to say that I object to the word ‘twitter,’ so usually applied to the song of the swallow. It is more than a meaningless twitter. Although neither loud nor clear, it is—when heard close at hand—inexpressibly sweet and soft and tender, more so than even that of the linnet, and there are many joyous and happy notes in it, which it is quite delightful to listen to. Indeed, hardly any one could attentively observe the song of our domestic martin for any length of time without feeling convinced that the dusky little minstrel was happy—inexpressibly happy. Few, perhaps, know that there is a striking similarity between the expressions by sound or, voice of the emotions of all animals in the world, whether birds or beasts, and whether those emotions be those of grief or pain, or joy itself. This is well worth observing, and if you live in the country you will have a thousand chances of doing so. Why does the swallow sing in so low a voice? At a little distance you can hardly hear it at all. I have travelled a good deal in forests and jungles and bush lands in Africa and the islands about it, and, of course, I always went alone, that is, I never had any visible companion—because only when alone can one enjoy Nature, and study the ways and manners of birds and beasts, and I have been struck by the silence of the birds, or, at all events, their absence of song in many of them.”

“Why should that be so, I wonder?” said Ida.

“Probably,” said Frank, “because the woods where the birds dwell are so full of danger that song would betray their presence, and the result be death. And the same reason may cause the house martins to lower their voices when they give vent to their little notes of tuneful joy.”

There was a moment’s pause: Aileen came and put her head in my lap.

“She is waiting for the story,” said Frank.

"Oh! yes," my wife remarked; "both the dogs are sure to be interested in 'Toby's' tale."

"Why?" said Frank.

"Because," my wife replied, "Toby was a sheep."

Here Theodore Nero must join Aileen. The very name or mention of the word "sheep," was sure to make that honest dog wag his tail.

"Two heads are better than one," I once remarked in his presence.

"Especially sheep's heads," said the dog.

And now for the story.

Toby: The Story of a Sailor Sheep.

Now Toby was a sheep, a sheep of middling size, lightly built, finely limbed, as agile as a deer, with dark intelligent gazelle-like eyes, and a small pair of neatly curled horns, with the points protruding about an inch from his forehead. And his colour was white except on the face, which was slightly darker.

It was the good brig *Reliance* of Arbroath, and she was bound from Cork to Galatz, on the banks of the blue Danube. All went well with the little ship until she reached the Grecian Archipelago, and here she was detained by adverse winds and contrary currents, making the passage through among the islands both a dangerous and a difficult one. When the mariners at length reached Tenedos, it was found that the current from the Dardanelles was running out like a mill-stream, which made it impossible to proceed; and accordingly the anchor was cast, the jolly-boat was lowered, and the captain took the opportunity of going on shore for fresh water, of which they were scarce. Having filled his casks, it was only natural for a sailor to long to treat himself to a mess of fresh meat as well as water. He accordingly strolled away through the little town; but soon found that butchers were unknown animals in Tenedos. Presently, however, a man came up with a sheep, which the captain at once purchased for five shillings. This was Toby, with whom, his casks of water, and a large basket of ripe fruit, the skipper returned to his vessel. There happened to be on board this ship a large and rather useless half-bred Newfoundland. This dog was the very first to receive the attentions of Master Toby, for no sooner had he placed foot on deck than he ran full tilt at the poor Newfoundland, hitting him square on the ribs and banishing almost every bit of breath from his body. "Only a sheep," thought the dog, and flew at Toby at once. But Toby was too nimble to be caught, and he planted his blows with such force and precision, that at last the poor dog was fain to take to his heels, howling with pain, and closely pursued by Toby. The dog only escaped by getting out on to the bowsprit, where of course Toby could not follow, but quietly lay down between the knight-heads to wait and watch for him.

That same evening the captain was strolling on the quarter-deck eating some grapes, when Toby came up to him, and standing on one end, planted his feet on his shoulders, and looked into his face, as much as to say: "I'll have some of those, please."

And he was not disappointed, for the captain amicably went shares with Toby. Toby appeared so grateful for even little favours, and so attached to his new master, that Captain Brown had not the heart to kill him. He would rather, he thought, go without fresh meat all his life. So Toby was installed as ship's pet. Ill-fared it then with the poor Newfoundland; he was so battered and so cowed, that for dear life's sake he dared not leave his kennel even to take his food. It was determined, therefore, to put an end to the poor fellow's misery, and he was accordingly shot. This may seem cruel, but it was the kindest in the main.

Now, there was on board the *Reliance* an old Irish cook. One morning soon after the arrival of Toby, Paddy (who had a round bald pate, be it remembered) was bending down over a wooden platter cleaning the vegetables for dinner, when Toby took the liberty of insinuating his woolly nose to help himself. The cook naturally enough struck Toby on the snout with the flat of the knife and went on with his work. Toby backed astern at once; a blow he never could and never did receive without taking vengeance. Besides, he imagined, no doubt, that holding down his bald head as he did, the cook was desirous of trying the strength of their respective skulls. When he had backed astern sufficiently for his purpose, Toby gave a spring; the two heads came into violent collision, and down rolled poor Paddy on the deck. Then Toby coolly finished all the vegetables, and walked off as if nothing had happened out of the usual.

Toby's hatred of the whole canine race was invincible. While the vessel lay at Galatz she was kept in quarantine, and there was only one small platform, about four hundred yards long by fifty wide, on which the captain or crew of the *Reliance* could land. This was surrounded by high walls on three sides, one side being the Pe'latoria, at which all business with the outside world was transacted through gratings. Inside, however, there were a few fruit-stalls. Crowds used to congregate here every morning to watch Toby's capers, and admire the nimbleness with which he used to rob the fruit-stalls and levy blackmail from the vegetable vendors.

One day when the captain and his pet were taking their usual walk on this promenade, there came on shore the skipper of a Falmouth ship, accompanied by a large formidable-looking dog. And the dog only resembled his master, as you observe dogs usually do. As soon as he saw Toby he commenced to hunt his dog upon him; but Toby had seen him coming and was quite *en garde*; so a long and fierce battle ensued, in which Toby was slightly wounded and the dog's head was severely cut. Quite a multitude had assembled to witness the fight, and the ships' riggings were alive with sailors. At one time the brutal owner of the dog, seeing his pet getting worsted, attempted to assist him; but the crowd would have pitched him neck and crop into the river, had he not desisted. At last both dog and sheep were exhausted and drew off, as if by mutual consent. The dog seated himself close to the outer edge of the platform, which was about three feet higher than the river's bank, and Toby went, as he was wont to do, and stood between his

master's legs, resting his head fondly on the captain's clasped hands, but never took his eyes off the foe. Just then a dog on board one of the ships happened to bark, and the Falmouth dog looked round. This was Toby's chance, and he did not miss it nor his enemy either. He was upon him like a bolt from a catapult. One furious blow knocked the dog off the platform, next moment Toby had leaped on top of him, and was chasing the yelling animal towards his own ship. There is no doubt Toby would have crossed the plank and followed him on board, had not his feet slipped and precipitated him into the river. A few minutes afterwards, when Toby, dripping with wet, returned to the platform to look for his master, he was greeted with ringing cheers; and many was the plaster spent in treating Toby to fruit. Toby was the hero of Galatz from that hour; but the Falmouth dog never ventured on shore again, and his master as seldom as possible.

On her downward voyage, when the vessel reached Selina, at the mouth of the river, it became necessary to lighten her in order to get her over the bar. This took some time, and Toby's master frequently had to go on shore; but Toby himself was not permitted to accompany him, on account of the filth and muddiness of the place. When the captain wished to return he came down to the river-side and hailed the ship to send a boat. And poor Toby was always on the watch for his master if no one else was. He used to place his fore-feet on the bulwarks and bleat loudly towards the shore, as much as to say: "I see you, master, and you'll have a boat in a brace of shakes." Then if no one was on deck, Toby would at once proceed to rouse all hands fore and aft. If the mate, Mr Gilbert, pretended to be asleep on a locker, he would fairly roll him off on to the deck.

Toby was revengeful to a degree, and if any one struck him, he would wait his chance, even if for days, to pay him out with interest in his own coin. He was at first very jealous of two little pigs which were bought as companions to him; but latterly he grew very fond of them, and as they soon got very fat, Toby used to roll them along the deck like a couple of footballs. There were two parties on board that Toby did not like, or rather that he liked to annoy whenever he got the chance, namely, the cook and the cat. He used to cheat the former and chase the latter on every possible occasion. If his master took pussy and sat down with her on his knee, Toby would at once commence to strike her off with his head. Finding that she was so soft and yielding that this did not hurt her, he would then lift his fore-foot and attempt to strike her down with that; failing in that, he would bite viciously at her; and if the captain laughed at him, then all Toby's vengeance would be wreaked on his master. But after a little scene like this, Toby would always come and coax for forgiveness. Toby was taught a great many tricks, among others to leap backward and forward through a life-buoy. When his hay and fresh provisions went down, Toby would eat pea-soup, invariably slobbering all his face in so doing, and even pick a bone like a dog. He was likewise very fond of boiled rice, and his drink was water, although he preferred porter and ale; but while allowing him a reasonable quantity of beer, the captain never encouraged him in the nasty habit the sailors had taught him of chewing tobacco.

It is supposed that some animals have a prescience of coming storms. Toby used to go regularly to the bulwarks every night, and placing his feet against them sniff all around him. If content, he would go and lie down and fall fast asleep; but it was a sure sign of bad weather coming before morning, when Toby kept wandering among his master's feet and would not go to rest.

Pea-soup and pork-bones are scarcely to be considered the correct food for a sheep, and so it is hardly to be wondered at that Toby got very thin before the vessel reached Falmouth.

Once Toby was in a hotel coffee-room with his master and a friend of the latter's, when instead of calling for two glasses of beer, the captain called for three.

"Is the extra glass for yourself or for me?" asked his friend.

The extra glass was for Toby, who soon became the subject of general conversation.

"I warrant noo," said a north-country skipper, "that thing would kick up a bonnie shine if you were to gang oot and leave him."

"Would you like to try him?" replied Captain Brown.

"I would," said the Scot, "vera muckle."

Accordingly Toby was imprisoned in one corner of the room, where he was firmly held by the Scotch skipper; and Captain Brown, after giving Toby a glance which meant a great deal, left the room. No sooner had he gone than Toby struggled clear of the Scotchman, and took the nearest route for the door. This necessitated his jumping on to the middle of the table, and here Toby missed his footing and fell, kicking over glasses, decanters, and pewter pots by the half-dozen. He next floored a half-drunken fellow, over whose head he tried to spring, and so secured his escape, and left the Scotch skipper to pay the bill.

One day Captain Brown was going up the steps of the Custom-house, when he found that not only Toby but Toby's two pigs were following close at his heels. He turned round to drive them all back; but Toby never thought for a moment that his master meant that *he* should return.

"It is these two awkward creatures of pigs," thought Toby, "that master can't bear the sight of."

So Toby went to work at once, and first rolled one piggie downstairs, then went up and rolled the other piggie downstairs; but the one piggie always got to the top of the stairs again by the time his brother piggie was rolled down to the bottom. Thinking that as far as appearances went, Toby had his work cut out for the next half-hour, his master entered the Custom-house. But Toby and his friends soon found some more congenial employment; and when Captain Brown returned, he found them all together in an outer room, dancing about with the remains of a new mat about their necks, which they had just succeeded in tearing to pieces.

Their practical jokes cost the captain some money one way or another.

One day the three friends made a combined attack on a woman who was carrying a young pig in a sack; this little pig happened to squeak, when Toby and his pigs went to the rescue. They tore the woman's dress to atoms and delivered the little pig. Toby was very much addicted to describing the arc of a circle; that was all very good when it was merely a fence he was flying over, but when it happened that a window was in the centre of the arc, then it came rather hard on the captain's pocket.

In order to enable him to pick up a little after his long voyage, Toby was sent to country lodgings at a farmer's. But barely a week had elapsed when the farmer sent him back again with his compliments, saying that he would not keep him for his weight in gold. He led his, the farmer's, sheep into all sorts of mischief that they had never dreamed of before, and he defied the dogs, and half-killed one or two of them.

Toby returned like himself, for when he saw his master in the distance he baa-ed aloud for joy, and flew towards him like a wild thing, dragging the poor boy in the mud behind him.

Toby next took out emigrants to New York, and was constantly employed all day in sending the steerage passengers off the quarter-deck. He never hurt the children, however, but contented himself by tumbling them along the deck and stealing their bread-and-butter.

From New York Toby went to Saint Stephens. There a dog flew out and bit Captain Brown in the leg. It was a dear bite, however, for the dog, for Toby caught him in the act, and hardly left life enough in him to crawl away. At Saint Stephens Toby was shorn, the weather being oppressively hot. No greater insult could have been offered him. His anger and chagrin were quite ludicrous to witness. He examined himself a dozen times, and every time he looked round and saw his naked back he tried to run away from himself. He must have thought with the wee "wifiekie comin' frae the fair—This is no me surely, this is no me." But when his master, highly amused at his antics, attempted to add insult to injury by pointing his finger at him and laughing him to scorn, Toby's wrath knew no bounds, and he attacked the captain on the spot. He managed, however, to elude the blow, and Toby walked on shore in a pet. Whether it was that he was ashamed of his ridiculous appearance, or of attempting to strike his kind master in anger, cannot be known, but for three days and nights Toby never appeared, and the captain was very wretched indeed. But when he did return, he was so exceedingly penitent and so loving and coaxing that he was forgiven on the spot.

When Toby arrived with his vessel in Queen's Dock, Liverpool, on a rainy morning, some nice fresh hay was brought on board. This was a great treat for Toby, and after he had eaten his fill, he thought he could not do better than sleep among it, which thought he immediately transmuted to action, covering himself all up except the head. By-and-by the owner of the ship came on board, and taking a survey of things in general, he spied Toby's head.

"Hollo!" he said, "what's that?" striking Toby's nose with his umbrella. "Stuffed, isn't it?"

Stuffed or not stuffed, there was a stuffed body behind it, as the owner soon knew to his cost, and a spirit that never brooked a blow, for next moment he found himself lying on his back with his legs waggling in the air in the most expressive manner, while Toby stood triumphantly over him waiting to repeat the dose if required.

The following anecdote shows Toby's reasoning powers. He was standing one day near the dockyard foreman's house, when the dinner bell rang, and just at the same time a servant came out with a piece of bread for Toby. Every day after this, as soon as the same bell rang—"That calls me," said Toby to himself, and off he would trot to the foreman's door. If the door was not at once opened he used to knock with his head; and he would knock and knock again until the servant, for peace' sake, presented him with a slice of bread.

And now Toby's tale draws near its close. The owner never forgave that blow, and one day coming by chance across the following entry in the ship's books, "Tenedos—to one sheep, five shillings," he immediately claimed Toby as his rightful property. It was all in vain that the captain begged hard for his poor pet, and even offered ten times his nominal value for him. The owner was deaf to all entreaties and obdurate. So the two friends were parted. Toby was sent a long way into the country to Carnoustie, to amuse some of the owner's children, who were at school there. But the sequel shows how very deeply and dearly even a sheep can love a kind-hearted master. After the captain left him, poor Toby refused all food and *died of grief in one week's time*.

Chapter Eleven.

A Bird-Haunted Lawn in June—Pets of my Early Years.

> "Go, beautiful and gentle dove!
> But whither wilt thou go?
> For though the clouds tide high above.
> How sad and waste is all below.
>
> "The dove flies on.
> In lonely flight
> She flies from dawn to dark;
> And now, amidst the gloom of night,
> Comes weary to the ark.
> 'Oh! let me in,' she seems to say,
> 'For long and lone has been my way;
> Oh! once more, gentle mistress, let me rest
> And dry my dripping plumage on thy breast.'"

Rev. W. Bowles.

There is a kind of semi-wildness about our back lawn that a great many people profess to admire. It stretches downwards from my indoor study, from where the French windows open on to the trellised verandah, which in this sweet month of June, as I write, is all a smother of roses. The walk winds downwards well to one side, and not far from a massive hedge, but this hedge is hidden from view for the most part by a ragged row of trees. The Portuguese laurel, tasselled with charming white bloom at present, but otherwise an immense globe of green (you might swing a hammock inside it and no one know you were there), comes first; then tall, dark-needled Austrian pines, their branches trailing on the grass, with hazels, lilacs, and elders, the latter now in bloom. The lawn proper has it pretty much to itself, with the exception of the flower-beds, the rose-standards, and a sprinkling of youthful pines, and it is bounded on the other side by a tall privet hedge—that, too, is all bedecked in bloom. On the other ride of this hedge the view is shut in to some extent by tapering cypress trees, elms, and oaks, but here and there you catch glimpses of the hills and the lovely country beyond. Along this hedge, at present, wallflowers, and scarlet and white and pink-belled foxgloves are blooming.

If you go along the winding pathway, past the bonnie nook—where is now the grave of my dear old favourite Newfoundland (the well-known champion, Theodore Nero)—and if you obstinately refuse to be coaxed by a forward wee side-path into a cool, green grotto, canopied with ivy and lilacs, you will land—nowhere you would imagine at first, but on pushing boughs aside you find a gate, which, supposing you had the key, would lead you out into open country, with the valley of the Thames, stretching from west to east, about a mile distant, and the grand old wooded hills, blue with the softening mist of distance, beyond that. But the lower part of the lawn near that hidden gate is bounded by a bank of glorious foliage—rhododendrons, syringas, trailing roses, and hero-laurels in front, with ash, laburnum, and tall holly trees behind. It may not be right to allow brambles to creep through this bank; nor raspberries, with their drooping cane-work; nor blue-eyed, creeping belladonna; but I like it. I dearly love to see things where you least expect them; to find roses peeping through hedgerows, strawberries building their nests at the foot of gooseberry clumps, and clusters of yellow or red luscious raspberries peeping out from the midst of rhododendron banks, as if fairy fingers were holding them up to view.

I'm not sure that the grass on this pet lawn of mine, is always kept so cleanly shaven as some folks might wish, but for my own part I like it snowed over with daisies and white clover; and, what is more to the point, the birds and the bees like it. Indeed, the lawn is little more than a vast outdoor aviary—it is a bird-haunted lawn. There is a rough,

shallow bath under a tree at the end of it, and here the blackbirds, thrushes, and starlings come to splash early in the morning, and stare up at my window as I dress, as coolly as if they had not been all up in the orchard trees breakfasting off the red-heart cherries. I have come now, after a lapse of four years, to believe that those cherries belong to the birds and not to me, just as a considerable number of pounds of the greengages belong to the wasps.

The nightingales hop around the lawn all day, but they do not bathe, and they do not sing now; they devour terribly long earthworms instead. In the sweet spring-time, in the days of their wooing, they did nothing but sing, and they never slept. Now all is changed, and they do little else save sleep and eat.

There are wild pigeons build here, though it is close to two roads, and I see turtle-doves on the lawn every day.

“Did you commence the study of natural history at an early age, Gordon?” said Frank to me one evening, as we all sat together on this lawn.

“In a practical kind of a way, yes, Frank,” I replied, “and if I live for the next ten thousand years I may make some considerable progress in this study. *Ars longa vita brevia est*, Frank.”

“True; and now,” he continued, “spin us a yarn or two about some of the pets you have had.”

“Well, Frank,” I replied, “as you ask me in that off-hand way, you must be content to take my reminiscences in an off-hand way, too.”

“We will,” said Frank; “won’t we, Ida?”

Ida nodded.

“Given a pen and put in a corner, Frank, I can tell a story as well as my neighbours, but the *extempore* business floors me. I’m shy, Frank, shy. Another cup of tea, Dot—thank you—ahem!”

Pets of my Early Years.

There was no school within about three miles of a property my father bought when I was a little over two years of age. With some help from the neighbours my father built a school, which I believe is now endowed, but at that time it was principally supported by voluntary contributions. I was sent there as a first instalment. I was an involuntary contribution. Nurse carried me there every morning, but I always managed to walk coming back. By sending a child of tender years to a day-school, negative rather than positive good was all that was expected, for my mother frankly confessed that I was only sent to keep me out of mischief. The first few days of my school life flew past quickly enough, for my teacher, a little hunchback, be it remembered, whom you may know by the name of Dominie W—, was very kind to me, candied me and lollipopped me, and I thought it grand fun to sit all day on my little stool, turning over the pages of picture-books, and looking at the other boys getting thrashed. This latter part indeed was the best to me, for the little fellows used to screw their miserable visages so, and make such funny faces, that I laughed and crowed with delight. But I didn’t like it when it came to my own turn. And here is how that occurred:—There was a large pictorial map that hung on the schoolroom wall, covered with delineations of all sorts of wild beasts. These were pointed out to the Bible-class one by one, and a short lecture given on the habits of each, which the boys and girls were supposed to retain in their memories, and retail again when asked to. One day, however, the dromedary became a stumbling-block to all the class; not one of them could remember the name of the beast.

“Did ever I see such a parcel of numskulls?” said Dominie W—. “Why, I believe that child there could tell you.”

I felt sure I could, and intimated as much.

“What is it, then, my dear?” said my teacher encouragingly. “Speak out, and shame the dunces.”

I did speak out, and with appalling effect.

“It’s a schoolmaster,” I said.

“A what?” roared the dominie.

“A schoolmaster,” I said, more emphatically; “it has a hump on its back.”

I didn’t mean to be rude, but I naturally imagined that the hump was the badge of the scholastic calling, and that the dromedary was dominie among the beasts.

“Oh! indeed,” said Dominie W—; “well, you just wait there a minute, and I’ll make a hump on your back.” And he moved off towards the desk for the strap.

As I didn’t want a hump on my back, instant flight suggested itself to me, as the only way of meeting the difficulty; so I made tracks for the door forthwith.

“Hold him, catch him!” cried the dominie, and a big boy seized me by the skirt of my dress. But I had the presence of mind to meet my teeth in the fleshy part of the lad’s hand; then I was free to flee. Down the avenue I ran as fast as two diminutive shanks could carry me, but I had still a hundred yards to run, and capture seemed inevitable, for the dominie was gaining on me fast. But help was most unexpectedly at hand, for, to my great joy, our pet bull-terrier, “Danger,” suddenly put in an appearance. The dog seemed to take in the whole situation at a glance, and it was now the dominie’s turn to shake in his shoes. And Danger went for him in grand style, too. I don’t know that he hurt him very much, but to have to return to school with five-and-thirty pounds of pure-bred bull-terrier hanging to one’s hump, cannot be very grateful to one’s feelings. I was not sent to that seminary any more for a year, but it dawned upon me even thus early that dogs have their uses.

When I was a year or two older I had as a companion and pet a black-and-tan terrier called “Tip,” and a dear good-hearted game little fellow he was; and he and I were always of the same mind, full of fan and fond of mischief. Tip could fetch and carry almost anything; a loose railway rug, for example, would be a deal heavier than he, but if told he would drag one up three flights of stairs walking backwards. Again, if you showed him anything, and then hid it, he would find it wherever it was. He was not on friendly terms with the cat though; she used him shamefully, and finding him one day in a room by himself she whacked him through the open window, and Tip fell two storeys. Dead? No. Tip fell on his feet.

One day Tip was a long time absent, and when he came into the garden he came up to me and placed a large round ball all covered with thorns at my feet.

“Whatever is it, Tip?” I asked.

“That’s a hoggie,” said Tip, “and ain’t my mouth sore just.”

I put down my hands to lift it up, and drew them back with pricked and bleeding fingers. Then I shrieked, and nursie came running out, and shook me, and whacked me on the back as if I had swallowed a bone. That’s how she generally served me.

“What is it now?” she cried; “you’re never out of mischief; did Tip bite you?”

“No, no,” I whimpered, “the beastie bited me.”

Then I had three pets for many a day, Tip and the cat and the hedgehog, who grew very tame indeed.

Maggie Hay was nursie’s name. I was usually packed off to bed early in the evening, and got the cat with me, and in due time Maggie came. But one night the cat and I quarrelled, so I slipped out of bed, and crept quietly down to the back kitchen, and returned with my hoggie in the front of my nightdress, and went back to my couch. I was just in that blissful state of independence, between sleeping and waking, when Maggie came upstairs to bed. The hoggie had crept out of my arms, and had gone goodness knows whither, and I didn’t care, but I know this much, that Maggie had no sooner got in and laid down, than she gave vent to a loud scream, and sprang on to the floor again, and stood shaking and shivering like a ghost in the moonlight. I suppose she had laid herself down right on top of my hoggie, and hoggie not being used to such treatment had doubtless got its spines up at once. I leave you to guess whether Maggie gave me a shaking or not. This pet lived for three long happy months, and its food was porridge and milk, morsels of green food, and beetles, which it caught on its own account. But I suppose it longed for its old gipsy life in the green fields, and missed the tender herbs and juicy slugs it had been wont to gather by the foot of the hedgerows. I don’t know, but one morning I found my poor hoggie rolled up in a little ball with one leg sticking out; it was dead and stiff.

Maggie took it solemnly up by that one leg as if it had been a handle and carried it away and buried it; then she came back with her eyes wet and kissed me, and gave me a large—very large—slice of bread with an extra allowance of treacle on it. But there seemed to be a big lump in my throat; I tried hard to eat, but failed miserably, only—I managed to lick the treacle off.

My little friend Tip was of a very inquiring turn of mind, and this trait in his character led to his miserable end.

One day some men were blasting stones in a neighbouring field, and Tip seeing what he took to be a rat's tail sticking out of a stone, and a thin wreath of blue smoke curling up out of it, went to investigate.

He did not come back to tell tales; he was carried on high with the hurtling stones and *débris*, and I never saw my poor Tip any more.

Chapter Twelve.

Early Studies in Natural History.

> "Within a bush her covert nest
> A little birdie fondly prest;
> The dew sat chilly on her breast,
> Sae early in the morning."
>
> Burns.

Shortly after the melancholy death of Tip, some one presented me with a puppy, and some one else presented me with a rook. My knowledge of natural history was thus progressing. That unhappy pup took the distemper and died. If treated for the dire complaint at all, it was no doubt after the rough and harsh fashion, common, till very lately, of battling with it.

So my puppy died. As to the rook, a quicker fate was reserved for him. The bird and I soon grew as thick as thieves. He was a very affectionate old chap, and slept at night in a starling's cage in the bedroom. He was likewise a somewhat noisy bird, and very self-asserting, and would never allow us to sleep a wink after five in the morning. Maggie tried putting his breakfast into the cage the night before. This only made matters worse, for he got up at three o'clock to eat it, and was quite prepared for another at five. Maggie said she loved the bird, because he saved her so many scoldings by wakening her so punctually every morning. I should think he did waken her, with a vengeance too. He had a peculiar way of roaring "Caw! Caw!" that would have wakened Rip Van Winkle himself. Like the great Highland bagpipe, the voice of a healthy rook sounds very well about a mile off, but it isn't exactly the thing for indoor delectation. But my uncle sat down upon my poor rook one day, and the bird gave vent to one last "Caw!" and was heard again—nevermore. My mother told him he ought to be more careful. My uncle sat down on the same chair again next day, and, somehow, a pin went into him further than was pleasant. Then I told him he ought to be more careful, and he boxed my ears, and I bit him, and nursie came and shook me and whacked me on the back as if I had been choking; so, on the whole, I think I was rather roughly dealt with between the two of them. However, I took it out of Maggie in another way, and found her very necessary and handy in my study of natural history, which, even at this early age, I had developed a taste for. I had as a plaything a small wooden church, which I fondled all day, and took to bed with me at night. One fine day I had an adventure with a wasp which taught me a lesson. I had half-filled my little church with flies to represent a congregation, but as they wouldn't sing unless I shook them, and as Maggie told me nobody ever shook a real church to make the congregation sing, I concluded it was a parson they lacked, and went to catch a large yellow fly, which I saw on the window-ledge. *He* would make them sing I had no

doubt. Well, he made me sing, anyhow. It was long before I forgot the agony inflicted by that sting. Maggie came flying towards me, and I hurled church, congregation, and all at her head, and went off into a first-class fit. But this taught me a lesson, and I never again interfered with any animal or insect, until I had first discovered what their powers of retaliation were; beetles and flies were old favourites, whose attendance at church I compelled. I wasn't sure of the earthworm at first, nor of the hairy caterpillar, but a happy thought struck me, and, managing to secure a specimen of each, and holding them in a tea-cup, I watched my chance, and when nursie wasn't looking emptied them both down her back. When the poor girl wriggled and shrieked with horror, I looked calmly on like a young stoic, and asked her did they bite. Finding they didn't, they became especial favourites with me. I put every new specimen I found, instantly or on the first chance, down poor Maggie's back or bosom, and thus, day by day, while I increased in stature, day by day I grew in knowledge. I wasn't quite successful once, however, with a centipede. I had been prospecting, as the Yankees say, around the garden, searching for specimens, and I found this chap under a stone. He was about as long as a penholder, and had apparently as many legs as a legion of the Black Watch. Under these circumstances, thinks I to myself what a capital parson he'll make. So I dismissed all my congregation on the spot, and placed the empty church at his disposal, with the door thereof most invitingly open, but he wouldn't hear of going in. Perhaps, thought I, he imagines the church isn't long enough to hold him, so I determined, for his own comfort, to cut him in two with my egg-cup, then I could capture first one end of him, and then the other, and empty them down nursie's back, and await results. But, woe is me! I had no sooner commenced operations than the ungrateful beast wheeled upwards round my finger and bit it well. I went away to mourn.

When nine years old my opportunities for studying birds and beasts were greatly increased, for, luckily for me, the teacher of my father's school nearly flogged the life out of me. It might have been more lucky still had he finished the job. However, this man was a bit of a dandy in his way, and was very proud of his school. And one fine day who should walk in at the open doorway but "Davy," my pet lamb. As soon as he spied me he gave vent to a joyful "Ba-a!" and as there was a table between us, and he couldn't reach me, he commenced to dance in front of it.

"Good gracious!" cried the teacher, "a sheep of all things in my school, and positively dancing." On rushing to save my pet, whom he began belabouring with a cane, the man turned all his fury on me, with the above gratifying result.

I was sent to a far-off seminary after this.

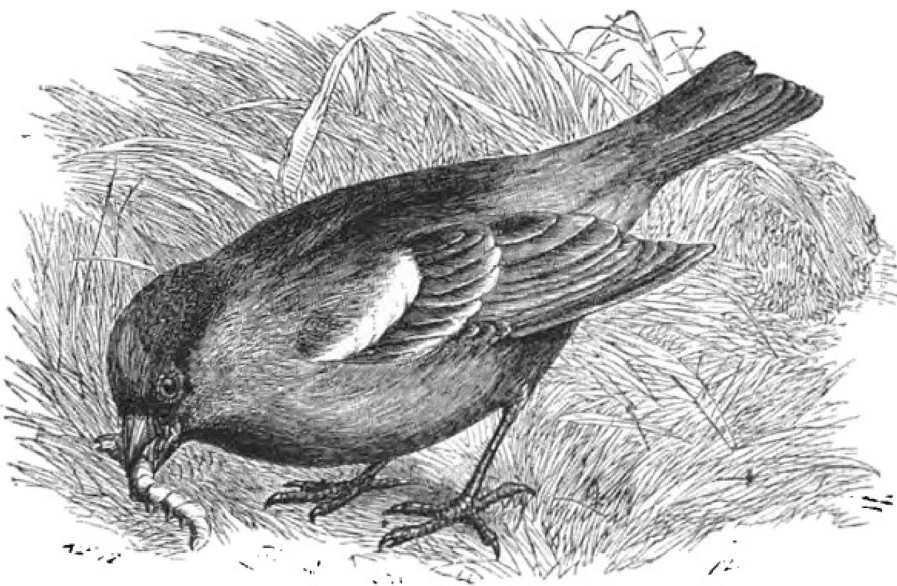
Three miles was a long distance for a child to walk to school over a rough country. It was rough but beautiful, hill and dale, healthy moorlands, and pine woods. It was glorious in summer, but when the snows of winter fell and the roads were blocked, it was not quite so agreeable.

I commenced forthwith, however, to make acquaintance with every living thing, whether it were a creepie-creepie living under a stone, or a bull in the fields.

My pets, by the way, were a bull, that I played with as a calf, and could master when old and red-eyed and fierce, half a dozen dogs, and a peacock belonging to a farmer. This bird used to meet me every morning, not for crumbs—he never would eat—but for kind words and caresses.

The wild birds were my especial favourites. I knew them all, and all about them, their haunts, their nests, their plumage, and eggs and habits of life. I lived as much in trees as on the ground, used to study in trees, and often fell asleep aloft, to the great danger of my neck.

I do not think I was ever cruel—intentionally, at all events—to any bird or creature under my care, but I confess to having sometimes taken a young bird from the nest to make a pet of.



I myself, when a little boy, have often sat for half an hour at a time swinging on the topmost branches of a tall fir-tree, with my waistcoat pocket filled with garden worms, watching the ways and motions of a nest of young rooks, and probably I would have to repeat my aerial visit more than once before I could quite make up my mind which to choose. I always took the sauciest, noisiest young rascal of the lot, and I was never mistaken in my choice. Is it not cruelty on my part, you may inquire, to counsel the robbery of a rook's nest? Well, there are the feelings of the parent birds to be considered, I grant you, but when you take two from five you leave three, and I do not think the

rooks mourn many minutes for the missing ones. An attempt was made once upon a time to prove that rooks can't count farther than three. Thus: an ambush was erected in the midst of a potato field, where rooks were in the habit of assembling in their dusky thousands. When into this ambush there entered one man, or two men, or three men, the gentlemen in black quietly waited until the last man came forth before commencing to dig for potatoes, but when four men entered and *three* came out, the rooks were satisfied and went to dinner at once. But I feel sure this rule of three does not hold good as far as their young ones are concerned. I know for certain that either cats or dogs will miss an absentee from a litter of even six or more.

Books are very affectionate towards their owners, very tricky and highly amusing. They are great thieves, but they steal in such a funny way that you cannot be angry with them.

Chapter Thirteen.

All About my Bird Pets.

“Ye ken where yon wee burnie, love,
Runs roarin’ to the sea,
And tumbles o’er its rocky bed
Like spirit wild and free.
The mellow mavis tunes his lay,
The blackbird swells his note,
And little robin sweetly sings
Above the woody grot.”

W. Cameron.

“The gladsome lark o’er moor and fell,
The lintie in the bosky dell,
No blither than your bonnie sel’,
My ain, my artless Mary.”

Idem.

Scottish poets cannot keep birds out of their love-songs any more than they can the gloaming star, the bloom of flowers, the scent of golden gorse, or soft winds sighing through woods in summer. And well may the lovely wee linnet be compared to a young and artless maiden, so good and innocent, so gentle and unobtrusive is the bird, and yet withal so blithe. Nor could a better pet be found for girls of a quiet, retiring disposition than the linnet. Some call it a shy bird. This hardly coincides with my own experience, and I dearly like to study the characters of birds and animals of all kinds, and have often discovered something to love and admire even in the wildest beasts that ever roamed o’er prairie or roared in jungle. No, the linnet is not shy, but he is unostentatious; he seems to have the tact to know when a little music would be appreciated, and is by no means loath to trill his sweet song. He is also most affectionate, and if his mistress be but moderately kind to him, he may *like* other people well enough, but he will *love* but her alone, and will often and often pipe forth a few bars, in so low a key that she cannot but perceive they are meant for her ear only.

Even in the wild state the rose-linnet courts retirement. Thinking about this bird brings me back once more to the days of my boyhood. I am a tiny, tiny lad trudging home from the distant day-school, over a wide, wild moorland with about a stone of books—Greek and Latin classics and lexicons—in a leather strap over my shoulder. I am—as I ever wished to be—alone. That is, I have no human companionship. But I have that of the wild birds, and the thousand and one wild creatures that inhabit this great stretch of heathy wold, and I fancy they all know me, from yonder hawk poised high in the air to the merlin that sings on a branch of broom; from the wily fox or fierce polecat to the wee mouse that nestles among the withered grass. I have about a score of nests to pay a visit to—the great long-winged screaming whaup’s (curlew’s) among the rushes; the mire-snipe’s and wild duck’s near the marsh; the water-hen’s, with her charming red eggs, near the streamlet; the peewit’s on the knoll; the stonechat’s, with eggs of milky blue, in the cairn; the laverock’s, the woodlark’s, and the wagtail’s, and last, but not least, the titlin’s nest, with the cuckoo’s egg in it. But I linger but a short time at any of these to-day, for on my way to school I saw a rose-linnet singing on a

thorn, and have been thinking about it all day. I have been three times thrashed for Cicero, and condemned to detention for two hours after my schoolmates are gone. I have escaped through the window, however. I shall be thrashed for this in the morning, but I should be thrashed for something, at all events, so that matters nothing. The sun is still high in the heavens, summer days are long, I'll go and look for my linnet's nest; I haven't seen one this year yet. The heather is green as yet, and here and there on the moorland is a bush or patch of golden furze, not tall and straggling like the bushes you find in woods, that seem to stretch out their necks as if seeking in vain for the sunlight, but close, compact, hugging the ground, and seeming to weigh down the warm summer air around it with the sweetness of its perfume.

Now, on one of those very bushes, and on the highest twig thereof, I find my cock linnet. His head is held well up, and his little throat swells and throbs with his sweet, melodious song. But I know this is all tact on the bird's part, and that his heart beats quick with fear as he sees me wandering searchingly from bush to bush. He is trying to look unconcerned. He saw me coming, and enjoined his pretty mate to lie close and not fly out, assuring her that if she did so all would be well.

He does not even fly away at my approach.

"There is no nest of mine anywhere near," he seems to say. "Is it likely I would be singing so blithely if there were?"

"Ah! but," I reply, "I feel sure there is, else why are you dressed so gaily? why have you cast aside your sombre hues and donned that crimson vest?"

Pop—I am at the right bush now, and out flies the modest wee female linnet. She had forgotten all her mate told her, she was so frightened she could not lie close. And now I lift a branch and keek in, and am well rewarded. A prettier sight than that little nest affords, to any one fond of birds, cannot easily be conceived. It is not a large one; the outside of it is built of knitted grass and withered weeds, and on the whole it is neat; but inside it is the perfection of beauty and rotundity, and softly and warmly lined with hair of horse and cow, with a few small feathers beneath, to give it extra cosiness. And the eggs—how beautiful! Books simply tell you they are white, dotted, and speckled with red. They are more than this; the groundwork is white, to be sure, but it looks as if the markings were traced by the Angers of some artist fay. It looks as though the fairy artist had been trying to sketch upon them the map of some strange land, for here are blood-red lakes—square, or round, or oval—and rivers running into them and rivers rolling out, so that having once seen a rose-linnet's egg, you could never mistake it for any other.

"I think," said Ida, "I should like a linnet, if I knew how to treat it."

"Well," I continued, "let me give you a little advice. I have interested you in this bonnie bird, let me tell you then how you are to treat him if you happen to get one, so as to make him perfectly happy, with a happiness that will be reflected upon you, his mistress."

I always counsel any one who has a pet of any kind to be in a manner jealous of it, for one person is enough to feed and tend it, and that person should be its owner.

Of course, if you mean to have one as a companion you will procure a male bird, and one as pretty as possible, but even those less bright in colour sing well. Let his cage be a square or long one, and just as roomy as you please; birds in confinement cannot have too much space to move about in. Keep the cage exceedingly clean and free from damp, give the bird fresh water every morning, and see that he has a due allowance of clean dry seed. The food is principally canary-seed with some rape in it, and a small portion of flax; but although you may now and then give him a portion of bruised hemp seed, be careful and remember hemp is both stimulating and over-fattening. Many a bird gets enlargement of the liver, and heart disease and consequent asthma, from eating too freely and often of hemp. In summer it should never be given, but in cold weather it is less harmful.

Green food should not be forgotten. The best is chic-weed—ripe—and groundsel, with—when you can get it—a little watercress. There are many seedling weeds which you may find in your walks by the wayside, which you may bring home to your lintie. If you make a practice of doing this, he will evince double the joy and pleasure at seeing you on your return.

Never leave any green food longer than a day either in or over the cage. So shall your pet be healthy, and live for many years to give you comfort with his sweet fond voice. I may just mention that the linnet will learn the song of some other birds, notably that of the woodlark. Sea-sand may be put in the bottom of the cage, and when the bird begins to lose its feathers and moult, be extra kind and careful with it, covering the cage partly over, and taking care to keep away draughts. After the feathers begin to come you may put a rusty nail in the water. This is a tonic, but I do not believe in giving it too soon.

HOME OF THE CURLEW, OR "WHAUP."

Let me now say a word about another of my boyhood's pets—the robin.

But I hardly know where or how I am to begin, nor am I sure that my theme will not run right away with me when I do commence. My winged horse—my Pegasus—must be kept well in hand while speaking about my little favourite, the robin. Happy thought, however! I will tell you nothing I think you know already.

The robin, then, like the domestic cat, is too well known to need description. We who live in the country have him with us all the year round, and we know his charming song wherever we hear it. He may seem to desert our habitations for a few months in the early spring-time, for he is then very busy, having all the care and responsibility of a family on his head; but he is not far away. He is only in the neighbouring grove or orchard, and if we pay him a visit there he will sing to us very pleasantly, as if glad to see us. And one fine morning we find him on the lawn-gate again, bobbing and becking to us, and looking as proud as a pasha because he has his little wife and three of the family with him. His wife is not a Jenny Wren, as some suppose, but a lovely wee robin just like himself, only a trifle smaller, and not quite so red on the breast nor so bold as her partner. And the young ones, what charmingly innocent little things they look, with their broad beaks and their apologies for tails! I have often known them taken for juvenile thrushes, because their breasts are not red, but a kind of yellow with speckles in it.

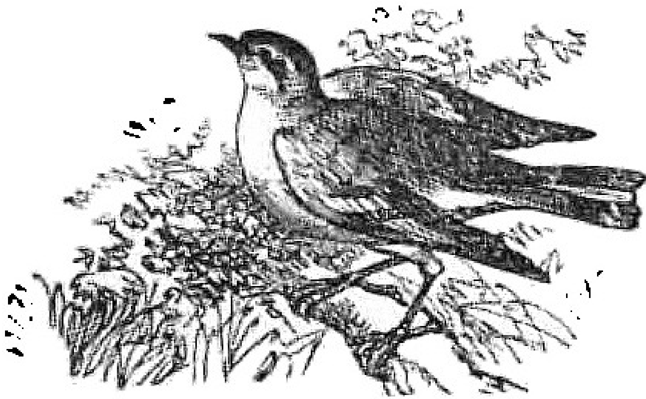
"Tcheet, tcheet!" cries Robin, on the gate, bobbing at you again; "throw out some crumbs. My wife is a bit shy; she has never been much in society; but just see how the young ones can eat."

Well, Robin is one of the earliest birds of a morning that I know. He is up long before the bickering sparrows, and eke before the mavis. His song mingles with your morning dreams, and finally wakes you to the joys and duties of another day, and if you peep out at the window you will probably see him on the lawn, hauling some unhappy worm out of its hole. I have seen Robin get hold of too big a worm, and, after pulling a piece of it out as long as a penholder, fly away with a frightened "Tcheet, tcheet!" as much as to say, "Dear me! I didn't know there were yards and yards of you. You must be a snake or something."

Robin sings quite late at night too, long after the mavis is mute and every other bird has retired. And all day long in autumn he sings. During the winter months, especially if there be snow on the ground, he comes boldly to the window-ledge, and doesn't ask, but demands his food, as brazenly as a German bandsman. Sparrows usually come with him, but if they dare to touch a bit of food that he has his eye on they catch it. My robin insists upon coming into my study in winter. He likes the window left open though, and I don't, and on this account we have little petulancies,

and if I turn him out he takes revenge by flying against the French window, and mudding all the pane with his feet.

Almost every country house has one or two robins that specially belong to it, and very jealous they are of any strange birds that happen to come nigh the dwelling. While bird-nesting one time in company with another boy, we found a robin's nest in a bank at the foot of a great ash tree. There were five eggs in it. On going to see it two days after, we found the nest and eggs intact, but two other eggs had been laid and deposited about a foot from the bank. We took the hint, and carried away these two, but did not touch the others. The eggs are not very pretty.



While shooting in the wildest part of the Highlands, and a long way from home, I have often preferred a bed with my dog on the heather to the smoky hospitality of a hut; and I have found robins perched close by me of a morning, singing ever so sweetly and low. They were only trying to earn the right to pick up the crumbs my setter and I had left at supper, but this shows you how fond these birds are of human society.

In a cage the robin will live well and healthily for many years, if kindly and carefully treated. He will get so tame that you needn't fear to let him have his liberty about the room.

Let the cage be large and roomy, and covered partly over with a cloth. The robin loves the sunshine and a clean, dry cage, and, as to food, he is not very particular. Give him German paste—with a little bruised hemp and maw seed, with insects, beetles, grubs, garden and meal worms, etc. Let him have clean gravel frequently, and fresh water every morning. Now and then, when you think your pet is not particularly lively, put a rusty nail in the water.

Chapter Fourteen.

The Redstart, the Goldfinch, the Mavis, and Merle.

> "They sang, as blithe as finches sing,
> That flutter loose on golden wing,
>   And frolic where they list;
> Strangers to liberty, 'tis true,
> But that delight they never knew,
>   And therefore never miss'd."
>
> Cowper.

I was creeping, crawling, and scrambling one afternoon in the days of my boyhood, through tall furze at the foot of the Drummond Hill, which in England would be called a mountain. It was the Saturday half-holiday, and I was having a fine time of it among the birds. I was quite a mile away from any human dwelling, and, I flattered myself, from any human being either. I was speedily undeceived though. "Come out o' there, youngster," cried a terrible voice, almost to my ear. "I thought ye were a rabbit; I was just going to chuck a stone at your head."

I crept forth in fear and trembling.

A city rough of the lowest type—you could tell that from the texture of the ragged, second-hand garments he wore; from his slipshod feet, his horrid cap of greasy fur, and pale, unwholesome face.

He proceeded to hoist a leafless branch, smeared with birdlime, in a conspicuous place, and not far off he deposited a cage, with a bird in it. Then he addressed me.

“I’m goin’ away for half an hour, and you’ll stop here and watch. If any birds get caught on the twigs, when I come back I’ll mebbe gie you something.”

When he came back he did “gie me something.” He boxed my ears soundly, because I lay beside the cage, and talked to the little bird all the time instead of watching.

You may guess how I loved that man. I have had the same amount of affection for the whole bird-catching fraternity ever since, and I do a deal every summer to spoil their sport. I look upon them as followers of a most sinful calling, and just as cruel and merciless as the slave-traders of Southern Africa. Many a little heart they break; they separate parent birds, and tear the old from their young, who are left to starve to death in the nest.

The redstart was a great favourite with me in these joyous days. In size and shape he is not unlike the robin; but the bill is black, the forehead white, the rest of the upper part of the body a bluish grey. The wings are brownish, the bird wears a bib of black, but on the upper portion of the chest and all down the sides there is red, though not so bright in colour as the robin’s breast. That is the plumage of the cock-bird, so these birds are easily known. They make charming cage pets, being very affectionate, and as merry as a maiden on May morning, always singing and gay, and so tame that you need not be afraid to let them out of the cage.

Another was the wren. Some would love the mite for pity sake. It is very pretty and very gay, and possesses a sweet little voice of its own; it needs care, however. It must not, on the one hand, be kept too near a fire or in too warm a room, and on the other it should be well covered up at night; a draught is fatal to such a bird. There is also the golden-headed wren, the smallest of our British birds, but I do not remember ever having seen one kept in a cage. There is no accounting for tastes, however. I knew a young lady in Aberdeen who kept a golden eagle in a cage of huge dimensions. He was the admiration of all beholders, and the terror of inquisitive schoolboys, who, myself among the number, fully believed he ate a whole horse every week, and ever so many chickens. While gazing at the bird, you could not help feeling thankful you were on the *outside* of the cage. I admired, but I did not love him much. He caught me by the arm one day, with true Masonic grip—I loved him even less after that.

