PETER

CLARENCE HAWKES

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The Story of Little Stoutheart

"Rats!" Cried Mr. Browning.—*Page 176.*

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The Story of Little Stoutheart

BY

CLARENCE HAWKES

Illustrated by

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PETER

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TO EVERY DOG-LOVER WHO READS THIS BOOK AND LOVES PETER, THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

TO MY LITTLE FOX TERRIER

How we love you, little Stoutheart,
With your winsome, playful ways,
Filling all the house with gladness,
Cheering all the darksome days.

You are such a Little Joker,
Playing pranks upon your folks,
Hiding shoes and gloves and brushes,
Making laughter with your jokes.

If a cloud hangs o'er the household,
You will always find it out,
And with funny doggish capers,
Help to put the grief to rout.

If good fortune comes to greet us,
It is mirrored in your glee,
You are just a small dog echo
Of our joy and misery.

And you know just how to comfort,
Place your nose within my hand,
Tell me that a dog is sorry,
And a dog can understand.

How your generous spirit shames me,
Puts to blush my meagre own,
Loving without thought of profit,
Sharing e'en a scanty bone.

Fighting for your friends and household,
Giving all your strength and breath,
Standing steadfast in great danger,
Fighting even unto death.

Could I find a friend so faithful
'Midst the human friends I know,
I would prize him as a jewel,
And I'd never let him go.

Little Stoutheart, in my bosom
Beats a love and pride in you,
Which will stay with me forever,
Just as you yourself are true.

And if through the gates of Heaven,
I shall never see your face,
It will be a lonesome landscape,
And no Heaven in the place.

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INTRODUCTION

WITHOUT THE GATE

"WITHOUT are dogs" is a statement in the Revelation of St. John that is often quoted to prove that the so-called lower animals have neither part nor parcel in man's immortality, and that when he says good-bye to them in this earthly life it is for all time. The argument that is usually given in support of this line of reasoning is that since the human soul is the whole of man that survives death and the grave, and since the animals are not possessed of souls, they cannot, of course, experience immortality.

This argument at once raises the point as to just what man's soul is and what its

component parts are. They are usually described as faith, hope, trust, fidelity, and love. These attributes are supposed to lift man above his human level and make him godlike. Thus he escapes annihilation. But do not such animals as dogs often manifest the same qualities, and if they are evidence of a soul in man, why not in the lower animals?

Job once said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Such faith as this is much more often the faith of a dog than it is the faith of a human being. Many a surgeon could testify, if he would, that the dog on the vivisection table, which he sent to an untimely end, licked his hand as a last act of love before he went out into the great dark.

Who that has looked into the fear-filled eyes of an old dog as he neared his end has not appreciated his fear and horror

of the unknown before him, and the lingering hope of good to come that was entirely human in its pathos? Few mortals trust as does a dog his master. He is as sure of his master as he is of the fact that he lives and breathes. In this one person his sun rises and sets. No matter how sorry a mortal he may be, yet he is all in all to the faithful dog.

As for fidelity, that is just another name for dog. He is faithful and true as few mortals know how to be, giving all and asking nothing, willing and glad to serve, because it is his nature to be faithful.

As for love, few human beings know how to love with the constancy of a dog. Fame, position, and creed or color matter nothing to him if you are his master. You are the one person in the whole world for whom he would lay down his life, and

we are told on high authority that this is the greatest test of love.

It is no sign because an animal walks on four legs and man on two that the man is more upright than the animal. We cannot differentiate in that way. In the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians we read:

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds."

Ernest Bell, editor of *Animal's Friend,* a valuable magazine published in London, gives in "An After-life for Animals" strong arguments to prove that there is a life beyond for the lower animals that possess intelligent souls.

Agassiz, the greatest scientist we have

ever had on this continent, and a man of profound religious convictions, was a firm believer in some future life for lower animals. He says: "Most of the arguments of philosophy in favor of the immortality of man apply equally to the permanency of the immortal principle in other living beings."

Mrs. Mary Somerville, who was a member of the philosophical societies and academies of science both in England and in Germany, and who was noted, the world over, for her scientific knowledge and womanly virtues, when speaking on the subject of death, said: "I firmly believe that the living principle is never extinguished. I am sincerely happy to find that I am not alone in believing in the immortality of the lower animals."

