

A PUFFIN BOOK



The classic animal story loved by generations of readers

LAD: A DOG

— By Albert Payson Terhune —



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HIS MATE

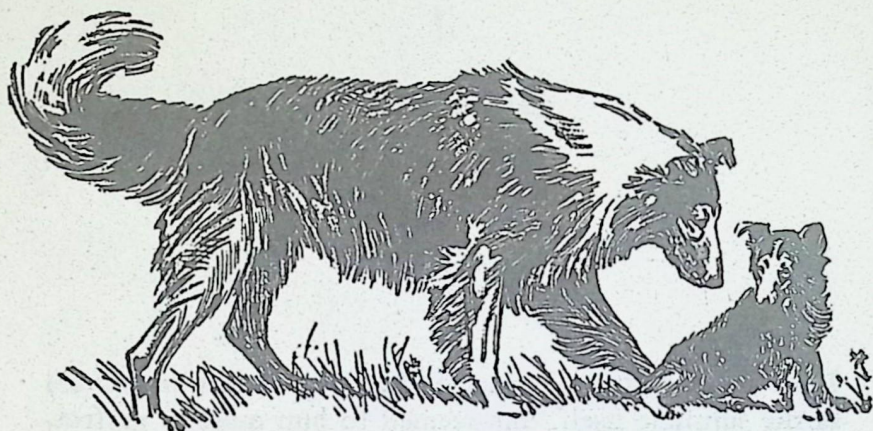
LADY WAS AS MUCH A PART OF LAD'S EVERYDAY HAPPINESS as the sunshine itself. She seemed to him quite as perfect, and as gloriously indispensable. He could no more have imagined a Ladyless life than a sunless life. It had never occurred to him to suspect that Lady could be any less devoted than he—until Knave came to The Place.

Lad was an eighty-pound collie, thoroughbred in spirit as well as in blood. He had the benign dignity that was a heritage from endless generations of high-strain ancestors. He had, too, the gay courage of a d'Artagnan, and an uncanny wisdom. Also—who could doubt it, after a look into his mournful brown eyes—he had a Soul.

His shaggy coat, set off by the snowy ruff and chest, was like orange-flecked mahogany. His absurdly tiny forepaws—in which he took inordinate pride—were silver white.

Three years earlier, when Lad was in his first prime (before the mighty chest and shoulders had filled out and the tawny coat had waxed so shaggy), Lady had been brought to The Place. She had been brought in the Master's overcoat pocket, rolled up into a fuzzy gold-gray ball of softness no bigger than a half-grown kitten.

The Master had fished the month-old puppy out of the cavern of his pocket and set her down, asprawl and shivering and squealing, on the veranda floor. Lad had walked



cautiously across the veranda, sniffed inquiry at the blinking pygmy who gallantly essayed to growl defiance up at the huge welcomer—and from that first moment he had taken her under his protection.

First it had been the natural impulse of the thoroughbred—brute or human—to guard the helpless. Then, as the shapeless yellow baby grew into a slenderly graceful collie, his guardianship changed to stark adoration. He was Lady's life slave.

And she bullied him unmercifully—bossed the gentle giant in a shameful manner, crowding him from the warmest spot by the fire, brazenly yet daintily snatching from between his jaws the choicest bone of their joint dinner, hectoring her dignified victim into lawn romps in hot weather when he would far rather have drowsed under the lakeside trees.

Her vagaries, her teasing, her occasional little flurries of temper, were borne by Lad not meekly, but joyously. All she did was, in his eyes, perfect. And Lady graciously allowed herself to be idolized, for she was marvelously human in some ways. Lad, a thoroughbred descended from a hun-

dred generations of thoroughbreds, was less human and more disinterested.

Life at The Place was wondrous pleasant for both the dogs. There were thick woods to roam in, side by side; there were squirrels to chase and rabbits to trail. (Yes, and if the squirrels had played fair and had not resorted to un-sportsmanly tactics by climbing trees when close pressed, there would doubtless have been squirrels to catch as well as to chase. As for the rabbits, they were easier to overtake. And Lady got the lion's share of all such morsels.)

There was the ice-cool lake to plunge into for a swim or a wallow, after a run in the dust and July heat. There was a deliciously comfortable old rug in front of the living room's open fire whereon to lie, shoulder to shoulder, on the nights when the wind screamed through bare trees and the snow scratched hungrily at the panes.

Best of all, to them both, there were the Master and the Mistress; especially the Mistress.

Any man with money to make the purchase may become a dog's *owner*. But no man—spend he ever so much coin and food and tact in the effort—may become a dog's *Master* without the consent of the dog. Do you get the difference? And he whom a dog once unreservedly accepts as Master is forever that dog's God.

To both Lad and Lady, from the first, the man who bought them was not the mere owner but the absolute Master. To them he was the unquestioned lord of life and death, the hearer and answerer, the Eternal Law; his the voice that must be obeyed, whatever the command.

From earliest puppyhood, both Lad and Lady had been brought up within the Law. As far back as they could remember, they had known and obeyed The Place's simple code.

For example: All animals of the woods might lawfully be

chased; but the Mistress' prize chickens and the other little folk of The Place must be ignored no matter how hungry or how playful a collie might chance to be. A human, walking openly or riding down the drive into The Place by daylight, must not be barked at except by way of friendly announcement. But anyone entering the grounds from other ingress than the drive, or anyone walking furtively or with a tramp slouch, must be attacked at sight.

