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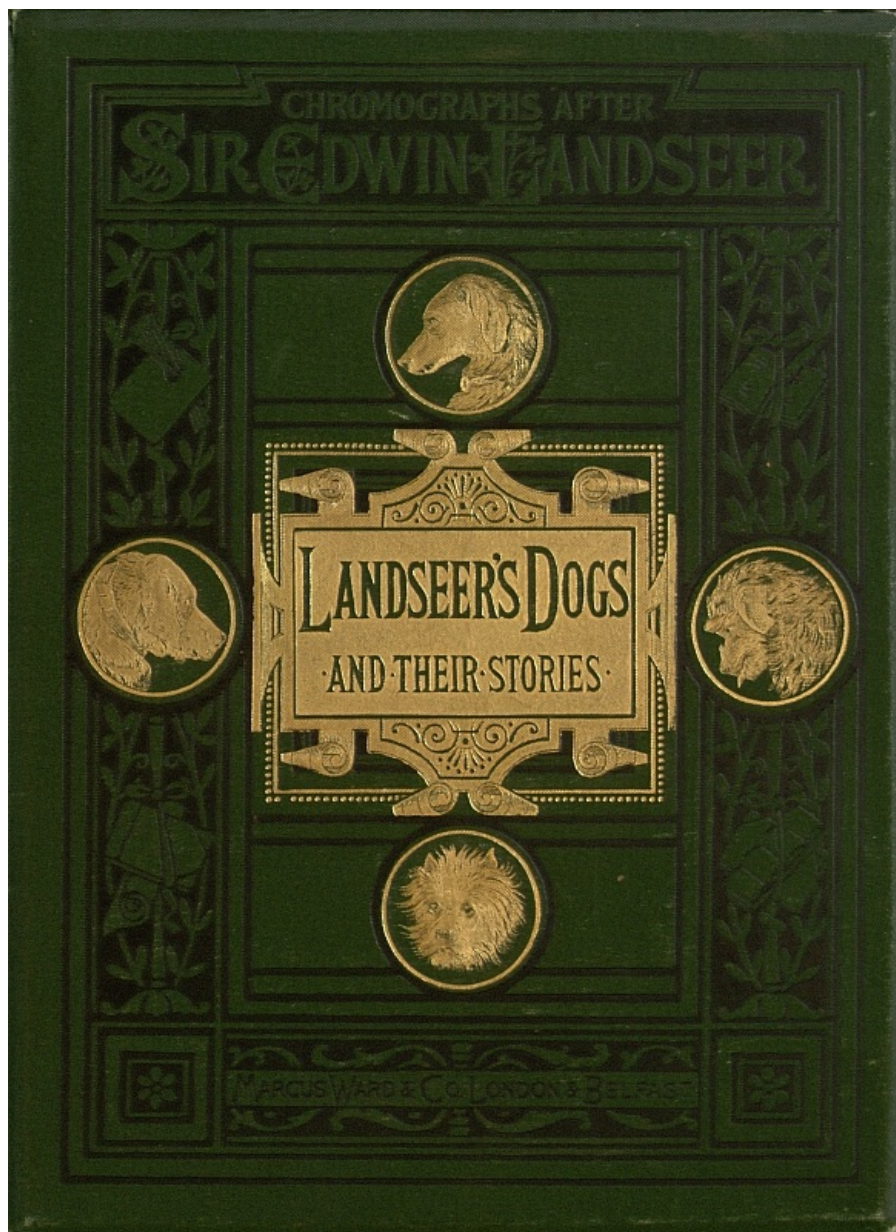
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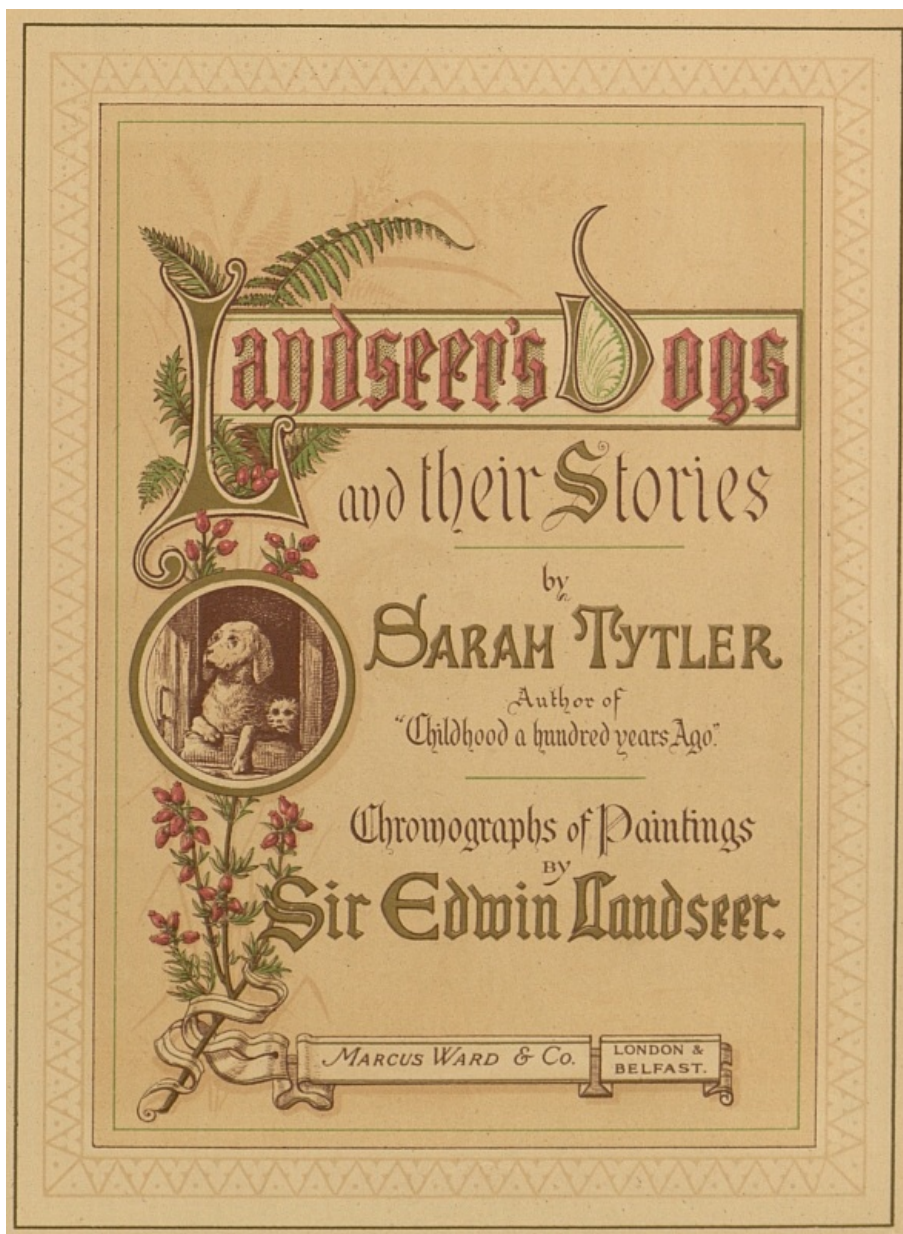
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Landseer's Dogs and their Stories





Landseer's Dogs and their Stories

by
Sarah Tytler

Author of
"Childhood a hundred years Ago."

Chronographs of Paintings
BY
Sir Edwin Landseer.

Marcus Ward & Co. London &
Belfast.

LANDSEER'S DOGS
AND THEIR STORIES

BY

SARAH TYTLER

AUTHOR OF "PAPERS FOR THOUGHTFUL GIRLS," "CHILDHOOD A HUNDRED
YEARS AGO," &c., &c.

With Six Chromographs

AFTER PAINTINGS BY SIR EDWIN LANDSEER



London:

MARCUS WARD & CO., 67 & 68, CHANDOS STREET, STRAND
AND ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST

1877

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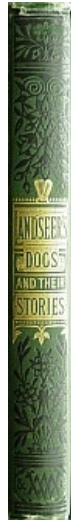
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LANDSEER'S DOGS AND THEIR STORIES.

INTRODUCTORY.



PORTION of Sir Edwin Landseer's strength and of his weakness lay in the human element which he introduced into his pictures of animals. Each of his pictures tells a story—not only of animal characteristics, but of those characteristics as they approach most closely to men's qualities, and as they are blended most inseparably with men's lives.

The dog is the humble friend of man, and man has been called the god of the dog; a sorry god at the best—often a perverse and cruel divinity. In very many of Landseer's pictures it is impossible to dissolve the relationship. You cannot look at the animal without thinking of the absent master and mistress. The hero or the heroine of the scene is strongly influenced by the man or the woman in the background. It is a little drama of blended human and animal life, as well as the spirited and faithful likeness of an animal which you gaze upon. [8]

A good deal of what is unique in Landseer belongs to this peculiarity, and much of his great popularity is due to it. Men are charmed not only by contemplating the representations of their four-footed favourites, but by having a genius to interpret to them the beautiful and gracious ties which bind together God's higher and humbler creatures. After all, God put man at the head of His creatures in this world, and perhaps man is not so far wrong as he has sometimes been said to show himself, in seeing in the lower animals a reflection of his own hopes, aims, and destiny.

The selfish and sympathetic instincts are strong in us; and neither grown man nor child will, unless in very exceptional cases, feel either long or deep concern in a kingdom from which he himself is banished. Our familiarity, our fellow-feeling, is to a large extent the measure of our interest in any subject. If we cannot put ourselves in the place of our neighbour, let him have two feet or four, we will not continue long to care for him; and, *vice versa*, if we have not imagination enough to endow our neighbour with some of our own attributes, so that he may stand, in a way, in our place, our regard for him will be but partial and fleeting.

People speak of the charm in unlikeness and the attraction in reverses; but there must be a more profound underlying harmony for such a charm and attraction to exist. The fact is, we can only appreciate what we understand in a degree at least, and there is no understanding without some points of union. If I may venture reverently to employ such an analogy, though man was made in the image of his Maker, when he had done all he could to deface that image, he became so incapable of having God in all his thoughts, that God, in His divine mercy, had compassion upon man's miserable incapacity, and, taking upon Him the form of a man, restored the lost link in the chain which binds the whole universe to the throne of God. [9]

Children have no difficulty in mentally putting themselves in the place of animals, or in putting animals in their place. Some of my readers may be inclined to say this is because the child is itself a little animal, with its higher faculties undeveloped; but none will refuse to admit that the moral and intellectual faculties are there, however much in abeyance. For my part, I believe that it is rather from the essential gifts of a child, its immense power of believing beyond what it sees, its ready sympathy and boundless trust, than from its defects of ignorance, that it has the happy capacity of identifying itself with its pets, and even its toys, either by transferring to them its own possessions, or by appropriating their experience. Curious instances of such application occur to me. A little child was heard gravely rebuking her dog. "If you are so naughty, Floss, your Uncle Tom and your Aunt Anne" (bestowing in all simplicity of heart her own relations on the dog) "will be vexed; you know they will."

The second instance is given by an accomplished writer in a recent story, but I am persuaded it is from real life. I quote from memory.

"Why are you crying, Emily? What is the matter?" a mother asked her little daughter in tears.

"Oh, mamma! I am not Emily just now," the child explained through her sobs; "I am the parrot the cat has been after, and I cannot get over the loss of my best tail feathers." [10]

A little child lisping its evening prayers startled its human hearers by adding an impromptu petition:—"God bless Ducky-daidles;" referring to an ugly little wooden duck which the child had received into the inmost circle of its affections.

It is a well-known fact that there is sometimes developed in men and women from childhood an extraordinary relation to animals, a capability of communicating with them, and exerting influence over them which does not commonly exist. With this abnormal alliance is doubtless connected the old myth of Orpheus gathering a brute audience to listen to the music of his lyre, and the more modern stories of bird and snake charmers and horse-tamers. I imagine this is only an extreme and abiding manifestation of an ordinary characteristic of childhood; and I believe it to be the inheritance, more or less, of all great animal painters.

But Sir Edwin Landseer possessed his animals in another sense from that in which the expression is used of other eminent animal painters, and especially with regard to the animal painters of the French and Belgian schools. He possessed them not merely as an artist, but as a man—I had almost said a brother—certainly in the light in which Robert Burns employed, with perfect manly tenderness, the term “fellow-mortal” to the field-mouse whose nest his ploughshare had turned up; and in the meaning which Sir Walter Scott intended to convey, when, on the day of the death of his dog, he wrote an apology to a host who expected Sir Walter’s company at dinner, on the plea of “the loss of an old friend.” Sir Edwin Landseer possessed animals—not simply in an accurate knowledge of their bodily traits, their hoofs, horns, and tails, the red fire or the luminous brown discs of their eyes, the symmetry of their loins, the glassy texture of their coats, or the soft sheen of their feathers—but in the chivalrous insight into those instincts in animals which in their sagacity and devotion sometimes put to shame the boasted wisdom and constancy of man. [11]

I cannot help thinking that the wide-spread popularity of Sir Edwin Landseer in England is not only a credit to that manliness of national character which expresses itself in a love of out-of-door sports, and of the animals which share in these sports, but is also honourable as an evidence of the kindly satisfaction with which a matter of fact and plain-spoken race recognise in their four-footed allies attributes which constitute them far more than useful dependants—privileged and cherished comrades.

I should like to say a word on the other side of the question—I mean with regard to the sense in which Sir Edwin Landseer’s lively interpretation of the characters of animals—dogs in particular—has been an element of weakness in his power.

It has been alleged by those critics least affected by his second sight into the motives of animals, and most enamoured of the painters of brutes in their entirety—brutes as apart from men, while each specimen is distinct and individual in itself, and while it has a relation to the nature, if not the human nature, around it—that Sir Edwin sacrificed truth to sentiment till it became fantastic, and that in the pursuit he lost, not any grain of his popularity among his multitude of admirers, but something of his technical skill. It would be presumption in me to defend Sir Edwin; neither, in truth, am I inclined to write that he was never guilty of an exaggeration or fantasticalness—that he never failed in effect. But I am quite clear in the statement that it was the truth of his interpretation—not subtle, but transparent—of the dumb speech of animals which caused it to be accepted with unqualified delight by their masters, high and low; and that nothing short of the most exquisite perception of propriety on Sir Edwin’s part could have enabled him to give innumerable versions of the inner life of animals, with so little of the exaggeration and fantasticalness which would have easily become repugnant to the common sense of Englishmen. [12]

The great English animal painter was a marvellous poet in his own department, and it ought to be simply a source of thankfulness to us that he painted poetry which those who run can read.

Yet I am about to attempt to tell again the stories which some of his animals tell me, since it may well be they have other tales for other admirers, and that, therefore, my experience may not be quite uncalled for and too much. But if in any respect I cumber with words or mar by false rendering the suggestive text which I am seeking to illustrate lovingly, I can only hope that my blunder may be forgiven.







CHAPTER I. "LOW LIFE."

I DARE not say that the bull-terrier, my hero, was pure bred. I am strongly disposed to think that he was mongrel—of the hardy, self-reliant, incorrigible type which some mongrel races assume, until their very mongrelness, like their ugliness, becomes almost respectable by its manly independence and stoical indifference.

He was not by any means a dog of fine feelings, though no doubt he had his weak side, which had nothing to do with the question of his personal appearance. He was a democrat to the backbone, with so little pretension to be what he was not, that if it had not been for a large stock of coarse stolidity, and of self-confidence amounting to impudence, a total incapacity to comprehend a higher range of character than he himself possessed, and a certain scurrilous tongue of his own, he would have been, in his unvarnished low life, still tolerably free from vulgarity.

If you will examine him narrowly, you will find clear indications of the qualities I have referred to in his general aspect. I do not say anything of the shortness of his ears, as I suspect they have been cropped, and he is certainly not accountable for an operation performed against his will. But remark and admire his small piggish eyes, the broad brevity of his nose, and the equal brevity of his tail, the width of his jowl, the thickness of his neck—even in his clumsy conformation, and the peculiar dogmatic obstinacy with which his substantial paws are turned inwards. I am afraid I cannot call him anything except a plain-looking dog, with no nonsense about him. [14]

But he is not destitute of solid advantages, on which he justly piques himself, in that big body scarred with the traces of many a combat in which he has come off the victor.

He may be little to boast of where speed, agility, keenness of scent, quickness and sureness of sight, discipline, docility, and splendid sagacity are desired, but he has always his vigour and endurance to fall back upon, and they are a tower of strength in themselves.

That bullet-head and those close-shut jaws can thrust like a battering-ram and grip like a vice. His capacious chest and hind quarters, and his posts of legs, offer a great field of resistance, and are as hard to uproot as a stout young sapling. His hide is well-nigh as thick as that of a rhinoceros, and can stand a perfect hail-storm of blows without flinching. Many a rival dog he has throttled, many a man and boy he has threatened successfully to "pin." His scowl and his growl are enough to repel all, save the boldest and most dauntless of assailants.

If he is not a dog of brilliant parts, he knows a thing or two where self-preservation is concerned. He is perfectly capable of looking after number one—the only number which he feels himself called upon to reckon; in fact, poor fellow, he has been accustomed to that reckoning, and to dwelling upon it with dull, degrading reiteration from his earliest years. [15]

If you could ask himself, he would tell you decidedly that he has no relations, and he would imply with an inarticulate murmur, between a grunt and a growl, that the question is one of perfect indifference to him; he does not mind the privation in the least—he is sufficient for himself.

"He cares for nobody, no, not he,
If nobody cares for him."

For that matter, ancestors, contemporaries, descendants would have been a considerable incumbrance to him in his circumstances, which he will not hesitate to admit have been for the most part precarious, and in what has usually been his hand-to-mouth mode of picking up a living.

Not that he is a dog of no calling, or that he merely works on the job principle. You may notice that he has a collar round his neck, and is therefore of sufficient consequence to own a master. Indeed, he has nothing of the shirking, hang-dog air, alternating with the savage expression of the dog-tramp or pauper. His very heavy assurance and thorough mastery of the situation altogether contradict his belonging to that grade.

He may be low—one of the rudest and surliest of working dogs, but he is still a working dog, a trusty watch in the absence of his master from his place of work, a ratter of some renown. He is, to do him justice, removed from the deepest gulf into which dogs and men can sink.

But he is in error on that point of his relations without knowing it; for his truth and honesty, unless under overwhelming temptations, are among his best claims on our regard. Dog of the [16]

people as he is, he is not without distinguished kindred. We need not mention his unfortunate great-grand-uncle, who was the avenging shadow over the garret roofs of a certain ruffianly Bill Sykes, and who met the fate which is generally the portion of avenging shadows. He has other claims to a much more distant connection, certainly, but as they are to carry him into the upper regions of society, let them be counted. He has an ancestor in a dog named Trump, who was altogether in a superior position in life, and on his death received the honour of having a monument erected to his memory in the garden of the house at Chiswick which belonged to his attached master, the great painter. Our friend had also a canny Scotch cousin, who bore a part in a famous dialogue delivered in the district of Kyle, in the county of Ayr, and preserved and handed down to posterity.

It is time that we recorded our hero's name, and began to give some particulars of his not uneventful plebeian history. I dare say my readers conjecture that his name was plebeian too, like all the rest about him—that it was "Jim," or "Ned," or "Crab," or "Pickles," or "Seize 'em," or "Tear 'em." Not at all. In spite of his democratic antecedents and proclivities, he had an aristocratic, nay, a royal designation. My own observation tends to prove that this inconsistent appellation was according to a law of human nature. In the various households belonging to the humblest ranks with which he had any acquaintance, there were to be found specimens of the finest, most sonorous titles in the English nomenclature. There was generally a Gussy or a Louie, and there were twice Fredericks and once a Marmaduke. The dog's first master styled the waif, either in high-reaching ambition or in smouldering satire, "Prince;" and Prince, not President, he is likely to continue till the day of his death. [17]

It is no reproach to Prince's powers of memory—which, at the same time, were only remarkable in what were to him the parallel lines of meals and feuds—that they could not carry him back beyond that era in puppyhood when he was found, in one of the back slums of London, doing brave battle with a dog twice his size and age for a gnawed crust.

Unquestionably, Prince had not first seen the light in such a dainty kennel as might have impressed his juvenile imagination, and the loss of which would have made a crisis in his early history. The probability was that he was the puppy of some poor working dog, such as he himself became in after-life; and that the dog's proprietor, after having tolerated him for a few weeks—during which he showed no signs of growing up of any particular value, and when no fellow-workman fancied the "pup"—had either separated him from his parent, and cast him adrift on the world, or had suffered him to be lost in the street, and thrown on the tender mercies of the police, as the easiest solution of the difficulty—happily less insurmountable than that of Ginx's spare baby.

But the finder of Prince was not a policeman. He was a little boy named Jack, who was almost as audacious and reckless as the puppy, with the delight of a child in a young dog—especially in a young dog which is treasure-trove, and when there is the fraction of a chance he may be permitted to retain it for his own property. He decoyed Prince, still a nameless little cur, from the fray in which he was engaged, christened him Prince, with a splendid disregard of the proprieties, on the spot, and prepared to convey him home, tucked tightly within Jack's ragged jacket. [18]

Poor little Prince! pugilistic as he had already shown himself, and as he was doomed to prove throughout his career, he responded then, as he always did, in his gruff fashion, to the scant kindness which was shown him. He did not nestle to Jack's heart or lick his dirty hand, for he was never a demonstrative dog, but he cocked the ears—short even then, before they had undergone the hideous process of cropping—looked up with his small beads of eyes in his captor's face, as if acknowledging his master, and then gave one short, stiff wag of his stump of a tail, as if appending his signature—the signature of the puppy-father to the dog whose word was his bond—to the bargain.

That slightly ungracious, yet expressive wag of the tail did Jack's business, and rendered him ten times more bent on retaining the puppy, in spite of sundry obstacles which he saw looming ahead of the connection, in the prejudices which might be entertained by his father and mother regarding their small means—of which Jack, boy as he was, did not fail to be aware—their limited house accommodation, and the number of his little brothers and sisters.

But if Prince the puppy was father to Prince the dog, so Jack the boy was father to Jack the man. A certain jolly self-indulgence and ignoring of consequences, so long as they could be shelved, were from first to last marked features in his character. When Jack, with his captive, reached the small, swarming, reeking family-room, in which there was always a washing going on, at some stage of the process, his mother did say that they had already as many dogs as there was bran for. And his father, coming in from his last odd job, told the boy to get along, and asked him reproachfully if his father's dog, Bully, a lame, cantankerous old bull-terrier of dubious origin, and his mother's birds—canaries and goldfinches, which were her "fad"—were not, together with his numerous little brothers and sisters, pets enough for him? [19]

But Jack was his father and mother's own boy, and, as it was rather a prosperous time with them, they could not find it in their hearts to baulk him in an inclination with which they had really so much sympathy. So Prince was suffered to become a member of the happy-go-lucky family. The only serious opposition he met with came from his dog-brother, Bully, who assumed a hostile attitude of tooth and claw. However, Bully was old and incapable, so that a tolerably active young dog could manage to escape from the execution of his menaces. Besides, a street accident soon afterwards disposed of the canine patriarch, to the unaffected grief of his master.

Prince grew to dog's estate in the household, sharing its very fluctuating, but inevitably downward-tending, fortunes, scrambling with it for a livelihood—feasting the one day, fasting the next—receiving a cuff, or a spendthrift dole, as humour and the family purse inclined.

Prince acquired stores of knowledge and experience of a mixed sort at this stage of his existence. He was accustomed to go everywhere with Jack in his spare time—above all, on his half-holidays. Prince enlarged his acquaintance with London; he was not only a regular attendant on all the bird sales and rat-pits in the neighbourhood, but travelled into the suburbs and to the verge of the country. He followed Punch and Judys, and joined in the festivities of Guy Fawkes' and chimney-sweeps' days. He went a-palming on the Saturday before Palm Sunday; he was on Hampstead Heath, in Greenwich Park, and Epping Forest, and saw the coloured paper-streamers, and the brilliant crimson and green false beards on successive Easter and Whit Mondays. The wide open spaces, the green grass, the shady trees puzzled him a good deal, but not nearly so much as did the sea, which he once saw in a cheap trip to Brighton, when Jack's family were in exceptional funds, and spending them like princes.