Miss Frances Power Cobbe, of England, a noted writer, says: "I will venture

to say plainly that, so far as appears to me, there is no possible solution that the existence of animals ends at death. It is absolutely necessary to postulate a future life for the tortured dog, cat, or horse, if we would escape the unbearable conclusion that a sentient creature, unoffending, nay, incapable of giving offense, has been given by the great Creator an existence which, on the whole, has been a curse. That conclusion would be blasphemy. Rejecting it with all the energy of our souls, we find ourselves logically driven to assume the future life of lower animals."

Reverend J. G. Wood, author of "Man and Beast," says: "I feel sure that animals will have the opportunity of developing their latent faculties in the next world, though their free scope has been denied them in the short time of their existence

in the present world. They surpass many human beings in love, unselfishness, generosity, conscience, and self-sacrifice. I claim for them a higher status in creation than is generally attributed to them, and claim they have a future life in which they can be fully compensated for the suffering which so many of them have to undergo in this world."

If any more witnesses are needed in behalf of the dumb animals, we might summon to the witness stand Plutarch, Huxley, Darwin, Matthew Arnold, Richard Wagner, Sir Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, Martin Luther, Gladstone, all of whom have been willing and glad to give the dumb animals a place in a future life.

As for me, heaven will be a dreary place if I cannot look out through its gates, provided I ever get inside, and

see a goodly company of faithful dog friends disporting themselves on the grass outside. I should also expect to see a little black saddle-horse come trotting across the celestial meadows to the pearly gates and stick his nose inside to rub his face affectionately against my arm or to search in my pocket for lumps of sugar.

I do not think there is any great advantage in jasper pavements, which would at least be hard on the feet, but I would much prefer green grass, and running brooks, and friendly trees, and the old sweet friendship of all the so-called lower animals that, on earth, had been my friends indeed.

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CHAPTER I

THE MISTRESS MEETS A GENTLEMAN

Mr. and Mrs. Browning were sitting in the large sunny living-room at Sunshine Cottage where a pleasant wood fire made the room cosy and comfortable, although it was dreary and quite desolate outside. On this afternoon, fast-moving wind clouds were scudding across a dark November sky, while their counterparts, great dark shadows, ran rapidly across the landscape. The boisterous wind was kicking up showers of leaves and sending them scurrying across the common of the

broad street in Shadyville. The great elms were lifting their arms pathetically toward heaven, imploring, as it were, with their leafless palms for the return of sunshine and warmth. Bird Acre, which had been so attractive in summer time, so beautiful with flowers, and so vocal with birds, was nearly forsaken. A few sparrows and starlings chirped and scolded in the pear trees, while a large bed of chrysanthemums was all that remained of the flowers. Even though it was cold and rather forbidding outside, yet in the living-room it was quite the opposite, for the bottled sunshine in an oak log on the grate was radiating through the room.

Mrs. Browning sat by the fireside reading in a woman's magazine, while her husband sat in his easy-chair close to the center table. He was supposed to be thinking up a plot for a new book. Pres-

ently he reached over to the table and picked up a book and turned its pages abstractedly. His forehead was knit in a frown of perplexity. Then Mrs. Browning looked up.

"What are you thinking of, Lawrence?" she asked. "You look as though you were trying to unravel some knotty problem. What is it? A penny for your thoughts."

"They are not worth it," replied the man. "I do not like to express any but cheerful thoughts, and these are rather somber ones."

"Well, never mind, let's have them," returned the woman. "I guess I can endure it. What were you puzzling over?"

"Well," returned Mr. Browning, slowly thumbing the pages of his book, "I was just wondering where little Dannie is."

"Wondering where he is," exclaimed Mrs. Browning incredulously. "You ought to know if anybody does. You helped the boys dig his grave under the sweet-apple tree, and helped them put him in it, and I covered him with flowers. Then we all stood around while he was buried. He is out in the orchard, of course. Why did you ask such a foolish thing?"