Also, the interior of the house was sacrosanct. It was a place for perfect behavior. No rug must be scratched, nothing gnawed or played with. In fact, Lady's one whipping had followed a puppy-frolic effort of hers to "worry" the huge stuffed bald eagle that stood on a papier-mâché stump in the Master's study, just off the big living room where the fireplace was.

That eagle, shot by himself as it raided the flock of prize chickens, was the delight of the Master's heart. And at Lady's attempt on it, he had taught her a lesson that made her cringe for weeks thereafter at bare sight of the dog whip. To this day, she would never walk past the eagle without making the widest possible detour around it.

But that punishment had been suffered while she was still in the idiotic days of puppyhood. After she was grown, Lady would no more have thought of tampering with the eagle or with anything else in the house than it would occur to a human to stand on his head in church.

Then, early one spring, came Knave—a showy, magnificent collie; red-gold of coat save for a black "saddle," and with alert topaz eyes.

Knave did not belong to the Master, but to a man who, going to Europe for a month, asked him to care for the dog in his absence. The Master, glad to have so beautiful an ornament to The Place, had willingly consented. He was rewarded when, on the train from town, an admiring crowd

of commuters flocked to the baggage car to stare at the splendid-looking collie.

The only dissenting note in the praise chorus was the grouchy old baggage man's.

"Maybe he's a thoroughbred, like you say," drawled the old fellow to the Master, "but I never yet saw a yellow-eyed, prick-eared dog I'd give hell-room to."

Knave showed his scorn for such silly criticism by a cavernous yawn.

"Thoroughbred?" grunted the baggage man. "With them streaks of pinkish-yeller on the roof of his mouth? Ever see a thoroughbred that didn't have a black mouth-roof?"

But the old man's slighting words were ignored with disdain by the crowd of volunteer dog experts in the baggage car. In time the Master alighted at his station, with Knave straining joyously at the leash. As the Master reached The Place and turned into the drive, both Lad and Lady, at sound of his far-off footsteps, came tearing around the side of the house to greet him.

On simultaneous sight and scent of the strange dog frisking along at his side, the two collies paused in their madly joyous onrush. Up went their ruffs. Down went their heads.

Lady flashed forward to do battle with the stranger who was monopolizing so much of the Master's attention. Knave, not at all averse to battle (especially with a smaller dog), braced himself and then moved forward, stiff-legged, fangs bare.

But of a sudden his head went up; his stiff-poised brush broke into swift wagging; his lips curled down. He had recognized that his prospective foe was not of his own sex. (And nowhere, except among humans, does a full-grown male ill-treat or even defend himself against the female of his species.)

Lady, noting the stranger's sudden friendliness, paused irresolute in her charge. And at that instant Lad darted past her. Full at Knave's throat he launched himself.

The Master rasped out:

"Down, Lad! *Down!*"

Almost in midair the collie arrested his onset—coming to earth bristling, furious and yet with no thought but to obey. Knave, seeing his foe was not going to fight, turned once more toward Lady.

"Lad," ordered the Master, pointing toward Knave and speaking with quiet intentness, "let him alone. Understand? Let him *alone*."

And Lad understood—even as years of training and centuries of ancestry had taught him to understand every spoken wish of the Master's. He must give up his impulse to make war on this intruder whom at sight he hated. It was the Law; and from the Law there was no appeal.

With yearningly helpless rage he looked on while the newcomer was installed on The Place. With a wondering sorrow he found himself forced to share the Master's and Mistress' caresses with this interloper. With growing pain he submitted to Knave's gay attentions to Lady, and to Lady's evident relish of the guest's companionship. Gone were the peaceful old days of utter contentment.

Lady had always regarded Lad as her own special property—to tease and to boss and to despoil of choice food-bits. But her attitude toward Knave was far different. She coquetted, human-fashion, with the gold-and-black dog—at one moment affecting to scorn him, at another meeting his advances with a delightful friendliness.

She never presumed to boss him as she had always bossed Lad. He fascinated her. Without seeming to follow him about, she was forever at his heels. Lad, cut to the heart at her sudden indifference toward his loyal self, tried in every

way his simple soul could devise to win back her interest. He essayed clumsily to romp with her as the lithely graceful Knave romped, to drive rabbits for her on their woodland rambles, to thrust himself, in a dozen gentle ways, upon her attention.

But it was no use. Lady scarcely noticed him. When his overtures of friendship chanced to annoy her, she rewarded them with a snap or with an impatient growl. And ever she turned to the all-conquering Knave in a keenness of attraction that was all but hypnotic.

As his divinity's total loss of interest in himself grew too apparent to be doubted, Lad's big heart broke. Being only a dog, and a Grail knight in thought, he did not realize that Knave's newness and his difference from anything she had known formed a large part of Lady's desire for the visitor's favor; nor did he understand that such interest must wane when the novelty should wear off.

All Lad knew was that he loved her, and that for the sake of a flashy stranger she was snubbing him.

As the Law forbade him to avenge himself in true dog-fashion by fighting for his Lady's love, Lad sadly withdrew from the unequal contest, too proud to compete for a fickle sweetheart. No longer did he try to join in the others' lawn romps, but lay at a distance, his splendid head between his snowy little forepaws, his brown eyes sick with sorrow, watching their gambols.

Nor did he thrust his undesired presence on them during their woodland rambles. He took to moping, solitary, infinitely miserable. Perhaps there is on earth something unhappier than a bitterly aggrieved dog. But no one has ever discovered that elusive something.