[20]

Prince was never absent from the Boat Race. Year after year, as the day came round, he was to be found stationed by Jack's side on the Hammersmith Bridge, not half so much incommode, on account of the pressure—which, indeed, he could keep off by the use of natural weapons—as he had been startled by the wide world of waters, on the edge of which he had stood, with his tail uncertain whether to droop or to curl, at Brighton.

I question whether any dog belonging to the two universities took a greater interest in the race, even though he had been rowed for hours by his attentive master on the Isis or the Cam, than did Prince, in all impartiality; for, though he had a rag of ribbon tied duly round his neck by Jack, Prince at least had no bet either on the light or the dark blue. No more had he any, save the simplest friendly interest, in the winner of the Derby, when he accompanied Jack in an overflowing costermonger's cart to Epsom Downs. His temper was sorely tried on the way, not merely by the traffic and the clouds of dust, but by the flour warfare, which powdered him white like a miller's dog. As Prince could not wear a veil, his small eyes were filled till he could hardly blink at the flying hedges, or, after his arrival, at the grand stand, the starting-point, the negro serenaders, and the gipsy fortune-tellers.

[21]

On the whole, Prince had a tolerably happy youth, for a dog of his condition, under Jack's auspices. It might not have been so improving as one could wish, but he learnt some proficiency in shifting for himself, and being philosophical when nothing better offered—a valuable lesson for more than dogs.

Everything comes to an end, and few things sooner, alas! than the hand-to-mouth drifting with the tide of careless, improvident working people. There came a time, at no distant date in Jack's and Prince's household, in which there were no longer treats and dainties going. Bacon, buttered toast, and saveloys vanished from the board. Meals became intermittent. Bit after bit of furniture, and every scrap of clothing that could be spared, were put in pawn at one of the shops with the three golden balls above the doorway. The mother of the family was laid down with typhus, and removed to the nearest hospital. Young Gussy and Fred shared the same fate.

Poor Jack, hanging his head, began to speak of parting with Prince. He had often wished he could put him in pawn with the rest of the pledged goods, and borrow a little money on Prince's capabilities of keeping guard and ridding. Jack had joked in his half-rueful, half-rough fashion on the dogs not eating his head off, since he could hardly tell on what Prince, together with his master's family, had fed for the last fortnight. Jack knew very well how he and Prince had gone out, in company and separately, after nightfall and in broad day, on the hunt; how they had constituted themselves amateur chiffonniers, and burrowed in the dust heaps for cast-away fragments; how they had hung about the doors of eating-houses and bakers shops for chance crumbs; how they had picked up garbage and been thankful.

[22]

But it was one thing to joke and another to dispose, for good and all, of the old dog—he was an old dog now in Jack's eyes—and that to a customer who was hard-fisted and cross-grained, whose bite and sup Prince would not share, and who could no more be trusted to let old friends meet than he could be expected to redeem the forfeited articles and restore the fallen fortunes of the family gone to the wall.

But Jack, who had been, in his humble way, self-willed and extravagant from his cradle, had already parted with more precious possessions than Prince, and it is to be feared would part with still more before his history was ended. Anyhow, he sold Prince for the merest trifle to a hard buyer; and as tears were in Jack's dull eyes when he closed the bargain, we will dismiss him with the reluctant reflection that, if he or his progenitors had only owned a single germ of noble self-denial, manly, womanly forethought, plucky, cheery diligence, he might not merely have kept the dog—he and his might have been as independent and well-to-do, and risen as far above want, with its terrible temptations, as any of the gentlefolks in the land.

The inducement which Prince's new master, Mr. Jerry Noakes, had for the purchase, was that he had enjoyed some opportunity of remarking Prince's tenacity of purpose and literal discharge of a commission, which he was convinced would render the dog a good watch; while Mr. Jerry was satisfied, from Prince present appearance, that he could be put off with as shabby quarters and meagre fare as will suffice to keep a dog in life. In fact, Mr. Jerry Noakes' principle, which he found to work well for his ends, was—don't pamper your dependants on any consideration, if you

[23]

wish them to be of use to you—on the contrary, grind them down to the last extremity, and all that is in them will be stimulated to do battle with the world on their and your account.

Mr. Jerry Noakes owned a small coal-yard—very small and very little frequented, though its possessor was a man of some substance—but he drew his means from other sources. Still he was not inclined that these slaty-looking, dusty, crumbling piles of coals which were his property should disappear under the predatory attacks of the loafers in a low neighbourhood. Therefore he procured Prince at a cheap rate, inducted him into a couch—which, as it had been knocked together by Mr. Jerry Noakes' own hands from some rickety deals, was as poor an affair and as wretched a shelter from the weather as could well be imagined—and put him in charge of the yard.

It might be promotion, but it was also a great reverse for Prince. True, he had now a regular meal once a-day, a moderate mess of bran and food for poultry, with the parings of cats' meat, administered by Mr. Jerry, in place of Prince's being called upon to forage for himself, with the not uncommon conclusion of finding himself both breakfastless and dinnerless, as had been the case lately in Jack's family circle. But not only was the gain not large, there was the sentiment of the thing. I hope none of my readers suppose that Prince, though a coarse brute, thick-skinned and obtuse, was destitute of feeling. [24]

In Jack's home the dog was one of the family; indeed from his very doghood he had rather the best of it. For if men and women, responsible beings, will live, like animals, along with animals, the last—the real Simon Pures—have generally the advantage. Jack's race, reckless as they were, must surely have been visited with some doubts, some anxieties, some pricking sense that they were wasting their capital of time and capacity for work as well as of wages. But of course Prince was never harassed by such a reminder that he had a conscience, and was at once mortal and immortal. He had his little work to do, and did it to the best of his ability. He was occasionally left to keep house, and did not fail in his trust. He sat beside the tools of Jack's trade many a day, never offering to stir till Jack released him. He entered with pride and zest into his calling as a rat-catcher whenever he had the chance. But all the time he was largely his own master, for he could hardly call it servitude to roam the world of London at Jack's heels.

It was another matter for Prince to be a prisoner himself, while prepared to take others prisoners, in this dreary yard—to spend day and night there—to have no change of scene, no comradeship, though it might result in scuffles and single combats with other dogs—to see nobody for a stretch of twenty-four hours, perhaps, except Mr. Jerry Noakes. He always spoke gruffly, never encouragingly, to Prince; and the dog, though he was gruff himself, with little tenderness or humour, so that he was impatient of fondling, and had no great aptitude for fun, yet knew and appreciated what fidelity and good-fellowship meant. [25]

That parting from his first master, Jack, had been a great wrench to Prince's whole nature; and while the strain of the pull, and the ache of the void, were still in full force, the dog was condemned for his sins to solitary confinement, on the lowest diet, and with no satisfaction of his social instincts, except the brief interview with Mr. Jerry Noakes, his gaoler, who never said, "Hie! old dog," or "What are you arter to-day, you duffer?" or "Shan't we have a rove to-night, my beauty?"

Sometimes Prince was so depressed in his spirits that he could not find it in his heart to make a spring, worry, and have done with a cat which, from scrambling idly down on the wall, ventured imprudently to descend into his territory. He contented himself with growling at her, just that she might escape to the wall again, and stand there raising her back and spitting at him, which was an approach to company.

It was a positive relief when the sun was right overhead, blazing down into the little black hole, threatening to produce spontaneous combustion among the materials for fuel which seemed then so unnecessary, and to grill the bones of Prince, lying panting with his tongue out in that couch of his, which neither kept out heat nor cold, and was very far from water-tight—that he could divert his mind from sad thoughts by watching the blue-bottle flies which, for some reason Prince could not divine—if he had got his choice, he would not have selected such quarters—congregated and buzzed lazily about the enclosure. Prince only watched the flies; he was by far too practical and mature a dog to descend—even in his dulness, and although he had not been weak from deficiency of food and overcome by the heat—to anything so childish as catching flies. [26]

I think it was Sir Edwin Landseer himself who said that no dog could endure being kept strictly on the chain for a longer period than three years; that his heart would break, or his reason give way in the interval.

I believe Prince was nearly three years Mr. Jerry Noakes property without either dying or going mad; but then he was a dog of singular powers of endurance, as I have signified; besides, after the first few months of his joint experience of being a gaoler and gaoled, there were modifications introduced into the system which rendered it more bearable to him.

Mr. Jerry Noakes discovered that by the sheer force of habit, and of that defective imagination which prevents some men and dogs, though driven to extremity, from breaking out into independent enterprise, Prince, if let loose for a season, would return doggedly, of his own accord, to his durance on the expiry of a reasonable time. Therefore, when Mr. Jerry was himself on duty at the yard, he would free the dog, and send him out of the gates for a scamper, reflecting with a grin that he saved Prince's feed that morning—since the dog was sure to nose

out some booty in his outing—as well as preserved him in good health.

Even if Prince had, with keen canine sagacity and a yearning heart, sought out his former home, he would still have missed his old protector, for, in sinking lower and lower, the humble street where Jack and his family had dwelt in Prince's day now knew them no more. The seniors and the younger children had gravitated without fail to the House; while Jack had become peripatetic in his vocation, and moved rapidly from one wretched lodging-house to another. [27]

But, truth to tell, Prince did not attempt to make the discovery. He was too stupid, and too prostrated by slow starvation, to do more than prowl about the immediate neighbourhood of his yard, and stump—for Prince no more slunk, not even when he was greatly in the wrong, than he stalked—back to his den when he was weary, or when some occult instinct told him that his leave was up.

Prince was not in some important respects the dog he looks in his picture when he was living with Mr. Jerry Noakes. He is a fairly well-fed dog, and in excellent condition, as we see him; but in those hard times he was reduced to skin and bone, his ribs could be counted, his mongrel disproportions were exposed in all their ugliness, and there was a wild look—that of a creature at bay, and which struck people as unsafe—about the dog.

Yet the lamentable change on the outer dog was not the worst result of Prince's residence with Mr. Jerry Noakes; the inner dog was undergoing as sure a deterioration. Any good that had been in Prince was being stamped out of him. He was hardening back into the original savage wolf or jackal. His truth and honesty, which had been his best domestic qualities, were being corrupted and sapped to the foundation.

With Jack's family Prince had been—well, free and easy in his practices; but the whole family had been free and easy in their ways, and anything like deliberate, premeditated larceny was unknown to the dog. There was all the difference that there is between manslaughter and murder in Prince's helping himself occasionally when the opportunity came unexpectedly in his way, and when he knew that there was no great offence in the deed, and in his craftily planning and brazenly carrying out, in utter impenitence, the series of roll-liftings from the baskets on bakers' counters, and trotter-snatchings from behind butchers' doors, in spite of the butchers' dogs, whose vigilance he managed to evade—by which Prince signalled his absences from the shed. [28]

Mr. Jerry Noakes was right, that Prince needed no regular meal on the day of his temporary release. Indeed, if Mr. Jerry had known how liberally the dog fared on these occasions, the man might have sought covertly to share in the spoil, and might have been tempted, though he had no need, to run the risk of constituting Prince a professional thief and a permanent provider, in a dishonest manner, for the material wants of both.

But Prince's diabolical cunning, that new and alarming feature in the dog's character, was too much for his master. Prince took care to despatch every crumb and hair, and get rid of all traces of his unlawful proceedings, before he returned sullenly to his master.

It is all very well to laugh; but the dog, with all his craft, would have been caught red-handed some day and made a public example of, perishing miserably by a violent death, had not Mr. Jerry Noakes' own death suddenly dissolved the connection between him and Prince. Mr. Jerry Noakes was removed at a moment's notice from all his grubbing and grinding, and Prince, after narrowly escaping being forgotten and starved to death in the yard, fell into the hands of Mr. Miles Noakes, Mr. Jerry's nephew and nearest surviving relation.

Mr. Miles was a family man settled in the country, and was called on to sustain the trouble and expense of a journey to London in order to discharge the last duties to Mr. Jerry, and possibly to be rewarded by entering on his inheritance. Those who had known Mr. Jerry said "possibly" advisedly, while they were aware that Mr. Miles was the nearest surviving relation; and the cautious wording of the phrase was vindicated by the sequel. Mr. Jerry had left a will, and bequeathed his gains in two parts—to a more distant relation than Mr. Miles, and who was comparatively rich and in no want of money, and to a charitable institution. [29]

It was just after Mr. Miles had been made acquainted with the disposal of the funds that he, still acting in the character of the representative of the dead man, seeing that the favoured kinsman had not put himself about to attend the funeral, looked into the yard and remarked Prince.

The dog, faithful to the single principle of duty that was left in him, threatened the intruder as furiously as if Prince himself were not an arrant rogue, or as if he were acting out the adage, "Set a thief to catch a thief."

The dog looked such a miserable object, there was so little to steal, the idea of his revenging himself for being deprived of the succession by pilfering these mouldy coals—if coals can ever be called mouldy—tickled the stranger's fancy, though this was no laughing occasion, neither was he in any laughing mood.

Mr. Miles, while he had stood in the relation of nephew to Mr. Jerry, was nearly as old a man as his uncle, and, as he lounged there in his rusty black, he bore a certain resemblance to his late father's brother. He appeared crusty, if not grim, but he possessed what Mr. Jerry had certainly been devoid of—an imagination to take in the ludicrousness of the situation; and he was not altogether selfish and inhuman, for even, while smarting under the injury which had been [30]

inflicted on him, and as Prince was flying at him as far as his chain would permit, Mr. Miles said to himself, "I must see that beast put out of pain before I go."

Then the humour of the man, which had been stirred in him, took a new direction. "I should not care, just for the fun of the thing, to take him down with me to Westbarns and show him to Nanse as our share of Uncle Jerry's goods. I heard the landlord of the Hare and Hounds say he wanted a serviceable dog to replace his young Newfoundland which he had been induced to sell. I'll go bail that Uncle Jerry's dog is serviceable."

The whim found favour with a whimsical poor man, and so Prince, not without difficulty and danger, was removed to the railway station and consigned to a dog-box. There he was so dazed and confounded by the darkness and the rapid motion—which he had only once experienced before, and that was on that far-away trip to Brighton, when he had been smuggled in Jack's arms among a hilarious company into an open van—that he came out, in the course of an hour and a half, comparatively subdued, and condescended, without extreme pressure, to accompany Mr. Miles Noakes to his cottage.

It was evening when the two arrived, jaded by travel, excitement, and disappointment. A much younger looking woman than Mr. Miles was a man, was gazing eagerly along the road in expectation of their arrival. She stood at the gate of a well-kept little garden, sweet with spring flowers—blue hyacinths, primroses, polyanthuses. She had lively hazel eyes and smooth dark hair, and wore a neat cap and clean apron. She might have been a capable, prized maid-servant in her day; she was still an active, tidy matron in her early prime. [31]

"You are come at last, Miles; you must be clean done up, but the children are a-bed, and your supper is ready," she said hurriedly, while she kissed her husband, as if feeling it a relief to welcome him first before she asked the question with which her heart was beating, her breath coming fast and her lips quivering, while she had no attention to spare for his four-footed attendant.

"All right, Nanse," said Mr. Miles, entering the cottage before he vouchsafed any explanation.

Perhaps his mind misgave him, or his heart smote him with regard to the jest he was about to make, as he looked round on the familiar dwelling—small, not without evidence of narrow means, but scrupulously clean and well ordered, from the gay patched quilt on the crib, in which the two children slept, to the well-scoured pewter mug with his beer flanking the plate of cold bacon, the better part of the dinner saved for his supper.

It would be no jesting matter to Nanse to hear that the property of which he had been summoned to take possession had gone past them. When they had parted, she had not been able to help building on it, in her impulsive woman's fashion, as what should render them easy in their worldly affairs, lighten the load on their backs, provide a welcome substitute when his strength must fail, and, above all, supply better schooling for the children, and raise them above all fear of want when she alone was left to labour for them.

But Mr. Miles Noakes was not a man easily turned from a purpose, and, it might be, he thought the quip would break the weight of the fall. He said at last, as he took off his hat and placed it carefully beyond the reach of damage, while he gave a jerk of his elbow in the direction of Prince, standing uncertain on the threshold, a most unattractive object in his skeleton leanness, his unthrifty coat, and the greed which the glimpse of the victuals called up—in spite of his clumsy efforts to conceal his feelings—in his winking eyes and sniffing nose—"Well, Nanse, there is our legacy." [32]

The woman stood bewildered; her colour went and came. "Oh, Miles! you cannot mean it?" she cried at last; "Uncle Jerry and you could not be so cruel?"

"Woman, I had nothing to do with it," he said, flinging himself heavily into the chair set for him; "and was it not better than to come back empty-handed?"

She understood now that he was in earnest—that he and she had been defrauded, as she called it in her hot heart, of the time, trouble, and expense of his journey, as well as of their justifiable expectations, and that there was nothing left for Miles but to be grimly merry at her expense.

She hesitated, for she was a quick-tempered woman, prone to resent fun of which she was the butt, and any advantage taken of her ignorance. Yet she had loved her husband for the very oddity which expressed itself in this shape. She had been proud of her conquest of him when she had been a pretty, smart, popular servant-girl, and he had enjoyed the reputation of being the most "humoursome," no less than the most long-headed, steady, middle-aged bachelor in the place. His humour, even in company with his long-headedness and steadiness, had not brought him great worldly prosperity, yet she had never regretted her choice. There must have been a strain of something uncommon in Nanse herself, which had enabled her, in the first instance, to appreciate what was remarkable in her future husband and to triumph in astonishing the world by accepting him from her host of wooers, and, in the second, to remain content with her bargain. [33]

But it is one thing to relish a queer fish's cranky wit played off on other people and on things in general, and quite another to value the same rare quality turned against one's self in a supreme moment of mortification and vexation.

Nanse stood motionless for an instant, and was on the verge of getting into a white heat and

saying something she would have regretted afterwards, when the corner of her eye caught sight of her husband's grey hairs, while her ears seemed to take in the echo of a break in his voice. Her heart was as warm as her temper was quick. With a flash of sympathy she realised all his fatigue and chagrin, and pain for her pain, which he was seeking to carry off by his poor joke. She was at his side in a moment, entering into his humour, though with a lump in her throat and a dimness before her eyes.

"Dear heart alive!" she exclaimed, borrowing one of her old mother's expressions; "it must be a rare monster, Miles; I should have said it was not worth the carriage, but Uncle Jerry and you must know best. In the meantime, let it be, and eat your supper like a good man. I'm right down thankful to have you safe home again, and the children are both pretty well, and fell asleep an hour ago wearying for your kisses."

"You're a good soul, Nanse," muttered Mr. Miles down in his throat in the pauses between bolting mouthfuls of bacon. "Come and have your supper with me, lass, and I'll kiss you again as soon as I have finished." [34]

Mr. and Mrs. Miles had no thought save of disposing of Prince to the landlord of the Hare and Hounds the first thing next morning, though they gave him, as a matter of course also, the scraps of their supper and leave to sleep at their hearth.

But the new day brought new ideas. Little Freddy—named proudly for Nanse's little master in the last situation she had filled—fell sick in the night, and was still ill and cross in the morning when Nanse rose to light the fire and prepare the breakfast. Mr. Miles, who kept the child while the mother was thus engaged, thought to divert the boy, and partly succeeded, by drawing his attention to the strange bow-wow which daddy had brought home while Freddy was asleep last night.

"You had better leave the brute all the morning, Miles, since Freddy is so taken with him," suggested the anxious mother. "Pretty dear! he has left off crying to watch the dog. I suppose the creature will be quiet enough if nobody meddles with him, and I shall take care that neither Freddy nor Louie teases him. You will be in and out, and you can take the dog away at dinner-time quite as well as now. Perhaps the child will be better then."

When the dinner hour came the child was not better, but worse, lying listlessly with flushed face and heavy eyes, which, however, still lightened a little as they followed the entrancing apparition of the dog. Mr. and Mrs. Miles could not bear to remove the solace of their sick child, and hour by hour and day by day the departure of Prince was deferred.

In this period of probation I am glad to say that Prince's conduct was irreproachable. As Nanse fed the dog regularly, that the child, who could not eat himself, might have the pleasure of seeing the dog eat, and with a faint hope that Freddy might be induced to follow the "doggie's" example, Prince was not exposed to the temptation of hunger, which had already proved too much for his virtue. For that matter he had not stolen in private houses, his depredations had been committed in shops, and his dulness was in his favour at this epoch, as it did not suggest an analogy between Nanse's little larder and the regions from which he had been wont to pick and steal. [35]

Then it was found true here, as elsewhere, that if there is any lingering remnant of good in the rudest, most brutalised man or dog, a helpless little child will call it forth. Prince, as a rule, hated fondling, but he had some experience of children. Though Jack had been twice Freddy's age when he appropriated the dog—a strong puppy in the street, Jack had always possessed, more or less, small brothers and sisters, with whom Prince had been on friendly, familiar terms. Prince knew, therefore, that fondlings and sundry other liberties—such as clutching him round the neck, or pulling him by the tail—must be put up with from senseless little children, although no dog of spirit would stand them for a moment from grown-up, rational people.

Prince sat like patience on a monument, and permitted Freddy to stroke his bristly hair backwards with hot little hands, or to hold on by his ears, without uttering one note of protest, till Mrs. Miles cried out of her full heart to her husband, "Miles, let us keep the dog ourselves; we're not so hard up or so near that we'll miss his bite. We've had no cat since poor Kitty was took in the rabbit warren. He may earn something for his living if he can be got to go out and do a turn at rattling for a neighbour at a time. Anyway, he can always watch your dinner till you're ready, when you carry it with you to your place of work; and he is good to the child. I feel as if dear little Freddy will get well again, and that the dog may bring luck to the house, though he came to it at an unlucky time." [36]

Of course, and very properly, Mr. Miles laughed and scouted at Prince's bringing luck; and it was not in consequence of any such vain womanish superstition, but because families like Mr. Miles' are tolerably sure on the whole, and in spite of troubles, to rise in the social scale—just as families like poor Jack's are as certain to decline, that the occupants of the cottage did begin to prosper from the hour that Prince crossed their threshold.

Prince himself knew when he was in good quarters, and showed the knowledge satisfactorily, by continuing to be on his best behaviour, till he commenced to forget his worst, and to be good as if goodness were a second nature to him. He thawed manifestly in his surliness to more than the children, whose trusty play-fellow he was. He showed himself faithful, obedient, attentive, as far as his understanding went, and decently civil and discreet.

I wish I could state that Prince became in all respects a superior dog, or at least that he lost his

overweening opinion of himself, and became capable of reverencing, at a humble distance, really great dogs—instead of cracking vulgar jokes at their expense, and seeking to drag them down to his own level—or that he even altogether got rid of that lowered moral standard and grave deterioration which he suffered during his stay in Mr. Jerry Noakes' yard.

[37]

I am sorry to say I can make no such assertion. On the contrary, it was a great shock to Mrs. Miles, who was pre-eminently an honest woman, to discover that Prince—fairly to be relied upon at home—could not come within a hundred yards of the baker's and butcher's shops in the village without undergoing a distressing transformation. He would slip away from his mistress' side, if he happened to be out marketing with her, dodge about with an evident disreputable assumption of an incognito, for he was but a fifth-rate actor after all, till he saw his opportunity, then improve it by darting to the scene of action, seizing the coveted twopenny loaf or sheep's liver, though he had made an excellent breakfast that very morning, and making off with it like the wind.

It was to no purpose that he was pursued, convicted, punished; the next time temptation met him, he fell without fail, repeating the offence. It was as if the temptation, once habitually indulged in, had become irresistible to poor stupid Prince.

Mrs. Miles had a struggle whether she ought to keep a dog with such a disgraceful propensity, and one day she was very nearly giving him up, when by his gross self-indulgence he covered not only her but his master with ridicule and shame.

It was on a Sunday at noon, of all times, but Mrs. Miles had not been to church—she had sat up, the night before, with a sick neighbour. She had carried the younger child with her on her errand of mercy, while Mr. Miles had taken care of the elder, and been at church with him, leaving Prince to keep house, which he did with sufficient uprightness, in the family's absence.

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Mr. Miles had gone home when the service was over, and liberated the dog, permitting him to join the little party, in their Sunday clothes, that set out to meet and greet the wife and mother on her expected return.

