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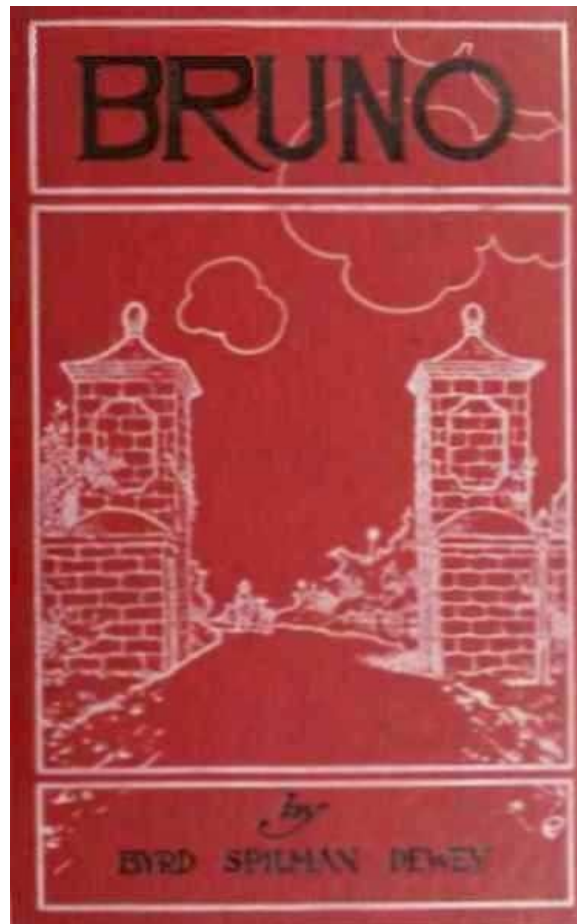
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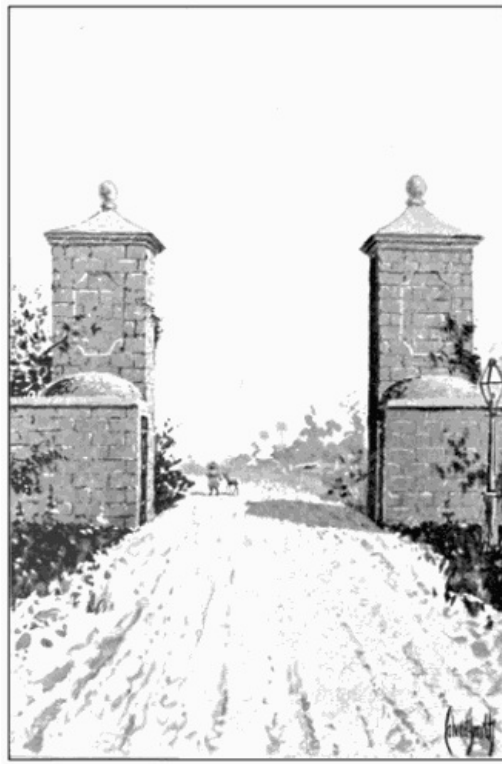
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BRUNO ***



BRUNO



The Old City Gates, St. Augustine.
—*Frontispiece.*

BRUNO
BY
BYRD SPILMAN DEWEY



New Edition
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CALVERT SMITH

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1908

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THIS LITTLE SKETCH
Is dedicated
TO ALL WHO HAVE EVER LOVED ONE OF THOSE FAITHFUL

CREATURES OF WHOM WE, IN OUR IGNORANCE
AND VANITY, ARE WONT TO SPEAK AS
"THE LOWER ANIMALS."

B. S. D.

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BRUNO

CHAPTER I

[Pg 1]

We do not count the first half-year of our married life, because, during that time we did not live, we boarded.

Then we found we had developed a strong appetite for housekeeping, so we began to look about us for a house.

In the small northern village where we must live, it was not possible to rent anything that suited us; so we decided to take what we could get until we could manage to build what we wanted.

The house we took was one which had originally been built out in the country, but the town had crept around it until it now seemed to be almost in the heart of the village.

While we were furnishing and embellishing this our first home, was, I think, the most entirely happy time of our lives.

Julius often said, "I know now why the birds always sing so joyously when they are building their nests." [Pg 2]

We were just beginning to feel settled, when a letter came to Julius from his only sister, who lived in a city. It was not unusual for him to have letters from her, but this particular letter stands by itself.

It had a postscript!

The postscript said: "Would you like a nice dog? The children have had a valuable puppy, seven months old, given to them, and we cannot keep him here, in a flat. He is half setter and half

water-spaniel; pure on both sides. We call him 'Bruno.'"

How our dignity increased at the idea of owning live-stock! So far we had only achieved a cat, who had by this time achieved kittens. But a dog! That was something like! It did not take us long to decide and send off an enthusiastic acceptance. Then another letter came, saying that Bruno had started on the journey us-ward.

The next afternoon a colored car-porter walked into Julius's place of business escorting a shaggy brown dog by a chain fastened to his collar. We have never known just what transpired during that eighteen hours' journey; but something notable there certainly was, for Bruno could never endure the sight or presence of a negro from that time as long as he lived. He seemed utterly humiliated and dejected when he was led in.

[Pg 3]

Julius looked up from his day-book, and exclaimed,—

"Is that you, Bruno? How are you, old fellow?" At the sound of his name, Bruno raised his ears, wrinkled his forehead, and cocked his head on one side inquiringly. Julius stroked and patted him, and Bruno was won.

I was sitting at home busily sewing, when I was startled by a great clatter out on the sidewalk. I looked, and there came Julius leading—puppy, indeed! A dog nearly as big as a calf! I had expected a baby-dog in a basket!

He was a beauty,—his hair just the color that is called auburn or red, when humans have it. He sniffed me over approvingly, and let me hug his beautiful head.

We took off the chain, and watched him roll and bathe himself in the high grass of the back yard. He had probably never seen such grass before, and he could not express his delight with it.

There was a three-cornered discussion at bedtime about where our new pet was to sleep. Julius and I did the talking, while Bruno sat upright—I called it "standing up before, and sitting down behind," his ears cocked up, looking from one to the other as we spoke, seeming to understand all that was said. It was finally decided to make him a bed on the floor beside ours, so that he would not be lonesome.

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Several times in the night we were startled by his cries. He moaned and whined in his sleep,—evidently having bad dreams. Julius would call to him until he was broad awake, then reach down and pat him till his tail began to thump the floor, and he would rise and wind himself up by going round and round on his bed, then drop, to go off again into an uneasy snooze. We did not sleep much. Towards morning we were awakened from a first sound nap, finding ourselves violently crowded and pushed. Julius sprang out of bed and lighted a candle. There was Bruno monopolizing half of our bed.

It was daylight before we could convince him that his bed was on the floor and that he was expected to occupy it.

The next afternoon, I ventured to take Bruno for a walk. I had tied a broad light-blue ribbon in a big bow round his neck, which contrasted beautifully with his auburn curls. I felt very proud of his appearance, and he also eyed me with a look of satisfaction. Alas! "Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction."

[Pg 5]

As we crossed a street that ran at right angles with the one we were gracing, Bruno, looking down its vista, caught sight of what was probably the first flock of hens he had ever seen.

All the setter in him sprang to the fore, and in a flash he was off after them. Without a thought, I followed. Up and down the street we sped,—he after the one speckled hen he had singled out, and I after him, shrieking to him, and making lunges at him with my parasol, as he and the hen rushed by me.

Finally the distracted Bidy, squawking, cackling, and with outspread wings, found the hole under the fence through which the others had escaped and disappeared, leaving us to view the ruins, heated and dishevelled, with smashed parasol, muddy feet, draggled ribbon, and vanished dignity.

After some half-hysterical reproaches from me, which Bruno listened to with drooping ears and tail, we turned, demoralized and dejected, to wend our way homeward, I mentally congratulating myself that the streets were deserted. I shuddered to think of the probable consequences if it had happened after school hours when the small boy was abroad.

[Pg 6]

So far we had managed to prevent a meeting between Bruno and Rebecca.

Bruno was to us such an uncertain quantity that we feared the result of their first glimpse of each other. So the box containing Rebecca's kittens had been kept out in the stable, and her food carried out to her to prevent the dreaded meeting. I wearied of the daily forced marches stable-ward, though, and longed to have them within reach. So, one evening after Julius came home from the office, we, in fear and trembling, brought in the box, and mounted guard to watch developments.

Bruno looked curious, sniffed, and then drew nearer. I sat down on the floor to be ready to defend them, while Julius stood behind Bruno.

As soon as he spied the kits, his ears rose and he was all alert. Then gradually he seemed to

realize, from our way of proceeding, that they were not fair game. His ears drooped forward, his tail began to wag, and I drew back from the protecting attitude I had instinctively assumed. His tail continued to wag, his ears drooped lower and lower, until presently he was licking the little kits and rooting them over with his nose regardless of their ineffectual clawing and spitting.

[Pg 7]

At this stage of the game, who should arrive on the scene but Rebecca! She came dashing in, having returned from a hunting excursion to find her nest of babies gone; coming, as she always did when anything went wrong, for our help and comfort. As soon as she saw Bruno, her back went up as if a spring had been touched; she stood at bay, growling and spitting.

He started towards her, but Julius grasped his collar. Then Rebecca caught sight of her kits. She darted to them, sprang into the box, and covered them with her body.

Julius loosened his hold of Bruno, who advanced eagerly.

Rebecca received him with a flash of her paw which left a long deep scratch on his nose. He retreated whining and growling. Julius comforted him, while I took Rebecca in hand. For some time we reasoned and experimented with them, until finally we had the satisfaction of seeing Rebecca let down her bristles and begin to purr while Julius smoothed her head and back with Bruno's paw.

[Pg 8]

After that they kept the peace fairly well, though Rebecca always boxed his ears when she came in and found him licking and nosing her kittens.

We tried to keep him away from them, but he did love them so. He would watch Rebecca out of one eye as he lay dozing, and as soon as she started on a hunt, he would go tiptoeing to the kitten-box for a frolic.

Soon they grew quite fond of playing with his big curly ears, and forgot to spit and scratch.

CHAPTER II

[Pg 9]

One morning when Julius got up, he could find only one of his slippers. After a long search the other was found under the edge of the washing-stand, but in a decidedly dilapidated condition.

It had evidently been gnawed.

We gravely discussed the misfortune of having our premises invaded by rats, and when on the following morning one of my overshoes was likewise discovered to be a wreck, matters began to look serious, and Julius hastened to procure a trap.

That night I was awakened from my first doze by a sound of gnawing, and on hastily lighting a candle, Bruno was seen with a conscious, shamefaced expression—just like a big boy who is caught enjoying a nursery-bottle—chewing a shoe!

It was quite a revelation of dog-character to find such a big fellow chewing up things, but we were relieved on the score of rats. Bruno was furnished with an old shoe for his very own on which to exercise his jaws, and we formed the habit of arranging our shoes on the mantelpiece every night before retiring.

[Pg 10]

We exchanged the trap for some boxes of tacks, which are always "handy to have in the house."

About this time our neighbors, the Crows, became possessed of a large setter dog, by name Leo.

This dog was deficient in morality, and at once developed thieving propensities.

Bruno soon understood that we did not want Leo to come to our house, nor even into the yard; still, he personally formed a dog-friendship for him. While this seemed at the time very strange to us, I have since explained it to my own satisfaction.

I think Leo must have confided to Bruno the fact that he was not well cared for by his owners.

Many people seem to think it is unnecessary to give a dog regular meals. They think he ought to "pick up a living." The Crows seemed to have this idea; so Bruno doubtless felt that Leo was not altogether to blame for being a thief, and after fiercely driving him outside of our gate, he would follow, and they would have romps and races until both were exhausted.

[Pg 11]

Leo was the only real dog-friend Bruno ever had. All his other friends were either humans or cats.

The crowds of dogs that sometimes go yelping and tearing through the streets were to him objects of the loftiest scorn. From front window or porch he would look down his nose at them, then turn, stepping high, to march off and lie down in some remote corner where only the faintest echoes of their din could reach him.

One evening, while Julius and I were at choir-practice, we heard something that distressed me greatly. I felt that I could not stay, so we slipped out and hurried home. As soon as we were inside of our own door I threw myself into Julius's arms with childlike sobbing.

He tried to comfort me, but I could only hear my own heart-throbs. All at once he exclaimed,—

"Look, Judith, look at Bruno!"