Knave from the first had shown and felt for Lad a scornful indifference. Not understanding the Law, he had set down the older collie's refusal to fight as a sign of exem-

plary, if timorous prudence, and he looked down upon him accordingly. One day Knave came home from the morning run through the forest without Lady. Neither the Master's calls nor the ear-ripping blasts of his dog whistle could bring her back to The Place. Whereat Lad arose heavily from his favorite resting place under the living-room piano and cantered off to the woods. Nor did he return.

Several hours later the Master went to the woods to investigate, followed by the rollicking Knave. At the forest edge the Master shouted. A far-off bark from Lad answered. And the Master made his way through shoulder-deep underbrush in the direction of the sound.

In a clearing he found Lady, her left forepaw caught in the steel jaws of a fox trap. Lad was standing protectingly



above her, stooping now and then to lick her cruelly pinched foot or to whine consolation to her; then snarling in fierce hate at a score of crows that flapped hopefully in the treetops above the victim.

The Master set Lady free, and Knave frisked forward

right joyously to greet his released inamorata. But Lady was in no condition to play—then nor for many a day thereafter. Her forefoot was so lacerated and swollen that she was fain to hobble awkwardly on three legs for the next fortnight.

It was on one pantingly hot August morning, a little later, that Lady limped into the house in search of a cool spot where she might lie and lick her throbbing forefoot. Lad was lying, as usual, under the piano in the living room. His tail thumped shy welcome on the hardwood floor as she passed, but she would not stay or so much as notice him.

On she limped, into the Master's study, where an open window sent a faint breeze through the house. Giving the stuffed eagle a wide berth, Lady hobbled to the window and made as though to lie down just beneath it. As she did so, two things happened: she leaned too much weight on the sore foot, and the pressure wrung from her an involuntary yelp of pain; at the same moment a crosscurrent of air from the other side of the house swept through the living room and blew shut the door of the adjoining study. Lady was a prisoner.

Ordinarily this would have caused her no ill-ease, for the open window was only thirty inches above the floor, and the drop to the veranda outside was a bare three feet. It would have been the simplest matter in the world for her to jump out, had she wearied of her chance captivity.

But to undertake the jump with the prospect of landing her full weight and impetus on a forepaw that was horribly sensitive to the lightest touch—this was an exploit beyond the sufferer's will power. So Lady resigned herself to imprisonment. She curled herself up on the floor as far as possible from the eagle, moaned softly and lay still.

At sound of her first yelp, Lad had run forward, whining eager sympathy. But the closed door blocked his way. He

crouched, wretched and anxious, before it, helpless to go to his loved one's assistance.

Knave, too, loping back from a solitary prowl of the woods, seeking Lady, heard the yelp. His prick-ears located the sound at once. Along the veranda he trotted, to the open study window. With a bound he had cleared the sill and alighted inside the room.

It chanced to be his first visit to the study. The door was usually kept shut, that drafts might not blow the Master's desk papers about. And Knave felt, at best, little interest in exploring the interior of houses. He was an outdoor dog, by choice.

He advanced now toward Lady, his tail awag, his head on one side, with his most irresistible air. Then, as he came forward into the room, he saw the eagle. He halted in wonder at sight of the enormous white-crested bird with its six-foot sweep of pinion. It was a wholly novel spectacle to Knave; and he greeted it with a gruff bark, half of fear, half of bravado. Quickly, however, his sense of smell told him this wide-winged apparition was no living thing. And ashamed of his momentary cowardice, he went over to investigate it.

As he went, Knave cast over his shoulder a look of invitation to Lady to join him in his inspection. She understood the invitation, but memory of that puppyhood beating made her recoil from accepting it. Knave saw her shrink back, and he realized with a thrill that she was actually afraid of this lifeless thing which could harm no one. With due pride in showing off his own heroism before her, and with the scamp dog's innate craving to destroy, he sprang growling upon the eagle.

Down tumbled the papier-mâché stump. Down crashed the huge stuffed bird with it; Knave's white teeth buried deep in the soft feathers of its breast.

Lady, horror-struck at this sacrilege, whimpered in terror.

But her plaint served only to increase Knave's zest for destruction.

He hurled the bird to the floor, pinned it down with his feet and at one jerk tore the right wing from the body. Coughing out the mouthful of dusty pinions, he dug his teeth into the eagle's throat. Again bracing himself with his forelegs on the carcass, he gave a sharp tug. Head and neck came away in his mouth. And then before he could drop the mouthful and return to the work of demolition, he heard the Master's step.

All at once, now, Knave proved he was less ignorant of the Law—or, at least, of its penalties—than might have been supposed from his act of vandalism. In sudden panic he bolted for the window, the silvery head of the eagle still, unheeded, between his jaws. With a vaulting spring, he shot out through the open casement, in his reckless eagerness to escape, knocking against Lady's injured leg as he passed.

He did not pause at Lady's scream of pain, nor did he stop until he reached the chicken house. Crawling under this, he deposited the incriminating eagle head in the dark recess. Finding no pursuer, he emerged and jogged innocently back toward the veranda.

The Master, entering the house and walking across the living room toward the stair, heard Lady's cry. He looked around for her, recognizing from the sound that she must be in distress. His eye fell on Lad, crouching tense and eager in front of the shut study door.

The Master opened the door and went into the study.

At the first step inside the room he stopped, aghast. There lay the chewed and battered fragments of his beloved eagle. And there, in one corner, frightened, with guilt writ plain all over her, cowered Lady. Men have been "legally" done to death on far lighter evidence than encompassed her.