"I'm not so sure it is foolish," returned the man. "I am not at all sure he is out there. Of course, we buried the little house he used to live in. It wasn't fit for him to inhabit any longer. But as for him, I do not really believe we could bury him, not the real Dannie. He was more than a dog. He was a personality, a character, an expression of friendship, fidelity, and love, and we cannot bury such things, can we?"

"Well, I don't know that we could," returned the woman, "if we look at it in that way. I wasn't even thinking of those things. Guess I must have been thinking of the little house. Of course that was buried."

Mrs. Browning resumed her book, and her husband his cogitations, and perfect silence reigned in the room for fifteen minutes. Finally the woman arose.

"I am not going to stay around here straining my brains over any such abstract proposition as that," she said at last. "I am going to get out the car and go to Meadowdale. Don't you want to come?"

"I guess not to-day," replied Mr. Browning. "I have some work to do. You go ahead, and I will try to write the first chapter of that book. I must get started if I am ever going to do it."

Half an hour later the car rolled out of

the yard, and Mr. Browning sat down before the typewriter. He placed several sheets of paper on the corner of the desk close by. He intended to write a long chapter, but instead he put one sheet into the machine and then sat thinking for a considerable time. Finally he began writing slowly, a line at a time, and then stopping to think. But at last he removed the paper from the typewriter and gave it up. He could not write that day.

Instead, he went out into the kitchen and took down a forlorn empty little dog collar which hung on a nail in one corner of the room. He carried it back into the study and sat down in the easy-chair, sadly fondling the collar. It was the one thing that reminded him most poignantly of little Dannie, for it had gone with him spring, summer, autumn, and winter, on the trot and on the gallop, up and down

the streets of Shadyville, and across Bird Acre, into the house and out. And the tin tag on the collar was the sign that little Dannie had been licensed to live another year in this rushing, hurrying world where there are so many perils to dogs.

As Mr. Browning sat in his chair fingering the dog collar, that last tragic night a month ago came back to him in all its pathetic details. There had been an accident two days before. A baker's car while backing out of the back yard had run over little Dannie's hind leg as he lay munching a bone under the rosebush. There had been an agonized cry, and he had rushed about the yard shrieking pathetically. But as he had been an old dog and had been troubled with rheumatism for a year or two, it was not known at the time whether any serious damage

had been done or not, for after a little his cries of distress had ceased. He had not seemed to be in great pain, so the master and mistress had nursed him themselves without summoning a veterinary.

For two days they had hovered over him day and night. But on the third evening Mr. Browning heard him whimpering pathetically in his kennel in the cellar close to the furnace, so he went down to see him. The dog seemed to be in great pain, and nothing that the devoted master and mistress could do helped for long, so finally the veterinary was sent for. He had seen almost at a glance that the hip was broken, although it had not been apparent to the dog's friends, even in two days.

"I am very sorry," he said, "but there isn't a single thing you can do. He is an old dog, anyhow, and the only possible

thing to do is just to put him to sleep. He never will know what happens."

