

Albert Payson Terhune



*The Critter and
Other Dogs*

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WILD HEATHER

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Champion Bruckwold Heather had brought home many a cup, many a medal, double-handfuls of blue ribbons and winners' rosettes, and several hundred dollars in cash prizes, from the big dog-shows.

As a result she was tended and guarded and conditioned and pampered as though she were heiress to some super-imperial throne. Never in her two years of life had Heather caught so much as a mouse. Never had she known the disreputable joys of rummaging garbage-pails. Never had she had the miles of sweeping cross-country gallops which are a collie's immemorial heritage.

Her balanced rations were served to her on sanitary pewter dishes. Her daily exercise was a walk of precisely two miles on the end of a leash, supplemented by a carefully supervised half-hour of wandering around an enclosed half-acre lot.

The Bruckwold kennels were inordinately proud of her. Her owner dreamed of founding a glorious collie dynasty from her future puppies; a race of sublimated show-type collies which should make Simon Bruckwold's name immortal in dog-show annals.

From Scotland, at a cost of \$2,700, Bruckwold imported a mate for her—the peerless British collie champion,

Kirkcaldie Cragmere. This Scottish paragon, alone of all dogdom, was deemed worthy by Bruckwold to sire Heather's wondrous progeny.

But the day before Kirkcaldie Cragmere was due to arrive in America, one of the Bruckwold kennelmen got exceedingly drunk. When he carried Heather's evening meal to her he fumbled awkwardly at the drop latch of her yard's door in closing it after him. The iron pin dropped, unheeded, to the ground, instead of fitting into the socket. The heavy yard gate swung slightly ajar.

There was an odd uneasiness in Heather's blood on that winter night; an urge to rove instead of settling down stolidly on her cedar-mat bed as usual. There was invitation in the half-open yard gate. Nature for once was out-calling mere lifelong environment.

Through the doorway trotted Heather, a little scared at her own temerity, and out into the deepening dusk.

Aimlessly she wandered about the grounds. Then she followed the driveway out into the main road. Here the going was smooth. Her sense of adventure quickened. For perhaps a mile she ambled along the road. A passing car halted abruptly a few rods beyond her. A man descended to the ground and came back toward Heather.

The collie made no resistance when he laid hold of her ruff. She had known nothing but kindness. Her temper was gentle. She was used to being handled by strange judges in the show ring. So she stood still, even waving her plumed tail gently.

The man's fingers were exploring her throat in search of a collar and license tag. He found neither. Apparently this

was a mere stray dog, one hundred per cent eligible for the pound. The man was poundmaster at the village of Hampton, seven miles distant.

In this capacity he received from the township a dollar for every stray dog he could pick up, and an extra dollar for every unredeemed dog he put to death. Thus, ever, he was on the alert for such chances for revenue. That he was far from his own bailiwick, now, and returning from a trip to a dogskin dealer's at the county seat, did not deter him from picking up this friendly lost collie and lifting her into his car.

To the dog-show world, Bruckwold Heather represented something close to \$2,000 in cash value. To the poundmaster she typified merely a much-needed dollar, and perhaps a second dollar if she should remain unclaimed for forty-eight hours.

Dollars were few, just now, in the Hampton poundmaster's line of industry. There was but one dog, at present, in the backyard pen he used as a pound. This was a savage male bull terrier his net had caught that morning when the hungry stray was too busy looting a garbage dump to note the poundmaster's sly approach.

Into the pen, with this sulkingly ferocious brute, the man tossed Heather as soon as he reached home.

Next morning, when he came out with a panful of moldy scraps for his prisoners' breakfast and swung wide the pen's narrow door to take the pan in, the bull terrier launched himself voicelessly at his captor; digging his teeth deep into the unprepared man's forearm and hanging on like grim death.

Back staggered the poundmaster under the impact. He smote with his free fist at the rage-wrinkled head whose jaws were grinding so agonizingly into his flesh.

Heather had shrunk back in terror at the din and turmoil of the attack. Now, unseen by her struggling jailer, she slipped out through the pen's doorway and made off at a gallop.

She was wretchedly homesick. Above all things, she craved to get back to her own peaceful kennel, to her human friends there and to her food. She was rumped and dirty from her night in the filthy pen. Nervousness made her tongue hang out. A light foam dripped from her lips.