Wrens are fed in the same way as robins or nightingales are. In the wild state they build a large roundish nest, principally of green moss outside, and with very little lining. There is just one tiny hole left in the side capable of admitting two fingers. Eggs about ten in number, very small, white, and delicately ticked with red. If I remember rightly, the golden wren’s are pure white. The nests I have found were in bushes, holly, fir, or furze, or under the branches of large trees close to the trunk. The back of the nest is nearly always towards the north and east.

The stonechat or stone-checker is a nice bird as to looks, but possesses but little song. It would require the same treatment in cage or aviary as the robin. So I believe would the whinchat, but I have no practical knowledge of either as pets.

With the exception of the kingfisher, I do not recollect any British bird with brighter or more charming plumage, than our friend the goldfinch. He is arrayed in crimson and gold, black, white, and brown, but the colours are so beautifully placed and blended, that, rich and gaudy though they be, they cannot but please the eye of the most artistic. The song of the goldfinch is very sweet, he is with all a most affectionate pet, and exceedingly clever, so much so that he may be taught quite a number of so-called tricks.

In the wild state the bird eats a variety of seeds of various weeds that grow by the wayside, and at times in the garden of the sluggard. Dandelion and groundsel seed are the chief of these, and later on in the season thistle seed. So fond, indeed, is the goldfinch of the thistle that the only wonder is that our neighbours beyond the Tweed do not claim it as one of *the* birds of Bonnie Scotland, as they do the curlew and the golden eagle. But, on the other hand, they might on the same plea claim a certain quadruped, whose length of ear exceeds its breadth of intellect.

“Won’t you tell us something,” said Ida, “about the blackbird and thrush? Were they not pets of your boyhood?”

“They were, dear, and if I once begin talking about them I will hardly finish to-night.”

“But just a word or two about them.”

It is the poet Mortimer Collins that says so charmingly:

> “All through the sultry hours of June,
> From morning blithe to golden noon,
> And till the star of evening climbs
> The grey-blue East, a world too soon,
> There sings a thrush amid the limes.”

Whether in Scotland or England, the mavis, or thrush, is one of the especial favourites of the pastoral poet and lyrist. And well the bird deserves to be. No sweeter song than his awakes the echoes of woodland or glen. It is shrill, piping, musical. Tannahill says he “gars (makes) echo *ring* frae tree to tree.” That is precisely what the charming songster does do. It is a bold, clear, ringing song that tells of the love and joy at the birdie’s heart. If that joy could not find expression in song, the bird would pine and die, as it does when caught, caged, and improperly treated. When singing he likes to perch himself among the topmost branches; he likes to see well about him, and perhaps the beauties he sees around him tend to make him sing all the more blithely. But though seeing, he is not so easily seen. I often come to the door of my garden study and say to myself, “Where can the bird be to-night?” This, however, is when the foliage is on orchard and oaks. But his voice sometimes sounds so close to my ear that I am quite surprised when I find him singing among the boughs of a somewhat distant tree. This is my mavis, my particular mavis. In summer he awakes me with his wild lilts, long ere it is time to get up, and he continues his song “till the star of evening climbs the grey-blue East,” and sometimes for an hour or more after that. I think, indeed, that he likes the gloaming best, for by that witching time nearly all the other birds have retired, and there is nothing to interrupt him.

**"May I not dream God sends thee there,
Thou mellow angel of the air."**

In winter my mavis sings whenever the weather is mild and the grass is visible. But he does not think of turning up of a morning until the sun does, and he retires much earlier. I have known my mavis now nearly two years, and I think he knows me. But how, you may ask me, Frank, do I know that it is the selfsame bird. I reply that not only do we, the members of my own family, know this mavis, but those of some of my neighbours as well, and in this way: all thrushes have certain expressions of their own, which, having once made use of, they never lose. So like are these to human words, that several people hearing them at the same time construe them in precisely the same way. My mavis has four of these in his vocabulary, with which he constantly interlards his song, or rather songs. They form the choruses, as it were, of his vocal performances. The chorus of one is, "Weeda, weeda, weeda;" of another, "Piece o' cake, piece o' cake, piece o' cake;" of the third, "Earwig, earwig, earwig;" and of the last, sung in a most plaintive key, "Pretty deah, pretty deah, pretty deah."

"That is so true," said Ida, laughing.

On frosty days he does not sing, but he will hop suddenly down in front of me while I am feeding the Newfoundlands.

"You can spare a crumb," he says, speaking with his bright eye; "grubs are scarce, and my poor toes are nearly frozen off."

Says the great lyrist—

> "May I not dream God sends thee there,
> Thou mellow angel of the air,
>   Even to rebuke my earthlier rhymes
> With music's soul, all praise and prayer?
> Is that thy lesson in the limes?"

I am lingering longer with the mavis than probably I ought, simply because I want you all to love the bird as I love him. Well, then, I have tried to depict him to you as he is in his native wilds; but see him now at some bud-seller's door in town. Look at his drooping wings and his sadly neglected cage. His eyes seem to plead with each passer-by.

"Won't *you* take me out of here?" he seems to say, "nor you, nor you? Oh! if you would, and were kind to me, I

should sing songs to you that would make the green woods rise up before you like scenery in a beautiful dream."

The male thrush is the songster, the female remains mute. She listens. The plumage is less different than in most birds. The male looks more pert and saucy, if that is any guide.

The mavis is imitative of the songs of other birds. In Scotland they say he *mocks* them. I do not think that is the case, but I know that about a week after the nightingales arrive here my mavis begins to adopt many of their notes, which he loses again when Philomel becomes mute. And I shouldn't think that even my mavis would dare to mock the nightingale.

I have found the nest of the mavis principally in young spruce-trees or tall furze in Scotland, and in England in thick hedges and close-leaved bushes; it is built, of moss, grass, and twigs, and clay-lined. Eggs, four or five, a bluish-green colour with black spots. The missel-thrush, or Highland magpie, builds far beyond any one's reach, high up in the fork of a tree; the eggs are very lovely—whitish, speckled with brown and red. I do not recommend this bird as a pet. He is too wild.

The merle, or blackbird, frequents the same localities as the mavis does, and is by no means a shy bird even in the wild state, though I imagine he is of a quieter and more affectionate disposition. It is my impression that he does not go so far away from the nest of his pretty mate as the mavis, but then, perhaps, if he did he would not be heard. The song is even sweeter to the ear than that of the thrush, although it has far fewer notes. It is quieter, more rich and full, more mellow and melodious. The blackbird has been talked of as "fluting in the grove." The notes are certainly not like those of the flute. They are cut or "tongued" notes like those of the clarionet.

Chapter Fifteen.

A Bird-Haunted Churchyard.

“Adieu, sweet bird! thou erst hast been
Companion of each summer scene,
Loved inmate of our meadows green,
    And rural home;
The music of thy cheerful song
We loved to hear; and all day long
Saw thee on pinion fleet and strong
    About us roam.”

It is usual in the far north of Scotland, where the writer was reared, to have, as in England, the graveyard surrounding the parish church. The custom is a very ancient and a very beautiful one; life’s fitful fever past and gone, to rest under the soft sward, and under the shadow of the church where one gleaned spiritual guidance. There is something in the very idea of this which tends to dispel much of the gloom of death, and cast a halo round the tomb itself.

But at the very door of the old church of N— a tragedy had, years before I had opened my eyes in life, been enacted, and since that day service had never again been conducted within its walls. The new church was built on an open site quite a mile from the old, which latter stands all by itself—crumbling ivy-clad ruins, in the midst of the greenery of an acre of ancient graves. There is a high wall around it, and giant ash and plane trees in summer almost hide it from view. It is a solitary spot, and on moonlit nights in winter, although the highway skirts it, few there be who care to pass that way. The parish school or academy is situated some quarter of a mile from the auld kirkyard, and in the days of my boyhood even bird-nesting boys seldom, if ever, visited the place. It was not considered “canny.” For me, however, the spot had a peculiar charm. It was so quiet, so retired, and haunted, not with ghosts, but with birds, and many a long sunny forenoon did I spend wandering about in it, or reclining on the grass with my Virgil or Horace in hand—poets, by the way, who can only be thoroughly enjoyed out of doors in the country.

A pair of owls built in this auld kirkyard for years. I used to think they were always the same old pair, who, year after year, stuck to the same old spot, sending their young ones away to the neighbouring woods to begin life on their own account as soon as they were able to fly. They were lazy birds; for two whole years they never built a nest of their own, but took possession of a magpie’s old one. But at last the lady owl said to her lord—

“My lord, this nest is getting quite disreputable—we *must* have a new one this spring.”

“Very well,” said his lordship, looking terribly learned, “but you’ll have to build it, my lady, for I’ve got to think, and think, you know.”

“To be sure, my lord,” said she. “The world would never go on unless you thought, and thought.”

She chose an old window embrasure, and, half hid in ivy, there she built the new nest with weeds and sticks and stubble, while he did nothing but sit and talk Greek and natural philosophy at her.

There were tree sparrows built in the ivy of those crumbling walls, each nest about as big as the bottom of an armchair, and containing as many feathers as would stuff a small pillow-case, to say nothing of threads of all colours, hair, and pieces of printed paper. Seven, eight, and ten eggs would be in some of those, white as to ground, and beautifully speckled with brown and grey.

I have heard the tree sparrow called a nasty, common, dowdy thing. It really is not at all dowdy, and although it may be called the country cousin of the busy, chattering little morsel of feathers and fluff that hops nimbly but noisily about our roof-tops, and is constantly quarrelling with its neighbours, the tree sparrow is far more pretty. Nor is it quite plebeian. It is the *Passer montanus* of some naturalists, the *becfin friquet* of the French; it belongs to the Greek family, the *Fringillidae*, and does not the linnet belong to that family too? Yes, and the beautiful bullfinch and the gaudy goldfinch as well, to say nothing of the siskin and canary, so it cannot be plebeian. The tree sparrow makes a nice wee pet, very loving and gentle, and not at all particular as to food. It likes canary-seed, but insects and worms as well, and it is not shy at picking a morsel of sugar, nor a tiny bit of bread and butter.

There were more birds of the same family that haunted this auld kirkyard. The greenfinch or green-grosbeak used to flit hither and thither among the ivy like a tiny streak of lightning, and the pretty wee redpole was also there.

There was one bird in particular that used to build in the trees that grew inside the graveyard wall. I refer to my old friend and favourite the chaffinch, called in Scotland the boldie. He is most brilliant in plumage, being richly clad in russet red and brown, picked out with blue, yellow, and white. The chaffinch is lovely whether sitting or flying, whether trilling his song with head erect and throat puffed out, or keeking down from the branch of a tree with one saucy eye, to see if any one is going near his nest. His song in the wild state is more celebrated for brilliancy and boldness than for sweetness or variation, but in confinement it may be improved.

But this same nest is something to look at and admire for minutes at a time. I used to think my chaffinch—the chaffinch that built in my churchyard—was particularly proud of his nest.

“Pink, pink, pink,” he used to say to me; “I see you looking up at my nest. You may go up, if you like, and have a look in. *She* is from home just now, and there are four eggs in at present. There will be five by-and-by. Now, did you ever see such beautiful eggs?”

“Never,” I would reply; “they are most lovely.”

“Well, then,” he would continue, “pink, pink, pink! look at the nest itself. What do you think of that for architecture? It is built, you see, some twelve feet from the ground, against the stem, but held in its place by a little branch. It is out of the reach of cats; if it were higher up the wind would shake it, or the hawks would see it. It is not much bigger than your two hands; and just look at the artistic way in which the lichens are mingled with the moss on the outside, to blend with the colour of the tree!”

“Yes, but,” I would remark, “there are bits of paper there, as well as lichens.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” the bird would reply; “bits of paper do almost as well as lichens. Pink, pink, pink! There is the whole of Lord Palmerston’s speech there; Palmerston is a clever man, but he couldn’t build a nest like that.”

I mentioned the redpole. It is, as far as beauty goes, one of the best cage-birds we have; a modest, wee, affectionate, unassuming pet, but deficient in song.

“Cheet, cheet, cheet, cheet, cheet, cheet, chee-ee!” What sweet little voice is that repeating the same soft song over and over again, and dwelling on the last syllable with long-drawn cadence? The music—for music it is, although a song without variations—is coming from yonder bonnie bush of golden-blossomed broom, that grows in the angle between the two walls in a remote corner of the auld kirkyard. I throw Horace down, and get up from the grass and walk towards it.

“Chick, chick, chick, chick, chee-ee!”

“Oh, yes! I daresay you haven’t a nest anywhere near; but I know better.” This is my reply.

I walk across the unhallowed ground, as this patch is called, for—whisper it!—suicides lie here, and the graves have not been raised, nor do stones mark the spot where they lie.

Here is the nest, in under a bit of weedy bank, and yonder is the bird himself—the yellow-hammer, skite, or yellow bunting—looking as gay as a hornet, for well he knows that I will not disturb his treasures. The eggs are shapely, white in ground, and beautifully streaked and speckled, and splashed with reddish brown. But there are no eggs; only four morsels of yellow fluff, apparently, surrounded by four gaping orange-red mouths. But they are cosy. I catch a tiny slug, and break it up between them, and the cock-bird goes on singing among the broom, while the hen perches a little way off, twittering nervously and peevishly.

“Chick, chick, che-ee!” says the bird. “I don’t pretend to build such a pretty nest as the chaffinch; besides, such a flimsy thing as his would not do on the ground; mine has a solid foundation of hay, don’t you see? That keeps out the damp, and that lining of hair is warmer than anything else in the world.”

A poor, persecuted little bird is this same yellow bunting; and schoolboys often, when they find the nest, scatter it

and its precious contents to the four winds of heaven.

All the more reason why we should be kind to the pet if we happen to have it in confinement. It is true the wild song is not very interesting; but when a young one is got, it will improve itself if it can listen to the song of another bird, for nearly all our feathered songsters possess the gift of imitation.

Chapter Sixteen.

A Friend of my Student Days.

> “He was a gash and faithfu’ tyke
> As over lap a sheugh or dyke.”
>
> Burns.

I had cured friend Frank’s dog of some trifling ailment, and she seemed fonder of me than ever. “Poor Meg,” I said, patting her.

Dogs are never ungrateful for kindnesses, but I have seen many noted instances of revenge, and so doubtless have many of my readers. Here is a case. At one time of day my father possessed a breed of beautiful black game-cocks. One of these had a great aversion to dogs, and a bull-terrier, who was tied up in a stall in the stable, came in for a considerable share of blows and abuse from a certain brave bird of the King Jock strain. I myself was a witness to the assault, but I dared not interfere, for to tell you the truth, that game-cock was one too many for me then, and I wouldn’t care to be attacked by a bird of the same kind even now. King Jock had come into the stable to pick a bit by himself, for he was far too cavalierly to eat much before the hens. “Give everything to the ladies and go without yourself” is game-cock etiquette. Presently he spied “Danger” lying in the stall with his head on his two fore-paws.

“Oh! you’re there, are you?” said King Jock, holding his head to the ground, and keening up with one eye at the poor dog. “Didn’t notice ye before. It ain’t so light as it might be.”

Danger gave one apologetic wag of his tail. “Pretty fellow you are, ain’t ye?” continued the cock, edging a bit nearer.

“Eh? Why don’t you speak?”

“Ho! ho! it’s chained ye are, is it? I’ve a good mind to let you have it on that ugly patched face of yours. And, by my halidom, I will too. Who ran through the yard yesterday and scared the senses out of half my harem? Take that, and that, and that. Try to bite, would you? Then you’ll have another; there! and there!”

Poor Danger’s head was covered with round lumps as big as half marbles, and each lump had a spur-hole. Cock Jock had made good practice, which he had much reason to repent, for one day Master Danger broke loose, and went straight away to look for his enemy. Jock possessed a tail that any cock might have been proud of, but after his encounter with Danger his pride had a fall, for in his speedy flight he got stuck in a hedge, and the dog tore every feather out, and would have eaten his way into, and probably through, King Jock himself, if the twig hadn’t snapped, and the bird escaped. After that King Jock was content to treat bull-terriers with quiet disdain.

Dogs know much of what is said to them, especially if you do not speak too fast, for, if you do, they get nervous, and forget their English. It is, in my opinion, better not to alter your form of speech, nor the tone of your voice, when talking to a dog. My old friend Tyro, a half-bred collie, but most beautiful animal, understood and was in the habit of being talked to in three languages, to say nothing of broad Scotch, namely, English, Gaelic, and Latin—no, not dog Latin, by your leave, sir, but the real Simon Pure and Ciceronic. I don’t mean to assert that he could appreciate the beauties of the Bucolics, nor Horatian love lays if read to him; but he would listen respectfully, and he would obey ordinary orders when couched in the Roman tongue. Every animal that had hair and ran was, to Tyro, a cat; every animal that had feathers was a crow, and these he qualified by size. In a flock of sheep, for instance, if you asked him to chase out the *big* “cat,” it was a ram, who got no peace till he came your way; if, in a flock of fowls, you had asked him to chase out the *big* “crow,” it was the cock who had to fly; if you said the wee crow, a bantam or hen would be the victim. An ordinary cat was simply a cat, and if you asked him to go and find one, it would be about the barn-yards or stables he would search. But if you told him to go and find a “grub-cat,” it was off to the hills he would be, and if you listened you would presently hear him in chase, and he would seldom return without a grub-cat, that meant a cat that could be eaten—i.e., a hare or rabbit. He knew when told to go and take a drink of water; but, at sea, the ocean all around him was pointed out to him as the big drink of water. In course of time he grew fond of the sea, though the commotion in the water and the breakers must have been strange and puzzling to him; but if at any time he was told to go and take a look at the big drink of water, he would put his two fore-paws on the bulwarks and watch the waves for many minutes at a time.

“I have often heard you speak of your dog Tyro, Gordon,” said Frank; “can’t you tell us his history?”

“I will, with pleasure,” I replied. “He was *the* dog of my student days. I never loved a dog more, I never loved one so much, with the exception perhaps of Theodore Nero—or you, Aileen, for I see you glancing up at me. No, you needn’t sigh so.”

But about Tyro. Here is his story:—He was bred from a pure Scottish collie, the father a powerful retriever (Irish). “Bah!” some one may here say, “only a mongrel,” a class of dogs whose praises few care to sing, and whose virtues are written in water. A watch-dog of the right sort was Tyro; and from the day when his brown eyes first rested on me, for twelve long years, by sea and land, I never had a more loving companion or trusty friend. He was a large and very strong dog, feathered like a Newfoundland, but with hair so soft and long and glossy, as to gain for him in his native village the epithet of “silken dog.” In colour he was black-and-tan, with snow-white gauntlets and shirt-front. His face was very remarkable, his eyes bright and tender, giving him, with his long, silky ears, almost the expression of a beautiful girl. Being good-mannered, kind, and always properly groomed, he was universally admired, and respected by high and low. He was, indeed, patted by peers and petted by peasants, never objected to in first-class railway cars or steamer saloons, and the most fastidious of hotel waiters did not hesitate to admit him, while he lounged daintily on sofa or ottoman, with the *sang froid* of one who had a right. Tyro came into my possession a round-pawed fun-and-mischief-loving puppy. His first playmate was a barn-door fowl, of the male persuasion, who had gained free access to the kitchen on the plea of being a young female in delicate health; which little piece of deceit, on being discovered by his one day having forgot himself so far as to crow, cost “Maggie,” the name he impudently went by, his head. Very dull indeed was poor Tyro on the following day, but when the same evening he found Maggie’s head and neck heartlessly exposed on the dunghill, his grief knew no bounds. Slowly he brought it to the kitchen, and with a heavy sigh deposited it on the hearthstone-corner, and all the night and part of next day it was “waked,” the pup refusing all food, and flashing his teeth meaningly at whosoever attempted to remove it, until sleep at last soothed his sorrow. I took to the dog after that, and never repented it, for he saved my life, of which anon. Shortly after his “childish sorrow,” Tyro had a difference of opinion with a cat, and got rather severely handled, and this I think it was that led him, when a grown dog, to a confusion of ideas regarding these animals, *plus* hares and rabbits; “when taken to be well shaken,” was his motto, adding “wherever seen,” so he slew them indiscriminately. This cat-killing propensity was exceedingly reprehensible, but the habit once formed never could be cured; although I, stimulated by the loss of guinea after guinea, whipped him for it, and many an old crone—deprived of her pet—has scolded him in English, Irish, and Scotch, all with the same effect.

Talking of cats, however, there was *one* to whom Tyro condescendingly forgave the sin of existing. It so fell out that, in a fight with a staghound, he was wounded in a large artery, and was fast bleeding to death, because no one dared to go near him, until a certain sturdy eccentric woman, very fond of our family, came upon the scene. She quickly enveloped her arms with towels, to save herself from bites, and thus armed, thumbed the artery for two hours; then dressing it with cobwebs, saved the dog’s life. Tyro became, when well, a constant visitor at the woman’s cottage; he actually came to love her, often brought her the hares he killed, and, best favour of all to the old maid, considerately permitted her cat to live during his royal pleasure; but, if he met the cat abroad, he changed his direction, and inside he never let his eyes rest upon her.

When Tyro came of age, twenty-one (months), he thought it was high time to select a profession, for hitherto he had led a rather roving life. One thing determined him. My father’s shepherd’s toothless old collie died, and having duly mourned for her loss, he—the shepherd—one day brought home another to fill up the death-vacancy. She was black, and very shaggy, had youth and beauty on her side, pearly teeth, hair that shone like burnished silver, and, in short, was quite a charming shepherdess—so, at least, thought Tyro; and what more natural than that he should fall in love with her? So he did. In her idle hours they gambolled together on the gowny braes, brushed the bells from the purple heather and the dewdrops from the grass, chased the hares, bullied the cat, barked and larked, and, in short, behaved entirely like a pair of engaged lovers of the canine class; and then said Tyro to himself, “My mother was a shepherdess, *I* will be a shepherd, and thus enjoy the company of my beloved ‘Phillis’ for ever, and perhaps a day or two longer.” And no young gentleman ever gave himself with more energy to a chosen profession than did Tyro. He was up with the lark—the bird that picks up the worm—and away to the hill and the moor. To his faults the shepherd was most indulgent for a few days; but when Tyro, in his over-zeal, attempted to play the wolf, he was, very properly, punished. “What an indignity! Before one’s Phillis too!” Tyro turned tail and trotted sulkily home. “Bother the sheep!” he must have thought; at any rate, he took a dire revenge—not on the shepherd, *his* acquaintance he merely cut, and he even continued to share the crib with his little ensnarer—but on the sheep-fold.

A neighbouring farmer's dog, of no particular breed, was in the habit of meeting Tyro at summer gloaming, in a wood equidistant from their respective homes. They then shook tails, and trotted off side by side. Being a very early riser, I used often to see Tyro coming home in the mornings, jaded, worn, and muddy, avoiding the roads, and creeping along by ditches and hedgerows. When I went to meet him, he threw himself at my feet, as much as to say, "Thrash away, and be quick about it." This went on for weeks, though I did not know then what mischief "the twa dogs" had been brewing, although ugly rumours began to be heard in all the countryside about murdered sheep and bleeding lambs; but my eyes were opened, and opened with a vengeance, when nineteen of the sheep on my father's hill-side were made bleeding lumps of clay in one short "simmer nicht"; and had Tyro been tried for his life, he could scarcely have proved an *alibi*, and, moreover, his pretty breast was like unto a robin's, and his gauntlets steeped in gore. Dire was the punishment that fell on Tyro's back for thus forsaking the path of virtue for a sheep-walk; and for two or three years, until, like the "Rose o' Anandale," he—

> "Left his Highland home
> And wandered forth with me,"

he was condemned to the chain.

He now became really a watch-dog, and a right good one he proved.

The chain was of course slipped at night when his real duties were supposed to commence. Gipsies—tinklers we call them—were just then an epidemic in our part of the country; and our hen-roosts were in an especial manner laid under blackmail. One or two of those same long-legged gentry got a lesson from Tyro they did not speedily forget. I have seldom seen a dog that could knock down a man with less unnecessary violence. So surely as any one laid a hand on his master, even in mimic assault, he was laid prone on his back, and that, too, in a thoroughly business-like fashion; and violence was only offered if the lowly-laid made an attempt to get up till out of arrest.

I never had a dog of a more affectionate disposition than my dead-and-gone friend Tyro. By sea and land, of course *I* was his especial charge; but that did not prevent him from joyously recognising "friends he had not seen for years." Like his human shipmates, he too used to look out for land, and he was generally the first to make known the welcome news, by jumping on the bulwarks, snuffing the air, and giving one long loud bark, which was slightly hysterical, as if there were a big lump in his throat somewhere.

I should go on the principle of *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*; but I am bound to speak of Tyro's faults as well as his virtues. Reader, he had a temper—never once shown to woman or child, but often, when he fancied his *casus belli* just, to man, and once or twice to his master. Why, one night, in my absence, he turned my servant out, and took forcible possession of my bed. It *was* hard, although I *had* stayed out rather late; but only by killing him could I have dislodged him, so for several reasons I preferred a night on the sofa, and next morning I reasoned the matter with him.

During our country life, Tyro took good care I should move as little as possible without him, and consequently dubbed himself knight-companion of my rambles over green field and heathy mountain, and these were not few. We often extended our excursions until the stars shone over us, then we made our lodging on the cold ground, Tyro's duties being those of watch and pillow. Often though, on awakening in the morning, I found my head among the heather, and my pillow sitting comfortably by my side panting, generally with a fine hare between its paws, for it had been "up in the morning airly" and "o'er the hills and far awa'," long before I knew myself from a stone.

Tyro's country life ended when his master went to study medicine. One day I was surprised to find him sitting on the seat beside me. The attendant was about to remove him.

"Let alone the poor dog," said Professor L. "I am certain he will listen more quietly than any one here." Then after the lecture, "Thank you, doggie; you have taught my students a lesson." That naughty chain prevented a repetition of the offence; but how exuberant he was to meet me at evening any one may guess. Till next morning he was my second shadow. More than once, too, he has been a rather too faithful ally in the many silly escapades into which youth and spirits lead the medical student. His use was to cover a retreat, and only once did he floor a too-obtrusive

Bobby; and once he *saved me from an ugly death*.

It was Hogmanay—the last night of the year—and we had been merry. We, a jolly party of students, had elected to sing in the New Year. We did so, and had been very happy, while, as Burns hath it, Tyro—

> "For vera joy had barkit wi' us."

Ringing out from every corner of the city, like cocks with troubled minds, came the musical voices of night-watchmen, bawling "half-past one," as we left the streets, and proceeded towards our home in the suburbs. It was a goodly night, moon and stars, and all that sort of thing, which tempted me to set out on a journey of ten miles into the country, in order to be "first foot" to some relations that lived there. The road was crisp with frost, and walking pleasant enough, so that we were in one hour nearly half-way. About here was a bridge crossing a little rocky ravine, with a babbling stream some sixty feet below. On the low stone parapet of this bridge, like the reckless fool I was, I stretched myself at full length, and, unintentionally, fell fast asleep. How nearly that sleep had been my last! Two hours afterwards I awoke, and naturally my eyes sought the last thing they had dwelt upon, the moon; she had declined westward, and in turning round I was just toppling over when I was sharply pulled backwards toward the road. Here was Tyro with his two paws pressed firmly against the parapet, and part of my coat in his mouth, while with flashing teeth he growled as I never before had heard him. His anger, however, was changed into the most exuberant joy, when I alighted safely on the road, shuddering at the narrow escape I had just made. At the suggestion of Tyro, we danced round each other, for five minutes at least, in mutual joy, by which time we were warm enough to finish our journey, and be "first foot" to our friends in the morning.

When Tyro left home with me to begin a seafaring life, he put his whole heart and soul into the business. There was more than one dog in the ship, but his drawing-room manners and knowledge of "sentry-go" made him saloon dog *par excellence*.

His first voyage was to the Polar regions, and his duty the protection by night of the cabin stores, including the spirit room. This duty he zealously performed; in fact, Master Tyro would have cheerfully undertaken to take charge of the whole ship, and done his best to repel boarders, if the occasion had demanded it.

A sailor's life was now for a time the lot of Tyro. I cannot, however, say he was perfectly happy; no dog on board ship is. He missed the wide moors and the heathy hills, and I'm sure, like his master, he was always glad to go on shore again.

Poor Tyro got old; and so I had to go to sea without him. Then this dog attached himself to my dear mother. When I returned home again, she was gone...

Strange to say, Tyro, who during my poor mother's illness had never left her room, refused food for days after her death.

He got thin, and dropsy set in.

With my *own* hand, I tapped him no less than fifteen times, removing never less than one gallon and three quarters of water. The first operation was a terrible undertaking, owing to the dog making such fierce resistance; but afterwards, when he began to understand the immense relief it afforded him, he used to submit without even a sigh, allowing himself to be strapped down without a murmur, and when the operation (excepting the stab of the trocar, there is little or no pain) was over, he would give himself a shake, then lick the hands of all the assistants—generally four—and present a grateful paw to each; then he had his dinner, and next day was actually fit to run down a rabbit or hare.

Thinner and weaker, weaker and thinner, month by month, and still I could not, as some advised, "put him out of pain;" he had once saved my life, and I did not feel up to the mark in Red Indianism. And so the end drew nigh.

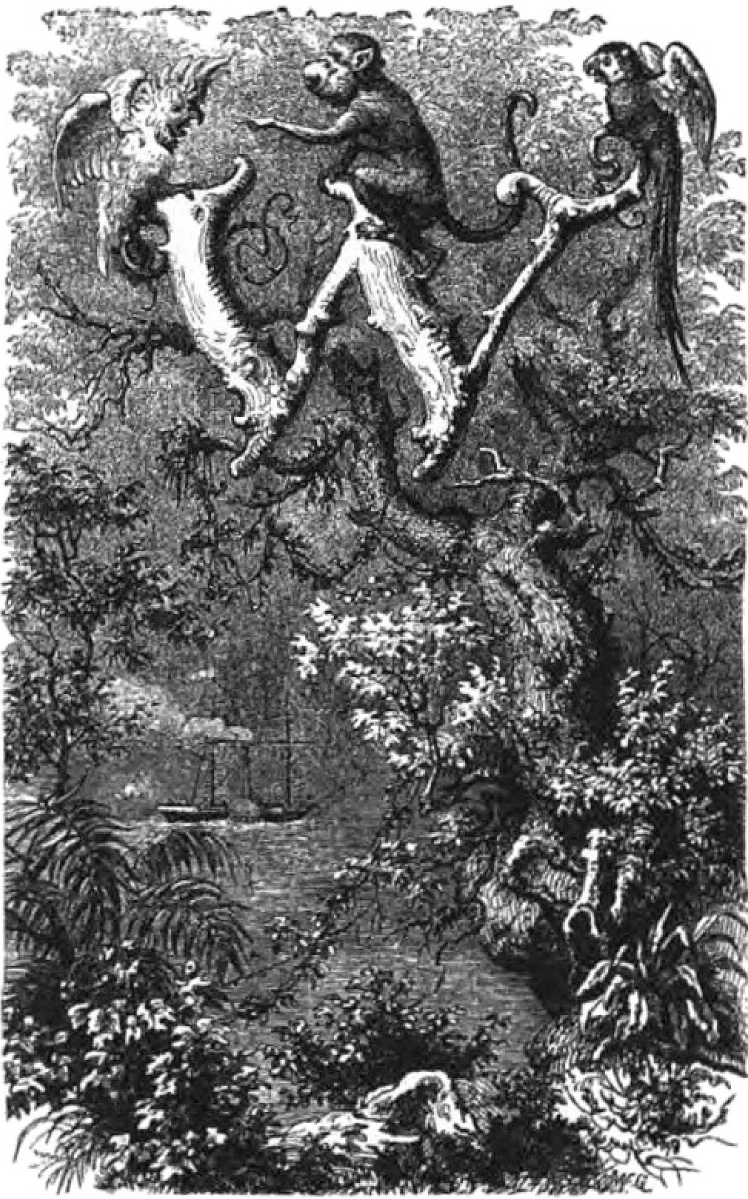
The saddest thing about it was this: the dog had the idea (knowing little of the mystery of death) that I could make him well; and at last, when he could no longer walk, he used to crawl to meet me on my morning visit, and gaze in my face with his poor imploring eyes, and my answer (*well* he knew what I said) was always, "Tyro, doggie, you'll be better the morn (to-morrow), boy." And when one day I could stand it no longer, and rained tears on my old friend's head, he crept back to his bed, and that same forenoon he was dead.

Poor old friend Tyro. Though many long years have fled since then, I can still afford a sigh to his memory.

On a "dewy simmer's gloaming" my Tyro's coffin was laid beneath the sod, within the walls of a noble old Highland ruin. There is no stone to mark where he lies, but I know the spot, and I always think the *gowan blinks* bonniest and the grass grows greenest there.

Chapter Seventeen.

The Days When we went Cruising.



> "O'er the glad waters of the dark-blue sea,
> Our thoughts as boundless and ourselves as free."
>
> Byron.

When cruising round Africa some years ago in a saucy wee gunboat, that shall be nameless, I was not only junior assistant surgeon, but I was likewise head surgeon, and chief of the whole medical department, and the whole of that department consisted of—never a soul but myself. As we had only ninety men all told, the Admiralty couldn't afford a medical officer of higher standing than myself. I was ably assisted, however, in my arduous duties, which, by the way, occupied me very nearly half an hour every morning, after, not before, breakfast, by the loblolly boy "Sugar o' Lead." I don't suppose he was baptised Sugar o' Lead. I don't think it is likely ever he was baptised at all. This young gentleman used to make my poultices, oatmeal they were made of, of course—I'm a Scot. But Sugar o' Lead always put salt in them, ate one half and singed the rest. He had also to keep the dispensary clean, which he never did, but he used to rub the labels off the bottles, three at a time, and stick them on again, but usually on the wrong bottles. This kept me well up in my pharmacy; but when one day I gave a man a dose of powder of jalap, instead of Gregory, Sugar o' Lead having changed the labels, the man said "it were a kinder rough on him." Sugar o' Lead thought he knew as much as I, perhaps; but Epsom salts and sulphate of zinc, although alike in colour, are very different in their effects when given internally. Sugar o' Lead had a different opinion. Another of the duties which devolved upon Sugar o' Lead was to clean up after the dogs. At this he was quite at home. At night he slept with the monkeys. Although the old cockatoo couldn't stand him, Sugar o' Lead and the monkeys were on very friendly terms; they lived together on that great and broad principle which binds the whole of this mighty world of ours together, the principle of "You favour me to-day and I'll favour you to-morrow." Sugar o' Lead and the monkeys acted upon it in quite the literal sense.

At Symon's Town, I was in the habit of constantly going on shore to prospect, gun in hand, over the mountains. Grand old hills these are, too, here and there covered with bush, with bold rocky bluffs abutting from their summits, their breasts bedecked with the most gorgeous geraniums, and those rare and beautiful heaths, which at home you can only find in hot-houses.

My almost constant attendant was a midshipman, a gallant young Scotchman, whom you may know by the name of

Donald McPhee, though I knew him by another.

The very first day of our many excursions "in the pursuit of game," we were wading through some scrub, about three or four miles from the shore, when suddenly my companion hailed me thus: "Look-out, doctor, there's a panther yonder, and he's nearest you."

So he was; but then he wasn't a panther at all, but a very large Pointer. I shouldn't like to say that he was good enough for the show bench; he was, however, good enough for work. Poor Panther, doubtless he now rests with his fathers, rests under the shadow of some of the mighty mountains, the tartaned hills, over which he and I used to wander in pursuit of game. On his grave green lizards bask, and wild cinerarias bloom, while over it glides the shimmering snake; but the poor, faithful fellow blooms fresh in my memory still. I think I became his special favourite. Perhaps he was wise enough to admire the Highland dress I often wore. Perhaps he thought, as I did, that of all costumes, that was the best one for hill work. But the interest he took in everything I did was remarkable. He seemed rejoiced to see me when I landed, as betokened by the wagging tail, the lowered ears, slightly elevated chin, and sparkling eye—a canine smile.

"Doctor," he seemed to say, "I was beginning to think you weren't coming. But won't we have a day of it, just?"

And away we would go, through the busy town and along the sea beach, where the lisping wavelets broke melodiously on sands of silvery sheen, where many a monster medusa lay stranded, looking like huge umbrellas made of jelly, and on, and on, until we came to a tiny stream, up whose rocky banks we would scramble, skirting the bush, and arriving at last at the great heath land. We followed no beaten track, we went here, there, and everywhere. The scenery was enchantingly wild and beautiful, and there was health and its concomitant happiness in every breeze. Sometimes we would sit dreamily on a rock top, Panther and I, for an hour at a time, vainly trying to drink in all the beauties of the scene. How bright was the blue of the distant sea! How fleecy the cloudlets! How romantic and lovely that far-off mountain range, its rugged outline softened by the purple mists of distance! These everlasting mountains we could people with people of our own imagination. I peopled them with foreign fairies. Panther, I think, peopled them with rock rabbits. Weary at last with gazing on the grandeur everywhere around us, we would rivet our attention for a spell upon things less romantic—bloater paste and sea biscuit. I shared my lunch with Panther.

Panther was most civil and obliging; he not only did duty as a pointer and guide, but he would retrieve as well, rock rabbits and rats, and such; and as he saw me bag them, he would look up in my face as much as to say—

"Now aren't you pleased? Don't you feel all over joyful? Wouldn't you wag a tail if you had one? I should think so."

Panther wouldn't retrieve black snakes.

"No," said Panther, "I draw the line at black snakes, doctor."

I would fain have taken him to sea with me, as he belonged to no one; but Panther said, "No, I cannot go."

"Then good-bye, dear friend," I said.

"Farewell," said Panther.

And so we parted.

He looked wistfully after the boat as it receded from the shore. I believe, poor fellow, he knew he would never see me again.

Conceive, if you can, of the lonesomeness, the dreariness of going to sea without a dog. But as Panther wouldn't come with me, I had to sail without him. As the purple mountains grew less and less distinct, and shades of evening gathered around us, and twinkling lights from rocky points glinted over the waters, I could only lean over the taffrail and sing—

> "Happy land! happy land!
> Who would leave the glorious land?"

Who indeed? but sailor-men must. And now darkness covers the ocean, and hides the distant land, and next we were out in the midst of just as rough a sea as any one need care to be in. My only companion at this doleful period of my chequered career was a beautiful white pigeon. Here is how I came by him. Out at the Cape, in many a little rocky nook, and by many a rippling stream, grow sweet flowerets that come beautifully out in feather work. Feather-flower making then was one of my chief delights and amusements; the art had been taught me by a young friend of mine, whose father grew wine and kept hunters (jackal-hunting), and had kindly given me "the run" of the house. Before leaving, on the present cruise, I had secured some particularly beautiful specimens of flowers, too delicate to be imitated by anything, save the feathers of a pigeon; so I had bought a pure white one, which I had ordered to be killed and sent off.

"Steward," I cried, as we were just under weigh, "did a boy bring a white pigeon for me?"

"He did, sir; and I put it in your cabin in its basket, which I had to give him sixpence extra for."

"But why," said I, "didn't you tell him to put his nasty old basket on his back and take it off with him?"

"Because," said the steward, "the bird would have flown away."

“Flown away!” I cried. “Is the bird alive then?”

“To be sure, sir,” said the steward.

“To be sure, you blockhead,” said I; “how can I make feather-flowers from a live pigeon?”

The man was looking at me pityingly, I thought.

“Can’t you kill it, sir? Give him to me, sir; I’ll Wring his neck in a brace of shakes.”

“You’d never wring another neck, steward,” I said; “you’d lose the number of your mess as sure as a gun.”

When I opened the basket, knowing what rogues nigger-boys are, I fully expected to find a bird with neither grace nor beauty, and about the colour of an old white clucking hen. The boy had not deceived me, however. The pigeon was a beauty, and as white as a Spitzbergen snow-bird. Out he flew, and perched on a clothes-peg in my bulkhead, and said—

“Troubled wi’ you. Tr-rooubled with you.”

“You’ll need,” said I, “to put up with the trouble for six months to come, for we’re messmates. Steward,” I continued, “your fingers ain’t itching, are they, to kill that lovely creature?”

“Not they,” said the fellow; “I wouldn’t do it any harm for the world.”

“There’s my rum bottle,” I said; “it always stands in that corner, and it is always at your service while you tend upon the pigeon.”

The cruise before, we had a black cat on board, that the sailors looked upon as a bird of evil omen, for we got no luck, caught no slavers, ran three times on shore, and were once on fire. This cruise, we had lots of prize-money, and never a single mishap, and the men put it all down to “the surgeon’s pet,” as they called my bird. He was a pet, too. I made him a nest in a leathern hat-box, where he went when the weather was rough. He was tame, loving, and winning in all his ways, and always scrupulously white and clean.

The first place we ran into was Delagoa Bay. How sweetly pretty, how English-like, is the scenery all around! The gently undulating hills, clothed in clouds of green; the trees growing down almost to the water’s edge; the white houses nestling among the foliage, the fruit, the flowers, the blue marbled sky, and the wavelets breaking musically on the silvery sands—what a watering-place it would make, and what a pity we can’t import it body bulk! The houses are all built on the sand, so that the beach is the only carpet. In the Portuguese governor’s house, where we spent such a jolly evening, it was just the same; the chair-legs sank in the soft white sand, the table was off the plane, and the piano all awry; and a dog belonging to one of the officers, a monster boarhound, with eyes like needles, and tusks that would have made umbrella handles, scraped a hole at one end of the room, and nearly buried himself. That dog, his owner told me, would kill a jackal with one blow of his paw; but he likewise caught mice like winking, and killed a cockroach wherever he saw one. His owner wrote this down for me, and I afterwards translated it.

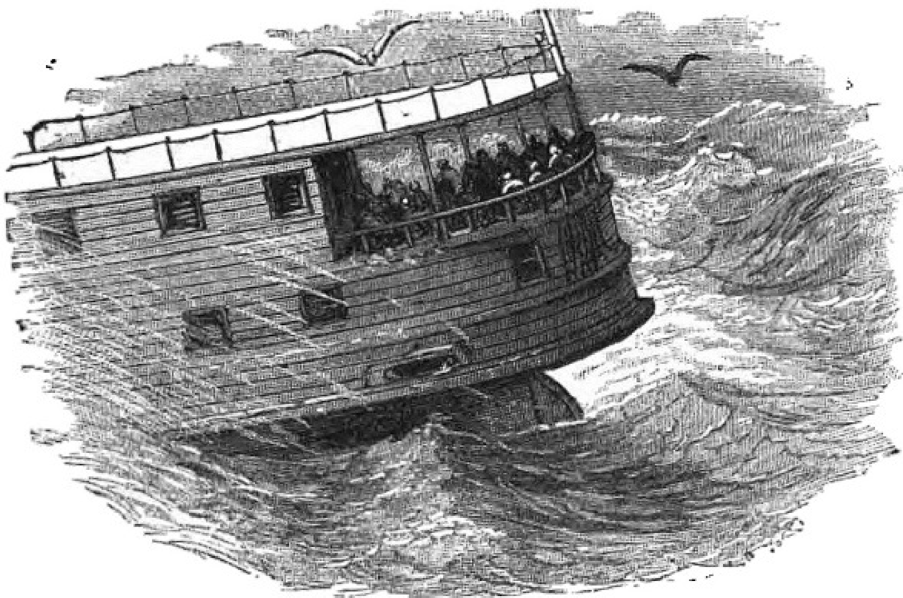
Next morning, at eleven, the governor and his officers came off, arrayed in scarlet, blue, and burnished gold, cocked-hats and swords, all so gay, and we had tiffin in the captain’s cabin; Carlo, the dog, came too, of course, and seated himself thoughtfully at one end, abaft the mess table. There we were, then, just six of us—the captain, a fiery looking, wee, red man, but not half a bad fellow; the governor, bald in pate, round-faced, jolly, but incapable of getting very close to the table because of the rotundity of his body; his *aide-de-camp*, a little thin man, as bright and as merry as moonshine; his lieutenant, a jolly old fellow, with eyes like an Ulmer hound, and nose like a kidney potato; myself, and Carlo.

Our conversation during tiffin was probably not very edifying, but it was very spirited. You see, our captain couldn’t

speak a word of Portuguese, and the poor Portuguese hadn't a word of English. I myself possessed a smattering of Spanish, and a little French, and I soon discovered that by mixing the two together, throwing in an occasional English word and a sprinkling of Latin, I could manufacture very decent Portuguese. At least, the foreigners themselves seemed to understand me, or pretended to for politeness sake. To be sure they didn't always give me the answer I expected, but that was all the funnier, and kept the laugh up. I really believe each one of us knew exactly what he himself meant, but I'm sure couldn't for the life of him have told what his neighbour was driving at. And so we got a little mixed somehow, but everybody knew the road to his mouth, and that was something. We got into an argument upon a very interesting topic indeed, and kept it up for nearly an hour, and were getting quite excited over it, when somehow or other it came out, that the Portuguese had all the while been argle-bargling about the rights of the Pope, while we Englishmen had been deep in the mystery of the prices of yams and sucking pig, in the different villages of the coast. Then we all laughed and shook hands, and shrugged our shoulders, and turned up our palms, and laughed again.

Presently I observed the captain trying to draw my attention unobserved: he was squinting down towards the cruet stand, and I soon perceived the cause. An immense cockroach had got into a bottle of cayenne, and feeling uncomfortably warm, was standing on his hind-legs and frantically waving his long feelers as a signal of distress. I was just wondering how I could get the bottle away without letting the governor see me, when some one else spotted that unhappy cockroach, and that was Carlo.

Now Carlo was a dog who acted on the spur of the moment, so as soon as he saw the beast in the bottle he flew straight at it. That spring would have taken him over a six-barred gate. And, woe is me for the result! Down rolled the table, crockery and all; down rolled the governor, with his bald pate and rotundity of body; down went the merry little thin man; over rolled the fellow with the nose like a kidney potato. The captain fell, and I fell, and there was an end to the whole feast.

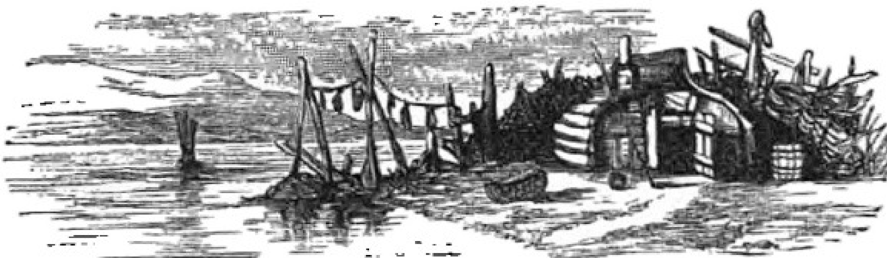


STERN REALITIES.

When we all got up, Carlo was intent upon his cockroach, and looking as unconcerned as if nothing out of the common had occurred.

Chapter Eighteen.

Blue-Jackets' Pets.



"Hard is the heart that loveth nought."

Shelley.

"All love is sweet,
Given or returned.

Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.”

Idem.

Blue-jackets, as Her Majesty’s sailors are sometimes styled, are passionately fond of pets. They must have something to love, if it be but a woolly-headed nigger-boy or a cockroach in a ’baccy-box. Little nigger-boys, indeed, may often be found on board a man-o’-war, the reigning pets. Young niggers are very precocious. You can teach them all they will ever learn in the short space of six months. Of this kind was one I remember, little Freezing-powders, as black as midnight, and shining all over like a billiard ball, with his round curly head and pleasant dimply face. Freezing-powders soon became a general favourite both fore and aft. His master, our marine officer, picked him up somewhere on the West coast; and although only nine years of age, before he was four months in the ship, he could speak good English, was a perfect little gymnast, and knew as many tricks and capers as the cook and the monkey. Snowball was another I knew; but Snowball grew bad at an early age, lost caste, became dissipated, and a gambler, and finally fled to his native jungle.