Mrs. Miles had appeared duly, and been gratified by her husband's attention. The group were proceeding in the most exemplary and agreeable fashion along the village street, when the heads of the household were startled by the nudges and sniggles, rising into roars of laughter, which their progress drew forth—not only from the loiterers about the ale-house door, but from the more decorous passers-by, carrying home their Sunday's dinner from the baker's oven.

Mrs. Miles glanced round indignantly at her husband and two children, and could discover nothing—unless a pleasing picture of domestic felicity, which ought to have excited admiration or envy, not contempt—to account for the derision with which even some of her own particular friends were regarding the family, till she looked behind her, and then Mrs. Miles saw it all.

To her horror, Mrs. Miles found that Prince was scouring along close to heel, bearing a whole roast duck by his teeth in its back. He had been unable to pass the baker's door, though the shutter was on the window: having entered, his nose had beguiled him into a more daring and serious crime than the petty pilfering which was the usual extent of his delinquencies. And Mrs. Miles could not create the scandal on the Sunday, with the parson coming out of the rectory at her back, of having the dog pursued and deprived of his prey.

That night, while Mr. Miles—though he had not liked the laugh when it was sounding in his ears any better because he had often raised such himself—after he had escaped the cackle, took the matter easily, like a philosopher, Mrs. Miles was, as she would have described it, "in a sad way;" she felt as if her own and her husband's good name were at stake, and that they might be unjustly accused of sharing in the toothsome dainty, basely come by, and for which some Sunday dinner had waited in vain. She renounced Prince with a groan. But next morning, when the dog stood letting Freddy harness him with pack-thread, Nanse thought better of it. She judged correctly that Prince was only a dumb brute; when the worst came to the worst, she was not certain whether Uncle Jerry were not accountable for Prince's bad tricks, and whether she and Miles, as Uncle Jerry's representatives, did not owe the dog some reparation for the cruel wrong done him.

[39]

At the same time, she was careful to relieve her conscience and clear her credit by solemnly warning the baker and butcher, and going so far as to offer to pay for any amount of plunder with regard to which it could be proved that it had not been left carelessly, after her caution, in the dog's way.

The tradesmen, to whom Mrs. Miles always paid her bills to a day, took her communication in good part, and even generously tossed to Prince an occasional crust or bone, which, nevertheless, had not the effect of curing him of his culpable weakness. But Mrs. Miles left him as few chances as possible of lapsing into his one inveterate vice.

With this, alas! flagrant exception, Prince ended by being a tolerably respectable character, in the favourable circumstances to which he was so fortunate as to attain at last.



CHAPTER II. "HIGH LIFE."

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER intended to produce a broad contrast when he painted two dogs, and ticketed them respectively "Low Life" and "High Life." I need hardly say he succeeded in his attempt. Never were dog nature and dog surroundings more widely opposed than those which are to be found in the two pictures.

I have already described Prince's appearance, and sketched his history, while I have left my readers to study for themselves the copy which the painter has supplied of the dog's primitive abode. But I must turn back and call attention to it at this point, in order to mark the gulf between it and Carlo's home. First, look at Prince's lodging, with its rude block for a table, the red-handled knife on the block, the pewter pot which has contained his master's beer and still holds his pipe standing behind the dog, and, lying at his feet, a well-polished bone.

Next, contemplate Carlo sitting in an elegant, pensive attitude in his master's study; was there ever a deeper gulf alike between dogs and their quarters?

Carlo belongs as unmistakeably to the castle—one turret of which, with its fluttering flag when the family are at home, we see through the study window in the picture—as the castle belongs to Carlo. Both dog and scene—the table littered with books and writing materials, the riding-gloves, the fine old bell glass and flask of rare old wine, the foils, together with that glimpse through the window of the castle turret—are products of centuries of civilisation and generations of culture. Now look at the dog himself, as refined as any fine lady, for no fine gentleman was ever so absolutely removed from the faintest trace of rude nature—not to say from caddishness or snobbishness. Carlo is positively burdened with refinement. Measure him from the tip of his long nose to the point of his long tail, from his small head and slender throat to his delicate haunches and fine legs, and do not forget his large soft eyes and exquisite skin. Is he not grace personified?—grace, not dignity, for dignity implies power. Indeed there are critics who would limit Carlo's dominant attribute to superlative elegance, since they allege that perfect grace demands natural vigour, and vigour or power is exactly the quality which the dog lacks. Being a high-bred hound, he may be fleet as a bird—fleet as Master Magrath of racing renown; but stamina, endurance (apart from fleetness), simple force of constitution and character, are not in him. [41]

I have said Carlo is positively burdened with refinement. You cannot look at him without suspecting what a weight the vulgar world is on his mind. It does not enrage him; he is too mildly superior for that. Rage is more or less of a brutal quality, and Carlo is as little of a savage brute as any four-footed creature ever was. The wilful low life and rude practices of the mass of living beings simply depress his not very strong spirits, and torture his keen sensibilities. He is often rendered wretched by the mere coarseness of the world in general; and this wretchedness bulks so largely in his excited imagination that his peculiar trial shuts out from him every other dog's trial. Carlo has fared delicately all his days. He has never known what it is to want food and shelter; the best and most suitable of everything has been provided sedulously for his use by the men whose business it is to wait upon him, instead of his having had to hunt hard to satisfy his most pressing wants, and to submit to being hunted in turn, kicked and abused for presuming to have wants, and for seeking to satisfy them. He has hardly ever heard a rough word addressed to him, so that he will mope for hours if he is merely overlooked—if his master has not smiled upon him, stroked his head, taken in his hand one fine paw after the other. Naturally, Carlo has little sympathy to spare from his own sentimental woes, which he plaintively airs and nurses, for the matter-of-fact miseries of homeless dogs, starved, beaten, done to death for the idle amusement of the spectators. [42]

Yet Carlo is a gentle, generous dog, by natural temperament, and, so far from having no feelings, his feelings are only of too fine a description. The truth is, there is a subtle—all the more serious—danger to moral character in exquisitely fine feelings, especially when they accompany a morbidly fastidious taste and effeminate habits.

When I say effeminate habits, I wish not to be mistaken. I do not mean that Carlo was a larger lap-dog, utterly idle and useless—that he sat and lay all day and all night in that luxurious study, or in a still more luxurious drawing-room, or in a kennel very little behind the two rooms in comfort and beauty. On the contrary, he saw plenty of sun and wind. He had been trained, like his master, to count as the best part of his time those hours which were spent in the open air, and in active exercise. Coursing was exactly to Carlo what stalking deer, riding to hounds, and rowing a boat were to his master. When the dog's blood and breeding were up, he could make a good fight in his doggish sport. [43]

What I do intend to convey is, that in Carlo, and, for that matter, in his master also, the

instincts of self-preservation, self-resource, and independence were sensibly and unconsciously weakened. The two could not have earned a dinner for themselves to save their lives, and if they had earned it they would not have known what to do with it, unless some foreign aid had happily come to them. Even after they had been initiated into the necessary process, they would have been so revolted by all the plain details inevitable to preparing a dinner, that they would have left it to be devoured by hardier applicants, till hunger urged them on to the stifling of their over-trained and stimulated susceptibilities.

Carlo first saw the light in a perfectly appointed kennel, built in the shape of a pagoda, one of the show-places in a noble ancestral park. His birth was attended with all the *éclat* of the coming into the world of a great and important personage, and his pedigree was as proudly and hotly upheld as that of many a prince whose inheritance depends on his family tree. The young heir up at the castle had scarcely been welcomed with greater exultation, or had more unremitting care and attention bestowed on him than was lavished by the kennel staff on the puppy, the finest of the litter, the progeny of a valuable and favourite dog. Neither were the kennel men and boys the only or the principal persons who waited on the levees of Carlo. My lord and my lady visited him almost daily; the most cherished visitors at the castle were taken to inspect his points, and admire his promise; indeed it was regarded as a mark of favour, on the part of the earl and the countess, when some comparatively humble visitor—parson, lawyer, or doctor, with his wife or daughters—was invited to go to the kennel and have a look at the special puppy. The kennel was the first place the young lord ran to when he was home from Eton. [44]

Carlo was led through all the trying stages of puppyhood with the most tender anxiety for his welfare. His weaning and teething were carefully seen to. I am almost sure that he was inoculated for distemper, either in the ear or under a front leg, at a spot which could not be reached by tooth or claw; and that the operation was performed by a distinguished veterinary surgeon, who came from the next large town for the purpose.

If I am right, by this means the dog was enabled to escape altogether the common scourge of the young of the dog race. And I believe the most distant suspicion of mange, imported by some extraordinary means to Carlo, would have been enough to have driven the head kennel-man into a fit, would have covered with gloom the countenance of the young lord, and would even have brought a cloud over the brow of his father the earl, who was a famous statesman, and was understood to have the destinies of nations at his beck.

That was a great day to more than the dog—on which he was emancipated from kennel thralldom, and was brought to the castle, where he was destined to be the companion and friend of the future earl when he was at home, though by this decision a sacrifice was made, of what would probably have been Carlo's laurels as a regular coursing dog. Carlo might course occasionally, stirred by his master's presence and encouragement, but no study or drawing-room dog, whatever his pedigree, could go in with a hope of winning the great matches equal to that of the dog who was kept up to the mark, by being maintained solely for that end. [45]

It was an evidence of the degree to which social claims are permitted to prevail in every circle. "De Vaux wishes to have the dog constantly with him," said De Vaux's mother, as if the desire of the heir settled the question; "and Carlo is such a nice gentlemanly dog. I have been so frightened for De Vaux's taking a fancy to a hideous turnspit, or a rough German boar-hound, or a fighting bull-terrier, with a beauty spot over one eye, or even to some wretched cur. Young men are so odd now-a-days," she finished with a sigh of relief.

Not a footman or a housemaid was not respectful to Carlo, well-nigh as to my lord and my lady—tolerant of the trouble he gave the servants, flattered if he took any notice of them. Like all aristocratic dogs, he was inclined to keep his distance from the domestics, even from his old friends of the kennel, so soon as he saw that they were not his masters—that his master, who was also his familiar friend, proved to be their master, and stopped short with being so. Carlo was disposed to keep up an almost unbroken reserve towards the worthy persons, in their own way, who used the back stairs. He would no more have thought of visiting the kitchen, or even the housekeeper's room or the butler's pantry, on terms of equality, than I daresay you and I, my reader, would dream of doing, if we were, like Carlo, not so much the servant as the privileged member of an earl's family. But Carlo was such a gentlemanly dog, as my lady had said, that he was incapable of arrogance, far less insolence. His manner was, like that of Queen Charlotte when she curtsied to her humblest maid-servant, or of King George when he took off his hat to the gentlemen of his band, always gracious and affable. [46]

My lord and my lady had a great partiality for Carlo. My lord would take him for a walk when the dog's master was not at home. My lady would encourage him to sit with her in her morning-room, where she conducted her correspondence, and to glide after her in her conservatory and flower-garden, where she gathered flowers, and played at being a gardener in a big apron and gauntlet gloves, wielding shears for the destruction of dead leaves and twigs.

Carlo was introduced into the family picture which a great artist from London came down to the castle to paint. The dog had been painted several times before, and photographed on occasions without number—with De Vaux on his pony, with my lady standing on the terrace, or entering the family's almshouses; but it was the first time that Carlo had been put on the same canvas with the head of the house, and in a picture which was destined to be one of the great works of the generation, secured for the castle. My lord, who himself dabbled in art, likened the introduction of Carlo into the piece to the use made of the white greyhound by Rubens in the "Arundel Family," and to the similar employment of a dog, with the best effect, in Van Dyck's [47]

"Wilton Family." One cannot wonder that Carlo felt perfectly justified in regarding himself as a member of the earl's family.

But Carlo was De Vaux's special property, and the relation between them continued unbroken, in spite of the young man's frequent absences on his travels, during the first period of the connection. These absences were trying to Carlo, who had little else to do save to miss his friend, and pine for his return; and the more he pined, the more he was praised and petted for his fidelity and devotion, till—as the dog had naturally no dislike, but, on the contrary, a great yearning for praise and petting, provided they were administered with the delicacy which he demanded in all the dealings with him—he ran a great risk either of falling into a normal condition of pining, or of becoming guilty of the most abominable affectation, passing by insensible degrees into hardened hypocrisy.

Carlo was saved from these pitfalls by De Vaux's return from his travels, which had of course extended from Europe to Asia, including Palestine and Damascus; Africa, as far as has been made out of the course of the Nile; and America, across the continent to the Rocky Mountains.

After the celebration of De Vaux coming of age—which, to tell the truth, was in its exuberant rejoicings a considerable infliction both on him and Carlo—the heir settled down as far as he was likely to do in his ancestral home, and took Carlo into his constant society, until the dog had nothing more left to wish for.

Ah! there was the rub; it was the having nothing more left to wish for that threatened to be Carlo's bane—to weigh him down with satiety, and oppress him with a sense of life accomplished. De Vaux laboured under a touch of the same complaint, only it took a higher form in the man than in the dog, and De Vaux and all his friends gave it another name. They made out that De Vaux, with his gifts and prospects, was rendered so difficult to satisfy, while he had such a craving after perfection, that the whole machinery of history and society disheartened and distressed him, until he could not make up his mind—and it did not really seem worth while to make it up—to join any political party, conservative or reforming, or take up any calling or work in life, beyond dreaming over what might have been, and deploring what was.

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De Vaux was not unlike Carlo in body and mind, if you make allowance for the fact that the man was royally endowed compared to the dog. The young lord was a fine handsome young fellow, more elegant than muscular, in spite of the muscular education he had received both at his public school and his university, yet quite manly enough to despise sybarite indulgences and face hardships when they came in the way of his sport or travels. What was enervated in him had to do with his excessive fastidiousness and his want of hopefulness, his mental and moral languor. He was sufficiently thoughtful always, and courteously considerate when one came across him personally—so kindly that he would not have harmed a fly—always unless in the way of sport.

De Vaux was grieved to disappoint his noble parents, who would have liked him, with his rank and talents, to enter the world and do his devoir, and win his spurs gallantly. But to him the game was not worth the candle; and when he regarded his fellow-players and the weapons he must use, he shrank unconquerably from the contest. Altogether, he was of as little use in the toiling, struggling world—except it might be in affording an example of refraining from the indulgence of gross appetites which he did not possess, and of pursuing cultivation for its own sake—as one can well imagine in the case of a highly responsible man.

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Perhaps, as a consequence, De Vaux suffered greatly, like Carlo, from that sickening of a vague disease, that inexplicable, unbearable depression, that weight of sympathy thrown back on itself, which will always beset such men. I do not know how he could have stood it, without breaking out into some abnormal eccentricity, or seeking a miserable refuge from himself and his weakness in excess or vice, if it had not been for the intellectual and muscular sides of him, both of which had been carefully developed. They afforded him the relief of a variety of interests in study, art, science, in long walks and rides—wherein not only his nerves and muscle were braced, but a wholesome love of natural history was farther fostered, in fishing, shooting, deer-stalking, hunting, each in its proper season. Neither was he, in his father's house, at liberty to neglect intercourse with his neighbours, though they afforded him much less solace, and frequently grated painfully on his fine perceptions, so that they drove him to give tokens of sinking, with all his advantages, into the life of a confirmed recluse before he was thirty years of age.

Withal, it was rather a melancholy spectacle to see De Vaux and Carlo sitting listlessly together on a glad spring morning, or a serene summer evening, by the bank of a trout stream, or at the man's study window—De Vaux's long legs crossed, his long hand supporting his drooping head, his eyes gazing wistfully and moodily into the distance; while the dog, reflecting closely his master's expression, if not his attitude, sat with his head declined also, and his nose sniffing the air in a kind of tender despondency—both so weary and sad, with wonderfully treacherous fascination for them in the energy-sapping sadness—and yet both so goodly in their respective fashions; De Vaux not yet twenty-three, Carlo not turned ten years.

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There was only one element of light to be thankful for in this, among the many mysteries of existence. When you thought of the low life of Prince and his friend Jack, with all their shortcomings and deprivations, and, in the middle of it, how courageously—though it might be with a stolid courage—the dog and the lad endured misfortunes unmerited as well as merited, and what an absolute hearty relish remained to them wherewith to seize and enjoy every scrap of pleasure that came in their way in the course of the day's difficulties; how they were not weary of

life, in spite of the troubles they had known, but were always looking forward, in the teeth of their experience, to happier to-morrows—even when Prince was dragging out his dreary days in Mr. Jerry Noakes' yard—then you could not help seeing there was compensation in life both for men and dogs. At least, where men's blundering arrangements are concerned, it is the tendency of riches to produce surfeit, and of polish to sharpen the blade to an impracticable fineness, till it not only wears out the scabbard, but bends and breaks in the hand of him who uses it.

But, for my part, I think the man and dog here were far too much alike for their good. If they could have been parted, and De Vaux fitted with a rollicking, though gruff young mastiff or Newfoundland, and Carlo with a light-hearted, if empty-headed young squire, it would have been better for both of them. [51]

In course of time the earl became superannuated, and more responsibilities were heaped on De Vaux's shoulders, bending, notwithstanding their developed muscularity, under their present load, which the bearer was growing more and more fain to shirk.

My lady, plied with representations by friends and relatives of the family, became alarmed at the supineness of her son, with the waste of all his youthful promise, and his increasing inclination to let the active current of life sweep by him, while he buried himself in a remote retreat, taking with him his unemployed talent to rust there.

One winter evening at the castle the curtains were drawn, and tea had been brought in and carried out. Mother and son were alone together in their several corners, behind their respective screens, and having their private little tables, laden with books, drawing materials, ladies' work, and flowers, between them and the blazing fire. Carlo was stretched decorously on the white bear skin which served as a hearthrug. Then the countess spoke out, and urged on De Vaux all the arguments which could stir his principles or rouse his ambition. But he had always the same answer.

Was it his father's wishes that were pled? Ah! it was too late, so far as affording his father gratification went; besides, De Vaux had been persuaded from the first that, since he must have followed his own convictions, he would have run counter to his father's opinions, and only contrived to vex and disappoint him in a public career.

Was it the good of his country he was bidden mind? De Vaux laughed softly, but with more pensive sadness than cynical bitterness in the laugh, at the idea of his being of any service to speak of to the nation. There were better qualified men than he to do the country's work—men who could stick to a party, and have all the consistency and combined strength which such resolute adhesion gave; men not too scrupulous—not cumbered with a double sight, which saw both sides of a question, or with a vague, hazy farsightedness—he did not count it a gain, he was not meaning to praise himself in reckoning the defects which prevented him from observing clearly and concisely—which was always anticipating dim consequences, magnified to giants in their dimness. At the same time, he really felt he could not work—he could not do himself or any other body justice in union with fellows who were tools of a faction, or slaves to a theory; and he was not such a Don Quixote as to propose to fight the battles of the country and Parliament single-handed. [52]

Was it a suggestion of authorship? He had been a prize-man at Oxford; he had been fond of making researches in various fields of intellect; his style, as shown in his letters when he had been on his travels, had been commended by distinguished literary men and diners out as the *juste milieu* between simplicity and brilliance. The family papers alone might supply him with delightful subjects for essays.

De Vaux laughed again, and protested that the world was too full of books; that the making of books in his generation, much more than in that of Solomon, was "vanity," and he was not fool enough to add without any distinct calling to those toppling monster heaps, which, however evanescent, threatened to crush for the present, by the mere force of numbers, the half-dozen books capable of surviving the catastrophe. As for the records of the house, he was not disposed to turn them out for daws to peck at, neither had he any desire to wash his dirty linen in public, if she would forgive him the coarseness of the simile. [53]

Was it a proposal of giving more personal attention to the management of the estate, now that his father was no longer able to take any part in it, or even to consult with the agent, in near prospect of the time when De Vaux should be sole master?

Here the poor lady began to cry, half at being forced to allude to the approaching death of her old husband, half at the recollection that he had always told her that to be an earl and a great landed proprietor were not the sinecures that ignorant people imagined they were. Yet De Vaux, who might have known better from what he had seen of his father's cares and worries, and with his own cleverness, was taking his future position with unbecoming indifference, and declining to serve any apprenticeship to it since the time when he had been a bright boy, proud to accompany his father to the offices and the home farm.

De Vaux's affectionate heart was touched. He assured his mother that he hoped his father would still be spared, and trusted he might rally and resume some of his former habits. "In such a case, my dear mother," he said, "do you think he would like to find me prematurely interfering with his plans, and overturning his arrangements, particularly when Anwell is the briskest, most trustworthy old fellow out. He has a greater knowledge of the capabilities of the estate, and of country interests, than even my father had—don't be angry; I have often heard him say so—or, I

need not add, than I am likely to acquire, though I live to the age of Methuselah, which God forbid. It must have been a heavy task for the oldest of the antediluvians to get along without the comfort of so much as a contemporary to share his penalties. No, no; 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' We have Scripture authority for that, and I shall recommend the vicar to take the text for his homily next Sunday if you will fret about my future troubles. I shall think I am in your way if you are so anxious to get rid of me and my spare time. In order to bring about that, there ought to be a new crusade—quite enough in the unaccountable laziness of your son to justify that. Eh, mum?" He ended with a flash of youthful fun, which was some consolation to his mother for her failure. [54]

But she was more puzzled than ever. It was all De Vaux's superior cultivation, ability, and good feeling which stood in the way, of course. There was a great deal of good taste, good sense, and good feeling in what he had said, especially in his reluctance to grasp the sceptre falling from his poor father's hands. It was so different with Lady Netherby's son, who was little better than an amateur coachman—in those days, too, when coaches had almost ceased to exist; or Lord Dorchester, who was a learned prig as well as a marquis; or young Ascham of Ryelands, who, as everybody knew, had sold himself to the Jews, and was eagerly anticipating his father's death for his release. She recognised the difference thankfully. On the other hand, though she and her lord had been fairly polished, intelligent, well-disposed persons, she had not been, so to speak,

"Too wise and good
For human nature's daily food;"

and it was a little hard to have a son whose genius and virtue took this turn. But De Vaux was the product of the age. [55]

The countess hit on a new device. She would have young people about the house. It might be that De Vaux, though he was too kind and long-suffering to own it, even to himself, found his home a little slow, shut up, as he was, with a couple of elderly people, one of the two growing more and more infirm every day. No doubt the unequal association told on the boy's spirits—even his dog Carlo looked dull. A disadvantage like that was enough to confirm De Vaux in those mooning, moping habits—his one fault, and which somebody had frightened her by foreboding might end in valetudinarianism; citing Lord Paulet, who had not been beyond his own park for years, though he was not over forty, and Sir Charles Ridley, who could not face a stranger to save his life.

She would begin by having girls, since it would be rather a delicate matter, and have the air of an act of interference on her part, if she were to bring young men about the place who were not even of De Vaux's old quad or college, and were certainly not of his selection and invitation.

It showed the extent of the countess's secret alarm on her son's account, and of her unselfish devotion to his welfare, when she fixed upon getting girls to the castle to entertain him. Good woman as she was, she had not loved to contemplate her successor, and she had been tempted to keep her boy to herself as long as she could. But she would encounter the danger, and even bring herself to make the sacrifice cheerfully, because of the true mother's love which she bore him.

De Vaux had an utter aversion to loud, fast girls, and two or three even nice girls, with their incessant claims on his attention, might be too much for him and Carlo—might serve to bore rather than enliven him. But there was one quiet little girl, the daughter of a favourite cousin of her ladyship and of a brother peer, held in especial esteem by her husband, and who my lady thought would be the very material for a first experiment. Accordingly, Lady Margaret was invited to spend a little time at the castle, and the invitation was accepted. [56]

De Vaux had made no objection when he heard of the probable guest. He thought a young woman's company for a few weeks might be a boon to his mother, and though he was becoming every day more of a hermit, and more averse to the slightest exertion out of the ordinary routine, he would not interfere with his mother's pleasure, and he too would bear a little on his mother's account.

When Lady Margaret arrived she did not look like a person who would be in anybody's way, and even Carlo did not insist on sitting at attention, and refusing in a melancholy manner to be at home in her company. She was a very quiet, very shy, very young girl—on first acquaintance almost too quiet, shy, and young for the countess's purpose, she feared. Lady Margaret required to be drawn out herself in place of drawing out De Vaux; and she was hardly even pretty, for her fair hair had been cut out on account of an illness, and was only half-grown and thin; while she was as thin as her hair, and so pale, that she resembled a wan, washed-out little ghost. My lady felt disappointed.