As she rushed down the village street some one set up a screech of, "Mad dog!"

This asinine cry lurks ever in the fear mists at the back of the human brain, ready to spring to noisy life at the faintest provocation. In an amazingly short time a group of men and boys were streaming along the short street in full pursuit of the harmless and friendly little collie.

Their yells terrified Heather. The thud of their chasing feet lent the speed of dread to her own fast pace. A stone whizzed past her head. Another grazed her hip, painfully. Heather proceeded to grow crazy from panic. Unseeing, guideless, she tore along the street at express-train speed, whimpering and gasping. Out beyond the village she ran, and into the open country.

The miles flowed past; but ever she seemed to hear that howling man-pack at her heels and to feel the whiz and the sting of the volley of flung stones. Unseeing, unthinking,

scourged by that crazy yearning to outstrip her human tormentors, she fled.

At last her straining muscles refused to carry her further. Sheer exhaustion began to clear the panic-cloud from her bewildered brain. Her sweeping and scrambling gallop slowed to a trot. Presently she slid to a halt, then dropped heavily to the ground. There she lay, fighting to get her breath.

Bit by bit her breathing waxed less labored. Bit by bit the wiry young strength seeped back into her worn-out body. She got waveringly to her feet and looked about.

She was in the middle of a hillside wood. The nearest house in sight was fully two miles away. All around her was brown forest, broken here and there by browner clearings. She had not the remotest idea whither her mad flight had carried her, nor that she was a full fifteen miles from the kennels of her birth.

To some dogs is given the mystic homing instinct which carries them unerringly over scores of miles of unknown territory, back to their owners. Many collies have this odd instinct. But many more have not. Most assuredly Champion Bruckwold Heather had not. Her pamperedly sheltered life had not been of a kind to waken such occult power.

She was lost. Irretrievably lost.

Ordinarily, in this predicament, she would have sought the nearest human, for food and for shelter and for companionship. But this morning's harrowing experience had broken to pieces her loving trust in mankind. It had taught her that strange humans chase dogs and stone them

and try to kill them. It had implanted in her undeveloped mind a mortal fear of men.

Remember, please, that this had been the first painful or exciting or even interesting occurrence in her entire cut-to-order life. And such an experience was certain to burn indelibly deep into her sensitive organism.

From somewhere just ahead of Heather, in the woods, sounded the trickle of water. It reminded her that she was torturingly thirsty. She moved forward into a steep glen where ran a shallow brook newly loosened from its clogging burden of ice.

Never before had Heather drunk except from her sanitary and oft-scoured pewter water-dish. But never before had water tasted one-millionth as good as from this half-frozen brook. She lapped up pints of it, raising her head now and then for breath, then continuing to drink.

In front of her there was an outjut of rock under the shale-walled side of the glen. Beneath this roof a ruffle of dead leaves had drifted. The nook was sheltered from the damp February wind, and it was dry. Heather curled herself deep in the leaves. She fell asleep almost at once.

When she awoke, night was falling. She drank deep again from the brook. Then she was aware of a compelling hunger. She was aware, too, for the first time in her cotton-wool-wrapped life, that getting food may sometimes be a problem. The knowledge increased her teasing hunger and it drove her forth from her shelter on a quest for supper.

Ever, up to now, humans had provided everything for her. They had solved all her simple difficulties. Hence, toward the abode of humans she bent her steps. True, humans had

turned out to be murderous enemies, to be shunned and dreaded. But where there were humans there was food. Always that had been Heather's experience.

She raised her head and sniffed the still night air sharply; without the remotest idea why she sniffed or what she hoped to achieve thereby. Then, still not consciously aware why she was doing such a thing, she loped off through the woods, sniffing occasionally as she ran.

Soon she came in sight of a farmhouse's lights. She slackened her pace and slunk forward, stomach to earth, on a tour of inspection. Around the house she crept, her nose ever busy in its quest for food. At a dairy door she paused. Here on the dead grass had been set a bucket of sour milk for the pigs' next morning meal.