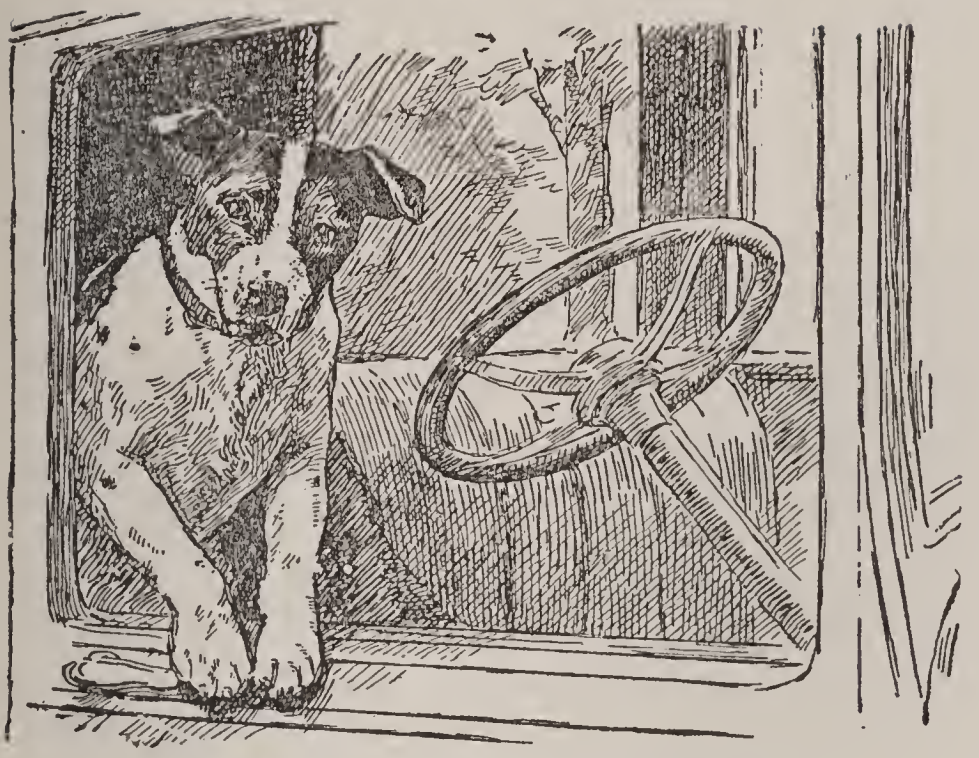
A hurried consultation of the master and mistress had approved this plan, tragic as it seemed. The kind doctor made his preparations, but he had no help from the man and woman. For Mr. Browning put on his hat and hurried up the street to the market, where he and little Dannie had often gone together. The mistress went out in the orchard as far from the house as she could get and still not trespass on her neighbors. Five minutes later the man and the woman stole back to the house, hardly daring to return, yet knowing that they must, for there were other things to do for little Dannie.

"He went to sleep like a baby," said the doctor. "You didn't need to leave the place. The distressed look on his face

is gone. The only thing to do now is to get another dog."

This was the pathetic scene which Mr. Browning rehearsed as he sat in his easy-chair fingering the dog collar. Finally he went back to the kitchen and returned it to the nail, but as he hung it up he asked himself once more, "Where is little Dannie?" It was impossible that all his love, fidelity, and friendship had been lost, for such things do not die. Like all other things that are good and true, they are immortal.

Meanwhile Mrs. Browning was meeting with an adventure. Arriving at Meadowdale, she turned the car off Main Street into one of the side streets and parked it about a hundred feet from the main thoroughfare. After having hung her shopping bag upon her arm and locked the car, she started back to Main



"HALT! WHO GOES THERE?"

Street. But she had taken only a few steps when her attention was arrested by a sharp, imperative, staccato bark. The bark was like a sentry's challenge. It seemed to say: "Halt! Stop! Who goes there?"

So she turned about to see who was accosting her in this peremptory manner. Standing on the front seat of the car next to hers was the brightest-eyed, most alert fox terrier she had ever seen. He was

looking at her in an appraising manner as though he were trying to determine what sort of person she was.

"Hello, Mr. Dog," exclaimed Mrs. Browning, who was always ready to scrape an acquaintance with a friendly dog. But as she approached the machine and laid her hand on the window sill the watchman inside became fairly frantic and jumped up and down like a jack-in-the-box, barking and growling prodigiously.

His whole manner seemed to say: "What are you doing, lady? Take your hand off my mistress' car and go away. Don't you see I am guarding it while she is gone?"

His outcry was so persistent that Mrs. Browning backed away.

"You needn't make such a fuss, Mr. Dog," she said. "I don't want to steal

your old car. I have one of my own, but I know it is all right. You are a good little watchman."

The watchman cocked his head on one side and listened intently as though he were trying to make out what she was saying to him. The conciliatory tone evidently satisfied him, for he at once calmed down and became most friendly.

So Mrs. Browning finally took leave of him and went about her business, almost forgetting him in the excitement of shopping. But when she returned to the street to look for her car, the first thing she noticed was the little watchman still peering out of the window, but this time he was looking wistfully toward a certain store door right opposite the car. Just as Mrs. Browning espied him, the store door in question opened and a young woman came hurriedly out. At sight of her he

bounced up and down barking in a frenzy of delight.

"That's a bright little dog you have," remarked Mrs. Browning as she passed the car. "He was quite belligerent when I addressed him to-day, but finally he became more friendly."