Jock of ours was a seal of tender years, who for many months retained the affection of all hands, until washed overboard in a gale of wind. This creature’s time on board was fully occupied in a daily round of duty, pleasure, and labour. His duty consisted in eating seven meals a day, and bathing in a tub after each; his pleasure, to lie on his side on the quarter-deck and be scratched and petted; while his labour consisted of earnestly endeavouring to enlarge a large scupper-hole sufficiently to permit his escape to his native ocean. How indefatigably he used to work day by day, and hour after hour, scraping on the iron first with one flipper, then with another, then poking his nose in to measure the result with his whiskered face! He kept the hole bright and clear, but did not sensibly enlarge it, at least to human ken. Jock’s successor on that ship was a youthful bear of Arctic nativity. He wasn’t a nice pet. He took all you gave him, and wanted to eat your hand as well, but he never said “Thank you,” and permitted no familiarity. When he took his walks abroad, which he did every morning, although he never went out of his road for a row, he walked straight ahead with his nose downwards growling, and gnawed and tore everything that touched him—not at all a pet worth being troubled with.

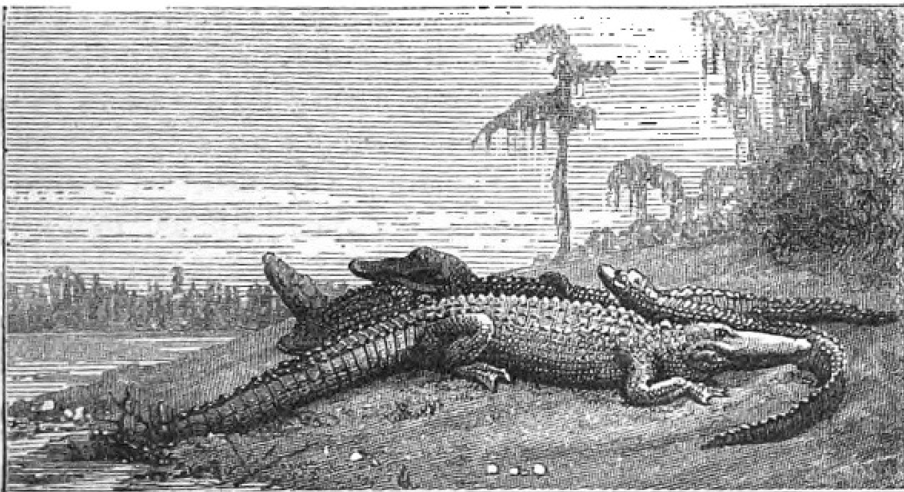
Did the reader ever hear of the sailor who tamed a cockroach? Well, this man I was “shipmates” with. He built a little cage, with a little kennel in the corner of it, expressly for his unsavoury pet, and he called the creature “Idzky”—“which he named himself, sir,” he explained to me. Idzky was a giant of his race. His length was fully four inches, his breadth one inch, while each of his waving feelers measured six. This monster knew his name and his master’s voice, hurrying out from his kennel when called upon, and emitting the strange sound which gained for him the cognomen Idzky. The boatswain, his master, was as proud of him as he might have been of a prize pug, and never tired of exhibiting his eccentricities.

I met the boatswain the other day at the Cape, and inquired for his pet.

“Oh, sir,” he said, with genuine feeling, “he’s gone, sir. Shortly after you left the ship, poor Idzky took to taking rather much liquor, and that don’t do for any of us, you know, sir; I think it was that, for I never had the heart to pat him on allowance; and he went raving mad, had regular fits of delirium, and did nothing at all but run round his cage and bark, and wouldn’t look at anything in the way of food. Well, one day I was coming off the forenoon watch, when, what should I see but a double line of them ‘P’ ants working in and out of the little place: twenty or so were carrying a wing, and a dozen a leg, and half a score running off with a feeler, just like men carrying a stowed mainsail; and that, says I, is poor Idzky’s funeral; and so it was, and I didn’t disturb them. Poor Idzky!”

Peter was a pet mongoose of mine, a kindly, cosy little fellow, who slept around my neck at night, and kept me clear of cockroaches, as well as my implacable enemies, the rats. I was good to Peter, and fed him well, and used to take him on shore at the Cape, among the snakes. The snakes were for Peter to fight; and the way my wary wee friend dodged and closed with, and finally throttled and killed a cobra was a caution to that subtlest of all the beasts of the field. The presiding Malay used to clap his brown hands with joy as he exclaimed—“Ah! sauvé good mongoose, sar, proper mongoose to kill de snake.”

“You don’t object, do you,” I modestly asked my captain one day, while strolling on the quarter-deck after tiffin—“you don’t object, I hope, to the somewhat curious pets I at times bring on board?”



“Object?” he replied. “Well, no; not as a rule. Of course you know I don’t like your snakes to get gliding all over the ship, as they were the other day. But, doctor, what’s the good of my objecting? If any one were to let that awful beast in the box yonder loose—”

“Don’t think of it, captain,” I interrupted; “he’d be the death of somebody, to a dead certainty.”

“No; I’m not such a fool,” he continued. “But if I shot him, why, in a few days you’d be billeting a boar-constrictor or an alligator on me, and telling me it was for the good of science and the service.”

The awful beast in the box was the most splendid and graceful specimen of the monitor lizard I have ever seen. Fully five feet long from tip to tail, he swelled and tapered in the most perfect lines of beauty. Smooth, though scaly, and inky black, tartaned all over with transverse rows of bright yellow spots, with eyes that shone like wildfire, and teeth like quartz, with his forked tongue continually flashing out from his bright-red mouth, he had a wild, weird loveliness that was most uncanny. Mephistopheles, as the captain not inaptly called him, knew me, however, and took his cockroaches from my hand, although perfectly frantic when any one else went near him. If a piece of wood, however hard, were dropped into his cage, it was instantly torn in pieces; and if he seized the end of a rope, he might quit partnership with his head or teeth, but never with the rope.

One day, greatly to my horror, the steward entered the wardroom, pale with fear, and reported: “Mephistopheles escaped, sir, and yaffling (rending) the men.” I rushed on deck. The animal had indeed escaped. He had torn his cage into splinters, and declared war against all hands. Making for the fore hatchway, he had seized a man by the jacket skirts, going down the ladder. The man got out of the garment without delay, and fled faster than any British sailor ought to have done. On the lower deck he chased the cook from the coppers, and the carpenter from his bench. A circle of Kroomen were sitting mending a foresail; Mephistopheles suddenly appeared in their midst. The niggers unanimously threw up their toes, individually turned somersaults backwards, and sought the four winds of heaven. These routed, my pet turned his attention to Peepie. Peepie was a little Arab slave-lass. She was squatting by a calabash, singing low to herself, and eating rice. He seized her cummerbund, or waist garment. But Peepie wriggled clear—natural—and ran on deck, the innocent, like the “funny little maiden” in Hans Breitmann. On the cummerbund Mephistopheles spent the remainder of his fury, and the rest of his life; for not knowing what might happen next, I sent for a fowling-piece, and the plucky fellow succumbed to the force of circumstances and a pipeful of buck-shot. I have him yonder on the sideboard, in body and in spirit (gin), bottle-mates with a sandsnake, three centipedes, and a tarantula.

With monkeys, baboons, apes, and all of that ilk, navy ships, when homeward bound, are ofttimes crowded. Of our little crew of seventy, I think nearly every man had one, and some two, such pets, although fully one-half died of chest-disease as soon as the ship came into colder latitudes. These monkeys made the little craft very lively indeed, and were a never-ending source of amusement and merriment to all hands. I don’t like monkeys, however. They “are so near, and yet so far,” as respects humanity. I went shooting them once—a cruel sport, and more cowardly even than elephant-hunting in Ceylon—and when I broke the wrist of one, instead of hobbling off, as it ought to have done, it came howling piteously towards me, shaking and showing me the bleeding limb. The little wretch preached me a sermon anent cruelty to animals that I shall not forget till the day I die.

We had a sweet-faced, delicate, wee marmoset, not taller, when on end, than a quart bottle—Bobie the sailors called him; and we had also a larger ape, Hunks by name, of what our Scotch engineer called the “ill-gettit breed”; and that was a mild way of putting it. This brute was never out of mischief. He stole the men’s tobacco, smashed their pipes, spilled their soup, and ran aloft with their caps, which he minutely inspected and threw overboard afterwards. He was always on the black list; in fact, when rubbing his back after one thrashing, he was wondering all the time what mischief he could do next. Bobie was arrayed in a neatly fitting sailor-costume, cap and all complete; and so attired, of course could not escape the persecutions of the ape. Hunks, after contenting himself with cockroaches, would fill his mouth; then holding out his hand with one to Bobie, “Hae, hae, hae,” he would cry, then seize the little innocent, and escape into the rigging with him. Taking his seat in the maintop, Hunks first and foremost emptied his mouth, cramming the contents down his captive’s throat. He next got out on to the stays for exercise, and used Bobie as a species of dumb-bell, swinging him by the tail, hanging him by a foot, by an ear, by the nose, etc, and threatening to throw him overboard if any sailor attempted a rescue. Last of all, he threw him at the nearest sailor.

On board the *Orestes* was a large ape as big as a man. He was a most unhappy ape. There wasn’t a bit of humour in his whole corporation. “He had a silent sorrow” somewhere, “a grief he’d ne’er impart.” Whenever you spoke to him, he seized and wrung your hand in the most pathetic manner, and drew you towards him. His other arm was thrown across his chest, while he shook his head, and gazed in your face with such a woe-begone countenance, that the very smile froze on your lips; and as you couldn’t laugh out of politeness, you felt very awkward. For anything I know, this melancholy ape may be still alive.

Deer are common pets in some ships. We had a fine large buck in the old *Semiramie*. A romping, rollicking rascal, in truth a very satyr, who never wanted a quid of tobacco in his mouth, nor refused rum and milk. Whenever the steward came up to announce dinner, he bolted below at once; and we were generally down just in time to find him dancing among the dishes, after eating all the potatoes.

"IT IS SO VERY COMFORTING, YOU KNOW!"

I once went into my cabin and found two Liliputian deer in my bed. It was our engineer who had placed them there. We were lying off Lamoo, and he had brought them from shore.

"Ye'll just be a faither to the lammies, doctor," he said, "for I'm no on vera guid terms wi' the skipper."

They were exactly the size of an Italian greyhound, perfectly formed, and exceedingly graceful. They were too tender, poor things, for life on shipboard, and did not live long.

In the stormy latitudes of the Cape, the sailors used to amuse themselves by catching Cape pigeons, thus: a little bit of wood floated astern attached by a string, a few pieces of fat thrown into the water, and the birds, flying tack and half-tack towards them, came athwart the line, by a dexterous movement of which they entangled their wings, and landed them on board. They caught albatrosses in the same fashion, and nothing untoward occurred.

I had for many months a gentle, loving pet in the shape of a snow-white dove. I had bought him that I might make feather-flowers from his plumage; but the boy brought him off alive, and I never had the heart to kill him. So he lived in a leathern hat-box, and daily took his perch on my shoulder at meal-times (see page 178).

It was my lot once upon a time to be down with fever in India. The room in which I lay was the upper flat of an antiquated building, in a rather lonely part of the suburbs of a town. It had three windows, close to which grew a large banyan-tree, beneath the shade of whose branches the crew of a line-of-battle ship might have hung their hammocks with comfort. The tree was inhabited by a colony of crows; we stood—the crows and I—in the relation of over-the-way to each other. Now, of all birds that fly, the Indian crow most bear the palm for audacity. Living by his wits, he is ever on the best of terms with himself, and his impudence leads him to dare anything. Whenever, by any chance, Pandoo, my attendant, left the room, these black gentry paid me a visit. Hopping in by the score, and regarding me no more than the bed-post, they commenced a minute inspection of everything in the room, trying to destroy everything that could not be eaten or carried away. They rent the towels, drilled holes in my uniform, stole the buttons from my coat, and smashed my bottles. One used to sit on a screen close by my bed every day, and scan my face with his evil eye, saying as plainly as could be—"You're getting thinner and beautifully less; in a day or two, you won't be able to lift a hand; then I'll have the pleasure of picking out your two eyes."

Amid such doings, my servant would generally come to my relief, perhaps to find such a scene as this: Two or three pairs of hostile crows with their feathers standing up around their necks, engaged in deadly combat on the floor over

a silver spoon or a tooth-brush; half a dozen perched upon every available chair; an unfortunate lizard with a crow at each end of it, getting whirled wildly round the room, each crow thinking he had the best right to it; crows everywhere, hopping about on the table, and drinking from the bath; crows perched on the window-sill, and more crows about to come, and each crow doing all in his power to make the greatest possible noise. The faithful Pandoo would take all this in at a glance; then would ensue a helter-skelter retreat, and the windows be darkened by the black wings of the flying crows, then silence for a moment, only broken by some apologetic remark from Pandoo.

When at length happy days of convalescence came round, and I was able to get up and even eat my meals at table, I found my friends the crows a little more civil and respectful. The thought occurred to me to make friends with them; I consequently began a regular system of feeding them after every meal-time. One old crow I caught, and chained to a chair with a fiddle-string. He was a funny old fellow, with one club-foot. He never refused his food from the very day of his captivity, and I soon taught him a few tricks. One was to lie on his back when so placed for any length of time till set on his legs again. This was called turning the turtle. But one day this bird of freedom hopped away, fiddle-string and all, and a whole fortnight elapsed before I saw him again. I was just beginning to put faith in a belief common in India—namely, that a crow or any other bird, that has been for any time living with human beings, is put to instant death the moment he returns to the bosom of his family; when one day, while engaged breakfasting some forty crows, my club-footed pet reappeared, and actually picked the bit from my hand, and ever after, until I left, he came regularly thrice a day to be fed. The other crows came with surprising exactness at meal-times; first one would alight on the shutter outside the window, and peep in, as if to ascertain how nearly done I happened to be, then fly away for five or ten minutes, when he would return, and have another keek. As soon, however, as I approached the window, and raised my arm, I was saluted with a chorus of cawing from the banyan-tree; then down they swooped in dozens; and it was no very easy task to fill so many mouths, although the loaves were Government ones.

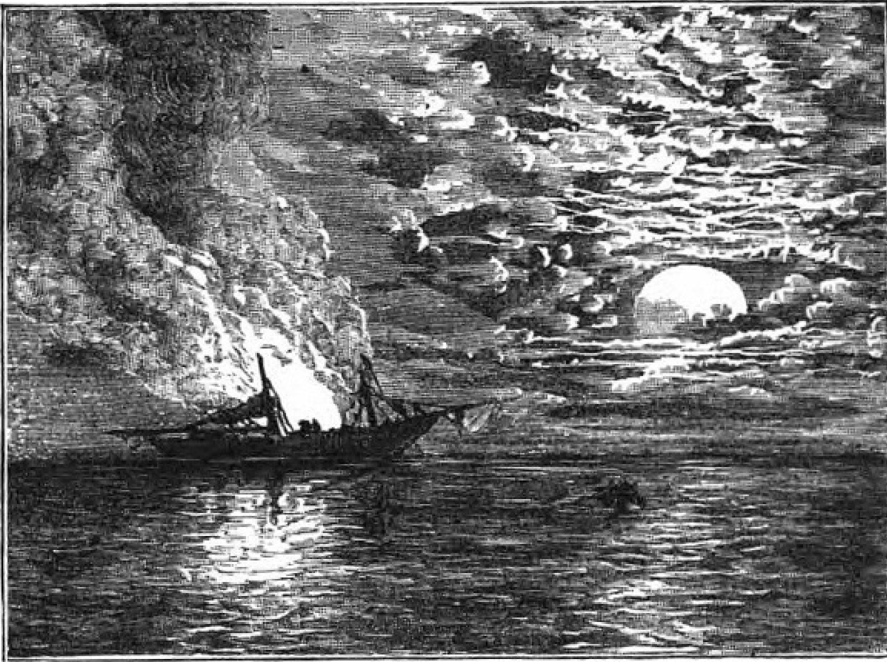
These pets had a deadly enemy in a brown raven—the Brahma kite; swifter than arrow from bow he descended, describing the arc of a great circle, and carrying off in his flight the largest lamp of bread he could spy. He, for one, never stopped to bless the hand of the giver; but the crows, I know, were not ungrateful. Club-foot used to perch beside me on a chair, and pick his morsels from the floor, always premising that two windows at least must be open. As to the others, their persecutions ended; they never appeared except when called upon. The last act of their aggression was to devour a very fine specimen of praying mantis I had confined in a quinine bottle. The first day the paper cover had been torn off, and the mantis had only escaped by keeping close at the bottom; next day, the cover was again broken, and the bottle itself capsized; the poor mantis had prayed in vain for once. Club-foot, I think, must have stopped all day in the banyan-tree, for I never went to the window to call him without his appearing at once with a joyful caw; this feat I used often to exhibit to my shipmates who came to visit me during my illness.

One thing about talking-birds I don’t remember ever to have seen noticed—namely, the habit some birds have of talking in their sleep. And, just as a human being will often converse in his dream in a long-forgotten language, so birds will often at night be heard repeating words or phrases they never could remember in their waking moments. A starling of mine often roused me at night by calling out my dog’s name in loud, distinct tones, although by day his attempts to do so were quite ineffectual. So with a venerable parrot we had on board the saucy *Skipjack*. Polly was a quiet bird in daylight, and much given to serious thought; but at times, in the stillness of the middle watch at sea, would startle the sailors from their slumbers by crying out: “Deen, deen—kill, kill, kill!” in quite an alarming manner. Polly had been all through the Indian mutiny, and was shut up in Delhi during the sad siege, so her dreams were not very enviable.

Do parrots know what they say? At times I think they do. Our parson on board the old *Rumbler* had no more attentive listener to the Sabbath morning service than wardroom Polly; but there were times when Polly made responses when silence would have been more judicious. There was an amount of humour which it is impossible to describe, in the sly way she one day looked the parson in the face, as he had just finished a burst of eloquence both impassioned and impressive, and uttered one of her impertinent remarks. For some months, she was denied access to church because she had once forgotten herself so far as to draw corks during the sermon—this being considered “highly mutinous and insubordinate conduct.” But she regained her privilege. Poor Poll! I’ll never forget the solemn manner in which she shut her eyes one day at the close of the service, as if still musing on the words of the sermon, on the mutability of all things created, and remarked: “Vanity, vanity, all is vanity, says—says:” she could say no more—the rest stuck in her throat, and we were left to ponder on her unfortunate loss of memory in uttering the admonitory sentiment.

Chapter Nineteen.

My Cabin Mates and Bedfellows: A Sketch of Life on the Coast of Africa.



> “Whaur are gaun crawlin’ ferlie,
> Your impudence protects ye sairly.”
>
> Burns.

I was idly sauntering along the only street in Simon’s Town one fine day in June, when I met my little, fat, good-humoured friend, Paymaster Pumpkin. He was walking at an enormous pace for the length of his legs, and his round face was redder than ever. He would hardly stop to tell me that H.M.S. *Vesuvius* was ordered off in two hours—provisions for a thousand men—the Kaffirs (scoundrels) had crossed some river (name unpronounceable) with an army of one hundred thousand men, and were on their way to Cape Town, with the murderous intention of breaking every human bone in that fair town, and probably picking them leisurely afterwards. The upshot of all this, as far as I was concerned, was my being appointed to as pretty a model, and as dirty a little craft, as there was in the service, namely, H.M.S. *Pen-gun*. Our armament consisted of four pea-shooters and one Mons Meg; and our orders were to repair to the east coast of Africa, and there pillage, burn, and destroy every floating thing that dared to carry a slave, without permission from Britannia’s queen. Of our adventures there, and how we ruled the waves, I am at present going to say nothing. I took up my commission as surgeon of this interesting craft, and we soon after sailed.

On first stepping on board the *Pen-gun*, a task which was by no means difficult to a person with legs of even moderate length, my nose—yes, my nose—that interesting portion of my physiognomy, which for months before had inhaled nothing more nauseous than the perfume of a thousand heaths, or the odour of a thousand roses—my nose was assailed by a smell which burst upon my astonished senses, like a compound of asafoetida, turpentine, and Stilton cheese. As I gasped for breath, the lieutenant in command endeavoured to console me by saying—“Oh, it’s only the cockroaches: you’ll get used to it by-and-by.”

“*Only* the cockroaches!” repeated I to myself, as I went below to look after my cabin. This last I found to be of the following dimensions—namely, five feet high (I am five feet ten), six feet long, and six feet broad at the top; but, owing to the curve of the vessel’s side, only two feet broad at the deck. A cot hung fore and aft along the ship’s side, and the remaining furniture consisted of a doll’s chest of drawers, beautifully fitted up on top with a contrivance to hold utensils of lavation, and a Liliputian writing-table on the other; thus diminishing my available space to two square feet, and this in a break-neck position. My cot, too, was very conveniently placed for receiving the water which trickled freely from my scuttle when the wind blew, and more slowly when the wind didn’t; so that every night, very much against my will, I was put under the operations of practical hydropathy. And this was my *sanctum, sanctorum*; but had it been clean, or capable of cleaning, I am a philosopher, and would have rejoiced in it; but it was neither; and ugh! it was inhabited.

Being what is termed in medical parlance, of the nervo-sanguineous temperament, my horror of the loathsome things about me for the first week almost drove me into a fever. I could not sleep at night, or if I fell into an uneasy slumber, I was awakened from fearful dreams, to find some horrid thing creeping or running over my hands or face. When a little boy, I used to be fond of turning up stones in green meadows, to feast my eyes upon the many creeping things beneath. I felt now as if I myself were living *under* a stone. However, after a year’s slaver-hunting, I got so used to all these creatures, that I did not mind them a bit. I could crack scorpions, bruise the heads of centipedes, laugh at earwigs, be delighted with ants, eat weevils, admire tarantulas, encourage spiders. As for mosquitoes, flies, and all the smaller genera, I had long since been thoroughly inoculated; and they could now bleed me as much as they thought proper, without my being aware of it. It is of the habits of some of these familiar friends I purpose giving a

short sketch in this chapter and next.

Of the “gentlemen of England who live at home at ease,” very few, I suspect, would know a cockroach, although they found the animal in their soap—as I have done more than once. Cockroaches are of two principal kinds—the small, nearly an inch long; and the large, nearly two and a half inches. Let the reader fancy to himself a common horsefly of our own country, half an inch in breadth, and of the length just stated, the body, ending in two forks, which project beyond the wings, the head, furnished with powerful mandibles, and two feelers, nearly four inches long, and the whole body of a dark-brown or gun-barrel colour, and he will have as good an idea as possible of the gigantic cockroach. The legs are of enormous size and strength, taking from fifteen to twenty ants to carry one away, and furnished with bristles, which pierce the skin in their passage over one’s face; and this sensation, together with the horrid smell they emit, is generally sufficient to awaken a sleeper of moderate depth. On these legs the animal squats, walking with his elbows spread out, like a practical agriculturist writing an amatory epistle to his lady-love, except when he raises the fore part of his body, which he does at times, in order the more conveniently to stare you in the face. He prefers walking at a slow and respectable pace; but if you threaten him by shaking your finger at him, it is very funny to see how quickly he takes the hint, and hurries off with all his might. What makes him seem more ridiculous is, that he does not appear to take into consideration the comparative length of your legs; he seems impressed with the idea that he can easily run away from you; indeed, I have no doubt he would do so from a greyhound. The creature is possessed of large eyes; and there is a funny expression of conscious guilt and impudence about his angular face which is very amusing; he knows very well that he lives under a ban—that, in fact, existence is a thing he has no business or lawful right with, and consequently he can never look you straight in the face, like an honest fly or moth. The eggs, which are nearly half an inch long, and about one-eighth in breadth, are rounded at the upper edge, and the two sides approach, wedge-like, to form the lower edge, which is sharp and serrated, for attachment to the substance on which they may chance to be deposited. These eggs are attached by one end to the body of the cockroach; and when fully formed, they are placed upon any material which the wisdom of the mother deems fit food for the youthful inmates. This may be either a dress-coat, a cocked-hat, a cork, a biscuit, or a book—in fact, anything softer than stone; and the egg is no sooner laid, than it begins to sink through the substance below it, by an eating or dissolving process, which is probably due to the agency of some free acid; thus, sailors very often (I may say invariably) have their finest uniform-coats and dress-pants ornamented by numerous little holes, better adapted for purposes of ventilation than embellishment. The interior of the egg is transversely divided into numerous cells, each containing the larvae of I know not how many infant cockroaches. The egg gives birth in a few weeks to a whole brood of triangular little insects, which gradually increase till they attain the size of huge oval beetles, striped transversely black and brown, but as yet minus wings. These are usually considered a different species, and called the beetle-cockroach; but having a suspicion of the truth, I one day imprisoned one of these in a crystal tumbler, and by-and-by had the satisfaction of seeing, first the beetle break his own back, and secondly, a large-winged cockroach scramble, with a little difficulty, through the wound, looking rather out of breath from the exertion. On first escaping, he was perfectly white, but in a few hours got photographed down to his own humble brown colour. So much for the appearance of these gentry. Now for their character, which may easily be summed up: they are cunning as the fox; greedy as the glutton; impudent as sin; cruel, treacherous, cowardly scoundrels; addicted to drinking; arrant thieves; and not only eat each other, but even devour with avidity their own legs, when they undergo accidental amputation. They are very fond of eating the toe-nails—so fond, indeed, as to render the nail-scissors of no value, and they also profess a penchant for the epidermis—if I may be allowed a professional expression—of the feet and legs; not that they object to the skin of any other part of the body, by no means; they attack the legs merely on a principle of easy come-at-ability.

In no way is their cunning better exhibited than in the cautious and wary manner in which they conduct their attack upon a sleeper. We will suppose you have turned in to your swinging cot, tucked in your toes, and left one arm uncovered, to guard your face. By-and-by, first a few spies creep slowly up the bulkhead, and have a look at you: if your eyes are open, they slowly retire, trying to look as much at their ease as possible; but if you look round, they run off with such ridiculous haste and awkward length of steps, as to warrant the assurance that they were up to no good. Pretend, however, to close your eyes, and soon after, one, bolder than the rest, walks down the pillow, and stations himself at your cheek, in an attitude of silent and listening meditation. Here he stands for a few seconds, then cautiously lowering one feeler, he tickles your face: if you remain quiescent, the experiment is soon repeated; if you are still quiet, then you are supposed to be asleep, and the work of the night begins. The spy walks off in great haste, and soon returns with the working-party. The hair is now searched for drops of oil; the ear is examined for wax; in sound sleepers, even the mouth undergoes scrutiny; and every exposed part is put under the operation of gentle skinning. Now is the time to start up, and batter the bulkheads with your slipper; you are sure of half an hour’s good sport; but what then? The noise made by the brutes running off brings out the rest, and before you are aware, every crevice or corner vomits forth its thousands, and the bulkheads all around are covered with racing, chasing, fighting, squabbling cockroaches. So numerous, indeed, they are at times, that it would be no exaggeration to say that every square foot contains its dozen. If you are wise, you will let them alone, and go quietly and philosophically to bed, for you may kill hundreds, and hundreds more will come to the funeral-feast. Cockroaches are cannibals, practically and by profession. This can be proved in many ways. They eat the dead bodies of their slain comrades; and if any one of them gets sick or wounded, his companions, with a kindness and consideration which cannot be too highly appreciated, speedily put him out of pain, and, by way of reward for their own trouble, devour him.

These creatures seem to suffer from a state of chronic thirst; they are continually going and returning from the wash-hand basin, and very careful they are, too, not to tumble in.

They watch, sailor-like, the motion of the vessel; when the water flows towards them, they take a few sips, and then wait cautiously while it recedes and returns. Yet, for all this caution, accidents do happen, and every morning you are certain to find a large number drowned in the basin. This forms one of the many methods of catching them. I will only mention two other methods in common use. A pickle-bottle, containing a little sugar and water, is placed in the cabin; the animals crawl in, but are unable to get out until the bottle is nearly full, when a few manage to escape, after the manner of the fox in the fable of the “Fox and Goat in the Well;” and if those who thus escape have previously promised to pull their friends out by the long feelers, they very unfeelingly decline, and walk away as quickly as

possible, sadder and wiser ’roaches. When the bottle is at length filled, it finds its way overboard. Another method is adopted in some ships—the boys have to muster every morning with a certain number of cockroaches; if they have more, they are rewarded; if less, punished. I have heard of vessels being fumigated, or sunk in harbour; but in these cases the number of dead cockroaches, fast decaying in tropical weather, generally causes fever to break out in the ship; so that, if a vessel once gets overrun with them, nothing short of dry-docking and taking to pieces does any good.

They are decided drunkards. I think they prefer brandy; but they are not difficult to please, and generally prefer whatever they can get. When a cockroach gets drunk, he becomes very lively indeed, runs about, flaps his wings, and tries to fly—a mode of progression which, except in very hot weather, they are unable to perform. Again and again he returns to the liquor, till at last he falls asleep, and by-and-by awakes, and, no doubt filled with remorse at having fallen a victim to so human a weakness, rushes frantically away, and in trying to drink, usually drowns himself.

But although the cockroach is, in general, the bloodthirsty and vindictive being that I have described, still he is by no means unsociable, and *has* his times and seasons of merriment and recreation. On these occasions, the ’roaches emerge from their hiding-places in thousands at some preconcerted signal, perform a reel, or rather an acute-angled, spherically-trigonometrical quadrille, to the music of their own buzz, and evidently to their own intense satisfaction. This queer dance occupies two or three minutes, after which the patter of their little feet is heard no more, the buzz and the bum-m-m are hushed; they have gone to their respective places of abode, and are seen no more for that time. This usually takes place on the evening of a very hot day—a day when pitch has boiled on deck, and the thermometer below has stood persistently above ninety degrees. When the lamps are lit in the wardroom, and the officers have gathered round the table for a quiet rubber at whist, then is heard all about and around you a noise like the rushing of many waters, or the wind among the forest-trees; and on looking up, you find the bulkheads black, or rather brown, with the rustling wretches, while dozens go whirring past you, alight on your head, or fly right in your face.

This is a cockroaches’ ball, which, if not so brilliant as the butterfly ball of my early recollections, I have no doubt is considered by themselves as very amusing and highly respectable.

The reader will readily admit that the character of “greedy as gluttons” has not been misapplied when I state that it would be an easier task to tell what they did *not* eat, than what they *did*.

While they partake largely of the common articles of diet in the ship’s stores, they also rather like books, clothes, boots, soap, and corks. They are also partial to lucifer-matches, and consider the edges of razors and amputating-knives delicate eating. (Note 1.) As to drink, these animals exhibit the same impartiality. Probably they *do* prefer wines and spirits, but they can nevertheless drink beer with relish, and even suit themselves to circumstances, and imbibe water, either pure or mixed with soap; and if they cannot obtain wine, they find in ink a very good substitute. Cockroaches, I should think, are by no means exempt from the numerous ills that flesh is heir to, and must at times, like human epicures and gourmands, suffer dreadfully from rheums and dyspepsia; for to what else can I attribute their extreme partiality for medicine? “Every man his own doctor,” seems to be *their* motto; and they appear to attach no other meaning to the word “surgeon” than simply something to eat: I speak by experience. As to physic, nothing seems to come wrong to them. If patients on shore were only half as fond of pills and draughts, I, for one, should never go to sea. As to powders, they invariably roll themselves bodily in them; and tinctures they sip all day long. Blistering-plaster seems a patent nostrum, which they take internally, for they managed to use up two ounces of mine in as many weeks, and I have no doubt it warmed their insides. I one night left a dozen blue pills carelessly exposed on my little table; soon after I had turned in, I observed the box surrounded by them, and being too lazy to get up, I had to submit to see my pills walked off with in a very few minutes by a dozen ’roaches, each one carrying a pill. I politely informed them that there was more than a dose for an adult cockroach in each of these pills; but I rather think they did not heed the caution, for next morning, the deck of my little cabin was strewed with the dead and dying, some exhibiting all the symptoms of an advanced stage of mercurial salivation, and some still swallowing little morsels of pill, no doubt on the principle of *similia similibus curantur*, from which I argue that cockroaches are homoeopathists.

That cockroaches are cowards, no one, I suppose, will think of disputing.

I have seen a gigantic cockroach run away from an ant, under the impression, I suppose, that the little creature meant to swallow him alive.

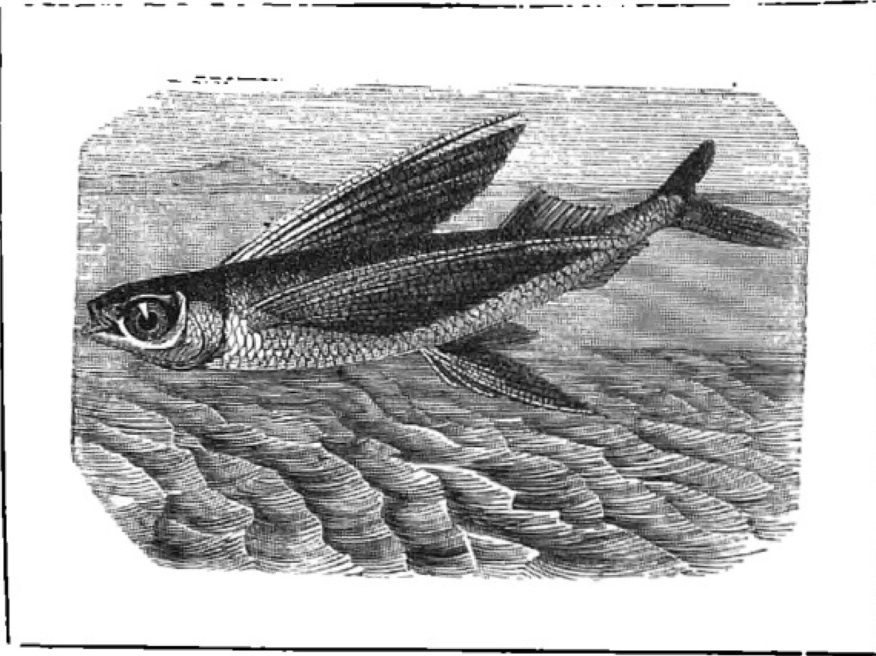
The smaller-sized cockroach differs merely in size and some unimportant particulars from that just described, and possesses in a less degree all the vices of his big brother. They, too, are cannibals; but they prefer to prey upon the large one, which they kill and eat when they find wounded. For example, one very hot day, I was enjoying the luxury of a bath at noon, when a large cockroach alighted in great hurry on the edge of my bath, and began to drink, without saying “By your leave,” or “Good-morning to you.”

Now, being by nature of a kind disposition, I certainly should never have refused to allow the creature to quench his thirst in my bath—although I would undoubtedly have killed him afterwards—had he not, in his hurried flight over me, touched my shoulder with his nasty wings, and left thereon his peculiar perfume.

This very naturally incensed me, so seizing a book, with an interjectional remark on his impudence, I struck him to the deck, when he lay to all appearance, dead; so, at least, thought a wily little ’roach of the small genus, that had been watching the whole affair at the mouth of his hole, and determined to seize his gigantic relative, and have a feast at his expense; so, with this praiseworthy intention, the imp marched boldly up to him, pausing just one second, as if to make sure that life was extinct; then, seeing no movement or sign of life evinced by the giant, he very pompously seized him by the fore-leg, and, turning round, commenced dragging his burden towards a hole, no doubt inwardly chuckling at the anticipation of so glorious a supper.

Unfortunately for the dwarfs hopes, however, the giant now began to revive from the effects of concussion of the brain, into which state my rough treatment had sent him; and his ideas of his whereabouts being rather confused, at the same time feeling himself moving, he very naturally and instinctively began to help himself to follow, by means of his disengaged extremities. Being as yet unaware of what had happened behind, the heart of the little gentleman in front swelled big with conscious pride and dignity, at the thought of what a strong little ’roach he was, and how easily he could drag away his big relative.

But this new and sudden access of strength began presently to astonish the little creature itself, for, aided by the giant’s movements, it could now almost run with its burden, and guessing, I suppose, that everything was not as it ought to be, it peeped over its shoulder to see. Fancy, if you can, the terror and affright of the pigmy on seeing the monster creeping stealthily after it. “What had it been doing? How madly it had been acting!” Dropping its relative’s leg, it turned, and fairly *ran*, helping itself along with its wings, like a barn-door fowl whose wits have been scared away by fright, and never looked once back till fairly free from its terrible adventure; and I have no doubt it was very glad at having discovered its mistake in time, since otherwise the tables might have been turned, and the supper business reversed.



So much for cockroaches, and I ought probably to apologise for my description of these gentry being so realistic and graphic. If I ought to, I do.

Note 1. It is probable that the edges of razors, etc, are destroyed by a sort of acid deposited there by the cockroaches, similar to that which exudes from the egg; however, there is no gainsaying the fact.

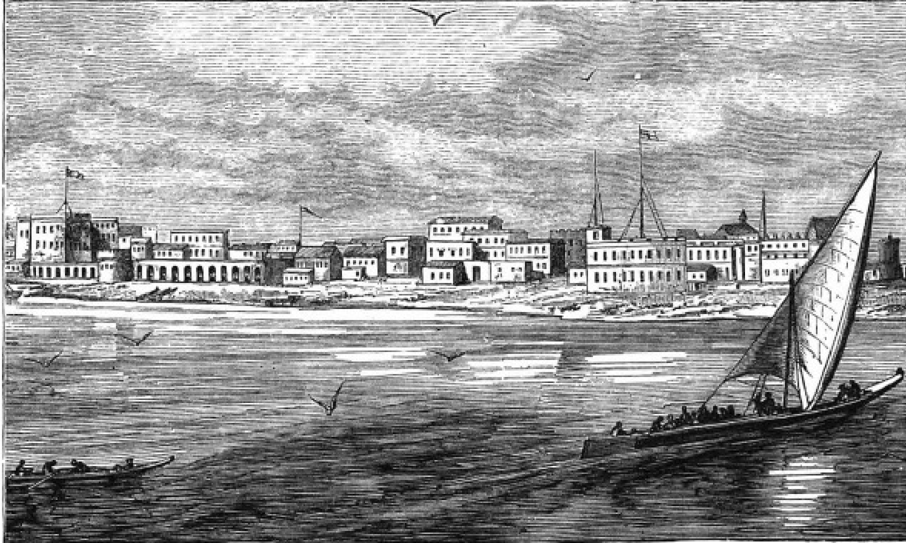
Chapter Twenty.

My Cabin Mates—Concluded.

> “The spider spreads her web, whether she be
> In poet’s towers, cellar or barn or tree.”
>
> Shelley.

The spider, however, is the great enemy of the small genus of cockroaches. These spiders are queer little fellows. They do not build a web for a fly-trap, but merely for a house. For the capture of their prey, they have a much more ingenious method than any I have ever seen, a process which displays a marvellous degree of ingenuity and cleverness on the part of the spider, and proves that they are not unacquainted with some of the laws of mechanics. Having determined to treat himself to fresh meat, the wary little thing (I forgot to say that the creature, although very small in proportion to the generality of tropical spiders, is rather bigger than our domestic spider, and much stronger) emerges from his house, in a corner of the cabin roof, and, having attached one end of a thread to a beam in the roof, about six inches from the bulkhead, he crawls more than half-way down the bulkhead, and attaching the thread here again, goes a little further down, and waits. By-and-by, some unwary ’roach crawls along, between the second attachment of the thread and the spider; instantly the latter rushes from his station, describes half a circle round his victim, lets go the second attachment of the thread—which has now become entangled about the legs of the ’roach—and, by some peculiar movement, which I do not profess to understand, the cockroach is swung off the bulkhead, and hangs suspended by the feet in mid-air; and very foolish he looks; so at least must think the spider, as he coolly stands on the bulkhead quietly watching the unavailing struggles of the animal which he has so nimbly done for; for Marwood himself could not have done the thing half so neatly. The spider now regains the beam to

which the thread is attached, and, sailor-like, slides down the little rope, and approaches his victim; and first, as its kicking might interfere with the further domestic arrangements of its body, the ’roach is killed, by having a hole eaten out of its head between the eyes. This being accomplished, the next thing is to bring home the butcher-meat; and the manner in which this difficult task is performed is nothing less than wonderful. A thread is attached to the lower part of the body of the ’roach; the spider then “shins” up its rope with this thread, and attaches it so high that the body is turned upside down; it then hauls on the other thread, *turns* the body once more, and again attaches the thread; and this process is repeated till the dead cockroach is by degrees hoisted up to the beam, and deposited in a corner near the door of its domicile. But the wisdom of the spider is still further shown in what is done next. It knows very well—so, at least, it would appear—that its supply of food will soon decay; and being unacquainted with the properties of salt, it proceeds to enclose the body of the ’roach in a glutinous substance of the form of a chrysalis or air-tight case. It is, in fact, hermetically sealed, and in this way serves the spider as food for more than a week. There is at one end a little hole, which is, no doubt, closed up after every meal.



OUR HEADQUARTERS ON THE COAST.

In my cabin, besides the common earwigs, which were not numerous, and were seldom seen, I found there were a goodly number of scorpions, none of which, however, were longer than two inches. I am not aware that they did me any particular damage, further than inspiring me with horror and disgust. It *was* very unpleasant to put down your hand for a book, and to find a scorpion beneath your fingers—a hard, scaly scorpion—and then to hear him crack below your boot, and to be sensible of the horrid odour emitted from the body: these things were *not* pleasant. Those scorpions which live in ships are of a brown colour, and not dangerous; it is the large green scorpion, so common in the islands of East Africa, which you must be cautious in handling, for children, it is said, frequently die from the effects of this scorpion’s sting. But a much more loathsome and a really dangerous creature is the large green centipede of the tropics. Of these things, the natives themselves have more horror than of any serpent whatever, not excepting the common cobra, and many a tale they have to tell you of people who have been bitten, and have soon after gone raving mad, and so died. They are from six to twelve inches in length, and just below the neck are armed with a powerful pair of sharp claws, like the nails of a cat, with which they hold on to their victim while they bite; and if once fairly fastened into the flesh, they require to be cut out. While lying at the mouth of the Revooma River, we had taken on board some green wood, and with it many centipedes of a similar colour. One night, about a week afterwards, I had turned in, and had nearly fallen asleep, when I observed a thing on my curtain—luckily on the outside—which very quickly made me wide awake. It was a horrid centipede, about nine inches long. It appeared to be asleep, and had bent itself in the form of the letter S. I could see its golden-green skin by the light of my lamp, and its wee shiny eyes, that, I suppose, never close, and for the moment I was almost terror-struck. I knew if I moved he would be off, and I might get bitten another time—indeed, I never could have slept again in my cabin, had he not been taken. The steward came at my call; and that functionary, by dint of caution and the aid of a pair of forceps, deposited the creature in a bottle of spirits of wine, which stood at hand always ready to receive such specimens. I have it now beside me; and my Scotch landlady, who seemed firmly impressed with the idea that all my diabolical-looking specimens of lizards and various other creeping things are the productions of sundry unhappy patients, remarked concerning my centipede: “He maun hae been a sick and a sore man ye took that ane oot o’, doctor.”

But a worse adventure befell an engineer of ours. He was doing duty in the stokehole, when one of these loathsome creatures actually crept up under his pantaloons. He was an old sailor, and a cool one, and he knew that if he attempted to kill or knock it off, the claws would be inserted on the instant. Cautiously he rolled down his dress, and spread a handkerchief on his leg a short distance before the centipede, which was moving slowly and hesitatingly upwards. It was a moment of intense excitement, both for those around him as well as for the man himself. Slowly it advanced, once it stopped, then moved on again, and crossed on to the handkerchief, and the engineer was saved; on which he immediately got sick, and I was sent for, heard the story, and received the animal, which I placed beside the other.

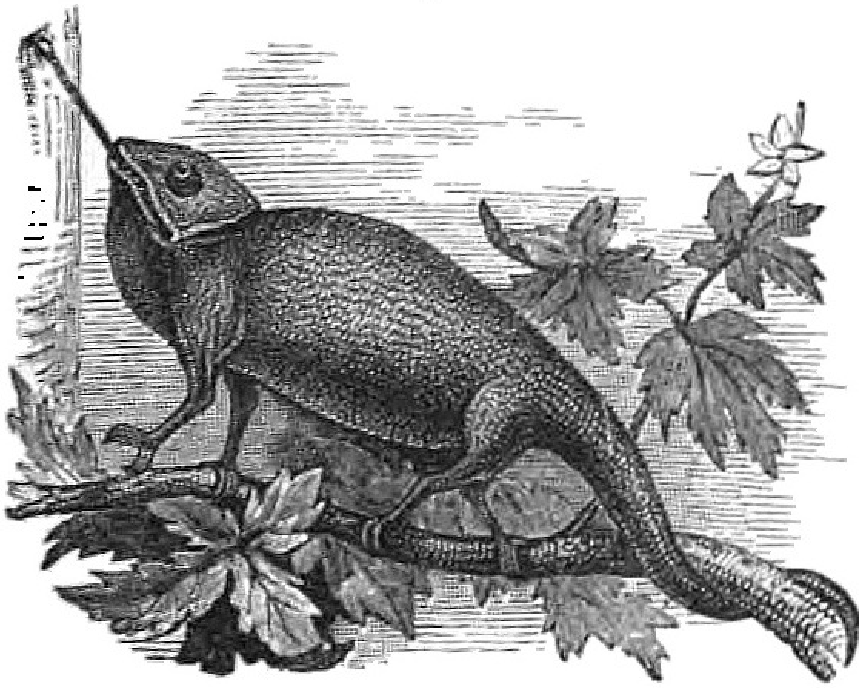
More pleasant and amusing companions and cabin mates were the little ants, a whole colony of which lived in almost every available corner of my sanctum. Wonderfully wise they are too, and very strong, and very proud and “clannish.” Their prey is the large cockroach. If you kill one of these, and place it in the centre of the cabin, parties of ants troop in from every direction—I might say, a regiment from each clan; and consequently there is a great deal of fighting and squabbling, and not much is done, except that the cockroach is usually devoured on the spot. If, however, the dead ’roach be placed near some corner where an army of ants are encamped, they soon emerge from the camp in hundreds, down they march in a stream, and proceed forthwith to carry it away. Slowly up the bulkhead

moves the huge brute, impelled by the united force of half a thousand, and soon he is conveyed to the top. Here, generally, there is a beam to be crossed, where the whole weight of the giant ’roach has to be sustained by these Liliputians, with their heads downward; and more difficult still is the rounding of the corner. Very often, the ants here make a most egregious mistake; while hundreds are hauling away at each leg, probably a large number get on top of the ’roach, and begin tugging away with all their might, and consequently their burden tumbles to the deck; but the second time he is taken up, this mistake is not made. These creatures send out regular spies, which return to report when they have found anything worth taking to headquarters; then the foraging-party goes out, and it is quite a sight to see the long serpentine line, three or four deep, streaming down the bulkhead and over the deck, and apparently having no end. They never march straight before them; their course is always wavy; and it is all the more strange that those coming up behind should take exactly the same course, so that the real shape of the line of march never changes. Perhaps this is effected by the officer-ants, which you may see, one here, one there, all along the line. By the officer-ants I mean a large-sized ant (nearly double), that walks along by the side of the marching army, like ants in authority. They are black (the common ant being brown), and very important, too, they look, and are no doubt deeply impressed by the responsibility of their situation and duties, running hither and thither—first back, then to the side, and sometimes stopping for an instant with another officer, as if to give or receive orders, and then hurrying away again. These are the ants, I have no doubt, that are in command, and also act as engineers and scouts, for you can always see one or two of them running about, just before the main body comes on—probably placing signal-staffs, and otherwise determining the line of march. They seem very energetic officers too, and allow no obstacle to come in their way, for I have often known the line of march to lie up one side of my white pants, over my knees, and down the other. I sat thus once till a whole army passed over me—a very large army it was too, and mightily tried my patience. When the rear-guard had passed over, I got up and walked away, which must have considerably damaged the calculations of the engineers on their march back.