Heather plunged her dainty nose into the bucket with no daintiness at all. Long she lapped the acridly nourishing milk. At last the edge of her famine was dulled. She moved on to a second and larger pail, near by. The pail was full of table-scrapings, and the like, also designed for the pigs' breakfast. Heather nosed aside some wilted green stuff. She drew forth a lump of underdone bread—token of a failure in the day's baking.

This she gorged. She was helping herself to other edible bits amid the conglomeration of swill, when she heard the knob of the dairy door turn. Swift and noiseless as a shadow she disappeared into the night. Her hunger was appeased. Now she sought the lair she had found during the day.

For weeks Heather continued to creep through the darkness, every night, to feast on the pigs' breakfast. Her innate daintiness and her fear of being heard made her nose

too delicately in the pail to scatter any of its contents. Thus her nightly visits went unsuspected by the occupants of the house.

Also, this late-awakened forage instinct taught her to chase such rabbits as she encountered in the woods. At first she did this with so little adroitness that the pursuit always ended in failure. But, without realizing her own improvement, she taught herself by instinct to stalk her prey and to anticipate by a fraction of a second a running rabbit's doublings. In like fashion she became a moderately good stalker of game birds and she learned to scent the underground haunts of field mice.

But never was she an inspired hunter. The farmhouse's pig-food was still a welcome addition to her fare.

This pig-provender became more and more useful to her as the weeks went on. For she found herself growing slower and lazier and heavier, day by day. The clumsiest rabbit or grouse could elude her now. But for the farmhouse folk's habit of setting out the sour milk and swill every evening for a hired man to carry to the pigpen early the next morning, she must have starved. Even the nightly two-mile trip, between the house and her lair became a burdensome effort.

On her return from one such foray, Heather sank limply on her side, among the leaves, muttering and whining. Then, feverishly, she began to scratch the leaves together in heaps, pawing them here and there, never satisfied with the results of her bedmaking.

At sunrise she was still lying there, weak, languid, but at peace. Nuzzling against her furry underbody were three

squirmy puppies, about the size of rats. Sightless, vehemently hungry, they nursed with avid greediness; digging their almost hairless little claws deep into their mother's fur and chuckling to themselves.

An expert dogman, viewing the newborn trio, would have had scant trouble classifying two of them as baby bull terriers. At least they were much more like bull-terrier pups than like anything else. But the third had all the general aspect of a collie.

The same expert dogman, a few days later, would not have had to classify the two infants that resembled bull terriers. For both of them were dead. Like so many dog mothers, Heather ate the two, almost as soon as they died. This with the canine instinct to keep the nest clean, and through no taint of cannibalism.

But the baby that looked like a reasonably pure-breed collie lived on. Lived and thrived. For his was the nourishment which otherwise would have gone into the feeding of all three pups.

And now Heather took up the burden of life afresh; working hard for her son's livelihood as well as for her own. Foraging was easier, every day. For April had come. The woods and fields were turning green in sheltered places. Birds and squirrels and rabbits grew daily more plentiful and fatter and less timid. And habit was teaching Heather to hunt better and more wilily, as time went on.

No longer did she bother to visit the farmhouse dairy yard. There was food and to spare, all around her; food which her increasing reversion to the wild rendered more and more palatable.

The puppy was pudgy and strong and inordinately fat. Now he did not resemble a rat, nor even a well-fed rabbit. He was growing at an incredible rate. His mother's new-waked instinct made her change his diet, when he was five weeks old, to such game as she brought home to the nook from her daily rambles. With an atavistic joy, the puppy learned to love his new fare; and to growl horrifically as he sank his needle-sharp milk-teeth into the breast of some fresh-killed pheasant or quail.

He did not need to be taught to hunt. Perhaps, from pre-natal influences, the stalking of game was wholly natural to him; even when he was still too young and unwieldy to put on the necessary spurts of speed. He followed his mother afield as soon as he could travel with any certainty on his thick legs. And he watched her in vibrant excitement as she stalked and killed.

By the time he was five months old he was joining her in these stalks and in heading off rabbits she drove toward him. Slowly and with much difficulty had Heather become a huntress. Never was she a gifted performer in the rôle. But the puppy was born to it, as much as is any young wolf.