"Yes," returned the woman, "when I leave him to guard the car he is all importance. If any one comes near it, he makes a great fuss. If any one should try to get inside, he would do his best to eat him up. But he is really the most loving, gentle little dog of his breed that I ever knew. He thinks the world of his folks, and that is why he is so anxious to guard the car. I wish we could keep him always, but I am afraid we shall have to find a new home for him. You see, my little niece is coming to live with me. She is only a year old, and it would break

Peter's heart to see anybody taking the love he thinks belongs to him. I never saw such a jealous little chap as he is. He has to be the whole show. Not that he wants anything for himself, but he just wants to be *it*."

"We have just lost our little dog," returned Mrs. Browning, "but Mr. Browning is very fussy about the kind of dog he has. I am afraid this little fellow would not do. He is very particular about having a dog with a tail. He says a dog talks with his tail, and that it is as wicked to cut off a dog's tail as it would be to cut a man's tongue out."

"I do so wish you could take him," returned Peter's mistress. "He is such a dear little chap I know you would learn to like him. You couldn't help it, because he would love you so much that you would have to love him in return."

"Well," said Mrs. Browning doubtfully, "I don't know. I will mention it to Mr. Browning, and if you happen to be going through Shadyville you might stop and let him see the dog."

Mrs. Browning very wisely said nothing of her adventure until supper was nearly through, and then she remarked casually:

"I had an adventure to-day. I saw something interesting over at Meadowdale."

"Is that so?" inquired Mr. Browning. "What was your adventure?"

"I saw a dog," replied the mistress, "and he was the brightest little rogue I have seen in many a day. At first he wanted to eat me up for putting my hand on his mistress' car, but finally I pacified him."

"I don't see how seeing a dog was

an adventure," replied Mr. Browning. "There are always a dozen or two walking up and down Main Street. I should have thought you would have seen twenty."

"Oh, yes, I did see a lot of them," replied Mrs. Browning, "but this was the only one I noticed especially. He was as bright as a new dollar. I haven't seen such an intelligent little dog in years."

"What breed was he?" asked the man becoming interested in spite of himself.

"A fox terrier," replied Mrs. Browning, "and he is a great little dog."

"He is not my kind," returned the man. "I wouldn't give a dog house-room that hasn't a good tail to wag when I talk to him. You know, a dog always talks to me with his tail. The tail is half of the dog to me. Your fox terrier wouldn't do at all."

"You talk as though I had proposed him for us," replied the mistress. "I told you of him because his owner, Mrs. Hodges, says they have got to find a home for him. It would be a great pity for him to go into bad hands."

"You didn't say anything about his coming here, did you?" asked Mr. Browning suspiciously. "I am not going to have another dog for a long time. It hurts too much when you lose one, besides there aren't any more such dogs as Dannie."

"Why," replied Mrs. Browning, "I merely mentioned that we had lost our dog. The lady said she would be driving through some day and might stop and let you see him. That is all."

"Well, it won't be any use," replied Mr. Browning. "A dog without a tail is like Hamlet with Hamlet left out. If I

am going to have a dog, I want a whole one. It won't do any good for this little chap to call. I don't want him."

It is very dangerous to prophesy or to say what one will, or will not do, when a child or a dog is in question, for one may find himself gripped by an unseen force, and compelled to do the very thing he had determined not to do.