The Master was thunderstruck. For more than two years

Lady had had the free run of the house. And this was her first sin—at that, a sin unworthy any well-bred dog that has graduated from puppyhood and from milk teeth. He would not have believed it. He *could* not have believed it. Yet here was the hideous evidence, scattered all over the floor.

The door was shut, but the window stood wide. Through the window, doubtless, she had gotten into the room. And he had surprised her at her vandal work before she could escape by the same opening.

The Master was a just man—as humans go; but this was a crime the most maudlin dog-spoiler could not have condoned. The eagle, moreover, had been the pride of his heart—as perhaps I have said. Without a word, he walked to the wall and took down a braided dog whip, dust-covered from long disuse.

Lady knew what was coming. Being a thoroughbred, she did not try to run, nor did she roll for mercy. She cowered, moveless, nose to floor, awaiting her doom.

Back swished the lash. Down it came, whistling as a man whistles whose teeth are broken. Across Lady's slender flanks it smote, with the full force of a strong driving arm. Lady quivered all over. But she made no sound. She who would whimper at a chance touch to her sore foot, was mute under human punishment.

But Lad was not mute. As the Master's arm swung back for a second blow, he heard, just behind, a low, throaty growl that held all the menace of ten thousand wordy threats.

He wheeled about. Lad was close at his heels, fangs bared, eyes red, head lowered, tawny body taut in every sinew.

The Master blinked at him, incredulous. Here was something infinitely more unbelievable than Lady's supposed destruction of the eagle. The Impossible had come to pass.

For, know well, a dog does not growl at its Master. At its

owner, perhaps; at its Master, never. As soon would a devout priest blaspheme his deity.

Nor does a dog approach anything or anybody, growling and with lowered head, unless intent on battle. Have no fear when a dog barks or even growls at you, so long as his head is erect. But when he growls and lowers his head—then look out. It means but one thing.

The Master had been the Master—the sublime, blindly revered and worshiped Master—for all the blameless years of Lad's life. And now, growling, head down, the dog was threatening him.

It was the supreme misery, the crowning hell, of Lad's career. For the first time, two overpowering loves fought with each other in his Galahad soul. And the love for poor, unjustly blamed Lady hurled down the superlove for the Master.

In baring teeth upon his lord, the collie well knew what he was incurring. But he did not flinch. Understanding that swift death might well be his portion, he stood his ground.

(Is there greater love? Humans—sighing swains, vow-laden suitors—can any of *you* match it? I think not. Not even the much-lauded Antonys. They throw away only the mere world of earthly credit, for love.)

The Master's jaw set. He was well-nigh as unhappy as the dog. For he grasped the situation, and he was man enough to honor Lad's proffered sacrifice. Yet it must be punished, and punished instantly—as any dog-master will testify. Let a dog once growl or show his teeth in menace at his Master, and if the rebellion be not put down in drastic fashion, the Master ceases forever to be Master and degenerates to mere owner. His mysterious power over his dog is gone for all time.

Turning his back on Lady, the Master whirled his dog whip in air. Lad saw the lash coming down. He did not

finch. He did not cower. The growl ceased. The orange-tawny collie stood erect. Down came the braided whiplash on Lad's shoulders—again over his loins, and yet again and again.

Without moving—head up, dark tender eyes unwinking—the hero dog took the scourging. When it was over, he waited only to see the Master throw the dog whip fiercely into a corner of the study. Then, knowing Lady was safe, Lad walked majestically back to his "cave" under the piano, and with a long, quivering sigh he lay down.

His spirit was sick and crushed within him. For the first time in his thoroughbred life he had been struck. For he was one of those not wholly rare dogs to whom a sharp word of reproof is more effective than a beating—to whom a blow is not a pain, but a damning and overwhelming ignominy. Had a human, other than the Master, presumed to strike him, the assailant must have fought for life.

Through the numbness of Lad's grief, bit by bit, began to smolder and glow a deathless hate for Knave, the cause of Lady's humiliation. Lad had known what passed behind that closed study door as well as though he had seen. For ears and scent serve a true collie quite as usefully as do mere eyes.

The Master was little happier than was his favorite dog. For he loved Lad as he would have loved a human son. Though Lad did not realize it, the Master had "let off" Lady from the rest of her beating, in order not to increase her champion's grief. He simply ordered her out of the study.

And as she limped away, the Master tried to rekindle his own indignation and deaden his sense of remorse by gathering together the strewn fragments of the eagle. It occurred to him that though the bird was destroyed, he might yet have its fierce-eyed silvery head mounted on a board, as a minor trophy.

But he could not find the head.

Search the study as he would, he could not find it. He remembered distinctly that Lady had been panting as she slunk out of the room. And dogs that are carrying things in their mouths cannot pant. She had not taken the head away with her. The absence of the head only deepened the whole annoying domestic mystery. He gave up trying to solve any of the puzzle—from Lady's incredible vandalism to this newest turn of the affair.

Not until two days later could Lad bring himself to risk a meeting with Lady, the cause and the witness of his beating. Then, yearning for a sight of her and for even her grudging recognition of his presence, after his forty-eight hours of isolation, he sallied forth from the house in search of her.

He traced her to the cool shade of a lilac clump near the outbuildings. There, having with one paw dug a little pit in the cool earth, she was curled up asleep under the bushes. Stretched out beside her was Knave.

Lad's spine bristled at sight of his foe. But ignoring him, he moved over to Lady and touched her nose with his own in timid caress. She opened one eye, blinked drowsily and went to sleep again.