Soon it was he, not she, that did the bulk of the killing. It was he, not she, for example, that learned the wolf-trick of cutting a fat fawn out of the wandering deer herd or from beside the doe, and of driving the bleating fugitive into a ravine pocket whence there was no outlet; there to pull it down at his leisure and to devour the feast with Heather.

When they were not hunting or sleeping, there was a spot to which Heather used to lead the way, almost daily, from the time the pup was strong enough to follow her so

far. This was a tumble of rocks atop a knoll which overlooked a stretch of hillside pasture land. Amid the huddle of split boulders there was ample space for the two dogs to lie or sit unseen and to scan the fields just beneath them.

There, for hours at a time, they remained. There was a magic fascination, to Heather, in what she saw from the rock-tumble eyrie. She herself did not know why the spectacle stirred her so. But she seemed able to impart its keen interest to her young son.

To a human onlooker there would have been nothing dramatic or exciting in what the two dogs watched. Such a human would have seen only an extensive rock-pasture where grazed about a hundred sheep; and another and lower pasture with twenty cattle browsing its lush grass.

Yet Heather could not keep her eyes from the occupants of these two spacious fields. She had no such red impulse to chase or kill any of the silly sheep or their stiff-legged lambs as was hers when she and the puppy came upon a herd of deer. She felt no desire to harm these sheep. But she found their every motion of absorbing interest.

For ten centuries her collie ancestors in Scotland had won their right to a livelihood by herding and guarding sheep and cattle. Hereditary instinct was gripping mightily at Heather's heartstrings; and in only slightly lesser fashion at her son's. The cattle in the more distant pasture were also most attractive to the two. Some urge they could not at all understand awoke in the brains of mother and son; an urge that had no objective and that certainly was not for destruction.

And so, hour after hour, they would look down upon the grazing creatures, lying silent, tense, in their double vigil, their eyes straying from group to group.

Once in a while a human would go to one or another of the pastures, to inspect the flock or the herd. At such times the pup would glance sidewise at his mother, as if for explanation of the queer biped and of his presence. At such times, too, Heather's upper lip would curl in something like a reminiscent snarl; at sight and scent of the kind of creatures that had chased her out of civilization.

Once or twice, when the wind was right and the human who was inspecting the cattle and sheep passed within closer distance to the knoll, Heather could catch his scent and could identify it. She knew it for one of the several scents which had reached her from indoors; and by means of footprints on the dooryard ground, on the countless nights when she had pillaged the milk-bucket and swill-pail outside the farmhouse two miles away. The man must belong there, she knew.

Then came autumn and then the stripping of the trees by a gigantic invisible hand and the searing of the sweet meadow grass into brown-gray. The man whose scent Heather remembered came with two other men. They drove the sheep from their pasture and off to the farmhouse folds. The next day the three drove away the cattle, in like manner. And there was nothing left to entertain and excite the two dogs, from the rock eyrie on their chosen knoll.

Winter laid its strangling white grip on their world. Lean days followed. Game was scarcer and scarcer. The dogs sometimes had to range for many miles for a single square

meal. They grew gaunt beneath their mighty winter coats. Yet they were as hard as nails. And by constant hunting they managed not only to keep alive, but to keep strong and vigorous.

The puppy went on growing. He was much larger now than was his pretty little mother. His chest was deepening—the chest he inherited from his bull-terrier sire, along with that sire's terrible fighting prowess. It was always the pup nowadays that led the hunt. Yet always he gave Heather the lion's share of the kill. His tender adoration for her was complete.

After months of lean dreariness the snow was gone and the earth began to array itself in green. On a May morning mother and son visited the rocky knoll for the first time in months. A nameless Something told them the two pastures no longer would be empty. And they were right.

Below them, in the farther field, some twenty cattle grazed. Up a rocky and twisting lane, from the direction of the farmhouse, the three men were driving the hundred sheep toward the nearer field.

The close-set bars of this pasture's fence were down, as they had been all winter. Toward the bars, along the steep lane, the men were trying to pilot the milling and jostling sheep. The task was anything but easy, sheep being perhaps the silliest and most erratic and annoying members of the animal kingdom. The men had their hands full, to keep the flock from bolting or scattering or trying to turn back. But after violent effort the drovers brought their foolish convoys to within perhaps ninety yards of the pasture bars.