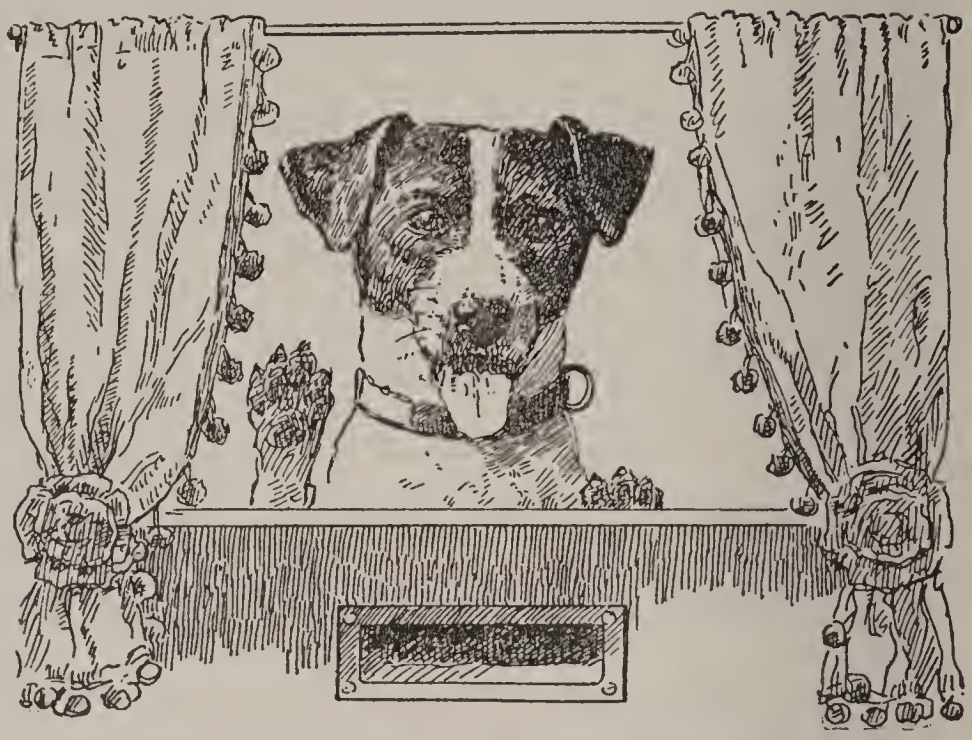
CHAPTER II

A NEW DOG COMES TO BIRD ACRE

About a week after the Brownings' conversation over the teacups relative to a new dog, an automobile drew up on the green before Sunshine Cottage. One of its doors opened, and the most eager, alert fox terrier that Mrs. Browning thought she had ever seen sprang out of the car. But he immediately turned about and waited expectantly for some one to follow him. When a young lady finally alighted, Mrs. Browning, who was looking out of the long window in the living-room, saw at once it was Mrs. Hodges and her dog that she had met in Meadowdale the week before.

As soon as Mrs. Hodges looked toward Sunshine Cottage, the dog, that was watching her every movement, saw the direction of her gaze and started up the path toward the house, bounding along like a rubber ball. His legs seemed to be just steel springs that shot him into the air whenever his paws touched Mother Earth. He ran so aerially that he seemed more like a sprite of a dog than a real flesh-and-blood canine. When he came to the four stone steps leading up to the piazza, he took them in a single bound, and, with another great jump which brought his head on a level with the window in the top of the front door, peeked in at the surprised inhabitants of Sunshine Cottage.

For a second, Mrs. Browning saw his eager little face framed in the window of the front door, and then his four paws



HE PEEKED IN AT THE INHABITANTS

made a resounding bump on the piazza as he fell backward. But such gymnastics were nothing to him, and he was up like a flash.

"Here, here, Peter," admonished his mistress. "You mustn't go about peeking into people's windows in that way. They might not like it. They might think you were inquisitive."

This mild rebuke had the desired effect, and it was a very demure little dog that

stood by the lady's side when Mrs. Browning opened the front door to greet them.

"Come right in, Mrs. Hodges," she said. "I saw you drive up. I see you have brought Peter along."

"I had to; he won't let the car go out of the yard unless he is in it. It would break his heart if I went off and left him, so he had to come. Besides I wanted your husband to see him."

When his mistress had seated herself in an easy chair, her companion and protector took up his position by her side, looking rather indifferently at Mrs. Browning and the master of Sunshine Cottage, who had just entered the room.

"I wouldn't think of parting with him for the world," explained Mrs. Hodges, "but, as I told your wife the other day, a little girl is coming to live with me, and I don't think Peter would stand for it."

"It is too bad he hasn't a tail," said Mr. Browning, after a pause, "but that is not his fault. He seems to be a nice little fellow, and I presume I should like him aside from that."

"If you could see more of him, you wouldn't mind that," returned Peter's mistress. "He talks all over, with his eyes, his ears, his nose, and his whole quivering body. I just don't know what I am going to do without him. But I don't see how I can keep him."