But Lad's coming had awakened Knave. Much refreshed by his nap, he woke in a playful mood. He tried to induce Lady to romp with him, but she preferred to doze. So, casting about in his shallow mind for something to play with, Knave chanced to remember the prize he had hidden beneath the chicken house.

Away he ambled, returning presently with the eagle's head between his teeth. As he ran, he tossed it aloft, catching it as it fell—a pretty trick he had long since learned with a tennis ball.

Lad, who had lain down as near to sleepily scornful Lady as he dared, looked up and saw him approach. He saw, too, with what Knave was playing; and as he saw, he went quite

mad. Here was the thing that had caused Lady's interrupted punishment and his own black disgrace. Knave was exploiting it with manifest and brazen delight.

For the second time in his life—and for the second time in three days—Lad broke the Law. He forgot, in a trice, the command "Let him alone!" And noiseless, terrible, he flew at the gamboling Knave.

Knave was aware of the attack, barely in time to drop the eagle's head and spring forward to meet his antagonist. He was three years Lad's junior and was perhaps five pounds heavier. Moreover, constant exercise had kept him in steel-and-whalebone condition; while lonely brooding at home had begun of late to soften Lad's tough sinews.

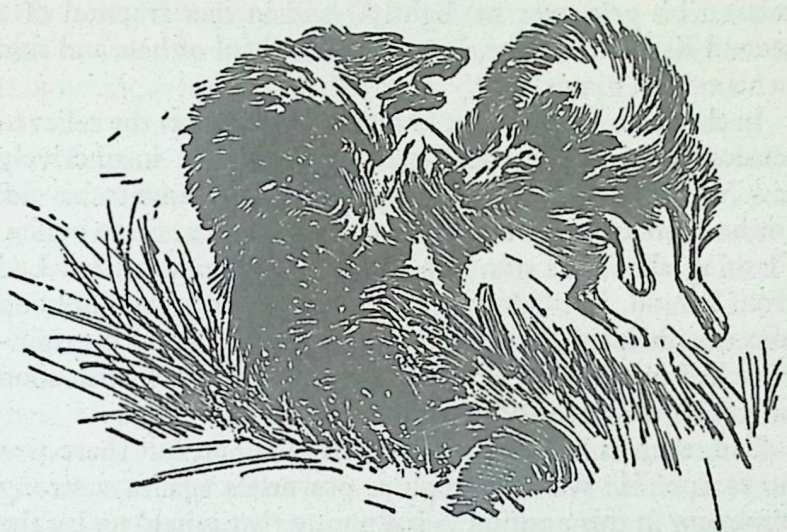
Knave was mildly surprised that the dog he had looked on as a dullard and a poltroon should have developed a flash of spirit. But he was not at all unwilling to wage a combat whose victory must make him shine with redoubled glory in Lady's eyes.

Like two furry whirlwinds the collies spun forward toward each other. They met, upreared and snarled, slashing wolflike for the throat, clawing madly to retain balance. Then down they went, rolling in a right unloving embrace, snapping, tearing, growling.

Lad drove straight for the throat. A half-handful of Knave's golden ruff came away in his jaws. For except at the exact center, a collie's throat is protected by a tangle of hair as effective against assault as were Andrew Jackson's cotton-bale breastworks at New Orleans. And Lad had missed the exact center.

Over and over they rolled. They regained their footing and reared again. Lad's saber-shaped tusk ripped a furrow in Knave's satiny forehead; and Knave's half-deflected slash in return set bleeding the big vein at the top of Lad's left ear.

Lady was wide awake long before this. Standing immov-



able, yet wildly excited—after the age-old fashion of the female brute for whom males battle and who knows she is to be the winner's prize—she watched every turn of the fight.

Up once more, the dogs clashed, chest to chest. Knave, with an instinctive throwback to his wolf forebears of five hundred years earlier, dived for Lad's forelegs, with the hope of breaking one of them between his foaming jaws.

He missed the hold by a fraction of an inch. The skin alone was torn. And down over the little white forepaw—one of the forepaws that Lad was wont to lick for an hour a day to keep them snowy—ran a trickle of blood.

That miss was a costly error for Knave. For Lad's teeth sought and found his left shoulder, and sank deep therein. Knave twisted and wheeled with lightning speed and with all his strength. Yet had not his gold-hued ruff choked Lad and pressed stranglingly against his nostrils, all the heavier dog's struggles would not have set him free.

As it was, Lad, gasping for breath enough to fill his lungs,

relaxed his grip ever so slightly. And in that fraction of a second Knave tore free, leaving a mouthful of hair and skin in his enemy's jaws.

In the same wrench that liberated him—and as the relieved tension sent Lad stumbling forward—Knave instinctively saw his chance and took it. Again heredity came to his aid, for he tried a maneuver known only to wolves and to collies. Flashing above his stumbling foe's head, Knave seized Lad from behind, just below the base of the skull. And holding him thus helpless, he proceeded to grit and grind his tight-clenched teeth in the slow, relentless motion that must soon or late eat down to and sever the spinal cord.

Lad, even as he thrashed frantically about, felt there was no escape. He was well-nigh as powerless against a strong opponent in this position as is a puppy that is held up by the scruff of the neck.

Without a sound, but still struggling as best he might, he awaited his fate. No longer was he growling or snarling.

His patient, bloodshot eyes sought wistfully for Lady. And they did not find her.