His tone was so strange, it penetrated even my grief. I raised my head and there was Bruno, standing upright, his head against Julius's shoulder, as close to me as he could get, his eyes full of tears, the picture of woe.

[Pg 12]

"You see Bruno is crying too," said Julius.

As soon as Bruno saw me look up, he threw back his head and wagged his tail as if to say,—

"Come now, that's better, much better."

My tears still fell, but they were no longer bitter. There was something about the sympathy of that dumb creature which touched a chord not to be reached by anything human. It was so unlooked for and so sincere.

It was wonderful how he entered into all our feelings. In those days I was very much afraid of thunder-storms. In some subtle way Bruno divined this and kept the closest watch for clouds. If the heavens began to be overcast, he would go from window to window, noting developments, coming to me every few minutes to look into my face and wag his tail reassuringly.

When our fears were verified and the storm broke, he would come to rest his head on my knee, wincing with me at the thunders and flashes. When the worst was over, and big scattering drops showed the end of the storm to be near, he would drop at my feet with a huge sigh of relief that showed what a nervous strain he had been enduring.

[Pg 13]

He also discovered a strong aversion I had for spiders, and went about killing every one he could find. Chancing to be at my side one day when I dodged and exclaimed at the too familiar dartings of a wasp that was flying around me, he from that time made it a rule to destroy flying bugs of all kinds, often jumping high in the air to catch them.

CHAPTER III

[Pg 14]

Now approached a troublous time in Bruno's career. He fell into bad ways. We always thought it was Leo who tempted him.

It developed in this way. Soon after dark Bruno would ask to have the door opened for him to go out. He would look as innocent as if he only meant to step around to the well for a fresh drink. At bedtime we would suddenly remember that we had heard nothing of him since he had been let out. Julius would open the door expecting to find him lying on the porch. Disappointed in this, he would whistle, call, whistle again, but there would be no answer. At last we would give him up and go to bed. At gray dawn there would be a sound of scratching on the door, and when it was opened Bruno would come in, muddy, draggled, and exhausted. After drinking with evident relish from his water-bowl, he would curl up on his bed and sleep till noon.

We scolded him about these "tears," as we called them, until he would in spite of his fatigue go through with his tricks on being admitted in the morning: he would "sit up" and offer to "shake hands" with first one paw, then the other; trying to propitiate whichever of us opened the door for him. But he would not give up the "tears." Then we tried chaining him for the night. This kept him at home for nearly a week, until he finally succeeded in pulling out the staple that held the chain. In the morning Bruno, chain, and all had vanished; for it was summer-time and we had chained him outside, under an open shed. The hours crept on towards afternoon, and still he came not. I had heard at intervals all day the distant yelping of a dog, but had only noticed it to suppose that a neighbor some few blocks away had had occasion to tie up his watch-dog. As evening approached, I anxiously awaited the return of Julius from his office that he might go in search of our missing Bruno.

[Pg 15]

While I was waiting, the milkman came along.

"Where's your dog?" he asked, as he poured out the milk.

Bruno and Rebecca always watched for the milkman and were first to greet him; this day only Rebecca was there.

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"I wish I knew," I answered; "he ran off in the night dragging his chain, and we don't know what has become of him."

"There's a big brown dog that looks just like yours chained to the sidewalk over yonder beyond Mr. Black's."

He jerked his head in the direction whence the yelping sounds had come.

Uncle Edwards was then spending a few days with us. He was one of those people who believe that sooner or later all dogs go mad, and that it is as much as one's life is worth to come within ten feet of them. He and Bruno were on the most distant terms of mutual toleration.

But I was desperate. Julius had not come, and I must be at home in case Bruno did arrive hungry, thirsty, and footsore. There was no help for it; I must ask assistance from Uncle Edwards.

He was a gentleman of the old school, always obliging and courteous. He would bow politely and pick up a loaded shell with burning fuse attached, if asked to do so by a lady.

He readily agreed to go round by Mr. Black's to see if by any chance the "big brown dog chained to the sidewalk" could be ours. He shortly returned, leading by the extreme end of his chain a very crestfallen Bruno; tired, hungry, thirsty, his throat raw with ineffectual yelpings. [Pg 17]

Delighted and relieved as I was to see him, I still had room for a smothered laugh at his and Uncle Edwards's attitude to each other as they approached. Uncle regarded Bruno out of the tail of his eye, as if he were some infernal machine, liable at any moment to do things unheard of; while Bruno, perfectly aware of his distrust, threw tired, meekly humorous glances out of the tail of *his* eye. It was comical.

His chain had caught in a cleft board of the sidewalk, and he had been held there, struggling and yelping, part of the night and all day! All who had happened to see him thought he had been fastened there for some purpose or other.

This was a pretty severe lesson for Bruno, and it kept him at home for several nights. At last temptation again overcame him, and at bedtime one night he was missing. When he returned at dawn, his side was peppered with small bloody wounds. He had been shot!

"That settles it," said Julius; "he has been chasing sheep!"

We were extremely troubled at this discovery, and Julius said,— [Pg 18]

"Our life is too quiet for him. His instincts are all for chasing something. Our little promenades are but an aggravation to a dog who is longing to stretch his legs over miles of country."

We knew he must go at least six miles to find sheep.

For the first time we now began seriously to consider the idea of giving Bruno away.

A young hunter, whom we will call Mr. Nimrod, had long been wanting him. He told us it was a shame to turn such a splendid fellow into a drawing-room dog. He would hold forth indefinitely on Bruno's points, especially certain extra toes on his various legs. He said a dog with such toes was built for a "lightning-express" runner, and that it was outraging nature to try to keep him cooped up in a village lot. After many discussions we at last decided we ought to give him up to the life for which he so evidently longed.

We were about to move into the house we had been building, and we thought the best way to make the dog-transfer would be for Julius to take him to Mr. Nimrod's the last day before we moved, so that if he ran away and came to find us, there would be only the deserted house. [Pg 19]

It did not occur to us that this would be cruel. We knew we were giving him up for his own good, and we felt sure he would soon get wonted to his new home, where he could live the life for which he was created. So, on the last evening in the old home, Julius took up his hat, which was always a signal to Bruno, who came and sat up before him, with ears at "attention," which was his way of asking,—

"May I go?"

"Yes, Boonie can go," answered Julius.

Then Bruno, who had long since learned to understand the difference between "go" and "stay," went bounding down the walk, leaped over the gate, and began rushing back and forth along in front of the lot, giving short barks of delight. Julius called him back, and he came rather crestfallen, thinking he was, after all, to "stay;" but it was only that I might hug him and tell him, "Good-bye, you must be a good doggie!"

This puzzled him; but his bewilderment was soon forgotten in the fact that he was really and truly to "go." When Julius returned an hour later, he told me he had slipped away while Mr. and Mrs. Nimrod were petting Bruno, and so had escaped a formal leave-taking. I was glad of this, for I had dreaded their parting. [Pg 20]

In spite of the fact that I was the one to attend to Bruno's wants—that he always came to me when hungry or thirsty, and that I never disciplined him as Julius sometimes did,—still he showed in many ways that Julius's place in his heart was far above mine. So I was relieved that there had been no good-byes.

We were both entirely engrossed for the next few days by getting moved and settled. In spite of busy hands, I had many times felt a tugging at the heart-strings for the absent Bruno. I said nothing about it, though; and Julius afterwards confessed that he too had felt longings, but had suppressed them for fear of upsetting me, just as I had concealed my feelings on his account.

On the afternoon of the fourth day Julius could stand it no longer; he must have some news of Bruno. So he looked up Mr. Nimrod.

Before he could ask any questions, Mr. Nimrod began,—

"What did you feed that dog, anyway?"

"Why, the same things we ate," answered Julius, in surprise; "whatever there was on the table." [Pg 21]

"Well, he won't eat anything for us. We've tried everything we could think of. What does he like best?"

"Well," said Julius, "he likes biscuit and toast and fried mush,—all sorts of crisp and crackly things; and bones,—little ones that he can bite,—and meats of course."

"We've tried everything except the toast and mush. We'll try him on those. I'll go right home now and see about it."

When Julius came home and repeated this conversation to me, it produced what may without exaggeration be called a state of mind. I was half wild. All the emotions I had been struggling to conceal since Bruno's departure now held sway. Julius was deeply moved too. We could only comfort each other by recalling all the trouble we had had with Bruno, from the anxious night of his first "tear," to that last morning when he had returned wounded and bloody.

We assured each other that he would soon consent to be happy in such a good home, and that it would be wrong for us to indulge our feelings to his ultimate hurt. We dwelt especially on the fact that if he should again go sheep-chasing and be shot at, he stood at least a chance of being fatally wounded.

[Pg 22]

Thus we talked ourselves into a reasonable frame of mind.

CHAPTER IV

[Pg 23]

I knew, without anything being said about it, that Julius would lose no time the next day in finding out if Bruno had consented to eat his supper. When he started down town a whole hour earlier than usual, I knew, as well as if he had said so, that it was in order to have time to hunt up Mr. Nimrod before office hours.

"It's no use," began Mr. Nimrod, as soon as Julius appeared; "wouldn't touch a thing. Never saw such a dog. I believe he's trying to starve himself."

"Don't you think," ventured Julius, "it would be well to bring him out to our house for a little visit, to cheer him up?"

"Not much!" answered Mr. Nimrod, promptly. "I never could break him in then. He has run away twice already, and both times I followed him and found him hanging around the house you moved from. Lucky the trail was cold. If he once finds out where you are, the jig's up."

When Julius came home at noon, we sat at the table listless and dejected, now and then making fitful attempts to converse. The dainty noon meal had suddenly lost flavor after we had exchanged a few sentences about "Poor, hungry Bruno!"

[Pg 24]

Were we to eat, drink, and be merry, while our faithful friend starved for love of us!

After Julius had returned to the office, there was such a tugging at my heart-strings that I—well, yes, I did, I cried! How I regretted that I had never cultivated an intimacy with Mrs. Nimrod, so that I might have "run in" to call, and thus have an opportunity to comfort the poor homesick fellow!

Julius saw the tear-traces when he returned towards evening, and proposed a stroll down town; thinking, I suppose, that if we sat at home we should be sure to talk of Bruno and be melancholy.

We walked through all the principal streets of the town, meeting and greeting friends and acquaintances, stopping to glance at new goods in several of the shops; bringing up at last in the town's largest bookstore.



"I fell on my knees to hug him."—PAGE 25.

We were just starting for home, when on the sidewalk there was a sudden flurry and dash, and Bruno, stomach to earth, was crawling about us, uttering yelps and whines that voiced a joy so great it could not be told from mortal agony. [Pg 25]

Regardless of the fact that we were on the most public thoroughfare of the town, I fell on my knees to hug him, and could not keep back tears of mingled joy and pain. His poor thin sides! His gasps of rapture! Oh, Boonie, Boonie!

The first excitement over, we looked about us for Mr. Nimrod. He was nowhere to be seen. Bruno had evidently escaped, and was running away to look for us when he had chanced to strike our trail and so had found us.

We were glad he was alone. We both felt that if he had been torn from us at that supreme moment he would have died; he was so faint with fasting and grief, and then the overwhelming joy at finding those he had thought to be forever lost to him! He squeezed himself in between us, and kept step as we went homeward in the gathering twilight.

As soon as we reached home, we hurried him to the kitchen to enjoy the sight of the poor fellow at his trencher. How we fed him! I ransacked the pantry for the things he liked best, till his sides began to swell visibly. He paused between mouthfuls to feast his loving eyes on first one, then the other of us, and his tail never once stopped wagging. Rebecca came purring in to rub against his legs, and even submitted with shut eyes to a kiss from his big wet tongue. He must have felt that such an hour repaid him for all his sufferings. [Pg 26]

After he had eaten until he evidently could not take another morsel, we drew him in front of us as we sat side by side, for a three-cornered talk. He sat on end, waving his tail to and fro on the floor, wrinkling his forehead and cocking up his ears, while we explained the situation to him.

We told him how kind Mr. Nimrod meant to be to him, how he would train him to hunt and take him on long daily runs. Then we reminded him how impossible it was for Julius to go on such excursions with him, and of how many scrapes he had got into by going alone,—he seeming to take it all in and to turn it over in his mind.

Then we told him that since he had found our new home he could come often to see us, and he would always find us glad to see him,—yes, more than glad!

Then Julius got his hat and said,—

"Come on, Boonie; now we're going home."