If the countess and De Vaux had known it, poor Lady Margaret was undergoing a severe ordeal, and was suffering, without any sign, agonies of *mauvais honte* and of incipient home sickness. It was the first time that she had been away among strangers without either her mother or her governess. She was naturally timid, and she had only recently recovered from a bad illness which had shaken her nerves. Everything was strange and overwhelming to her; even the sound of her own titled name startled her, seeing that she was accustomed to be called Peggy at home. [57]

The countess was very kind, and De Vaux looked a *preux chevalier*; but Lady Margaret did not know them, and they did not know her. She could not tell in the least how they should ever become acquainted, or how she should get over the weeks she must spend at the castle. But mamma had wished her to come. Berry had said the change would be good for her, and she knew

she was a silly, spoilt girl. No doubt the trial was beneficial, and she ought to make the best of it.

The best was within the reach of a creature so humble, so full of good-will and generous enthusiasm, in spite of her bashfulness and nervousness. In a marvellously short time Lady Margaret began to be reconciled to her situation, and to get the better of its disadvantages. Every day she was a fresh surprise to my lady and De Vaux—she opened up into such brightness and bonniness, as well as sweetness, before their admiring eyes.

The girl's health was profiting by the change, combined with the friendliness of her entertainers. She was coming out in her natural colours of innocent trustfulness and happiness. My lady was getting as fond of her as if Lady Margaret had been the countess's daughter.

Lady Margaret was a perpetual wonder to De Vaux, after she was at ease with him, and he could remark how constantly she was occupied, and how fresh and unflagging was her interest in whatever she was engaged with, whether it was reading a new book, or drawing an original design for the countess's work, or borrowing a hint from the castle schools for her own schools, or learning from Mrs. Woods the hen-wife, or Forbes the gardener, the last plans for prairie chickens and orchises. She was as ardent as a child, and her ardour knew no decrease. She carried about with her a perennial spring of gladness, which was not impaired by her earnestness and seriousness; for she could be very earnest and serious on grave topics, and she was not an ignorant girl—I mean, not ignorant of the sorrowful, terrible verities of life. She had been brought up in a family that took a deep interest in humanity at large, and were early accustomed to see the world as it is, and not to fear to soil their raiment by coming in contact with the draggled garments of others. These people were possessed with a passion of humanity, the fervent conviction that to the pure all things are pure, while to the strong and the good is appointed, under God's grace, the task of supporting and bringing back the weak and the bad.

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De Vaux believed that Lady Margaret's mind had been too great for her body—not that she was exceptionally clever, only unboundedly sympathetic, unweariedly helpful. But all the drain of the sympathy and help she afforded, in addition to the delicate health she had suffered, did not suffice to take the girlish lightheartedness and mirth out of her, after it was no longer checked by her first reserve.

He was amused watching her in the park one day, when she thought she was alone with Carlo. She had a bit of stick in her hand, which she was throwing away from her with a great show of *empressement*, to encourage the dog to follow and pick it up. He could guess she was saying, "I should like to see you run for a bit of fun. Good dog. Oh dear! is there no fun in you?—I know there is very little left in your master. I wonder if you can run, except after a hare. If you only would, I think it might shake you up, and put a little spirit in you. Of course I should not expect you to run like my Buzfuz or Berry's Reiver; but if you would just try a little bit to please me."

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All that she got Carlo to do was to wag his tail as if he were shaking his head. "I believe the brute thinks it would lower his dignity and mine if he were to run," said De Vaux to himself, impatiently. He could have found it in his heart to rise up from under the tree where he lay, and go and run for her delectation, and to show her that he could run, though he had not exerted his long legs, save at cricket, since they were short legs, and had done their best at football.

"Do you never whistle, Lord De Vaux?" she asked curiously one day. "My brother Berry is a great whistler, and I miss the music. I know it is very homely music, but none seems to me so blythe or so straight from the heart. I wish girls might whistle if they could. I will confess to you I have tried and failed. Berry said it was the feeblest attempt at the magnificent—like a mouse squeaking."

He did not answer her that he had no heart-hilarity from which to whistle, and that he had sometimes been moved to envy a ploughboy who went whistling joyously past him, only pausing to take off his cap to the young lord on his walk or ride.

The next time De Vaux was in his room, with the door ajar, and was aware that Lady Margaret was going along the corridor, he whistled with all his might, though it took away his breath, so unwonted was the performance; and involuntarily he fell into a solemn and stately measure, like the "Dead March in Saul." Still, he responded to her suggestion better than Carlo had done, and he made her laugh—though he was happily unconscious of it—at his doleful strain. She called him to herself "the melancholy Jaques," and said, though he was a product of the age, a specimen of the kind existed in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

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But I don't know that Lady Margaret thought the worse of him, or liked him the less, because of her private wit at his expense; though he—being, like other young men, stupid where young girls are concerned—might have been at that date hurt and offended, and even imagined that she despised him because she made game of him.

One morning, as an excuse for his elegant idleness—of which he began to feel slightly ashamed, when he was forced to see how busy this delicate little girl was, and generally on the behalf of others—he repeated to her the speech he had addressed to his mother, of his wanting a modern crusade to induce him to put on his armor.

"But there is a crusade going on all around us, for every one of us, always," she said, opening her eyes wide. "We have never been without one since"—she stopped, but he knew what she meant.

"I quite envy those fellows who have their own way to make in the world," he observed on another occasion, still with an underlying motive of self-defence, and speaking in allusion to her younger brothers' work in their military and naval schools.

"Oh! but Berry does most of all," she explained promptly; "and he is an eldest son—like you, I had almost said, but you are an only son and child. I pity you, if you will forgive me for pitying you." [61]

"Not forgive, but thank you, and I pity myself," he answered quickly, for it had at that moment struck him that, if he had possessed an admiring sister to quote him as she quoted "Berry," or to look up to and depend upon him as she described her schoolboy brothers looking up to and depending on their elder brother, he might have had more faith in himself, and more inducement for exertion.

"Lord Beresford is going into Parliament,"—she continued the conversation, always delighted to speak about Berry,—“and, do you know, Berry will never make a great speaker?” she confided to him, as if it were a matter of extreme surprise, no less than regret, to more than herself. “Berry acts, he does not speak. He has few words, except on rare occasions. He says he could not be eloquent to save his life. But that is nonsense; at least I have heard him what I call eloquent—to save other people’s lives, when he had to argue against the bad water and worse drainage in Friarton, the town next us. He hopes to be a useful member; and he says though he hates to be in town, and it makes him shiver to think there is the most distant chance of his having to speak within earshot of the reporters and the strangers’ gallery, and ironical cheers from the opposition benches, yet he ought to make himself acquainted with the working of the House of Commons, and to put himself in training, since, if he live, he must sit in the other House one day.”

"He is very good," said De Vaux, abstractedly.

"Oh yes," said Lady Margaret warmly, without any affectation of contradicting him. "I must not tell you what I think, because Berry says, if I go about praising him or any of the others, we shall be set down as the Mutual Admiration Society; only I may be permitted to mention that he does not need to go into Parliament for occupation. Our vicar—with whom, by-the-bye, Berry has some differences—always maintains that my eldest brother, what with his clubs, societies, and night-schools, his allotment schemes and co-operative experiments, is the hardest-worked man in the parish." [62]

"For a member of the bloated aristocracy," commented De Vaux, with somewhat grim humour.

"Yes; is it not an odd order for Berry, as well as yourself, to belong to?" she asked, laughing merrily; and then she added seriously—"But it is no laughing matter. Berry says he does not wonder at that, or indeed at any term of opprobrium, after the awful gulf which has been permitted to yawn and deepen between the ranks."

"Lord Beresford will never fill it," said Lord De Vaux dogmatically, and with a suspicion of irritation. "Not above a tithe of the people for whom he is spending himself will even understand him—far less be a bit the better for his waste of life and energy."

"Berry says a man’s life would be well spent in helping a handful of his fellow-creatures, especially his countrymen—not to say our own people down at Southfolds," said Lady Margaret serenely.

"Did I say a tithe? Probably not more than one will follow your brother’s lead."

"Berry says he would not grudge his work if one man, woman, or child were the gainer by it," said Lady Margaret proudly. [64]

"What manner of man, woman, or child ought he or she to be who is to cost so much," protested De Vaux ironically. "A beer-drinking clown, a long-tongued slattern, a dirty-faced imp of mischief—one and all of them dropping their r’s and revelling in their h’s."

"Lord De Vaux!" said Lady Margaret, taken in by his tone, and getting red and indignant. "Berry says he has heard as good sense and as poetic thoughts from men and women who abused their r’s and h’s, as he ever listened to from their neighbours who respected these important letters. He is tempted to hold that it is a prejudice to be so particular about their disposal. More than that, he protests that, if the use of a tooth-brush would cause him to have a profound aversion to and contempt for the multitude who do not employ such an aid to their toilet, he would rather renounce tooth-brushes for ever, and continue to care for his brother."

Lady Margaret had recovered her good-humour by this time, and saw he was trying her; so she added waggishly, "I must tell you, Lord De Vaux, that I have the greatest respect for an honest old woman who commits the enormity of taking snuff, as papa remembers your great-grandmother and mine doing freely, and that Berry’s model boy has red hair and a face covered with freckles."

"What will you do without Berry?" he questioned her insidiously.

"I don’t know," she answered, her face falling, and herself dropping forthwith into the new trap laid for her. "We’ll miss him dreadfully, and we are only to go to town after Easter for a few weeks, just that I may be presented, as mamma does not think that I am strong enough to stand the season. Berry will have nobody from home with him for the rest of the time, except Reiver, to [64]

make him feel less lonely, poor dear fellow.”

“You might take Carlo and me in exchange for Reiver and Berry. I think you could make something of us—get us to run unprofessionally, and do a little work in time.”

She looked up quickly to see how much he was in jest, and how much in earnest. She looked down again, and said hastily, “Carlo and you do not need me or any one to make you run and work, when it is in you both to run faster and work better than the rest of the world, if you choose.”

She did not intend to flatter him by any means, but he was not displeased with her answer—not though she put aside his petition.

The conviction had been growing upon De Vaux, till it was like an inspiration, that Lady Margaret and her brother held the right standard which he had missed—the one bracing and ennobling view of life—in which a man can live and die, serve God and man, and cast behind him self with all its weakness and waywardness.

He could do it as he was a Christian man, Heaven helping him. He had known what she had meant by a crusade all around us, for every man and woman, always. He had remembered who had first bidden man take up the cross, and condemned the servant who had hidden his talent in the earth. It made De Vaux thoughtful and sorrowful; but in spite of his sorrow, and the humility which was at its root, he was more hopeful than he had been since boyhood in taking these reflections to heart, and in seeing in the light of Lady Margaret’s conception of duty what an egotist he had been, and how near he had got to making shipwreck of his life, by yielding to scruples and whims, and forgetting the great call which is on him and every man. [65]

My lady never had reason to regret having summoned Lady Margaret to stimulate De Vaux. Lady Margaret did finally take both man and brute in hand; but De Vaux had learned to work to purpose long before then, having, as she had said, the power to work in him, while it was his own fault if it lay dormant and shrivelled away. She never could or would accept the credit of his working, but she was ready to allow that she had helped to make Carlo a more cheerful dog than she had found him. She had not done everything, for Carlo had always reflected his master’s mood, and when De Vaux looked alive, and stepped out briskly to keep some engagement which went against the grain with him, but the obligation of which he had come to recognise, Carlo looked alive also, and accommodated himself to his master’s quickened pace, and even to the spring which had entered into the young man’s tread with the light in his eye. But Carlo could not go everywhere with his master—could not even be so much with him as formerly, after De Vaux grew a busy man with ever-increasing engagements; so that it was all the better for the dog that he had a brave little lady by whose side he could trot on her numberless errands, until he had no time left to fall back into his old painful consideration of the stumbles, the blunders, the coarseness and vulgarity of his neighbours, or to indulge in morbid moping and pining.



CHAPTER III. "SUSPENSE."

FLORA was a species of dog that had a dash of the bloodhound in her. She was a great, somewhat gaunt creature, standing high on the legs, and with a broad sagacious jowl, as different as possible from Carlo's fine, supercilious, pensive mouth. Flora, like many of her sex—especially those of them whose personal qualities are not their great distinction, and who have not, therefore, been followed and fawned upon by a crowd of fools—was a dog of strong affections. It was for her capacity in this respect, together with her admirable patience and a kind of broad good sense, that she was valued.

In the picture, Flora is sitting waiting, as she so often sat, expectation and longing in every bristling hair, but without a single demonstration of violence or obstreperous appeal. The door is closed, and it is not for her to batter it, as Flora knows right well, neither will she disturb her friends and owners by intruding her wishes on them in barking and yelping. It is not that she has tried the artillery and found it fail; it is that she is too reasonable, too long-suffering, too unexact and unselfish to practice with the weapons of a smaller dog in every way.

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There she is, a great, not over-comely, and somewhat uncouth dog, but loyal and loving to the heart's core—as considerate as a dog can be—full of a great trust in and an absolute submission to her master, who is her lord and king, and in her master's absence to his family and representatives. She is so strong that she can afford to dispense with bullying, and is meek in her strength and mild in her power.

She sits to the artist, full of the anxiety and desire which you can read in a thousand signs—by her wide-apart legs, the one foot slightly raised, as on tiptoe—by the head bent in the attitude of intent listening—by the fixed eyes, a little mournful, as deeply-loving eyes are apt to be—by the hair rising on the crest of the back—by the very squat of the haunches, and the utterly flat and flaccid condition of the great tail laid at rest on the floor; for you will please to observe that Flora, though hearkening with all her ears, does not catch the faintest murmur of sound. It is the dog's instinct and affection—whatever she has for a mind—that is on the rack, and not her nerves or her senses. She remains perfectly still and silent—a monument of watching and hope, which are not undashed with fear and doubt, almost despair; for the dog is capable of very keen and constant attachment, and she has little knowledge wherewith to lighten the apprehensions and solace the pangs of devotion put on its hardest trial. But should Flora's hope deferred sink in the end into fathomless despondency, the dog will still contain herself. She will be no burden to anybody. She will not add to the grief of others, who have a better right than she has to mourn. She will wear a decent veil of reserve over her anguish. What is she that she should cry out against destiny? She will go about her usual avocations, and even faintly wag her tail and make a formal show of joy at her friends' advances, or on any occasion of hilarity. There will be no idle baying at the moon, or wild howling in the dead of night, causing the blood of other watchers to curdle, in Flora's case; she knows how to suffer and be silent, nay, to put the best face on

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suffering. Only the old dog's tread will grow heavier and heavier, in proportion to the increasing heaviness of her heart, as she stalks about her business. She will get ever gaunter, without attracting much notice to her spectral condition, until one day she will be found stretched stark and still on some spot, hallowed by association, where her master was wont to whistle her to his side to start for the day's sport—where he cleaned his gun on their return, and she, after lapping the cold tea which his care provided for her refreshment, sat and looked on, not too tired to enter with interest and admiration into the operation. Or she will be discovered on the mat by the closed door—opening no more—of his room; dying without complaint, and seeking to cause no trouble in her death, as she had tried to give as little as possible in her life.

Flora was brought up in a middle station of life to that of Prince or of Carlo. She was not the next thing to an outcast, neither was she a pampered dog of high degree. She was one of a litter of puppies that arrived at a country parsonage, when there was no great need of such an addition to the family. Neither was she, nor her mother before her, particularly precious for purity or excellence of breed, though they were members of a race of stout serviceable dogs which could be turned to account in various ways, and could be trained to prove of considerable use, both as setters and retrievers, among the turnips and clover, and in the young plantations. But the perpetual curate who was master of the parsonage was an elderly man, and no great sportsman, and one dog was quite enough for him and his friends.

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Flora was sentenced to death along with her brothers and sisters, and if it had not been for Master Harry her history would have been of the briefest. He was not the sole hope of the house, like De Vaux; neither had he any honours beyond an honest name to succeed to. But he was the youngest born of his family. He was growing up in a healthy, hardy, happy boyhood, after the elder members had gone out into the world, and were married and settled in households of their own. Master Harry was the last young bird that kept the parent nest tenanted by more than the old pair. He was the Benjamin of their mature years, and therefore it was difficult to deny him a small request—not that Harry's father and mother did not strive to do their duty by him, in contradicting and correcting him, as they had dealt by their elder children, in order to bring him up in the way he should go. His mother, who was a tall gaunt woman, as gaunt as Flora became in later days, and yet as active and managing as if she had been one of your little boneless, tireless women, and the apple of whose eye Harry was, especially laboured conscientiously to mortify her own inclinations and hold her youngest son in check. Even in the matter of Flora, though she yielded to let the dog be reared, it was always under protest and with reservations—if the dog proved a thoroughly good dog, and was in every respect well conducted from her puppyhood; if Mrs. Bloomfield saw no reason to change her mind at any point of Flora's career, and cause the dog to be consigned, after all, to the water-hole in the furze quarry, by common consent—the grave of all the criminal, mangy, forsaken dogs in the parish of Rushbrook.

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As the best of dogs, like the best of men, are fallible, Flora may be said to have grown up under a sentence of death, and was only spared by a succession of reprieves from the execution of the warrant. Once or twice she made very narrow escapes, and perhaps her rescue was due to more than Harry's powers of piteous pleading. She had been gradually, by the pertinacious efforts of her master, introduced into the house, instead of living at the stables with her mother, according to Mrs. Bloomfield's original decree, and so had established a claim of familiarity on the regard of the stern censor herself.

Two marked instances of Flora's rubbing shoulders with that eminence above the water-hole in the quarry, which may be compared to the Tarpeian Rock, are on record.

Mrs. Bloomfield, who prided herself on her success in her poultry yard, had to listen at one period to various mysterious and doleful accounts from her cook and boy-of-all-work on the inexplicable disappearance of new-laid eggs and newly-fledged chickens. As there were no disreputable characters about, and neither fox nor hawk in the vicinity, and as the innocence of Flora's mother was as well established as the incorruptibility of the parsonage servants who brought the reports, a grave suspicion attached from the beginning to Flora as the depredator. But in the absence of positive proof, and in the face of Harry's indignant denial, the dark suggestion only hovered in the light of a suspicion, and did not settle in the form of a conviction in people's minds.

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As good or ill luck would have it, Harry had a half-holiday, and proposed gallantly to escort his mother round the offices, offering her his arm for the purpose. The two proceeded, chatting easily, the best of friends, past the kitchen garden, the paddock where the Guernsey cow and her calf fed, the shed where the pony phaeton stood, and the stable which held the curate's cob, and his wife and Harry's ponies. The pair came in course of time opposite the door of the well-ordered hen-house, or the hennery, as some ladies of Mrs. Bloomfield's acquaintance, ambitious of euphemism, preferred to term it. There was an unusual commotion about the place; the door, with its crescent hole for hens to enter or issue at pleasure, had been forced ajar, and at the very moment when Mrs. Bloomfield and her son appeared on the scene it was driven still more violently open. There rushed out a loudly protesting, terrified hen-mother, with all her black feathers ruffled, and some of them half pulled out, hanging by the tips of the pens. Behind her tore along Flora, not subdued and decorous, as we have seen her, but inflamed with riot and in hot pursuit. Her jaws were dripping yellow with the yolks of eggs, to which was added, in horrid significance, a fringe of the fluffy down which is the covering of recently hatched chickens.

The sight struck Mrs. Bloomfield and Harry dumb. She had too much feeling for her son, as the master of Flora, to say a word to him at first. He could not bring forward a syllable in defence of

the dog, caught red-handed, or yellow and feathery jawed—which came to the same thing—in this instance.

Though Mrs. Bloomfield said nothing, she let her hand, which had been resting lightly on Harry's jacket sleeve, tighten its grasp. Thus she marched the boy to the house. Flora, who had taken guilt to herself, stopped short in her headlong career, let the plundered and insulted hen go, and slunk at a safe distance after the mother and son to the parsonage. [72]

"Now, Harry, what have you to say for yourself and that brute of yours?" asked Mrs. Bloomfield, in the tone of a righteous and relentless judge.

"I had nothing to do with it, mother," cried Harry in desperation; "and Flo is only a dog."

"Flo is only a dog," echoed his mother severely; "and those who should know better, and keep her to the injury of poor helpless fowls, and the destruction of as fine a brood of chickens as cook ever set, have the more to answer for. Harry, Flora goes this very night."

"Mother, it is the first time," pled Harry faintly.

"The first and the last," said his mother. "I have heard that a taste for eggs, not to say chickens, is never eradicated in a dog."

"Oh no, mother, you are wrong there," cried Harry eagerly. "Tom Cartright's Juno was as destructive a beast to turkeys and geese, even to lambs, when he was half-grown——"

"Hold your tongue, Harry, and don't contradict your mother."

Harry was cut short in his argument, and submitted more unresistingly than usual.

"I cannot have the dog about the place for another night," went on Mrs. Bloomfield, in a high authoritative key. "Hoppus," naming the gardener, "will take her away quietly, and put an end to her without any unnecessary pain. It must be done, Harry; there is no help for it, and you must bear it like a man. You know I have often told you, when you would insist on keeping pets, that you must be prepared for their coming to grief, and causing you to suffer in your turn." [73]

"I don't mind my own sufferings," muttered Harry indignantly; "but I'll tell you what, mother, if Flo is to be killed, I—I'll kill her myself," he said, with quivering lips and a husky voice, but making a manful fight to keep down his feelings. "I have a right to be let do it. Nobody will care so much that she shall not suffer as I will. And Flo will do anything for me. She will even jump over the quarry when I tell her, and not believe her senses that it can hurt her, because it is I who bid her do it," he ended, unable to restrain a sob.

Mrs. Bloomfield hesitated, while she was conscious of some troublesome moisture in her eyes. It was true what Harry urged, that he had a right—and she was the last woman to deny a right, if he claimed it—to save Flora from pain, and make her death as inconceivable to her to the last moment as was possible. But could she condemn her boy to such a task? She would consult his father.

The curate, like his wife, shrank from making Harry his dog's executioner. Harry stood firm. The matter was argued, and the fulfilment of the sentence delayed, till at last it was commuted to a sound whipping, and *that* Harry consented to relegate to the hands of the gardener. So faithfully did Hoppus discharge his mission, and so susceptible was Flora, from these early days, to reason—whether it was conveyed in kind careful instruction or wholesome chastisement—that from that hour she respected the poultry yard, and always looked another way when she had to pass a nest, or when a chicken crossed her path. So magnanimous did she become in her age, that she has been known to allow a daring young cock, or stolid middle-aged hen, to advance and peck at the bone beside which she lay reposing. [74]

The next perilous crisis through which Flora passed occurred later in time, and in Harry's absence from home—which proved, nevertheless, a fortunate circumstance. Flora was grown, and had her first litter of puppies, which were taken from her and destroyed. Ill, sad—missing Harry as well as her puppies—the ordinarily quiet, well-behaved dog fretted herself into a very frenzy of destructiveness, under the influence of which she roamed in secret all over the house, gratifying her gnawing and tearing propensities. She got possession of a visitor's ermine boa, and rent it in fragments. She was found ensconced in a spare bedroom, and established in the bed, the Marseilles quilt of which she had chewed till it was riddled with holes. Finally, she managed to secure a bandbox, containing two maid-servants' Sunday bonnets, and made short work with the pink ribbons and the artificial flowers.

Mrs. Bloomfield replaced the wholesale wreck; but she could stand such conduct no longer, though she was too well-informed a woman to fall into a panic, under the impression that the dog was mad. In reference to the right in Flora stringently asserted by Harry when he was a mere boy, she could not—now that her son was a big lad—do more than order the dog to be tied up, while she waited word from Harry in answer to her inquiry as to how his *protégée* was to be disposed of. It happened to be the end of the week, when Harry frequently returned home from his public school to remain over the Sunday. And it had been noticed before that the dog was cognizant of these stated visits, and looked eagerly out for the arrival of her master. [75]

In the season allowed to Flora for cooling down and contrition, while she had the knowledge forced upon her that she could no longer rush to greet Harry with an open face and a clear

conscience, but must be sought out by the lad, smarting under a fellow-feeling with her disgrace, Flora became so overpowered by the consequences of her previous self-indulgence of restless grief and longing, that she cast to the winds the silent endurance which had been from her youth a marked feature in the big, brave dog's character. She refused to eat and sleep, and expressed her poignant regret and repentance, in a mode most unlike herself, by filling the air with her howls and moans.