Of the many species of flies found in my cabin, I shall merely mention two—namely, the silly fly—which is about the size of a pin-head, and furnished with two high wings like the sails of a Chinese junk; they come on board with the bananas, and merit the appellation of *silly* from the curious habit they have of running about with their noses down, as if earnestly looking for something which they cannot find; they run a little way, stop, change their direction, and run a little further, stop again, and so on, *ad infinitum*, in a manner quite amusing to any one who has time to look at and observe them—and the hammer-legged fly (the *Foenus* of naturalists), which possesses two long hammer-like legs, that stick out behind, and have a very curious appearance. This fly has been accused of biting, but I have never found him guilty. He seems to be continually suffering from a chronic stage of shaking-palsy. Wherever he alights—which is as often on your nose as anywhere else—he stands for a few seconds shaking in a manner which is quite distressing to behold, then flies away, with his two hammers behind him, to alight and shake on some other place—most likely your neighbour’s nose. It seems to me, indeed, that flies have a penchant for one’s nose. Nothing, too, is more annoying than those same house-flies in warm countries. Suppose one alights on the extreme end of your nasal apparatus, you of course drive him off; he describes two circles in the air, and alights again on the same spot; and this you may do fifty times, and at the fifty-first time, back he comes with a saucy hum-m, and takes his seat again, just as if your nose was made for him to go to roost upon, and for no other purpose at all; so that you are either obliged to sit and smile complacently with a fly on the end of your proboscis, or, if you are clever and supple-jointed, follow him all round the room till you have killed him; then, probably, back you come with a face beaming with gratification, and sit down to your book again, when bum-m-m! there is your friend once more, and you have killed the wrong fly.

In an hospital, nothing is more annoying than these flies; sleep by day is sometimes entirely out of the question, unless the patient covers his face, which is by no means agreeable on a hot day. Mosquitoes, too, are troublesome customers to a stranger, for they seem to prefer the blood of a stranger to that of any one else. The mosquito is a beautiful, feathery-horned midge, with long airy legs, and a body and wings that tremble with their very fineness and grace. The head and shoulders are bent downward at almost a right angle, as if the creature had fallen on its head and broken its back; but, for all its beauty, the mosquito is a hypocritical little scoundrel, who comes singing around you, apparently so much at his ease, and looking so innocent and gentle, that one would imagine butter would hardly melt in his naughty little mouth. He alights upon your skin with such a light and fairy tread, inserts his tube, and sucks your blood so cleverly, that the mischief is done long before you are aware, and he is off again singing as merrily as ever. Probably, if you look about the curtain, you may presently find him gorged with your blood, and hardly able to fly—an unhappy little midge now, very sick, and with all his pride fallen; so you catch and kill him; and serve him right too!

I should deem this chapter incomplete if I omitted to say a word about another little member of the company in my crowded cabin—a real friend, too, and a decided enemy to all the rest of the creeping genera about him. I refer to a chameleon I caught in the woods and tamed. His principal food consisted in cockroaches, which he caught very cleverly, and which, before eating, he used to beat against the deck to soften. He lived in a little stone-jar, which made a very cool house for him, and to which he periodically retired to rest; and very indignant he was, too, if any impudent cockroach, in passing, raised itself on its fore-legs to look in. Instant pursuit was the consequence, and his colour came and went in a dozen different hues as he seized and beat to death the intruder on his privacy. He seemed to know me, and crawled about me. My buttons were his chief attraction; he appeared to think they were made for him to hang on to by the tail; and he would stand for five minutes at a time on my shoulder, darting his tongue in every direction at the unwary flies which came within his reach; and, upon the whole, I found him a very useful little animal indeed. These lizards are very common as pets among the sailors on the coast of Africa, who keep them in queer places sometimes, as the following conversation, which I heard between two sailors at Cape Town, will show.



“Look here, Jack, what I’ve got in my ’bacca-box.”

“What is it?” said Jack—“an evil spirit?”

“No,” said the other, as unconcernedly as if it might have been an evil spirit, but wasn’t—“no! a chameleon;” which he pronounced kammy-lion.

“Queer lion that ’ere, too,” replied Jack.

But, indeed, there are few creatures which a sailor will not attempt to tame.

Chapter Twenty One.

Containing a Tale to Banish the Creepies.

> “The noblest mind the best contentment has.”
>
> Spenser.

“Now,” said Frank, next night (we are all assembled drinking tea on the lawn), “after all those tales about your

foreign favourites, and your pet creepie-creepies, I think the best thing you can do is to come nearer home and change your tactics.”

“I was dreaming about cockroaches last night,” said my wife; “and you know, dear, they are my pet aversion.”

“Yes,” cried Ida; “do tell us a story to banish the creepies.”

“Well then, here goes. I’ll tell you a story about a pet donkey and Nero’s son, ‘Hurricane Bob.’ Will that do? And we’ll call it—”

Jeannie’s Boarding-house: A Seaside Story.

“Jeannie was an ass. I do not make this remark in any disparaging way, for a more interesting member of the genus donkey never, I believe, stood upon four legs. Indeed, I do not think I would be going too far if I said that I have known many individuals not half so wise who stood upon two. Now, although I mention Jeannie in the past tense, it is because she is not present with me, but she is still, I believe, alive and well, and is at this moment, I have little doubt, quietly cropping the grass on her own green field, or gazing pensively at the ocean from the Worthing sands.

“I must tell you who was my travelling companion when I first made the acquaintance of the heroine of this little sketch. He was a very large jet-black Newfoundland dog. Such a fellow! And with such a coat too, not one curly hair in all his jacket, all as straight as quills, and as sheeny as the finest satin. Hurricane Bob can play in the sea, toying with the waves for hours, and still not be wet quite to the skin, and when he comes on shore again he just gives himself a shake or two, buckets of water fly in all directions, for the time being he looks like an animated mop, then away he feathers across the sands, and in a few minutes he is dry enough for the drawing-room. Bob is quite an aristocrat in his own way, and every inch a gentleman—one glance at his beautiful face and his wide, thoughtful eyes would convince you of this—nor, on being introduced to him, would you be surprised to be told that not only is he a winner of many prizes himself, but that his father is a champion dog, and his grandfather before him as well. I do not think that Hurricane Bob—or Master Robert, as we call him on high days and holidays—has a single fault, unless probably the habit he has of going tearing along the streets and roads, when out for a walk, at the rate of twenty miles an hour. It is this habit which has gained for him the sobriquet of Hurricane; it is sometimes a little awkward for the lieges, but to his credit be it said that whenever he runs down a little boy or girl he never fails to stop and apologise on the spot, licking the hands of the prostrate one, and saying, as plainly as a dog can speak, ‘There, there, I didn’t really mean to hurt you, and you’ll be all right again in a minute.’

“We called the place where Jeannie lived, at Worthing, Jeannie’s boarding-house. It was a nice roomy stable, with a coach-house, a yard for exercise, and a loose-box. The door of the stable was always left open at Jeannie’s request, so that she could go out and in as she pleased. The loose-box was told off to Hurricane Bob; he had a dish of nice clean water, a box to hold his dog-biscuits, and plenty of dry straw, so he was as happy as a king.

“When his landlady, Jeannie, first saw him she sniffed him all over, while Bob looked up in her face.

“‘Just you be careful, old lady,’ said Bob, ‘for I might be tempted to catch you by the nose.’

“But Jeannie was satisfied.

“‘You’ll do, doggie,’ she said; ‘there doesn’t seem to be an ounce of real harm in your whole composition.’

“The other members of Jeannie’s boarding establishment were about twenty hens, old and young, more useful perhaps than ornamental. Now, any other landlady in the world would have had a bad time of it with this ill-bred feathered squad, for they were far from polite to her, and constantly grumbling about their food; they said they hadn’t enough of it, and that it was not good what they did get. Then they were continually squabbling or fighting with each other; the little fowls always stole all the big pieces, and the big fowls chased and pecked the little ones all round the yard in consequence, till their backs, under their feathers, must have been black and blue, and they hadn’t peace to eat the portion they had stolen. ‘Tick, tuck,’ the big fowl would say; ‘tick, tuck, take that, and that; tick, tuck, that’s what greed gets.’

“But Jeannie was a philosopher, she simply looked at them with those quiet brown eyes of hers, shook one ear, and said—

“‘Grumble away, grumble away, I’m too well known to be afraid of ye; ye can’t bring disgrace on my hotel. Hee, haw! Haw, hee! There!’

“Hurricane Bob paid his bill *every* morning and every night with a dog-biscuit. The first morning I offered Jeannie the biscuit she looked at me.

“‘Do you take me for a dog?’ she asked. Then she sniffed it. ‘It do smell uncommonly nice,’ she said; ‘I’ll try it, anyhow.’ So she took the cake in her mouth, and marched into the yard; but returned almost immediately, still holding it between her teeth.

“‘What’s the correct way to eat it?’ she inquired.

“‘That’s what I want you to find out,’ I said.

“Poor Jeannie! she tried to break it against the door, then against the wall, and finally against the paving stone, but it resisted all her efforts. Then, ‘Oh! I know,’ she cried. ‘You puts it on the ground, and holes it like a turnip.’ N.B.—I’m not accountable for Jeannie’s bad grammar.

“Every morning, when I came to see Master Robert, Jeannie ran to meet me, and put her great head under my arm for a cuddle. She called me Arthur, but that isn’t my name. She pronounced the first syllable in a double bass key, and the second in a shrill treble. Ar—thur! Haw, hee! Haw, hee!

“She was funny, was Jeannie. Some mornings, as soon as she caught sight of me, she used to go off into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, then she would apologise.

“‘I can’t help it, Arthur,’ she seemed to say. ‘It does seem rude, I daresay, but I really can’t help it. It’s the sight of you that does it. Hee, haw! Hee, haw!’

“One day, and one day only, Bob and his landlady nearly had a quarrel. Jeannie, having eaten her own biscuit, burst into the loose-box, to help the dog with his. ‘Ho, ho!’ said Hurricane Robert, ‘you’ve come to raise the rent, have ye? Just look at this, old lady.’ As he spoke, the dog lifted one lip, and showed such a display of alabaster teeth, that Jeannie was glad to retire without raising the rent.

“What was Jeannie like, did you ask? Why, straight in back and strong in limb, with beautiful long ears to switch away the flies in summer, with mild, intelligent eyes of hazel brown, and always a soft, smooth patch on the top of her nose for any one to kiss who was so minded. In winter Jeannie was rough in coat. She preferred it, she said, because it kept out the cold, and made an excellent saddle for her three little playmates to ride upon. Of these she was exceedingly fond, and never more pleased and proud than when the whole three of them were on her back at one time—wee, brown-eyed, laughing Lovat S—; young Ernie, bold and bright and free; and little winsome Winnie C—.

“To be sure they often fell off, but there was where the fun and the glee lay, especially when Jeannie sometimes bent her nose to the ground and let them all tumble on the sand in a heap. And that, you know, was Jeannie’s joke, and one that she was never tired of repeating.

“In summer Jeannie shone, positively shone, all over like a race-horse or a boatman beetle, and then I can tell you it was no easy matter for her playmates to stick on her back at all. She was particularly partial, as you have seen, to the society of human beings, and brightened up wonderfully as soon as a friend appeared on the scene, but I think when alone she was rather of a contemplative turn of mind. There was a rookery not far from Jeannie’s abode, and at this she never tired gazing.

“‘Well,’ said Jeannie to me one day, ‘they do be funny creatures, those rooks. I don’t think I should like to live up there, Ar—thur. And they’re always a-fighting too, just like my boarders be, and never a thing do they say from morning till night but caw, caw, caw. Now if they could only make a few remarks like this, Haw, hee! Haw, hee! Haw hee!’

“‘Oh! don’t, pray don’t, Jeannie,’ I cried, with my fingers in my ears.

“And now, then, what do you think made Jeannie such a bright, loving, and intelligent animal? Why, kindness and good treatment.

“Dear old Jeannie, I may never gaze upon her classic countenance again, but I shall not forget her. In my mind’s eye I see her even now, as I last beheld her. The sun had just gone down, behind a calm and silent sea; scarcely do the waves speak as they break in ripples on the sand, they do but whisper. And the clouds are tipped with gold and crimson, and far away in the offing is a ship, a single ship, and these are all the signs of life there are about, save Jeannie on the beach. Alone.

“I wonder what she was thinking about.”

Chapter Twenty Two.

An Evening Spent at our own Fireside.

> “Well, puss,” says Man, “and what can you
> To benefit the public do?”
>
> Gay.

“Draw round your chair,” said I to Frank; “and now for a comfortable, quiet evening.”

Frank and I had been away all the afternoon, on one of our long rambles. Very pleasantly shone the morning sun, that had wooed us away; the ground was frozen hard as iron, there wasn’t a cloud in himmel’s blue, nor a breath of wind from one direction or another. But towards evening a change had come suddenly over the spirit of the day’s dream, which found my friend and I still a goodly two hours’ stride from home. Heavy grey clouds had come trooping up from the north-east, borne along on the fierce fleet wings of a ten-knot breeze; then the snow had come on, such snow as seldom falls in “bonnie Berks;” and soon we were surrounded by one of the wildest wintry nights ever I remember. Talking was impossible; we could but clutch our sticks and boldly hurry onwards, while the wind sighed and roared through the telegraph-wires, and the snow sifted angrily through the leafless hedgerows. It was a night that none save a healthy man could have faced.

Ah! but didn’t the light from the cosy, red-curtained window, streaming over our own snow-silvered lawn, amply reward us at last; while the nice dinner quite put the climax on our happiness.

“Now for your story,” said Frank. “Now for my story,” I replied; “I will call it—”

The Fireside Favourite: An Autobiography.

“The lines of some cats fall in pleasant places. Mine have. I’m the fireside favourite, I’m the parlour pet. I’m the *beau idéal*, so my mistress says, of what every decent, respectable, well-trained cat ought to be—and I looked in the glass and found it so. But pray don’t think that I am vain because I happen to know the usages of polite society, and the uses and abuses of the looking-glass. No cat, in my opinion, with any claim to the dignity of lady-puss, would think of washing her face unless in front of a plate-glass mirror. But I will not soon forget the day I first knew what a looking-glass meant. I was then only a silly little mite of a kitten, of a highly inquiring turn of mind. Well, one evening my young mistress was going to a ball, and before she went she spent about three hours in her dressing-room, doing something, and then she came down to the parlour, looking more like an angel than ever I had seen her. Oh, how she was dressed, to be sure. And she had little bunches of flowers stuck on all over her dress, and I wanted to play at ‘mousies’ with them; but she wouldn’t wait, she just kissed me and bade me be a good kitten and not run up the curtains, and then off she went. Yes; I meant to be an awfully good little kitten—but first and foremost I meant to see the interior of that mysterious room. By good luck the door was ajar, so in I popped at once, and made direct for the table. Such a display of beautiful things I had never seen before. I didn’t know what they all meant then, but I do now, for, mind you, I will soon be twenty years of age. But I got great fun on that table. I tried the gold rings on my nose, and the earrings on my toes, and I knocked off the lid of a powder-box, and scattered the crimson contents all abroad. Then I had a fearful battle with a puff which I unearthed from another box. During the fight a bottle of ylang-ylang went down. I didn’t care a bit. Crash went a bottle of flower-water next. I regarded it not. I fought the puff till it took refuge on the floor. Then I paused, wondering what I should do next, when behold! right in front of me and looking through a square of glass, and apparently wondering what *it* should do next, was the ugliest little wretch of a kitten ever you saw in your life—I marched up to it as brave as a button, and it had the audacity to come and meet me.

“‘You ugly, deformed little thing,’ I cried, ‘what do you want in my lady’s room?’

“‘The same to you,’ it seemed to say, ‘and many of them.’

“‘For two pins,’ I continued, ‘I would scratch your nasty little eyes out—yah—fuss-s!’

“‘Yah—fuss-s!’ replied the foe, lifting its left paw as I lifted my right.

“This was too much. I crept round the corner to give her a cuff. She wasn’t there! I came back, and there she was as

brazen as ever. I tried this game on several times, but couldn't catch her. 'Then,' says I, 'you'll catch it where you stand, in spite of the pane of glass!'

"I struck straight from the shoulder, and with a will too. Down went the glass, and I found I had been fighting all the time with my own reflection. Funny, wasn't it?

"When mistress came home there was such a row. But she was sensible, and didn't beat me. She took me upstairs, and showed me what I had done, and looked so vexed that I was sorry too. 'It is my own fault, though,' she said; 'I ought to have shut the door.'

"She presented me with a looking-glass soon after this, and it is quite surprising how my opinion of that strange kitten in the mirror altered after that. I thought now I had never seen such a lovely thing, and I was never tired looking at it. No more I had. But first impressions *are* so erroneous, you know.

"My dear mother is dead and gone years ago—of course, considering my age, you won't marvel at that; and my young mistress is married long, long ago, and has a grown family, who are all as kind as kind can be to old Tom, as they facetiously call me. And so they were to my mother, who, I may tell you, was only three days in her last illness, and gave up the ghost on a file of old newspapers (than which nothing makes a better bed), and is buried under the old pear-tree.

"Dear me, how often I have wondered how other poor cats who have neither kind master nor mistress manage to live. But, the poor creatures, they are so ignorant—badly-bred, you know. Why, only the other day the young master brought home a poor little cat he had found starving in the street. Well, I never in all my life saw such an ill-mannered, rude little wretch, for no sooner had it got itself stuffed with the best fare in the house, than it made a deliberate attempt to steal the canary. There was gratitude for you! Now, mind, I don't say that *I* shouldn't like to eat the canary, but I never have taken our own birds—no—always the neighbours'. I did, just once, fly at our own canary's cage when I was quite a wee cat, but I didn't know any better. And what do you think my mistress did? Why, she took the bird out of the cage and popped me in; and there I was, all day long, a prisoner, with nothing for dinner but seeds and water, and the canary flying about the room and doing what it liked, even helping itself to my milk. I never forgot that.

"Some cats, you know, are arrant thieves, and I don't wonder at it, the way they are kicked and cuffed about, put out all night, and never offered food or water. I would steal myself if I were used like that, wouldn't you, madam? But I have my two meals a day, regularly; and I have a nice double saucer, which stands beside my mirror, and one end contains nice milk and the other clean water, and I don't know which I like the best. When I am downright thirsty, the water is so nice; but at times I am hungry and thirsty both, if you can understand me—then I drink the milk. At times I am allowed to sit on the table when my mistress is at breakfast, and I often put out my paw, ever so gently, and help myself to a morsel from her plate; but I wouldn't do it when she isn't looking. The other day I took a fancy to a nice smelt, and I just went and told my mistress and led her to the kitchen, and I got what I wanted at once.

"I am never put out at night. I have always the softest and warmest of beds, and in winter, towards morning, when the fire goes out, I go upstairs and creep (singing loudly to let her know it is I) into my mistress's arms.

"If I want to go on the tiles any night, I have only to ask. A fellow does want to go on the tiles now and then, doesn't he? Oh, it is a jolly thing, is a night on the tiles! One of these days I may give you my experience of life on the tiles, and then you'll know all about it—in the meantime, madam, you may try it yourself. Let it be moonlight, and be cautious, you know, for, as you have only two feet, you will feel rather awkward at first.

"Did I ever know what it was to be hungry? Yes, indeed, once I did; and I'm now going to tell you of the saddest experience in all my long life. You see it happened like this. It was autumn; I was then about five years of age, and a finer-looking Tom, I could see by my mirror, never trod on four legs. For some days I had observed an unusual bustle both upstairs and downstairs. The servants, especially, seemed all off their heads, and did nothing but open doors and shut them, and nail up things in large boxes, and drink beer and eat cold meat whenever they stood on end. What was up, I wondered? Went and asked my mistress. 'Off to the seaside, pussy Tom,' said she; 'and you're going too, if you're good.' I determined to be good, and not make faces at the canary. But one night I had been out rather late at a cat-concert, and, as usual, came home with the milk in the morning. In order to make sure of a good sleep I went upstairs to an unused attic, as was my wont, and fell asleep on an old pillow. How long I slept I shall never know, but it must have been far on in the day when I awoke, feeling hungry enough to eat a hunter. As I trotted downstairs the first thing that alarmed me was the unusual stillness. I mewed, and a thousand echoes seemed to mock me. The ticking of the old clock on the stairs had never sounded to me so loud and clear before. I went, one by one, into every room. Nothing in any of them but the stillness, apparently, of death and desolation. The blinds were all down, and I could even hear the mice nibbling behind the wainscot.

"My heart felt like a great cold lump of lead, as the sad truth flashed upon my mind—my kind mistress had gone, with all the family, and I was left, forgotten, deserted! My first endeavour was to find my way out. Had I succeeded, even then I would have found my mistress, for cats have an instinct you little wot of. But every door and window was fastened, and there wasn't a hole left which a rat could have crept through.

"What nights and days of misery followed!—it makes me shudder to think of them even now.

"For the first few days I did not suffer much from hunger. There were crumbs left by the servants, and occasionally a mouse crept out from the kitchen fender, and I had that. But by the fifth day the crumbs had all gone, and with them the mice, too, had disappeared. They nibbled no more in the cupboard nor behind the wainscot; and as the clock had run down there wasn't a sound in the old house by night or by day. I now began to suffer both from hunger and thirst. I spent my time either mewing piteously at the hall-door, or roaming purposelessly through the empty house, or watching, watching, faint and wearily, for the mice that never came. Perhaps the most bitter part of my sufferings

just then was the thought that would keep obtruding itself on my mind, that for all the love with which I had loved my mistress, and the faithfulness with which I had served her, she had gone away, and left, me to die all alone in the deserted house. Me, too, who would have laid down my life to please her had she only stayed near me.

"How slowly the time dragged on—how long and dreary the days, how terrible the nights! Perhaps it was when I was at my very worst, that I happened to be standing close by my empty saucer, and in front of my mirror. At that time I was almost too weak to walk; I tottered on my feet, and my head swam and moved from side to side when I tried to look at anything. Suddenly I started. Could that wild, attenuated image in the mirror be my reflection? How it glared upon me from its glassy eyes! And now I knew it could not be mine, but some dreadful thing sent to torture me. For as I gazed it uttered a yell—mournful, prolonged, unearthly—and dashed at me through and out from the mirror. For some time we seemed to writhe together in agony on the carpet. Then up again we started, the mirror-fiend and I. 'Follow me fast!' it seemed to cry, and I was impelled to follow. Wherever it was, there was I. How it tore up and down the house, yelling as it went and tearing everything in its way! How it rushed half up the chimney, and was dashed back again by invisible hands! How it flung itself, half blind and bleeding, at the Venetian blinds, and how madly it tried again to escape into the mirror and shivered the glass! Then mills began in my head—mills and machinery—and the roar of running waters. Then I found myself walking all alone in a green and beautiful meadow, with a blue sky overhead and birds and butterflies all about, a cool breeze fanning my brow, and, better than all, *water*, pure, and clear, and cool, meandering over brown smooth pebbles, beside which the minnows chased the sunbeams. And I drank—and slept.

"When I awoke, I found myself lying on the mat in the hall, and the sunlight shimmering in through the stained glass, and falling in patches of green and crimson on the floor. Very cold now, but quiet and sensible. There was a large hole in my side, and blood was all about, so I must have, in my delirium, *torn the flesh from my own ribs and devoured it*. (Note 1.)

"I knew now that death was come, and would set me free at last.

"Then the noise of wheels in my ears, and the sound of human voices; then a blank; and then some one pouring something down my throat; and I opened my eyes and beheld my dear young mistress. How she was weeping! The sight of her sorrow would have melted your heart. 'Oh, pussy, pussy, do not die!' she was crying.

"Pussy didn't die; but till this day I believe it was only to please my dear mistress I crept back again to life and love.

"I'm very old now, and my thoughts dwell mostly in the past, and I like a cheery fire and a drop of warm milk better than ever. But I have all my faculties and all my comforts. We have other cats in the house, but I never feel jealous, for my mistress, look you, loves me better than all the cats in the kingdom—fact—she told me so."

Note 1. Not overdrawn. A case of the kind actually occurred some years ago in the new town of Edinburgh.—The Author.

Chapter Twenty Three.

"Greyfriars' Bobby"—"Pepper"—The Blind Fiddler's Dog.

> "Alas! for love if this were all,
> And nought beyond on earth."

"A good story cannot be too often told," said Frank one evening.

"Well, I doubt that very much," said my wife; "there is a probability of a good story being spoiled by over-recital."

"I'm of the same opinion," I assented; "but as I intend the story of 'Greyfriars' Bobby' to be printed in my next book, I will just read it over to you as I have written it."

I had fain hoped, I began, to find out something of Bobby's antecedents, and something about the private history of the poor man Grey, who died long before Bobby became a hero in the eyes of the world, and attracted the kindly notice of the good and noble William Chambers, then Lord Provost of Edinburgh. I have been unable to do so, however; even an advertisement in a local paper failed to elicit the information I so much desired.

What Mr Grey was, or who he was, no one can tell me. Some years ago, runs an account of this loving, faithful dog, a stranger arrived in Edinburgh bringing with him a little rough-haired dog, that slept in the same room with him, and followed him in his walks, but no one knew who the stranger was, or whence he came.

The following account of Bobby is culled from the *Animal World* of the second of May, 1870:—

"It is reported that Bobby is a small rough Scotch terrier, grizzled black, with tan feet and nose; and his story runs thus:—More than eleven years ago, a poor man named Grey died, and was buried in the old Greyfriars churchyard, Edinburgh. His grave is now levelled by time, and nothing marks it. But the spot had not been forgotten by his faithful dog. James Brown, the old curator, remembers the funeral well, and that Bobby was one of the most conspicuous of the mourners. James found the dog lying on the grave the next morning; and as dogs are not admitted he turned him out. The second morning the same; the third morning, though cold and wet, there he was, shivering. The did man took pity on him and fed him. This convinced the dog that he had a right there. Sergeant Scott, R.E., allowed him his

board for a length of time, but for more than nine years he had been regularly fed by Mr Trail, who keeps a restaurant close by. Bobby is regular in his calls, being guided by the mid-day gun. On the occasion of the new dog-tax being raised, many persons, the writer amongst the number, wrote to be allowed to pay for Bobby, but the Lord Provost of Edinburgh exempted him, and, to mark his admiration of fidelity, presented him with a handsome collar, with brass nails, and an inscription:—'Greyfriars' Bobby, presented to him by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, 1867.' He has long been an object of curiosity, and his constant appearance in the graveyard has led to numberless inquiries about him. Many efforts have been made to entice him away, but unsuccessfully, and he still clings to the consecrated spot, and from 1861 to the present time he has kept watch thereon. Upon his melancholy couch Bobby hears the bells toll the approach of new inmates to the sepulchres around and about him; and as the procession solemnly passes, who shall say that the ceremony enacted over his dead master does not reappear before him? He sees the sobs and tears of the bereaved, and do not these remind him of the day when he stood with other mourners over the coffin which contained everything he loved on earth? In that clerical voice he rehears those slow and impressive tones which consigned his master's body to ashes and dust. All these reminiscences are surely felt more or less; and yet Bobby, trustful, patient, enduring, continues to wait on the spot sacred to the memory of poor Grey. Poor Grey, did we say? Why, hundreds of the wealthiest amongst us would give a fortune to have placed upon their tombs a living monument of honour like this!—testifying through long years and the bitterest winters (with a blessed moral for mankind) that death cannot dissolve that love which love alone can evoke. When our eye runs over the gravestone records of departed goodness, we are sometimes sceptical whether there is not much mockery in many of the inscriptions, though the friends of the deceased have charitably erected an outward mark of their esteem. But here we have a monument that knows neither hypocrisy nor conventional respect, which appeals to us not in marble (the work of men's hands), but in the flesh and blood of *a living creature that cannot be tempted to desert his trust*—in the devotion of a friend whose short wanderings to and fro prove how truly he gravitates to one yard of earth only—in the determination of a sentinel *who means to die at his post*.

"I hear they say 'tis very lung
    That years hae come and gane,
Sin' first they put my maister here,
    An' grat an' left him lane.
I could na, an' I did na gang,
    For a' they vexed me sair,
An' said sae bauld that they nor
    Should ever see him mair.

"I ken he's near me a' the while,
An' I will see him yet;
For a' my life he tended me.
An' noo he'll not forget.
Some blithesome day I'll hear his step;
There'll be nae kindred near;
For a' they grat, they gaed awa',—
But he shall find *me* here.

"Is time sae lang?—I dinna mind;
Is't cauld?—I canna feel;
He's near me, and he'll come to me,
An' sae 'tis very weel.
I thank ye a' that are sae kind,
As feed an' mak me braw;
Ye're unco gude, but ye're no *him*—
Ye'll no wile me awa'.

"I'll bide an' hope!—Do ye the same;
For ance I heard that ye
Had ay a Master that ye loo'd,
An' yet ye might na see;
A Master, too, that car'd for ye,
(O, sure ye winna flee!)
That's wearying to see ye noo—.
Ye'll no be waur than me?"

In the above account the words which I have italicised should be noted, viz, "a living creature that cannot be tempted to desert his trust, who means to die at his post." These words were in a sense prophetic, for Bobby never did desert the graveyard where his master's remains lie buried, until death stepped in to relieve his sorrows.

The following interesting letter is from Bobby's guardian, Mr Trail, of Greyfriars Place, Edinburgh, who will, I feel sure, pardon the liberty I take in publishing it *in extenso*:—

"In answer to your note in reference to Greyfriars Bobby, I send the following extracts which state correctly the dates and other particulars concerning the little dog:—"

Scotsman, January 17th, 1872:—Many will be sorry to hear that the poor but interesting dog, Greyfriars Bobby, died on Sunday evening, January 14th, 1872. Every kind attention was paid to him in his last days by his guardian Mr Trail, who has had him buried in a flower plot near the Greyfriars Church. His collar, a gift from Lord Provost Chambers, has been deposited in the office at the church gate. Mr Brodie has successfully modelled the figure of Greyfriars Bobby, which is to surmount the very handsome memorial to be erected by the munificence of Baroness Burdett-Coutts.

"'Edinburgh Veterinary College, *March*, 1872.

"'To those who may feel interested in the history of the late Greyfriars Bobby, I may state that he suffered from disease of a cancerous nature affecting the whole of the lower jaw.

"'Thomas Wallet.

"'Professor of Animal Pathology.'

"There are several notices of an interesting nature in the following numbers of the *Animal World* concerning Greyfriars Bobby:—November 1st, 1869; May 2nd, 1870; February 1st, 1872; March 2nd, 1874.

"The fountain is erected at the end of George the Fourth Bridge, near the entrance to the Greyfriars churchyard. It is of Westmoreland granite, and bears the following inscription:—'A tribute to the affectionate fidelity of Greyfriars Bobby.'

"In 1858, this faithful dog followed the remains of his master to Greyfriars churchyard, and lingered near the spot until his death in 1872. Old James Brown died in the autumn of 1868. There is no tombstone on the grave of Bobby's master. Greyfriars Bobby was buried in the flower plot near the stained-glass window of the church, and opposite the gate."

Poor Bobby, then, passed away on a Sunday evening, after watching near the grave for fourteen long years. He died of a cancerous affection of the lower jaw, brought on, doubtless, from the constant resting of his chin on the cold earth. I trust he did not suffer much. I feel convinced that Bobby is happy now; but no stone marks the humble grave where Bobby's master lies. I wish it were otherwise, for surely there must have been good in the breast of that man whom a dog loved so dearly, and to whose memory he was faithful to the end.

The picture of Greyfriars Bobby here given is said to be a very good one, see page 239. You can hardly look at that wistful, pitiful little countenance, all rough and unkempt as it is, without *feeling* the whole truth of the story of

Bobby’s faithfulness and love.

“Ah!” said Frank, when I had finished, “dogs are wonderful creatures.”

“No one knows how wonderful, Frank,” I said. “By the way, did ever you hear of, or read the account of, poor young Gough and his dog? The dog’s master perished while attempting to climb the mountain of Helvellyn. There had been a fall of snow, which partly hid the path and made the ascent dangerous. It was never known whether he was killed by a fall or died of hunger. Three months went by before his body was found, during which time it was watched over by a faithful dog which Mr Gough had with him at the time of the accident. The fidelity of the dog was the subject of a poem which Wordsworth wrote, beginning:—

> “‘A barking sound the shepherd hears,’ etc.

“And now, Ida, I’ll change the tone of my chapter into a less doleful ditty, and tell you about another Scotch, or rather Skye-terrier, who was the means, in the hands of Providence, of saving life in a somewhat remarkable manner. Though I give the story partly in my own words, it was communicated to me by a lady of rank, who is willing to vouch for the authenticity of the incident.”

“Pepper.”

Pepper was our hero’s name. And Pepper was a dog; but I am unable to tell you anything about his birth or pedigree. I do not even know who Pepper’s father was, and I don’t think Pepper knew himself or cared much either; but had you seen him you would have had no hesitation in pronouncing him one of the handsomest little Skye-terriers ever you had beheld.

Pepper was presented to his mistress, the Hon. Mrs C—, by her mother-in-law, the late Lady Dun D—, and soon became a great favourite both with her and all the family. He was so cleanly in his habits, so brave and knightly, so very polite, and had a happy mixture of drollery and decorum about him which was quite charming! Every one liked Pepper. But “liked” is really not the proper word to express the strong affection which the lady portion of the household felt for him. They loved Pepper. That’s better. He was to them the “dearest and best fellow” in the world.

But woe is me that the best of friends must part. And so it came to pass that Pepper’s loving mistress had to go to town on business, or pleasure, or perhaps a mixture of both.

Now, everybody knows that the great wondrous world of London isn’t the place to keep dogs in, that is, if one wishes to see them truly happy and comfortable. For as they don’t wear shoes, as human beings do, they find the hard, stony streets very punishing to their poor little soft feet. Then they miss the green fields in which they used to romp, the hawthorn fences near which they used to find the hedgehog and mole, the crystal streams at which they were wont to quench their thirst, and the ponds in which they bathed or swam. Besides, there is danger for dogs in London. The danger of losing their way, the danger of being stolen, and the still greater danger of being run over by carts or carriages. But that isn’t all, for in the country you can keep even a long-haired Skye clean—clean enough, indeed, to sleep on the hearthrug, or even curl himself up on ottoman or couch, without his leaving any more mark or trace than my lady’s muff or the Persian pussy does; but a Skye-terrier in London is quite a different piece of furniture. London mud is proverbially black and sticky, and when a Skye gets thoroughly soused in it, why, not to put too fine a point on it, he isn’t just the sort of pet one would care to put under his head as a pillow.

Taking Pepper to London, therefore, would have involved endless washings of him, the risk of his catching cold, and, dreadful thought! the risk of offending the servants. True, he might be kept to the kitchen, but banished from the society of his dear mistress, and compelled to associate with servants and the kitchen cat; why, poor little Pepper would simply have broken his heart.

So the question came to be asked—

“Maggie, dear, what *shall* we do with Pepsy?”

“Oh! I have it,” said Maggie; “send him down to Brighton on a visit to dear Mrs W—y; she is such a kind creature, knows all the ways of animals so well; and, moreover, Pepper is on the best of terms with her already.”

So the proposal was agreed to, and a few days afterwards Mrs W—y received her little visitor very graciously indeed, and Pepper was pleased to express his approval of the welcome accorded him, and soon settled down, and became very happy in his Brighton home. His greatest delight was going out with his temporary mistress for a ramble; there was so much to be seen and inquired into, so many pretty children who petted him, so many ladies who admired him, and so many little doggies to see and talk to and exchange opinions on canine politics. But Pepper used to express his delight at going for a walk in a way which his new mistress deemed anything but dignified. People don’t generally care about having all eyes directed towards them on a public thoroughfare like the Brighton esplanade, or King’s Road. But Pepper didn’t care a bark who looked at him. He was intoxicated with joy, and didn’t mind who knew it; consequently, he used, when taken out, to go through a series of the most wonderful acrobatic evolutions ever seen at a seaside watering-place, or anywhere else. He jumped and barked, and chased his tail, rolled and tumbled, leapt clean over his own head and back again, and even made insane attempts to jump down his own throat. Inside, Pepper was content to romp and roll on the floor with a pet guinea-pig, and chase it or be chased by it round and round the room, or tenderly play with some white mice; but no sooner was his nose outside the garden gate, than Pepper felt himself in duty bound to take leave of his senses without giving a moment’s warning, and conduct himself in every particular just like a daft doggie, and had there been a lunatic asylum at Brighton for caninity, I haven’t a

doubt that Pepper would have soon found himself an inmate of it.

One day when out walking, Pepper met a little long-haired dog about his own size and shape, but whereas Pepper was dressed like a gentleman Skye, in coat of hodden-grey, this little fellow was more like a merry man at a country fair, or a clown at a circus. He had been originally white, pure white, but his master had dyed him, and now he appeared in a blue body, a magenta tail, and ears of brightest green.

“I say, mistress,” said Pepper, looking up and addressing the lady who had charge of him, “did you—ever—in—all—your—born—days—see such a fright as that?”

“Hullo!” he continued, talking to the little dog himself, “who let you out like that?”

“Well,” replied the new-comer, “I dare say I do look a little odd, but you’ll get used to me by-and-by.”

“Used to you?” cried Pepper—“never! You are a disgrace to canine society.”

“The fact is,” said the other, looking somewhat ashamed “my master is a dyer, and he does me up like this just by way of advertising, you know.”

“Your master a dyer,” cried Pepper, “then you, too, shall die. Can you fight? I’m full of it. Come, we must have it out.”

“Come back, Pepper, come back, sir!” cried his mistress. But for once Pepper disobeyed; he flew at that funny dog, and in a few minutes the air was filled with the blue and magenta fluff, that the Skye tore out of his antagonist. The combat ended in a complete victory for Pepper. He routed his assailant, and finally chased him off the esplanade.

Pepper’s life at the seaside was a very happy one, or would have been except for the dyed dog, that he made a point of giving instant chase to, whenever he saw him.

Pepper next turned up in Wales. Sir B. N— had taken a lovely old mansion between C—n and Ll—o, far removed from any other houses, and quite amongst the hills, and after seeing his wife and sister settled in the new abode, he went off to Scotland. A week after his departure, the two ladies got up a small picnic to Dolbadran Castle, whose ruins stand upon a steep rock overhanging the lake. Pepper of course accompanied the tourists, and the whole party returned at night rather fatigued. Mrs C— went to bed, and soon fell into a sound sleep, from which she was aroused by Pepper; he was barking at the bedside. She got up, gave him some water, and returned to bed, but Pepper continued to bark and run about the room in a very strange way; he seized the bedclothes, and pulled at them violently. So she put him outside the door in a long passage, which was closed at the other end by a thick green-baize covered door.

Poor Mrs C— was fated to have no rest. Pepper barked louder than ever, he tore at the door, and scratched as if he wished to pull it down; so his mistress again left her couch, and taking up a small riding-whip, proceeded to

administer what she thought to be well-merited correction.

Pepper did not appear to care for the whip at all; he only barked the louder, and jumped up wilder; he even caught Mrs C—'s nightdress in his mouth, and attempted to drag her on towards the end of the passage.

You must be going mad, she thought. I'll put you out of the house, for you will alarm the whole establishment; and thus thinking, she returned, followed by Pepper, who continued to clutch at her garments, into her room, put on her dressing-gown, and proceeded to carry her intention into effect.

Directly she opened the door at the end of the passage, she saw a bright light streaming from a sort of ante-room at the top of the staircase, on the opposite side of the corridor, and at the same moment became sensible of a strange smell of burning wood.

She flew across, and was nearly blinded by the smoke that burst forth immediately the ante-room door was opened. The whole house was on fire, and it was with considerable difficulty that Mrs C—, Lady N—, and the domestics, escaped from the burning mass.

Had Mrs C— been five minutes later before discovering the flames all must have perished; for there was a great quantity of wood-work in the house, and it burnt rapidly.

It matters little how the fire in this case originated, the fact remains that this Skye-terrier, Pepper, was the first to discover it, and his wonderful sagacity and determination, combined to save his friends from a fearful death.

"FIDDLER."

"Ida," said Frank, refilling his pipe, "you are beginning to wink."

"It is time you were in bed, Ida," said my wife.

"Oh! but I do want to hear you read what you wrote yesterday about the poor blind fiddler's dog," cried Ida.

"Well, then," I said, "we will bring the little dog on the boards, and make him speak a piece himself, and this will be positively the last story or anecdote to-night."

The Blind Fiddler's Dog.

The blind man's dog commences in doggerel verse:—

> "It really is amusing to hear how some dogs brag,
> And walk about and swagger, with tails and ears a-wag,—
> How they boast about their prizes and the shows they have been at,
> And their coats so crisp and curly, or bodies sleek and fat,

> Crying, There’s no mistake about it, for judges all agree,
> We’re the champion dogs of England, by points and pedigree.”

Heigho! I wonder what I am, then. Let me consider, I am a poor blind fiddler’s dog, to begin with; but of course that is only a trade. I asked “Bit-o’-Fun” the other day what breed I was. Bit-o’-Fun, I should tell you, is a champion greyhound, and not at all an unkind dog, only just a little haughty and proud, as becomes her exalted station in life. She was talking about the large number of prizes she had won for her master at the various shows she had been at.

“What breed do you think I am?” I asked her. Bit-o’-Fun laughed.

“Well, little Fiddler,” she replied, looking down at me with one eye, “I should say you were what we gentry call a mongrel.”

“Is that something very nice?” I inquired. “Do I come of a high family, now?”

Bit-o’-Fun laughed now till the tears came into her eyes.

“Family!” she cried. “Yes, Fiddler, you have a deal of family in your blood—all families, in fact. You are partly Skye and partly bulldog, and partly collie and partly pug.”

“Oh, stop!” I cried; “you will make me too proud.”

But Bit-o’-Fun went on—

“Your head, Fiddler, is decidedly Scotch; your legs are Irish—awfully Irish; you are tulip-eared, ring-tailed, and your feather—”

“My feather!” I cried, looking round at my back. “You never mean to say I have got feathers.”

“Your hair, then, goosie; feather is the technical term. Your feather is flat, decidedly flat. And, in fact, you’re a most wonderful specimen altogether. That’s your breed.”

I never felt so proud in all my life before.

“And you’re a great beauty, Bit-o’-Fun,” I said; “but aren’t your legs rather long for your body?”

“Oh, no!” replied Bit-o’-Fun; “there isn’t a morsel too much daylight under me.”

“And wouldn’t you like to have a nice long coat like mine?”

“Well, no,” said Bit-o’-Fun—“that is, yes, you know; but it wouldn’t suit so well in running, you see. Look at my head, how it is formed to cleave the wind. Look at my tail, again; that is what I steer with.”

“Oh! you’re perfection itself, I know,” said I. “Pray how many prizes have you taken?”

“Well,” answered the greyhound, “I’ve had over fifty pound-pieces of beef-steak and from twenty to thirty half-pound.”

“Do they give you beef-steak for prizes, then?” I asked.

“Oh dear no,” replied she; “but it’s like this: whenever I take a first prize my master gives me a one-pound piece of steak; if it’s only a second prize I only get half a pound, and I always get a kiss besides.”

“But supposing,” I asked, “you took no prize?”

“A thing which never happened,” said Bit-o’-Fun, rather proudly.

“But supposing?” I insisted.

“Oh, well,” she answered, “instead of being kissed and *steaked*, I should be kicked and *Spratt-caked*, or sent to bed without my supper.”

“And do you enjoy yourself at a show?” said I.

“Well, yes,” said the greyhound; “all doggies don’t, though, but I do. And master gives me such jolly food beforehand, and grooms me every morning, and washes me—but that isn’t nice, makes one shiver so—and then I have always such a nice bed to lie upon. Then I’m sent to the show town in a beautiful box, and men meet me at the station with a carriage. These men are sometimes very rough though, and talk angrily, and carry big whips, and smell horribly of bad beer and, worse, tobacco. One struck me once over the head. Now, if I had been doing anything I wouldn’t have minded; but I wasn’t: only I served him out.”

“What did you do?” said I.

“Why, just waited till I got a chance, then bit him through the leg. My master just came up at the same moment, or it might have been a dear bite to me.”

"BIT-O'-FUN."

"And what is a dog-show like?" I asked.

"Oh!" said Bit-o'-Fun, "when you enter the show-hall, there you see hundreds and hundreds of doggies all chained up on benches. And the noise they make, those that are new to it, is something awful. At first I used to suffer dreadfully with headaches, but I'm used to it now. But it is great fun to see and converse with so many pretty and intelligent dogs, I can tell you. It is this conversation that makes all the row, for perhaps you want to talk with a doggie quite at the other end of the hall, and so you have to roar until you are hoarse. What do we speak about? Well, about our masters, and our points, and our food and exploits, and we abuse the judges, and wonder whether all the funny people we see have souls the same as we have, and so on. I have often thought what fun it would be if one of us were to break his chain some night, and let all the other doggies loose. Oh, wouldn't we have a ball just!

"Well, we are taken out in batches to be judged, and are led round and round in a ring, while two or three ugly men, with hooks in their hands and ribbons in their buttonholes, shake their heads and examine us. That is the time I look my proudest. I cock my ears, straighten my tail, walk like a princess, and bow like a duchess, for I know that the eyes of all the world are on me, and, more than that, my master's eyes. And then when they hang the beautiful ticket around my neck, oh, ain't I glad just! But still I can't help feeling for the poor doggies who don't get any prize, they look so woe-begone and downhearted.

"But managers might do lots to make us more comfortable, by feeding us more regularly, and giving us better food and more water. Oh, I've often had my tongue hanging out, and feeling like a bit of sand-paper for want of a draught of pure water at a country show. And I've been at shows where they never gave us food, and no shelter from the scorching sun or the thunder-shower. Again, they ought to lead us all out occasionally, if only for five minutes, just to stretch our poor cramped legs. But they don't, and it is very cruel. Sometimes, too, the people tease us. I don't mind a pretty child patting me on the head, nor I don't object to a sweet young lady bending over me and letting her long silky curls fall over my shoulder; but there are gawky young men, who come round and prod us with their sticks; and silly old ladies, who prick us with their parasols, and say, 'Get up, sir, and show yourself.' You've heard of my friend 'Tell,' the champion Saint Bernard, I dare say. No? Oh, I forgot; of course you wouldn't. But, at any rate, one day a fat, podgy lady, vulgarly bedecked in satin and gold, goes up to Tell and points her splendid white parasol right at his chest. 'Get up,' says she, 'and show yourself.' Now Tell hasn't the best of tempers at any time. So he did get up, and quickly, too, and showed his teeth and bit; and if his chain hadn't been as short as his temper it would have been a sad thing for Mrs Podgy. As it was, he collared the parasol, and proceeded at once to turn it into toothpicks and rags, and what is more, too, he kept the pieces. So you see the life even of a show-dog has its drawbacks."

"How exceedingly interesting!" said I; "wouldn't I like to be a champion! Do you think now, Bit-o'-Fun, I would have any chance?"

"BILL," THE BUTCHER'S DOG.

“Well, you see,” said Bit-o’-Fun, smiling in her pleasant way, “there isn’t a class at present for Castle Hill collies.”

“What?” said I. “I thought you said a while ago I was a high-bred mongrel?”

“Yes, yes,” said Bit-o’-Fun; “mongrel, or Castle Hill collie; it’s all the same, you know.”

“You’re very learned, Bit-o’-Fun,” I continued. “Now tell me this, what do they mean by judging by points?”