For even as they sought her, a novel element entered into the battle. Lady, hitherto awaiting with true feminine meekness the outcome of the scrimmage, saw her old flame's terrible plight, under the grinding jaws. And, proving herself false to all canons of ancestry—moved by some impulse she did not try to resist—she jumped forward. Forgetting the pain in her swollen foot, she nipped Knave sharply in the hind leg. Then, as if abashed by her unfeminine behavior, she drew back, in shame.

But the work was done.

Through the red war lust Knave dimly realized that he was attacked from behind—perhaps that his new opponent stood an excellent chance of gaining upon him such a death-hold as he himself now held.

He loosed his grip and whizzed about, frothing and snapping, to face the danger. Before Knave had half completed his lightning whirl, Lad had him by the side of the throat.

It was no death-grip, this. Yet it was not only acutely painful, but it held its victim quite as powerless as he had just now held Lad. Bearing down with all his weight and setting his white little front teeth and his yellowing tusks firmly in their hold, Lad gradually shoved Knave's head sideways to the ground and held it there.

The result on Knave's activities was much the same as is obtained by sitting on the head of a kicking horse that has fallen. Unable to wrench loose, helpless to counter, in keen agony from the pinching of the tender throat skin beneath the masses of ruff, Knave lost his nerve. And he forthwith justified those yellowish streaks in his mouth roof whereof the baggage man had spoken.

He made the air vibrate with his abject howls of pain and fear. He was caught. He could not get away. Lad was hurting him horribly. Wherefore he ki-yied as might any gutter cur whose tail is stepped upon.

Presently, beyond the fight haze, Lad saw a shadow in front of him—a shadow that resolved itself in the settling dust as the Master. And Lad came to himself.

He loosed his hold on Knave's throat, and stood up, groggily. Knave, still yelping, tucked his tail between his legs and fled for his life—out of The Place, out of your story.

Slowly, stumbling, but without a waver of hesitation, Lad went up to the Master. He was gasping for breath, and he was weak from fearful exertion and from loss of blood. Up to the Master he went—straight up to him.

And not until he was a scant two yards away did he see that the Master held something in his hand—that abominable, mischief-making eagle's head, which he had just picked up! Probably the dog whip was in the other hand. It did not

matter much. Lad was ready for this final degradation. He would not try to dodge it, he the double breaker of Laws.

Then—the Master was kneeling beside him. The kind hand was caressing the dog's dizzy head, the dear voice—a queer break in it—was saying remorsefully:

“Oh Lad! Laddie! I'm so sorry. So sorry! You're—you're more of a man than I am, old friend. I'll make it up to you, somehow!”

And now besides the loved hand, there was another touch, even more precious—a warmly caressing little pink tongue that licked his bleeding foreleg.

Lady—timidly, adoringly—was trying to stanch her hero's wounds.

“Lady, I apologize to you, too,” went on the foolish Master. “I'm sorry, girl.”

Lady was too busy soothing the hurts of her newly discovered mate to understand. But Lad understood. Lad always understood.

"QUIET"

TO LAD THE REAL WORLD WAS BOUNDED BY THE PLACE. Outside, there were a certain number of miles of land and there were an uncertain number of people. But the miles were uninspiring, except for a cross-country tramp with the Master. And the people were foolish and strange folk who either stared at him—which always annoyed Lad—or else tried to pat him, which he hated. But The Place was—The Place.

Always, he had lived on The Place. He felt he owned it. It was assuredly his to enjoy, to guard, to patrol from high road to lake. It was his world.

The denizens of every world must have at least one deity to worship. Lad had one: the Master. Indeed, he had two: the Master and the Mistress. And because the dog was strong of soul and chivalric, withal, and because the Mistress was altogether lovable, Lad placed her altar even above the Master's. Which was wholly as it should have been.

There were other people at The Place—people to whom a dog must be courteous, as becomes a thoroughbred, and whose caresses he must accept. Very often, there were guests, too. And from puppyhood, Lad had been taught the sacredness of the Guest Law. Civilly, he would endure the pettings of these visiting outlanders. Gravely, he would shake hands with them, on request. He would even per-

mit them to paw him or haul him about, if they were of the obnoxious, dog-mauling breed. But the moment politeness would permit, he always withdrew, very quietly, from their reach and, if possible, from their sight as well.

Of all the dogs on The Place, big Lad alone had free run of the house, by day and by night.

He slept in a "cave" under the piano. He even had access to the sacred dining room, at mealtimes—where always he lay to the left of the Master's chair.

With the Master, he would willingly unbend for a romp at any or all times. At the Mistress' behest he would play with all the silly abandon of a puppy; rolling on the ground at her feet, making as though to seize and crush one of her little shoes in his mighty jaws; wriggling and waving his legs in air when she buried her hand in the masses of his chest ruff; and otherwise comporting himself with complete loss of dignity.

But to all except these two, he was calmly unapproachable. From his earliest days he had never forgotten he was an aristocrat among inferiors. And, calmly aloof, he moved among his subjects.

Then, all at once, into the sweet routine of the House of Peace, came Horror.

It began on a blustery, dour October day. The Mistress had crossed the lake to the village, in her canoe, with Lad curled up in a furry heap in the prow. On the return trip, about fifty yards from shore, the canoe struck sharply and obliquely against a half-submerged log that a fall freshet had swept down from the river above the lake. At the same moment a flaw of wind caught the canoe's quarter. And, after the manner of such eccentric craft, the canvas shell proceeded to turn turtle.

Into the ice-chilled waters splashed its two occupants. Lad bobbed to the top, and glanced around at the Mistress to

learn if this were a new practical joke. But, instantly, he saw it was no joke at all, so far as she was concerned.