At the end of two days and nights Flora had howled herself perfectly hoarse, until Mrs. Bloomfield's—not to say the curate's—ears and hearts ached with the dog's husky distress. In sheer self-defence they sent instructions to loose her, but to detain her a prisoner on parole, banished from their presence.

But Flora did not understand anything about parole, or reservations in pardon. With a succession of joyous bounds at her release, she spurned all efforts to detain her, and never stopped till she had pushed her way, worn and dishevelled as she was with unrest, hunger, and the constant agitation of eight-and-forty hours, into her offended judge's august presence, leaping upon her and the curate—up to their very shoulders and heads—in her fond gladness, licking the hem of Mrs. Bloomfield's garment, falling grovelling at her feet, whining in a very passion of gratitude and delight.

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What was to be done? It was not in hearts which were not steel to resist such unbounded dependence on their regard and their goodness. Mrs. Bloomfield professed to frown and pull away her gown from the dog's touch; Mr. Bloomfield pshawed and read on at his paper; but I believe both secretly caressed the confiding culprit. Certainly no more notice was taken of her misdemeanours. As for Master Harry, on his return he had the coolness to take high ground, and maintain that the accidents were all owing to the ignorance and carelessness of the dog's keepers, and that if he had been at home, and had Flora in charge, not a single misadventure would have happened.

Soon after this escapade, changes occurred in the curate's family which established Flora's position there so firmly that nothing short of a capital crime could have dislodged her. Flora's character was far removed from a capital crime; she was an honest, worthy dog, noble and sterling in her unaffected humility and steadfast attachment. She had laid aside her youthful indiscretions—whether the probations and penalties of these days had anything to do with the peculiar staidness and propriety which ultimately, except on rare and exceptional occasions, distinguished her bearing. The dog, that was at first permitted to live as a favour, and brought up under protest, reached at last to as high honour as ever dog attained.

However, it was long previous to this climax that Flora had many happy days with Harry, attending him sedulously, and assisting him with all her ability in his raids on rabbits, hares, pheasants, wild ducks, or rats in the barn. Flora was not particular; any game came right to her, which was one advantage of her mixed descent. Harry averred that she would have gone at a deer had she got the chance of deer-stalking. He was proud of her skill in pointing and in bringing him the game, though he was free to admit that she was not probably just such a dog as that which the poet Earl of Surrey—with the true poetic insight into animal nature, and power of drawing forth and tutoring animal gifts—first taught to point.

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I don't know whether Harry or Flora enjoyed most those early autumn mornings, when the silvery white mist drew a bridal veil over the orange and tawny woodlands, when the young man's foot crushed out the aromatic fragrance from the thyme and mint in the pasture; or those winter and spring afternoons, when the sunset reddened the prevailing gray, and the two crouched, stiff but staunch, among the frozen sedges by the silent brook, and trudged home content—although they had got but a single green-necked duck, or were empty-handed—in the gathering darkness, with the stars coming out and twinkling over their heads. The two were excellent company, and in room of speech Harry whistled—oh! with what untiring wind, and how cheerily—in a way that it would have done Lady Margaret's heart good to hear, leaving echoes which rang pathetically in other hearts throughout the long years.

The first great change which made good Flora's footing in the curate's family, was Harry's ultimate choice of the navy for a profession. He had delayed his resolve out of a regard to his father and mother's reluctance to grant their consent. They were quite elderly people, and were loath to agree to the son of their old age following a rough and dangerous vocation, which, at the best, would take him far from those who had not much time left to spend on earth. But Harry's bent was too strong, and his father and mother were too wise and kind long to resist the clear inclination, or to call on their son to sacrifice it, with its inspiration of hearty liking, to the growing timidity of their years, and the very clinging love they bore him.

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It was not the less a trial, which so broke down even the younger and stronger of the two, that Mrs. Bloomfield, who had been known as a highly practical woman, actually took to discoursing to Flora on the subject, doubtless since she could not trust herself to speak to more responsive auditors—least of all to her equally interested old husband. "We'll miss him, Flora. Ay, you need not wag your tail; there will be few waggings of the tail in the dull days that are coming. I thought you had more sense, old dog. But perhaps you mean that he'll serve his Maker and his fellow-men as well in a ship as in an office, even as in a church, where I would fain have seen my Harry—only Providence has settled it otherwise, and Providence knows best. We are following unerring guidance; that is one thing to be thankful for. Some old sailor—I daresay Harry could tell me his name and all about him—said he was as near heaven on sea as on land, and so it will be with my boy."

It was after the wrench of Harry's departure, for many months, that Flora was first seen to assume that attitude of supreme watching and expectation in which she has been painted. She had been shut up to keep her from running off to the railway station—just as I have known another faithful dog go regularly and take up his position at a particular hour, in order to be present on the arrival of a coach by which his master had been wont to return home. The dog was under the impression that the man would make his appearance in the old accustomed fashion, and, although he was doomed to disappointment night after night, he kept up the bootless practice for weeks.

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The attitude expressive of suspense became frequent, almost habitual, with Flora. In the early days of Harry's service, he happened to have tolerably frequent opportunities of coming home, so that his dog grew familiar with arrivals and departures. And Harry's father and mother, now cherishing Flora as a relic of their absent son, were fain to allege that she showed marvellous, certainly superhuman, if not supernatural, discrimination in detecting the most distant signs of her master's approach; and that they were often made aware of Harry's unexpected nearness, before they could otherwise have known it, simply by the actions of the dog.

In addition, Flora had her susceptibilities keenly alive to any trace of Harry, or any association with him, so that on the sight of some article which had belonged to him, such as his cap or his old overcoat, or even on her catching the distant sound of the sportsmen's dropping shots on the first of September, Flora would fall into an expectant position, and sit motionless and listening for hours. The last expression of her remembrance unquestionably detracted from the correctness of her premonitions of Harry's reappearance; but his father and mother argued that there was a perceptible difference between Flora's air when she sat thus waiting for her master, without any hope of seeing him, and her whole gait and manner when she flung up her bent head triumphantly before she made a bolt at the door or the open window, crying as plainly as if she had made the remark in so many words—"Ah! don't you know Master Harry is at the gate?" Either expression was clear to Harry's father and mother, who had a sympathy with the dog, and whose own dim eyes showed a reflection of the aimless wistfulness which was creeping into Flora's brighter orbs.

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A sore test was in store for all Harry's friends, human and canine. In the course of honourable promotion he became a person of importance, and his absences were much longer, his returns briefer and less unflinching. At last there came a day when he had the pride of showing a lieutenant's uniform; but as a qualification to the satisfaction, where his friends were concerned, he sailed for a distant station, from which he could not return for a period of years.

Slowly the days passed in the quiet parsonage, where the snows of winter had gathered thickly on the old curate's head, and he was seldom fit to totter up the stairs to his pulpit, and where Mrs. Bloomfield had at last to avail herself of spectacles; and to own to a touch of rheumatism, so that she had to employ young deputies to do the entire decorations of the church at Christmas, and even to teach in the Sunday school, and undertake, under the old lady's superintendence, her district visiting. Flora herself, by far the youngest of the household, was neither so young nor so active as she had been.

But whatever powers of seeing, hearing, and discharging professional duties were passing away from the members of the little party, there was one thing they were still fit for—to count the hours and look out for the appointed time of Harry's return.

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Alas! the hours were counted in vain. Although the long-desired season came duly round, it did not herald the event which was to have rendered it illustrious in one remote spot in Great Britain. Harry did not walk into the old house and rouse its slumberous inmates. His cutter was not even heard of; it had not been reported for many months.

Gradually misgivings and apprehensions, the sickness of hope deferred, the agony of the worst forebodings, gathered and darkened over the parsonage.

Everybody in the parish shook his or her head, and commiserated the bereaved parents: surely they were bereaved, though it was natural in them to cling to the last chance, and refuse to give up hope. Still, it would be better for them if they could resign their son, with his messmates, to an unknown death and a nameless grave.

Harry had been a favourite in the parish, and there was sincere mourning for his untimely fate, as well as real sympathy with his aged father and mother, even when their grief took a trying phase, and they shut themselves up—not to say refusing to be comforted, but declining to believe in their loss. "We won't give him up so soon, old dog," Mrs. Bloomfield was heard to say to Flora. "You still look out for him; don't you? You would teach people, who ought to know better, greater confidence in God and His mercy, and more fidelity to their friends, instead of calling us afflicted, whom God has not afflicted." And she refused to put on mourning.

Then people began to say it was a bad example from those who should be the first to show resignation to the Divine will, and that Mrs. Bloomfield was guilty of lamentable weakness and superstitious folly in paying heed to Harry's dog and its ways. It was the grossest absurdity to suppose that a dumb animal could be aware whether its master had perished, or was sailing in strange waters, or had been cast away on a virgin island. It was well known that the Admiralty had given up the cutter. The speakers would not have expected such inconsistency in poor old Mrs. Bloomfield, who had been a clever, sensible woman in her day, though she was breaking up fast.

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Harry's mother got all the blame with reason, since the curate had grown so feeble in mind, as well as in body, that he was only able to take in what his wife told him; and if she had assured him that Harry had never been away at all, but had been all this while in the cricket-ground, or off with his gun and Flora, he would have called for his hat and stick, and claimed her arm, to go out and chide the boy for his thoughtless delay.

The elder sons and daughters of the family, middle-aged people, with growing-up children of their own, put themselves about to come from various distances to condole and remonstrate gently with their mother, until poor Mrs. Bloomfield's forlorn hope was at its last tremulous gasp. Even Flora threatened to fail her, for the old dog began, not so much to sit listening, as to crouch down, it seemed in despair.

But one April day, when the country air was full of the scent of blossoming furze bushes and the songs of birds, awakening to the knowledge that summer was at hand, Flora pricked her ears, started up, and pawed eagerly at the door.

"There! I told you; there is Harry at last," cried a shrill quavering voice, and then Mrs. Bloomfield fell back in a dead faint; for, even as she had spoken, she had recognised that it was only the postman who was advancing to give his accustomed rap, and her strained nerves and breaking heart could not stand the bitter disappointment. [83]

"This delusion will kill my mother," said one of the daughters, hurrying to attend to Mrs. Bloomfield, while one of the sons received the letters. "That wretched dog of poor Harry's must be taken away from the place."

"Yes, Conty," said her brother hastily; "but this is very like—it cannot be—good Heavens! it is Harry's handwriting, and see"—pointing to the end of a letter he had torn open—"here is his signature. Could the brute have scented it a hundred yards off?"

"Oh! never mind, if dear Harry be only alive and well. Find out all about it, that we may tell mamma the first thing after she knows what we are saying. There, the red is coming into her poor lips again; but I am sure nothing will bring her back like such good news. No, Jem, I have no fear for the shock; it is sorrow and not joy which drains the blood from the heart; and the knowledge that she and Flora have been proved right, and all the rest of us wrong, will help to steady her. Don't you know so much of human nature?" demanded the half-laughing, half-crying, middle-aged daughter.

Harry's story was one not altogether strange to men's experience, and which occurs once and again in a generation, but when it happens is always regarded as a marvel with the attributes of a romance.

The cutter had been lost in a stormy night on a coral reef in the southern seas; but a boat's-load of the crew, among whom was the junior lieutenant, had managed to land on an uninhabited island, and make good a living there for four dreary months. "If I had only got Flora with me," Harry wrote in the letter—in which he was at last able to announce his rescue, and in which he sought to make light of the hardships he and his companions had undergone—to his father and mother, "the old lass would have found plenty to do among the rabbits and a kind of partridge. She would have been invaluable, if her very value had not proved the ruin of her, and if she had not fallen a victim to her general gaminess, as other poor beggars were like to do; but that is all over now." [84]

When the castaway men were at last taken off the island, it was by a foreign ship that carried them thousands of miles out of their track; but the sufferers had been treated with every attention and kindness by good Samaritans in the guise of Brazilian sailors, and by the time Harry's letter should reach the parsonage, to disperse any little anxiety that might be entertained there, the writer would be far on his way home.

Mrs. Bloomfield had enough spirit to undertake a journey to Portsmouth, in order to be the first of all the friends who accompanied her to greet her son. Her husband was not able to escort her; he waited placidly with Flora, satisfied to be taken to the railway station to meet the appointed train.

I need not say that the old dog was an object of great interest, while she comported herself with her own exemplary sobriety. If she had an intuition that her master was on the road, she did not betray it on this occasion. She had no call to announce to the idle world of Rushbrook—and it was rather an idle holiday world, with a marked inclination to congregate at the railway station on another fine spring morning—that Master Harry was coming. Withal, Flora's sagacity and devotion could hardly be expected to compass the fact that late events had intensified the importance of such information. She submitted to have a sailor's blue ribbon tied round her neck, in honour of the day and her master; but she wore the decoration rather with imperturbability than with conscious pride, and she took no notice of the flags and evergreens which were displayed with kindly zeal. [85]

When the train steamed into the station, and a brown face appeared at the window of a carriage, crowded with brothers and sisters, in addition to an old mother, Flora did strain violently at the chain by which Hoppus, for greater precaution, held her, and it was with difficulty that she was induced to have the grace to permit Harry to pay his respects first to his father—who, as by an involuntary motion, uncovered his white head to receive his lost son—before she sprang upon her master in a rapture of welcome, which Harry's "Hold on, old dog; don't worry

me outright!" only raised to a higher pitch of ecstasy.

But Flora was not naturally a demonstrative, far less a forward dog. She soon controlled herself, and recalled the superior claims of others, falling respectfully, and with a shadow of shamefacedness for her late unwonted ebullition, to heel, and following decorously, for the rest of the way, in the little procession.

Only one trouble occurred with the dog. It had been arranged that the reunited family, with their friends and the parishioners present, should proceed first to the church, in order to join together in a solemn service of thanksgiving for a great act of mercy vouchsafed by Almighty God to some of His children—a ceremony which is touching in proportion to its rarity in this world of care and discontent.

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Flora, who had never been to church before, and who was, as I said, walking in her place in the procession just behind Harry, who was between his father and mother, showed no sign of stopping short in the porch.

There was considerable hesitation in the breasts of the brothers and sisters, who noticed the dog's proceedings, and in the mind of Hoppus, who considered that he had her particularly in charge. Indeed, that consequential functionary had been giving himself sundry airs on account of the guardianship, seeing that if Master Harry were the hero of the day, Master Harry's dog, which had never ceased to look out for him, might surely be regarded as playing second fiddle to her master, reflecting glory on her keeper for the next twelve hours at least. But what would become of the glory if Flora were let get into a scrape? The official spirits of the clerk, beadle, and pew-opener were also sensibly stirred by the *contretemps*.

Was the harmony to be broken, and a disturbance to be created, by the forcible arrest and expulsion of the dog?—no easy task if Flora made up her mind to stick closely to her newly-found master. Would a scandal be created if a dog were suffered to make one of the congregation in a thanksgiving service?

The matter settled itself. As the principals concerned walked unconsciously within the sacred walls, and Harry took the old place he had occupied when a boy in the family pew, Flora did not wait till the objectors had formed a resolution; she advanced steadily in her line of march in the rear of her master, and lay down in her festival blue ribbon at his feet, with the coolness of unchallengeable right. It would have been impossible to dislodge her then. As it was, she soon stilled the alarm she had raised, by remaining perfectly quiet, and behaving as if she had attended church every Sunday from her puppyhood; like Scotch collies that wait discreetly on the diets of worship in pastoral Presbyterian kirks. But I am bound to confess that was the first and last occasion on which Flora went to church.

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CHAPTER IV. "THE HUMBLE FRIEND."

"CÆSAR will be the death of Dash some day, Tot," said Nelly Pollard to her favourite brother—not a little boy in petticoats, as his name might imply, but a young man upwards of six feet, and "bearded like the pard." The origin of his inappropriate name was capable of easy explanation, when it came to be investigated. He had been christened Reginald—an imposing and euphonious title which his numerous brothers and sisters in the nursery abbreviated unceremoniously to "Wretch." The child naturally objecting to this corruption, an indulgent mother substituted the neutral epithet "Tot," which was in keeping with a mite in a white frock and blue shoes; but "Tot," in spite of the glaring discrepancy, stuck to the man after he had attained his full stature, and the frock and the shoes had been exchanged for a frock-coat and Blücher boots.

"I am afraid that will be about it," said Tot, with all a man's barbarous *sang-froid*, in marked contrast to the accent of trepidation and terror with which Nelly had spoken.



"Serve him right. Why need he play Boswell unasked to Cæsar's Johnson?"

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"But if father would only see that Cæsar is a dreadful brute, and have him put away in time to save Dash," she said pleadingly.

"Why, you cannot complain of our father's predilection, when it is shared to so great an extent by your silly favourite," remonstrated Tot. "It is on the principle of Carlyle's admiration of Frederick the Great, and of the present furor for Bismarck," added Tot, who was fond of historical parallels. "What do you mean by putting away?" he pressed Nelly with pitiless directness. "I have no patience with euphemisms, Nell. Say at once that you would have Cæsar shot or hanged, in order to protect Dash from the natural consequences of his folly. Well, though I must say that is a queer kind of justice, by way of mercy, too—"

"Oh! not shot or hanged, Tot. You know I did not mean that," exclaimed Nelly piteously, interrupting her brother; "and you do not like Cæsar yourself."

"I am perfectly aware that he is a truculent ruffian," said Tot, composedly. "He has grossly imposed on the governor. I would see him despatched with all the pleasure in life—"

"I don't believe you," Nelly interrupted him again with energy.

"Wait till I have finished my sentence," complained Tot. "I was going to say that while I should have no objection to Cæsar's meeting his deserts, I really cannot recognise the propriety of his

falling a sacrifice to the stubborn idiocy of Dash.”

Cæsar was a truculent ruffian, with hardly a redeeming trait; though, from his life as a chained-up watch-dog—which, to give the beast his due, might have helped to brutalise his disposition—he was removed from the opportunity of doing much mischief, and though he was able with all his stupidity—and he was as stupid as he was savage—to throw dust in his master’s eyes. He ought not to have been named for a brave Roman soldier, granting he did overthrow a republic. Timour or Tippoo was too good a name for the dog.

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You may see him in the illustration—a huge, half-bred brute, without any of the nobility or magnanimity of the true mastiff. There he lies sprawling, half out of his den, with his muzzle and his unwieldy paws guarding a piece of meat, while he glares at you with a jealous scowl. There is no harmony in his bulk, which, in place of being imposing, is simply repulsive. The girth of his neck is tremendous, while his bull head is furnished with comparatively short, thick ears. His broad, flat, black and red nose is stolid in the extreme, and destitute of speculation apart from its animal scent.

Yet Cæsar is not without his admirers; not only does his master, worthy gentleman, refuse to believe that the dog is coarser, more insensate and vicious than other dogs—there is a poor little weak-minded spaniel Dash, that hankers after the ugly, hard, selfish tyrant, haunts his den, and makes timid advances to him.

Dash also is to be seen in the illustration, bowing and begging to Cæsar. Dash’s silky, wavy hair, prominent eyebrows, pendant ears, the abject inclination of his head, the slobbering of his tongue in sneaking kindness—half for Cæsar, half for his piece of meat—are all keenly characteristic of the spaniel, with his fawning, frightened ways; and alas! alas! there are in him, along with his gentleness and surface amiability, the elements of a liar and a traitor.

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There cannot be a wider distinction in dog-life, and in the human life of which, in Landseer’s hands, the first was the type, than that which exists between the despicable, precarious relations of Cæsar and Dash, and the chivalrous enduring connection that knit together two such dogs as figure in the group, “Dignity and Impudence.”

I do not mean that poor Dash’s infatuated *penchant* for Cæsar—at the best always surly to him, and whose rude tolerance was bought by the relish which Cæsar, with other tyrants, had for low flattery—was entirely a cake and pudding, or, I should say more fitly here, a beef and bone attachment. I do not wish to imply more than that, in such an unreasonable, unreasoning passion as that which not unfrequently links a Dash to a Cæsar, I have generally found beneath the weak creature’s softness, silliness, flagrant imprudence, and apparent self-abnegation, a very considerable leaven of self-will and selfishness, with a lively appreciation of what are to the victim the good things of this life. Still I am willing to admit these are not the only motives for such a perverse, well-nigh degrading subjection, and that even the spaniel Dash entertained an incomprehensible tenderness for the brute Cæsar, apart from the hope of the reversion of Cæsar’s bones, which, when thoroughly sated himself, he permitted sometimes to his visitor.

I know there exists an odd fascination in outward inequality, when the foundations of character are tolerably balanced. It was the brusque manner and slightly hectoring tones of Tot—who was in the main a thoroughly kind-hearted fellow, and quite a different character from Cæsar—that rendered him the favourite brother of his gentlest sister Nelly. But Nelly, again, was not like Dash; she was, with all her delicate womanliness, not merely transparent as crystal and true as steel, but firm as a rock on questions of moment to her; and it is to cowardly, vacillating natures that I am inclined to ascribe—in addition to the attraction which boldness has for softness—double motives, and a constitutional tendency to artful manœuvring and secret defiance.

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It was in secret defiance that Dash waited on Cæsar. Dog as he was, Dash knew perfectly well that he was warned away from the precincts of the watch-dog’s couch, and that every effort was made to show him it was not in accordance with his own welfare, any more than with his owners’ wishes, that he should expose himself to Cæsar’s coarse companionship and often grisly humour. And Dash had not even the excuse of the fly for yielding to the wiles of the spider. Cæsar certainly did not invite the spaniel into his “chamber.” He was neither complacent nor cunning enough to solicit his satellite’s company; he did no more than permit it, with a sort of insolent indifference. Dash chose to risk himself in a combination of credulous vanity, lurking—not open—naughtiness, misplaced affection, and greed.

The intimacy, if so it could be called, continued in spite of Nelly Pollard’s prohibitions, and the barriers raised by her—notwithstanding Tot’s rougher reminders of his duty to the spaniel, and attempts at coercing Cæsar—till a prolonged howl of terror and anguish arose one morning, and caused the brother and sister to rush simultaneously—Tot from his chemical experiments, Nell from her gardening—to the back court where the watch-dog’s couch stood, and from which the cry proceeded.

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Sure enough, Dash had been a little too importunate, and a shade indiscreet in his greeting, when Cæsar was engaged with his morning meal; and the tyrant had leaped upon his slave, rolled him over, and though Cæsar had thought fit to spare life and limb, he had planted with his fangs more than one terrible love-token in Dash’s quivering flesh.

When Tot and Nelly ran into the court, the criminal retired growling to his fastness, and Dash, who had actually fainted, lay prostrate and mangled—a miserable warning to all foolish, wayward dogs and men. He was loudly bemoaned, tenderly borne off the field, and succoured to the best of

his doctor's and nurse's powers—even Tot forgot for the moment to remark it was Dash's own blame.

With great care and trouble the spaniel's wounds were healed; and where do you think he limped the first time he could drag his shattered little carcass abroad once more? Not to Tot's room—though Tot had expended on the dog every particle of his skill as a medical student; not to Nelly's room—though Nelly had prayed to be allowed to have his basket by her fire, in order to see to his wants during the night—as a mother watches her baby—and had lost not a few hours of beauty sleep in consequence. Dash had licked the hands of his doctor and nurse most impartially all the time they were in attendance on him. He had whined and wagged his tail, and absolutely grovelled to them, as if they were the objects of his profoundest gratitude, his lowliest adoration. Doubtless the dog was grateful, and did love his young friends; but his own will was more to him than his gratitude, and his fitful inclinations than his allegiance. It does not sound well in a dog; yet I have heard and read of such conduct in a man, above all in a woman, when it was narrated coolly without a word of censure—nay, with strongly expressed notes of admiration!