“Well, you see,” replied Bit-o’-Fun, with a comical twinkle in her eye, “the judge goes round, and he says, ‘We’ll give this dog ten points for his head,’ and sticks in ten pins; and so many for his tail, and sticks in so many pins in his tail, and his coat and legs, and so on, and does the same with the other dogs, and the dog who has most pins in him wins the prize. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I replied; “you put it as plain as a book. But it is queer, and I wouldn’t like the pins; I’m sure I should bite.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” roared “Bill,” the butcher’s bull-and-terrier. I knew it was he before I looked round, for he is a nasty vulgar thing, and sometimes he bites me. “Ha! ha! ha!” he laughed again. “Good-morning, Bit-o’-Fun. Whatever have you been telling that little fool of a Fiddler?”

They always call me Fiddler, after my dear master.

“About the shows,” said Bit-o’-Fun.

“Why, you never mean to tell me, Fiddler, that you think of going to a show! Ha! ha! ha!”

“And suppose I did,” I replied, a little riled, and I felt my hair beginning to stand up all along my back, “I dare say I would have as much chance as an ugly patch-eyed thing like you.”

“Look here, Fiddler,” said Bill, showing all his teeth—and he has an awful lot of them—“talk a little more respectfully when you address your betters. I’ve a very good mind to—”

“To what, Master Bill?” said “Don Pedro,” a beautiful large white-and-black Newfoundland, coming suddenly on the ground.

“No one is talking to you, Don,” said Bill.

“But *I’m* talking to you, Bill,” said Don Pedro; “and if I hear you say you’ll dare to touch poor little Fiddler, I’ll carry you off and drown you in the nearest pond, that’s all.”

Bill ran off with his tail between his feet before Don Pedro had done speaking. Now isn’t Don Pedro a dear, good fellow?

“Well, I’m not a champion dog, you see, though I modestly advance;
I *might* have taken a prize or two if I’d ever had a chance;
But shows, I fear, were never meant for the like of poor me,—
Besides, my master isn’t rich, and couldn’t pay the fee;
Yet I love my master none the less, and serve him faithfully.

“Poor master’s got no eyes, you know, and I lead him through the street;
And he plays upon the fiddle, and oh! he plays so sweet.
That I wonder and I ponder, while my eyes with salt tears glisten.
How so many people pass him by, and never stop to listen:
How that nasty big blue man, with his nasty big blue coat.
Moves master on so roughly that I long to bite his throat!

“There are certain quiet side-streets where master oft I take,
Where he’s sure to get a penny, and I a bit of cake;
But at times the nights are rainy, and seem so very long,
That I envy pets in carriages, though I know that that is wrong;
And master’s growing very old, and his blood is getting thin,
And he often shivers with the cold before I lead him in.

“Poor master loves me very much, and I love master too;
But if anything came over me, whatever *could* he do?
I think of things like these, you know, when in my bed at night,
Even in my dreams those nasty thoughts oft make me cry with fright!
Yet, though my lot seems very hard, and my pleasures are but few
I do not grieve, for well I know a dog’s life soon wears through;
And I’ve been told by some there are better worlds than this,
That, even for little doggies, there’s a future state of bliss:
That faithfulness and love are things that cannot die,
And sorrow *here* means joy *there*—
in the realms beyond the sky.”

Chapter Twenty Four.

Mr and Mrs Polypus: A Story Founded on a Fact in Natural History.

“Our plenteous streams a varied race supply.”

Pope.

“Creatures that by a rule of Nature teach
The art of order to a peopled kingdom.”

Shakespeare.

Scene: The old pine forest; a beautiful day in later summer. Grey clouds flitting across the sky’s bright blue, and occasionally obscuring the sun’s rays. A gentle breeze going whispering through the woods, the giant elms, the lordly oaks, and the dark and gloomy firs bending and bowing as the wind passes among their branches. Patches of bright crimson here and there where the foxgloves still bloom; patches of purple and yellow where heather and furze are growing. Not a sound to be heard in all the wood, except the clear, joyous notes of the robin; all his young ones are safely hatched and fledged, and flown away, and he is singing a hymn of thanksgiving.

Aileen Aroon lying as usual with her great head on my lap, Theodore Nero as usual tumbling on the grass, Ida close at my side peeping over my shoulder at the paper I am reading aloud to her.

Ida (*speaks*): “What mites of people your hero and heroine are!”

The author: “Yes, puss; didn’t you order me to write you a tale with tiny, tiny, tiny people in it? Well, here they are. They are microscopic.”

A SUBMARINE GARDEN.

Ida: “But of course it is not a true story; it is composed, as you call it.”

The author: “It is a romance, Ida; but it is a romance of natural history, because, you know, there *are* creatures called polyps that live in the sea, and are so small you have to get a microscope to watch their motions, and they often eat each other, or swallow each other alive, and do all sorts of strange things; and so I call my story—

“Mr and Mrs Polypus: A Tale of the Coralline Sea, a tale of the Indian Ocean, a romance of the coralline sea.

“Far down beneath the blue waves lived my hero and heroine all alone together in their crystal home, with its floors of coral and its windows of diamonds. The cottage in which they dwelt was of a very strange shape indeed, being nothing like any building ever you saw on the face of the earth—but it suited them well—and all around it was a beautiful garden of living plants. Well, all plants possess life; but these were, in reality, living animals, living beings, shaped like flowers, but as capable of eating and drinking as you or I am, only they were all on stalks, and could only catch their food as it floated past them. This seems somewhat awkward, but then they were used to it, and custom is everything. I don’t believe these animals growing on stalks ever wished to walk any oftener than human beings wished to fly.

“Mr and Mrs Polypus, as you may easily guess, were husband and wife, but for all that I am very sorry to have to tell you that they did not always live very peaceably together. They used to have little disagreements now and then; for they were only polyps, you must remember, and smaller far than water-babies. Their little quarrels were always about their food, for, if the truth must be told, Mr Polypus was somewhat of a tyrant to his tiny wife.

“Mr Polypus had many faults; he was, among other things, a very great glutton; so much so, that he did not mind his wife starving so long as he himself had enough to eat.

“Now a word or two about the personal appearance of my principal characters. They were indeed a funny-looking couple, and so small, that unless you had had good eyes, and a tolerably good microscope as well, it would have been impossible for you to see much of what they were doing at all. They were both the same shape, and had only one leg a-piece—a comparatively thick one though—so that when they walked about it was hop, hop, hop on one end, and very ridiculous it looked. But then, if they had only one leg each, Nature had made it up to them in the matter of arms; for instead of two only, as you have, they had a whole row of them all round their shoulders. Wonderfully movable arms they were too, and seemed all joints together, and neither he nor his wife could keep from whirling their arms about whenever they were excited. They had, in fact, so many arms that they could afford to place two pair akimbo, fold one or two pairs across the chest, and still have a few left to shake in each other’s faces when scolding; not that she did much of that, for she was very mild and obedient.

“The only food that Mr and Mrs Polypus got was little fishes, which came floating in through the window to them, or down the chimney, or in by the door; so that they never required to go to the market to buy any provisions; they only had to wait comfortably at their own fireside until breakfast or dinner swam in to them of its own accord. But this did not satisfy the craving appetite of Mr Polypus; so he used often to be from home, swimming up and down the streets, or hopping about at the bottom of the village of Coral Town, where fish did most abound; and it was only when he was away from home on a fishing expedition that poor pretty Mrs Polypus used to get anything to eat, for she was a quiet little woman, and always stopped at home. Poor thing, the neighbours were often very sorry for her; for hers had been a very sad story. For all she was so quiet now, she was once the gayest of the gay, the life and soul of the village of Coral Town. At every ball or party that was given, Peggy—for so she was then called—was the star; and whenever Peggy countenanced a picnic or an angling match, all the village went too and took his wife with him.

“When Peggy was still in her teens she fell in love with gay, rollicking young Mr Pompey, the potassium merchant. You know it was all potassium that they burned in Coral Town, because that burns under water, and coals won’t; and instead of the streets and houses being lighted with gas or oil at nights, they were illuminated with phosphorus. For the next six months after Pompey met pretty Peggy at a ball, their young lives were but as one happy dream; for Pompey loved Peggy dearly, and Peggy loved Pompey. Away down at the bottom of Coral Town was a beautiful submarine garden, with fresh-water shrubs of every shade and flowers of every hue, and there were lonely caves and grottoes and groves, and all kinds of lovely scenery imaginable; and here the lovers often met, and along the winding pathways they ofttimes hopped together. ’Twas here Pompey first declared his passion, and first beheld the love-light in his Peggy’s beaming eyes. One evening they were seated side by side in a coral cave. Everything around them was peaceful and still, the water clear and pellucid, and unbroken by a single ripple. They had sat thus for hours; for the time had flown very quickly, and Pompey had been reading a delightful book to Peggy, until it got so dark he couldn’t see. Far up above them were the phosphorescent lights in the village twinkling like stars in heaven’s firmament. The cave in which they sat was lighted up by a large diamond, which sparkled in the roof, and diffused a soft rose light all around, while here and there on the floor lay strange-shaped musical shells, which ever and anon gave forth sounds like Aeolian harps.

“‘Ah!’ sighed Pompey, and—

“‘Ah!’ sighed Peggy, and—

“‘When shall we wed?’ said Pompey, and—

“‘Whenever you please,’ said she.

“‘Oh! oh!’ cried a terrible voice at their elbows, ‘there’ll be two words to that bargain. He! he! There’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip. Ha! ha!’

“And behold! there in the mouth of the cave stood an ugly old male polyp grinning and bobbing at them like some dreadful ogre.

“‘How dare you, sir!’ said Potassium Pompey, springing from his seat, and striding with a couple of hops towards the new-comer—‘how dare you intrude yourself on the privacy of affianced lovers?’

“‘Intrude? Ho! ho! Privacy? He! he! Affianced? Ha! ha!’ replied the old polyp. ‘I’ll soon let you know that, young jackanapes.’

“‘Sir,’ cried Pompey, ‘this insolence shall not go unpunished. Unhand me, Peggy.’

"'Oh! hush, hush, pray hush,' cried poor Peggy, wringing a few of her hands; 'it's my father, Pompey, my poor father.'

"'That fright your father?' replied Pompey; 'but there, for your sake, my Peggy, and for the sake of his grey hairs, I will spare him.'

"'Come along, Miss Malapert; adieu, Mr Jackanapes,' cried the enraged father; and he dragged his daughter from the cave, but not before she had time to cast one tearful look of fond farewell on her lover, not before she had time to extend ten hands to him behind her back, and he had fondly pressed them all.

"Peggy's father was a miserly old polyp, who lived in a superb residence in the most fashionable part of Coral Town. He had servants who went or came at his beck or call, a splendid chariot of pure gold to ride in, with pure-bred fish-horses, and the only thing he ever had to annoy him was that when he awoke in the morning he could not think of any new pleasure for the day that had dawned. Every day he had a lovely little polyp boy killed for his dinner—for polyps are all cannibals—and if that meal didn't please him, then he used to eat one of the flunkeys. But for all his riches, he was not a gentleman. He had made all his money as a marine store dealer, and then retired to live at his mansion, with his only daughter Peggy.

"Now, for the next many days poor Potassium Pompey was a very unhappy polyp indeed. He went about his business very listlessly, neglected to eat, grew awfully thin, and let his beard grow, and people even said that he sometimes sold them bad potassium. As for Peggy, she was locked up in a room all by herself, and never saw any one at all, except her father, who five times a day came regularly to feed her, and when she refused to eat he cruelly crammed it down her throat. He was only a polyp, remember.

"'I'll fatten the gipsy,' he said to himself, 'and then marry *her* to my old friend Peterie. He can support a wife, for I always see him fishing, and he can't possibly eat all he catches himself.'

"So it was all arranged that the wedding should come off, and one day, as Pompey was returning disconsolately from his office, he met a great and noisy crowd, who were huzzaing and waving their arms in the water, and shouting, 'Long live the happy, happy pair!' And presently up drove the old miser's chariot, with six fish-horses, and polyp postillions to match; and seated there beside his detested rival, Pompey caught a glimpse of his loved and lost darling Peggy; thereupon Pompey made up his mind to drown himself right off. So he went and sought out the blackest, deepest pool, and plunged in. But polyps are so used to the water that they cannot drown, and so the more Pompey tried to drown himself, the more the water wouldn't drown him; so at last he wiped his eyes, and—

"'What a fool I am,' said he, 'to attempt death for the sake of one fair lady, when there are hundreds of polyps as beautiful as she in Coral Town. I'll go home and work, and make riches, then I'll marry ten wives, and hold them all in my arms at once.'

"But Pompey couldn't forget his early love as quickly as he wished to, and often of an evening, when he knew that Mr Polypus was away at some of his gluttonous carousals, Pompey would steal to the window of her house and keek in through the chinks of the shutters, and sigh to see his beloved Peggy sitting all so lonely by herself at the little table, on which the phosphorus lamp was burning. And at the same time—although Pompey did not know it—Peggy would be gazing so sadly into the potassium fire, and thinking of him; she really could not help it, although she knew it was wrong, and poor pretty Mrs Polypus couldn't be expected to be very cheery, could she?

"Well, one night she was sitting all alone like that, wondering what was keeping her husband so long, and if he would beat her, as usual, when he did come home. She hadn't had a bit to eat for many, many hours, and was just beginning to feel hungry and faint, when a tiny wee fish swam in by the chimney, and pop! Mrs Polypus had it down her throat in a twinkling; but as ill-luck would have it, who should return at the very moment but her wicked husband. He had evidently been eating even more than usual, and looked both flushed and angry.

"'*Now*, Mrs Polypus,' he began, 'I saw that. How dared you, when you knew I was coming home to supper, and there wasn't a morsel in the larder?'

"'Oh! please, Peterie,' said poor little Mrs Polypus, beginning to cry, 'I really didn't mean to; but I was *so* hungry, and —'

"'Hungry?' roared the husband; 'how dared you to be hungry?—how dared you be anything at all, in fact? But there, I shall not irritate myself by talking to you. Bring it back again.'

"'Oh! if you please, Peterie—' cried Mrs Polypus.

"'Bring it back again, I say,' cried Mr Polypus, making all his arms swing round and round like a wheel, till you could hardly have seen one of them, and finally crossing them on his chest; and, leaning on the back of the chair, he looked sternly down on his spouse, and said—'Disgorge at once!'

"'I won't, then, and, what is more, I shan't; there!' said the wee woman, for even a woman as well as a worm will turn when very much trodden upon.

"'Good gracious me!' cried Mr Polypus, fairly aghast with astonishment; 'does—she—actually—dare—to—defy me?' but 'Ho! ho!' he added, likewise 'He! he!' and 'we'll see;' and he strode to the window and bolted it, and strode to the door and bolted that; then he took the phosphorus lamp and extinguished it.

"'It'll be so dark, Peterie,' said his wife, beginning to be frightened.

"'There is light enough for what I have to do,' said Peterie, sternly. Then he opened a great yawning mouth, and he seized her first by one arm, and then by another, until he had the whole within his grasp, and she all the time kicking

with her one leg, and screaming—

"'Oh! please don't, Peterie. Oh! Peterie, don't.'

"But he heeded not her cries, which every moment became weaker and more far-away like, until they ceased entirely, and the unhappy Mrs Polypus was nowhere to be seen. *Her husband had swallowed her alive*!

"As soon as he had done so he sat down by the fire, looking rather swollen, and feeling big and not altogether comfortable; but how could he expect to be, after swallowing his wife? He leaned his head on three arms and gazed pensively into the fire.

"'After all,' he said to himself, 'I may have been just a little too hasty, for she wasn't at all a bad little woman, taking her all-in-all. Heigho! I fear I'll never see her like again.'

"Hark! a loud knocking at the door. He starts and listens, and trembles like the guilty thing he is. The knocking was repeated in one continuous stream of rat-tats.

"'Hullo! Peterie,' cried a voice; 'open the door.'

"'Who is there?' asked Peterie at last.

"'Why, man, it is I—Potassium Pompey. Whatever is up with you to-day that you are barred and bolted like this? Afraid of thieves? Eh?'

"'No,' said Peterie, undoing the fastenings and letting Pompey come in; 'it isn't that exactly. The fact is, I wasn't feeling very well, and just thought I would lie down for a little while.'

"'You don't look very ill, anyhow,' said Pompey; 'and you are actually getting stouter, I think!'

"'Well,' replied Peterie, 'you see, I've been out fishing, and had a good dinner, and perhaps I've eaten rather more, I believe, than is good for me.'

"'Shouldn't wonder,' said Pompey, sarcastically; for the truth is, he had been keeking through the chinks of the shutters, and had seen the whole tragedy.

"'A decided case of dropsy, I should think,' added Pompey.

"Peterie groaned.

"'Take a seat,' he said to Pompey. 'I believe you are my friend, and I want to have a little talk with you; I—I want to make a clean breast of it.'

"'Well, I'm all attention,' replied Pompey—'all ears, as the donkey said.'

"'Fact is, then,' continued Peterie, 'I've been a rather unhappy man of late, and my wife and I never understood one another, and never agreed. She was in love with some scoundrel, you know, before we were married—leastways, so they tell me—and I—I'm really afraid I've swallowed her, Pompey.'

"'Hum!' said Pompey; 'and does she agree any better with you now?'

"'No,' replied Peterie, 'that's just the thing; she's living all the wrong way, somehow, and I fear she won't digest.'

"'Wretch!' cried Peterie, starting to his feet, 'behold me. Gaze upon this wasted form: I am he who loved poor Peggy before her fatal marriage. Oh! my Peggy, my loved, my lost, my half-digested Peggy, shall we never meet again?'

"'Sooner,' cried Peterie, 'perhaps than you are aware of. So it was you who loved my silly wife?'

"'It was I.'

"'Wretch, you shall die.'

"'Never,' roared Pompey, 'while I live.'

"'We shall see,' said Peterie.

"'Come on,' said Pompey, 'set the table on one side and give us room.'

"That was a fearful fight that battle of the polyps. It is awful enough to see two men fighting who have only two arms a side, but when it comes to twenty arms each, and all these arms are whirling round at once, like a select assortment of windmills that have run mad, then, I can tell you, it is very much more dreadful. Now Peterie has the advantage.

"Now Pompey is down.

"Now he is up again and Peterie falls.

"Now Peterie half swallows Pompey.

"Now Pompey appears again as large as life, and half swallows Peterie; but at last, by one unlucky blow administered

by ten fists at once, down rolls Potassium Pompey lifeless on Peterie's floor. Peterie bent over the body of Pompey.

"'Bad job,' he mutters, 'he is dead. And the question comes to be, what shall I do with the body? Ha! happy thought! the struggle has given me an appetite, *I'll swallow him too*.'

"Barely had he thus disposed of poor Pompey's body, when a renewed knocking was heard at the outside door. There was not a moment to lose; so Peterie hastily set the furniture in order, and bustled away to open the door, and hardly had he done so when in rushed an excited mob of polyps headed by two warlike policemen, who *headed* them by keeping well in the rear, but being, after the manner of policemen, very loud in their talk.

"'Where is Potassium Pompey?' cried one; and—

"'Ay! where is Potassium Pompey?' cried another; and—

"'To be sure, where is Potassium Pompey?' cried a third; and—

"'That is the question, young man,' cried both policemen at once.

"'Where is Potassium Pompey?'

"'Oh!' groaned Peterie, 'would I were as big as a bullfrog, that I might swallow you all at a gulp.'

"'Away with him, my friends,' cried the warlike policemen, 'to the hall of justice.'

"In the present state of Peterie's digestive organs, resistance was not to be thought of; so he quietly submitted to be led out with ten pairs of handcuffs on his wrists, and dragged along the street, followed by the hooting mob, who wanted to hang him on the spot; but a multitude of policemen now arrived, and being at the rate of three policemen to each civilian polyp, the hanging was prevented. The justice hall was a very large building right in the centre of Coral Town. There the judges used to sit night and day on a large pearl throne at one end to try the cases that were brought before them.

"Now Potassium Pompey was a very great favourite in Coral Town, so that when the wretched Peterie was dragged by fifteen brave policemen before the pearl throne, the hall was quite filled, and you might have heard a midge sneeze, if there had been a midge to sneeze, so great was the silence. The first accuser was Popkins, the miserly old polyp who was poor Peggy's father. He was too wretchedly thin and weak and old to hop in like any other polyp, so he came along the hall walking on his one foot and his twenty hands after the fashion of the looper caterpillar, which I daresay you have observed on a currant-bush.

"'Where is me chee—ild?' cried the aged miser, as soon as he could speak. 'Give me back me chee—ild?'

"'If that's all you've got to say,' said the judge, sternly, 'you'd better stand down.'

"'I merely want me chee—ild,' repeated Popkins.

"'Stand down, sir,' cried the judge.

"After hearing various witnesses who had seen Pompey enter Peterie's house and never return, the judge opened his mouth and spake, for Peterie had said never a word. The judge gave it as his unbiassed opinion that, considering all things, the mysterious disappearance of Mrs Polypus, coupled with that of Potassium Pompey, whom every one loved and admired, the absence of all defence on the part of the prisoner, and the extraordinary rotundity of his corporation, as well as the fact that he had always been a spare man, there could be little doubt of the prisoner's guilt; 'but to make assurance doubly sure,' added the judge, 'let him at once be opened, to furnish additional proof, and the opening of the prisoner, I trust, will close the case.' If guilty, the sentence of the Court was that he should then be dragged to the common execution ground, and there divided into one hundred pieces, and he, the judge, hoped it would be a warning to the prisoner in all future time."

(When a polyp is cut into pieces, each piece becomes a new individual.)

"Twenty policemen now rushed away and brought the biggest knife they could find; twenty more went for ropes, and having procured them, the wretched Mr Polypus was bound to a table, and before he could have said 'cheese,' if he had wanted to say 'cheese,' an immense opening was made in his side, and, lo and behold! out stepped first Potassium Pompey, and after him hopped, modestly hopped, poor Peggy. But the most wonderful part of the whole business was, that neither Peggy nor Pompey seemed a bit the worse for their strange incarceration. Indeed, I ought to say they looked all the better; for Pompey was all smiles, and Peggy was looking very happy indeed, and even Peterie seemed immensely relieved. Pompey led Peggy before the throne, and here he told all the story about how Peggy was murdered, and then how he, Pompey, was murdered next. And—

"'Enough! enough!' cried the judge; 'away with the doomed wretch! Let the execution be proceeded with without a moment's delay.'

"'Please, my lord,' said Peggy, modestly, 'may I have a divorce?'

"'To be sure, to be sure,' said the judge; 'you are justly entitled to a divorce.'

"'And please, my lord,' continued Peggy, 'may—may—'

"'Well? well?' said the judge, with slight impatience, 'out with it.'

"'She wants to ask if she may marry me,' said Pompey, boldly.

"'Most assuredly,' said the judge, 'and a blessing be on you both.'

"In vain the unhappy Peterie begged and prayed for mercy; he was hurried away to the execution ground and led to the scaffold. In all that crowd of upturned faces, Peterie saw not one pitying eye. And now a large barrel was placed to receive the pieces, and, beginning with his head and arms, the executioners cut him into one hundred pieces, leaving nothing of Peterie but the foot.

"'Now,' cried the judge, 'empty the barrel on the floor.'

"This was done.

"And it did seem that wonders would never cease, for as soon as each piece was thrown on the floor it immediately *grew up into a real live polyp, and body and arms all complete and hopping*; and the foot, which had been left, and which was more especially Peterie's—being all that remained of him, you know—grew up into another polyp, and behold there was another and a new Peterie. He was at once surrounded by the ninety and nine new polyps, who all threw their arms—nineteen hundred and ninety arms—around his neck, and began to kiss him and call him dearest dada.

"'On my honour,' said Peterie, 'I think this is rather too much of a joke.'

"But nobody had any pity on him, and the judge said—'Now, Mr Polypus, let this be a lesson to you. Go home at once and work for your children, and remember you support them; if even one of them comes to solicit parish relief, dread the consequences.'

"'How ever shall I manage?' said poor Peterie.

"And he hopped away disconsolate enough amid his ninety and nine baby polyps all crying—

"'Dada dear, give us a fish.'

"'I think,' said the judge, when Peterie had gone—'I think, Mr Popkins, you cannot now do better than consent to make these two young things happy by letting them wed. Pompey, it is true, isn't a king, but he has an excellent business in the potassium line, and none of us can live without fire, you know.'

"'But I'm a king,' cried the aged miser; 'I have mines of wealth, and all I have is theirs. Come to your father's arms, my Peggy and Pompey.'

"'Hurrah!' shouted the mob; 'three cheers for the old miser, and three for Pompey the brave, and three times three for the bonny bride Peggy.'

"And away rolled Peggy in the golden chariot, with her father—such a happy, happy Peggy now; and Pompey was carried through the streets, shoulder high, to his old home.

"So nothing was talked about in Coral Town for the next month but the grandeur of the coming wedding, and the beauty of Peggy, and everybody was happy and gay except poor Peterie; for who could be happy with ninety-nine babies to provide for—ninety-nine breakfasts to get, ninety-nine dinners, ninety-nine teas and suppers all in one, two hundred and ninety-seven meals to provide in one day?

"There were no more fishing excursions for him, no more big dinners, and he worked and toiled to get ends to meet deep down in a potassium mine in the darkest, dismalest corner of Coral Town. And everybody said—

"'It serves him right, the cruel wretch.'

"What a wonderful house that was which Pompey built for his Peggy!

"It was charmingly situated on the slope of a wooded hill, quite in the country. Pompey spent months in furnishing and decorating it, and his greatest pleasure was to superintend all the work himself. Such trees you never saw as grew in the gardens and park, marine trees whose very leaves seemed more lovely than any terrestrial flower, and they were incessantly moving their branches backwards and forwards with a gentle undulating motion, as if they luxuriated in the sight of each other's beauty. Such flowers!—living, breathing flowers they were, and radiant with rainbow tints, flowers that whispered together, and beckoned and bowed and made love to each other. Then those delightful rockeries, half hidden here and there amid the wealth of foliage, and there were curious shells of brilliant colours that made music whenever there was the slightest ripple in the water, and whole colonies of the quaintest little animals that ever you dreamt of crept in and crept out of every fissure or miniature cave in the rocks.

"At night the garden was all lighted up with phosphorescent lamps; but inside the palace itself, in the spacious halls, along the marble staircases, and in the beautiful rooms, nothing short of diamond lights would satisfy Pompey; for you must know that Pompey thought nothing too good for Peggy. So each room was lighted up by a diamond, that shone in the centre of the vaulted roof like a large and beautiful star. Some of these diamonds suffused a rosy light throughout the apartment, the light from others was of a paley green, and from others a faint saffron, while in one room the light from the diamond was for ever changing as you may see the planet Mars doing, if you choose to watch—one moment it was a bright, clear, bluish white, next a rainbow green, and anon changing to deepest crimson. This was a very favourite dining-hall with Pompey, for the simple reason that no one could be sure how his neighbour looked. For instance, if a lady blushed, it did not look like a blush—oh dear no—but a flash of rosy light; if an old gentleman indulged rather much in the pleasures of the table, and began to feel ill in consequence, not a bit of it, he was never better in his life—it was the bluish flash from the diamond; and so, again, if last night's lobster salad

rendered any one yellow and bilious-looking, he could always blame the poor pretty diamond.

“In some rooms the chairs themselves were made of precious stones, and the ottomans and couches built of a single pearl.

“At length everything was completed to Pompey’s entire satisfaction, and he had given any number of gay parties and balls, just by way of warming the house. Pompey flattered himself he had the best provisions in his cellars and the best-trained servants in all Coral Town, and of course nobody cared to deny that. These servants were nearly all of different shapes: some were properly-made polyps; some rolled in when Pompey touched the gong, rolled in like a gig-wheel without the rim, all legs and arms, and the body in the centre; some were merely round balls, and you couldn’t see any head or legs or arms at all till they stopped in front of you, then they popped them all out at once; some walked in, others hopped, one or two floated, and one queer old chap walked on the crown of his head. If you think this is not all strictly true, you have only to take a microscope and look for yourself.

“‘Heigho!’ said Pompey one day, after he had finished a dinner fit to set before a polyp king, ‘all I now want to make me perfectly happy is Peggy. Peggy—Peggy! what a sweetly pretty name it is to be sure! Peggy!’

“And that came too; for if you wait long enough for any particular day, it is sure to come at last, just as whistling at sea makes the wind blow, which it invariably does—when you whistle long enough.

“And never was such a day of rejoicing seen in Coral Town. The bells were ringing and the banners all waving almost before the phosphorescent lamps began to pale in the presence of day.

“Then everybody turned out.

“And everybody seemed to take leave of his senses by special arrangement.

“All but poor Peterie, who was left all by himself to work away in the deep, dark potassium mine. The wedding took place in Peggy’s father’s—Popkins’s—house. The old miser, miser no more though, was half crazy with joy. And nothing would satisfy him but to have one of the upper servants cooked for his breakfast. He didn’t care, he said, whether it was Jeames or the butler. So the butcher dressed the butler, and he was stewed for his master’s breakfast with sauce of pearls powdered in ambrosia.

“And after the ceremony was performed, Pompey appeared on the balcony, clasping Peggy to his heart with ten arms, while he gave ten other hands to Popkins, his father-in-law, to shake as he cried—

“‘Bless you, bless you, my children.’

“Then such a ringing cheer was heard, as never was heard before, or any time since. Even Peterie heard it down in the darkling mine, swallowed a ball of potassium, and died on the spot. As soon as Peterie was dead, he (Peterie) said, ‘Well now, I wonder I never thought of that before;’ because he at once grew up again into ten new polyps, who forthwith left the mine, joined the revellers, and shouted louder than all the rest.

“And when at last Peggy was in Peterie’s house, when the idol of his love became the light of his home, when he saw her there before him, so blooming and bonnie, he opened his twenty arms, and she opened *her* twenty arms, and—

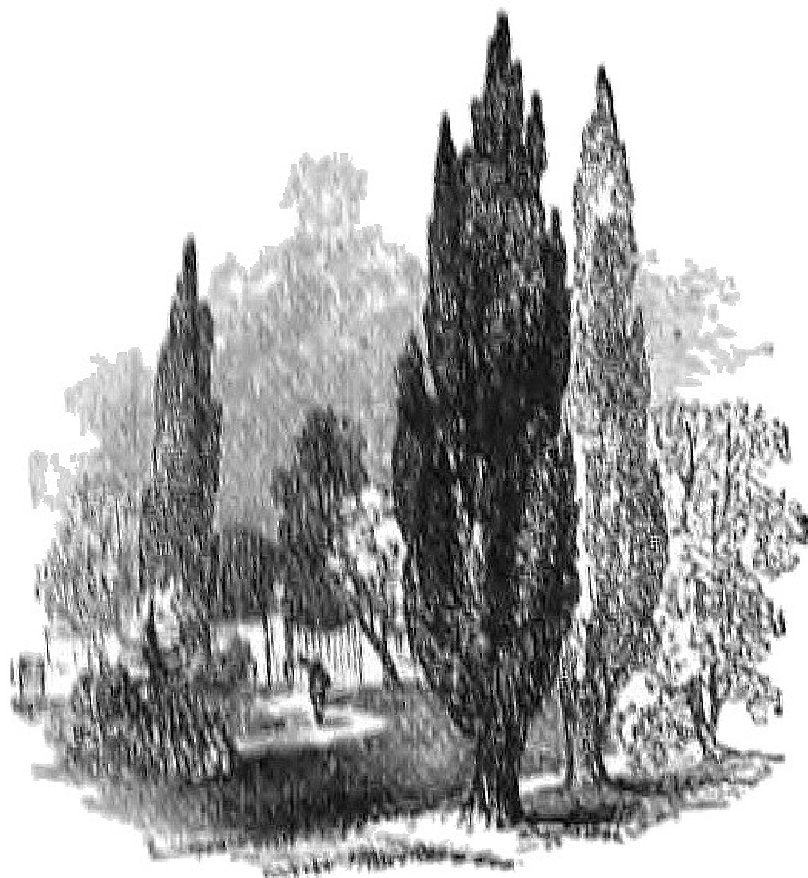
“‘Peggy!’ cried Pompey; and—

“‘Pompey!’ cried Peggy; and—

“Down drops the curtain. It would be positively mean and improper to keep it up one moment longer.”

Chapter Twenty Five.

The Tale of the “Twin Chestnuts”; or, a Summer Evening’s Reverie.



“Twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad:
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch; these to their nests
Were slunk, all save the wakeful nightingale:
Hesperus that led
The starry host rode brightest, till the moon
Unveiled her peerless light,
And o’er the dark her silver mantle threw.”

Milton.

Running all along one side of our orchard, garden, and lawn are a row of tall and graceful poplar trees. So tall are they that they may be seen many miles away; they are quite a feature of the landscape, and tell the position of our village to those coming towards it long before a single house is visible.

These trees are the admiration of all that behold them, but, to my eye, there seems always connected with them an air of solemnity. All the other trees about—the spreading limes, the broad-leaved planes, and the rugged oaks and elms—seem dwarfed by their presence, so high do they tower above them. Their tips appear to touch the very sky itself, their topmost branches pierce the clouds. Around the stem of each the beautiful ivy climbs and clings for support; and this ivy gives shelter by night to hundreds of birds, and to bats too, for aught I know.

Their very position standing there in a row, like giant sentinels, surrounds them with an air of mystery to which the fact that they follow each other’s motions—all bending and nodding in the same direction at once—only tends to add. And spring, summer, autumn, or winter they are ever pointing skywards. In the winter months they are leafless and bare, and there is a wild, weird look about them on a still night, when the moon and stars are shining, which it would be difficult to describe in words. But sometimes in winter, when the hoar-frost falls and silvers every twiglet and branch till they resemble nothing so much as the snowiest of coral, then, indeed, the beauty with which they are adorned, once seen must ever be remembered.

But hardly has spring really come, and long before the cuckoo’s dual notes are heard in the glade, or the nightingale’s street, unearthly music fills every copse and orchard, making the hearts of all that hear it glad, ere those stately poplars are clothed from tip to stem in robes of yellow green, and their myriad leaves dance and quiver in the sunlight, when there is hardly wind enough to bend a blade of grass. As the summer wears on, those leaves

assume a darker tint, and approach more nearly to the colour of the ivy that crowds and climbs around their stems. The wind is then more easily heard, sighing and whispering through the branches even when there is not a breath of air down on the lawn or in the orchard. On what we might well call still evenings, if you cast your eye away aloft, you may see those tree-tops all swaying and moving in rhythm against the sky; and if you listen you may catch the sound of their leaves like that of wavelets breaking on a beach of smoothest sand.

I remember it was one still summer's night, long after sundown, for the gloaming star was shining, that we were all together on the rose lawn. The noisy sparrows were quiet, every bird had ceased to sing, there wasn't a sound to be heard anywhere save the sighing among the topmost branches of the poplars. Far up there, a breeze seemed to be blowing gently from the west, and as it kissed the tree-tops they bent and bowed before it.

Ida lay in a hammock of grass, the book she could no longer see to read lying on her lap in a listless hand.

"No matter how still it is down here," she said, "those trees up there are always whispering."

"What do you think they are saying?" I asked.

"Oh," she answered, "I would give worlds to know."

"Perhaps," she added, after a pause, "they hear voices up in the sky there that we cannot hear, that they catch sounds of—"

"Stop, Ida, stop," I cried; "why, if you go on like this, instead of the wise, sensible, old-fashioned little girl that I'm so fond of having as my companion in my rambles, you will degenerate into a poet."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Frank; "well, that is a funny expression to be sure. Degenerate into a poet. How complimentary to the sons and daughters of the lyre, how complimentary to your own bonnie Bobby Burns, for instance!"

Ida half raised herself in her hammock. She was smiling as she spoke.

"It was you, uncle, that taught me," she said. "Did you not tell me everything that grows around us has life, and even feeling; that in winter the great trees go to sleep, and do not suffer from the cold, but that in summer they are filled with a glow of warmth, and that if you lop a branch off one, though it does not feel pain, it experiences cold at the place where the axe has done its work? Haven't you taught me to look upon the flowers as living things? and don't I feel them to be so when I stoop to kiss the roses? Yes, and I love them too; I love them all—all."

"And I've no doubt the love is reciprocated, my little mouse. But now, talking about trees, if Frank will bring the lamp, I'll read you a kind of a story about two trees. It isn't quite a tale either—it is a kind of reverie; but the descriptive parts of it are painted from the life. Thank you, Frank. Now if the moths will only keep away for a minute, if it wasn't for that bit of displayed humanity on the top of the glass in the shape of a morsel of wire gauze, that big white moth would go pop in and immolate himself. Ahem!"

The Twin Chestnuts: A Reverie. "They grew in beauty side by side."

We weren't the only happy couple that had spent a honeymoon at Twin Chestnut Cottage. In point of fact, the chestnuts themselves had their origin in a honeymoon; for in the same old-fashioned cottage, more than one hundred and ninety years ago, there came to reside a youthful pair, who, hand in hand, had just commenced life's journey together. They each had a little dog, and those two little dogs were probably as fond of each other, after their own fashion, as their master and mistress were; and the name of the one dog was "Gip," and the name of the other was "George"—Gip and George, there you have them. And it was very funny that whatever Gip did, George immediately followed suit and did the same; and, *vice versa*, whatever George did, Gip did. If Gip harked, George barked; if George wagged his tail, so did Gip. Whenever Gip was hungry, George found that he too could eat; and when George took a drink of water, Gip always took a mouthful as well, whether she was thirsty or not. Well, it happened one day in autumn, when the beauty-tints were on the trees—the sunset glow of the dying year—that the two lovers (for although they were married, they were lovers still) were walking on the rustling leaves, and of course George and Gip were no great way behind, and were having their own conversation, and their own little larks all to themselves, when suddenly—

“I say, Georgie,” said Gip.

“Well, my love?” replied George.

“I’m quite tired watching for that silly blind old mole, who I’m certain won’t come again to-night. Let us carry a chestnut home.”

“All right,” said George; “here goes.”

So they each of them chose the biggest horse-chestnut they could find, and they were only very small dogs, and went trotting home with them in their mouths; and when they got there, they each laid their little gifts at the feet of their loved master or mistress.

This they did with such a solemn air that, for the life of them, the lovers could not help laughing outright. But the little dogs received their due meed of praise nevertheless, and the two chestnuts were carefully planted, one on each side of the large lawn window. And when winter gave place to spring, lo! the chestnuts budded, budded and peeped up through the earth, each one looking for all the world like a Hindoo lady’s little finger, which isn’t a bit different, you know, from your little finger, only it is dark-brown, and yours is white. Then the little finger opened, and bright green leaves unfolded and peeped up at the sun and the blue sky, and long before the summer was over they had grown up into sprightly little trees, as straight as rushes, and very nearly as tall, for they had been very carefully watered and tended. Very pretty they looked too, although their leaves seemed a mile too big for their stems, which made them look like two very small men with very large hats; but the young chestnuts themselves didn’t see anything ridiculous in the matter.

These, then, were the infant chestnuts.

And as the years rolled on, and made those lovers old, the chestnuts still grew in height and beauty. And in time poor Grip died, and as George had always done exactly as Gip did, he died too; and Gip was laid at the foot of one tree, and George at the foot of the other, and their graves were watered with loving tears. And the trees grew lovelier still. And when at last those lovers died, the trees showered their flowers, pink-eyed and white, on the coffins, as they were borne away from the old cottage to their long, quiet home in the “moots.”

And time flew on, generation after generation was born, grew up, grew old, and died, and still the twin chestnuts increased and flourished, and they are flourishing now, on this sweet summer’s day, and shading all the cottage from the noonday sun.

It is a very old-fashioned cottage, wholly composed, one might almost say, of gables, the thatch of some of which comes almost to the ground, and I defy any one to tell which is the front of the cottage and which isn’t the front. There are gardens about the old cottage, fruit gardens and flower gardens, and grey old walls half buried in ivy, which never looked half so pretty as in autumn, when the soft leaves of the Virginia creepers are changing to crimson, and blending sweetly with the ivy’s dusky green.

The principal gable is that abutting on to the green velvety lawn, which goes sloping downwards to where the river, broad and still, glides silently on its way to bear on its breast the ships of the greatest city of the world, and carry

them to the ocean.

But the main beauty of the cottage lies in those twin chestnuts. No chestnuts in all the countryside like those two beautiful trees; none so tall, so wide, so spreading; none have such broad green leaves, none have such nuts—for each nutshell grows as big and spiny as a small hedgehog, and contains some one nut, many two, but most three nuts within the outer rind. I only wish you could see them, and you would say, as I do, there are no trees like those twin chestnuts.

The earth was clad in its white cocoon when first we went to Twin Chestnut Cottage, and the two giant trees pointed their skeleton fingers upwards to the murky sky; but long before any of the other chestnut-trees that grew in the parks and the avenues, had even dreamt of awakening from their deep winter sleep, the twin chestnuts had sent forth large brown buds, bigger and longer than rifle bullets, and all gummed over with some sticky substance, as if the fairies had painted them all with glycerine and treacle. With the first sunshine of April those bonnie buds grew thicker, and burst, disclosing little bundles of light-green foliage, that matched *so* sweetly with the brown of the buds and the dark grey of the parent tree.

Day by day we watched the folded leaves expanding; and other eyes than ours were watching them too; for occasionally a large hornet or an early bee would fly round the trees and examine the buds, then off he would go again with a satisfied hum, which said plainly enough, “You’re getting on beautifully, and you’ll be all in flower in a fortnight.”

And, indeed, hardly had a fortnight elapsed, from the time the buds first opened, till the twin chestnuts were hung in robes of drooping green. Such a tender green! such a light and lovely green! and the pendent, crumply leaves seemed as yet incapable of supporting their own weight, like the wings of the moth when it first bursts from its chrysalis. Then, oh! to hear the *frou-frou* of the gentle wind through the silken foliage! And every tree around was bare and brown save them.

Even the river seemed to whisper fondly to the bending reeds as it glided past those chestnuts twain; and I know that the mavis and the merle sung in a louder, gladder key when they awoke in the dewy dawn of morn, and their bright eyes rested on those two clouds of living green.

And now crocuses peeping through the dun earth, and primroses on mossy banks, had long since told that spring had come; but the chestnut-trees said to all the birds that summer too was on the wing. Cock-robin marked the change, and came no more for crumbs—for he thought it was high time to build his nest; only there were times when he seated himself on the old apple-tree, and sung his little song, just to show that he hadn’t forgotten us, and that he meant to come again when family cares were ended and summer had flown away.

Meanwhile, the flower-stems grew brown and mossy, and in a week or two the flowers themselves were all in bloom. Had you seen either of those twin chestnuts then, you would have seen a thing of beauty which would have dwelt in your mind as a joy for ever. It was summer now. Life and love were everywhere. The bloom was on the may—pink-eyed may and white may. The yellow laburnum peeped out from the thickets of evergreen, the yellow broom dipped its tassels in the river, and elder-flowers perfumed the wind. I couldn’t tell you half the beautiful creatures that visited the blossoms on the twin chestnut-trees, and sang about them, and floated around them, and sipped the honey from every calyx. Great droning, velvety bees; white-striped and red busy little hive-bees; large-winged butterflies, gaudy in crimson and black; little white butterflies, with scarlet-tipped wings; little blue butterflies, that glanced in the sunshine like chips of polished steel; and big slow-floating butterflies, so intensely yellow that they looked for all the world as if they had been fed on cayenne, like the canaries, you know. In the gloaming, “Drowsy beetles wheeled their droning flight” around the trees, and noisy cockchafers went whirring up among the blossoms, and imagined they had reached the stars.

When the roses, purple, red, and yellow, clung around the cottage porch, climbed over the thatch, and clung around the chimneys, when the mauve wisterias clustered along the walls, when the honeysuckle scented the green lanes, when daisies and tulips had faded in the garden, and crimson poppies shone through the corn’s green, a breeze blew soft and cool from the south-east, and lo! for days and days the twin chestnuts snowed their petals on the lawn and path. And now we listened every night for the nightingale’s song. They came at last, all in one night it seemed: “Whee, whee, whee.” What are those slow and mournful notes ringing out from the grove in the stillness of night? A lament for brighter skies born of memories of glad Italy?

“Churl, churl; chok, wee, cho!” This in a low and beautiful key; then higher and more joyful, “Wheedle, wheedle, wheedle; wheety, wheety, wheety; chokee, okee, okee-whee!”

Answering each other all the livelong night, bursting into song at intervals all the day, when, we wondered, did they sleep? Did they take it in turns to make night and day melodious, keeping watches like the sailors at sea? We thought the song of the mavis so tame now; but cock-robin’s had not lost its charm, just as the dear old simple “lilts” of bonnie Scotland, or the sadder ditties of the Green Isle, never pall on our ear, love we ever so well the lays of sunny Italy.

As the summer waned apace, and the leaves on the chestnuts changed to a darker, hardier green, the nightingales ceased their song; but, somehow, we never missed them much, there were so many other songsters. We used to wonder how many different sorts of birds found shelter in those twin chestnuts, apart from the bickering sparrows, who colonised it; apart from the merle and thrush, who merely came home to roost; apart from the starling, who was continually having quarrels with his wife about something or other; and apart from the noisy jackdaw, who was such an argumentative fellow, and made himself such a general nuisance that it always ended in his being forcibly ejected.

Robin was invariably the first to awake in the morning. As the first faint tinge of dawning day began to broaden in the

east, he shook the dew from his wings, and gave vent to a little peevish twitter. Then he would hop down from the tree, perch on the gate, and begin his sweet wee song: “Twitter, twitter, twee!” We used to wonder if it really was a song of praise to Him who maketh the sun to rise and gladden all the earth.

“Twitter, twitter, twee!” Little birdies are so happy, and awake every morning as fresh and joyous as innocent children.

“Twitter, twitter, twitter, twee!” went the song for fully half an hour, till it was so light that even the lazy sparrows began to awake, and squabble, and scold, and fight; for you must know that sparrows hold about the same social rank in the feathered creation, that the dwellers around Billingsgate do among human beings.

Then there would be such a chorus of squabbling from the big trees, that poor robin had to give up singing in disgust, and come down to have his breakfast.

“Hullo!” he would cry, addressing a humble-bee, who with his wings all bedraggled in dew, was slowly moving across the gravel, thinking the sun would soon rise and dry him—for poor bees often do stay too long on thistles at night, get drugged with the sweet-scented ambrosia, and are unable to get home till morning—“Hullo!” robin would say; “do you know you’re wanted?”

The poor bee would hold up one arm in mute appeal.

“Keep down your hands,” robin would say; “I’ll do it ever so gently;” and off the bee’s head would go in a twinkling. Then robin would eye his victim till the sting ceased to work out and in, then quietly swallow it. This, with an earthworm or two, and a green caterpillar by way of relish, washed down with a bill-full of water from a little pool in a cabbage-leaf, would form robin’s breakfast; then away he would fly to the woods, where he could sing all day in peace.

And so the summer sped away in that quiet spot, and anon the fields were all ablaze with the golden harvest, and the sturdy leaves of our chestnut-trees turned yellow and brown, and the great nuts came tumbling down in a steady cannonade each time the wind shook the branches. And the twin chestnuts, perhaps, looked more lovely now than ever they had looked—they had borrowed the tints of the autumn sunset; yet their very beauty told us now that the end was not far away.

The wind of a night now moved the branches with a harsher, drier rustling, like the sound of breaking waves or falling water, and we often used to dream we were away at sea, tossed up and down on the billows. “Heigho!” we (Part of this page missing.)

There were days when the sun set in an ochrey haze, when the evening star with its dimmed eye looked down from a sky of emerald green, where as the gloaming deepened into night, not a cloud was there to hide the glittering orbs; then the fairies set to work to adorn the trees, and when morning came, lo! what a sight was there! All around the hoar-frost lay, white and deep on bush and brake, on the hedgerows and brambles; and every twiglet and thorn was studded with starry jewels on tit twin chestnuts, and they were trees no more—every branchlet and spray was changed to glittering coral; and garlands of silver and lace-work, lovelier far than human brains could ever plan or fingers weave, were looped from bough to bough, and hung in sheeny radiance around the sturdy stems.

Those dear old chestnut-trees!