[Pg 27]

He seemed quite willing to go. I told him good-by with a heart so light I could scarcely believe it the same one I had felt to be such a burden when I had set off for our walk two hours earlier. I busied myself then preparing a little supper against Julius's return; for we had not been able to eat since breakfast, and I knew by my own feelings that Julius would welcome the sight of a well-spread smoking table; and he said on his return that I "guessed just right."

He and Bruno had found the Nimrods very much disturbed over their dog's disappearance. Mr. Nimrod had just returned from an unsuccessful search, and they were wondering what to do next. They welcomed the wanderer, but were concerned, too, that he had discovered our

dwelling-place.

"I'm afraid we'll have to keep him tied up now," said Mr. Nimrod.

Julius thought not, and said,—

"Now that he knows where we are, and can come for a glimpse of us now and then, I believe he'll be better contented than he was when he thought we'd left the country."

Better contented he certainly was, but he positively refused to stay at home. It soon came to be a regular thing for Julius to escort him back every evening. [Pg 28]

The Nimrods lived nearly a mile from us, so Julius did not lack for exercise.

Mr. Nimrod finally came to remonstrate with us.

"You ought to shut him out," he cried, "then he'd have to come back home."

For answer, Julius showed him certain long, deep scratches on our handsome new doors, adding,

—

"Don't you see? It's as much as our doors are worth to shut him out, and he leaps that four-foot fence as if it were but four inches."

There was obviously no possible reply to such logic as this; so he continued to come,—dragging sometimes a rope or strap, or some other variety of tether, triumphantly proving that love laughs at locksmiths!

The Nimrods at last lost heart. Bruno never would eat there, and he never stayed when he could manage to escape. One night it was raining hard when the time came for him to be taken "home," so they did not go; and that seemed to settle it.

He was our dog.

We had given him away without his consent, and he refused to be given; so the trade was off. He stayed closely at home now, seeming to think we might disappear again if he did not watch us. [Pg 29]

CHAPTER V

[Pg 30]

Unless there were guests in the house, we usually slept with all the inner doors wide open for better circulation of air.

One night we were awakened by tremendous barkings and growlings from Bruno. Julius spoke to him, and he answered with a whine. Then we could hear his feet pad-padding on the carpet as he went from our room, tap-tapping on the oil-cloth in the hall, pad-padding again through the sitting-room and the dining-room, then tap-tapping on the painted kitchen floor, with more loud barks and deep growls.

Julius tried again to quiet him, but he refused to be quieted.

"Something disturbs him," I said. "Maybe we'd better let him out."

"No," said Julius, "it is probably that wretched Leo lurking around, trying to toll him off. He's better inside."

I did not think he would seem so fierce if it were Leo, but I was too sleepy to argue; so we dozed off, leaving him still on the alert.

Deep was our surprise next morning to find that a band of thieves had raided the town during the night, and that the houses on both sides of us had been entered! How we petted and praised Bruno, our defender! He was quite unconcerned, though, and seemed as if he would say to us,— [Pg 31]

"Oh, that was nothing. I only barked and made a racket!"

Truly, it was only necessary for him to bark and make a racket. There was never any occasion for him to go further. His voice was so loud and deep it always conveyed the impression of a dog as big as a house,—one that could swallow a man at one mouthful without winking.

People were always ready to take the hint when he gave voice to his emotions. They never undertook to argue with him.

After that night we never slept with such comfortable feelings of perfect security as we felt at those times when we were half aroused by Bruno's barks and growls.

For a while the days passed uneventfully in our little home. Julius and I were interested in beautifying and improving our grounds, so time never dragged with us. Rebecca rejoiced in several successive sets of kittens. They and Bruno frolicked through the days, with exciting interruptions in the shape of the milkman's calls, Julius's returns from the office, and occasional visits from the neighbors' children. [Pg 32]

For greater convenience we always spoke collectively of Bruno, Rebecca and her kits, as "the cattle."

The milkman's daily calls never grew stale to them. They generally heard his bell before Julius or I suspected he was near, and would all go to the sidewalk to meet him. Bruno would leap the fence; Rebecca and her kits would creep through. As soon as the milk was poured out, they all raced to the back piazza to wait for their share of it. When the dish was filled and placed before them on the floor, Bruno stood back with drooping ears, watching them drink. He seemed to feel that it would not be fair to pit his great flap of a tongue against their tiny rose-leaves. They always left some for him, which he devoured in two or three laps, while they all sat about washing their faces. I don't think he cared for the milk; he took it to be sociable, and seemed to be as well satisfied with a swallow or two as he was after drinking the dishful I sometimes offered him. He often tried to chew the grain on which the chickens were fed, and would eat anything he saw us taking, including all kinds of fruit, nuts, candies, and ices. Of course the chief of his diet was the various preparations of cereals and meats, but he seemed to want a taste of all that was going.

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Once, much to his own ultimate disgust, he coaxed me to give him a sniff of a smelling-bottle he thought I seemed to be enjoying. After that, he regarded all bottles with the deepest suspicion and aversion.

CHAPTER VI

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It is hard to remember just when we first began to talk Florida. Then a neighbor went down there on a prospecting tour, and returned bringing enthusiastic accounts of the climate and opportunities. We were greatly interested, and at once sent off for various Florida papers, pamphlets, and books.

Julius had always dreaded the bleak northern winters, having some chronic troubles,—a legacy of the Civil War. It is only in literature that a delicate man is interesting; practically, it subjects him to endless trials and humiliations, so we never gave his state of health as a reason for the proposed change. Instead, we flourished my tender throat. A woman may be an invalid without loss of prestige, so not one of our friends suspected that our proposed change of climate was not solely on my account.

We decided that as soon as our northern property could be disposed of, we would turn our faces southward and try pioneering.

Some children in a neighboring family had formed an enthusiastic friendship with Bruno, and as soon as our plans were announced, their parents asked us to give him to them when we were ready to start South. In spite of our former experience in giving him away, this seemed entirely feasible to us.

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In the first place, we thought it would be utterly impossible to take him with us to Florida. Then he was really and truly attached to the children who wanted him; so we readily consented; and we encouraged them to monopolize him as much as possible, so that we might see him comfortably settled before we started. They lived next door to us, and Bruno was always ready to join them in a game of romps. He even ate from their hands. It seemed a perfect arrangement.

Our pretty little home was soon sold and dismantled, and we went to board in another part of town while preparing for the long journey, which then seemed almost as difficult as a trip to the moon. We locked up the empty house and slipped away to our boarding-place, while Bruno, all unconscious of what was going on, was barking and tearing about in a game of tag on the other side of our neighbor's large grounds.

Old Aunt Nancy, a colored woman who had belonged to one of my aunts before the war, and who had been our stand-by in domestic emergencies, had taken Rebecca and her family, promising them "Jes' as good a home as I can gib'm, Miss Judith." It was a sad breaking up, but we felt that our pets were well provided for, and that we should feel worse for leaving them than they would at being left.

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Vain thought!

Two evenings after leaving our home, while I was busy in our room, making ready to begin packing, I heard Julius's step on the stairs, accompanied by a familiar clatter that made my heart stand still. The door burst open, and, before I could rise from my kneeling position, surrounded by piles of folded things, I was knocked over sideways by a rapturous onslaught from Bruno.

"What does this mean!" I exclaimed, as soon as I could speak.

"I don't know," answered Julius. "I found him waiting for me at the office door when I came out. He seemed half wild with delight at seeing me again. I rather think it is a repetition of the Nimrod experiment."

"Poor old fellow!" I cried. "See how his sides have fallen in just in these two days! He has been starving again, and we have nothing to give him!"

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"That's so," said Julius. "I'd better go and get something for him, hadn't I?"

"Yes, indeed," I answered. "At once, poor old doggie!"

So they went clattering down the stairs again, and soon returned with some promising-looking paper bags.

We spread a newspaper on the hearth to receive his feast, then sat watching him and returning his glances of affection while he ate. When he had eaten to his satisfaction and dropped into a happy snooze, Julius said,—

"Well, I suppose I might as well try to find out if it would be possible to take him with us. I'll see the agent to-morrow. We must either take him, or have him killed; for I see plainly that it won't do at all to try to leave him."

"If we could just have him go along in the car with us, it would be all right," answered I. "He is such a knowing old fellow he would understand things perfectly."

"That's impossible, I know," cried Julius. "If he goes at all, he must ride in baggage-cars, and we'll be in a sleeper. I don't see how we can manage it." [Pg 38]

I began to think that a way would open, and my heart felt lighter than it had at any time since we first began to talk Florida. If we could have Bruno with us, I no longer dreaded going to a land which, in my imaginings, had appeared to be teeming with unknown dangers.

The next morning Julius went promptly to interview the agent, and found that, after all, it would be possible to take Bruno with us to Florida. It would be some trouble and some expense. Besides his passage as baggage, the porters in each car must be feed; and while we in the sleeper should be in a through car, he would have a number of changes to make,—one of them at early dawn, and another in the night. It would be necessary for Julius to see to these changes in person, in case Bruno proved to be unruly, which was quite probable. We decided to undertake it, and Bruno's outfit for the journey was at once purchased. This consisted of a strong new collar and chain, with a big tin cup fastened to the chain for plenty of drinks, and a lunch-basket full of biscuit.

The memorable day came, and we were escorted to the train by kind neighbors and friends full of good-byes and good wishes for us all, Bruno receiving a full share of their attentions. [Pg 39]

We knew well that they considered the whole affair to be a wild-goose chase, and that they expected to see us return, sadder and wiser, in a year at furthest.

As soon as the train was under way, Julius went forward to see how Bruno was taking it. He found him in a state of the utmost excitement, howling and dragging at his chain, probably remembering his other journey on the cars, when he had left his first home to come alone to us in his puppyhood. When he saw Julius and realized that we were with him, his joy and relief were touching. Julius stayed awhile with him, and got him some water,—he was always thirsty after "crying,"—then came back to report to me.

I felt so relieved to know that we had really got off with Bruno in good shape, it almost made me forget a small ache in the corner of my heart for something that had happened a day or two before. I had gone up by the old home to say good-by to an invalid neighbor, and there, on the sidewalk, by the gate, sat Rebecca. Thin, scrawny, and alert, she sat watching for somebody,—easy to guess what "somebody." How glad she was to see me! [Pg 40]

I sat down on the gate-step, and took her in my arms, wishing with all my heart that we could take her with us too. Still, I knew we couldn't. She, a sober, middle-aged cat, to be carried all those many miles! Then it might be weeks after we reached Florida before we decided where to settle. A dog, once there, could trot around after us, but what could we do with a cat? She had never learned to follow for any distance, and she was always nervous about being carried.

No, it wasn't to be thought of.

I stayed, petting her as long as I could; then, after urging her to go back and be contented with Aunt Nancy, I bade her a tearful good-by, and carried away an ache in my heart that I sometimes feel yet.

Dear old Rebecca!

Some day I hope to go across into cat-heaven and hunt her up. Then she can be made to understand why I was seemingly so hard-hearted as to go off and leave her looking mournfully after me on that sad day so long ago. Maybe she knows now; I hope she does.

CHAPTER VII

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It was late forenoon when we set off Florida-ward. Just after dark we reached a big city where we were to take the through sleeper to Jacksonville. In those days there was no Union Depot there, and it was necessary to cross the city in order to get started on the road South.

This transfer had worried us all along, for the time was limited, and there was all our baggage to see to and recheck, and Bruno. We arranged that I was to take Bruno and go with him in the regular transfer omnibus, while Julius crossed with the baggage. We thought that Bruno and I could take care of each other, though I confess I was not willing to have a private cab. In the well-lighted, comfortably filled 'bus I felt safe enough, even though I was crossing a strange city at nightfall, with only a dog for escort.

Bruno looked wistfully at the door as the 'bus started, but seemed satisfied when I assured him it was all right.

Julius was waiting for us at the other station with tickets and checks.

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When he returned from escorting Bruno to the baggage car, reporting, "All's well," we both fairly laughed, in the relief of having passed the most puzzling part of the journey.

I did not see Bruno again until the next morning. It was gray dawn. The train was standing, puffing and snorting like a restless horse, on the track under the shadow of Lookout Mountain.