It was then that an enormous red mongrel came charging up from the direction of the far-off highway—a dog owned by a shiftless laborer in the valley below; a dog that ranged the countryside at will and had proven himself a pest and a menace to livestock for miles around. A dozen farmers had long been seeking positive evidence to connect him with a series of henroost-slaughters and lamb-killings.

The sight of so many moving sheep apparently went to the red brute's brain and deprived him of his wonted craftiness. For now he was coming straight for the flock, head down, jaws slavering. The men shouted. One of them ran at the advancing dog with stick raised, while the two other drovers tried in vain to keep the flock bunched and free from panic.

Eluding the man with the stick, the mongrel hurled himself into the welter of baaing and scattering sheep. Slashing murderously right and left as his prey fled in every direction, he caught one yearling, pinned it to the ground, and tore out its throat. In what was almost the same instant, he was up and after another victim.

The sheep dispersed to every point of the compass, running wild, crazy with fear. All over the hillside they scattered, for a full quarter-mile; so that no man or no ten men could hope to round them up within a day. Ever among them, quadrupling their runaway panic, dashed the giant red mongrel. As he ran he pulled down a second sheep, slew it, and was away again after more victims. Then——

From nowhere—from the sky itself, it seemed—appeared two collies, galloping like the wind, their mighty pale golden coats aflame.

The three men shouted aloud in sheer despair at the advent of these two presumptive allies of the great red killer. The situation was beyond their control. All they could do was to stand impotently and watch the trio of sheep murderers go on with their horrible work.

But in the next breath the farmer whose scent Heather had recognized caught the arm of one of his two hired men. He pointed unbelievably toward the rabble rout of pursuer and pursued.

The two collies had been racing side by side toward the scene of slaughter. Now, as at a signal, they separated. The younger dog flew, head down, toward the red killer. Heather made a galloping detour of hundreds of yards, until she was beyond the farthestmost of the scattered sheep. Then she wheeled.

Deftly she turned back the group of sheep she had just flashed past. She headed them toward the men. Then, racing in and out, she caught up with single strays, turning them in like manner and driving them into the bunch she first had halted.

Ever augmenting the numbers of the bunch by whirling side trips for more recruits, she kept her captives in close formation and she kept them moving steadily, if unwillingly, in the direction she had chosen for them. It was pretty herding. It was as neatly and as swiftly and as deftly achieved as if by a life-trained sheep-dog. The spirits of a million brilliant herd-collie ancestors were shouting their atavistic secrets to her.

Again and again, here and in Europe, has a novice collie shown this miraculous hereditary skill at rounding up sheep.

But to the three onlooking men Heather's work savored of stark magic. From her to her son their bulging eyes kept shifting, and back again; after the fashion of folk who view a three-ring circus.

The younger collie did not swerve nor slacken his headlong pace as he bore down upon the huge red mongrel. The latter, by scent or by instinct, became aware of his approach.

Whirling around, as his teeth were about to close on the shoulder of a ewe he had just overhauled, the red dog was barely in time to brace himself for the collie's charge.

The two dogs came together with a shock that threw them both off their feet. On the instant they were up again, mad for battle. The red mongrel was a famous warrior. Dog after dog, throughout the valley, he had killed in fair or, preferably, unfair fight. He was eager to use his most deadly and foulest tactics on this pale-gold intruder that was interfering with his glorious sport of sheep-slaying. But the task of getting rid of the new foe seemed suddenly more difficult than the mongrel had expected.

Never before had the young collie fought. But in his veins ran not only the blood of a thousand redoubtable pit bulldogs—invincible fighters all—but also the collie strain which gives its possessor a speed and elusiveness in battle and a quality of being everywhere and nowhere at once. The combination of the two strains was teaching its ancestral secrets to the youngster; even as atavism was telling Heather how to round up and turn a horde of panicky sheep.

By sheer weight, the red dog sought to bear down his smaller and lighter foe and to get the desired death grip on the jugular or at the base of the skull. But the collie dived under the plunging rufous bulk, slashing deeply the other's underbody, then writhing free and tearing into his shoulder.