Swathed and cramped by the folds of her heavy outing skirt, the Mistress was making no progress shoreward. And the dog flung himself through the water toward her with a rush that left his shoulders and half his back above the surface. In a second he had reached her and had caught her sweater shoulder in his teeth.

She had the presence of mind to lie out straight, as though she were floating, and to fill her lungs with a swift intake of breath. The dog's burden was thus made infinitely lighter than if she had struggled or had lain in a posture less easy for towing. Yet he made scant headway, until she wound one hand in his mane, and, still lying motionless and stiff, bade him loose his hold on her shoulder.

In this way, by sustained effort that wrenched every giant muscle in the collie's body, they came at last to land.

Vastly rejoiced was Lad, and inordinately proud of himself. And the plaudits of the Master and the Mistress were music to him. Indefinably, he understood he had done a very wonderful thing and that everybody on The Place was talking about him, and that all were trying to pet him at once.

This promiscuous handling he began to find unwelcome. And he retired at last to his "cave" under the piano to escape from it. Matters soon quieted down; and the incident seemed at an end.

Instead, it had just begun.

For, within an hour, the Mistress—who, for days had been half-sick with a cold—was stricken with a chill, and by night she was in the first stages of pneumonia.

Then over The Place descended Gloom. A gloom Lad could not understand until he went upstairs at dinnertime to escort the Mistress, as usual, to the dining room. But to his

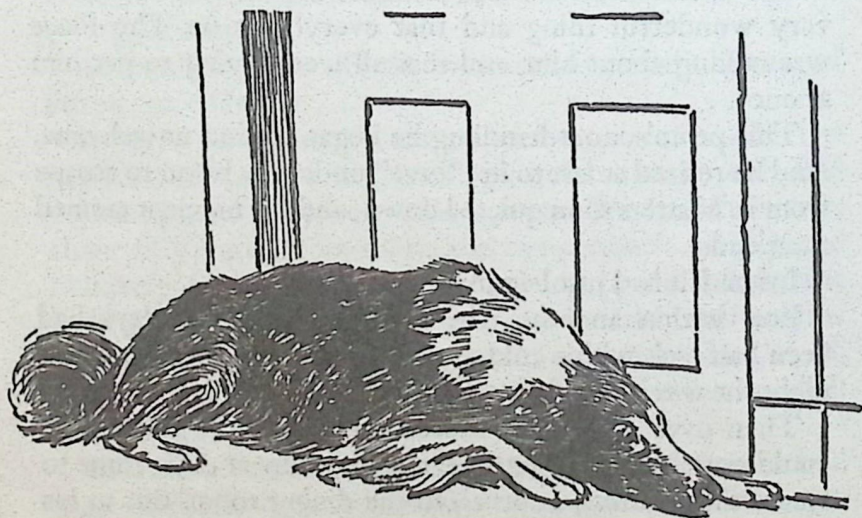
light scratch at her door there was no reply. He scratched again and presently Master came out of the room and ordered him downstairs again.

Then from the Master's voice and look, Lad understood that something was terribly amiss. Also, as she did not appear at dinner and as he was for the first time in his life forbidden to go into her room, he knew the Mistress was the victim of whatever mishap had befallen.

A strange man, with a black bag, came to the house early in the evening; and he and the Master were closeted for an interminable time in the Mistress' room. Lad had crept dejectedly upstairs behind them and sought to crowd into the room at their heels. The Master ordered him back and shut the door in his face.

Lad lay down on the threshold, his nose to the crack at the bottom of the door, and waited. He heard the murmur of speech.

Once he caught the Mistress' voice—changed and muffled



and with a puzzling new note in it—but undeniably the Mistress'. And his tail thumped hopefully on the hall floor. But no one came to let him in. And, after the mandate to keep out, he dared not scratch for admittance.

The doctor almost stumbled across the couchant body of the dog as he left the room with the Master. Being a dog owner himself, the doctor understood and his narrow escape from a fall over the living obstacle did not irritate him. But it reminded him of something.

"Those other dogs of yours outside there," he said to the Master, as they went down the stairs, "raised a fearful racket when my car came down the drive, just now. Better send them all away somewhere till she is better. The house must be kept perfectly quiet."

The Master looked back, up the stairway; at its top, pressed close against the Mistress' door, crouched Lad. Something in the dog's heartbroken attitude touched him.

"I'll send them over to the boarding kennels in the morning," he answered. "All except Lad. He and I are going to see this through, together. He'll be quiet, if I tell him to."

All through the endless night, while the October wind howled and yelled around the house, Lad lay outside the sickroom door, his nose between his absurdly small white paws, his sorrowful eyes wide open, his ears alert for the faintest sound from the room beyond.

Sometimes, when the wind screamed its loudest, Lad would lift his head—his ruff abristle, his teeth glinting from under his upcurled lip. And he would growl a throaty menace. It was as though he heard, in the tempest's racket, the strife of evil gale spirits about to burst in through the rattling windows and attack the stricken Mistress. Perhaps—well, perhaps there are things visible and audible to dogs, to which humans are blind and deaf. Or perhaps there are not.

Lad was there when day broke and when the Master,

heavy-eyed from sleeplessness, came out. He was there when the other dogs were herded into the car and carried away to the boarding kennels.

Lad was there when the car came back from the station, bringing to The Place an angular, wooden-faced woman with yellow hair and a yellower suitcase—a horrible woman who vaguely smelt of disinfectants and of rigid Efficiency, and who presently approached the sickroom, clad and capped in stiff white. Lad hated her.