There was a little sob at the end of the sentence, and her sympathetic companion at once noticed it. He put his paws up on her knees and looked straight into her face. Then something bright and shiny coursed down her cheek and fell on the dog's upturned head. This was too much for the sympathetic heart, and he sprang into her lap and licked the moisture from

her cheek. His concern was surprising when one remembered that he was just a dog.

"That is just like Peter," said his mistress, giving him a big squeeze. "He always wants to comfort us when we feel bad. He is just a big bundle of love."

"I wish he would come over and let me put my hand on his head," said Mr. Browning. "I should like to see what he feels like."

After considerable coaxing, Peter came over to the man's side and allowed him to touch his head, but only for a second or two, when he was warned by a low growl not to take too many liberties that time.

"You must not mind his growling," said Mrs. Hodges; "that is his way of talking. He doesn't mean anything by it. He even growls at me sometimes."

For fifteen minutes the Brownings and

Peter's mistress talked over the possibilities of his coming to Bird Acre, and all the time he sat on the floor beside Mrs. Hodges, listening intently to every word that was said.

"He knows we are talking about him," said the mistress, "but I wonder if he appreciates how important this conversation may be in his life. I have got to go away next week, and I wish you would let me leave him here on trial. I am sure you will not be disappointed in him."

Mr. Browning finally consented, rather grudgingly, as his memories of Dannie were still very vivid and he hated to see a usurper in the old dog's place. But at last he agreed that they would take Peter for a week.

"Just on trial, you know," reminded Mr. Browning as Mrs. Hodges prepared to go.

She smiled and said, "Yes," but her smile meant more to Mrs. Browning than the monosyllable had. It seemed to say to her, "You just leave him to Peter, and if Peter doesn't have his own way with him, then I lose my guess."

Accordingly on Wednesday evening, the night before Thanksgiving Day, the automobile again stopped before Sunshine Cottage and Peter and his mistress came inside.

"I don't just know how we are going to work it," she said. "I am afraid he will make a terrible fuss when I am gone. He is so attached to his folks."

"Does he ever go down cellar?" inquired Mr. Browning.

"Yes, often, with my husband," returned the lady. "He thinks the cellar a great place for rats. He is always hunting them."

"You take him down cellar, Betty," said Mr. Browning. "You were going down now to look after the furnace, anyway, and while he is rat-hunting, Mrs. Hodges can make her get-away."

So Mrs. Browning led the way to the cellar crying "Rats!" to Peter, who at once became much excited and followed, all eagerness to take a hand in his favorite sport. Down the cellar stairs he raced, and for fifteen minutes was wholly occupied with nosing into all the dark corners and smelling in every hole where a rat might be hiding. Finally he seemed to remember something, and looked up the cellar stairs and then at Mrs. Browning to see if she were about ready to leave the cellar.

He came bounding up the stairs ahead of her, and searched about in every room for his mistress, but she was nowhere to be

found. As the minutes went by and his search became more frantic, his eyes grew wide with fear which soon changed to pathetic wistfulness. They almost seemed to be clouded with tears.

Presently he went and looked at the door and then came back and stood in front of Mr. Browning, growling at him most belligerently.

He seemed to be saying: "You wicked man! You locked the door. You let me out this minute. I want to go to my mistress."

"I'm awfully sorry, old boy," said Mr. Browning. "I couldn't help it. She had to go," and he reached out his hands to comfort the distraught dog. But this only increased Peter's growls.

Then he went and stood before Mrs. Browning, growling at her also. She might be easier to intimidate than the man

had been, but Mrs. Browning could only talk comfortingly to him. Neither opened the hateful door that had closed behind his beloved mistress.

Finally, when his frenzy had somewhat abated, the Brownings took the bag stuffed with camel's hair which had been brought in with him for his bed, and put it in a warm place behind the kitchen stove. But he would not lie down; instead he took the bag in his teeth and turned it over and over, as though the way it had been placed did not suit him.

Then Mrs. Browning offered him some warm milk and fresh meat, but he turned his head away wearily. He was too heart-sick and frightened to eat. All that evening the master and mistress of Sunshine Cottage tried to pacify him, but to no purpose. The light of his world had gone out, and for that day and many to

come he was a wretched, heartbroken little dog.