With a roar, the red giant shook loose and hurled himself afresh at the collie. Four times in as many seconds, he sought to crush and pinion the lighter dog. Four times the collie was not there as he lunged. Four times, deep slashing furrows in the red dog's coat attested to the efficiency of the pup's countering.

Then, as the collie sprang nimbly aside from the fifth lunge, his hindfeet slipped on a wet rock and he crashed to the ground. Ragingly the red dog threw himself into the slaughter.

But a collie down is not a collie beaten. There was no scope for the pup to get to his feet or to roll aside, before the gigantic red bulk was upon him. Nor did he seek to. Instead, as the huge jaws snapped shut on a handful of mattress-like hair and on little else, the collie struck upward for the mongrel's briefly unguarded throat.

His collie swiftness and accuracy enabled him to secure the vital grip. But his bulldog strain's all-crushing jaws enabled him to make the most of it, in one quick and body-wrenching motion.

The red dog slumped to the ground, his throat as completely torn out as had been the throats of his sheep victims. The pup wriggled from under him and stood for an instant, panting and looking about him. Then he saw

Heather and what she was doing. Immediately the pup was in rapid motion.

And now the dazed onlookers saw both collies at work among the scattered sheep; as perfect a team as though they had been trained to herding, all their lives. Steadily, rapidly, the scatter of sheep ceased to be a scatter. Firmly, compactly, the protesting beasts were herded and bunched, in spite of anything they could do, and they were headed toward the pasture bars. Every time one of them tried to break formation, it was pushed back into place as readily as if a solid wall of collies surrounded it.

The gray-white jostle of sheep moved toward the bars. Not one of them was hurt or so much as bruised. For, after the custom of the best type of herd-collie, the two dogs were as gentle as they were deft.

At the bars there was one more futile mass attempt to balk. Quickly it was frustrated. The flock was urged into a gallop. Into the broad pasture they cascaded, all of them, from first to last. The panting dogs stood in the gap, side by side, to frustrate any stray's possible attempt to double back and to escape.

Then only did Ellis Slater, master of the flock, find his voice and come out of his daze of wonder.

"I—I've read about such things," he blithered to his gaping men. "I've read about them in Dad's farm-books. But I never believed it. If it wasn't for those two collies we'd have lost forty sheep before the red devil was through with them. And it would have taken us maybe days to round up the rest. I'm going to find who owns the collies. If I have to advertise for him. And I'm going to offer him his own price

for the pair of them, even if I have to put a mortgage on the land to do it.”

As he talked he and his assistants were hurrying toward the bars where stood the golden dogs on guard. Heather and her son did not run away as the three men came forward, though memory made Heather shiver as if with a chill.

They waited until Slater and his hired men were too close at hand for the sheep to try to bolt past them. Then—once more as if at a signal—the dogs darted off.

Unheeding Slater’s pleading calls to them and the blandishing whistles of the two other men, mother and son made for the sheet of underbrush which covered the upper half of the hill. Into this they melted from sight, like a brace of wolves.

Their work was done—cleverly, gloriously done—the work to which they had leaped by instinct at sight of the red mongrel’s onslaught. Now they were free to take up again the forest life they loved; to turn their backs on their brief intercourse with humankind, and with no desire to renew it.

With eager joy, the Wild returned to the Wild.



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DYNAMITE

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He was not wanted. He was as unwanted as a wrinkle, or as a boost in the income tax. He was a collie pup—furry, pretty, eagerly friendly. His name was Kenneth.

He was given to Margaret Bryce by a man she detested. That was one reason why Kenneth was unwanted. Another reason was that Margaret was afraid of dogs and that neither of her parents had any experience or interest in them. Margaret was for sending Kenneth back at once—the moment the messenger boy deposited the small pup in the big basket at her feet on the veranda and handed her the note from Mallon.

But her parents would not have it so. They liked Mallon. They liked his gentleness with women, his outdoor ways, the tinge of the wild that seemed to cling to him. Besides, he had more money and more common sense about its use than has the average youth of twenty-seven. Wherefore they encouraged his visits to Mossmere, and they reproved Margaret for her unreasoning prejudice against him.

So now when, after one disgusted look into the shiny wicker basket, the girl demanded that the messenger take it back to the donor, both her father and her mother vetoed the return. For a wonder they managed to do so with such vehemence that Margaret yielded. But she yielded about as graciously as might a sick wildcat.