And as the seasons pass o’er the chestnut-trees, and each one clothes them in a beauty of its own, so across the seasons of our life Time spreads his varied joys: childhood, in its innocence, hath its joys, youth in its hope of brighter days, manhood in its strength and ambition, and old age in the peaceful trust of a better world to come.

Chapter Twenty Six.

The Story of Aileen’s Husband, Nero.

> “The pine-trees, gathering closer in the shadows,
> Listened in every spray—”

I certainly had no intention of bringing tears to little Ida’s eyes; it was mere thoughtlessness on my part, but the result was precisely the same; and there was Ida kneeling beside that great Newfoundland, Theodore Nero, with her arms round his neck, and a moment or two after I had spoken, I positively saw a tear fall on his brow, and lie there like a diamond. Ah! such tears are far more precious than any diamonds.

“You don’t love that dog, mouse?” These were the words I had given utterance to, half-banteringly, as she sat near me on the grass playing with the dog. I went on with my writing, and when I looked up again beheld that tear.

Yes, I felt sorry, and set about at once planning some means of amends. I knew human nature and Ida’s nature too well to make any fuss about the matter—I would not even let her know I had seen her wet eyelashes, nor did I attempt to soothe her. If I had done so, there would have been some hysterical sobbing and a whole flood of tears, with red eyes and perhaps a headache to follow. So without looking up I said—

“By the way, birdie, did ever I tell you Nero’s story?”

“Oh, no,” she said, in joyful forgetfulness of her recent grief; “and I would so like to hear it. But,” she added, doubtfully, “a few minutes ago you said you could not talk to me, that you must finish writing your chapter. Why have you changed your mind?”

“I don’t see why in this world, Ida,” I replied, smiling, “a man should not be allowed to change his mind sometimes as well as a woman.”

This settled the matter, and I put away my paper in my portfolio, and prepared to talk.

Where were we seated? Why, under the old pine-tree—our *very* favourite seat. My wife was engaged at home turning gooseberries into jam, and had packed Ida and me off, to be out of the way, and friend Frank himself had gone that day on some kind mission or other connected with boys. I never saw any one more fond of boys than Frank was; I am sure he spent all his spare cash on them. He was known all over the parish as the boys’ friend. If in town Frank saw a new book suitable for a boy, it was a temptation he could not resist. If he had been poor, I’m certain he would have gone without his dinner in order to secure a good book for a boy. He was constantly finding out deserving lads and getting them situations, and the day they were going to start was a very busy one indeed for Frank. He would be up betimes in the morning, sometimes before the servants, and often before the maids came down he would have the fire lighted, and the kettle boiling, and everything ready for breakfast. Then he would hurry away to the boy’s home, to see he got all ready in time for the start, and that he also had had breakfast. He saw him to the station, gave him much kind and fatherly advice, and, probably, in the little kit that accompanied the lad, there were several comforts in the way of clothes, that wouldn’t have been there at all if friend Frank had not possessed the kindest heart that ever warmed a human breast.

I said Frank found out the *deserving* boys; true. But he did not forget the undeserving either, and positively twice every season what should Frank do but get up what he called—

“The Bad Boys’ Cricket Match.”

Nobody used to play at these matches but the bad boys and the unregenerate and the ungrateful boys. And after the

match was over, if you had peeped into the tent you would have seen Frank, his jolly face radiant, seated at the head of a well-spread table, and all his bad boys around him, and, had you been asked, you could not have said for certain whether Frank looked happier than the boys, or the boys happier than Frank.

But I've seen a really bad boy going away from home to some situation, where Frank was sending him on trial, and bidding Frank good-bye with the big lumps of tears rolling down over cheeks and nose, and heard the boy say—

"God bless ye, sir; ye've been a deal kinder to me than my own father, and I'll try to deserve all your goodness, sir, and lead a better life."

To whom Frank would curtly reply, perhaps with a tear in his own honest blue eye—

"Don't thank me, boy—I can't stand that. There, good-bye; turn over a new leaf, and don't let me see you back for a year—only write to me. Good-bye."

And Frank's boys' letters, how he did enjoy them to be sure!

Dear Frank! he is dead and gone, else dare I not write thus about him, for a more modest man than my friend I have yet to find.

Well, Frank was away to-day on some good mission, and that is how Ida and I were alone with the dogs. Nero, by the way, was on the sick-list to some extent. Indeed, Nero never minded being put on the sick-list if there was nothing very serious the matter with him, because this entailed a deal of extra petting, and innumerable tit-bits and dainties that would never otherwise have found the road to his appreciative maw. As to petting, the dog could put up with any amount of it; and it is a fact that I have known him sham ill in order to be made much of. Once, I remember, he had hurt his leg by jumping, and long after he was better, if any of us would turn about, when he was walking well enough, and say—in fun, of course—"Just look how lame that poor dear dog is!" then Nero would assume the Alexandra limp on the spot, and keep it up for some time, unless a rat happened to run across the road, or a rabbit, or a hedgehog put in an appearance—if so, he forgot all about the bad leg.

"Well, birdie," I said, "to give you anything like a complete history of that faithful fellow you are fondling is impossible. It would take up too much time, because it would include the history of the last ten years of my own life, and that would hardly be worth recording. When my poor old Tyro died, the world, as far as dogs were concerned, seemed to me a sad blank. I have never forgotten Tyro, the dog of my student days, I never shall, and I am not ashamed to say that I live in hopes of meeting him again.

"What says Tupper about Sandy, birdie? Repeat the lines, dear, if you remember them, and then I'll tell you something about Nero."

Ida did so, in her sweet, girlish tones; and even at this moment, reader, I have only to shut my eyes, and I seem to see and hear her once more as she sits on that mossy bank, with her one arm around the great Newfoundland's neck, and the summer wind playing with her bonnie hair.

"Thank you, birdie," I said, when she had finished.

"Now then," said Ida.

"I was on half-pay when I first met Nero," I began, "and for some time the relations between us were somewhat strained, for Newfoundlands are most faithful to old memories. The dog seemed determined not to let himself love me or forget his old master, and I felt determined not to love him. It seemed to me positively cruel to let any other animal find a place in my affections, with poor Tyro so recently laid in his grave in the romantic old castle of Doune. So a good month went past without any great show of affection on either side.

"Advancement towards a kindlier condition of feeling betwixt us took place first and foremost from the dog's side. He began to manifest regard for me in a somewhat strange way. His sleeping apartment was a nice, clean, well-bedded out-house, but every morning he used to find his way upstairs to my room before I was awake, and on quietly gaining an entrance, the next thing he would do was to place his two fore-paws on the bed at my shoulder, then raise himself straight up to the perpendicular.

"So when I awoke I would find, on looking up, the great dog standing thus, looming high above me, but as silent and fixed as if he had been a statue chiselled out of the blackest marble.

"At first it used to be quite startling, but I soon got used to it. He never bent his head, but just stood there.

"'I'm here,' he seemed to say, 'and you can caress me if you choose; I wouldn't be here at all if I didn't care just a little about you.'

"But one morning, when I put up my hand and patted him, and said—'You are a good, honest-hearted dog, I do believe,' he lowered his great head instantly, and licked my face.

"That is how our friendship began, Ida, and from that day till this we have never been twenty-four hours parted—by sea or on land he has been my constant companion.

"He was very young when I first got him, and had only newly been imported, but he was even then quite as big as he is now.

"The ice being broken, as I might say, affection both on his side and on mine grew very fast; but what cemented our friendship infrangibly was a terrible illness that the poor fellow contracted some months after I got him.

"He began to get very thin, to look pinched about the face, and weary about the eyes, his coat felt harsh and dry, and his appetite went away entirely.

"He used to look up wistfully in my face, as if wanting me to tell him what could possibly be the matter with him.

"The poor dog was sickening for distemper.

"All highly-bred dogs take this dreadful illness in its very worst form.

"I am not going to describe the animal's sufferings, nor any part of them; they were very great, however, and the patience with which he bore them all would have put many a human invalid to shame. He soon came to know that I was doing all I could to save him, and that, nauseous though the medicines were he had to take, they were meant to do him good, and at last he would lick his physic out of the spoon, although so weak that his head had to be supported while he was doing so.

"One night, I remember, he was so very ill that I thought it was impossible he could live till morning, and I remember also sorrowfully wondering where I should lay his great body when dead, for we lived then in the midst of a great, bustling, busy city. But the fever had done its worst, and morning saw him not only alive, but slightly better.

"I was on what we sailors call a spell of half-pay, so I had plenty of time to attend to him—no other cares then, Ida. I did all my skill could suggest to get him over the after effects of the distemper, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing him one of the most splendid Newfoundlands that had ever been known in the country, with a coat that rivalled the raven's wing in darkness and sheen.

"The dog loved me now with all his big heart—for a Newfoundland is one of the most grateful animals that lives—and if the truth must be told, I already loved the dog.

"Nero was bigger then, Ida, than he is now."

"Is that possible?" said Ida.

"It is; for, you see, he is getting old."

"But dogs don't stoop like old men," laughed Ida.

"No," I replied, "not quite; but the joints bend more, the fore and hind feet are lengthened, and that, in a large dog like a Saint Bernard or Newfoundland, makes a difference of an inch or two at the shoulder. But when Nero was in his prime he could easily place his paws on the shoulder of a tall man, and then the man's head and his would be about on a level.

"Somebody taught him a trick of taking gentlemen's hats off in the street."

"Oh!" cried Ida, "I know who the somebody was; it was you, uncle. How naughty of you!"

"Well, Ida," I confessed, "perhaps you are right; but remember that both the dog and I were younger then than we are now. But Nero frequently took a fancy to a policeman's helmet, and used to secure one very neatly when the owner had his back turned, and having secured it, he would go galloping down the street with it, very much to the amusement of the passengers, but usually to the great indignation of the denuded policeman. It would often require the sum of sixpence to put matters to rights."

"I am so glad," said Ida, "he does not deprive policemen of their helmets now; I should be afraid to go out with him."

"You see, Ida, I am not hiding any of the dog's faults nor follies. He had one other trick which more than once led to a scene in the street. I was in the habit of giving him my stick to carry. Sometimes he would come quietly up behind me and march off with it before I had time to prevent him. This would not have signified, if the dog had not taken it into his head that he could with impunity snatch a stick from the hands of any passer-by who happened to carry one to his—the dog's—liking. It was a thick stick the dog preferred, a good mouthful of wood; but he used to do the trick so nimbly and so funnily that the aggrieved party was seldom or never angry. I used to get the stick from Nero as soon as I could, giving him my own instead, and restore it with an ample apology to its owner.

"But one day Nero, while out walking with me, saw limping on ahead of us an old sailor with a wooden leg. I daresay he had left his original leg in some field of battle, or some blood-stained deck.

"'Oh!' Nero seemed to say to himself, 'there is a capital stick. That is the thickness I like to see. There is something in that one can lay hold of.'

"And before I could prevent him, he had run on and seized the poor man by the wooden leg. Nero never was a dog to let go hold of anything he had once taken a fancy to, unless he chose to do so of his own accord. On this occasion, I feel convinced he himself saw the humour of the incident, for he stuck to the leg, and there was positive merriment sparkling in his eye as he tugged and pulled. The sailor was Irish, and just as full of fun as the dog. Whether or not he saw there was half-a-crown to be gained by it I cannot say, but he set himself down on the pavement, undid the leg, and off galloped Nero in triumph, waving the wooden limb proudly aloft. The Irishman, sitting there on the pavement, made a speech that set every one around him laughing. I found the dog, and got the leg, slipping a piece of silver into the old sailor's hand as I restored it.

"Well, that was an easy way out of a difficulty. Worse was to come, however, from this trick of Nero's; for not long after, in a dockyard town, while out walking, I perceived some distance ahead of me our elderly admiral of the Fleet. I made two discoveries at one and the same time: the first was, that the admiral carried a beautiful strong bamboo

cane; the second was, that master Nero, after giving me a glance that told me he was brimful of mischief, had made up his mind to possess himself of that bamboo cane. Before I could remonstrate with him, the admiral was caneless, and as brimful of wrath as the dog was of fun.

“The situation was appalling.

“I was in uniform, and here was a living admiral, whom *my* dog assaulted, the dog himself at that very moment lying quietly a little way off, chewing the head of the cane into match-wood. An apology was refused, and I couldn’t offer him half-a-crown as I had done the old wooden-legged sailor.

“The name of my ship was demanded, and with fear and trembling in my heart I turned and walked sorrowfully away.”

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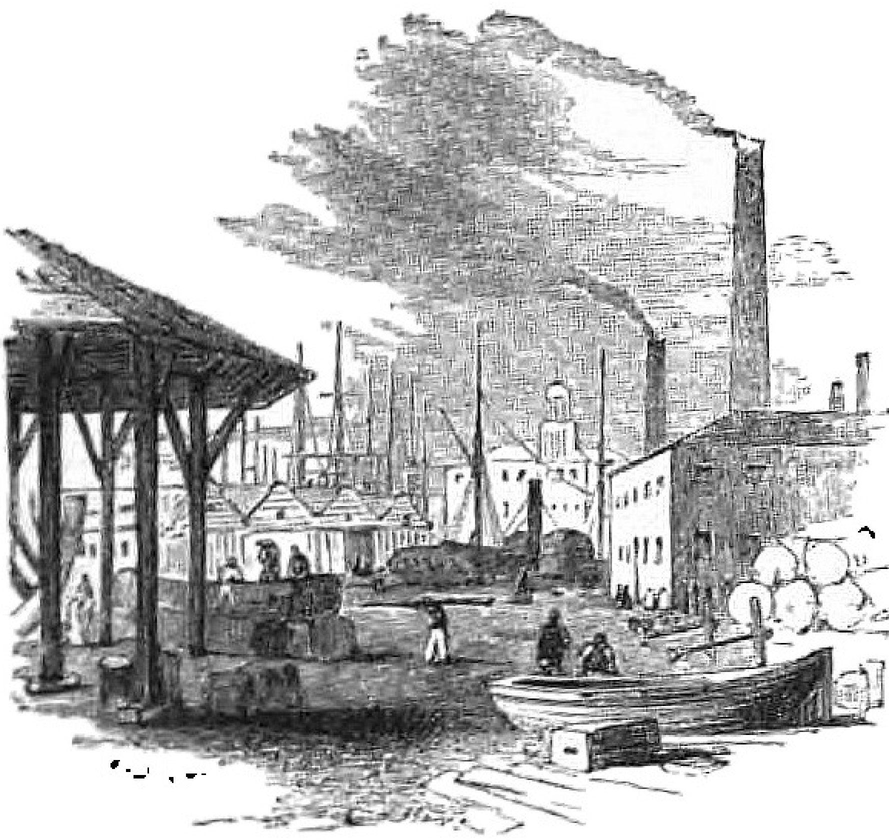
Chapter Twenty Seven.

The Story of Aileen’s Husband, Nero—Continued.



> “His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
> Showed he was none o’ Scotland’s dogs.”
>
> Burns.

“You see, dear,” I continued, “that Nero had even in his younger days a very high sense of humour and fun, and was extremely fond of practical joking, and this trait of his character sometimes led his master into difficulties, but the dog and I always managed to get over them. At a very early age he learned to fetch and carry, and when out walking he never seemed happy unless I gave him something to bring along with him. Poor fellow, I daresay he thought he was not only pleasing me, but assisting me, and that he was not wrong in thinking so you will readily believe when told that, in his prime, he could carry a large carpet bag or light portmanteau for miles without the least difficulty. He was handy, therefore, when travelling, for he performed the duties of a light porter, and never demanded a fee.

“He used to carry anything committed to his charge, even a parcel with glass in it might be safely entrusted to his care, if you did not forget to tell him to be very cautious with it.

“I was always very careful to give him something to carry, for if I did not he was almost sure to help himself. When going into a shop, for instance, to make a purchase, he was exceedingly disappointed if something or other was not bought and handed to him to take home. Once I remember going into a news-agent’s shop for something the man did not happen to have. I left shortly, taking no thought about my companion, but had not gone far before Nero went trotting past me with a well-filled paper bag in his mouth, and after us came running, gasping and breathless, a respectable-looking old lady, waving aloft a blue gingham umbrella. ‘The dog, the dog,’ she was bawling, ‘he has run off with my buns! Stop thief!’

“I stopped the thief, and the lady was gracious enough to accept my apologies.

“Not seeing me make any purchase, Nero had evidently said to himself—‘Why, nothing to carry? Well, I don’t mean to go away without anything, if my master does. Here goes.’ And forthwith he had pounced upon the paper bag full of buns, which the lady had deposited on the counter.

“At Sheerness, bathers are in the habit of leaving their boots on the beach while they enjoy the luxury of a dip in the sad sea waves. They usually put their stockings or socks in the boots. When quite a mile away from the bathing-place, one fine summer’s day, I happened to look round, and there was Nero walking solemnly after me with a young girl’s boot, with a stocking in it, in his mouth. We went back to the place, but I could find no owner for the boot, though I have no doubt it had been missed. Don’t you think so, birdie?”

“Yes,” said Ida; “only fancy the poor girl having to go home with one shoe off and one shoe on. Oh! Nero, you dear old boy, who could have thought you had ever been so naughty in the days of your youth!”

“Well, another day when travelling, I happened to have no luggage. This did not please Master Nero, and in lieu of something better, he picked up a large bundle of morning papers, which the porter had just thrown out of the luggage van. He ran out of the station with them, and it required no little coaxing to make him deliver them up, for he was extremely fond of any kind of paper to carry.

“But Nero was just as honest, Ida, when a young dog as he is now. Nothing ever could tempt him to steal. The only thing approaching to theft that could be laid to his charge happened early one morning at Boston, in Lincolnshire. I should tell you first, however, that the dog’s partiality for rabbits as playmates was very great indeed. He has taken more to cats of late, but when a young dog, rabbits were his especial delight.

“We had arrived at Boston by a very early morning train, our luggage having gone on before, the night before, so that when I reached my journey’s end, I had only to whistle on my dog, and, stick in hand, set out for my hotel. It was the morning of an agricultural show, and several boxes containing exhibition rabbits lay about the platform.

“Probably the dog had reasoned thus with himself:—

“‘Those boxes contain rabbits; what a chance to possess myself of a delightful pet! No doubt they belong to my master, for almost everything in this world does, only he didn’t notice them; but I’m sure he will be as much pleased as myself when he sees the lovely rabbit hop out of the box; so here goes. I’ll have this one.’

“The upshot of Nero’s cogitations was that, on looking round when fully a quarter of a mile from the station, to see why the dog was not keeping pace with me, I found him marching solemnly along behind with a box containing a live rabbit in his mouth. He was looking just a little sheepish, and he looked more so when I scolded him and made him turn and come back with it.

“Dogs have their likes and dislikes to other animals and to people, just as we human beings have. One of Nero’s earliest companions was a beautiful little pure white Pomeranian dog, of the name of ‘Vee-Vee.’ He was as like an Arctic fox—sharp face, prick ears, and all—as any dog could be, only instead of lagging his tail behind him, as a fox does, the Pomeranian prefers to curl it up over his back, probably for the simple reason that he does not wish to have it soiled. Vee-Vee was extremely fond of me, and although, as you know, dear Nero is of a jealous temperament, he graciously permitted Vee-Vee to caress me as much as he pleased, and me to return his caresses.

“It was a sight to see the two dogs together out for a ramble—Nero with his gigantic height, his noble proportions, and long flat coat of jetty black, and Vee-Vee, so altogether unlike him in every way, trotting along by his side in jacket of purest snow!

“Vee-Vee’s jacket used to be whiter on Saturday than on any other day, because it was washed on that morning of the week, and to make his personal beauties all the more noticeable he always on that day and on the next wore a ribbon of blue or crimson.

“Now, mischievous Nero, if he got a chance, was sure to tumble Vee-Vee into a mud-hole just after he was nearly dried and lovely. I am sure he did it out of pure fun, for when Vee-Vee came downstairs to go out on these occasions, Nero would meet him, and eye him all over, and walk round him, and snuff him, and smell at him in the most provoking teasing manner possible.

“‘Oh! aren’t you proud!’ he would seem to say, and ‘aren’t you white and clean and nice, and doesn’t that bit of blue ribbon, suit you! What do you think of yourself, eh? My master can’t wash me white, but I can wash you black, only wait till we go out and come to a nice mud-heap, and see if I don’t change the colour of your jacket for you.’

“Vee-Vee, though only a Pomeranian, learned a great many of Nero’s tricks; this proves that one dog can teach another. He used to swim along with Nero, although when first going into the water he sometimes lost confidence, and got on to his big friend’s shoulders, at which Nero used to seem vastly amused. He would look up at me with a sparkle of genuine mirth in his eye as much as to say—

“‘Only look, master, at this little fool of a Vee-Vee perched upon my shoulder, like a fantail pigeon on top of a hen-house. But I don’t mind his weight, not in the slightest.’

“Vee-Vee used to fetch and carry as well as Nero, in his own quiet little way. One day I dropped my purse in the street, and was well-nigh home before I missed it. You may judge of my joy when on looking round I found Vee-Vee coming walking along with the purse in his mouth, looking as solemn as a little judge. Vee-Vee, I may tell you, was only about two weeks old when I first had him; he was too young to wean, and the trouble of spoon-feeding was very great. In my dilemma, a favourite cat of mine came to my assistance. She had recently lost her kittens, and took to suckling young Vee-Vee as naturally as if she had been his mother.”

“How strange,” said Ida, “for a cat to suckle a puppy.”

“Cats, Ida,” I replied, “have many curious fancies. A book (Note 1) that I wrote some little time since gives many very strange illustrations of the queer ways of these animals. Cats have been known to suckle the young of rats, and even of hedgehogs, and to bring in chickens and ducklings, and brood over them. This only proves, I think, that it is cruel to take a cat’s kittens away from her all at once.”

“Yes, it is,” Ida said, thoughtfully; “and yet it seems almost more cruel to permit her to rear a large number of kittens that you cannot afterwards find homes for.”

“A very sensible remark, birdie. Well, to return to our mutual friend Nero: about the same time that he had as his bosom companion the little dog Vee-Vee, he contracted a strange and inexplicable affection for another tiny dog that lived quite a mile and a half away, and for a time she was altogether the favourite. The most curious part of the affair was this: Nero’s new favourite was only about six or seven inches in height, and so small that it could easily have been put into a gentleman’s hat, and the hat put on the gentleman’s head without much inconvenience to either the gentleman or the dog.

“When stationed at Sheerness, we lived on board H.M.S. P—, the flagship there. On board were several other dogs.

The captain of marines had one, for example, a large, flat-coated, black, saucy retriever, that rejoiced in the name of ‘Daidles’; the commander had two, a large fox-terrier, and a curly-coated retriever called ‘Sambo.’ All were wardroom dogs—that is, all belonged to the officers’ mess-room—and lived there day and night, for there were no fine carpets to spoil, only a well-scoured deck, and no ladies to object. Upon the whole, it must be allowed that there was very little disagreement indeed among the mess dogs. The fox-terrier was permitted to exist by the other three large animals, and sometimes he was severely chastised by one of the retrievers, only he could take his own part well enough. With the commander’s curly retriever, Nero cemented a friendship, which he kept up until we left the ship, and many a romp they had together on deck, and many a delightful cruise on shore. But Daidles, the marine Officer’s dog, was a veritable snarley-yow; he therefore was treated by Nero to a sound thrashing once every month, as regularly as the new moon. It is but just to Nero to say that Daidles always commenced those rows by challenging Nero to mortal combat. Wild, cruel fights they used to be, and much blood used to be spilled ere we could part them. As an instance of memory in the dog, I may mention that two years after Nero and I left the ship, we met Captain L— and his dog Daidles by chance in Chatham one day. Nero knew Daidles, and Daidles knew Nero, long before the captain and I were near enough to shake hands.

“‘Hullo!’ cried Nero; ‘here we are again.’

“‘Yes,’ cried Daidles; ‘let us have another fight for auld lang syne.’

“And they did, and tore each other fearfully.

“Nero’s life on board this particular ship was a very happy one, for everybody loved him, from the captain downwards to the little loblolly boy who washed the bottles, spread the plasters, and made the poultices.

“The blue-jackets all loved Nero; but he was more particularly the pet of the marine mess. This may be accounted for from the fact that my servant was a marine.

“But every day when the bugle called the red-coats to dinner—

“‘That calls me,’ Master Nero would say; then off he would trot.

“His plan was to go from one table to another, and it would be superfluous to say that he never went short.

“Nero had one very particular friend on board—dear old chief engineer C—. Now my cabin was a dark and dismal one down in the cockpit, I being then only junior surgeon; the engineer’s was on the main deck, and had a beautiful port. As Mr C— was a married man, he slept on shore; therefore he kindly gave up his cabin to me—no, not to *me*, as he plainly gave me to understand, but to *Nero*.

“Nero liked his comforts, and it was C—’s delight of a morning after breakfast to make Nero jump on top of my cot, and put his head on my pillow. Then C— would cover him over with a rug, and the dog would give a great sigh of satisfaction and go off to sleep, and all the din and all the row of a thousand men at work and drill, could not waken Nero until he had his nap out.

“On Sunday morning the captain went round all the decks of the ship inspecting them—the mess places, and the men’s kits and cooking utensils, everything, in fact, about the ship was examined on this morning. He was followed by the commander, the chief surgeon, and by Nero.

“The inspection over, the boats were called away for church on shore. Having landed, the men formed into marching order, band first, then the officers, and next the blue-jackets. Nero’s place was in front of the band, and from the gay and jaunty way he stepped out, you might have imagined that he considered himself captain of all these men.

“Sometimes a death took place, and the march to the churchyard was a very solemn and imposing spectacle. The very dog seemed to feel the solemnity of the occasion; and I have known him march in front all the way with lowered head and tail, as if he really felt that one of his poor messmates was like Tom Bowling, ‘a sheer hulk,’ and that he would never, never see him again. You remember the beautiful old song, Ida, and its grand, ringing old tune—

“‘Here a sheer hulk lies poor Tom Bowling,
    The darling of our crew;
No more he’ll hear the billows howling,
    For death has broached him to.
His form was of the manliest beauty,
    His heart was pure and soft;
Faithful below he did his duty,
    And now he has gone aloft.’

“It was on board this ship that Nero first learned that graceful inclination of the body we call making a bow, and which Aileen Aroon there has seen fit to copy.

“You see, on board a man-o’-war, Ida, whenever an officer comes on the quarter-deck, he lifts his hat, not to any one, remember, but out of respect to Her Majesty the Queen’s ship. The sailors taught Nero to make a bow as soon as he came upstairs or up the ship’s side, and it soon came natural to him, so that he really was quite as respectful to Her Majesty as any officer or man on board.

“My old favourite, Tyro, was so fond of music that whenever I took up the violin, he used to come and throw himself down at my feet. I do not think Nero was ever fond of music, and I hardly know the reason why he tolerated the band

playing on the quarter-deck, for whenever on shore if he happened to see and hear a brass band (a German itinerant one, I mean), he flew straight at them, and never failed to scatter them in all directions. I am afraid I rather encouraged him in this habit of his; it was amusing and it made the people laugh. It did not make the German fellows laugh, however—at least, not the man with the big bassoon—for Nero always singled him out, probably because he was making more row than the others. A gentleman said one day that Nero ought to be bought by the people of Margate, and kept as public property to keep the streets clear of the German band element.

“But Nero never attempted to disperse the ship’s band—he seemed rather to like it. I remember once walking in a city up North, some years after Nero left the service, and meeting a band of volunteers.

“‘Oh,’ thought Nero, ‘this does put me in mind of old times.’

“I do not know for certain that this was really what the dog thought, but I am quite sure about what he did, and that was, to put himself at the head of that volunteer regiment and march in front of it. As no coaxing of mine could get the dog away, I was obliged to fall in too, and we had quite a mile of a march, which I really had not expected, and did not care for.

“Nero’s partiality for marines was very great; but here is a curious circumstance: the dog knows the difference between a marine and a soldier in the street, for even a year after he left garrison, if he saw a red-jacket in the street, he would rush up to its owner. If a soldier, he merely sniffed him and ran on; if a marine, he not only sniffed him, but jumped about him and exhibited great joy, and perhaps ended by taking the man’s cap in a friendly kind of a way, and just for auld lang syne.

“Nero’s life on board ship would have been one of unalloyed happiness, except for those dreadful guns. The dog was not afraid of an ordinary fowling-piece, but a cannon was another concern, and as we were very often at general quarters, or saluting other ships, Nero had more than enough of big guns. Terrible things he must have thought them—things that went off when a man pulled a string, that went off with fire and smoke, and a roar louder than any thunder; things that shook the ship and smashed the crockery, and brought his master’s good old fiddle tumbling down to the deck—terrible things indeed. Even on days when there was no saluting or firing, there was always that eight o’clock gun.

“As soon as the quartermaster entered the wardroom, a few seconds before eight in the evening, and reported the hour to the commander, poor Nero took refuge under the sofa.

“He knew the man’s knock.

“‘Eight o’clock, sir, please,’ the man would say.

“‘Make it so,’ the commander would reply, which meant, ‘Fire the gun.’

“This was enough for Nero; he was in hiding a full minute before they could ‘make it so.’”

“Is that the reason,” asked Ida, “why you sometimes say eight o’clock to him when you want him to go and lie down?”

“Yes, birdie,” I replied. “He does not forget it, and never will as long as he lives. If you look at him even now, you will see a kind of terror in his eye, for he knows what we are talking about, and he is not quite sure that even here in this peaceful pine wood some one might not fire a big gun and make it eight o’clock.”

“No, no, no,” cried Ida, throwing her arms around the dog, “don’t be afraid, dear old Nero. It shan’t be eight o’clock. It will never, never be eight o’clock any more, dearest doggie.”

Note 1. “Friends in Fur.” Published by Messrs Dean and Son, Fleet Street, London.

Chapter Twenty Eight.

The Story of Aileen’s Husband, Nero—Continued.

> “His locked and lettered braw brass collar
> Showed him the gentleman and scholar.”

“You promised,” said my little companion the very next evening, “to resume the thread of Nero’s narrative.”

“Very prettily put, birdie,” I said; “resume the thread of Nero’s narrative. Did I actually make use of those words? Very well, I will, though I fear you will think the story a little dull, and probably the story-teller somewhat prosy.

“Do you know, then, Ida, that I am quite convinced that Providence gave mankind the dog to be a real companion to him, and I believe that this is the reason why a dog is so very, very faithful, so long-suffering under trial, so patient when in pain, and so altogether good and kind. When I look at poor old Nero, as he lies beside you there, half asleep, yet listening to every word we say, my thoughts revert to many a bygone scene in which he and I were the principal actors. And many a time, Ida, when in grief and sorrow, I have felt, rightly or wrongly, that I had not a friend in the world but himself.

“Well, dear, I had learned to love Nero, and love him well, when I received an appointment to join the flagship at Sheerness. The fact is I had been a whole year on sick leave, and Nero and I had been travelling for the sake of my health. There was hardly a town in England, Ireland, or Scotland we had not visited, and I always managed it so that the dog should occupy the same room as myself. By the end of a twelvemonth, Nero had got to be quite an old and quite a wise traveller. His special duty was to see after the luggage—in other words, Master Nero was baggage-master. When I left a hôtel, my traps were generally taken in a hand-cart or trolly. Close beside the man all the way to the station walked my faithful friend, he himself in all probability carrying a carpet bag, and looking the very quintessence of seriousness and dignified importance. As soon as he saw the porter place the luggage in the van, then back he would come to me, with many a joyous bark and bound, quite regardless of the fact that he sometimes ran against a passenger, and sent him sprawling on the platform.

“When we arrived at our journey’s end, Nero used to be at the luggage van before me. And here is something worth recording: as we usually came out at a door on the opposite side of the train to that at which we had entered, I was apt for a moment or two to forget the position of the luggage van. Nero never made a mistake, so I daresay his scent assisted him. As soon as the luggage was put on the trolly, and the man started with it, the dog went with him, but as the man often went a long way ahead of me, Nero was naturally afraid of losing sight of me; therefore if the porter attempted to turn a corner the dog invariably barked, not angrily, but determinedly, till he stopped. As soon as I came up, then the procession went on again, till we came to another corner, when the man had to stop once more. I remember he pulled a man down, because he would not stop, but he did not otherwise hurt him at all.

“In the train, he either travelled in the same carriage with myself, or in cases where the guard objected to this, I travelled in the van with the dog, so we were not separated.

“If a man is travelling much by train or by steamboat, he need never feel lonely if he has as splendid a dog as the Champion Theodore Nero with him; for the dog makes his master acquaintances.

“When Nero was with me, I could hardly stand for a moment at a street corner or to look in at a shop window without attracting a small crowd. I was never half an hour on the deck of a steamer without some one coming up and saying—

"'Excuse me, sir, but what a noble-looking dog you have! What breed is he? Pure Newfoundland, doubtless.'

"This would in all probability lead to conversation, and many an acquaintance I have thus formed, which have ripened into friendships that last till this day.

"Well, Ida, when I received my appointment to the flagship, my very first thoughts were about my friend the dog, and with a sad feeling of sinking at my heart, I asked myself the question—'Will Nero be permitted to live on board?' To part with the dear fellow would have been a grief I could not bear to contemplate.

"An answer to the question, however, could not be obtained until I joined my ship, that was certain; so I started.

"It was in the gloaming of a blustering day in early spring that the train in which we travelled, slowly, and after much unseemly delay, rolled rattling into the little station at Sheerness, and after a shoulder-to-shoulder struggle between half a dozen boatmen, who wished to take me, bag and baggage, off somewhere, and the same number of cabbies, who wished to carry me anywhere else, I was lucky enough to get seated in a musty conveyance that smelt like the aroma of wet collie-dogs and stale tobacco, with a slight suspicion of bad beer. Against the windows of this rattletrap beat the cold rain, and the mud flew from the wheels as from a wet swab. Lights were springing up here and there in the street under the busy fingers of a lamp-lighter, who might have been mistaken for a member of the monkey tribe, so nimbly did he glide up and down his skeleton ladder, and hurry along at his task. The wind, too, was doing all in its power to render his work abortive, and the gas-lights burned blue under the blast.

"We were glad when we reached the hotel, but I was gladder still when, on making some inquiries about the ship I was about to join, I was told that the commander was extremely fond of dogs, and that he had two of his own.

"I slept more soundly after that.

"Next day, leaving my friend carefully under lock and key in charge of the worthy proprietor of the Fountain Hotel, I got into uniform, and having hired a shore boat, went off to my ship to report myself. To my joy I found Commander C — to be as kind and jovial a sailor as any one could wish to see and talk to. I was not long before I broached the subject nearest to my heart.

"'Objection to your dog on board?' he said, laughing. 'Bring him, by all means; he won't kill mine, though, I hope.'

"'That I'm sure he won't,' I replied, feeling as happy as if I had just come into a fortune.

"I went on shore with a light heart, and hugged the dog.

"'We're not going to be parted, dear old boy,' I said. 'You are going on board with me to-morrow.'

"The evening before my heart was as gloomy as the weather; to-day the sun shone, and my heart was as bright as the sky was blue. Nero and I set out after luncheon to have a look at the town.

"Sheerness on two sides is bounded by the dockyard, which divides it from the sea. Indeed, the dockyard occupies the most comfortable corner, and seems to say to the town, 'Stand aside; you're nobody.' The principal thoroughfare of Sheerness has on one side of it the high, bleak boundary wall, while on the other stands as ragged-looking a line of houses as one could well imagine, putting one in mind of a regiment of militia newly embodied and minus uniform. As you journey from the station, everything reminds you that you are in a naval seaport of the lowest class. Lazy watermen by the dozen loll about the pier-head with their arms, to say nothing of their hands, buried deeply in their breeches-pockets, while every male you meet is either soldier or sailor, dockyard's man or solemn-looking policeman. Every shop that isn't a beer-house, is either a general dealer's, where you can purchase anything nautical, from a sail-needle to sea boots, or an eating house, in the windows of which are temptingly exposed joints of suspiciously red corned-beef, soapy-looking mutton and uninviting pork, and where you are invited to partake of tea and shrimps for ninepence.

"So on the whole the town of Sheerness itself is by no means a very inviting one, nor a very savoury one either.

"But away out beyond the dockyard and over the moat, and Sheerness brightens up a little, and spreads out both to left and right, and you find terraces with trim little gardens and green-painted palings, while instead of the odour of tar and cheese and animal decay, you can breathe the fresh, pure air from over the ocean, and see the green waves come tumbling in and break in soft music on the snowy shingle.

"Here live the benedicts of the flagship. At half-past seven of a fine summer morning you may see them, hurried and hungry, trotting along towards the dockyard, looking as if another hour's sleep would not have come amiss to them. But once they get on board their ships, how magic-like will be the disappearance of the plump soles, the curried lobster, the corned-beef, and the remains of last night's pigeon-pie, while the messman can hardly help looking anxious, and the servants run each other down in their hurry to supply the tea and toast!

"Of the country immediately around this town of Sheerness, the principal features are open ditches, slimy and green, evolving an effluvium that keeps the very bees at bay, encircling low flat fields and marshy moors, affording subsistence only to crazy-looking sheep and water rats. The people of Sheerness eat the sheep; I have not been advised as to their eating the rats.

"But, and if you are young, and your muscles are well developed, and your tendo Achillis wiry and strong, then when the summer is in its prime and the sun is brightly shining, shall you leave the odoriferous town and its aguish surroundings, and like 'Jack of the bean-stalk,' climb up into a comparative fairyland. At the top of the hill stands the little village of Minster, its romantic old church and ivied tower begirt with the graves of generations long since passed and gone, the very tombstones of which are mouldering to dust. The view from here well repays the labour of

climbing the bean-stalk. But leave it behind and journey seaward over the rolling tableland. Rural hamlets; pretty villages; tree-lined lanes and clovery fields with grazing kine—you shall scarcely be tired of such quiet and peaceful scenery when you arrive at the edge of the clayey cliff, with the waves breaking among the boulders on the beach far beneath you, and the sea spreading out towards the horizon a vast plain of rippling green, crowded with ships from every land and clime. Heigho! won't you be sorry to descend your bean-stalk and re-enter Sheerness once again?

"I do not think, Ida, that ship dogs' lives are as a rule very happy ones. They get far too little exercise and far too much to eat, so they grow both fat and lazy. But in this particular flagship neither I nor my friend Nero had very much to grumble about. The commander was as good as he looked, and there was not an officer in the ship, nor a man either, that had not a kind word for the dog.

"The great event of the day, as far as Nero and I were concerned, was going on shore in the afternoon for a walk, and a dip in the sea when the weather was warm. Whether the weather was warm or not, Nero always had his bath, for the distance to the shore being hardly half a mile, no sooner had the boat left the vessel's side than there were cries from some of us officers of the vessel—

"'Hie over, you dogs, hie over, boys.'

"The first to spring into the sea would be Nero, next went his friend Sambo, and afterwards doggie Daidles. The three black heads in the water put one in mind of seals. Although the retrievers managed to keep well up for some time, gradually the Newfoundland forged ahead, and he was in long before the others, and standing very anxiously gazing seawards to notice how Sambo was getting on; for the currents run fearfully strong there. Daidles always got in second. Of Daidles Nero took not the slightest notice; even had he been drowning he would have made no attempt to save him; but no sooner did Sambo approach the stone steps than with a cry of fond anxiety, the noble Newfoundland used to rush downwards, seize Sambo gently by the neck, and help him out.

"I was coming from the shore one day, when Sambo fell from a port into the sea. Nero at once leapt into the water, and swimming up to his friend, attempted to seize him. The conversation between them seemed to be something like the following—

"*Nero*: 'You're drowning, aren't you? Let me hold you up.'

"*Sambo*: 'Nonsense, Nero, let go my neck; I could keep afloat as long as yourself.'

"*Nero*: 'Very well, here goes then; but I *must* pick something up.'

"So saying, Nero swam after a piece of newspaper, seized that, and swam to the ladder with it; some of the men lent him a helping hand, and up he went.

"The flagship was a tall old line of battle ship; on the starboard side was a broad ladder, on the port merely a ladder of ropes. On stormy days, with a heavy sea on, the starboard ladder probably could not be used, and so the dog had to be lowered into the boat and hoisted up therefrom with a long rope. To make matters more simple and easy for him, one of the men made the dog a broad belt of canvas. To this corset the end of the rope was attached, and away went Nero up or down as the case happened to be.

"Although as gentle by nature as a lamb, Nero would never stand much impudence from another dog without resenting it. When passing through the dockyard one day, we met an immense Saint Bernard, who strutted up to Nero, and at once addressed him in what appeared to me the following strain—

"'Hullo! Got on shore, have you? I daresay you think yourself a pretty fellow now? But you're not a bit bigger than I am, and not so handsome. I've a good mind to bite you. Yah! you're only a surgeon's dog, and my master is captain of the dockyard. Yah!'

"'Don't growl at me,' replied Nero; 'my master is every bit as good as yours, and a vast deal better, *so* don't raise your hair, else I may lose my temper.'

"'Yah! yah!' growled the Saint Bernard.

"'Come on, Nero,' I cried; 'don't get angry, old boy.'

"'Half a minute, master,' replied Nero; 'here is a gentleman that wants to be brought to his bearings.'

"Next moment those two dogs were at it. It was an ugly fight, and some blood was spilled on both sides, but at last Nero was triumphant. He hauled the Saint Bernard under a gun carriage and punished him severely, I being thus powerless to do anything.

"Then Nero came out and shook himself, while the other dog lay beaten and cowed.

"'I don't think,' said Nero to me, 'that he will boast about his master again in a hurry.'

"Generosity is a part of the Newfoundland dog's nature. At my father's village in the far north, called Inverurie, there used to be a large black half-bred dog, that until Nero made an appearance lorded it over all the other dogs in the town. This animal was a bully, and therefore a coward. He had killed more than one dog.

"The very first day that he saw Nero he must needs rush out and attack him. He found himself on his back on the pavement in a few moments. Then came the curious part of the intercourse. Instead of worrying him, Nero simply held him down, and lay quietly on top of him for more than two minutes, during which time he appeared to reason with the cur, who was completely cowed.

“‘I’ll let you up presently,’ Nero said; ‘but you must promise not to attempt to attack me again.’

“‘I promise,’ said the other dog.

“Then, much to the amusement of the little crowd that had collected, Nero very slowly raised himself and walked away. Behold! no sooner had he turned his back than his prostrate foe sprang up and bit him viciously in the leg.

“It was no wonder Nero now lost his temper, or that he shook that black dog as a servant-maid shakes a hearthrug.

“*I* tried to intervene to save the poor mongrel, but was kept back by the mob.

“‘Let him have it, sir,’ cried one man; ‘he killed S—’s dog.’

“‘Yes, let him have it,’ cried another; ‘he kills dogs and he kills sheep as well.’

“To his honour be it said, I never saw Nero provoke a fight, but when set upon by a cur he always punished his foe. In two instances he tried to drown his antagonist. A dog at Sheerness attacked him on the beach one day. Nero punished him well, but seeing me coming to the dog’s rescue, he dragged the dog into the sea and lay on him there. I had to wade in and pull Master Nero off by the tail, else the other dog would assuredly have been drowned. I am referring to a large red retriever, lame in one leg, that belonged to the artillery. He had been accidentally blown from a gun and set fire to. That was the cause of his lameness.

“There was a large Newfoundland used to be on the *Great Eastern*, whose name was ‘Sailor.’ Before Nero’s appearance at Sheerness, he was looked upon as the finest specimen of that kind of dog ever seen. He had to lower his flag to Nero, however.

“They met one morning on the beach at the oyster beds.

“‘Hullo!’ said Sailor, ‘you are the dog that everybody is making such a fuss over. You’re Nero, aren’t you?’

“‘My name is Theodore Nero,’ said my friend, bristling up at the saucy looks of the stranger.

“‘And my name is Sailor, at your service,’ said the other, ‘and I belong to the largest ship in the world. And I don’t think much of you. Yah!’

“‘Good-morning,’ said Nero.

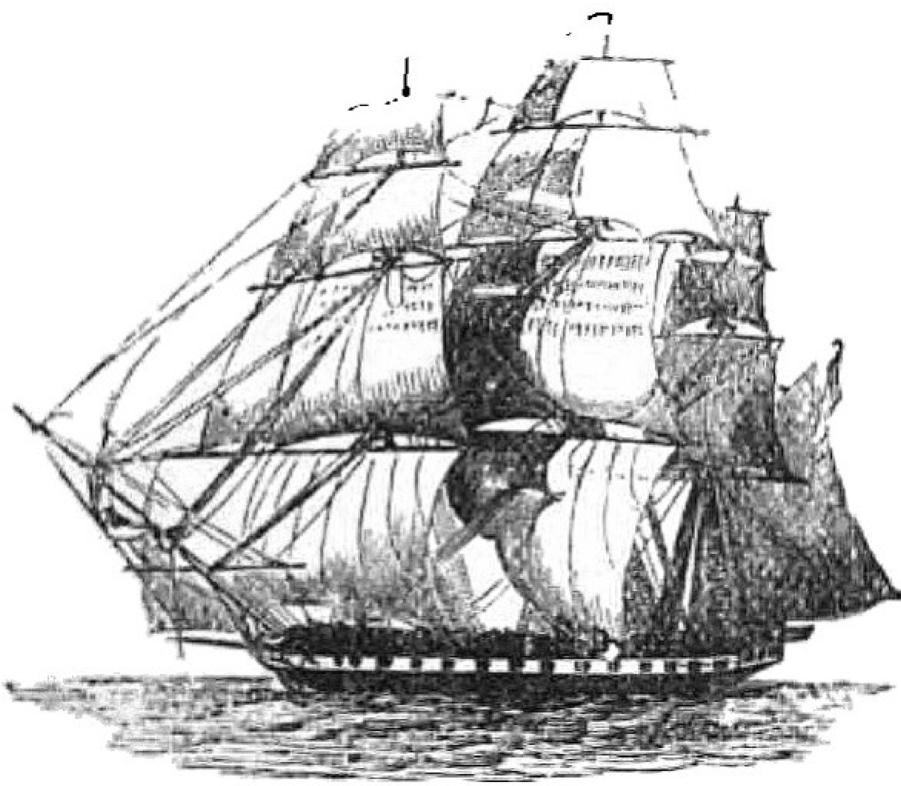
“‘Not so fast,’ cried the other; ‘you’ve got to fight first, but I daresay you’re afraid. Eh! Yah!’

“‘Am I?’ said Nero. ‘We’ll see who is afraid.’

“Next moment the oyster beach was a battle-field. But some sailors coming along, we managed to pull the dogs asunder by the tails. Whenever Sailor saw Nero after this he took to his heels and ran away. But a good dog was Sailor for all that, and a very clever water-dog. He used to jump from the top of the paddle-box of the great ship into the sea—a height, I believe, of about seventy feet.

“Nero’s prowess as a water-dog was well known in Sheerness, and wonderful stories are told about him, even to this day; not all of which are true, any more than the tales of the knights of old are. But some of our marines managed to turn his swimming powers to good account, as the following will testify.

“On days when it was impossible for me to get on shore, I used to send my servant with the dog for a swim and a run. When near the dockyard steps, a great log of wood used to be pitched out of the boat, and Nero sent after it. Anything Nero fetched out of the water he considered his own or his master’s property, which it would be dangerous for any one to meddle with. Well, as soon as he had landed with the log, Nero used to march up the steps, the water flowing behind from his splendid coat, up the steps and through the dockyard; the policemen only stood by marvelling to see a dog carrying such an immense great log of wood. If my servant carried a basket, that would be searched for contraband goods, rum or tobacco.



“Then my servant would pass on, smiling in his own sleeve as the saying is, for no one ever dreamed of searching the dog.”