On inquiry, Julius had learned that there would be a delay of a quarter of an hour or so there, and, as he had to be up, anyway, to transfer Bruno to another baggage car, he had planned to give him a little run; so, as I leaned out of the car window, I saw Julius with Bruno's chain, cup, etc., bunched in his hands, while the happy dog was galloping up and down the roadside. He performed leaps and antics expressive of extreme joy when I leaned out and called to him, saying to me as plainly as possible,—

"Here we are again! Isn't it jolly?"

And I assured him that it was.

After that glimpse I saw no more of Bruno till we reached Jacksonville; but Julius reported, from time to time, that he seemed to comprehend the meaning of our plan of travel, and trotted along from old to new baggage car, so eager not to be left that he tried to enter every one he came to with doors standing open.

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Early on the next morning after our stop by Lookout Mountain, we entered the "Florida Metropolis." And now, behold, a great surprise! We had brought thinner clothing in our hand-bags, thinking that, as we journeyed southward, our heavy garments, built for northern winters, would prove to be oppressive. How startling, then, to feel our features pinched by nipping breezes as we stepped from the cars at last in the Sunny South! True, as we passed residences on our way to the hotel, we saw green trees and blooming flowers; but where were the balmy airs that in our dreams were always fanning the fadeless flowers in this Mecca of our hopes?

After leaving the cars, the most welcome sight that greeted our eager eyes was a roaring open fire in the hotel reception-room. We thought this a most excellent joke. They were very good to Bruno (for a consideration) at the hotel, but it was against their rules to allow dogs in the rooms, so he was installed in comfortable quarters outside. Julius went with him to make sure he was satisfied, and to see that he was watered, fed, and in good spirits before we had our own breakfast. On the way down, as ever before, Bruno had attracted much favorable notice. Women and girls exclaimed, "Oh, see that lovely dog!" And a number of men scraped acquaintance with Julius by admiring notice of his "Mighty fine dog!"

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Bruno shrank from their attentions. He never made friends with strangers, no matter how much they tried to pet him; and he never ate anything offered to him by others unless we told him to. In fact, he was always very particular about appropriating food. Sometimes at home, when in a brown study, I placed his dish of food on the floor without saying anything; but he would never begin to eat until he had gained my attention by thrusting his nose into my hand, asking, "Is that mine?" by questioning glances directed from me to the dish; then, when I answered, "Yes; that's Boonie's; that's for Boonie," he would fall to and enjoy it.

We were glad of this trait; and we often thought that but for it he would, very early in his career, have fallen a victim to poison, for he was greatly feared by many timid people, especially by various grocer and butcher boys, who approached our premises with so many absurd precautions that it seemed to afford Bruno the greatest delight to keep them in a state of terror.

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CHAPTER VIII

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We made but a short stay in Jacksonville, then hurried on to St. Augustine, where a former acquaintance of Julius's was living with his family. We had to take a river steamer to Tocoí,—called Decoy by many, for obvious reasons,—then journey across to the coast on a tiny railway.

The steamboat on the St. John's was a first experience of the kind for Bruno, who seemed to enjoy it greatly, for the boat had but few passengers beside ourselves, and we went up and down stairs at will, making him several visits in his quarters on the lower deck.

Things were even more informal on the little railway. There was no one about when we boarded the train; so Bruno followed us into the passenger coach, crept under the seat, doubling himself

up like a shut knife, and, totally effaced by the time the conductor came around, rode first-class for once. It seemed such a treat for us all to be together as we journeyed, that our short ride across from "Decoy" to the coast stands out in memory as the pleasantest part of the journey.

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We were met at St. Augustine by Julius's friend, and, as he bore a pressing invitation for us from his family, we stopped that first day with them, so that they might have their fill of news from their friends and relatives whom we had seen just before starting to Florida.

They kindly urged us to stay longer, but we thought that two people and a dog made a formidable party to entertain as visitors; so we hunted up a pleasant boarding-house, and settled ourselves for a two weeks' stay.

All three of us found much to surprise us in the old town; but by far the greatest sensation was Bruno's when we first took him out for a run, and he promptly made a dash into one of the creeks as the tide was flowing in, and took a big drink. He was warm with running, and the water looked so inviting that he had taken a number of swallows before he tasted it. Then his antics were most comical. He snorted and shook his head till his ears flapped again, and rubbed at his nose, first with one paw and then with the other. After that one lesson he never again drank from a strange pool or stream without first tasting it very gingerly, then waiting a few seconds to make sure of the after-taste. But if he objected to the taste of salt water, he found no flaw in the feeling of it.

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There is no memory of him on which I so much love to dwell as on the picture he made with his tawny curls streaming backwards in the breakers when we took him out to the beach. The green-curling, foam-tipped waves were to him a perfect delight. Even his dashing out in our midst and shaking himself so that we were all drenched in an impromptu shower-bath is pleasant,—as a memory,—though at the time we scolded him, and tried to respond sternly to his waggish glances, as he gambolled about and rolled in the sand.

The salt water was new to all of us, so we spent as much time as possible on the island and the beaches.

On those days when we were confined to the mainland by showers, or by the business we were attending to between times, we used to go, towards evening, to promenade on the seawall. Then Bruno always got down in one of the basins for a swim before we returned to our temporary home.

Although it seemed like northern spring weather, some days being quite chilly, and others warm enough for summer clothes, we awoke one morning to the fact that to-morrow would be Christmas. It had seemed to us, since our arrival in St. Augustine, as if we were in a foreign country, the Spanish element was so large in proportion to the rest of the town, both in the people and their customs and in the arrangement and the construction of the city. We heard of the celebration of midnight Mass in the old Cathedral, and resolved to "assist;" but, as the evening came on crisp and chilly, our enthusiasm cooled with it. The tonic qualities of the unaccustomed salt air had inspired us with a keen interest in food and sleep; so, after fully deciding to sit up for the Mass, we were ready by half-past nine to declare that there was not a sight in the world worth the sacrifice of such a night's sleep as that for which we felt ready. So we embarked for dreamland, whence we were recalled at daylight by Bruno's excitement over a perfect din of tin trumpets and toy drums.

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As we dressed, we peeped through the blinds at the processions of small boys marching by in the narrow streets below, blowing trumpets and pounding drums. The daily drills at the barracks in the old city made all the small boys of the town even more ambitious than small boys usually are to be soldiers. Apparently, every one of them had sent Santa Claus a petition to bring him something warlike for a Christmas present.

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Julius delighted Bruno by taking him out and buying him a paper of candy, which he ate with much relish; then we three sat on the upper piazza on which our room opened, listening to the music and watching the processions.

It was a very strange Christmas to all three of us. The air was pleasantly warm, and green things, with roses and other flowers, were in sight in all directions.

As soon as Christmas had passed, we, with that feeling of having turned a corner, common at such times, began to hasten our preparations to go on South. We had inspected various tracts of land around St. Augustine, but had not found anything to which we felt particularly drawn. It seemed rather odd, too, to come South intending to pioneer, and then to settle in or near what the old sergeant at the Fort assured us was the oldest city in the Union.

We felt that we must, at all events, see what the wilder parts of the State were like before deciding; so we soon found ourselves speeding away again towards "Decoy," to catch the boat for a little station away down South, up the river, which was then the only route to a small settlement in the mid-lake country, where a relative was living, who had urged us to see his part of Florida before deciding on anything.

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It seems odd now to think how remote south middle Florida was in those days. The point we were then trying to reach is now less than twelve hours from Jacksonville by rail. Then we travelled all night by boat, and took train at breakfast-time across to a big lake, where a tiny steamer awaited us; on this we crossed the lake, then stopped at a town on the other side, to wait for a wagon which was to come a half-day's journey to meet us.

Our message was delayed, so we spent two days at an English inn, near the big lake, where we made some friends we have kept on our list ever since. And besides these friendships, we have treasured many pleasant memories of this inn. We approached it in the twilight of a chilly, blustering day, and on entering it we were greeted by an immense open fire of light-wood, which glorified the polished floor, strewn with the skins of wild creatures killed in the near-by thickets, called hammocks or hummocks. The firelight gave fitful glimpses of old-fashioned chairs, tables, etc., and lighted up a number of large gilt-framed paintings which adorned the walls;—in short, it was a complete picture of artistic comfort. Nor was our satisfaction lessened by the fragrant odor of frying ham and hot muffins, wafted to us as we crossed the hall.

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They gave us a ground-floor room in an L opening on one of the side piazzas. This arrangement suited Bruno perfectly, and therefore it pleased us. There was a small lake behind the house, and the next day Julius proposed a row. The boat was quite small, and he was then rather unskilled in the use of oars; so we coaxed Bruno to sit on the tiny wharf and see us go by.

He seemed quite willing; so we pushed off. As we floated outward, Bruno lost heart. It was too much like being left behind; so he whined and plunged in after us.

"It isn't far across," said Julius, "and a swim won't hurt him!"

So we went on, letting him follow.

Suddenly he gave a strange cry, and Julius looked around, exclaiming,—

"See, he's cramping!"

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We went to him as rapidly as possible, and were just in time. At the risk of upsetting us all in the deepest part of the lake—probably about fifteen feet—Julius dragged him into the boat. We then hurried back to the landing, where poor Bruno had to be helped out, and we laid him on the grass in a state of exhaustion which alarmed us greatly.

It was some hours before he was himself again, and many months before he lost a great fear of the water,—in fact, he was never afterwards the fearless water-dog of his youth.

CHAPTER IX

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I see us next at the little inland settlement surrounding two small lakes for which we had started.

It had been long years since we had seen the relative who was living there, and childish memories did not tell us that he was the most visionary and unpractical of men. We could not trust our own judgment in such a topsy-turvy country as Florida, where the conditions were all so new to us; so it is no wonder that we took his word for a number of wild statements and decided to buy and settle there. We bought a tract of land from a friend and client of his, who offered us the use of a small homestead shanty near our land, to live in while we were building. This shanty looked decidedly uninviting, but the alternative was a room in the house of our relative, a full mile away from our place; so we decided in favor of the shanty. It was built of rived boards, slabs split out of the native logs. It had one door and no windows. In fact, it needed none; for the boards lapped roughly on each other, leaving cracks like those in window-blinds, so we could put our fingers through the walls almost anywhere. Besides affording a means of light and ventilation, this was vastly convenient for various flying and creeping things. The floor was of rough ten-inch boards, with inch-wide cracks between them. Julius escorted me over to inspect it, saying,—

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"If we try to live in this excuse for a house, we shall be pioneering with a vengeance."

After a searching glance around the premises, I answered,—

"The pioneering is all right, if we can just make it clean."

"Oh, that's easy enough!" exclaimed Julius, in a relieved tone. "If you think we can stand its other short-comings, I can whitewash the whole thing, and make it so fresh and sweet you won't know it."

We sent a message for our freight, which we had left at Jacksonville, and Julius took a team to the nearest town to buy a few necessaries. We had brought no furniture South with us, knowing that what we had in our Northern home would be unsuitable for pioneering. Our freight, therefore, was mostly books and pictures, with a few boxes of clothes, bedding, etc. The shanty was wonderfully improved by a coat or two of whitewash, and after an old tapestry carpet had been put down to cover the cracks in the floor, extending up on the walls to form a dado, it began to look quite livable.

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The bed and a row of trunks filled one end, there being just room to squeeze in between them. At the foot of the bed was a table, used by turns as kitchen, dining, and library table; there was also a box holding a kerosene stove, with shelves above it for dishes and supplies.

We had two wooden chairs, and a bench which we put to various uses. When these things were all in place, and our books arranged on boards which were laid across the rafters overhead, we

felt as snug as was Robinson Crusoe in his cave.

As soon as we were comfortable, Julius got a man to help him, and began to improve our land. A few of the large pine-trees had to be felled, and this performance filled Bruno with the wildest excitement. His natural instincts told him there was only one reason for which a tree should ever be cut,—to capture some wild creature which had taken refuge in its top. At the first blow of the axe he would begin to yelp and dance, breaking into still wilder antics when the tree began to sway and stagger, finally rushing into the top as it fell, in a state of excitement that bordered on frenzy.

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As he, of course, found nothing there, he seemed to think he had not been quick enough, and that the creature had escaped; so he became more and more reckless, until Julius was alarmed for his safety, and said I must keep him shut in-doors till the trees were down, or he would surely end by being crushed.

I had my hands full. I would coax him in, and shut the door. As soon as he heard the chopping begin, he would whine and bark, coaxing to be let out. I always temporized until I heard the tree falling, then off he would dash, and bounce into its top to yelp and explore.

