

THE DEAR ANIMALS.

BOGEY.

In time Bogey grew into a most magnificent dog: as a pup he was brought to the village by a preparatory schoolboy.

A very dear boy. He adored Bogey. The pup tolerated him.

Elizabeth, who was a farmer's daughter, cast her blue eyes on Bogey, the pup saw High Heaven in their azure depths.

The three entered into a compact. It came about thus.

Elizabeth, who lived very near to earth, although you might not have suspected it, had you noted how she stepped lightly on her toes, how her cotton frock billowed about her, how the sunlight appeared to flicker through her buoyant person, came one summer's day upon the boy cast down upon the earth half hidden in heather, clutching the wriggling bullpup.

He was sobbing painfully.

Thus Elizabeth, touching him with her toe:

"Thought I heard you laughing right across the heath—just you share that joke."

The boy sprang up, Bogey bounded towards Elizabeth, caught the hem of her flimsy garment, rent it in twain. Down flopped Elizabeth.

"How about that joke?" she questioned, stuffing her sun bonnet into the gaping jowl of the panting pup.

"Oh! Elizabeth," gasped the boy, "they are going to put him down; Pater says he's a savage beast—sure to commit manslaughter, and he hustles Mater's birds and cats. In the stable they're frightened of Bogey—fancy of Bogey—rotters; of course, a dog will growl if you interfere with his grub."

"Rather," assented Elizabeth. "You just try to walk off with anyone's best bone—see how they like it. When I was your age I gobbled up a whole row of early peas from the pod—sweet—succulent, yum—yum! My! you should have seen Dad chase me with a thick stick; if it hadn't been that I toppled into the river and was nearly drowned, I don't believe I should be alive to tell the tale."

The boy cheered up.

"You are a jolly girl, Elizabeth. After Bogey, I think I love you better than anyone that ever was. I wonder . . ."

"So do I," said Elizabeth, softly.

"This is a lonely heath—are you ever frightened of tramps?" asked the boy inconsequently.

"To tell the truth," answered Elizabeth, "my heart just thumps whenever I meet one."

"If you had a bulldog to protect you," broke in the boy.

"Oh! then," exclaimed Elizabeth, "I should never tremble again, if we came face to face with the most terrible fellow, all rags and tatters, even if he carried a blunderbuss. With Bogey squatted upon his haunches, his black mug turned upon him, ready to spring upon him with a loud woof, woof, the most abandoned tramp would take to his heels."

"Rather."

The boy looked enquiringly at Elizabeth.

"Then you'll take care of him, till I come again, dear Elizabeth," he said.

"That I will," replied the girl. "That's a bargain."

"Of course, I couldn't be jealous of you, Elizabeth, but you'll play fair, won't you? You won't let him forget me altogether?" asked the boy, wistfully.

"I've got your photo. I'll make him kiss it every day," laughed the girl.

"But, joking apart, Elizabeth, you're so pretty and smiling and motherly, he can't help but love you best."

Elizabeth sprang to her feet, flung her torn skirt over her arm, shook something sparkling from her eyes, and took the boy by the scruff of his neck.

"I don't mind telling you, young sir," she whispered, "*I love that dog—love it—you know. You do or you don't—we can't reason about these things. Can we, dear boy?*"

"No," said the boy, solemnly; "it's there or it isn't."

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The boy went back to school. Elizabeth ruled Bogey with a rod of love.

Then one day tragedy.

* * * *

The dog was missing.

When he returned he loped into darkness.

* * * *

The boy never came home again. That ghastly school fire!—a white face at a barred window. . . . The terrible struggle to restrain a bulldog from thrusting itself into the flames.

* * * *

Later the boy's father enclosed to Elizabeth a slip of paper found with his effects, on which he had scribbled "My last will and testament." "I leave my dog Bogey to Mistress Elizabeth Carstairs, because she understands, and will be faithful unto death, won't you, Elizabeth?" "Signed. ALISTER ADAIR."

"Indeed, indeed, I will," wept Elizabeth. Oh! how she *wept* and *wept*.

She kept the bit of paper all her life. She also kept faith with the dead boy.

Life was so sacred to Elizabeth. She never realised death.

E. G. F.

"He lies in the soft earth under the grass,

Where they who love him often pass.

And his grave is under a tall young lime,

In whose boughs the pale green hop-flowers climb;

But his spirit—where does his spirit rest?

It was God Who made him—God knows best."

Mortimer Collins.

A NATIONAL DISGRACE.

It was reported to the annual meeting of the R.S.P.C.A., recently held at Wigmore Hall, that last year members of the public reported 36,627 cases of cruelty—3,857 more than in 1936.

This is very sad, as there were numbers of cases of serious cruelty to dogs. Nine persons were disqualified for life from keeping them.

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