The messenger departed. Mr. Bryce opened the basket. Out onto the veranda floor floundered a mass of dynamically energetic fluff. The puppy was soft and fuzzy and adorably awkward. His eyes alone gave special promise of his future, for they were dark and wise and deep set. Around his ridiculously shapeless little neck was an enormous cerise bow tied with the inept fingers of a man little used to such exploits as the manipulating of cerise satin.

“He looks like a tipsy Teddy bear,” commented Margaret, eyeing poor little gamboling Kenneth without approval. “And this note is as absurd as the puppy. He says he is ‘sending me a chum’; and that ‘no gift in the world can be more precious to the right sort of girl than the right sort of collie.’ Then he speaks of me and the wretched cur as ‘thoroughbreds both.’ Did you ever hear such silliness?”

“Mallon meant it all right,” ventured Mr. Bryce.

“That’s the whole trouble with him,” complained Margaret. “He always means everything all right. Well, how about it, people? You said I mustn’t send the little brute back. I’m most certainly not going to take care of him. Daughterly obedience stops, one station short of that. Here he is. But I’ll be blest if I feed him or do anything for him! Ugh!”

This expletive was wrung from her by a violent onslaught from Kenneth himself. The puppy, freed of his basket, had explored with hesitant steps the expanses of the veranda. Then all at once remembering he was far from home and very, very lonely, he cantered gushingly up to the nearest human—for comfort and for petting.

This nearest human chanced to be Margaret. In active repulsion the girl shoved away the pudgily effusive youngster. The push sent him rolling over and over on his fat little back. As Kenneth gathered his feet under him, scared and amazed at such reception to his loving advances, the elderly gardener came plodding around the side of the house on his way to the orchard. Mr. Bryce hailed the interruption with relief.

“McLaren!” he called. “You’re a Scot. So you must know something of collies. They’re your national flower or something, aren’t they?”

“Yes, sir,” responded McLaren, solemnly; “cauliflower.”

At his own egregious witticism, the Scot began to laugh gruntingly with infinite relish.

Bryce, after blinking dazedly at him for a moment, granted a vague chuckle to the awful jest. Mrs. Bryce looked blank. Margaret walked coldly away. She did not believe in familiarity with servants.

“Well, here’s a Scotch collie puppy,” went on Bryce, “with a short body and a long pedigree. He has been given to Miss Bryce. She has no time to take care of him. Just lead him down to the barn and fix some kind of coop or corner for him and tell the cook to let you have food for him—table scraps or—or cauliflower, as you suggested. Or whatever collies are supposed to eat. See he’s well fed and looked after. He’s a valuable dog and all that.”

McLaren was gazing at the puppy with grave interest. Not so much was he noting the appealing little face and the unwieldy shape, as the broad shoulders and the deep chest and the rounded big bones and the glint in the wistful eyes.

He was forecasting from these the dog that one day was to grow out of this pudgy huddle of flesh and fur.

The gardener snapped his fingers at Kenneth. The puppy was glad of any recognition at all after this brief visit among dogless aliens. He scampered across the slippery floor to his new friend, wagging his rudimentary tail and barking in falsetto friendliness. McLaren tucked the pup under his arm and started back toward the barn.

Thus Kenneth came into the hands of some one who detested him, and thence into the care of a man who knew and loved collies as only a Scot can hope to.

The disused carriage shed became Kenneth's home, with a straw-heaped corner of it for his bed; and daily he fared forth with McLaren on the latter's rounds of the garden. Patiently he would play about amid the flower borders or between furrows while McLaren worked; and from the man's gruff voice he learned his first lessons in life and conduct.

Old McLaren was no sentimentalist. He was the sternest of disciplinarians. Even as he had disciplined and educated his own two sons until one of them had run away and the other had become a rugged pillar of the community, so he proceeded to educate and discipline Kenneth.

At Kenneth's age one's chief joys are to play hysterically and to eat inordinately and to sleep more than half the time and to get into any and every form of mischief. The eating and the sleeping were Kenneth's in ample measure, with much exercise thrown in; for McLaren knew the mighty value of these things in shaping a growing collie's body and upbuilding his health. But play was another matter, and mischief was barred. At an age when most pups know

nothing more serious than a chase after their own tails. Kenneth was learning the meaning of work. Also he was mastering many details as to behavior.