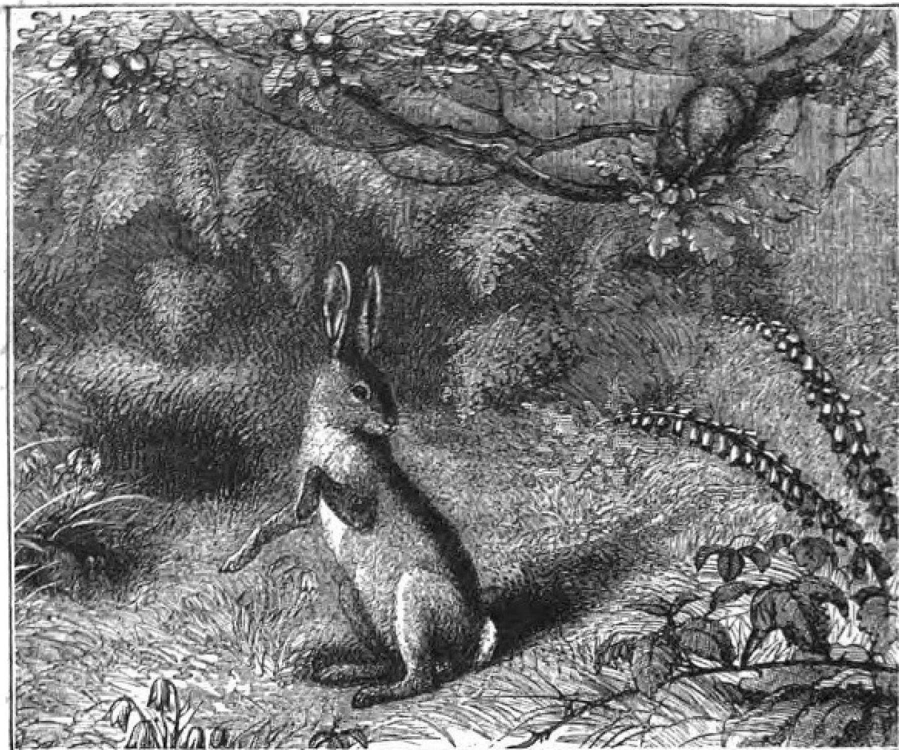
“Searching the dog!” said Ida, with wondering eyes.

“Yes, dear, the dog was a smuggler, though he did not know it. For that log of wood was a hollow one, and stuffed with tobacco. I did not know of this, of course.”

“How wicked!” said Ida. “Why, Nero, you’ve been a regular pirate of the boundless ocean.”

Chapter Twenty Nine.

The Story of Aileen’s Husband, Nero—Continued.



> “Poor dog! he was faithful and kind, to be sure,
> And he constantly loved me, although I was poor.”

Campbell.

“Do I think that Master Nero knows we are talking about him? Yes, birdie, of that I am quite convinced. Just look at the cunning old rogue lying there pretending to be asleep, but with his ears well forward, and one eye half-open. And Aileen, too, knows there is a bit of biography going on, and that it is all about her well-beloved lord and master.

“But to tell you one-tenth part of all that had happened to Nero, or to me and Nero together, would take far more time than I can spare, dear Ida. I could give you anecdote after anecdote about his bravery, his strength, his nobility of mind, and his wonderful sagacity; but these would not make you love him more than you do.

“And you never can love the faithful fellow half so much as I do. I have been blamed for loving him far too well, and reminded that he is only a dog.

“Only a dog! How much I hate the phrase; and sinful though I know it to be, I can hardly help despising those who make use of it. But of those who do use the expression, there are few, I really believe, who would wonder at me loving that noble fellow so well did they know the sincere friend he has been many a time and oft to me.

“He saved my life—worthless though it may be—he saved the life of another. Tell you the story? It is not a story, but two stories; and though both redound to the extreme wisdom and sagacity and love of the dog, both are far too sad for you to listen to. Some day I may tell them. Perhaps—”

There was a pause of some minutes here; Ida, who was lying beside the dog, had thrown her arms around his neck, and was fondly hugging him. Aileen came directly to me, sighed as usual, and put her head on my shoulder.

“Love begets love, Ida, and I think it was more than anything else the dog’s extreme affection for me, shown in a thousand little ways, that caused me to take such a strong abiding affection for him. He knew—as he does now—everything I said, and was always willing to forestall my wishes, and do everything in the world to please me.

“When ill one time, during some of our wanderings, and laid up in an out-of-the-way part of the country among strange people, it was a sad anxiety for me to have to tell the dog he must go out by himself and take his necessary ramble, as I was far too ill to leave my bed.

“The poor animal understood me.

“‘Good-bye, master,’ he seemed to say, as he licked my face; ‘I know you are ill, but I won’t stop out long.’

“He was back again in a quarter of an hour, and the same thing occurred every time he was sent by himself; he never stopped more than fifteen minutes.

“Would a human friend have been as careful? Do you not think that there were temptations to be resisted even during that short ramble of his—things he would have liked to have stopped to look at, things he would have liked to have chased? Many a dog, I have no doubt, invited him to stop and play, but the dog’s answer must have been, ‘Nay, nay, not to-day; I have a poor sick master in bed, and I know not what might happen to him in this strange place, and among so many strange people. I must hurry and get home.’

“When he did return, he did so as joyfully and made as much fuss over me as if he had been away for a week.

“‘I didn’t stop long, *did* I, master?’ he would always say, when he returned.

“But wasn’t he a happy dog when he got me up and out again? Weak enough I was at first, but he never went far away from me, just trotted on and looked about encouragingly and waited. I allowed him to take me where he chose, and I have reason to believe he led me on his own round, the round he had taken all by himself every day for weeks before that.

“‘Nero, old boy,’ I said to him one day, some time after this sickness, ‘come here.’

“The dog got up from his corner, and laid his saucy head on my lap.

“‘I’m all attention, master,’ he said, talking with his bonnie brown eyes.

“‘I don’t believe there are two better Newfoundlands in England than yourself, Nero.’

“‘I don’t believe there is one,’ said Nero.

“‘Don’t be saucy,’ I said.

“‘Didn’t I take a cup at the Crystal Palace?’

“‘Yes, but it was only second prize, old boy.’

“‘True, master, but nearly every one said it ought to have been first. I’m only two years old and little over, and isn’t a second prize at a Crystal Palace show a great honour for a youngster like myself?’

“‘True, Nero, true; and now I’ve something to propose.’

“‘To which,’ said the dog, ‘I am willing to listen.’

"'Well,' I said, 'there are dozens of dog-shows about to take place all over the country. I want a change: suppose we go round. Suppose we constitute ourselves show folk. Eh?'

"'Capital.'

"'And you'll win lots of prize-money, Nero.'

"'And you'll spend it, master. Capital again.'

"'There won't be much capital left, I expect, doggie, by the time we get back; but we'll see a bit of England, at all events.'

"So we agreed to start, and so sure of winning with the dog was I that I bought that splendid red patent leather collar that you, Ida, sometimes wear for a waist-belt. The silver clasps on it were empty then, but each time the dog won a prize, the name of the town was engraved on one of the clasps."

"They are pretty well filled up now," said Ida.

"Yes, the dog won nineteen first prizes and cups in little over three months, which was very fair for those days. He was then dubbed champion. There was not a Newfoundland dog from Glasgow to Neath that would have cared to have met Nero in the show ring.

"He used to enter the arena, too, with such humour and dash, with his grand black coat floating around him, and the sun glittering on it like moonbeams on a midnight sea. That was how Nero entered the judging ring; he never slunk in, as did some dogs. He just as often as not had a stick in his mouth, and if he hadn't, he very soon possessed himself of one.

"'Yes, look at me all over,' he would say to the judges; 'there is no picking a fault in me, nor in my master either for that matter. I'm going to win, that's what I'm here for.'

"But when I was presented with the prize card by the judge, Nero never failed to make him a very pretty bow.

"The only misfortune that ever befell the poor fellow was at Edinburgh dog-show.

"On the morning of the second day—it was a three or four day exhibition—I received a warning letter, written in a female hand, telling me that those who were jealous of the dog's honours and winnings were going to poison him.

"I treated the matter as a joke. I could not believe the world contained a villain vile enough to do a splendid animal like that to death, and so cruel a death, for the sake of pique and jealousy. But I had yet to learn what the world was.

"The dog was taken to the show, and chained up as usual at his place on the bench. Alas! when I went to take him home for the night I found his head down, and hardly able to move. I got him away, and sat up with him all night administering restoratives.

"He was able to drink a little milk in the morning, and to save his prize-money I took him back, but had him carefully watched and tended all the remaining time that the show was open.

"We went to Boston, Lincoln, Gainsboronghh, and all over Yorkshire and Lancaster and Chester, besides Scotland, and our progress was a triumph to the grand and beautiful dog. Especially was he admired by ladies at shows. Wherever else they might be, there was always a bevy of the fair sex around Nero's cage. During that three months' tour he had more kisses probably than any dog ever had before in the same time. It was the same out of the show as in it—no one passed him by without stopping to admire him.

"'Aren't we having a splendid time, master?' the dog said to me one day.

"'Splendid,' I replied; 'but I think we've done enough, my doggie. I think we had better retire now and go to sea for a spell.'

"'Heigho!' the dog seemed to say; 'but wherever your home is there mine is too, master.'"

"There is a prize card hanging on the wall of the wigwam," said Ida, "on which Nero is said to have won at a life-saving contest at Southsea."

"Yes, dear, that was another day's triumph for the poor fellow. He had won on the show bench there as well, and afterwards proved his prowess in the sea in the presence of admiring thousands.

"Your honest friend there, Ida, has been all along as fond of human beings and other animals as he is now. In their own country Newfoundlands are used often as sledge dogs, and sometimes as retrievers, but I do not think it is in their nature to take life of any kind, unless insect life, my gentle Ida. They don't like blue-bottles nor wasps, I must confess, but Nero has given many proofs of the kindness of heart he possesses that are really not easily forgotten.

"Tell you a few? I'll tell you one or two. The first seems trivial, but there is a certain amount of both pathos and humour about it. Two boys had been playing near the water at Gosport, and for mischiefs sake one had pitched the other's cap into the tide and ran off. The cap was being floated away, and the disconsolate owner was weeping bitterly on the bank, when we came up. Nero, without being told, understood what was wrong in a moment; one glance at the floating cap, another at the boy, then splash! he had sprang into the tide, and in a few minutes had laid the rescued article at the lad's feet; then he took his tongue across his cheek in a rough kind of caressing way.

"'There now,' he appeared to say, 'don't cry any more.'

"Nero ought to have made his exit here, and he would have come off quite the hero; but no, the spirit of mischief entered into him, and he shook himself, sending buckets of water all over the luckless lad, who was almost as wet now as if he had swam in after his cap himself. Then Nero came galloping up to me, laughing all over at the trick he had played the poor boy.

"This trick of shaking himself over people was taught him by one of my messmates; and he used to delight to take him along the beach on a summer's day, and put him in the water. When he came out, my friend would march along in front of the dog, till the latter was close to some gay lounger, then turn and say, 'Shake yourself, boy.' The *dénouement* may be more easily imagined than described, especially if the lounger happened to be a lady. I'm ashamed of my friend, but love the truth, Ida."

"How terribly wicked of Nero to do it!" said Ida.

"And yet I saw the dog one day remove a drowning mouse from his water dish, without putting a tooth in it. He placed it on the kitchen floor, and licked it as tenderly over as a cat would her kitten. He looked up anxiously in my face, as much as to say, 'Do you think the poor thing can live?'

"Hurricane Bob there, his son, does not inherit all his father's finest qualities; he would not scruple to kill mice or rats by the score. In fact, I have reason to believe he rather likes it. His mother was just the same before him; a kindly-hearted dog she was, but as wild as a wolf, and full of fun of the rough-and-tumble kind."

"Were you never afraid of losing poor Nero?"

"I did lose him one dark winter's night, Ida, in the middle of a large and populous city. Luckily, I had been staying there for some time—two weeks, I think—and there were different shops in different parts of the city where I dealt, and other places where I called to rest or read. The dog was always in the habit of accompanying me to the shops, to bring home the purchases, so he knew them all. The very day on which I lost the dog I had changed my apartments to another quarter of the city.

"In the evening, while walking along a street, with Nero some distance behind me, it suddenly occurred to me to run into a shop and purchase a magazine I saw in the window. I never thought of calling the dog. I fancied he would see me entering the book-shop and follow, but he didn't; he missed me, and thinking I must be on ahead, rushed wildly away up the street into the darkness and rain, and I saw him no more that night.

"Only those who have lost a favourite dog under such circumstances can fully appreciate the extent of my grief and misery. I went home at long last to my lonely lodgings. How dingy and dreadful they seemed without poor Nero's honest form on the hearthrug! Where could he be, what would become of him, my only friend, my gentle, loving, noble dog, the only creature that cared for me? You may be sure I did not sleep, I never even undressed, but sat all night in my chair, sleeping towards morning, and dreaming uneasy dreams, in which the dog was always first figure.

"I was out and on my way to the police offices ere it was light. The weather had changed, frost had come, and snow had fallen.

"Several large black dogs had been found during the night; I went to see them all. Alas! none was Nero. So after getting bills printed, and arranging to have them posted, I returned disheartened to my lodgings. But when the door opened, something as big as a bear flew out, flew at me, and fairly rolled me down among the snow.

"'No gentler caress, master,' said Nero, for it was he, 'would express the joy of the occasion.'

"Poor fellow, I found out that day that he had been at every one of the places at which I usually called; I daresay he had gone back to our old apartments too, and had of course failed to find me there. As a last resort he turned up at the house of an old soldier with whom I had had many a pleasant confab. This was about eleven o'clock; it was eight when he was lost. Not finding me here, he would have left again, and perhaps found his way to our new lodgings; but the old soldier, seeing that something must be amiss, took him in, kept him all night, found my rooms in the morning, and fetched him home. You may guess whether I thanked the old man or not.

"When Dolls (*see* page 76) came to me first, he was in great grief for the loss of his dear master (Note 1). Nero seemed to know it, and though he seldom made much of a fuss over dogs of this breed, he took Dolls under his protection; indeed, he hardly knew how kind to be to him.

"I ought to mention that Mortimer Collins and Nero were very great friends indeed, for the poet loved all things in nature good and true.

"There was one little pet that Nero had long before you knew him, Ida. His name was Pearl, a splendid Pomeranian. Perhaps Pearl reminded Nero very much of his old favourite, Vee-vee. At all events he took to him, used to share his bed and board with him, and protected him from the attacks of strange dogs when out. Pearl was fat, and couldn't jump well. I remember our coming to a fence one day about a foot and a half high. The other dogs all went bounding over, but Pearl was left to whine and weep at the other side. Nero went straight back, bounded over and re-bounded over, as if showing Pearl how easy it was. But Pearl's heart failed, seeing which honest Nero fairly lifted him over by the back of the neck.

"I was going to give a dog called 'Pandoo' chastisement once. Pandoo was a young Newfoundland, and a great pet of Nero, whose son he was. I got the cane, and was about to raise it, when Nero sprang up and snatched it from my hand, and ran off with it. It was done in a frolicsome manner, and with a deal of romping and jumping. At the same time, I could see he really meant to save the young delinquent; so I made a virtue of necessity, and pardoned

Pandoo.

“But Nero’s love for other animals, and his kindness for all creatures less and weaker than himself, should surely teach our poor humanity a lesson. You would think, to see him looking pityingly sometimes at a creature in pain, that he was saying with the poet—

> “‘Poor uncomplaining brute,
> Its wrongs are innocent at least,
> And all its sorrows mute.’

“One day, at the ferry at Hotwells, Clifton, a little black-and-tan terrier took the water after a boat and attempted to cross, but the tide ran strong, and ere it reached the centre it was being carried rapidly down stream. On the opposite bank stood Nero, eagerly watching the little one’s struggles, and when he saw they were unsuccessful, with one impatient bark—which seemed to say, ‘Bear up, I’m coming’—he dashed into the water, and ploughed the little terrier all the way over with his broad chest, to the great amusement of an admiring crowd.

“On another occasion some boys near Manchester were sending a Dandie-Dinmont into a pond after a poor duck; the Dandie had almost succeeded in laying hold of the duck, when Nero sprang into the water, and brought out, not the duck, but the Dandie by the back of the neck.

“I saw one day a terrier fly at him and bite him viciously behind. He turned and snapped it, just once. Once was enough. The little dog sat down on the pavement and howled piteously. Nero, who had gone on, must then turn and look back, and then *go* back *and lick the place he had bitten*.

“‘I really didn’t intend to hurt you so much,’ he seemed to say; ‘but you did provoke me, you know. There! there! don’t cry.’”

“Now then, Ida, birdie, let us have one good scamper through the pine wood and meadow, and then hie for home. Come on, dogs; where are you all? Aileen, Nero, Bob, Gipsy, Eily, Broom, Gael, Coronach? Hurrah! There’s a row! There’s music! That squirrel, Ida, who has been cocking up there on the oak, listening to all we’ve been saying, thinks he’d better be off. There isn’t a bird in the wood that hasn’t ceased its song, and there isn’t a rabbit that hasn’t gone scurrying into its hole, and I believe the deer have all jumped clean out of the forest; the hare thinks he will be safer far by the river’s brink; and the sly, wily old weasel has come to the conclusion that he can wait for his dinner till the dogs go home. The only animal that doesn’t run away is the field-mouse. He means to draw himself up under a burdock leaf and wait patiently till the hairy hurricane sweeps onward past him. Then he’ll creep out and go nibbling round as usual. Come.”

Note 1. The poet Mortimer Collins. He came into my possession shortly after his death.

Chapter Thirty.

Ida’s Illness—Mercy to the Dumb Animals.

“Then craving leave, he spake
Of life, which all can take but none can give;
Life, which all creatures love and strive to keep,
Wonderful, dear, and pleasant unto each,
Even to the meanest; yea, a boon to all
Where pity is, for pity makes the world
Soft to the weak and noble to the strong.”

E. Arnold’s “Light of Asia.”

It was sadly changed times with all of us when Ida fell ill.

Her illness was a very severe one, and for many weeks she literally hovered ’twixt death and life. Her spirit seemed like some beautiful bird of migration, that meditates quitting these cold intemperate shores and flying away to sunnier climes, but yet is loath to leave old associations and everything dear to it.

There was little done during these weeks, save attending to Ida’s comforts, little thought about save the child.

Even the dogs missed their playmate. The terriers went away to the woods every day by themselves. Eily, the collie, being told that she must make no noise, refrained from barking even at the butcher, or jumping up and shaking the baker by his basket, as had been her wont.

Poor Aileen Aroon went about with her great head lower than usual, and with a very apologetic look about her, a look that, beginning in her face, seemed to extend all the way to the point of her tail, which she wagged in quite a doleful manner.

Nero and she took turn and turn about at keeping watch outside Ida’s room door.

Ida’s favourite cat seldom left her little mistress’s bedside, and indeed she was as often in the bed as out of it.

It was winter—a green winter. Too green, Frank said, to be healthy; and the dear old man used to pray to see the snow come.

“A bit of a frost would fetch her round,” he said. “I’d give ten years of my life, if it is worth as much, to see the snow on the ground.”

The trees were all leafless and bare, but tiny flowers and things kept growing in under the shrubs in quite an unnatural way.

But Frank came in joyfully one evening, crying, “It’s coming, Gordon, it’s coming; the stars are unspeakably bright; there is a steel-blue glitter in the sky that I like. It’s coming; we’ll have the snow, and we’ll have Ida up again in a month.”

I had not quite so much faith in the snow myself, but I went out to have a look at the prospect. It was all as Frank had said; the weird gigantic poplars were pointing with leafless fingers up into a sky of frosty blue, up to stars that shone with unusual radiance; and as I walked along, the gravel on the path resounded to my tread.

"I'll be right; you'll see, I'll be right," cried Frank, exultant. "I'm an older man than you, Gordon, doctor and all though you be."

Frank *was* right. He was right about the snow, to begin with. It came on next morning; not all at once in great flakes. No, big storms never begin like that, but in grains like millet-seed. This for an hour; then mingling with the millet-seed came little flakes, and finally an infinity of large ones, as big as butterflies' wings. It was a treat to gaze upwards, and watch them coming dancing downwards in a dazzling and interminable maze.

It was beautiful!

It wanted but one thing at that moment to make me happy. That was the presence of our bright-faced, blue-eyed little pet, standing on the doorstep as she used to, gazing upwards, with apron outstretched to catch the falling flakes.

Frank was so overjoyed, he must needs go out and walk about in the snow for nearly an hour. I was in the kitchen engaged in some mysterious invalid culinary operation when Frank came in. He always came in through the kitchen now, instead of the hall, lest he might disturb the child.

Frank's face was a treat to look at; it was redder, and appeared rounder than usual, and jollier.

"There's three inches of snow on the ground already," he remarked, joyfully. "Mary, bring the besom, my girl, to brush the snow off my boots. That's the style."

Strange as it may appear, from that very morning our little patient began to mend, and ere the storm had shown signs of abatement—in less than a week, in fact—Ida was able to sit up in bed.

Thin was her face, transparent were her hands; yet I could see signs of improvement; the white of her skin was a more healthful white; her great, round eyes lost the longing, wistful look they had before.

I was delighted when she asked me to play to her. She would choose the music, and I must play soft and low and sweet. Her fingers would deftly turn the pages of the book till her eyes rested on something she loved, and she would say, with tears in her eyes—

"Play, oh, play this! I do love it."

I managed to find flowers for her even in the snowstorm, for the glass-houses at the Manor of D— are as large as any in the country, and the owner was my friend.

I think she liked to look at the hothouse fruit we brought her, better than to eat them.

The dogs were now often admitted. Even Gael and Broom were not entirely banished.

My wife used to sew in the room, and sometimes read to Ida, and Frank used to come in and sit at the window and twirl his thumbs. His presence seemed to comfort the child.

I used to write beside her.

"What is that you are writing?" she said one day.

"Nothing much," I replied; "only the introduction to a 'Penny Reading' I'm going to give against cruelty to animals."

"Mercy to the Dumb Animals.

"Read it," said Ida; "and to-morrow, mind, you must begin and tell me stories again, and then I'm sure I shall soon get well, because whatever you describe about the fields or the woods, the birds or the flowers I can see, it is just like being among them."

I had to do as I was told, so read as follows:—

"Mercy to the Dumb Animals.

"'I would give nothing for that man's religion whose cat and dog are not the better for it.'—*Dr Norman McLeod*.

"'We are living in an enlightened age.' This is a remark which we hear made almost every day, a remark which contains just one golden grain of truth. Mankind is not yet enlightened in the broad sense of the term. From the night of the past, from the darkness of bygone times, we are but groping our way, as it were, in the morning-glome, towards a great and a glorious light.

"It is an age of advancement, and a thousand facts might be adduced in proof of this. I need point to only one: the evident but gradual surcease of needless cruelty to animals. Among all classes of the community far greater love and kindness is now manifested towards the creatures under our charge than ever was in days gone by. We take greater care of them, we think more of their comfort when well, we tend them more gently when sick, and we even take a justifiable pride in their appearance and beauty. All this only shows that there is a spirit of good abroad in the land, a something that tends to elevate, not depress, the soul of man. I see a spark of this goodness even in the breast of the felon who in his prison cell tames a humble mouse, and who weeps when it is cruelly taken from him; in the ignorant costermonger who strokes the sleek sides of his fat donkey, or the rough and unkempt drover-boy, who shares the remains of a meagre meal with his faithful collie.

"Religion and kindness to animals go hand in hand, and have done so for ages, for we cannot truly worship the Creator unless we love and admire His works.

"The heavenly teaching of the Mosaic law inculcates mercy to the beasts. It is even commanded that the ox and the ass should have rest on one day of the week—namely, the Sabbath; that the ox that treadeth out the corn is not to be muzzled; that the disparity in strength of the ass and ox is to be considered, and that they should not be yoked together in one plough. Even the wild birds of the field and woods are not forgotten, as may be seen by reading the following passage from the Book of Deuteronomy:—'If a bird's nest be before thee in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: but thou shalt in any way let the dam go.'

"The Jews were commanded to be merciful and kind to an animal, even if it belonged to a person unfriendly to them.

"'If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.'

"That is, they were to assist even an enemy to do good to a fallen brute. It is as if a man, passing along the street, saw the horse or ass of a neighbour, who bore deadly hatred to him, stumble and fall under his load, and said to himself—

"'Oh! yonder is So-and-so's beast come down; I'll go and lend a hand. So-and-so is no friend of mine, but the poor animal can't help that. *He* never did me any harm.'

"And a greater than even Moses reminds us we are to show mercy to the animals even on the sacred day of the week.

"But it is not so very many years ago—in the time when our grandfathers were young, for instance—since roughness and cruelty towards animals were in a manner studied, and even encouraged in the young by their elders. It was thought manly to domineer over helpless brutes, to pull horses on their haunches, to goad oxen along the road, though they were moving to death in the shambles, to stone or beat poor fallen sheep, to hunt cats with dogs, and to attend bull-baitings and dog and cock fights. And there are people even yet who talk of these days as the good old times when 'a man was a man.' But such people have only to visit some low-class haunt of 'the fancy,' when 'business' is being transacted, to learn how depraving are the effects of familiarity with scenes of cruelty towards the lower animals. Even around a rat-pit they would see faces more revolting in appearance than those of Doré's demons, and listen to jests and language so ribald and coarse as positively to pain and torture the ear and senses. Goodness be praised that such scenes are every day getting more rare, and that the men who attend them have a wholesome terror of the majesty of human laws at least.

"Other religions besides the Christian impress upon their followers rules relating to kindness to the inferior animals. Notably, perhaps, that of Buddha, under the teachings of which about five hundred millions of human beings live and die. The doctrines of Gautama are sublimely beautiful; they are akin to those of our own religion, and I never yet met any one who had studied them who did not confess himself the better and happier for having done so. One may read in prose sketches of the life and teachings of Gautama the Buddha, in a book published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, or he may read them in verse in that splendid poem by Edwin Arnold called 'The Light of Asia.' Gautama sees good in all things, and all nature working together for good; he speaks of—

"'That fixed decree at silent work which will
Evolve the dark to light, the dead to life,
To fulness void, to form the yet unformed,
Good unto better, better unto best,
By wordless edict; having none to bid,
None to forbid; for this is past all gods
Immutable, unspeakable, supreme,
A Power which builds, unbuilds, and builds again,
Ruling all things accordant to the rule
Of virtue, which is beauty, truth, and use.
So that all things do well which serve the Power
And ill which hinder; nay, the worm does well (Note 1)
Obedient to its kind; the hawk does well
Which carries bleeding quarries to its young;
The dewdrop and the star shine sisterly,
Globing together in the common work;
And man who lives to die, dies to live well,
So if he guide his ways by blamelessness
And earnest will to hinder not, but help
All things both great and small which suffer life.'

"Those among us who have tender hearts towards the lower animals cannot help day after day witnessing acts of cruelty to them which give us great pain. We are naturally inclined to feel anger against the perpetrators of such cruelty, and to express that anger in wrathful language. By so doing I am convinced we do more harm than good to the creatures we try to serve. Calmness, not heat or hurry, should guide us in defending the brute creation against those who oppress and injure it. Let me illustrate my meaning by one or two further extracts from Arnold's poem.

"It is noontide, and Gautama, engrossed in thought and study, is journeying onwards—

"'Gentle and slow,
Radiant with heavenly pity, lost in care
For those he knew not, save as fellow-lives.'

"When,—

"'Blew down the mount the dust of pattering feet,
White goats, and black sheep, winding slow their way,
With many a lingering nibble at the tufts,
And wanderings from the path where water gleamed,
Or wild figs hung.
But always as they strayed
The herdsman cried, or slung his sling, and kept
The silly crowd still moving to the plain.
A ewe with couplets in the flock there was,
Some hurt had lamed one lamb, which toiled behind
Bleeding, while in the front its fellow skipped.

And the vexed dam hither and thither ran,
Fearful to lose this little one or that.
Which, when our Lord did mark, full tenderly
He took the limping lamb upon his neck,
Saying: “Poor woolly mother, be at peace!
Whither thou goest, I will bear thy care;
’Twere all as good to ease one beast of grief,
As sit and watch the sorrows of the world
In yonder caverns with the priests who pray.”
So paced he patiently, bearing the lamb.
Beside the herdsman in the dust and sun,
The wistful ewe low-bleating at his feet.’

“Sorely this was a lesson which the herdsman, ignorant though he no doubt was, never forgot; farther comment on the passage is needless. Precept calmly given does much good, example does far more.”

Note 1. A fact which Darwin in his treatise on earthworms has recently proved.

Chapter Thirty One.

Mirram: A Sketch from the Life of a Cat—About Summer Songs and Songsters.

“The mouse destroyed by my pursuit
No longer shall your feasts pollute,
Nor rats, from nightly ambuscade,
With wasteful teeth your stores invade.”

Gay.

“Books! ’tis a dull and endless strife,
    Come and hear the woodland linnet;
How sweet his music! On my life
    There’s more of wisdom in it.”

Wordsworth.

Ida continued to improve, and she did not let me forget my promise to resume my office of story-telling, which I

accordingly did next evening, bringing my portfolio into Ida’s bedroom for the purpose.

Ida had her cat in her arms. The cat was singing low, and had his round, loving head on her shoulder, and his arms buried in her beautiful hair. So this suggested my reading the following:—

Mirram: A Sketch from the Life of a Cat.

“Mirram: that was the name of pussy. It appears a strange one, I admit; but you see there is nobody accountable for it except the little cat herself, for she it was who named herself Mirram. I don’t mean to say that pussy actually came to her little mistress, and said in as many words, ‘Mirram is a pretty name, and I should like to be called Mirram. Call me Mirram, please, won’t you?’

“For cats don’t talk nowadays, except in fairy tales; but this is how it was. She was the most gentle and kindly-hearted wee puss, I believe, that ever was born, and if you happened to meet her anywhere, say going down the garden walk, she would look lovingly and confidingly up in your face, holding her tail very erect indeed, and ‘Mirram’ she would say.

“You see, ‘Mirram’ was the only English word, if it be English, that pussy could speak, and she made it do duty on every occasion; so no wonder she came to be called Mirram.

“If she were hungry she would jump upon your knee, and gently rub her shoulders against you and say, ‘Mirram.’

“‘Mirram’ in this case might be translated as follows: ‘Oh, please, my dear little mistress, I am *so* hungry! I’ve been up ever since five o’clock this morning. With the exception of a bird which I found and ate, feathers and all, and a foolish little mouse, I’ve had no breakfast. Do give me a little milk.’

“This would be an appeal that you couldn’t resist, and you would give her a saucerful of nice new milk, telling her at the same time that it was very naughty of her to devour poor birds, who come and cheer us with their songs both in winter and in summer.

“Another morning she would come hopping in through the open window, when you least expected her, and say ‘Mirram’ in the most kindly tone. This would, of course, mean, ‘Good-morning to you. I’m glad to see you downstairs at last. I’ve been up and out ever since sunrise. And, oh! such fun I’ve been having. You can’t conceive what a fine morning it is, and what a treat it is to rise early.’

“And now, having introduced this little puss to you by name, I must tell you something about her playmates, and say a word or two about the place she lived in, and her life in general, and after that show you how pussy at one time came to grief on account of a little fault she had. Of course, we all have our little faults, which we should strive to conquer, and I may as well confess at once what Mirram’s was. Well, it was—*thoughtlessness*.

“The first and the chief of pussy’s playmates, then, was her child-mistress. Would you like to know what her name was? I will tell you with pleasure; and when you hear it I’m sure you will say it is a strange one. She had two Christian names—the first was Fredabel, the second was Inez—Fredabel Inez—the latter being Spanish.

“‘But,’ you will say, ‘is “Fredabel” Spanish too, because I never heard of such a name before?’

“No, I am quite sure you never did; for this reason: no child was ever called by that name before, the fact being that her papa invented the name for her, as it was the only way he could see to get out of a dilemma, or difficulty. And here was the dilemma. When pussy’s mistress was quite a baby, her two aunts came to see her, and they had no sooner seen her than they both loved her very much; so they both went one morning into her papa’s study, and the following conversation took place:—

“‘Good-morning, brother,’ said one aunt. ‘I love your baby very, *very* much, and I want you to call her after me—her first name, mind you—and when she grows up she won’t lose by it.’

“‘Good-morning, brother,’ said the other aunt. ‘I also love your dear baby very much, and if you call her first name after mine, when she grows up she’ll gain by it.’

“Well, when baby’s papa heard both the aunts speak like this, he was very much perplexed, and didn’t know what to do, because he didn’t want to offend either the one aunt or the other.

“But after a great deal of cogitation, he possessed himself of a happy thought, or rather, I should say, a happy thought took possession of him. You see the name of the one aunt was Freda, and the name of the other was Bella, so what more natural than that baby’s papa should compound a name for her between the two, and call her Fredabel.

“So he did, and both aunts were pleased and merry and happy.

“But at the time our tale begins baby hadn’t grown up, nor anything like it; she was just a little child of not much over four years old.

“Now, as the one aunt always called her Freda and the other Bella, and as everybody else called her Eenie, I think we had better follow everybody else’s example, and call her Eenie, too.

“Was Eenie pretty, did you ask? Yes, she was pretty, and, what is still better than being pretty, she was very kind and good. So no wonder that everybody loved her. She had a sweet, lovely face, had Eenie. Her hair, that floated over her

lair shoulders, was like a golden sunbeam; her eyes were blue as the bluest sky, and large and liquid and love-speaking, and when she looked down her long dark eyelashes rested on cheeks as soft as the blossom of peach or apricot.

“Yet she was merry withal, merry and bright and gay, and whenever she laughed, her whole face was lighted up and looked as lovely as sunrise in May.

“I have said that Eenie was good and kind, and so she was; good and kind to every creature around her. She never tormented harmless insects, as cruel children do, and so all creatures seemed to love her in return: the trees whispered to her, the birds sang to her, and the bees told her tales.

“That was pussy Mirram’s mistress then; and it was no wonder Mirram was fond of her, and proud to be nursed and carried about by her. Mind you, she would not allow any one else to carry her. If anybody else had taken her up, puss would have said—‘Mirram!’ which would mean, ‘Put me down, please; I’ve got four legs of my own, and I much prefer to use them.’ And if the reply had been—‘Well, but you allow Eenie to handle and nurse you,’ pussy would have answered and said—

“‘Isn’t Eenie my mistress, my own dear mistress? Could any one ever be half so kind or careful of me as she is? Does she ever forget to give me milk of a morning or to share with me her own dinner and tea? Does she not always have my saucer filled with the purest, freshest water? and does she forget that I need a comfortable bed at night? No; my mistress may carry me as much as she pleases, but no one else shall.’

“Now Mirram was a mighty hunter, but she was also very fond of play; and when the dogs were in their kennels on very bright sunshiny days, and her little mistress was in the nursery learning her lessons, as all good children do, Mirram would have to play alone. *She* wasn’t afraid of the bright sunshine, if the dogs were; she would race up into a tall apple-tree, and laying herself full length on a branch, blink and stare at the great sun for half an hour at a time. Then—

“‘Oh!’ she would cry, ‘this resting and looking at the sun is very lazy work. I must play. Let me see, what shall I do? Oh! I have it; I’ll knock an apple down—then hurrah! for a game of ball.’

“And so she would hit a big apple, and down it would roll on the broad gravel-path; and down pussy would go, her face beaming with fun; and the game that ensued with that apple was quite a sight to witness. It was lawn-tennis, cricket, and football all in one. Then when quite tired of this, she would thrust the apple under the grass for the slugs to make their dinner of, and off she would trot to knock the great velvety bees about with her gloved paws. She would soon tire of this, though, because she found the bees such serious fellows.

“She would hit one, and knock it, maybe, a yard away; but the bee would soon get up again.

“‘It is all very well for you, Miss Puss,’ the bee would say; ‘your life is all play, but I’ve got work to do, for I cannot forget that, brightly though the sun is shining now, before long cold dismal winter will be here, and very queer I should look if I hadn’t laid up a store of nice honey to keep me alive.’

“And away the bee would go, humming a tune to himself, and Mirram would spy a pair of butterflies floating high over the scarlet-runners, but not higher than Mirram could spring. She couldn’t catch them, though.

“‘No, no, Miss Puss,’ the butterflies would say; ‘we don’t want you to play with us. We don’t want any third party, so please keep your paws to yourself.’

“And away they would fly.

“Then perhaps Mirram would find a toad crawling among the strawberry beds.

“‘You’re after the fruit, aren’t you?’ pussy would say, touching it gently on the back.

“‘No, not at all,’ the toad would reply. ‘I wouldn’t touch a strawberry for the world; the gardener put me here to catch the slugs; he couldn’t get on without me at all.’

“‘Well, go on with your work, Mr Toad,’ pussy would reply; ‘I’m off.’

“And what a glorious old garden that was for pussy to play in, and for her mistress to play in! A rambling old place, in which you might lose yourself, or, if you had a companion, play at hide-and-seek till you were tired. And every kind of flower grew here, and every kind of fruit and vegetable as well; just the kind of garden to spend a long summer’s day in. Never mind though the day was so hot that the birds ceased to sing, and sat panting all agape on the apple-boughs—so hot that the very fowls forgot to cackle or crow, and there wasn’t a sound save the hum of the myriads of insects that floated everywhere around, you wouldn’t mind the heat, for wasn’t there plenty of shade, arbours of cool foliage, and tents made of creepers?—and oh! the brilliancy of the sunny marigolds, the scarlet clustered geraniums, the larkspurs, purple and white, and the crimson-painted linums. No, you wouldn’t mind the heat; weren’t there strawberries as large as eggs and as cold as ice? And weren’t there trees laden with crimson and yellow raspberries? And weren’t the big lemon-tinted gooseberries bearing the bushes groundwards with the weight of their sweetness, and praying to be pulled? A glorious old garden indeed!

“But see, the dogs have got out of their kennels, and have come down the garden walks on their way to the paddock, and pussy runs to meet them.

“‘What! dogs in a garden?’ you cry. Yes; but they weren’t ordinary dogs, any more than it was an ordinary garden. They were permitted to stroll therein, but they were trained to keep the walks, and smell, but never touch, the flowers. They roamed through the rosary, they rolled on the lawn, they even slept in the beautiful summer-houses;

but they never committed a fault—but in the autumn, when pears and apples dropped from the trees, they were permitted, and even encouraged, to eat their fill of the fruit. And they made good use of their privilege, too. These were pussy's playmates all the year round—the immense black Newfoundlands, the princely boarhounds, the beautiful collies, and the one little rascal of a Scottish terrier. You never met the dogs without also meeting Mirram, whether out in the country roads or at home, on the leas or in the paddock; she pulled daisies to throw at the dogs in summer, and in winter she used to lie on her back, and in mere wantonness pitch pellets of snow at the great boar hound himself.

“The dogs all loved her. Once, when she was out with the dogs on a common, a great snarly bulldog came along, and at once ran to kill poor Mirram. You should have seen the commotion that ensued.

“‘It is our cat,’ they all seemed to cry, in a kind of canine chorus. ‘Our cat—*our* cat—our cat!’ And all ran to save her.

“No, they didn't kill him, though the boarhound wanted to; but the biggest Newfoundland, a large-hearted fellow, said, ‘No, don't let us kill him, he doesn't know any better; let us just refresh his memory.’

“So he took the cur, and trailed him to the pond and threw him in; and next time that dog met Mirram he walked past her very quietly indeed!

“Mirram loved all the dogs about the place; but I think her greatest favourite was the wee wire-haired Scottish terrier. Perhaps it was because he was about her own size, or perhaps it was because he was so very ugly that she felt a kind of pity for him. But Mirram spent a deal of time in his company, and they used to go trotting away together along the lanes and the hedges, and sometimes they wouldn't return for hours, when they would trot home again, keeping close cheek-by-jowl, and looking very happy and very funny.

“‘Broom’ this little dog had been called, probably in a frolic, and from some fancied resemblance between his general appearance and the hearth-brush. His face was saucy and impudent, and sharp as needles; his bits of ears cocked up, and his tiny wicked-looking eyes glanced from under his shaggy eyebrows, as if they had been boatman-beetles. I don't think Broom was ever afraid of anything, and very important the little dog and pussy looked when returning from a ramble. They had secrets of great moment between them, without a doubt. Perhaps, if her mistress had asked Mirram where they went together, and what they did, Mirram would have replied in the following words—

“‘Oh! you know, my dear mistress, we go hunting along by the hedgerows and by the ponds, and in the dark forests, and we meet with such thrilling adventures! We capture moles, and we capture great rats and frightful hedgehogs, and Broom is so brave he will grapple even with a weasel; and one day he conquered and killed a huge polecat! Yes, he is so brave, and nothing can ever come over me when Broom is near.’

“Now, no one would have doubted that, in such a pretty, pleasant country home as hers, with such a kind mistress, and so many playmates, pussy Mirram would have been as happy as ever a pussy could be. So she was, as a rule; but not always, because she had that one little fault—thoughtlessness. Ah! those little faults, how often will they not lead us into trouble!

“I don't say that pussy ever did anything very terrible, to cause her mistress grief. She never did eat the canary, for instance. But she often stopped away all night, and thus caused little Eenie much anxiety. Pussy always confessed her fault, but she was so thoughtless that the very next moonlight night the same thing occurred again, and Mirram never thought, while she was enjoying herself out of doors, that Eenie was suffering sorrow for her sake at home.

“On the flat roof of a house where Mirram often wandered, in the moonlight was a tiny pigeon-hole, so small she couldn't creep in to save her life even, but from this pigeon-hole a bonnie wee kitten used often to pop out and play with Mirram. Where the pigeon-hole led to, or what was away beyond it, pussy couldn't even conjecture, though she often watched and wondered for hours, then put in her head to have a peep; but all was dark.

“Perhaps, when she was quite tired of wondering, and was just going to retire for the night, the little face would appear, and Mirram would forget all about her mistress in the joy of meeting her small friend.

“Then how pleased Mirram would look, and how loudly she would purr, and say to the kitten—

“‘Come out, my dear, do come out, and you shall play with my tail.’

“But it was really very thoughtless of Mirram, and just a little selfish as well, not to at once let kittie have her tail to play with; but no.

“‘Sit there, my dear, and sing to me,’ she would say.

“Kittie would do that just for a little while. Very demure she looked; but kittens can't be demure long, you know; and then there would commence the wildest, maddest, merriest game of romps between the two that ever was seen or heard of; but always when the fun got too exciting for her, kittie popped back again into her pigeon-hole, appearing again in a few moments in the most provoking manner.

“What nights these were for Mirram, and how pleasantly they were spent, and how quickly they passed, perhaps no one but pussy and her little friend could tell. When tired of romping and running, like two feline madcaps, Mirram would propose a song, and while the stars glittered overhead, or the moon shone brightly down on them, they would seat themselves lovingly side by side and engage in a duet. Now, however pleasant cats' music heard at midnight may appear to the pussies themselves, it certainly is not conducive to the sleep of any nervous invalid who may happen to dwell in the neighbouring houses, or very soothing either.

“Mirram found this out to her cost one evening, and so did the kitten as well, for a window was suddenly thrown open

not very far from where they sat.

"'Ah!' said Mirram, 'that is sure to be some one who is delighted with our music, and is going to throw something nice to us.'

"Alas! alas! the something *did* come, but it wasn't nice. It took the shape of a decanter of water and an old boot.

"One night pussy Mirram had stayed out very much longer, and Eenie had gone to bed crying, because she thought she would never, never see her Mirram more.

"Thoughtless Mirram! At that moment she was once again on the roof, and the kittie's face was at the pigeon-hole. Mirram was sitting up in the most coaxing manner possible.

"'Come out again,' she was saying to kittie, 'come out again. Do come out to—'

"She didn't see that terrible black cat stealing up behind; but she heard the low threatening growl, and sprang round to confront her and defend herself.

"The fight was fierce and terrible while it lasted, and poor Mirram got the worst of it. The black cat had well-nigh killed her.

"'Oh!' she sobbed, as she dropped bitter, blinding tears on the roof,—'oh, if I had never left my mistress! Oh, dear! oh, dear! whatever shall I do?'

"You see Mirram was very sad and sorrowful now; but then, unfortunately, the repentance came when it was too late."

"Thank you," Ida said, when I had finished; "I like the description of the garden ever so much. Now tell me something about birds; I'll shut my eyes and listen."

"But won't you be tired, dear?" said my wife.

"No, auntie," was the reply; "and I won't go to sleep. I never tire hearing about birds, and flowers, and woods, and wilds, and everything in nature."

"Here is a little bit, then," I said, "that will just suit you, Ida. It is short. That is a merit. I call it—"

About Summer Songs and Songsters.

"Sweet is the melody that at this season of the year arises from every feathered songster of forest, field, and lea. I am writing to-day out in the fields, seated, I might say, in the very lap of Nature—my county is the very wildest and prettiest in all mid-England—and I cannot help throwing down my pen occasionally to watch the motions or listen to the singing of some or other of my wild pets. Nothing will convince me that I am not as well known in the woods as if I were indeed a denizen thereof. The birds, at all events, know me, and they do not fear me, because I never hurt or frighten them.

"High overhead yonder, and dimly seen against the light grey of a cloud, is the skylark. He is at far too great a height for me to see his head with the naked eye, so I raise the lorgnettes, and with these I can observe that even as he sings he turns his head earthwards to where, in her cosy grass-lined nest among the tender corn, sits his pretty speckled mate. He is singing to his mate. Yonder, perched on top of the hedgerow, is my friend the yellow-hammer. He is arrayed in pinions of a deeper, brighter orange now. Is it of that he is so proud? is it because of that that there

comes ever and anon in his short and simple song a kind of half-hysterical note of joy? Nay, *I* know why he sings so, because I know where his nest is, and what is in it.

“In the hollow of an old, old tree, bent and battered by the wind and weather, the starling has built, and the male bird trills his song on the highest branch, but in a position to be seen by his mate. Not much music in his song, yet he is terribly in earnest about the matter, and I’ve no doubt the hen admires him, not only for the green metallic gloss of his dark coat, but because he is trying to do his best, and to her his gurgling notes are far sweeter than the music of merle, or the song of the nightingale herself.

“But here is something strange, and it may be new to our little folk. There are wee modest mites of birds in the woods and forests, that really do not care to be heard by any other living ears than those of their mates. I know where there is the nest of a rose-linnet in a bush of furze, and I go and sit myself softly down within a few feet of it, and in a few minutes back comes the male bird; he has been on an errand of some kind. He seats himself on the highest twig of a neighbouring bush. He is silent for a time, but he cannot be so very long; and so he presently breaks out into his tender songlet, but so soft and low is his ditty, that at five yards’ distance methinks you would fail to hear it. There are bold singers enough in copse and wild wood without him. The song of the beautiful chaffinch is clear and defiant. The mavis or speckled thrush is not only loud and bold in his tones, but he is what you might term a singer of humorous songs. His object is evidently to amuse his mate, and he sings from early morning till quite late, trying all sorts of trick notes, mocking and mimicking every bird within hearing distance. He even borrows some notes from the nightingale, after the arrival of that bird in the country; a very sorry imitation he makes of them, doubtless, but still you can recognise them for all that.

“Why is it we all love the robin so? Many would answer this question quickly enough, and with no attempt at analysis, and their reply would be, ‘Oh, because he deserves to be loved.’ This is true enough; but let me tell you why I love him. Though I never had a caged robin, thinking it cruel to deprive a dear bird of its liberty, I always do all I can to make friends with it wherever we meet. I was very young when I made my first acquaintance with Master Robin. We lived in the country, and one time there was a very hard winter indeed; the birds came to the lawn to be fed, but one was not content with simple feeding, and so one colder day than usual he kept throwing himself against a lower pane in the parlour window—the bright, cheerful fire, I suppose, attracted his notice.

“‘You do look so cosy and comfortable in that nice room,’ he seemed to say; ‘think of my cold feet out in this dreary weather.’