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The first moment Dash could hobble out by himself, he covertly disowned Tot and Nelly's authority, and put to scorn their opinion, by stealthily seeking the abode of the dog that had all but slain him. Dash was detected begging forgiveness of Cæsar for having so nearly proved his victim, instead of awarding forgiveness on his own account. He was at his old trick of toad-eating, with pauses between times, to recover his lapsed strength, and to peer round so as to avoid observation. If any one calls such an action pathetic, so cannot I. If any one admires such fickleness and faithlessness where true and tried friendship was concerned, such annihilation of right principle and self-respect before the idle fancy of a day, I do not, and never will.

Tot and Nelly had no resource but to keep Dash a close prisoner, in order to save him from the worst death a dog can die, till Cæsar was guilty of another fierce outbreak, and this time, as it had a man and not a dog for its victim, he was summarily sentenced to the death which he richly deserved.

Dash was released, went on the sly to Cæsar's empty couch, and sniffed once all round it wonderingly. But his moan was soon made; he did not raise a single useless lamentation, for such weak dogs have often a curious counter-vein of extreme rationality and worldly wisdom. He at once transferred his homage to a lazy, phlegmatic sheep-dog, and, for any sign that could be seen, completely forgot his late savage crony.





CHAPTER V. "THE CAVALIER'S PETS."

DIFFERENT generations are marked by their different favourites, especially among those who have the means and the leisure for the cultivation of such predilections, in newly introduced animals and plants. Even human beings are included in this category, and so we had an era of dwarfs and an era of black boys, as half-attendants, half-playthings for fine ladies and gentlemen. Among the lower animals there was a monkey period and a macaw period, both of which have passed away in a great measure. Among plants we have had the seasons when dahlias and pansies first came into vogue and became objects of absorbing interest, and the year which saw the importation of the glorious Tom Thumb geranium.

Dogs are no exception to this influence of fashion, so that there is a double sense in which "every dog has its day." Even living persons have seen many canine candidates for such honours. The spotted Danish hound had his day, so had the bouncing, curly, jet black Newfoundland, the grand liver-coloured mastiff, the fierce white bull-dog, the hideous crooked-legged turnspit, the hardly less ugly, long-bodied, pig-headed boar-hound, the Pomeranian, with its sleek hair and fox's head, and the little cocker, with its indescribably comical, crushed-up nose. [96]

The origin of some of these manias must have been whimsical enough; but our concern is with the fact that in the reign of the first Charles there became prominent as pets in England a race of small dogs known as the King Charles spaniel, and that at a later period the Blenheim spaniel came into notice. Both races were and are aristocrats of the first water, connected in the very names of the species with royal and ducal houses.

I speak as an ignorant woman; but my impression is, that the King Charles is of French nationality, and that the little brute not only came to England in the train of pretty, foolish, flighty Henrietta Maria, but that it made its appearance in Scotland two generations earlier, in the suite of the beautiful and miserable Mary Stewart. Unless tradition lie, such a dog crept beside the block at Fotheringhay—

"The little dog that licked her hand, the last of all the crowd
Which sunned themselves beneath her glance, and round her footsteps bowed."

King Charles spaniels were at a premium in England in the reigns of the two sovereigns of that name. I don't doubt that they were under a cloud during the Protectorate, and that stout Oliver Cromwell owned none of them; but we find one in the study of Sir Isaac Newton, in its ignorant unconsciousness working dire mischief among the philosopher's priceless calculations, and drawing down on its empty head the mildest rebuke—"Diamond, Diamond! thou little knowest the mischief thou hast done." However, I think the spaniels fell somewhat into disgrace, in consequence of the bad company they kept in the second Charles' reign; and because that most unheroic of merry monarchs played with his little dogs, and fed his ducks, when he ought to have been fighting the Dutch on the Thames, or relieving the sufferers in plague-stricken London. [97]

No doubt, in the archives of the house of Marlborough there is an account of the rise of the Blenheim dogs; but though I bow to the authority of Landseer, I am driven to conclude them a more modern "fancy," even as the renown of Blenheim has its origin in John Churchill, and his victories in Queen Anne's reign. Yet here are a King Charles and a Blenheim lying side by side, one of them on the very brim of a cavalier's steeple-crowned hat, with its ostrich feather. The black and tan of the King Charles, relieved by a little white here and there, contrasts admirably with the mass of milky white, picked out with liver-colour, in the Blenheim. The silkiness of their long flapping ears is only matched by the glossy texture of their coats and the featheriness of their tails. Their soft paws are made for begging, or for resting their faces between them, as in the case of the Blenheim in the illustration. Their eyes are big, with an odd jumble of wilfulness and beseeching, like the eyes of some spoiled children. They are the loveliest and the idlest little pets in the world. They are adepts at coaxing and caressing, which form, indeed, a large part of their stock-in-trade—not that they are necessarily insincere, but they are very useless, very dependent, and they can but fondle like a child, as a small return for all the care and kindness lavished upon them. They are made to be decked in ribbons, not as part of a grand festive display—when even a huge gaunt Flora may submit to the unsuitable accompaniment, simply to do honour to the occasion—but because frippery of knots and bows belongs to them as to babies and beauties and dandies. The little dogs like their ribbons as they like their combings, washings, and gay baskets, all of which bigger dogs would look upon as an unmitigated nuisance. [98]

Withal, the King Charleses and the Blenheims have one serious personal disadvantage. Their voices are not like Cordelia's, low and sweet, neither are they, of course, sonorous, like the voice of a big dog. They have a high-pitched, thin, wearisome yelp, which, when they are vexed or angry, becomes painfully querulous, or peevishly vixenish.

All the other dogs we have discussed could do something for their living, besides looking pretty, wriggling and chasing their tails. Even Carlo could course when he was requested; but Roi—or Roy, as his name was corrupted into old English—and Reine were destitute of resources beyond the simple ones mentioned. Were those gifts enough to entitle the dogs to the daintiest maintenance? Were the shallow creatures worthy of being a man's companions and friends? Alas! if our receipts were measured by our deserts, many of us would fare but badly. The little dogs were endowed with one quality which we may be thankful appeals more forcibly than any other to the hearts of men—not of weak men alone or principally, but of the manliest and most generous of their kind. Roy and Reine were helpless as delicate women and feeble children, and in that very helplessness lay their charm to the strong and capable, who were not bullies in their strength, or arrogant in their power. [99]

I do not say that there is not a subtle flattery and deep danger in this appeal of weakness to strength. I do not pretend that it has not ruined, unawares, many a Samson, destroying him by his very magnanimity. But I do hold that the tenderness for beings at men's mercy belongs to one of the noblest, gentlest instincts of the human heart, and that it is not only chivalrous in its development, it is, when rightly judged, profoundly Christian in its sympathies.

Roy and Reine lived considerably more than two hundred years ago, when there was another England from the one we live in to-day, an England of keen political strife. (Well, perhaps that is peculiar to no time, or at least occurs periodically once in every generation.) But it was also an England of such civil war and bloodshed, polluting its fresh fields, and darkening its peaceful hearths, as happily has not been seen since then—not when Monmouth was routed at Sedgemoor—not when the last James fled in his turn, and William of Orange landed, and appropriated the crown left vacant, which became twin circlets for his head and Mary's—not when Bonnie Prince Charlie—a fatal title, which could not give way to anything more trustworthy—marched with his Highlanders as far south as Derby.

Charles the First and his Star Chamber, with his French queen and her French manœuvres, had turned the people of England against their government. The last Parliaments had proved either divided or rebellious. John Hampden had refused to pay the illegal ship-money; the train bands had been mustered; the whole country had risen to arms. England was parted into two warlike camps, Royalist and Roundhead. [100]

We can see now that there were good and devoted men on both sides, and of every shade of opinion. We can think dispassionately of Lord Falkland the Royalist, and Colonel Hutchinson the Roundhead—of Milton and Andrew Marvel on the one hand, and Jeremy Taylor on the other. But it was fearfully difficult then—in the midst of bitter accusations, hard blows, and cruel wrongs, inflicted almost inevitably by both the contending parties—to distinguish that there was any merit, or any quality save base subserviency or turbulent anarchy, on that side which differed from the faction of the person speaking.

It would be no easy task to decide which of the camps indulged most largely in abusing and slandering the other; but it belonged to the nature of things, and to the characteristics of the men and their leaders, that the Cavaliers, taking them all in all, were the most careless and reckless in the expression of their feelings. It was part of the profession of every Cavalier, from Prince Rupert downwards, to be easy-minded and light-hearted, as he was loyal, to the backbone. He made it a matter of honour that his joviality should be a proof that his conscience was clear, and his cause that of the divine right of kings and the unquestioning obedience of subjects. The very nickname, "crop-eared knave," which one man applied to his adversary, as opposed to the term "malignant," given by the Puritan to the Cavalier, showed the light scorn of complacent superiority pitted against deadly earnestness and desperate condemnation.

As it happened in the long run, to their mutual profit, the stout defiant Cavaliers were forced to respect the equally stout and dogged Roundheads, and to carry rueful hearts within their bold breasts under their bluff exteriors; and the Roundheads were compelled to grant grace to men who—in spite of their effeminate love-looks, the levity of their songs, even the profanity of their oaths—struggled against defeat like Englishmen, endured like men, and, with all their follies and sins, were the countrymen and neighbours of their conquerors. As they were human and Christian, these conquerors could not see the beaten foemen biting the dust and wallowing in their blood silently, and think of the near and far halls and granges which these deaths, that were their deed, would leave desolate, without groaning in spirit over some of the fruits of victory, even while the fighters were persuaded it was the Lord's triumph over the Man of Sin and Satan. [101]

Roy and Reine's master was a Cavalier, a man in the prime of life, who had seen the loss of a good many things he valued, before the civil war deprived him at last of his already dilapidated old court, and sent him adrift to wander in disguise here and there, and lie in hiding till better days came round, and the King should enjoy his own again. He was a Master Neville of the Alders, himself a scion, and his estate a fragment, of what had been, so far back as the Wars of the Roses, the mighty Neville family, with their vast domains.

When peace yet prevailed in England, and the storm was only brewing in the sky, Master Neville went to court and ruffled it with the best. He was then a young man, and made a picturesque figure in his slashed velvet satin doublet, his long Spanish leather boots, his falling collar, and just such a hat and feather as is to be seen in the picture, shading one of those swarthy oval faces which the peaked beard of the time became, while his dark hair was suffered to grow, and was tied by a ribbon—such as Roy and Reine are represented wearing—till it hung in one long scented curl down his back. He was by no means so destitute of resources as Roy and [102]

Reine were, apart from their beauty and their winning ways. He was a bold, dashing, clever enough young fellow, rather accomplished for his day. He could not compose a madrigal like Lovelace, but he could sing it after it was composed. He could fence, dance, fight, even speak when graceful fluent oratory was all that was called for. He could bandy a jest with a court wit, and manage a pageant with a master of the ceremonies.

In those days Master Neville married a court beauty in white satin and pearls, with her yellow hair crisped in curls all round her pink and white face, and brought her down to the Alders. The two did not tarry long there with all their charms and accomplishments; the simplicity and quiet of the country were too much for them, and they were attracted back without fail to London, with its splendid court and ceaseless stir, its water-parties and masks, cabals and intrigues, in which the husband and wife played their parts in such company as that of arrogant, magnificent Buckingham, and fair, frivolous Lucy Percy, Countess of Carlisle.

But such company was neither safe nor economical for a mere aspiring squire and his sympathetic madam. Many a fine oak and beech at the Alders, and even some of its massive silver plate, paid for the master and mistress's addiction to town living with its extravagance.

At last there was an enforced retreat to the court, after it had been stripped and impoverished of its most prized treasures, when the nakedness of the land was a constant eye-sore and reproach to its reluctantly returned owners. They had never cultivated the graces of patience and contentment, and they had no gift which could lighten the dreary monotony of what threatened to be a long banishment from their paradise. They might have drifted fast into the evil refuge of bandying reproaches and recriminations, and quarrelling away the dragging hours, as Roy and Reine did not quarrel over their bits of sugar biscuit—only madam was about as pretty, silly, and easily affectionate as the little dogs, with no more exasperating practices of fretting and scolding than they gave way to at times; so that Master Neville, who remained perfectly conscious that he was a being more fully armed and highly endowed, could not find it in his heart to blame her severely, or to wreak on her a revenge for his own misdoings. [103]

Doubtless he had been a little disappointed in her. In the days of his young love, when he had extolled her yellow hair and pink and white cheeks, he could hardly have contemplated mating himself to an intellectual baby, who was never to grow any older—rather she was to him then an embryo goddess, who was shortly to find her wisdom and power. But he had enough justice to admit that the disappointment was not her fault, and he took compensation in a certain amusement which he found in his wife's simplicity, as in that of Roy and Reine, combined as it was with a due regard for him, and as much admiration and reverence for his superior faculties as really narrow natures are capable of; for be it remembered that essentially narrow natures, which are circumscribed both morally and intellectually, can only compass a languid and limited amount of admiration and reverence. [104]

Master Neville was fairly kind and indulgent to his wife, though men would have said that she had not been of the least service to him—unless it be service to foster conceit, abet prodigality, and raise an idle laugh. But men take a good deal upon them when they place restrictions on the services of any creature that God has made, though man may have done his best to mar it, while out of evil God brings forth good. It might be that the protecting impulse which Madam Neville drew forth in her husband preserved in him the seed of better things, and kept him from being a harder and worse man than he became.

Then a strain of human sadness—all the more ineffable that it sounded strangely foreign to the poor genteel comedy—entered into it. Madam Neville's children, that she had borne and spoiled in sheer weakness, died one after another. Their mother, who would have been quickly consoled—like a child to whom another toy is substituted for that which has been removed—only that she was soon spent by a little watching and weeping, fell into a rapid consumption before she could throw off her grief, and followed her children.

The world looked on as at the crushing of a butterfly, or the introducing of a tragic pathos into the soulless life of a fairy. But there was a soul in this stunted human fairy, while a butterfly was the ancients' emblem of immortality; so good Master Arundel comforted himself, as he strove with all his might to introduce a supernatural element which should give a new aspect to the apparently pitiless destruction, and cause it to be, after all, a miracle of divine mercy.

No question but Master Neville felt the double bereavement—the very shock of it strewed silver threads in his black hair. But he was one of those men who, with an outward frankness of address, keep their inner lives as sealed books from their neighbours—almost, it would seem, from the men themselves. He made no sign as he sat alone in his empty hall, drank his flagon of wine or tankard of ale, and professed to busy himself with his steward's accounts, the flies for his fishing, or the play-books he was fond of studying. He rode, and hunted, and visited his neighbours much as usual. There might be a shade of greater reserve and sternness in his manner, and he was in no haste to replace the madam who was gone by a new madam to preside over the old court; but he was still a man who trolled his song, took his wild jest, and rather made a parade of his half-boisterous, half-sardonic philosophy. [105]

But he always spared kindly notice for Roy and Reine—made them be seen to, had them about him, playing with them, pulling their long ears, teaching them tricks, praising and rewarding them with tit-bits—only not plaguing them so much as of old—not more than the creatures liked now. He certainly preferred the small encumbrances to any fox-hound or lurcher in his kennel, which had brought him credit, or secured him a prey. He would sooner suffer inconvenience

himself than have Roy and Reine disturbed; he would shrug his broad shoulders and take another seat, to the great disgust of his old housekeeper, when he found the two nestling together, fast asleep, in the depths of his great arm-chair.

The vicar's eyes used to moisten when he came upon the tall strong man and his pets. "I suppose their utter unconsciousness, together with their fondness, doth soothe the soreness and the void in his heart," said Master Arundel to himself; "and their entire dependence on him makes an appeal to the tenderness that is at the bottom of Master Neville's imperious, boastful nature." [106]

The time came when Master Neville, with every man of any mind or energy in the country, was roused by the state of public affairs—when he had no longer leisure to manufacture his flies and ponder over his stage saws—when he was rarely at home, or else had a host of company with him. Riders and runners—posts, with carefully sealed and disposed of letters, were constantly drawing bridle, or pausing footsore under the gateway of the court. There was an eager rummaging out of rusty matchlocks and swords, and an arming and marshalling of the servants, and such tenants as Master Neville's example and authority constrained. At last a compact band of some twenty or thirty retainers, with the squire—looking a proper man in his glittering steel morion and breastplate—dashed with a flourish out of the courtyard.

But first Master Neville stood ready to start in the hall, and looked for an instant all around him, from the musicians' gallery to the deep recesses of the window that were draped with clematis and jessamine. There was nobody to take leave of save Roy and Reine, till Dame Hynd, covertly wiping her eyes, stole to the door, under pretence of receiving her master's last orders, for he was not a man who could brook spying on his privacy, or an unsolicited intrusion into states of feeling which he did not confess even to himself, whether the offender were intimate friend or old servant. She discovered Master Neville, in what looked like a reverie, drawing Roy's ears through the fingers of one hand, and holding up a finger of the other to enjoin on Reine the refraining from that jealousy to which she was prone. [107]

"I am afraid the little brutes will have forgot my pretty lessons, and will be as stupid and fat as yourself, dame, before I return," he said, with a mixture of mockery and rudeness, testy at the interruption; and then he turned and begged her to forgive him, with an odd candid sweetness that went far to breaking her heart. "Very likely that day will never come, and so you will not mind this piece of impudence any more than the rest of my offences. You will keep the house, though it be for my worshipful cousin and heir, and see that, so far as you can help it, neither old horse nor dog" (he was somewhat ashamed of his partiality for the foolish spaniels, and thus did not particularise them further), "which I am leaving behind me, come to grief. And you will wish me good-bye and good luck; hey, dame?"

It was a breezy summer morning when Master Neville rode away at the head of his band. It was a foggy winter day, with years between, when he came back, attended by no more than two followers, and, shrouded in the early darkness of a December afternoon, sought to get into the old court, to spend a single night there. His arrival was unexpected; but though it had been otherwise, neither Dame Hynd, who remembered not only his marriage but his baptism, nor any other attached family friend, dared have made the least demonstration of joy and welcome.

Fortune, or the will of Providence, had been against Master Neville and his cause. The King's troops had been beaten again and again, alike in fenced cities and in the open field, before three weary men, soiled with travel and rough living, approached by back ways and side gates, skulking in the gloom into the house of which one of them was the master. [108]

"Alack and well-a-day!" cried Dame Hynd, wringing her hands at the sorry plight of a gallant gentleman.

"It is the fortune of war, dame," he cried, relishing condolence as little as ever. He liked better the greeting of Roy and Reine, that no Parliament or Lord Protector or Fairfax's men in the neighbourhood could prevent—timid creatures though the welcomers were—from rushing to hail his arrival, with acclamation, little ringing yelps, much scuttling to and fro and clambering up his legs, with lavish licking of his muddy boots.

Having heard that the vicar was from home—indeed the worthy man was in hiding with greater sinners—Master Neville proceeded to the business which had brought him there—the destruction of private papers, in anticipation of a visit to his house from a detachment of the Parliamentary army.

"I don't think you have anything to fear at the rogues' hands," he told his housekeeper, as he prepared to leave again in the dank dawn of the next morning. "You have my leave to speak them fair. As for me, I think I shall make the country quit of me—like others I will not name; God be praised, they are out of danger;" and he raised his beaver for an instant—"till better times. I see my way to the coast, and I shall do my best to survive a term of existence in some wretched mouldy or whitewashed French or Dutch town. Why, I should not care to carry off my beauties with me to bear me company," he cried on a sudden impulse, catching up Roy and Reine, the one after the other, and depositing them in the deep pockets of his coat. He had often stowed them there when they were wearied with trotting at his heels in his walks in the park or the meadows—or when he passed through his herds of cattle, of which the little spaniels were inordinately afraid, so that if he forgot them they would grovel unperceived in some furrow, and lie there panting and half-dead with terror, though the oxen were not even looking at them, till he missed [109]

them and returned to search for, rally, and fetch them home.

"I wot you'll take something there's more sense in, master," remonstrated Dame Hynd, loath to oppose him at such a moment, yet driven almost past her patience by the freak.

"There is sense enough in the proposal," he insisted. "They are my esteemed play-fellows, and they may serve me for a breakfast some fine morning, when hunger craves and all other provisions fail," he added, in allusion to the Cavaliers' favourite jest of one of Rupert's troopers, when they were riding through a town in the Puritan interest, snatching up a fat baby, and poising it screaming before him on the crupper of his saddle, as he announced, amidst a grinning roar of assent from his comrades—while the horrified populace mobbed them, raging powerlessly—that here would be a nice roast wherewith to break a long fast.

Master Neville, with the little dogs in his pockets, turned away laughing from the old home which he might never see again.

The Cavalier squire proved wrong in his calculation as to gaining the coast forthwith; instead, he had to go through a lengthened experience of that most humiliating ordeal to a man—fleeing before the enemies he has despised. He had to move here and there in various irksome disguises—to seek help from friends ill able to afford it—to elude the vigilance of wide-awake, sometimes vindictive foes—to endure no scant measure of pains and penalties. But, through all, he never abandoned the poor pets with which he had rashly cumbered himself.

[110]

Occasionally, when he was so well up in the world as to represent a pedlar, with his pack on his back, vending his wares from one country house to another, or from town to town, he would display the little animals openly, and freely admit they had belonged to a gentleman in trouble. Then if some grave father or mother, brother or friend, so far relaxed in their lofty scorn of all toys as to propose to chaffer for the dogs in behalf of a doted-on grandson or a tender-hearted maiden, the reputed pedlar would excuse himself in a flow of specious words, explaining, with a double meaning in the assertion, that he was only conveying the dogs for their rightful owner, and had no warrant to dispose of them.

At other times, when Master Neville was playing the beggar, asking alms from door to door, he had cunningly to conceal Roy and Reine, lest he should become liable to the suspicion of having stolen them.

The dogs and their master shared and fared alike, and though they had good days and bad days, it soon befell that Roy and Reine, who had been reared on dainties, and who had at first turned up their noses in disgust, like petted children, at plain food, and rather gone without a meal than deigned to touch it, were fain, like Master Neville, to eat heartily and thankfully of homely scraps. Though all three were often hungry enough before they came to this pass, I need not say that the day never dawned when the Cavalier was reduced to kindling a fire in the shelter of the hedge, gipsy fashion, and cooking Roy and Reine for breakfast, dinner, or supper.

[111]

But another day arrived when the prescribed fugitive had wandered many a mile, and sat down faint and weary by a brooklet that crossed his path. He had turned aside for the purpose into a little wood through which the stream gurgled. It was a golden harvest day, with the green of the fern changing to straw-colour, and the leaves of the wild cherry-trees becoming brushed with crimson. He could hear the hearty voices of the reapers from a cornfield beyond the wood in which he had taken shelter; but there was no harvest or ingathering for Master Neville. He scrupled even to draw near to his fellow-creatures and ask grace from them in their rejoicing, since he was in a specially hostile district.

However, it was not his way to complain. He sat and courted repose after his fatigue, while he listened to the trill of the robin which was taking up the fuller song of earlier song-birds. He had a hunch of bread in his wallet, and he prepared to divide it with Roy and Reine.

The little dogs had lost much of their sleekness and trimness. No ribbons adorned their necks; their master had cut off the last faded rag long ago. As he watched them listlessly, he was sorry to see the tokens of adversity in their roughening coats, in the griminess of Reine, which gave her white livery a strong resemblance to the greasy shabbiness of a disreputable white kitten that has run the gauntlet of all the pots and pans in a kitchen. Then he glanced at his own ragged sleeve and at the weather-stained skin beneath, and reflected that the appearance of the dogs was in keeping with that of their master.

[112]

Reine certainly did not take ill with reverses; though she was getting up in years, she was more frisky than he recollected to have known her. As he was about to give her the crust which was her due, she voluntarily stood up on her hind legs, and, quite ignoring the fact that dancing was prohibited by the Puritans, began to execute a *pas seul* which he had taught her when he was an idle gentleman and she a pampered favourite in the hall of the Alders. The spectacle of the dirty, dishevelled little dog, in the untoward circumstances, capering demurely, of her own accord, like Queen Elizabeth before the Scotch Ambassador, overcame a man in whom a sense of the ridiculous was naturally strong, and he laughed till the tears ran down his battered cheeks.