For example, to snatch up a dishcloth from the kitchen doorway or to roll merrily on the flower beds or to dig a tunnel under a rosebush or to yelp plaintively when put back into the shed or to chew holes in McLaren's spare overalls—all these and many other things were deadly sins and punishable by stingingly sharp spankings across the loins with a bit of switch.

Then, too, when the puppy was in the midst of a romp, the detested word "Heel!" meant he must slink slowly along behind McLaren's big shoes. And "Lie down!" and "Back!" and "Quiet, there!" and a host of other confusing mandates all had different and imperative meanings. So much must be learned—all of it distasteful.

For a space Kenneth was the most miserably unhappy collie pup in the state of New Jersey. Then, bit by bit, because he was a true collie, the brain of him awoke, and with it a glad zeal to serve this dour old man whom he had begun to love even more than he feared him. And the pup found himself trying eagerly to anticipate McLaren's commands and in win from him a grunt of approval or a careless pat on the head.

Of all his lessons, he loved best the congenial art of retrieving. To rush after a thrown stick is inherent in the nature of nearly all normal pups. But to bring it back to the thrower and lay it meekly at his feet—this must be taught. It is so much more fun to gallop away with the stick and to pretend it is a deadly foe to be chewed and shaken. Yet, in a

very few days, Kenneth acquired the art of retrieving and of retrieving well. Then, before the next step in his education could be taken, several untoward events happened.

First of all, old McLaren was laid by the heels with an attack of inflammatory rheumatism. The cook kept on feeding Kenneth at the disabled gardener's orders and letting the pup out for an hour or two of exercise every day. But the lessons had stopped for a while, and Kenneth missed them. After two months of discipline he found his new freedom a bore, and he was lonely for the harsh old man who had done so much to make a self-respecting canine citizen of him.

A few days after McLaren fell ill the four Polack day laborers at Mossmere struck for extra pay and for six hours less work per week. They had chosen a bad time for the strike; for unemployment had begun to take the place of labor's post-war golden days. And Bryce's reply to their demand was to discharge all four of them.

This counter-move had not entered at all into their computations. Kilinski, the spokesman for the quartet, was jarred into a sudden loss of temper. In a bellowed avalanche of broken English, as he stood on the veranda edge, he cursed Bryce and all the latter's family. Among his fellow Polacks, Kilinski had a high repute for invective. This fame he justified for the benefit of the three other laborers, who stood grouped at the foot of the porch steps.

Bryce, at the howled repetition of one especially virulent epithet, lost control of his own temper and drove his fist to the Polack's jaw. Back over the edge of the top step reeled Kilinski, landing in the gritty gravel at the bottom of the

veranda in a blaspheming heap. Instantly he was on his feet; nursing a bruised jaw with one hand, while with the other he waved on his three co-strikers to charge on the capitalist who had just assaulted him.

Mallon's car, rounding the drive and coming to a halt in front of the steps, checked the rush. And Mallon himself, vaulting out of the runabout and reënforcing Bryce at the head of the steps, further discouraged the counter-attack. One by one, Kilinski last of all, the four slouched away.

"If I were you, sir," counselled Mallon, "I'd have the village constable round up those fellows and get them run out of town. That last chap looked back at you in a way I'd hate to have my best enemy look at me. By the way, is Margaret at home, do you know?"

"I—I think so; I'm—I'm not sure," stammered Bryce, dreading the ordeal of making his daughter consent to come downstairs and see the unwelcome caller.

"How's the puppy coming on?" asked Mallon.

"I—I don't know. First rate," faltered Bryce with a guilty memory that he had not set eyes on Kenneth in weeks and that the girl most assuredly had not. "I'll—I'll send one of the maids to find Margaret. Will you come in, or would you rather——"

Margaret, ignorant of Mallon's call, came sauntering out on the veranda. "What was all the noise about?" she inquired. "It sounded like a dozen people talking over crossed telephone wires. Did——"

Catching sight of Mallon, she paused. Then she forced herself to advance toward him with frigid semblance of hospitality.