He never found anything in the trees, but he never grew discouraged. He "assisted" at the felling of every one.

Bruno was much happier in Florida than he had been in our Northern home. He had all the woods to stretch his legs in, and for amusement he had the different kinds of wild creatures.

One moonlight night we three had walked over to the post-office for the mail. As Julius and I were slowly sauntering homeward, enjoying the night air, while Bruno made little excursions in all directions, he suddenly came up in front of us, and paused in that questioning way which showed he had found something of which he was not quite sure.

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"What is it, Boonie?" asked Julius.

Bruno made a short run, then came back, pausing as before, and glancing first in the direction he had started to go, then at Julius.

"It is probably a 'possum," I suggested.

Bruno had shown himself to be very careful about attacking strange animals. He seemed to remember our adventure with the hens, his first meeting with Rebecca, and some of his other experiences.

Julius answered his evident question with,—

"Yes. It's Boonie's 'possum. Go get him!"

Off he sprang, dashing into a little clump of trees, about a bow-shot from us, then with a yelp retreated, throwing himself on the ground, uttering short cries, rubbing and rooting his nose down into the grass and sand. Alas, poor Bruno! We knew what it was. We did not see it, we did not hear it, but we knew. He felt that he had been a victim of misplaced confidence; but we suffered with him, for it was days before he got rid of the "bouquet." Then it was as if by an inspiration. He seemed, all at once, to remember something. There was a tiny lake near our place, that was going dry. Day by day its waters had receded, until it was a mere mud-hole. Bruno went down to it, and buried himself up to the eyes in the black mud.

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He lay there until late afternoon, then trotted off to a wet lake near by, and took a thorough bath. With this, he regained his lost self-respect, but he never forgot the experience. It was only necessary to say,—

"Kitty, kitty, where's kitty?" to make his ears and tail droop in the most dejected manner; then he would creep away, out of sight, till some more agreeable topic of conversation was broached.

It was not strange, after such a trying adventure, that Bruno was rather timid about approaching "Br'er 'Possum" when he did meet him. One night, he was found lurking around outside, sniffing some odds and ends that Bruno had disdained. After a little urging, Bruno was induced to seize him. Finding that nothing unpleasant followed, he became from that moment an enthusiastic 'possum-hunter, and used to bring one in every night or two. I usually cooked them for him, and he ate them with a relish, which we thought was fortunate, as we were about twelve miles from a butcher. Another substitute for beef we found in the Florida gopher. This is a grass-eating tortoise, which digs a house for itself in the sand.

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Bruno soon became a most ardent gopher-hunter. Their hard shells make them difficult to handle, as they promptly draw in the head and legs on being approached; so Bruno would nose one over until he could seize the shovel, a protruding piece of the lower shell. Getting this small bit between his side-teeth, he balanced the weight by holding his head stiffly sideways, and came trotting in. The shadow of the house reached, he dropped the gopher, carefully turning it over on its back, and lay down beside it, to cool off and rest. Then off he would go for another.

He kept this up day after day, sometimes having as many as a dozen around the place at once. As often as the creatures managed to flop over so they could use their feet again and start to escape, Bruno, yelping and barking, brought them back, and turned them on their backs.

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Sometimes, when he returned after a protracted hunt, bringing in a fresh victim, he found

several of them escaping at once. Then he would hurriedly drop his latest catch, to speed away, tracking the truants until they were all found and recaptured, to be brought back and nosed over again.

He never wearied of this sport, and after our house was finished, and a well-stocked "chicken-park" was added to our estate, we bought a large camp-kettle, which we arranged on bricks in a secluded place; in this we would heat water and cook Bruno's gophers, so that he and the hens had constant feasts of them and thrive apace.

CHAPTER X

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Julius and I always like to experiment with new articles of food. We have no sympathy with the kind of fussiness that travels around the world with its own lunch-box, disdaining everything strange or new. It is to us part of the charm of changed surroundings to test the native articles of diet.



He was hissing at Bruno.—PAGE 62.

We had tried roast 'possum and stewed gopher; we now began to long for a taste of alligator steak. We had heard that to be at all eatable the steak must be taken from the fleshy part of the tail of a young animal before the creature grows large enough to lose its shiny skin; so we were quite delighted one day when we found that Bruno had cornered a young one about four feet long. It was in a little glade about three hundred yards from the house; and as soon as Julius found the cause of Bruno's excitement, he hurried to the house for the axe, and soon put a stop to the creature's demonstrations. He was hissing at Bruno like a whole flock of geese, the while snapping at him with his teeth and striking at him with his tail, which he had a most astonishing way of flourishing around.

When the steak was cut the meat looked white and fine-grained, like the more delicate kinds of fish. When cooked it was very inviting, being a compromise between fish and the white meat of domestic fowls.

We enjoyed it very much and were loud in our praises of alligator steak, but—we didn't want any more!

I cooked the rest of it for Bruno, and he ate one more meal of it; then he struck. We have since heard that most people who try alligator steak have the same experience. A first meal is thoroughly enjoyed, but one not brought up on such a diet never gets beyond the second. It is a useful article of food in southern camp-life, because it makes the campers go back to bacon and beans with renewed relish. The same may be said of roast 'possum and stewed gopher,—that is, for the human campers.

Just before our house was ready for us, while we were still living in the little shanty, I noticed one night when Julius came in that he was empty-handed. He had been in the habit of bringing his tools home every evening; so I asked,—

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"What have you done with the saws and things?"

"I left them under the building," he answered, "wrapped in an old coat I had there. They will be perfectly safe, and I am tired of carrying them."

I was always glad when he had discovered an easier way of doing things; so I made no objection to this, and went on preparing the evening meal, for which we three were ready. Bruno had been over at the new house all the afternoon; so I waited on him first, seeing that his water-basin was full to the brim and heaping a plate with food for him. Then Julius and I sat down with keenest enjoyment to such a meal as we would have scorned in our old home, but which our open-air life in the pine-woods made exceedingly welcome. Afterwards I cleared the table, and we sat down to our usual evening of reading, interrupted with occasional snatches of conversation.

Bruno lay at our feet—dozing when we were quiet, thumping the floor with his tail whenever we spoke. Towards nine o'clock he got up, shook himself, sighed deeply, then asked me in his usual manner to open the door for him. This was the way he asked. He rested his head on my knee until I looked up from my book. Then his tail began to wag, and he glanced quickly from me to the door, then back at me again. I asked,—

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"Boonie want to go?"

At this his tail wagged faster than ever, and he went to the door and stood waiting. Julius got up and opened the door for him; standing for a few moments after Bruno had disappeared in the darkness, looking at the stars and listening to that sweet sound the pine-needles make when the wind blows through them.

The night was rather cool, and it was not long before we both began to feel sleepy. Bruno had not returned; so Julius went to the door, whistling and calling to him.

But there was no answer.

We waited a little while; then Julius said:

"He will probably be here by the time we are ready to put out the lamp; so let's to bed."

I felt troubled. It reminded me of the old days in Bruno's giddy youth when he was off sheep-chasing. As I brushed out my hair, I was turning over in my mind all those vague fears I had felt when I had formerly dreamed of Florida as a country full of unknown dangers. At last I spoke,—

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"Julius, do you think a big alligator could have caught Bruno?"

"I don't know," answered Julius, slowly.

Then I knew that he was worried too.

When the lamp was out, Julius went to the door again and stood for some minutes whistling, calling, and listening; but no sound came except the pine murmurs and the mournful notes of a distant "Whip-Will's-Widow."

It was impossible for us to sleep. Having always had Bruno at our bedside, we had never before felt uneasy, and had provided no way to lock our shanty. There was just an old-fashioned string-latch with a padlock outside; and here we were, deserted by our protector!

Again and again through the night Julius got up to call and listen.

Towards dawn we both slept heavily, worn out with anxious surmises. We were awakened by a well-known whining and scratching at the door, and when we both sprang up to open it, in walked Bruno, looking just as he usually did in the morning,—lively, glad to see us awake, and ready for his breakfast.

We gave him a welcome so warm it surprised and delighted him, while we vainly questioned him for an explanation of his desertion of us for the night. It was of no use. We could see that he had not been running, but where *had* he been? We gave it up.

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Julius said his troubled night had left him without much appetite for work; but the man who was helping him would be there, so he thought it best to go over to the building, anyway.

He surprised me by returning almost immediately. His face was lighted up and his eyes were dancing.

"I came back to tell you where Bruno slept last night," he exclaimed. "You can't guess!"

"No," I answered; "I have already given it up."

"He went back to watch those tools I left over at the building. He dug himself a nest right beside them, drawing the edge of my old coat around for his pillow. The prints are all there as plain as can be!"

We were amazed and delighted at this performance; the reasoning seemed so human. He had watched Julius arranging and leaving the tools, the while making up his own mind that it was an unwise thing to do, and evidently deciding to see to it later. His sitting with us till bedtime, keeping in mind his mental appointment, and then going forth without a word from any one to keep it, seemed to us to be a truly wonderful thing, and so it seems to me yet.

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From the first, we had made a constant companion of Bruno, talking to him always as if he could speak our language; and we have since thought that this must have been a sort of education for him, drawing out and developing his own natural gifts of thought and reason. He often surprised us by joining in the conversation. He would be lying dozing, and we talking in our usual tones. If we mentioned Robbie or Charlie, the two children who were his friends in his puppy days before he was our dog, or spoke of Leo, or of going somewhere, he would spring up all alert, running to the door or window, and then to us, whining and giving short barks of inquiry or impatience.

Always, after that first time we had tried to give him away, he was subject to terrible nightmares. In his sleep he would whimper and sigh in a manner strangely like human sobbing. We thought at such times that he was going through those trying days again, in his dreams. So we always wakened him, petting and soothing him till he fully realized that it was only a dream.

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He had other ways which we thought noteworthy. Although he loved Julius better than he did me, yet he always came to me with his requests. If hungry or thirsty, he would come to me wagging his tail and licking his lips.

Like "Polly," his general term for food was cracker. If I asked, "Boonie want a cracker?" and if it was hunger, he would yawn in a pleased, self-conscious manner, and run towards the place where he knew the food was kept. If I had misunderstood his request, he continued gazing at me, licking his lips and wagging his tail till I asked, "Boonie want a drink?" Then he would yawn and run towards his water-cup, which I would find to be empty.

Often, when he had made his wants known to me, I passed them on to Julius, who would wait on him; but it made no difference: the next time he came to me just the same. He seemed to have reasoned it out that I was the loaf-giver, as the old Saxons had it, or else he felt that I was quicker to enter into his feelings and understand his wishes.

CHAPTER XI

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Not long after Bruno's self-imposed night watch we found ourselves settled on our own estate, ready to carry out our plans for the future. Briefly they were as follows. We had intended to make an orange-grove, and while it was coming to maturity, we expected to raise early vegetables to ship to northern markets. We brought with us only money enough to make our place and live for a year: by that time we had fully expected to have returns from vegetable shipments which would tide us over till another crop. We had plenty of faith and courage, and were troubled by no doubts as to the feasibility of our plans. Nor need we have been, if only our land had contained the proper elements for vegetable growing. It was good enough orange land, but it would be a long time before we could depend on oranges for an income.

All this time we had been learning many things, taking care, as we began to understand the situation, to go to practical doers for advice instead of to visionary talkers.

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There began to be serious consultations in our little home circle. The year was drawing to a close, and our whole crop of vegetables would not have filled a two-quart measure. We had gone on with our planting, even after we felt it to be hopeless, because we did not dare to stop and listen to our fears. It is not strange that we felt depressed and disappointed. We could see that our plans could easily have been carried out, had we only known just what sort of land to select. The whole State was before us to choose from, but we had been misled through the romances of a dreamer of dreams. All we had to show for our money, time, and labor was a small house surrounded by trees so young that they were at least five years from yielding us an income, and there was no more money for experiments.

For a while we felt rather bitter towards our misleading adviser, but I know now that we were wrong to feel so. A man can give only what he has. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh." A dreamer of dreams has only visions to offer to his followers, surely landing them either in the briers of difficulty or the mires of discouragement.

One day Julius returned from the nearest large town, where he had been for supplies, with an unusually thoughtful countenance. As soon as his purchases were unloaded and the horse had been attended to, he came in and, drawing a chair beside my work-table, opened the conversation with these memorable words:

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"Judith, how would you like to go up to Lemonville to live?"

"What makes you ask?" questioned I. "It depends altogether on the circumstances how I'd like to live there."