Afterwards his attention was drawn to Roy, that was not joining in the dance, and had only sniffed at the bit of bread he had already received. The action had not been disdainful, as of old, but wistful, and with a certain heaviness before the dog turned away from his meal, and crept back, with hanging head and drooping tail, to crouch down near his master. Master Neville remembered that Roy had fallen behind in the morning's walk. He spoke encouragingly to the

dog, and invited him to his knee, which had always been a coveted couch and throne of honour with the little pair.

But all Roy's response was to look up with the eyes which were so like a child's, dim and glazing over, to draw a shivering sigh, to utter a little whimper of distress in which there was the most piteous meek resignation, and to make one final effort to drag himself nearer for help and comfort to his master, in which the dog's head fell helplessly on Master Neville's worn boot. [113]

"Ah! has it come to this, my dog?" cried Master Neville, bending hastily over the slightly convulsed limbs. "Poor little soul!" he said to the creature which had no soul; "I would give much to lend the help you ask;" and he groaned as his own misfortunes had never forced a groan from his lips—not since another than Roy had appealed to him for aid which he could not bestow.

In a second it was all over, and Reine, with an instinct of something wrong about her motionless companion, had not only given over dancing, but leaped scared into her master's arms, to which he had bidden Roy in vain.

It was only the death of a little dog to him who had lost wife and children, house and lands, and position—who had seen the ghastly horrors of battle-fields, and known his King lay down his head on the block.

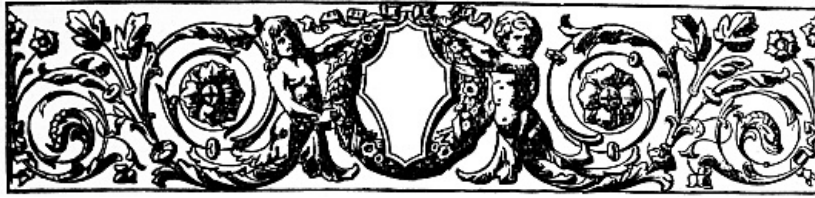
But at this moment his own powerlessness to save, together with his loneliness, his utter loneliness, if Reine should die likewise, pressed sorely on Master Neville. He saw once more the young bride he had brought to the Alders, while the sound of his children's pattering feet came again into his ears. He looked back on the thoughtlessness and vanity of his early manhood, on the hours he had wasted, and the opportunities he had lost, never to return. He recalled words he had heard Master Arundel say in the pulpit and out of it. He even remembered what he had witnessed of the conviction of the Puritans, that their God was ever with them to sustain and satisfy.

Master Neville gathered himself up, dug a hole in the ground with his pocket-knife, and buried away Roy. He trudged on his road with Reine. The very next day he heard of the long looked for means of leaving England. He was successful in making his way to the seaport. He sailed and reached Holland, where he found friends and assistance for his destitution, till an adventurous soldier like Monk, chiming in with the reactionary spirit of the hour, restored the King, and gave back to the Cavaliers, who were in exile with him, their country, and what was left of their possessions and careers. [114]

Master Neville dwelt once more at the court, with Dame Hynd reinstated as his housekeeper; but it could not be said of him, as it was recorded of the royal Stewarts and Bourbons, that in their absence from their kingdoms they had learned nothing and forgotten nothing. He was a more sober-minded and gentler-hearted man for his troubles. One incident which he never forgot was that half-hour in the wood when the ferns were getting sere, and the leaves growing red and yellow—when Reine danced and Roy died, and their master sat and looked on, a broken-down, forlorn man.







CHAPTER VI. "DIGNITY AND IMPUDENCE."

ONE of the most successful and popular of Sir Edward Landseer's delineations is the picture, "Dignity and Impudence." It is even better known and more widely prized than his exquisitely comical sick dog, that is so sorry for itself, while the keeper is examining its paw; and his deeply pathetic "Last Mourner," in which the shepherd's dog keeps solitary watch by its master's coffin.

The noble mastiff lies stately and serene, his vast bulk tempered by his perfect proportions, and by a gait worthy of the king of dogs. His well-opened hazel eyes look with honest straightforwardness full in your face. His huge ears hang down quietly. His jaws are closed and overlapped by his deep jowl. He is the *beau-ideal* of strength in restraint and repose, as he lies there with one paw, like that of a lion's cub, hanging idly over the framework of his couch, and the other half-turned inwards, as if he were about to put it on his heart, in token of the true gentleman he is.

From within the same pent-house, where he is freely tolerated as a lively child companion, protrudes the small confident head—bristling with hair, the knowing little ears erect, the tongue half-thrust out at one side, equivalent to being stuck in the cheek—of the briskest, most undaunted of terriers. I suppose it is because we all know many versions—both human and canine—of this pair of friends, that we are so fond of looking at them and admiring their union in diversity. [116]

I can never see "Dignity and Impudence" without thinking of a couple of dogs belonging to friends of mine, and that were said to bear a striking and exact resemblance to the dogs in the picture. I had not the good fortune to know this living "Dignity and Impudence," though I long looked forward to the pleasure; but I happened to hear a great deal of them, and registered their traits with interest.

Wallace and Dick were north-country dogs, as is evidenced by the name of the first—he would have been Bevis in England. They dwelt within sight of a purple spur of the Grampians, known as the Braes of Angus. Their home was a hospitable farm-house, among fresh breezy uplands, with that element of breadth and freedom which belongs to hill countries, where, side by side with the cultivated fields, lies a wide moor and remnant of ancient forest, and where the ground is broken—and now falls gradually in a sunny slope—now dips abruptly into a shady dell, or den, as we call it in Scotland. The last is a place of spreading beeches, feathery larches, waving birks, and a great wealth of ferns and wild flowers in spring and early summer, and with a never-failing wimpling burn threading its recesses. It is quite distinct from a wild heathery glen. The neighbourhood to which I allude has quaint old mansions, some of which existed in the stirring times when the glens and dens served as passes for "John Hielandman," rustling in his plaid and kilt, and bristling with his claymore and skene-dhu. He did not bring down cattle—long-horned kylies—like the modern drover, but came, saw, and lifted what "nowt" he fancied on lowland pastures, goading them up among the mountains to the headquarters of the chief and his dhuinnewassels. An ancient town with steep, narrow streets, having a feudal castle on a tree-crowned rock above a brawling river, and the remains of an abbey, is the market town of the district. On the road to this town one has a glimpse from a distance of the silver shield of the German ocean, with a larger town on its brink. [117]

Wallace and Dick could not have been more highly favoured in the matter of locality, though they had been lovers of the picturesque—not the picturesque on a stage scale, but the quality which is large and primitive—and though they had deliberately gratified their æsthetic tastes by pitching their tents in this region, which is fresh on the hottest summer day, and has a bracing keenness, not a chill sluggishness, in its winter cold.

Wallace came first to the farm-house a tremendous puppy, for the most part generous and docile in his conscious power, but not without elements of savageness and danger in him, if he were suffered to grow up undisciplined.

I have heard his master tell that, when Wallace was a young dog, one winter night he took more than his own share of the hearthrug, on which his master's solitary chair was also drawn up. The man, desiring more space to move in, gave the dog an unceremonious push, which roused in him such lurking ill-humour as besets us all at times; only Wallace was a mighty brute, unsupplied with the reins of reason and conscience wherewith to check his passions, and furnished on the other hand with the instinct of quick retaliation and fierce, disproportioned revenge. He gave a low growl, like muttered thunder, and made a half-spring at his master, who recognised on the instant that an unexpected crisis had come, which was to settle whether he was to be the master of the beast or the beast was to be his master, and which placed for the [118]

moment his very life in danger. Acting on the impulse of self-preservation, rather than on any deliberate design, he snatched up the poker, and dealt the dog a blow which felled him, and left him stunned and motionless. Quick remorse followed the deed, as the assailant asked himself, had he slain his comrade outright on the spot, and that for the merest ebullition of temper? If Wallace had betrayed some traces of the savage, who else had been cruel in unsparing punishment?

But Wallace came to himself almost before his master could make the compunctious reflection, rose and took himself off with lowered crest and submissive head and tail, clearly acknowledging himself beaten, and as clearly evincing the extreme of shame, for having been guilty of provoking the unequal contest. Unlike man, the dog bore no malice for his defeat; it simply called out in him that unswerving loyalty which has no parallel. From that day to the hour of his death, in a ripe old age, Wallace never again disputed his master's sovereign will, or disobeyed his direct command, but awarded him the most devoted allegiance. The dog's great strength, his solid sense for a dog, his rare magnanimity, were, from the era of his conquest, laid, together with his fervent attachment, at the feet of his conqueror—for the dog is another St. Christopher. [119]

Under the influence of this absolute submission^[A] to his master, rather than from any mere superficial cleverness, such as may be readily found in mere trick-performing dogs, Wallace could be taught a variety of acquirements, and was in the end so accomplished a dog that I fear I cannot call to mind a tithe of his attainments. I believe he could sit up in any attitude or assumption of character, or throw down his body in any required posture, and remain so for a given time. He could mimic swimming at the word of command. He could constitute himself a pony for little children—indeed he was not less than some Shetland ponies—and he would carry them decorously round the room or the garden on his back. He could—and this was probably the hardest task of all—at his master's bidding, lie down in a meadow where a herd of cattle fed, and permit the whole of the oxen to gather lowing round him, and even to lick him with their rough tongues, without his stirring or offering the smallest resistance.

Wallace was somewhat up in years before Dick came on the scene. He also arrived at the farmhouse a puppy, but it was not at first intended that he should remain there. The master of the house had kindly procured Dick with the intention of giving him to a friend when he himself became so enamoured of the little dog's briskness and pluck, and at the same time so persuaded that these qualities would be wasted in the quiet life of the woman for whom Dick had been originally got, that he substituted another and more suitable dog, and kept the little man for his own portion. [120]

As I have been assured, there never was a blyther, bolder, more irrepressible spirit than that which lodged in the body of the small terrier. Like his friend Wallace, he needed to be tamed, and to the last he could not stand teasing for any length of time without a strong inclination to show his fine white teeth in a way which was not play. The fact was, that on these occasions he got into a white heat of rage, in which he was in danger of ceasing to be master of his actions.

Once, when Dick was a young dog, under some provocation he flew at and slightly bit his mistress, who had no resource but to show him the iniquity of the deed in a manner which, I believe, is effectual when it is possible to practise it. According to strict injunctions as to the conduct required in the circumstances, and in the stern necessity of preventing a repetition of the offence, which might have cost the life of the offender, she caught Dick by the refractory cuff of his neck, carried him to the door of a room into which she could throw him when the time came, and while holding him in the air—which is the great secret of the effectiveness of the punishment, since the culprit feels himself, during the infliction, absolutely powerless in the grasp of the dispenser of justice—cuffed him soundly, and then flung him from her into the open door at hand, closing it quickly after him, and so preventing any possibility of a hostile attack from the dog while still writhing and struggling under his penalty. The result was, that the tender-hearted young mistress withdrew sick from giving the painful lesson she had been imperatively called on to teach. But, as in the case of Wallace, and as in that of the mastiff which Emily Brontë cowed by one box in the ear, the lesson had been learned thoroughly; Dick never again, unless in such an instance of wilful protracted teasing as I have referred to, took to biting his friends. [121]

His affection was as ardent as his temper was quick, and the convulsions of delight, the ecstatic caresses he lavished on members of the family when they returned from a temporary absence, were demonstrations to see rather than to hear of.

Dick is said to have been the most entertaining companion in a walk, always making amusing discoveries, full of the freshest zest and the most unwearied energy. He had a passion for sport, of which I shall have more to say hereafter; but, sport or no sport, he never failed to find objects of interest on his way, and to impart the interest to his fortunate companion.

Like Wallace, Dick could be easily induced to go through a variety of tricks—which, in my opinion, are slightly disparaging to very sensible or bright dogs, seeing that these tricks are purely artificial, entirely distinct from the dog's natural sagacity and genuine feats, and can be imparted, if proper pains be taken, to far inferior dogs—I mean dogs that have merely the faculty of mimicry, apart from intuition, steadfastness, and a power of love which makes wise. One of Dick's many tricks was to go through the form of sitting in his own chair at table with the family when they were at meals (though his food was taken elsewhere), and of speaking when he was told—that is, at a certain word and sign, starting off in his own dog language of yelping and whining, till he was requested to be quiet.

From his introduction to the farm as a puppy, Dick entertained an immense admiration—rapidly progressing, in a dog of his frank, confident character, into a trustful, rather encroaching affection—for the veteran Wallace. The mastiff responded by testifying the most amiable indulgence for his liliputian friend. The indulgence proved its own reward, for there was no question that the eager, joyous little dog brought some of its own eagerness and joy into what was becoming the fading, failing life of his mighty ally. [122]

A ludicrous position which the dogs often assumed has been described to me. Wallace had the usual sterlingly honest dog's aversion to tramps and disreputable characters (in the dog's eyes). Dick shared this repugnance; but in spite of his constitutional audacity, he was apt to mingle discretion with his valour here. When a particularly ill-looking traveller approached the farm gate, where Wallace and Dick were on sentry, Dick had a custom of nimbly insinuating himself between Wallace's fore paws and standing upright beneath the arch of the chest without difficulty; from this vantage-ground he would issue his sharp volley of barks as a rattling accompaniment to the bass cannon-like boom of Wallace's challenge.

When the two dogs lay down to sleep, Dick would take the most manifest advantage of his friend's neck, or shoulder, or side, nestling himself within or against it, for the promotion of his own warmth and ease, without sustaining the least rebuke from the gentle giant.

Sometimes when Dick wished a game of play, for which Wallace felt himself quite too old, Dick would beset his friend like a little pestering spoiled child, pawing and pulling, and making darts and dabs at Wallace's ears, which would have nearly covered Dick's body, or at the jaw, one shake from which would have dismissed the life from the little dog in a twinkling. But Dick was comfortably persuaded that he was entirely privileged, and he did not argue without his host, though Wallace, after much endurance, could assert himself so far as to send off his tormentor. Yet he was never known to do it, save in the kindest, most friendly fashion. No paralysing stroke from his paw, no crushing snap from his teeth, ever scared the fun and familiarity out of little Dick. He received his *congé* in the shape of a mild, if firm refusal, which left him free to come sidling into his crony's presence again within the next five minutes. [123]

I have mentioned Dick's love of sport. Wallace had the same love to a marked extent; indeed, it was the one temptation which proved irresistible, and seduced him once and again from his adherence to his master. It was not that the dog openly resisted or defied orders, but that he showed craft in snatching an opportunity to evade them, in slipping off unperceived, and conducting his hunts in an independent style in the preserves and on the great moor at hand—coming home with a dogged fidelity, and yet with the self-convicted air of a culprit, after his lust for the pursuit of prey was satisfied, to the punishment which he was perfectly aware remained in store for him. Of course, for a dog like Wallace to roam abroad unattended, on such an errand, was to expose both him and his master to certain penalties, and every effort was made, for the dog's own sake as well as for his master's credit, to break him of so dangerous a propensity. The attempt was not altogether successful. The ruling passion was so strong in Wallace that it rivaled even his conception of duty. But the consequences of his escapades always fell short of the condign punishment at the hands of incensed proprietors which his master dreaded for the dog, and repentance, forgiveness, amendment followed till the next outbreak. [124]

These outbreaks would probably have decreased in number and died out as Wallace's spirit of enterprise abated with his advancing age;^[B] but I am sorry to say Dick proved an artful decoy and subtle tempter. The two dogs did not venture on a forbidden expedition under the very eye of their master; but the moment his back was turned to go from home, I have been assured that the certainty and celerity with which the conspirators detected his absence was something marvellous. Wallace and Dick set off like the wind—or at least as like the wind as the old dog's lagging limbs would allow—to the nefarious indulgence of their appetite. Nothing short of chaining up Wallace before his master left could prevent the catastrophe. No efforts of his young mistress—of whom, at the same time, he was exceedingly fond, and whose escort and protector he was generally proud to be—were of the least avail to detain him; she has told me how she would run out to intercept the dogs on the first hint of their decamping, and try to hold them back by main force, but Wallace would wrest himself from her grasp, and trot after Dick, already scampering away in the distance. [125]

Sometimes these hunts lasted as long as three or four days. Naturally, the dogs were unwilling to come back to the disgrace which awaited them, and they could subsist in the meantime on the spoil which they caught and slew. The neighbourhood of the great wide moor and fragment of forest—a broad brown and dark green tract stretching, with a suggestion of wonder and mystery, along the whole expanse of cultivated country—rendered it specially difficult to discover the direction the dogs had taken, running as the birds flew, and making nothing of hedges, ditches, and "dykes" in their progress, after they were fairly out of sight. It was the solving of a puzzle to pursue and apprehend them. Sometimes a wayfarer passed and recognised them, and brought the tidings of their whereabouts to "the farm town." Sometimes the dogs' master, when he went to the weekly market in the quaint town I have described, received information from a neighbour which enabled him to track the fugitives. Oftenest they returned of their own accord, spent and sated, brought back by some compulsion of law, some tie of dependence and affection, which was in the end too powerful for their desire to rove, so that they could not become wild dogs again, or desert their aggrieved human friends for a permanence.

Knowing the district as I do, I have great sympathy with Wallace and Dick. Had I possessed Wallace's capacity of endurance, or Dick's youthful fleetness of foot and length of wind—had I

shared their relish for hares and rabbits, torn limb from limb, and their capacity of thriving on the same—I too should have liked to wander for days among these fresh fields, with their yellowing corn or rich pasture, on which sturdy bullocks or skittish colts were having a pleasant time. I could have dived with good-will into these tree-girdled quarries, and roamed along these high roads, ample enough for two coaches-and-six to drive abreast, and bordered with bands of yellow lady's bedstraw and azure veronica, and later in the season by miniature forests of nodding harebells; or down these rough by-roads, with their patches of yellow broom and trailing garlands of brambles, to the outlying heather on the verge of the moor, about which great humble bees were always humming. My heart would have hankered, like theirs, for that grand, gaunt old moor of Mendrummond—or, as it is called in local parlance, "Munrummon"—with its pale liverwort and white grass of Parnassus, its bronze stemmed firs and stunted oaks, its lone green glades. One can still feel that here, as among the mountains of old Scotland, there linger vestiges of a virgin world. [126]

As a human being and not a dog, I am not at all clear that I should have returned so faithfully to cutting reproaches and a good beating as Wallace and Dick had the courage to do.

The dogs used to display judiciousness in selecting the cover of night for their reappearance, and they sometimes brought home a mutilated hare or rabbit, as if it were intended for a propitiation. But Wallace at least reported himself, in full view of the result, with manly straightforwardness and resignation. He was accustomed to go beneath his master's window, and by a deep prolonged "bow-f-f" announce that there he was ready to submit to whatever his master imposed on him.

I regret to own that Dick, on the contrary, stole round the house on tiptoe, and, if he found an open window on the ground floor, crept in and hid himself beneath a convenient sofa or bed, in a short-sighted, childish notion that he might evade the righteous sentence he had provoked. [127]

On the last secret hunt in which the dog-friends engaged, Wallace was so enfeebled by age that the exertion exhausted the little strength left to him, and he was unable to return home. Dick had to face the wrath of his master alone, while he was unable to account for his missing comrade.

Happily the mastiff reached a neighbouring farm-house, where he was recognised—for he was a well-known and valued dog—and where he was hospitably entertained, till word could be sent to his master, who despatched a cart for the disabled sportsman. But fancy the mortification of poor Wallace, once so invulnerable at every point, so renowned a warrior and hunter, to be brought home like a dead donkey, stretched at the bottom of a cart!

Wallace survived his last hunt some time, but the evidence of the decay of his powers became always more unmistakable. He was a mere bony wreck of what he had been. He subsisted principally on great "diets" of milk freely lavished on him to prolong his days. At last he fell into a habit of stealing away and secreting himself in some solitary spot of the garden or grounds, an ominous inclination which superstitious servants called "looking for his grave," and that was in reality prompted by the curious pathetic instinct which causes every stricken animal to draw away from the herd, and hide itself from its kind.

But Wallace was not to die apart from human hands and the friends he had loved. No one saw him die; but a servant, preparing to sweep out the dining-room early one morning, found the old dog stretched stark and cold on his master's sofa—"like a Christian," as she protested, half awed, half scandalised. And what gave the last touch to the situation was that little lively Dick—always fond of establishing himself by his friend—was discovered lying trembling, with that consciousness of death of which a dog is supposed to be unconscious, behind Wallace, that he had not dared to disturb—the first time Wallace had frightened Dick. [128]

I think Wallace's master, by his own choice, helped to dig the dog's grave; I know that the spot selected was one which had been long chosen for his last resting-place. Care was taken that Dick should not know the place, or be tempted to disturb it, when it was little thought that the terrier would soon lie by his comrade's side. Not that Dick died of his mourning; I never heard of a dog pining to death for a fellow-dog—only for his master. I am not even aware that Dick gave great signs of missing his companion after the first few days, for dogs will be dogs after all; and undoubtedly Dick recovered the full flow of his constitutionally high spirits within a short period.

Merry Dick's death was so much the more tragical that it was not in the course of nature; it was the result of an accident—the product of such carelessness as it is hard to forgive. The offices belonging to Dick's master's farm were infested with rats to such an extent that even a terrier was insufficient to keep the vermin down, and poison was employed for their destruction. A portion of strychnine passed into the keeping of a kitchen maid, who was to sprinkle it on bread and butter, to be exposed, with due precaution, near the rats' holes. The plate of bread and butter, with the fatal powder invisible on it, was left heedlessly on a kitchen table, where it was only by the good providence of God that some man or woman—ignorant of anything unusual in the innocent-looking slices—did not eat what was intended for the rats, and perish by a horrible death. [129]

Only poor Dick was destined to be the victim. Attending on the footsteps of his mistress as usual, he came into the kitchen, and, spying the attractive luncheon, sprang up and seized a half-slice.

"It is the poisoned bread," cried the rash servant, observing what had happened, and thinking

she had done enough when she had given the tardy warning.

Dick's mistress snatched the perilous morsel from between his teeth and flung it in the fire. So instantaneous was the whole occurrence, that even she—never doubting that she had rescued the dog from all evil consequences—forgot the circumstances in the occupation she was engaged in.

Dick, in his usual excellent health and enjoyment of life, accompanied his mistress in a walk, with all his ordinary pleasure in the privilege. It was not till some hours later, in the bustle of guests assembling for dinner, that Dick's master suddenly summoned his mistress from her toilet with the grievous news that Dick was dying. The little dog had been discovered rigid in a fit. So entirely was the result of what had taken place in the morning unapprehended, that it was not till various remedies had been tried in vain that Dick's mistress suddenly recalled the episode of the poisoned bread. A clever young veterinary surgeon who was within reach came and administered antidotes, which poor little Dick, in the intervals between his paroxysms, was induced to take from the mistress who was so bitterly distressed by his fate; but all was of no avail, the dog succumbed speedily to the deadly poison, and died before the dinner guests had met.

[130]

So Dick and Wallace rest together, like true comrades, in what was once their pleasant playground.



FOOTNOTES:

[A] In addition to the instinct of obedience which in itself rendered Wallace tractable, the great dog had a little weakness, of which I have heard his master say he made use in conducting his four-footed retainer's education. "Wallace wight" "would have gone round the world" for a bit of sugar—the usual reward of a *fait accompli*.

[B] However, I have heard of an old terrier who had lived many years leading an entirely domestic life in a large town, and who, on being taken by its owners to country quarters—which happened, unfortunately, to be in a game country—ran off the very night of his arrival, hunted the whole summer night through, and turned up the next morning, after his friends had resigned all hope of recovering him. He was dead tired, and in a few hours was crying out under paroxysms of rheumatism, which his unwonted exposure, together with his weight of years, brought upon him.



CHAPTER VII. MY EARLY FRIENDS.

ONE of the remotest visions of my infancy—dim as the pearly dawn itself—is of two dogs called Flora and Danger, priest-grey and brown-and-yellow terriers respectively, which filled a prominent place in my baby regard. They soon vanished from the scene, and some time elapsed before they were succeeded by Fido—a small, sleek, short-haired, brown dog, resembling an English terrier, which was partly my own property, and, much more than any doll or toy, the darling of my early childhood.