He was there when the doctor came for his morning visit to the invalid. And again he tried to edge his own way into the room, only to be rebuffed once more.

"This is the third time I've nearly broken my neck over that miserable dog," chidingly announced the nurse, later in the day, as she came out of the room and chanced to meet the Master on the landing. "Do please drive him away. *I've* tried to do it, but he only snarls at me. And in a dangerous case like this—"

"Leave him alone," briefly ordered the Master.

But when the nurse, sniffing, passed on, he called Lad over to him. Reluctantly, the dog quitted the door and obeyed the summons.

"Quiet!" ordered the Master, speaking very slowly and distinctly. "You must keep quiet. *Quiet!* Understand?"

Lad understood. Lad always understood. He must not bark. He must move silently. He must make no unnecessary sound. But, at least, the Master had not forbidden him to snarl softly and loathingly at that detestable white-clad woman every time she stepped over him.

So there was one grain of comfort.

Gently, the Master called him downstairs and across the living room, and put him out of the house. For, after all, a shaggy eighty-pound dog is an inconvenience stretched across a sickroom doorsill.

Three minutes later, Lad had made his way through an open window into the cellar and thence upstairs; and was stretched out, head between paws, at the threshold of the Mistress' room.

On his thrice-a-day visits, the doctor was forced to step over him, and was man enough to forbear to curse. Twenty times a day, the nurse stumbled over his massive, inert body, and fumed in impotent rage. The Master, too, came back and forth from the sickroom, with now and then a kindly word for the suffering collie, and again and again put him out of the house.

But always Lad managed, by hook or crook, to be back on guard within a minute or two. And never once did the door of the Mistress' room open that he did not make a strenuous attempt to enter.

Servants, nurse, doctor, and Master repeatedly forgot he was there, and stubbed their toes across his body. Sometimes their feet drove agonizingly into his tender flesh. But never a whimper or growl did the pain wring from him. "Quiet!" had been the command, and he was obeying.

And so it went on, through the awful days and the infinitely worse nights. Except when he was ordered away by the Master, Lad would not stir from his place at the door. And not even the Master's authority could keep him away from it for five minutes a day.

The dog ate nothing, drank practically nothing, took no exercise; moved not one inch, of his own will, from the doorway. In vain did the glories of autumn woods call to him. The rabbits would be thick, out yonder in the forest, just now. So would the squirrels—against which Lad had long since sworn a blood feud (and one of which it had ever been his futile life ambition to catch).

For him, these things no longer existed. Nothing existed; except his mortal hatred of the unseen Something in that

forbidden room—the Something that was seeking to take the Mistress away with It. He yearned unspeakably to be in that room to guard her from her nameless Peril. And they would not let him in—these humans.

Wherefore he lay there, crushing his body close against the door and—waiting.

And, inside the room, Death and the Napoleonic man with the black bag fought their “no-quarter” duel for the life of the still, little white figure in the great white bed.

One night, the doctor did not go home at all. Toward dawn the Master lurched out of the room and sat down for a moment on the stairs, his face in his hands. Then and then only, during all that time of watching, did Lad leave the doorsill of his own accord.

Shaky with famine and weariness, he got to his feet, moaning softly, and crept over to the Master; he lay down beside him, his huge head athwart the man’s knees; his muzzle reaching timidly toward the tight-clenched hands.

Presently the Master went back into the sickroom. And Lad was left alone in the darkness—to wonder and to listen and to wait. With a tired sigh he returned to the door and once more took up his heartsick vigil.

Then—on a golden morning, days later, the doctor came and went with the look of a Conqueror. Even the wooden-faced nurse forgot to grunt in disgust when she stumbled across the dog’s body. She almost smiled. And presently the Master came out through the doorway. He stopped at sight of Lad, and turned back into the room. Lad could hear him speak. And he heard a dear, *dear* voice make answer; very weakly, but no longer in that muffled and foreign tone which had so frightened him. Then came a sentence the dog could understand.

“Come in, old friend,” said the Master, opening the door and standing aside for Lad to enter.

At a bound, the collie was in the room. There lay the Mistress. She was very thin, very white, very feeble. But she was there. The dread Something had lost the battle.

Lad wanted to break forth into a peal of ecstatic barking that would have deafened everyone in the room. The Master read the wish and interposed.

"Quiet!"

Lad heard. He controlled the yearning. But it cost him a world of will power to do it. As sedately as he could force himself to move, he crossed to the bed.

The Mistress was smiling at him. One hand was stretched weakly forth to stroke him. And she was saying almost in a whisper, "Lad! Laddie!"

That was all. But her hand was petting him in the dear way he loved so well. And the Master was telling her all over again how the dog had watched outside her door. Lad listened—not to the man's praise, but to the woman's caressing whisper—and he quivered from head to tail. He fought furiously with himself once again, to choke back the rapturous barking that clamored for utterance. He knew this was no time for noise. Even without the word of warning, he would have known it. For the Mistress was whispering. Even the Master was speaking scarce louder.

But one thing Lad realized: the black danger was past. The Mistress was alive! And the whole house was smiling. That was enough. And the yearning to show, in noise, his own wild relief, was all but irresistible. Then the Master said:

"Run on, Lad. You can come back by-and-by."

And the dog gravely made his way out of the room and out of the house.

The minute he was out of doors, he proceeded to go crazy. Nothing but sheer mania could excuse his actions during the rest of that day. They were unworthy of a mon-



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