"Well, Hawkes bantered me to-day to come up and keep his books for him, and I have been considering it all the way home. It looks like a way out, and I'll declare I don't see any other!"

"Go back to office work!" I exclaimed; "I thought you were done with that sort of thing!"

"I thought so, too; but after a year of this sort of thing, it begins to look quite different."

We sat up late, discussing this plan in all its bearings. Bruno seemed to know that it was a crisis

in our affairs, and sat on end facing us, wrinkling his brows and looking from one to the other as each spoke. We finally decided that Julius was to go back to town in a day or two, and investigate further.

When Julius returned from Lemonville three days later, he brought us the news that he had promised to give the position a trial, and that he had engaged temporary quarters for us in a new house near the office. Moreover, we were to move up there the following week, as Mr. Hawkes was impatient for his help.

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While we felt relieved at this decision, there was still something very sad about the breaking up. We had builded so many hopes into our pine-woods home, which had seemed to us to be guarded by a "standing army" of giants carrying silver banners, especially imposing on moonlight nights when the wind kept the banners of moss swaying under the immense pine-trees.

We had seen it in imagination blossoming as the rose, a quiet little nest, far from the madding crowd. And now to abandon it at the beginning and go back to village life,—it was leaving poetry for the flattest of prose.

The first step towards breaking up was to dispose of our fowls. This was soon arranged, and when the cart came to carry them off, Bruno watched the loading of them with the keenest interest, turning his head sideways, with alert ears, and catching his lip between his side-teeth when a hen squawked, as was his way when nervous. At last they were all in the coop. The driver mounted to his seat, and started off. Bruno trotted along after him, evidently not understanding that they were no longer our chickens. He thought it was the beginning of the move he had heard us discuss. He followed along for perhaps a quarter of a mile. All at once he stopped and looked back; he saw us standing and looking after him. It was a dilemma. He looked after the receding wagon, then back at us, then at the wagon again. Then he turned and galloped back, stomach to earth, and bounded up to us, yelping and panting, while we explained that they were not our chickens any more; they were sold, and had gone away to live in another home.

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The poultry disposed of, we began hurriedly to make ready for our own departure. It took a whole long day to pack our books, but we soon stowed our other things, and inside of the agreed time we were transferred and settled in the three rooms Julius had engaged.

There was a sitting-room below, which we used also as a dining-room, with a small kitchen behind it. Over the sitting-room we had a large chamber. The front windows of this room gave on the sloping roof which covered a lower porch. This seemed to meet Bruno's views; he at once sprang through one of the windows, and took possession of it as a lounging-place—airy and cool.

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Again and again friends we had made in our sylvan retreat, who came up to town to visit us, said,—

"I found where you lived by seeing your dog on the porch-roof."

The house stood on rising ground and could be seen from almost any part of the village; so we found Bruno quite useful as a door-plate in a town where there were as yet no street names nor numbers.

We do not like living in the homes of other people, so as soon as possible we made arrangements for two town lots, and put up a little cottage.

CHAPTER XII

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One day Julius came home with invitations for a ball in honor of the Governor, to be given in an ambitious embryo city across the lake. He had learned that the little steamer was to make an extra night-trip across on purpose to accommodate those who wished to attend, and that some of our friends had planned to go in company, and wished us to join their party. We had long intended to take the steamer trip across the lake; the Governor's ball sounded inviting, also the night crossing with our friends. We decided to accept.

The evening fell rather threatening, with flurries of wind and rain. Still we were undaunted, and kept hoping it would clear off.

I filled Bruno's basin and platter, telling him he must take care of the house and be a good dog. He seemed to understand all about it, and stood at the window after we had locked him in, watching us go with perfect composure.

It was still twilight when we started, and we could see his eyes shining through the glass, as long as the house was in sight.

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The weather, meantime, had not improved, and had we not promised to go, we should certainly have given it up.

When we reached the wharf, we found that the little steamer's cabin was in the sole possession of our party, all the others having backed out on account of the weather.

We kept up each other's spirits with all sorts of absurdities, and the boat was soon ploughing a

foamy track across the big waves.

As soon as we steamed out from behind a point of land that sheltered the wharf, we were met by a gale of wind that made the little steamer reel and tremble as if from the shock of a collision. The lights were all promptly extinguished, as the doors were forced open by fierce winds, while we huddled together in a corner, and laughingly reminded each other that it was a "pleasure exertion."

I shudder now whenever I think of that night, though at the time we did not know enough about the possibilities to be frightened.

How the little boat pitched and tossed! The waves washed its lower decks, again and again putting out the engine fires; we meanwhile rolling in the trough of the sea until they could be rekindled. We had expected to cross in about three-quarters of an hour, and return soon after midnight; but it was along towards the wee sma' hours when we reached the other shore. Then, when we heard the crew congratulating each other, exchanging experiences, and telling what they had expected to see happen to all concerned every time big waves had washed out the fire, we for the first time fully realized the risks we had taken in crossing.

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We were weary enough not to be sorry that the ball was already over. We looked in at its departed glories for a few minutes; and then, finding it would be impossible to start back home before broad daylight, began to look for a lodging-place.

The town was filled with people who had driven in from the surrounding country for the ball, but we succeeded in getting two small top-story rooms in the hotel, which were vacated for us by some sort of "doubling-up" among the good-natured guests. The three men of our party took one, and we three women the other.

It was about three o'clock when we retired to our room, and while the other two slept on the one bed, I sat by the window trying to hurry the dawn; wondering what Bruno was thinking, and how we should look, a party of people clothed in evening array, returning home in broad daylight. As if we had made a night of it, surely! I chuckled to myself as I compared our plight with that of Cinderella.

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We met at breakfast in the hotel dining-room, a queer-looking crowd. As we laughed at each other's appearance, it was hard for each to realize that he or she looked just as absurd; but an unprejudiced observer would have found little to choose between us. As soon as the meal was over, the three men started out to find a way to get us all home again. Everything seemed to conspire to delay us, and it was half-past twelve at noon when we entered our own gate, the click of the latch bringing Bruno's face to the window with a series of joyful barks.

Poor fellow! His long confinement to the house, his empty plate and bowl, his joyful reception of us, and then his springing out to dash round and round the lot, filled our hearts with compassion.

As soon as his first burst of enthusiasm was over, he came in, and crept up to me with dejected ears and tail, which in his language meant "mea culpa." I asked,—

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"What is it, Boonie? What's Boonie been doing?"

Still lower sank head and tail, and his knees began to weaken. I made a hasty survey of the sitting-room, and then I understood. He had slept on the lounge, a thing he was strictly forbidden to do.

"Oh, Boonie!" I cried, "you naughty dog! Judith thought she could trust you!"

At this his knees gave way, and he sank to the floor utterly dejected. He would not rise, nor even look up, until I had forgiven and comforted him.

The next time we had to leave him alone in the house, I built a "booby-trap," with two light chairs on the lounge, which left him looking so utterly crushed that I never had the heart to do it again. But he never more transgressed in that way, so I felt that I had dealt wisely with him.

It was a hard necessity which forced us to shut him up when we were going where it would not do to take him. At first we had tried leaving him outside; but we found that after we had been gone awhile, his heart was always sure to fail him, and he would track us, turning up invariably just in time to cover us with confusion, his own dejected mien saying plainly,—

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"I know this is against orders, but I just *had* to do it."

He had a wonderful development of conscience. We sometimes thought that this, as well as the other mental gifts of which he showed himself to be possessed, were due to the shape of his head. His nose was very short, and his forehead unusually high and well-rounded. Of course his life as a close companion to humans and as a full member of a family circle, was calculated to foster these mental gifts; but they were surely there, to begin with. We might treat dozens of dogs just as we treated Bruno, without developing another that would compare with him. He was unique; and I shall always glory in the fact that he loved and trusted us. His was a love not to be lightly won, nor, once given, ever to be recalled.

In spite of our snug little home in Lemonville, we never felt quite settled there. We were not built for village life. Country life is good, and city life is good; but in a village one has all the drawbacks of both, with the rewards of neither. So it was not long before we resolved on another change.

We sold our little home furnished, packed up our books, with a few other personal belongings, and turned our faces towards St. Augustine, to investigate several openings there, of which we had chanced to hear. We were so fortunate as to be able to rent a small cottage, and at once took possession, furnishing it from our trunks, only buying a few necessary articles of the plainest kind.

Just as we had settled ourselves in these temporary quarters, a matter of business came up, making necessary a return to Lemonville for a day or two. The trip was both tedious and expensive, so after some discussion we decided that Bruno and I should stay and keep house, while Julius made the trip alone "light weight."

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I had some trouble in persuading Julius that I should be perfectly safe in Bruno's care. He wished us to close the cottage, and go to some one of the many pleasant boarding-places, where we had friends or acquaintances stopping. This I should certainly have done, had I been alone; but I reminded Julius how more than able Bruno was to take care of me, and how much trouble he always gave in a strange house. So he was finally persuaded that it would be best for us to stay in the cottage.

Julius left on a noon train, carrying only a small hand-bag. When he said good-by to us, he impressed this on Bruno's mind,— "Take good care of Judith."

Bruno stood at the door with me, watching him out of sight, then breathed a deep sigh, and crept off under the bed to have it out with himself alone and unseen. I busied myself picking up the articles which had been scattered in the confusion of packing, then sat down to drown thought in a book.

Towards evening I had a caller. One of our friends, who had seen Julius, bag in hand, at the station, and had thus learned that I was alone, sent a message by her little son that I was to "come right around" to their house for the night. I sent our thanks, with further message that Bruno and I had agreed to take care of each other. The child went home; then his mother came. She thought I "must be crazy" to think of staying alone. She "wouldn't do it for any money." I assured her I was not staying alone, and had some trouble to convince her that I could not possibly be more safely guarded than by Bruno. I assured her, further, that nothing would now induce me to lock up the house and leave it, for it would be impossible to know just when Julius would return; he would be sure to catch the first boat and train after his business was finished, and I would not for anything have him return to find his nest deserted.

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I succeeded, at last, in quieting all of her kind objections, and was left in peace.

Darkness came on, and then Bruno lost courage. As I was preparing his evening meal, he ran to meet me as I crossed the room, and raising himself to an upright position, he rested his paws on my shoulders and gazed with mournful questioning into my eyes. I knew what he would say, and sitting down, I drew his head to my knee, and told him all about it,—that Julius would only stay a "little, little while," then he would come back and "stay—stay—stay always with us." His ears rose and fell, his forehead wrinkled and unwrinkled as I talked to him. Then he seemed comforted, and ate a good supper.

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I sat reading far into the night, until the letters began to blur. Bruno sat beside me, sometimes with his head on my knee while I stroked his silken ears,—which always suggested the wavy locks of a red-haired girl,—and sometimes he lay at full length on the floor, with his head against my feet.

As midnight tolled, I closed my book, covered up the fire, and tried to go to sleep, with Bruno lying on the rug beside my bed. Whenever I stirred, he got up, and putting his forefeet on the side of the bed, reached his head over for me to stroke it. It was the first time I had ever spent a night in a house with no other humans, and Bruno seemed to enter thoroughly into my feelings.

I lay listening to the breakers booming on the outer bar, wondering how far on his journey Julius could be.

Dawn looked in at me before I fell asleep; then I knew nothing until aroused by Bruno's barks, to find that some one was rapping on the front door.

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After hastily putting on a dressing-gown, I investigated through a crack made by holding the door slightly ajar, and found that the same kind friends had sent to see how I had spent the night. I gave a glowing account of our comfort and security, for my morning nap had thoroughly rested and refreshed me; then I hastened to prepare some breakfast for Bruno, meanwhile letting him out for a run in the lot.

After the small household duties were attended to, I had sat down to finish some souvenirs I was painting for one of the shops, when I heard a great din and clatter outside. Bruno, who was sitting beside me, gravely watching my work, while now and then he gave a disgusted snort as he

got a good whiff of the turpentine I was using to thin my paints, started up, barking and bounding towards the closed door. I sprang to open it, and was met on the very threshold by a trembling, half-grown deer. The gate was open, showing how it had entered, and there, hesitating at the sight of Bruno and me, was a motley crowd of boys and dogs. I at once grasped the situation. Many people in St. Augustine had such pets, and I was sure this one must have escaped from the grounds of its owner, to fall into the hands of the rabble.