I fancy Fido was not very well descended, and that his small size was due to accident, or to some arresting process practised in his puppyhood. But he was a well-made little dog; he had a keen tiny face, with erect ears; and he was amazingly agile in his habits. In fact his agility, together with his audacity, brought about his untimely death—the manner of which remains, at this distance of time, more impressed on my mind than any incident in his short life.

I remember the scene and circumstances as if the event had happened yesterday. My mother had strolled beyond the garden to “the front of the brae,” as it was called, or the brow of the green, grassy hill on which the old white house was built. It commanded a wide stretch of links or downs, met by the blue girdle of the Frith, having for its fringe, all along the coast, clusters of ancient villages—fishing or trading—with red-tiled or blue-slatted houses, and round-belfried or sharp-pointed steeples of parish kirks. [132]

I think no place was ever fresher or sunnier than that “front of the brae” on a summer morning, though in winter it was a bleak and windy station enough. Some young colts, feeding, as they usually did, on the links, had ventured to the summit of the brae, and were approaching the stackyard. Fido was scampering among the yellow ragwort and purple bur thistles in my mother’s vicinity, and on the impulse of the moment she sent him after the young horses.

The rash suggestion was only too acceptable. Without a shade of hesitation or fear, the morsel of a dog made a dart at the heels of what were the hugest elephants to him, and though the colts had turned to retreat, he reached them in time to be spurned by one of the flying hoofs, and to fall down with his back or neck broken.

I have a vivid recollection of the consternation and grief of the little group that gathered in the great kitchen, into which the lifeless little dog was carried—of one of Fido’s young mistresses wildly entreating to have wine put within the half-open jaws of the dead dog—of the grave shake of the head with which some senior negatived the desperate proposal, and of my mother’s kindly distress at having caused the catastrophe, which had extinguished the spark of life in one of God’s happy creatures, and occasioned such affliction to the children. [133]

I remember what a blight came over the bright day; how I rose from my dinner in a passion of sorrow, because in a moment of forgetfulness I had begun to lay aside some scrap for the dog which had ceased to need scraps; and how I walked in the garden among the Maundy roses and tall white Canterbury bells, and gathered—to store for a melancholy memorial—some early seeds of the nasturtium with which the little animal had been fond of playing, and in which there remained the marks of his tiny teeth. I have had greater losses since then, but I have not forgotten that first shock and stab of irretrievable separation.

To console us children for being deprived of our pet—and, I daresay, as some small atonement in her own person—my mother furnished us with money to buy another dog; an act in which there was a departure from the family practice of not spending what little money was to spare unnecessarily, and, above all, of not accustoming the children to anything that could be regarded as extravagance or self-indulgence. In our whole connection with dogs, this was the only instance in which one became ours by purchase.

I cannot recall that it grated on my feelings that the empty place of my dead pet should be filled up. I daresay I made some protest at first—that I would not be consoled, and that I could never like (we say *like* in Scotland, where an English child would say *love*) another doggie as I had liked Fido. But I was not then sufficiently faithful—or shall I say proud and passionate enough?—to be long able to resist the prospect of the dreary blank in the house and in my affections having another occupant, with the wholesome hope that I might take to it and be comforted, though I did not forget Fido. [134]

I know I went in great glee, in the company of a sister a little older than myself, to the village where we had heard of a suitable dog for sale—indeed, I think we had gone and inspected it previously—and where we were to pay down our purchase-money—it was no more than five

shillings—and receive our prize, which had belonged previously to a tradesman.

The dog was a small black and white animal, with straight sleek hair, and a pretty round face, set between pendant ears. I was a timid child, and did not venture to lay hands on our purchase while it was yet strange to us, and my sister undertook to carry it home in her arms. On our way we encountered a gentleman who was an acquaintance of the family, and who, not understanding how we were situated, insisted on shaking hands with us children. My sister was compelled partly to let go her captive—it did not escape, it only scrambled to her shoulder, from which she was unable to dislodge it, and where, to our affront, it stood barking wrathfully at the new-comer.

The dog had been named “Jessie Mackie,” a very human title, of which we did not approve for a dog, and so we called her “Rona,” the name of a dog of a friend’s friend. The title struck our fancy, and we believed that it had belonged originally to an island on the west coast of Scotland—rather a dignified source for a name. But I cannot say that I ever met any person who had visited the island of Rona, or who could tell exactly whereabouts in the Atlantic—from wild St. Kilda to wooded Rothesay—it was to be found.

Rona answered our expectations, and soon took Fido’s position in the house. She was a thoroughly worthy little dog; I don’t know that she was very clever, but I can vouch that she was exceedingly companionable. In her prime she was perfectly good-humoured to her friends, though I do not think that she was ever very accessible to strangers. She had queer ways of her own. She was very fond of fish, to which, as an article of food, dogs have either a great liking or loathing. She slept on the lower shelf of a cupboard, reserved for her use, in a dressing-room attached to the nursery. She would retire there for a morning snooze, and members of the family, unaware of her proximity, would be startled, on going into the nursery, by loud snores, exactly resembling those of a human being guilty of snoring, proceeding from the dressing-room at high noon. She had been taught to beg, and had great faith in the efficacy of the supplication. She would be found in a room alone begging with great patience to a closed door, and confidently expecting it would yield to the appeal. [135]

Rona was peculiarly affected by certain kinds of music, as dogs sometimes are. I have read different opinions expressed of the impression made by music on dogs, with an attempt to decide whether it is pain or pleasure which is produced on the creature by the melody that awakens its attention and rouses its emotions. The preponderance of evidence tends to indicate that it is pain, or at least some form of fear or distress, which music causes in the dog. What I remember of Rona’s behaviour when so excited confirms this idea, though we children chose to class the performance as singing, and boasted loudly of it to our companions, who used to wait breathlessly for it to begin, and were filled with delighted wonder, amounting to awe, when the dog was got to exhibit its talent. The sound of a piano or of singing did not move her in the least, but an accordion drawn out, or a violin played, touched the chord which vibrated to music in Rona’s composition. She would generally retire beneath a chair or sofa, with a restless, disturbed air (I suppose we made out her withdrawal to be the assumed modesty of a great performer); and if the music were continued, she would raise her head and utter in prolonged bays and howls what, I am satisfied, was her protest against the sound which, for some occult reason, both excited and rendered her miserable. It was an evident relief to her when the concert, in which she had felt bound to bear a part, was brought to a conclusion. [136]

I think it was for Rona that we children first manufactured a set of garments which figured on more than one dog. There was a pair of flannel pantaloons, into which we inserted the dog’s unwilling legs, fastening the pantaloons by strings across her back. There was a flannel gown, which we called a dressing-gown, and suspended round her shoulders. The costume was finished by a round cap, like a Highland bonnet, which we put on her head, tying it under her chin—or jaw: on high occasions we stuck a feather unto this cap.

Of course Rona objected strongly, in her own mind, to these incongruous decorations, though she had to submit outwardly to our will on that point. The pantaloons, after they had been donned, were least in her way, and she would appear to forget them and run about in them without protest for hours.

I remember one day, during a period of rainy weather, when even the sandy roads of that district were wet and miry, that an elder sister, who had gone to make calls in the village, came back half-a-mile with Rona. The dog had stolen out and kept at a safe distance in the rear, till she considered that she was beyond the danger of being marched home, when she capered to the front, and her unconscious companion not only perceived who was her attendant, but discovered, to her mingled diversion and chagrin, that the dog was dressed in that supremely absurd pair of pantaloons, plentifully bespattered with mud. [137]

By the time the younger members of the family were sent to school, poor Rona was up in years, and had become peevish and snappish in her growing infirmities, so that it was judged advisable that she should be quietly put out of the way in her mistresses’ absence. When we came home jubilant, we found no Rona waddling out to greet us, and I am afraid we had so many to meet, and so much to occupy us, that we hardly missed our humble friend.

A contemporary of Rona’s was a tall, gaunt, black—with silver hairs, peculiarly ugly, and valuable sheep-dog, which was my father’s friend. His ugliness was the result either of disease or of an accident, which had removed a portion of the lip and exposed his teeth on one side, but which did not impair his health, or detract from his merit as a wise and an efficient collie. His name, which was not given by us, was peculiar. I imagine it was either a mistake or a corruption.

Instead of being termed "Yarrow," "Tweed," or "Heather," the traditional names for Scotch collies, he was called "Gasto," which I have a notion must have been a perversion of "Gaston," though how a Scotch collie came to bear a chivalrous French Christian name I have not the faintest idea. [138]

He was a dog that had his proper business to mind, and did not take much account of us children. Shepherds who have the rearing of such dogs do not encourage their association with children, and regard it, where it occurs, as liable to be a source of deterioration in an animal which is bred to endure hardship, and to live under a sense of responsibility. And when the creature is trained to perfection, it is as valuable and important a member of the establishment on a sheep-farm as an ox or a horse on another farm. Gasto was one of the gravest dogs I ever saw, far too sober for play of any kind. Looking back, I cannot help associating him with wintry blasts and snow-drifts, in which he is buffeting the blast and wading through the drift, intent on his calling.

Gasto knew but one master, my father, and for him he lived and laboured with a still, deep devotion. On one occasion, when my father was attacked by a dangerous illness, and confined to his room for a time, the sheep-dog wandered about disconsolately, declining even to attend to his ordinarily rigidly discharged office, at the bidding of any other than his master. As the days wore on, about the time that the disease approached its crisis, the dog stationed himself on the garden wall, and in a manner foreign to his usually rather impassive, preoccupied demeanour when he was not about his work, howled dismally—conduct which, however well meant, was not calculated to cheer the invalid, or the watchers in the sick-room. The dog then refused to touch food, and it was feared he would die. After every other mode of coaxing was tried, without effect, Gasto was taken into the room where my father, by that time recovering, lay in bed—was shown his master, and spoken to by him. I don't think the dog attempted to leap on the bed, or did more than wag his bushy tail with immense relief and repressed gladness; but when a plate with his food was offered to him in the loved presence, he ate it quietly without further demur. Forthwith he went about his business, content to discharge it faithfully, as a trust committed to him, and to wait hopefully for the reappearance of his master. [139]

Poor Gasto, to my father's great regret and indignation, was cruelly poisoned by some ill-disposed persons in the neighbourhood. Another dog of ours fell a victim to their misdeeds. He was a huge, fawn-coloured, young watch-dog, named "Neptune," that was thus summarily cut off before he had got the beyond boisterous uncouthness of this hobble-de-hoyism.

I have come to the advent of a prized dog, so long a much esteemed member of the household, that she was regarded, not only by ourselves but our friends, as one of the family. She was a pure bred and fine terrier, given when she was about a year old to my brother, as the parting gift of a friend about to sail for Ceylon. She was dear for his sake as well as for her own, but she soon needed no external recommendation to make her a chief favourite. I have only a hazy recollection of her introduction to us, but a fragment of her illustrious pedigree, which was imparted with befitting seriousness, lingers in my mind. "Her mother was a lineal descendant of the dog that fought the lion at Warwick." What sort of lion-baiting this was? how it happened to take place at Warwick? what was the date of the event? whether the whole story were not a tradition of the great Bevis? were questions never answered. But we were accustomed to repeat the assertion as a solemn attestation to Skatta's claims to superiority. [140]

Skatta, like Rona, was named for an island in the West—an island which has a substantial existence. Yet though we were told, and implicitly believed for many a day, that the dog was of Western origin, a Skye terrier, this was ultimately disputed. I have been assured that she was a fine Dandie Dinmont terrier, of the renowned mustard species, and that she and her forbears ought to have been traced to pastoral Liddesdale in the South, and not to the corries of Cuchullin in the Land of Mist. I am sorry that I am not possessed of sufficient erudition to settle the point.

In the eyes of connoisseurs Skatta was a beautiful dog, though I am doubtful whether the uninitiated world would have perceived the extent of her claims. Her colour hovered between a sulphur yellow and a buff. She was short in the legs and rather long in the body, but not with such an ungainly length as I am told a true Skye terrier should show, just as a genuine Belgian canary-bird ought to be slightly hump-backed. The hair on her back was rough and wiry—one of her good points in our estimation; it was softer on her breast, legs, and feathery tail, and on her head, especially in the case of an admired lock that lay on her forehead, the texture of which was almost as fine as that of floss-silk. Her acute ears were of course erect. Her subtlest of noses was, in accordance with her complexion, red, not black. Her honest affectionate eyes were of warm hazel.

Skatta was by instinct alone an excellent game dog, and her glory was to be in attendance on the taking down of a stack in the yard, to sit watching with all her wits about her, and to pounce on and despatch each rat as it appeared. There were rabbit warrens in the neighbourhood, not without danger to the terrier. In her hot pursuit of the rabbits, she would follow them into their burrows by passages and windings too narrow for her to turn herself in, while the sandy soil fell down behind her, and she was detained till her absence was remarked. The dog's half-suffocated yelps indicated her subterranean place of imprisonment, when aid was speedily lent to restore her to the upper world. [141]

On other occasions Skatta's feet were caught in the traps set by the rabbit-catchers, and though her bones were strong enough to resist the pressure, and she was not maimed, as so many of our cats became, but generally freed herself after a struggle, and returned home

triumphantly without much injury, in two instances she was a serious sufferer from the accident. In the first it was not known that she had been caught in a trap, and nobody guessed why she paid such sedulous attention to one of her front paws, till after an interval of weeks, in the face of an impending lameness, a close examination detected a portion of brass-wire bound tightly round, and eating into the festering flesh. At a much later date, when Skatta was an old dog, her master missed her from his heel after crossing one of these warrens. It was a dark night, and he could not stay to search for her, even if it had been possible to find her. He trusted that, if she had been caught in a trap, she would free herself, as she had been wont to do, and follow on his steps. As she remained absent, however, the entire night—an unexampled incident in her history—my brother started early next morning in search of her, and found her lying unable to stir, with one of her legs terribly lacerated. She was carried carefully home, and after being tended for weeks, during which she showed great patience and gratitude, she was restored to the full use of her limbs. [142]

In spite of the danger, the rabbit-haunted links, with their wild thyme, cowslips, and harebells in the seasons, presented the utmost fascination in life to Skatta. After the links, she cared for the weasel and rat-frequented fields and ditches of the strath, with their bugloses and poppies, brooklime and irises; but the links formed *par excellence* her happy hunting-ground. I have heard her master say that on returning home, or taking a stroll before retiring to rest on a summer night, her mute entreaty was sometimes so irresistible, that he would turn away from the house and take the path to the solemn sea and the silent links, to grant her the half-hour's indulgence she besought.

At one period she walked with the women of the family every afternoon, and amused them by her uncontrollable disappointment and chagrin—though she was for the most part a modest, reasonable dog—when they resorted to the rocks and the sands as their place of promenade. She would sit down beside them while they rested, and begin to shiver, though she was in perfect health, and to whimper under her breath a reproach for their perversity. Why were they so provoking? Why could they not have walked on the springy turf of the links, or by the pleasant field path? Then she might have hunted to her heart's content, and still have been in their company.

When my brother was at home, Skatta made a marked distinction between him and the rest of the family, acknowledging him pointedly as her master, and electing herself his constant companion. When he first left home, she was very disconsolate for a few days, and sat a good deal on the garden wall, howling as Gasto did when my father was ill. After a time she seemed to make up her mind to the separation, and transferred her primary allegiance in a measure, and for the moment, to my father. (Though she was of the female sex herself, she gave no support to the rights of women, farther than being social and happy with us girls.) Her real master's absence was sometimes for many months, and lasted over a period of years; but the moment he reappeared on the scene she returned unflinchingly to her first love. So perfect was the good understanding between man and dog, and so blameless was the conduct of the latter as a rule, that I have heard my brother say he only struck his dog twice in the whole course of their long connection. On the first occasion the blow was administered to correct a fault, but on the second his stick fell on the wrong dog in a combat which had been thrust on Skatta, and which he was trying to stop. He averred that he could not bear to look his dog in the face afterwards, because of the meek wonder with which she submitted to the unjust stroke, and, as he complained, he had not the comfort of explaining to her that it was all a mistake. [143]

Skatta was never more than friendly to people outside her family, and there was one family friend whom she, like most reflective dogs, held in abhorrence. She hated the doctor, and laid aside her peaceful character to growl out her enmity every time she was in his company. I have heard various reasons assigned for the dislike of dogs to doctors.^[C] Do their delicate noses detect and find fault with any subtle aroma hanging about the man who orders drugs? Are the dogs' affectionate hearts moved by sympathy with the signs of suffering and anxiety, which they are quick to read, in the faces of the family? The dumb animals are clever enough to connect these tokens with the presence of the doctor, while they are not sufficiently well informed—given to leap at conclusions as they are—to comprehend that he is there to relieve distress instead of being its author. [144]

If dogs detest doctors, they do not often extend their dislike to clergymen. Skatta was not only on perfectly civil terms with the "minister" of her master's kirk, she herself knew the Sunday, and was disposed to respect its observance like a true-blue Presbyterian. She did not, to be sure, go to the kirk like the dog of one of the ministers in the village,^[D] but she consented to stay at home without any protest, and only burst out and greeted her family rather uproariously on their return in the ranks of their fellow-worshippers. [145]

On other occasions, to stay at home when her friends were going abroad, or to submit to confinement, was so severe a trial of Skatta's philosophy, that it was the one decree which found and left her rebellious. It was no easy task to detain a dog that, when shut into a room on the second floor of the house, with the windows closed, broke through a pane of glass, and precipitated herself twelve or fifteen feet to the ground; and with such rapidity did she clear the glass in taking the leap, that she was not punished for her defiant temerity by more than a few inconsiderable scratches and bruises.

She once walked a distance of fifteen miles with her master, and at the end of the journey was tied up in a stable, since he was going where she could not conveniently accompany him. I need

not say that she gnawed through the string, seized an opportunity, when the stable-door was open, to make her escape, and, not being able to trace her master, ran the whole way home again, and arrived in the course of two more hours, very travel-stained, tired, and hungry, but content. This is nothing of a feat compared to that performed by an Argyleshire terrier, which, having been conveyed in a carriage through one of the passes into an entirely different district, set off at the first available moment, and crossed a great solitary mountain range—taking a week to do it—arriving at last, a gaunt but happy skeleton, at what it persisted in regarding as its own door. How the poor animal subsisted in the meantime was only known to Him who feedeth the young ravens when they cry.

I remember Skatta's being lent to a sportsman, who was very desirous of availing himself of her powers; but no bribe of game or sport would detain her from her friends. So soon as she was let loose, she broke away and rushed back to them, the quick pattering of her feet sounding in every room of the house, her gleaming eyes and vibrating tail appealing to each member of the family in turn with a "Here I am, you see; I could not and I would not stay away." [146]

The pertinacity with which Skatta followed her master sometimes produced awkward results. He was attending the funeral of an old retainer of the family, to whom he desired to pay particular respect. He believed that the dog was safe at a distance when he was motioned to a place of honour close to the open grave. He observed a little disturbance among the ring of mourners, and, to his horror, discovered Skatta in the centre, by his side, with her head poked inquisitively forward over what was to her a great black hole.

Skatta came to us when some of us were young enough to dress her in Rona's cast-off clothes; she lived sufficiently long with us to see the steps of the youngest grow slow, and care settling on their brows. She was a silent witness to many changes—to the passing away of one honoured face, the breaking up of the old home, the dispersion of the family. She herself was so old that both her sight and hearing were nearly gone, and she could hardly answer to the signal of the master she had loved so well. Her life was becoming a burden to her—she was getting diseased as well as infirm. It was feared she would prove dangerous to a child in the house where she lived, as she had always been jealous of children where her master was concerned, disliking to see him take them into his arms, sniffing and growling at them if they came too near him according to her ideas, and fiercely resenting any liberty taken with herself under the circumstances. So old Skatta was sentenced—with what regret may be imagined—to a death quick and painless, for the sake of higher humanity. [147]

A contemporary of Skatta's was a huge black and white watch-dog, named "Foam," a good-natured, but formidable creature, which, when it was let loose, used to come bounding to greet us, and such was its impetus that, when it planted a paw on each shoulder, it caused each one of us to reel and stagger under its caress.

An interregnum in our connection with dogs occurred, during which, as I have heard masters and mistresses say after the loss of a confidential and trusty servant, various unavailable retainers passed across the domestic stage without making a lengthened stay, or filling successfully the vacant post.

There was "James Craig," a white, straight-haired terrier, boasting the becoming contrast of lively black eyes and a black nose. His temper was irascible, and his life was rendered so unendurable to him by the mischievous attentions of several lads, whose office chanced to be in the vicinity of his home, and who insisted on stamping their feet at him, that he in turn made life unbearable to his human neighbours, and had to be banished from the establishment. His fate was hard. He was always an excitable dog, and he managed, while quite in his senses, to inspire some credulous panic-stricken people with the notion that he was mad, under which delusion he was stoned to death.

There was "Bobby," a pretty, but weak-minded black spaniel, which also suffered a violent death. He had not the sense to get out of the way of a coach which drove over him. [148]

There was a poor dog—the very name of which I have forgotten—that was summarily shot by a sanguinary gamekeeper for deserting his master's side, for one brief moment, to encroach on a jealously guarded preserve.

There was "Massey Redan," a promising little pepper-and-salt terrier, that was picked up at the door of the house in the town where we then lived, and driven off in a "cadger's" cart by a company of successful amateur dog-stealers.

There was "Juno," a brown retriever, so crazy about taking to the water that she would desert her master to spend the whole day by the sea, plunging in for whatever stick or stone the children, who delighted in her swimming powers, might throw her.

There was "William Alexander," another retriever, a handsome, powerful, jet-black dog, which had a predilection for nuts, and would pounce on a sack in a grocer's shop, abstract, crack, and eat the contents for her delectation. She used to sit up on her haunches by her master's side while he sat writing or reading, and when William Alexander thought they had both had enough of the work, he would slap his master smartly on the arm with his paw in order to call his attention to the fact.

His master had trained the dog to bring him his boots every morning; but so headlong was William Alexander's race with them, up and down stairs, that he would have thrown to the

ground any unhappy individual who had happened to impede his progress. Indeed there was always something of a whirlwind about the dog, and when to his restlessness and boisterousness were added the reflection of the same qualities in a child visitor, the house seemed too small to hold the two.

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William Alexander had a remarkable objection to seeing any of his friends ill in bed, and on such occasions would begin to growl as at a personal offence.

The dog had a trick, in accordance with his species, of bringing everything to his master. Once, when a pet canary-bird got out of its cage, and began flying wildly about the room, William Alexander caught it, closing his great jaws upon it with a snap, so that it was lost to sight, and the spectators never doubted killed on the instant. But when he delivered up the bird to his master, it was uninjured save by fright.

Poor William Alexander tried this trick once too often. He was caught attempting to lift a baby, which happened to be in the same house with him, by the breast of its white frock, to take it to his master. He was conducting the operation with the greatest gentleness and care, but naturally the baby's mother had an insuperable prejudice against the performance, and William Alexander too had to be sent away.



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FOOTNOTES:

[C] I need not say this has no reference to dogs which have doctors for their masters, or that belong to any member of the family of a medical man.

[D] This dog, a collie, had been reared in a pastoral parish, where such dogs often accompany the shepherds to the kirk, and lie at their masters' feet during the service. The collie in question had been the favourite of a bachelor clergyman, and was in the habit of walking sedately at his heels into his church, ascending the pulpit stairs and disposing itself quietly outside the pulpit door, to wait there till the "diet of worship" had terminated. The congregation were so used to the proceeding that it offended nobody's sense of propriety. In course of time the clergyman took to himself a wife, who rather objected to his intrusive four-footed companion. In consequence of her sentiments the dog was thrown a good deal on its own devices, and thought fit to get up a friendship with a clergyman of a rival denomination in the place. This worthy gentleman threw his people into a ferment by walking up the aisle of his church one morning, followed unconsciously by his professional opponent's dog, which thus publicly showed that it had seceded from one religious body and joined another.

[1]

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Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 54, "Methusaleh" changed to "Methuselah" (age of Methuselah)

Page 96, "Fotheringay" changed to "Fotheringhay" (the block at Fotheringhay)

Page 125, "rot" changed to "trot" (and trot after Dick)

Advertisement:

Page 1, Landseer's name was changed from plain case to "by Sir EDWIN LANDSEER" to match the rest of the listings' style.

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