“My dear mother—she who first taught me to love birds and beasts, and all created things—did think of his cold feet. She opened the window, and by-and-by he came in. He would have preferred the window left open, but being given to understand that this would interfere materially with family arrangements, he submitted to his semi-imprisonment with charming grace, and perched himself on top of a picture-frame, which became his resting-place when not busy picking up crumbs, or drinking water or milk, through all the livelong winter. We were all greatly pleased when one day he threw back his pert wee head and treated us to a song. And it was always while we were at dinner that he sang.

“‘I suppose,’ he seemed to say, ‘you won’t object to a little music, will you?’ Then he would strike up.

“But when the winter wore away he gave us to understand he had an appointment somewhere; and so he was allowed to go about his business.

“My next adventure with a robin happened thus. I, while still a little boy, did a very naughty thing. By reading sea-stories I got enamoured of a sea life, and determined to run away from my old uncle, with whom I was residing during the temporary absence of my parents on the Continent. The old gentleman was not over kind to me—*that* helped my determination, no doubt. I did not get very far away—I may mention this at once—but for two nights and days I stayed in the heart of a spruce-pine wood, living on bread-and-cheese and whortleberries. My bed was the branches of the pines, which I broke off and spread on the ground, and all day my constant companion was a robin. I think he hardly ever left me. I am, or was, in the belief that he slept on me. Be this as it may, he picked up the crumbs I scattered for him, and never forgot to reward me with a song. While singing he used to perch on a branch quite close overhead, and sang so very low, though sweetly, that I fully believed he sang for me alone. After you have read this you will readily believe, that there may have been a large foundation of truth in the beautiful tale of ‘The Babes in the Wood.’ Before nor since my childish escapade, I never knew a robin so curiously tame as the one I met in the spruce-pine wood.

“Birds take singular fancies for some people. I know a little girl who when a child had a great fancy for straying away by herself into the woods. She was once found fast asleep and almost covered with wild birds. Some might tell me the birds were merely keeping their feet warm at the girl’s expense. I have a very different opinion on the subject.

“Robins usually build in a green bank at the foot of a large tree, and lay four or five lightish yellow or dusky eggs; but I have found their nests in thorn-bushes. In the romantic Isle of Skye all small birds build in the rocks, because there are no trees there, and few bushes. In a cliff, for example, close to the sea, if not quite overhanging it, you will find at the lower part the nests of larks, finches, linnets, and other small birds; on a higher reach the nests of thrushes and blackbirds; higher still pigeons build; and near the top sea-gulls and birds of prey, including the owl family.

“There is a short branch line not far from where I live, which ends five miles from the main artery of traffic. In the corner of a truck which had been lying idle at the little terminus for some time, a pair of robins built their nest, and the hen was sitting on five eggs when it became necessary to use the truck.

“‘Don’t disturb the nest,’ said the kindly station-master to his men; ‘put something over it. But I daresay the bird will forsake it; she’s sure to do so.’

“But the bird did nothing of the kind, and although she had a little railway journey gratis, once a day at least, to the

main line and back, she stuck to her nest, and finally reared her family to fledglings.

“Robins are early astir in the morning; their song is the first I hear. They sing, too, quite late at night; they also sing all the year round; and it is my impression, on the whole, that they like best to trill forth when other birds are silent.

“The song-birds of our groves are neither jealous of each other nor do they hate each other. Down at the foot of my lawn I have a large shallow pan placed, which is kept half-filled with water in summer. I can see it from my bedroom window, and it is very pleasant to watch the birds having a bath in the morning. There is neither jealousy nor hatred displayed during the performance of this most healthful operation. I sometimes see blackbirds, thrushes, and sparrows all tubbing at one time, and quite hilarious over it.

Chapter Thirty Two.

Harry’s Holiday—King John; or, The Tale of a Tub—Sindbad; or, the Dog of Penellan.

> “Country life,—let us confess it,
> Man will little help to bless it,
>   Yet, for gladness there
> We may readily possess it
>   In its native air.
>
> “Rides and rambles, sports and farming,
> Home, the heart for ever warming,
>   Books and friends and ease,
> Life must after all be charming,
>   Full of joys like these.”
>
> Tupper.

“I’m not sure, Ida, that you will like the following story. There is truth in it, though, and a moral mixed up with it which you may unravel if you please. I call it—”

Harry’s Holiday.

“The hero of my little story was a London boy. Truth is, he had spent all the days and years of his young life in town. I do not think that he had ever, until a certain great event in his life took place, seen even the suburbs of the great city in which it was his lot to reside. His whole world consisted of stone walls, so to speak, of an interminable labyrinth of streets and lanes and terraces, for ever filled with a busy multitude, hurrying to and fro in the pursuit of their avocations. I believe he got to think at last that there was nothing, that there *could* be nothing beyond this mighty London; and of country life, with all its joys and pleasures, he knew absolutely nothing. A tree to him was merely a dingy, sooty kind of shrub, that grew in the squares; flowers were gaudy vegetables used in window decorations; a lark was a bird that spent all its life in a box-cage, chiefly, in the neighbourhood of Seven Dials. As to trees growing in woods and in forests where the deer and the roe live wild and free; as to flowers carpeting the fields with a splendour of bloom; as to larks mounting high in air to troll their happy songs—he had not even the power of conception. True, he had read of such things, just as he had read of the moon as seen through a telescope, and the one subject was just as vague to him as the other.

“Harry at this time was, I fear, just a little sceptical. He lacked in a great measure that excellent quality, without which there would be very little real happiness in this world—I mean faith. He only believed in what he really saw and could understand, from which, of course, you will readily infer that his mind was neither a very comprehensive nor a very clever one. And you are right.

“Harry was not a strong boy; his face was pale, his eyes were large and lustrous, his poor little arms and legs were far from robust, and you could have found plenty of country lads who measured twice as much round the chest as Harry. Well, his parents, who really did all they could for their boy, were very pleased when one morning the postman brought them a letter from the far north, inviting their little son to come and spend a long autumn holiday at the farm of Dunryan, in the wilds of Aberdeenshire. He was to go all alone in the steamboat, simply in care of the steward, who promised to be very kind to him and look well after his comforts. And so he did, too; but I think that from the very moment that the great ship began to drop down the river, leaving the city behind it, with all its smoke and its gloom, Harry began to be a new boy. A new current of life seemed to begin to circulate in his veins, a better state of feeling to take possession of his soul. There was no end to the wonders Harry saw during his voyage to Aberdeen. The sea itself was a sight which until now he could not have imagined—could not have even dreamed of. Then there was the long line of wonderful coast. He had seen a panorama, but that couldn’t have been very large, because it was contained within the four stone walls of a concert-room. But here was a panorama gradually unrolling itself before his astonished gaze hundreds and hundreds of miles in extent. No wonder that his eyes dilated as he beheld it: the black, beetling cliffs that frowned over the ocean’s depths; the beautiful sandy beaches; the broad bays, with cities slumbering in the mists beyond; the green-topped hills; the waving woods; the houses; the palaces; and the grey old ruined castles that told of the might and strength of ages past and gone. All and every one of these seemed to whisper to Harry—seemed to tell him that there were more wonderful things even in this world than he had ever before believed in.

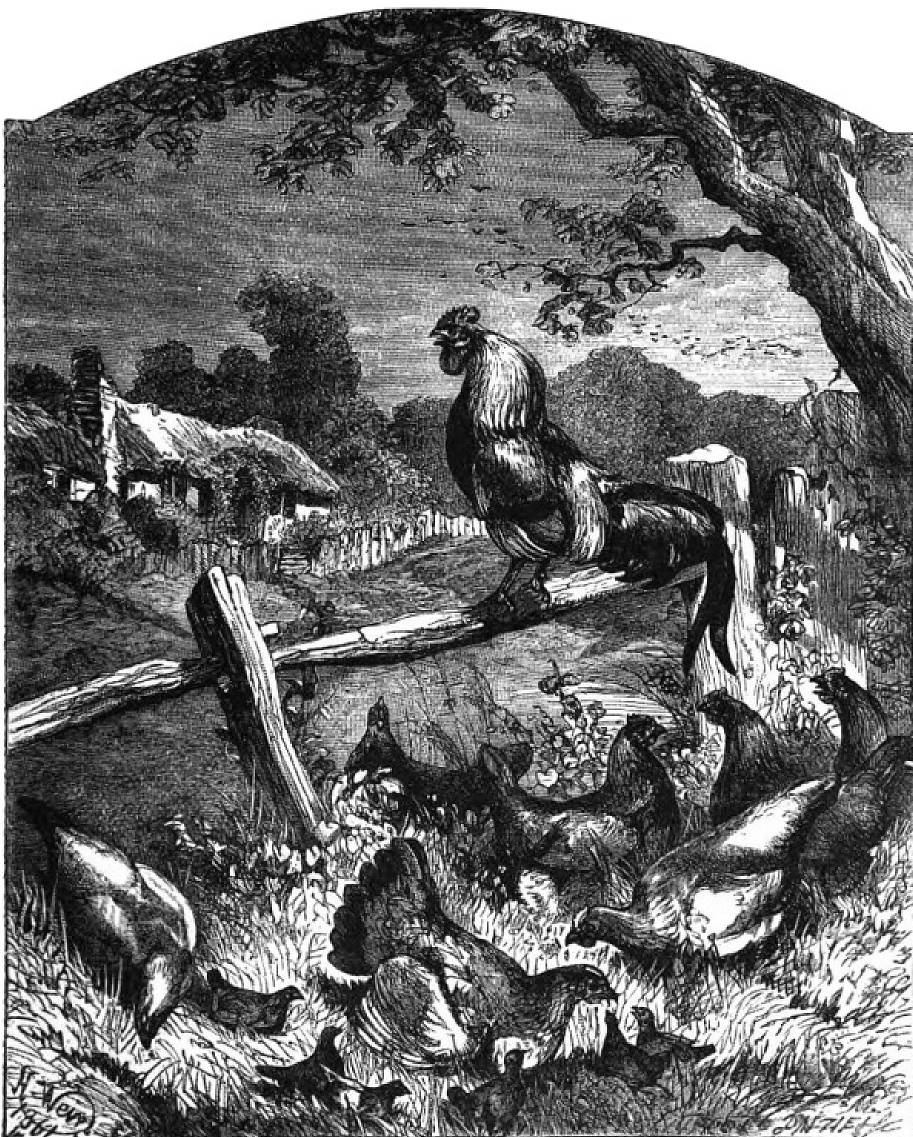
“When night came on, the stars shone out—stars more beautiful than he had ever seen before—so clear, so large, so bright. And they carried his thoughts far, far beyond the earth. In their pure presence he felt a better boy than ever he had felt before, but at the same time he could not help feeling ashamed of that feeling of unbelief that had possessed him in London. He was beginning to have faith already—a little, at all events. Were I to tell you of all Harry’s adventures, and all the strange sights he saw ere he reached Aberdeen, I would have quite a long story to relate. His uncle met him at the pier with a dog-cart, into which he helped him, the handsome, spirited horse giving just one look round, to see who was getting up. When he saw this mite of a hero of ours,—

“‘Oh,’ said the horse to himself, ‘he won’t make much additional weight. I’d trot along with a hundred of such as he is.’

“So away they went. Now Harry had been taught to look upon London as the finest and prettiest town in the world; but when he rattled along the wide and magnificent streets of the capital of the north, he found ample reason to alter his opinion. Here was no smoke—here was a sun shining down from a sky of cerulean hue, and here were houses built apparently of the costliest and whitest of marble. On went the dog-cart, and the closely-built streets gave place to avenues and terraces, and rows of palatial buildings peeping up through the greenery of trees.

“Harry was a little tired that night before he reached the good farm of Dunryan; but his aunt and cousins were kindness itself, and after a bigger and nicer supper than ever he had eaten before in his life, he was shown to his snow-white couch, and the next thing he became conscious of was that the sun was shining broad and clearly into his chamber, and there was a perfect babel of sounds right down under his window, sounds that a country boy would easily have understood, but which were worse than Greek to Harry. He soon jumped out of bed, however, washed and dressed, and then opened the casement and looked down. I have already told you that Harry’s eyes were large, but the sight he now witnessed made him open them considerably wider than he had done for many a day. A vast courtyard crowded with feathered bipeds of every kind that could be imagined. Harry hurried on with his toilet, so that he might be able to go downstairs and examine them more closely.

“Everybody was glad to see him, but he had to eat his breakfast all alone nevertheless, for his cousins had been up and had theirs hours and hours before. One of his relatives was a pretty little auburn-haired lass of some nine or ten summers, with blue, laughing eyes, and modest mien. She volunteered to show Harry round the farm. But Harry felt just a little afraid nevertheless, and considerably ashamed for being so, when he found himself in the great yard quite surrounded by hens and ducks and gobbling geese and turkeys. I think the animals themselves knew this, and did all they could to frighten him. The hens were content with cackling and grumbling, evidently trying to incite the cocks to acts of open hostility against our trembling hero. The cocks crew loudly at him, or defiantly approached him, looking as if they meant to imply that he owed it entirely to their generosity that his life was spared. The turkey-cocks put themselves into all sorts of queer shapes—tried to look like fretful porcupines, elevated the red rag that Harry was astonished to see depending from their noses, and made terrible noises at him. The ducks were content with standing on tiptoe, clapping their snow-white wings, and crying, ‘What! what! what!’ at the top of their voices. The peahens were merely curious and impertinent; but the geese were alarmingly intrusive. They stretched out their necks to the longest extent, approached him thus, and gave vent to hissings unutterable by any other creature than a goose.



“‘They won’t bite or anything, will they?’ faltered our hero, feeling very small indeed.

“But his little companion only laughed right merrily. Then taking Harry’s hand, she ran him off to show him more

wonders—great horses that looked to the London boy as big as elephants; enormous oxen as big as rhinoceroses; donkeys that looked wiser than he could have believed it possible for a donkey to look; and goats that looked simply mischievous and nothing else. What a blessing it was for Harry that he had such a wise little guardian and mentor as his Cousin Lizzie. She went everywhere with him, and explained away all his doubts and difficulties. Ay, and she chaffed him not a little either, and laughed at all his queer mistakes; but I think she pitied him a good deal at the same time. 'Poor boy,' Lizzie used to think to herself, 'he has never been out of London before. What can he know?'

"Little Lizzie had the same kind pity on Harry's physical weakness as she had for his mental. Her cousin couldn't climb the broom-clad hills as she could—not at first, at all events; but after one month's stay in this wild, free country, new life and spirit seemed to be instilled into him. He could climb hills now fast enough; and he was never tired wandering in the dark pine forests, or over the mountains that were now bedecked in the glorious purple of the heather's bloom.

"Harry's uncle gave him many a bit of good advice, which went far to dispel both his doubts and fears, and that means his ignorance; for only the very ignorant dare to doubt what they cannot understand. 'There are more things in heaven and earth,' said his uncle one day, 'than we have dreamed of in our philosophy. What would you think of my honest dog there if he told you the electric telegraph was an impossibility, simply because *he* couldn't understand it? Have faith, boy, have faith.'

"But would it be believed that this boy, this London boy, didn't know where chickens came from? He really didn't. Very little things sometimes form the turning-point in the history of great men, and lead them to a better train of thought. For remember that our mighty rivers that bear great navies to the ocean, like mighty thoughts, have very small beginnings.

"Harry observed a hen one day in a very great blaze of excitement. Her chickens were hatching. One after another they were popping out of the shell, and going directly to seek for food. One little fellow, who had just come out, was clapping his wings and stretching himself as coolly as if he had just come by train, and was glad the journey was over. This was all very wonderful to Harry; it led him to think; the thought led to wisdom and faith.

"Harry took a long walk that day in his favourite pine forest, and for the first time in his life, it struck him that every creature he saw there had some avocation; flies, beetles, and birds, all were working. Says Harry to himself, 'I, too, will be industrious. I may yet be something in this great world, in which I am now convinced everything is well ordained.'

"He kept that resolve firmly, unflinchingly; he is, while I write, one of the wealthiest merchants in London city; he is happy enough in this world, and has something in his breast which enables him to look beyond."

"Now one other," said Ida; "I know you have lots of pretty tales in that old portfolio."

"Well," I said, smiling, "here goes; and then you'll sleep."

King John; or, The Tale of a Tub.

“King John, he called himself, but every human being about the farm of Buttercup Hill called him Jock—simply that, and nothing else. But Jock, or King John, there was one thing that nobody could deny—he was not only the chief among all the other fowls around him, but he thought himself a very important and a very exalted bird indeed; and no wonder that he clapped his wings and crowed defiance at any one who chanced to take particular notice of him, or that he asked in defiant tones, ‘Kok *aik* uk uk?’ with strong emphasis on the ‘*aik*,’ and which in English means, ‘How dare you stand and stare at *me*?’

“King John’s tail was a mass of nodding plumage of the darkest purple, his wattles and comb were of the rosiest red, his wings and neck were crimson and gold, and his batonlike legs were armed with spurs as long as one’s little finger, and stronger and sharper than polished steel. Had you dared to go too near any one of his feathered companions—that is, those whom he cared about—you would have repented it the very next minute, and King John’s spurs would have been brought into play. But Jock wouldn’t have objected to your admiring them, so long as you kept at a respectable distance, on the other side of the fence, for instance. And pretty fowls they were—most of them young too—golden-pencilled Hamburgs, sprightly Spaniards, and sedate-looking Dorkings, to say nothing of two ancient grand hens of no particular breed at all, but who, being extremely fat and imposing in appearance, were admitted to the high honour of roosting every night one on each side of the king, and were moreover taken into consultation by him, in every matter likely to affect the interests of his dynasty, or the welfare of the junior members of the farmyard.

“Now Jock was deeply impressed with the dignity of the office he held. He was a very proud king—though, to his credit be it said, he was also a very good king. And never since he had first mounted his throne—an old water-tub, by the way—and sounded his shrill clarion, shouting a challenge to every cock or king within hearing—never, I say, had he been known to fill his own crop of a morning until the crops of all the hens about him were well packed with all good comestibles. Such then was Jock, such was King John. But, mind you, this gallant bird had not been a king all his life. No, and neither had he been born a prince. There was a mystery about his real origin and species. Judging from the colour of the egg from which he was hatched, Jock *ought* to have been a Cochin. But Jock was nothing of the sort, as one glance at our picture will be sufficient to convince you. But I think it highly probable that the egg in question was stained by some unprincipled person, to cause it to look like that of the favourite Cochin. Be that as it may, Jock was duly hatched, and in course of time was fully fledged, and one day attempted to crow, for which little performance he was not only pecked on the back by the two fat old hens, but chased all round the yard by King Cockeroo, who was then lord and master of the farmyard. When he grew a little older he used to betake himself to places remote from observance, and study the song of chanticleer. But the older he grew the prettier he grew, and the prettier he grew the more King Cockeroo seemed to dislike him; indeed, he thrashed him every morning and every evening, and at odd times during the day, so that at last Jock’s life became most unbearable. One morning, however, when glancing downwards at his legs, he observed that his spurs had grown long and strong and sharp, and after this he determined to throw off for ever the yoke of allegiance to cruel King Cockeroo; he resolved to try the fortune of war even, and if he lost the battle, he thought to himself he would be no worse off than before.

“Now on the following day young Jock happened to find a nice large potato, and said he to himself, ‘Hullo! I’m fortunate to-day; I’ll have such a nice breakfast.’

“‘Will you indeed?’ cried a harsh voice quite close to his ear, and he found himself in the dread presence of King Cockeroo, a very large yellow Cochin China. ‘Will you indeed?’ repeated his majesty. ‘How dare *you* attempt to eat a *whole* potato. Put it down at once and leave the yard.’

“‘I won’t,’ cried the little cock, quite bravely.

“‘Then I’ll make you,’ roared the big one.

“‘Then I shan’t,’ was the bold reply.

“Now, like all bullies, King Cockeroo was a coward at heart, so the battle that followed was of short duration, but very decisive for all that, and in less than five minutes King Cockeroo was flying in confusion before his young but victorious enemy.

“When he had left the yard, the long-persecuted but now triumphant Jock mounted his throne—the afore-mentioned water-butt—and crew and crew and crew, until he was so hoarse that he couldn’t crow any longer; then he jumped down and received the congratulations of all the inhabitants of the farmyard. And that is how Jock became King John.

“The poor deposed monarch never afterwards dared to come near the yard, in which he had at one time reigned so happily. He slept no longer on his old roost, but was fain to perch all alone on the edge of the garden barrow in the tool-house. He found no pleasure now in his sad and sorrowful life, except in eating; and having no one to share his meals with him, he began to get lazy and fat, and every day he got lazier and fatter, till at last it was all he could do to move about with anything like comfort. When he wanted to relieve his mind by crowing, he had to waddle away to a safe distance from the yard, or else King John would have flown upon him and pecked him most cruelly.

“And now those very fowls, who once thought so much of him, used to laugh when they heard him crowing, and remark to young King John—

“‘Just listen to that asthmatical old silly,’ for his articulation was not so distinct as it formerly was.

“‘Kurr-r-r!’ the new king would reply, ‘he’d better keep at a respectable distance, or cock-a-ro-ri-ko! I’ll—I’ll eat him entirely up!’

“‘I think,’ said the farmer of Buttercup Hill one day to his wife—‘I think we’d better have t’ould cock for our Sunday’s dinner.’

“‘Won’t he be a bit tough?’ his good wife replied.

"'Maybe, my dear,' said the farmer, 'but fine and fat, and plenty of him, at any rate.'

"Poor Cockeroo, what a fall was his! And oh! the sad irony of fate, for on the very morning of this deposed monarch's execution, the sun was shining, the birds singing, the corn springing up and looking so green and bonny; and probably the last thing he heard in life was King John crowing, as he proudly perched himself on the edge of his water-tub throne. One could almost afford to drop a tear of pity for the dead King Cockeroo, were it possible to forget that, while in life and in power, he had been both a bully and a coward.

"But bad as bullying and cowardice are, there are other faults in many beings which, if not eradicated, are apt to lead the possessors thereof to a bad end. I have nothing to say against ambition, so long as it is lawful and kept within due bounds, but pride is a bad trait in the character of even old or young; and if you listen I will tell you how this failing brought even brave and gallant King John to an untimely end.

"After the death of King Cockeroo the pride of Jack knew no bounds. His greatest enemy was gone, and there was not —so he thought—another cock in creation who would dare to face him; for did they not all prefer crowing at a distance, and did he not always answer them day or night, and defy them? His bearing towards the other fowls began to change. He still collected food for the hens, it is true, but he no longer tried to coax them to eat it. They would doubtless, he said, partake of it if they were hungry, and if they were not hungry, why, they could simply leave it.

"Jack had never had much respect for human beings—*they*! poor helpless things, had no wings to clap, and they couldn't crow; *they* had no pretty plumage of their own, but were fain to clothe themselves in sheep's raiment or the cocoons of caterpillars; and *now* he wholly despised them, and showed it too, for he spurred the legs of Gosling the ploughboy, and rent into ribbons the new dress of Mary the milkmaid, because she had invaded his territory in search of eggs. Even the death of the two favourite hens I have told you of, which took place somewhat suddenly one Saturday morning, failed to sober him or tone down his rampant pride. He installed two other very fat hens in their place on the perch, and then crowed more loudly than ever.

"He spent much of his time now on his old throne; for it was always well filled with water, which served the purpose of a looking-glass, and reflected his gay and sprightly person, his rosy comb, and his nodding plumes. He would sometimes invite a favourite fowl to share the honours of his throne with him, but I really believe it was merely that its plainer reflection might make his own beautiful image the more apparent.

"'Oh!' he would cry, 'don't I look lovely, and don't you look dowdy beside *me*? Kurr! Kurr-r-r! Am I not perfection itself?'

"Of course no one of the fowls in the yard dared to contradict him or gainsay a word he spoke, but still I doubt whether they believed him to be altogether such a very exalted personage as he tried to make himself out.

"And now my little tale draws speedily to its dark, but not, I trust, uninstructive close.

"The sun rose among clouds of brightest crimson one lovely summer's morning, and his beams flooded all the beautiful country, making every creature and everything glad, birds and beasts, flowers and trees, and rippling streams. Alas! how often in this world of ours is the sunrise in glory followed by a sunset in gloom. Noon had hardly passed ere rock-shaped clouds began to bank up in the south and obscure the sun, the wind fell to a dead calm, and the stillness became oppressive; but it was broken at length by a loud peal of thunder, that seemed to rend the earth to its very foundations. Then the sky grew darker and darker; and the darker it grew, the more vividly the lightning flashed, the more loudly pealed the thunder. Then the rain came down, such rain as neither the good farmer of Buttercup Hill nor his wife ever remembered seeing before. King John was fain to seek shelter for himself and his companions under the garden seat, but even there they were drenched, and a very miserable sight they presented.

"'Oh I what a terrible storm!' cried a wise old hen.

"'Who is afraid?' said the proud King John, stepping out into the midst of it. 'Behold my throne; it shall never be moved.'

"Dread omen! at that very moment a hoop suddenly sprang up with a loud bang, the staves began to separate, and the water came pouring out between them, deluging all the place, and well-nigh drowning one of the two hens which had bravely tried to share Jock's peril with him!

"'Kur-r-r!' cried the king, astonishment and rage depicted on every lineament of his countenance. 'Kurr! kurr! what trickery is this? But, behold, I have but to mount my throne and crow, and at once the thunder and the rain will cease, and the sun will shine again!'

"He suited the action to the word, but, alas! the sun never shone again for him. His additional weight completed the mischief, and the tottering throne gave way with a crash.

"There was woe in the farmyard that day, for under the ruins of his throne lay the lifeless body of Jock—the once proud, the once mighty King John."

"Oh!" cried Ida, "but that is *too* short. Pray, just one little one more, then I will sleep. You shall play me to sleep. Let it be about a dog," she continued. "You can always tell a story about a dog."

I looked once more into the old portfolio, and found this—

Sindbad; or, The Dog of Penellan.

"Unless you go far, very far north indeed, you will hardly find a more primitive place than the little village of Penellan, which nestles quite close to the sea on the southern coast of Cornwall. I say it *nestles*, and so it does, and nice and cosy it looks down there, in a kind of glen, with green hills rising on either side of it, with its pebbly beach and the ever-sounding sea in front of it.

"It was at Widow Webber's hostelry that there arrived, many years ago, the hero, or rather heroes, of this short tale. Spring was coming in, the gardens were already gay with flowers, and the roses that trailed around the windows and porches of the pilchard fishermen's huts were all in bud, and promised soon to show a wealth of bloom.

"Now, not only Widow Webber herself, but the whole village, were on tiptoe to find out who the two strangers were and what could possibly be their reason for coming to such a little outlying place—fifteen miles, mind you, from the nearest railway town. It appeared they were not likely soon to be satisfied, for the human stranger—the other was his beautiful Newfoundland retriever, 'Sindbad'—simply took the widow's best room for three months, and in less than a week he seemed to have settled down as entirely in the place, as though he had been born there, and had never been out of it. The most curious part of the business was that he never told his name, and he never even received a letter or a visitor. He walked about much out of doors, and over the hills, and he hired a boat by the month, and used to go long cruises among the rocks, at times not returning until sun was set, and the bright stars twinkling in the sky. He sketched a great deal, too—made pictures, the pilchard fishermen called it. Was he an artist? Perhaps.

"The 'gentleman,' as he was always called, had a kind word and a pleasant smile, for every one, and his dog Sindbad was a universal favourite with the village children. How they laughed to see him go splashing into the water! And the wilder the sea, and the bigger the waves, the more the dog seemed to enjoy the fun.

"Being so quiet and neighbourly, it might have been thought that the gentleman would have been as much a favourite with the grown-up people as Sindbad was with the young folk. Alas! for the charity of this world, he was not so at first. Where, they wondered, did he come from? Why didn't he give his name, and tell his story? It couldn't possibly be all right, they felt sure of that.

"But when the summer wore away, and winter came round, and those policemen, whom they fully expected to one day take the gentleman away, never came, and when the gentleman seemed more a fixture than ever, they began to soften down, and to treat him as quite one of themselves. Sindbad had been one of them for a very long time, ever since he had pulled the baker's little Polly out of the sea when she fell over a rock, and would assuredly have been drowned except for the gallant dog's timely aid.

"So they were content at last to take the gentleman just as they had him.

"'Concerts!' cried Widow Webber one evening, in reply to a remark made by the stranger. 'Why, sir, concerts in our little village! Whoever will sing?'

"But the stranger only laid down his book with a quiet smile, and asked the widow to take a seat near the fire, and he would tell her all about it.

"With honest Sindbad asleep on the hearthrug, and pussy singing beside him, and the kettle singing too, and a bright fire in the grate, the room looked quite cosy and snug-like. So the poor widow sat down, and the stranger unfolded all his plans.

"And it all fell out just as the stranger wished it. He was an accomplished pianist, and also a good performer on the violin. And he had good-humour and tact, and the way he kept his class together, and drew them out, and made them all feel contented with their efforts and happy, was perfectly wonderful. The first concert was a grand success, a crowded house, though the front seats were only sixpence and the back twopence. And all the proceeds were handed over to the clergyman to buy books and magazines.

"So the winter passed more quickly and cheerfully than any one ever remembered a winter to pass before, and summer came once more.

"It would need volumes, not pages, to tell of all poor Sindbad's clever ways. Indeed, he became quite the village dog; he would go errands for any one, and always went to the right shop with his basket. Every morning, with a penny in his mouth, he went trotting away to the carrier's and bought a paper for his master; after that he was free to romp and play all the livelong day with the children on the beach. It might be said of Sindbad as Professor Wilson said of

his beautiful dog—‘*Not* a child of three years old and upwards in the neighbourhood that had not hung by his mane and played with his paws, and been affectionately worried by him on the flowery greensward.’

“Another winter went by quite as cheerily as the last, and the stranger was by this time as much a favourite as his dog. The villagers had found out now that he was not by any means a rich man, although he had enough to live on; but they liked him none the less for that.

“The Easter moon was full, and even on the wane, for it did not, at the time I refer to, rise till late in the evening. A gale had been blowing all day, the sea was mountains high, for the wind roared wildly from off the broad Atlantic. One hundred years ago, if the truth must be told, the villagers of Penellan would have welcomed such a gale; it might bring them wealth. They had been wreckers.

“Every one was about retiring for rest, when boom boom! from out of the darkness seaward came the roar of a minute gun. Some great ship was on the rocks not far off. Boom! and no assistance could be given. There was no rocket, no lifeboat, and no ordinary boat could live in that sea. Boom! Everybody was down on the beach, and ere long the great red moon rose and showed, as had been expected, the dark hull of a ship fast on the rocks, with her masts gone by the board, and the sea making a clean breach over her. The villagers were brave; they attempted to launch a boat. It was staved, and dashed back on the beach.

“‘Come round to the point, men,’ cried the stranger. ‘I will send Sindbad with a line.’

“The point was a rocky promontory almost to windward of the stranded vessel.

“The mariners on board saw the fire lighted there, and they saw that preparations of some kind were being made to save them, and at last they discerned some dark object rising and falling on the waves, but steadily approaching them. It was Sindbad; the piece of wood he bore in his mouth had attached to it a thin line.

“For a long time—it seemed ages to those poor sailors—the dog struggled on and on towards them. And now he is alongside.

“‘Good dog!’ they cry, and a sailor is lowered to catch the morsel of wood. He does so, and tries hard to catch the dog as well. But Sindbad has now done his duty, and prepares to swim back.

“Poor faithful, foolish fellow! if he had but allowed the sea to carry him towards the distant beach. But no; he must battle against it with the firelight as his beacon.

“And in battling *he died*.

“But communication was effected by Sindbad betwixt the ship and the shore, and all on board were landed safely.

“Need I tell of the grief of that dog’s master? Need I speak of the sorrow of the villagers? No; but if you go to Penellan, if you inquire about Sindbad, children even yet will show you his grave, in a green nook near the beach, where the crimson sea-pinks bloom.

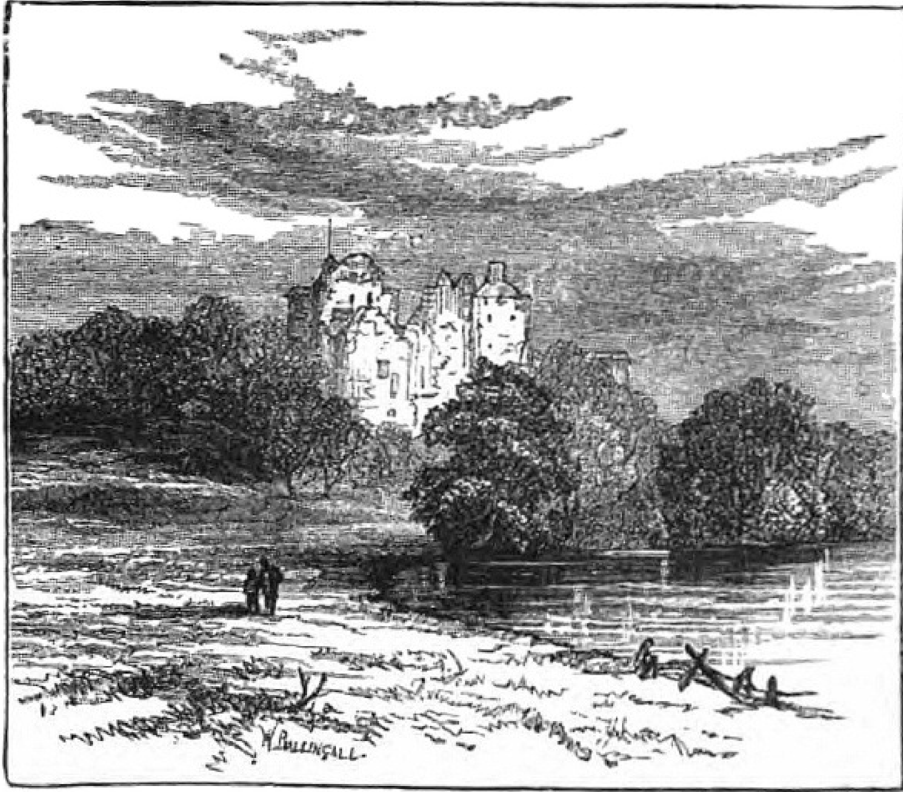
“And older folk will point you out ‘the gentleman’s grave’ in the old churchyard. He did not *very* long survive Sindbad.

“The grey-bearded old pilchard fisherman who showed it to me only two summers ago, when I was there, said—

“‘Ay, sir! there he do lie, and the sod never hid a warmer heart than his. The lifeboat, sir? Yes, sir, it’s down yonder; his money bought it. There is more than me, sir, has shed a tear over him. You see, we weren’t charitable to him at first. Ah, sir! what a blessed thing charity do be!’”

Chapter Thirty Three.

A Short, Because a Sad One.



DOUNE CASTLE, WHERE MY OLD FAVOURITE TYRO IS BURIED.

> “Why do summer roses fade,
> If not to show how fleeting
> All things bright and fair are made,
> To bloom awhile as half afraid
> To join our summer greeting?”

“Now,” said Frank one evening to me, “a little change is all that is needed to make the child as well again as ever she was in her life.”

“I think you are right, Frank,” was my reply; “change will do it—a few weeks’ residence in a bracing atmosphere; and it would do us all good too; for of course you would be of the party, Frank?”

“I’ll go with you like a shot,” said this honest-hearted, blunt old sailor.

“What say you, then, to the Highlands?”

“Just the thing,” replied Frank. “Just the place—

> “‘My heart’s in the Hielans.
> My heart is not here;
> My heart’s in the Hielans, chasing the deer;
> Chasing the wild deer and following the roe—
> My heart’s in the Hielans, wherever I go.’”

“Bravo! Frank,” I cried; “now let us consider the matter as practically settled. And let us go in for division of labour in the matter of preparation for this journey due north. You two old folks shall do the packing and all that sort of thing, and Ida and I will—get the tickets.”

And, truth to tell, that is really all Ida and myself did do; but we knew we were in good hands, and a better caterer for

comfort on a journey, or a better baggage-master than Frank never lived.

He got an immense double kennel built for Aileen and Nero; all the other pets were left at home under good surveillance, not even a cat being forgotten. This kennel, when the dogs were in it, took four good men and true to lift it, and the doing so was as good as a Turkish bath to each of them.

We had a compartment all to our four selves, and as we travelled by night, and made a friend of the burly, brown-bearded guard, the dogs had water several times during the journey, and we human folks were never once disturbed until we found ourselves in what Walter Scott calls—

> “My own romantic town.”

A week spent in Edinburgh in the sweet summer-time is something to dream about ever after. We saw everything that was to be seen, from the Castle itself to Greyfriars’ Bobby’s monument, and the quiet corner in which he sleeps.

Then onward we went to beautiful and romantic Perth. Then on to Callander and Doune. At the latter place we visited the romantic ruin called Doune Castle, where my old favourite Tyro is buried. In Perthshire we spent several days, and once had the good or bad fortune to get storm-stayed at a little wayside hotel or hostelry, where we had stopped to dine. The place seemed a long way from anywhere. I’m not sure that it wasn’t at the back of the north wind; at all events, there was neither cab nor conveyance to be had for love nor money, and a Scotch mist prevailed—that is, the rain came down in streams as solid and thick as wooden penholders. So we determined to make the best of matters and stay all night; the little place was as clean as clean could be, and the landlady, in mutch of spotless white, was delighted at the prospect of having us.

She heaped the wood on the hearth as the evening glome began to descend; the bright flames leapt up and cast great shadows on the wall behind us, and we all gathered round the fire, the all including Nero and Aileen; the circle would not have been complete without them.

No, thank you, we told the landlady, we wouldn’t have candles; it was ever so much cosier by the light of the fire. But, by-and-by, we would have tea.

Despite the Scotch mist, we spent a very happy evening. Ida was more than herself in mirth and merriment; her bright and joyous face was a treat to behold. She sang some little simple Highland song to us that we never knew she had learned; she said she had picked it up on purpose; and then she called on Frank to “contribute to the harmony of the evening”—a phrase she had learned from the old tar himself.

“Me!” said Frank; “bless you, you would all run out if I began to sing.”

But we promised to sit still, whatever might happen, and then we got the “Bay of Biscay” out of him, and he gave it that genuine, true sea-ring and rhythm, that no landsman, in my opinion, can imitate. As he sang, in fact, you could positively imagine you were on the deck of that storm-tossed ship, with her tattered canvas fluttering idly in the breeze, her wave-riddled bulwarks, and wet and slippery decks. You could see the shivering sailors clinging to shroud or stay as the green seas thundered over the decks; you could hear the wind roaring in the rigging, and the hissing boom of the breaking waters, all about and around you.

He stopped at last, laughing, and—

“Now, Gordon, it is your turn at the wheel,” he said. “You must either sing or tell a story.”

“My dear old sailor man,” I replied, “I will sing all the evening if you don’t ask me to tell a story.”

“But,” cried Ida, shaking a merry forefinger at me, “you’ve got to do *both*, dear.”

There were more stories than mine told that night by the “ingleside” of that Highland cot, for Frank himself must “open out” at last, and many a strange adventure he told us, some of them humorous enough, others pathetic in the extreme. Frank was not a bad hand at “spinning a yarn,” as he called it, only he was like a witness in a box of justice: he required a good deal of drawing out, and no small amount of encouragement in the shape of honest smiles and laughter. Like all sailors, he was shy.

“There’s where you have me,” Frank would say. “I am shy; there’s no getting over it; and no getting out of it but when I know I’m amusing you, then I could go on as long as you like.”

I have pleasing reminiscences of that evening. As I sit here at my table, I have but to pause for a moment, put my hands across my eyes, and the Rembrandt picture comes up again in every feature. Yonder sits Frank, with his round, rosy face, looking still more round and rosy by the peat-light. Yonder, side by side, with their great heads pointing towards the blaze, lie the "twa dogs," and Ida crouched beside them, her fair face held upwards, and all a-gleam with happiness and joy.

When lights were brought at last, it was plain that the honest old landlady, bustling in with the tea-things, had dressed for the occasion, and from the pleased expression on her face I felt sure she had been listening somewhere in the gloom behind us.

The cottage where we went at last to reside in the remote Highlands was a combination of comfort and rusticity, and Ida especially was delighted with everything, more particularly with her own little room, half bedroom, half boudoir, and the rustic flowers which old Mrs McF— brought every day were in her eyes gems of matchless beauty.

Then everything out of doors was so new to her, and so beautiful and grand withal, that we did not wonder at her being happy and pleased.

> "When I roved a young Highlander o'er the dark heath—"

So sings Byron. Well, *he* had some kind of training to this species of progression. Ida had none. *She* was a young Highlander from the very first day, and a bold and adventuresome one too. Nor torrent, cataract, nor cliff feared she. And no bird, beast, or butterfly was afraid of Ida.

Her chief companion was a matchless deerhound, whom we called Ossian.

Sometimes, when we were all seated together among the heather, Ossian used to put his enormous head on her lap and gaze into her face for minutes at a time. I've often thought of this since.

Nero, I think, was a little piqued and jealous when Ossian went bounding, deer-like, from rock to rock. Ah! but when we came to the lake's side, then it was Ossian's turn to be jealous, for in the days of his youth he had neglected the art of swimming, in which many of his breed excel.

Two months of this happy and idyllic life, then fell the shadow and the gloom.

There was nothing romantic about Ida's illness and death. She suffered but little pain, and bore that little with patience. She just faded away, as it were; the young life went quietly out, the young barque glided peacefully into the ocean of eternity.

Poor Frank had an accident in the same year, and ere the winter was over succumbed to his injuries. He died on such a night as one seldom sees in England. The bravest man dared not face that terrible snowstorm unless he courted death. Therefore I could not be with Frank at the end.

The generous reader will easily understand why I say no more than these few words about my dear friend's death. Alas! how few true friends there are in this world, and it seems but yesterday he was with us, seems but yesterday that I looked into his honest, smiling face, as I bade him good-bye at my garden gate.

Chapter Thirty Four.

The Last.

> "Once more farewell!
> Once more, my friends, farewell!"
>
> Coleridge.

I have never mentioned Frank's dog, this for the simple reason that I hope one day ere long to write a short memoir of her.

Meggie was a collie, a Highland collie, and a very beautiful one too. So much for her appearance. As for her moral qualities, it is sufficient to say that she was Frank's dog—and I myself never yet saw the dog that did not borrow some of the mental qualities of the master, whose constant companion he was, especially if that master made much of him.

Frank loved his dog, and she loved but him. She *liked* but few. *We* were among the number of those she liked, but, strange creature that she was, she was barely civil to any one else in the world. She had one action which I never saw any other dog have, but it might have been taught her by Frank himself. She used to stand with her two paws on his knees, and lean her head sideways, or ear downwards, against his breast, just like a child who is being fondled, and thus she would remain for half an hour at a time, if not disturbed.

When my friend was ill in bed, poor loving Meggie would put her paws on the edge of it, and lay her head sideways on his breast, and thus remain for an hour. What a comfort this simple act of devotedness was to Frank!

When Frank died, Meggie fell into the best of hands, that of a lady who had a very great regard for her, and so was happy; but I know she never forgot her master.

She died only a few months ago. Her owner—she, may I say, who held her in trust—brought her over for me to look at one afternoon. I prescribed some gentle medicine for her, but told Miss W— she could only nurse her, that her illness was very serious. Meggie's breath came very short and fast, and there was a pinched and anxious look about her face that spoke volumes to me. So when Miss W— was in the house I took the opportunity of going back to the carriage, and patting Frank's dog's head and whispering, "Good-bye."

I cannot help confessing here, although many of my readers may have guessed it before, that I believe in immortality for the creatures, we are only too fond of calling "the lower animals."

I have many great-souled men on my side in the matter of this belief, but if I stood alone therein, I would still hold fast thereto.

I have one firm supporter, at all events, in the person of my friend, the Rev. J.G. Wood (Note 1).

Nay, but my kindly poet Tupper, whose face I have never seen, but whose verses have given me many times and oft so much of real pleasure, have I not another supporter in you?

Aileen Aroon left us at last, dying of the fatal complaint that had so long lain dormant in her blood.

We had hopes of her recovery from the attack that carried her off until the very end. She herself was as patient as a lamb, and her gratitude was invariably expressed in her looks.

There are those reading these lines who may ask me why I did not forestall the inevitable. Might it not have been more merciful to have done so? These must seek for answer to such questions in my other books, or ask them of any one who has ever *loved* a faithful dog, and fully appreciated his fidelity, his affection, and his almost human amount of wisdom and sagacity.

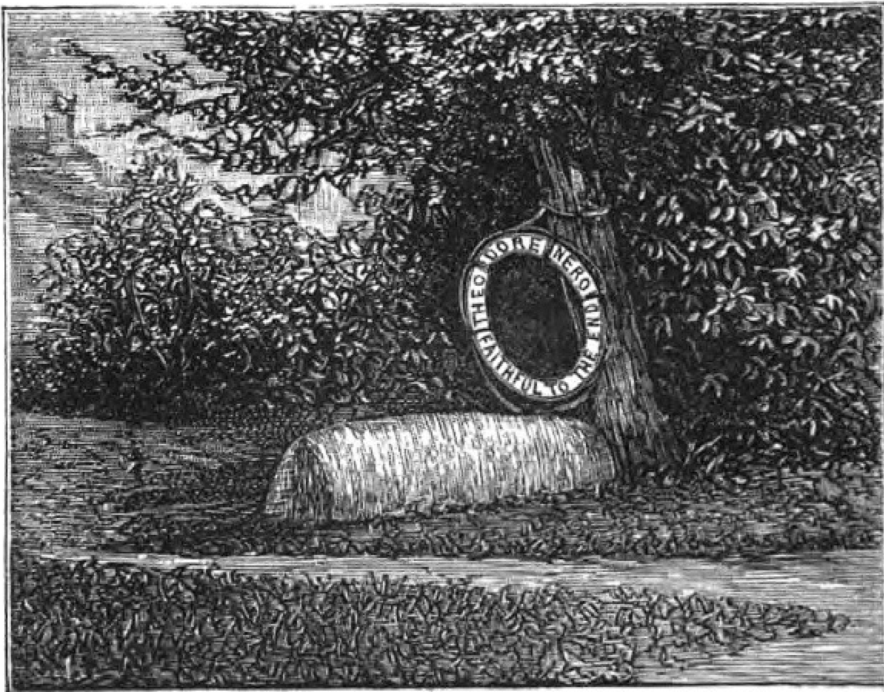
The American Indians did use to adopt this method of forestalling the inevitable; in fact, they slew their nearest and dearest when they got old and feeble. Let who will follow their example, I could not *if the animal had loved me and been my friend*.

Theodore Nero lived for years afterwards, but I do not think he ever forgot Aileen Aroon—poor simple Sable.

I buried her in the garden, in a flower border close to the lawn, and I did not know until the grave was filled in that Nero had been watching the movements of my man and myself.

A fortnight after this I went to her grave to plant a rosebush there, Nero following; but when he saw me commencing to dig, a change that I had never seen the like of before passed over his face; it was wonder, blended with joy. He thought that I was about to bring her back to life and him.

In his last illness, poor Nero's mattress and pillow were placed in a comfortable warm room. He seldom complained, though suffering at times; and whenever he did, either myself or my wife went and sat by him, and he was instantly content.



I had ridden down with the evening letters, and was back by nine o'clock. It was a night in bleak December, 'twixt Christmas and the New Year. When I went to the poor patient's room I could see he was just going, and knelt beside him, after calling my wife. In the last short struggle he lifted his head, as if looking for some one. His eyes were turned towards me, though he could not see; and then his head dropped on my knee, and he was gone.

Down at the foot of our bird-haunted lawn, in a little grassy nook, where the nightingales are now singing at night, where the rhododendrons bloom, and the starry-petalled syringas perfume the air, is Nero's grave—a little grassy mound, where the children always put flowers, and near it a broken, rough, wooden pillar, on which hangs a life-buoy, with the words—"Theodore Nero. Faithful to the end."

Note 1. Author of "Man and Beast." Two volumes. Messrs Daldy and Isbister.

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