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I hurried out to shut the gate. Most boys are more or less cruel; but Spanish boys are intensely so. When I returned to the porch, Bruno and the deer were regarding each other with mutual doubts. I settled Bruno's at once by laying my hand on his head while I stroked our gentle visitor, saying,—

"Pretty deer, Boonie mustn't hurt it!"

The deer seemed satisfied too, and to feel that danger was past. I brought water, and everything I could think of to offer it to eat. It was too warm with running to want food, though, and only took a few swallows of water. Its lovely, deep eyes suggested all sorts of romantic thoughts. Of course I quoted, "Come rest in this bosom," and "I never nursed a dear gazelle." I was sure its name should be Juanita, after the girl in the sweet Spanish song.

All day the pretty creature roamed about our little enclosure, Bruno and I attending to its wants as best we could, having had no experience in catering for such guests.

It turned quite chilly towards evening. When I had shut all the doors and built up the fire, I heard a clatter of small hoofs on the porch-floor, and there stood Juanita, looking wistfully in through the window. Bruno and I looked at each other, thoroughly perplexed. We were not prepared for such a hint. I thought afterwards it must have been taken as a baby-deer, and raised in-doors "by hand."

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We went out and prepared a warm bed for it in the wood-shed back of the house. It seemed quite satisfied with this arrangement, and settled down cosily as we left it and returned to our fireside. We spent this evening and night as we had the previous one, and were aroused very early in the morning by the sound of Juanita's impatient little hoofs on the porch floor. I had just finished feeding her and Bruno, when I heard the gate-latch click. I looked out. A colored girl was coming up the walk.

"Mawnin', Lady," she said; "ole Miss hyud our deer was hyuh. *Dah* you is, you good-f'-nuffin' ole runaway! Thanky, Lady. Come on, Billy!" And hitting *him* a resounding slap on the back, she went off, accompanied by our romantic Juanita, transformed into meek and prosy Billy.

Thus perish our illusions!

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Bruno was inclined to resent this unceremonious taking off of our pet, and began to growl; but as soon as I recovered from the mingled emotions which at first had rendered me speechless, I realized from Billy's actions that he and the colored girl were old friends; so I silenced him by saying,—

"Never mind, Boonie, it wasn't our deer; it only came for a little visit, and now it's going home." Then we stood watching graceful Billy and his uncouth companion till they disappeared through the old City Gates.

Late that evening, Bruno having had his supper, I sat by the fire sipping a cup of chocolate, and thinking those tender, half-melancholy thoughts we are apt to have at twilight when separated from those beloved.

All at once I heard the gate click. Bruno sprang up, thrilled and alert. A footstep on the walk—ah, Bruno knew it, even before I did, and was so eager to get out that he almost held the door shut in his excitement. We finally got it open, and there, weary, eager, and travel-stained, was Julius! Before his lips reached my face, I mentally exclaimed,—

"How glad I am that Bruno and I have stayed here, instead of leaving a shut-up house, where he would have to drop his bag and start out to look for us!"

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That moment, when I felt his arms around me and heard his words of joy mingled with Bruno's ecstatic yelps, paid for all of our endless, lonely hours. I dare say there was not in all the world a happier group of three than sat before our open fire that night.

Every time Bruno dozed, he would awaken with a start, and go to sniff and paw at Julius to make sure it wasn't a dream, that he really had come back to us.

Julius reported his business successfully concluded; a change in one of the time-tables had enabled him to get back sooner than we had dared to hope.

The next day I received his letter, telling me to look for him by the train on which he had come the night before!

In those days our mail not infrequently took an ocean voyage on its way from one Florida town to another quite near by, so we were never surprised at anything in the mail line,—except a prompt delivery!

It was shortly after the events related in the last chapter that we came to a final decision against the various business openings we had been investigating in St. Augustine, and concluded to go on to Jacksonville. We disposed of the few things we had bought for our little cottage, and when we again found ourselves on the train with our household goods, I gave us both a fit of merriment by quoting the words of poor little Joe in "Bleak House,"—

"Wisht I may die if I ain't a-movin' on."

It was by this time mid-season, and Jacksonville was full of tourists. It was then very popular as a winter resort, Southern Florida was not much known; so we had some difficulty in finding a place to live.

We decided to get just one room somewhere, and board at a restaurant till the city emptied so we could secure a cottage.

The first room we found that would do, was too far from the business part of town; so we took it for only a month, and kept on looking. We heard of one, at last, which seemed close to everything. It proved to be large, lofty, and pleasant, with a glimpse of the river from its front windows.

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The house was well recommended to us by the few business acquaintances Julius had made, though they all confessed that such places were constantly changing hands and inmates and that it was hard to keep up with them. Time pressed, and nothing better offered; so we moved in. It was entirely bare; so we bought some furniture, and, as it was rather a long room for its breadth, we managed, with a screen or two, to make it seem like three rooms.

When all was in place, it was really quite inviting. I had a small lamp stove, so we need only go out for dinners. We began to feel more settled than for a long time, especially, as Julius had in the meantime found a business opening which was entirely satisfactory. We saw nothing at all of the other lodgers; but this did not disturb us, as we were in no hurry to make acquaintances. We felt that it was best to be circumspect in a city of this size and make-up.

Our evenings were our pleasantest times, sitting on either side of the reading-lamp, with Bruno stretched at our feet; so I was inclined to object one evening, when Julius announced at dinner that he had promised to give a few hours to helping a young friend of his to straighten out his accounts. He had promised, though; so I had to yield. He set off betimes, so as to be home earlier. I locked the door after him, as I always did, and began to make myself as comfortable as possible for a quiet hour or two, with a new magazine.

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Before I had finished cutting the leaves, I was struck with surprise at Bruno's actions. He crept in a very stealthy manner to the door, and stood there in an attitude of listening, with every nerve and muscle tense.

I watched him a minute, and then asked,—

"What is it, Boonie?"

He did not look around; he waved his tail once or twice, then resumed his tense pose. Thoroughly surprised, I went softly to him, and stood also listening. I could hear nothing but a faint rustling, a suppressed whispering, and the soft click of a latch. I touched Bruno's head; he looked up at me, and I saw he was holding his lip between his side-teeth, as he had a way of doing when he was very much puzzled or excited.

I tried to coax him away from the door, but he refused to come. I made sure the bolt was shot, and then sat down at a little distance to watch him. There was a door in the middle of one side of the room, which, when we took possession, we had found to be nailed up. We utilized the recess with the aid of some draperies, as a place to hang clothing. Bruno went to this door, thrusting his head in among the clothes.

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He listened there for a long time, probably ten minutes; he returned again to the other door; then he gave a low growl, followed by several half-suppressed barks, and lay down against it.

I forgot all about my book, and sat watching to see what he would do next. The evening seemed endless. At last I heard Julius below in the hall; Bruno sprang up when I opened the door, and went clattering down the stairs to escort him up. It was not late, only about ten. I at once told Julius of the queer evening we had spent, and had the satisfaction of seeing him as thoroughly puzzled as I had been. We sat until a late hour discussing it, then gave it up as something quite beyond us.

About three o'clock in the morning we were awakened by an alarm of fire. The room was full of light, and when we looked out of the window we found that it was close by—only about two squares away. It was a big blaze and, as it was on the opposite side of the street, we had a fine view of it. I was terribly frightened. My uneasiness earlier in the evening had unnerved me, and this terrible fire so near us upset me completely. A fire fills me with horror, especially if it breaks out in the night: it always reminds me of the burning of a big steamer that happened one awful night in my tenth year.

[Pg 95]

I watched the flames, fascinated by their lurid splendor;—imagining that the three white pigeons which had been awakened by the light and were circling around the tower of smoke—now hidden by it, and now silhouetted against it—were the souls of those who had perished in the flames. Overcome by horror, I finally exclaimed:—

"Suppose it had been this big building that had caught fire!"

"But it wasn't," said Julius.

"No: but it might have been. I don't like this at all. I want to be in a little house by ourselves, close to the ground."

"Yes, it would be better," said Julius, who saw by the light of the flames how pale I had become, and noted how I was trembling. "It will not do to have you so terrified: we'll make a change at once. But it will be difficult to find a house until the tourists begin to scatter."

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We thoroughly discussed the situation, and by breakfast-time had reached a decision.

I was to return to Lemonville for a stay of a week or two, and while there to see to the packing and shipping of a piano we had left in storage. Julius meanwhile was to find a cottage, and have our belongings transferred to it. We did not like the arrangement very well, but it seemed to be the only thing we could do.

Thus ended our experience as lodgers.

I was gone two weeks. It was pleasant to meet old friends, after a separation long enough to have plenty of news to exchange, without having had time to lose interest in each other's affairs, but my heart was back in Jacksonville.

Julius and I wrote to each other every day, but the mails were so tedious and uncertain that we usually got each other's letters by threes or fours, with days full of anxiety and heart-ache between.

I still have the package of letters received then. I have just been reading them over again. Bruno pervades them all. It is—

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"Took Bruno with me to the office to-day, he begged so hard when I started to leave him; it's lonely for him, poor fellow!"

And—

"While I ate breakfast, I had the waiter put up a good lunch for Boonie; he's getting tired of biscuit, and I don't like to give him raw bones."

On Sunday,—

"I took Bruno a long walk in the suburbs to-day. It did him a lot of good."

A letter written just before I returned says,—

"Bruno seems down-hearted to-night; I think he misses somebody."

I returned as soon as Julius wrote that he had procured a house. The welcome I received told me that Bruno was not the only one who had missed "somebody."

CHAPTER XV

[Pg 98]

All that season we lived in a rented cottage, but before the next summer came we were planting roses in our own grounds. We had been renting just about a year, when we bought our little home in one of the suburbs; so we could fully appreciate the joys of being on our own place again.

We found a kitten, the "very moral" of Rebecca, striped black and blue-gray. She was a dear little thing, and she and Bruno soon became fast friends.

The only creature we ever knew him to bite—except, indeed, wild animals, which he considered fair game—was in defending Catsie.

His victim was a handsome coach-dog, following some friends who one day drove out to call on us. He was a thoroughbred dog, but he had not Bruno's gentlemanly instincts. The first thing he did was to go trotting around to the back porch, where he spied Catsie enjoying a fine meaty bone. He sneaked up behind her, and snatching it in his teeth, made off with it.

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Bruno could not stand that. It seemed to make a perfect fury of him. I think he felt that the fault was worse, because the coach-dog was so sleek and plump; there was not even the excuse of hunger.

Poor fellow! Bruno sent him howling and limping from the yard.

The call came to an untimely end, our visitors declaring,—

"That great savage brute of yours has almost killed our beautiful dog!"

I am afraid we did not feel very contrite. We never took our "great savage brute" anywhere to visit, except when he was especially invited; and besides, we had our own opinion, which was similar to Bruno's, of big dogs that robbed little cats.

It took a great deal to rouse Bruno, so much that we sometimes mistook his amiability for lack of courage.

We had often watched him chasing the animals that lax town laws had allowed to roam the streets of the only two villages we had ever known. He would go dashing after a pig or a cow. If the creature ran, he would chase it until he was exhausted; but if it stood its ground and calmly returned his excited gaze, he would stop, look at it for a minute, then turn and come trotting back, with an air that said plainly,—

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"I was only in fun; I wanted to see what it would do."

There was a big watch-dog which lived in an enclosure we had to pass on our way to town. When we took Bruno that way for a stroll, as soon as he reached this lot, he and the other dog would greet each other through the picket-fence with the most blood-curdling growls and snarls. They seemed fairly to thirst for each other's life-blood. Then, each on his own side of the fence, they would go racing along, keeping up their growls and snarls, till they reached a place where there were half a dozen pickets broken out, so that either could have leaped through with ease.

Then what a change!

Their ears would droop, and their coats and tempers smooth down to the most insipid amiability. But at their next meeting they were quite as savage, till they again reached the opening in the fence. It was the same program, over and over.

Bruno liked to play at anger just for a little excitement, but when he found anything really worth a spell of the furies, it was quite another story.

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The butcher-boy, who came every other day, took Bruno's tragic demonstrations for the real thing, and was terribly afraid of him. He used to shout to me, "Come out and hold the dog!" until he could run to the kitchen and get safely back outside the gate.

It was all in vain for me to assure him there was no danger. He thought I did not know what I was talking about. His terror was so real, I pitied the child—he was not more than twelve or fourteen—so I used to shut Bruno up in the front hall on butcher-boy days until after he had made his call.

Our colored woman used to spend her nights in the bosom of her family, coming back every morning in time to get breakfast. One morning she failed to appear. It was butcher-boy morning, and the weather was quite chilly. When I called Bruno in to shut him up, I noticed that the house next to ours was closed. Our neighbors were off for the day. There were two vacant lots opposite our place, and on the other side, a church. So when our neighbors went off for a day's jaunt, as they frequently did, we were quite isolated.

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After I had shut Bruno in the hall, I sat down by the kitchen fire to toast my toes and wait for the butcher-boy. I was impatient for him to come, so I could release Bruno, who did not like being shut up. He was perfectly willing to lie in the hall,—in fact, it was a favorite dozing-place with him,—but, like some people, he did not enjoy the idea of being forced to do even what he liked best. I was glad when I heard a step on the back porch, and sprang eagerly to open the door. There stood the dirtiest, most evil-looking tramp I had ever seen. He was so taken aback at the way the door flew open, that I had slammed it and shot the bolt before he recovered. I hurried in for Bruno, who had heard the strange step and was eager to investigate. As soon as I returned and unfastened the bolt, the tramp threw his weight against the door to force it open. Bruno sprang to the opening with a whole volley of barks and growls. I caught his collar, saying to the tramp,—

"You'd better run; I can't hold him long!"

I never saw a man make better time. I gave him a minute's start, then loosed Bruno. He reached the fence just as the tramp had fallen over it without stopping to open the gate. When I saw all was safe, I felt so limp I fell back in a chair weak and nerveless. Bruno watched the tramp around the corner, then returned to look after me. He was much exercised to find me in such a state, and relieved his feelings by alternately trying to lick my face, and dashing out to bark again after the vanished tramp.

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After that, Bruno seemed to feel more than ever responsible for me. He had all along been my especial protector, but seeing me overcome with fright seemed to make a deep impression on him.

CHAPTER XVI

[Pg 104]

Julius and I had been in the habit of taking evening walks, and as Bruno stayed with me through the day when Julius was gone, it was his only chance for a run.

One evening, when Julius came home, it had been raining, and I felt that it would not do for me to go out.

"You'd better take Boonie for a little run, though," I said; "he has been in the house all day."

"I have an errand down at the corner," answered Julius, "and he can race around the square while I am attending to it. You won't be afraid?"

"Not for that little while; you will be back again before I have time to miss you."

Julius went into the hall for his overcoat and hat.

"Come on, Boonie," he said; "Boonie can go."

Bruno bounced up, all excitement, showing how he had felt the confinement. He dashed into the hall, where Julius was putting on his overcoat, then came trotting back into the sitting-room and stood, ears erect, looking at me and wagging his tail. I understood him, and answered,—

[Pg 105]

"No, Boonie; Judith must stay. Just Julius and Boonie are going."

He knew us only by the names he heard us call each other.

He sat down at my feet, all his excitement gone.

"Come, Boonie," called Julius from the door. "Come on, Boonie's going!"

Bruno looked at him, wagged his tail, looked at me, and refused to stir.

"Don't you see?" I said; "he thinks I ought not to be left alone." Then to him, "Go on, Boonie; Boonie must go. Judith isn't afraid."

He looked gratefully at me, and wagged his tail, saying plainly, in his dog-fashion,—

"Thank you, but I'd rather not."

Julius waxed impatient.

"You Boon! come along, sir! come on!" he thundered. Bruno's ears and tail drooped. He looked up sideways in a deprecating manner at Julius, then came and laid his head on my knee. It was of no use. Neither threats nor coaxing could move him. Noble creature! His ideas of chivalry were not to be tampered with, even by those who were his gods, his all!

[Pg 106]

The next morning at breakfast I said to Julius,—

"I am afraid Bruno will be ill staying in-doors so closely. Can't you take him for a little run before you go to the office?"

"Yes," answered Julius, "I'll take him if he'll go."

"Oh, he'll go fast enough. Dinah is here, and he will think it safe to leave me."

Bruno was delighted at the invitation, and went tearing around the square four times while Julius walked it once; then came in, hot and happy, to tell Catsie and me all about it.

There was something so peculiarly tender about our feelings for Bruno and his for us. He was at once our protector and our dependent. It is not strange that we never failed to be thoroughly enraged when dog-lovers tried, as they sometimes did, to coax us to sell him. Sell our Bruno! True, we had tried to give him away, but that was for his own good. But to take money for him! To sell him!! Unspeakable!!!

Three times we had nursed him through trying illnesses,—twice the blind staggers, and once the distemper; and when either of us was ill, he could not be coaxed from the bedside. No matter who watched at night, Bruno would watch too, and no slightest sound nor movement escaped his vigilance.

[Pg 107]

How often since he left us have I longed in weary vigils for the comfort of his presence!

CHAPTER XVII

[Pg 108]

In looking back at that winter, most of its evenings seem to have been spent before the open fire, the room lighted only by its blaze.

Sometimes Little Blossom lay across my knees, the firelight mirrored in her thoughtful eyes, her pink toes curling and uncurling to the heat. Sometimes she lay cradled in Julius's arms, while he crooned old ditties remembered from his own childhood.

Bruno never seemed to tire of studying this new-comer to our home circle. He would stand with ears drooped forward, watching me bathe and dress her, so absorbed in contemplation that he would start when I spoke, as if he had forgotten my existence.

He had always before seemed intensely jealous when Julius or I had noticed children, but with

Little Blossom it was different; he seemed to share our feelings,—she was *our* baby.

At first he showed a disposition to play with her as he had long ago romped with Rebecca's kittens, but after I had once explained to him that she was too little and tender for such frolics, that he must wait till she could run about, he seemed quite satisfied, and constituted himself her guardian, as he had always been mine. While she slept, he would lie beside her crib. When she took an airing, it was his delight to walk proudly beside the carriage. When I held her, he sat at my elbow; and when she laughed and cooed in her romps with Julius, he would make short runs around the room, barking his delight.

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Happy hours, all too short!

As spring advanced, our Little Blossom drooped. Her brain had always been in advance of her physical development. She had never the meaningless stare seen in normal babies. Instead, there was a wistful, pensive expression as she gazed into the fire or through the window, with always a quick dimpling smile when either of us spoke to her. There was much sickness in town, especially among young children. We decided to spend the summer months at the seashore. A cottage was leased, and trunks were packed full of summer clothes, draperies, and other joys and comforts.

When the time came to start, the cry arose,—

"Where is Bruno?"

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No one knew. None remembered seeing him since breakfast. It was now half-past ten. The train was to go at eleven, and we were three-quarters of a mile from the station! We felt utterly lost. It was impossible to leave Bruno, and yet we must go.

Julius looked in all directions, calling and whistling. No answer. Our baggage had gone, a wagon full of it. The tickets were bought, and everything was arranged.

Julius came in from an unsuccessful search, a look of desperation on his face.

"There's no help for it," he said; "we must start, Bruno or no Bruno."

We locked up the house and set off. As we drove along, I kept looking out, hoping to see the familiar form come dashing after us, but in vain. Julius was to come into town each morning to the office, returning to us at the seashore on the afternoon train. I began to think I could not know Bruno's fate (for I feared something serious must have happened) until the afternoon of the next day. We had been so delayed it was necessary to make all speed.



Chasing Crabs and Sea-Birds.—PAGE 111.

We hurried into the station, and there, standing beside our heap of luggage, one eye for the packages and the other on the lookout for us, stood Bruno!

He greeted us with such extravagant delight, and we felt so relieved at seeing him, that we found no reproaches ready. Besides, although he had so delayed us, it was quite evident that he had thought we had our hands over-full, and that by keeping his eye on the things he would be helping us. So he had followed the wagon, overlooked the unloading, and evidently had kept tally of every package. Our man who had driven the wagon was to go on with us to help in the transfer

at the other end, and to make all ready for comfort in the cottage. He told us that Bruno had mounted guard over him as well as our effects, and while rather overdoing it, had been quite helpful.

It is hard to write of the weeks that followed.

I see Bruno racing up and down the beach and swimming out through the breakers, while Julius and I sit on either side of a little wicker wagon drawn up beyond the reach of the tide, watching him.

I see him chasing crabs and sea-birds, or limping up to show us his foot stung by a stranded jelly-fish.

Then—darkness.

It is night in a long white-draped room.

One end of it is lighted by a lamp having a rose-colored shade.

In the middle of the lighted end stands a crib. A little white-robed form lies within.

The pink light so simulates a glow of health that the mother, sitting beside the crib, bends low, thinking the little breast heaves.

But no. The waxen cheeks chill her lips.

Still she bends and gazes on that loved little form.

Bruno lies at the mother's feet. When she moves he rises, looking mournfully into the crib, then turns to rest his head on her knee.

On a lounge, in the end of the room where shadows lurk, the father lies asleep, exhausted with grief.

The curtains sway in the open windows, as if the room were breathing. All else is still.

I see all this as if it were a scene in a dream or as a picture,—something in which I have no part; and yet I feel that my heart throbbed in that mother's bosom.

I know that after she had sent away all kind friends, to watch alone that last night, it was literally and truly a "white night" to her.

She felt neither sorrow nor grief.

Yesterday her heart was torn with anguish, when those heavenly eyes grew dim with the death-glaze.

To-morrow it will be rent again, when the little form is hidden from her in its white casket; and again—at that bitterest moment Life can give—when the first handful of earth makes hollow echo above it.

But to-night there is the uplifted feeling of perfect peace.

Although it is the third sleepless night, there is no thought of weariness. All through the short hours she sits and feasts her eyes on the angelic face with its look of joy unutterable.

And Bruno watches with her.

The next day Bruno does not ask to join the sad procession leaving the cottage.

He has no thought for self at such a time.

As it turns the corner, his mournful eyes are seen at the window, gazing after his little playmate who is being carried away.

Or does he realize it is only the beautiful body they are taking, which was all too frail for the bright spirit now flown these two days since!

CHAPTER XVIII

Again the mother is in the city home. No crib stands by the fireplace; no tiny garments are spread out to air. All is orderly as in the years that now seem so far away.

She sits with book or needle.

The book falls to her knee, the work slips to the floor; tears steal down her cheeks.

Bruno presses near, his head against her arm. With his uplifted, pleading eyes, he seems to say,—

[Pg 111]

[Pg 112]

[Pg 113]

[Pg 114]

"Don't cry, Judith, please don't cry."

Oh, matchless comforter!

After a time we notice that Bruno is growing old and feeble.

Do we grieve at this? Far from it. We feel that life is over for us; our only thought is to escape its grasp and join our Little Blossom.

We could never leave Bruno alone; he would grieve himself to death, and meanwhile, perhaps, be abused as a stupid brute for refusing to be comforted.

So it is with a feeling of sad resignation that we realize how his hold on life is weakening. At least he will die in comfort, ministered to by his loved ones. [Pg 115]

We sit alone, we three, in the twilight,—Julius and I, with Bruno at our feet,—talking of the future. We speculate on the Beyond, hoping it will not be the conventional Heaven, with harps and crowns.

We long for a sheltered nook, near the River of Life, where we and Little Blossom can resume the life so happily begun here, going over to the Happy Hunting Grounds to get Bruno, and to the Cat Heaven for Rebecca and Catsie.

Then, our family circle complete, we would settle down to an eternity of HOME.

Can Heaven itself offer anything sweeter than home,—the wedded home, where love abides!

One morning Bruno seemed not to care for his breakfast. He sniffed daintily at it, and turned away, though I tried to tempt him with everything he liked best.

He rested his head on my knee, looking gratefully into my eyes, while his tail waved his thanks.

Then he went to his bed, and lying down upon it, he fell asleep,—not a short uneasy nap, with ears open for every sound, but a deep, dreamless sleep. [Pg 116]

There was a beautiful young fig-tree in our lot. Under this his grave was dug. His bed was laid in, he on it, with his blanket wrapped around him.

"Arise against thy narrow door of earth,
And keep the watch for me!"

THE END

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A Contents has been added with links to the appropriate pages as an aid to the reader. This was not included in the original book.

Illustrations have been moved so as to not interrupt the flow of the text. Links are provided to the actual illustration and not to the referenced page number.

The book cover has been modified from the original

Missing punctuation has been added and obvious punctuation errors have been corrected.

Printer errors, misspelled and archaic words have been retained with the exception of that noted below.

Page 91: "gods" changed to "goods" (and we again found ourselves on the train with our household goods).

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BRUNO ***

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