When the master or the mistress tried to put their hands on him and pet him, he would back away and growl admonishingly. He seemed to be saying: "Please don't touch me. You see, I don't belong to you, and I cannot let anybody caress me but my own folks. You know how it is."

Most of his time for the next week he spent sitting in a bay window watching the automobiles which came from Meadowdale. If there was one that looked like the car of his mistress he became much excited, but when it usually rushed through the town on its way to some distant point, the look of joy that had momentarily lighted up his face would give way to its habitual expression of wistfulness and longing.

The Brownings did not try to force their friendship upon him, for they knew it would be useless, but in many little ways they tried to make him understand that they were his friends. Yet the progress was so slow that they were often discouraged.

One night the mistress had to go to a lecture, and Mr. Browning to a banquet where he was to make a speech, and the new dog was left alone in the big house. But he was made very comfortable on the best sofa in the living-room and did not seem to mind having his new friends go.

Mr. Browning was the first to return that night, and when he unlocked the front door he heard the new dog jump down from the couch and trot into the hall, in a very businesslike manner, to see who had come.

"Hello, Peter," said the man cheerily.

"Were you a good dog while I was gone?"

Peter opened his mouth very wide and said, "Ow-ow-o-o-o," which means in dog language, Yes.

After depositing his coat and hat in the hall, Mr. Browning sat down in his easy-chair to rest, and to his surprise Peter came shyly toward him. He advanced until he could rest his nose upon the man's knees, then without saying as much as by your leave he fairly catapulted into Mr. Browning's lap, nor did the demonstration stop there. For he rubbed his face up and down on the man's coat, first on the right side and then on the left, and ended by showering the master's hands and face with dog kisses, all the time uttering little half-choking sobs of joy.

"Why, you poor little beggar," exclaimed the man, stroking the dog's head

and fondling his ears gently in a way that dogs like. "You poor little beggar, I believe you are half-starved for love."

Peter certainly was craving some one to pet and love him, and he and Mr. Browning made up for all the time they had lost during the past week.

Presently the mistress entered, and as soon as she had taken off her wraps and seated herself Peter rushed at her and bounded into her lap with such agility that he gave her a great start. She, too, came in for a shower of dog kisses on her hands and face, and Peter was not satisfied until she had cuddled and hugged him for at least five minutes.

"What in the world has come over him?" she inquired of Mr. Browning. "He is not the same dog he was when we left."

"As nearly as I can make out," re-

turned the man, "it means that we are adopted. We aren't orphans any more. The old friends have been tried in the balance and found wanting. Peter had to have some one to love, so he has adopted us. I think he will be a great dog from now on." And the prophecy was a true one.

CHAPTER III

GETTING ACQUAINTED

PETER always was a man's dog, yet this did not prevent his expressing a gentleness and consideration for his mistress which was often touching and very beautiful to behold. Yet he best loved the "rough-house" in which he and Mr. Browning sometimes participated when both were feeling in a hilarious mood. But Peter never took liberties with either his master or his mistress.

He was much larger than the average fox terrier, for he weighed anywhere from twenty-two to twenty-five pounds according to the time of year. But there never was any superfluous fat on his body, and his muscles were always like whipcord.

This was because he was so energetic and did so much running and jumping and was so ready to frolic with the other dogs.

He was black-and-white with small tan dots above each eye. His back from the shoulders to the rump was covered with a glossy black satin blanket. He was white beneath, with specks of black here and there. His bosom shirt was always white as driven snow when he had not been rolling in the mud with another dog. He had four white paws and a white tip on his tail. His eyes were black, but they changed color when he was excited or angry or pleased. Mrs. Browning often said that one could have lit a match on one of Peter's eyes when he was angry, but she never tried it, so I am not sure as to that.

The mistress also said that she thought Peter was inclined to carry a chip on his

shoulder, but Mr. Browning said that he merely carried himself as any self-respecting, high-spirited dog should. A dog that knew his own worth and wanted to be sure that all other canines recognized it as well.

Once he had broken his reserve and given himself fully to the Brownings, it was astonishing how quickly Peter became the very heart and soul of the household. He was an unending reservoir of good spirits, in fact, Mr. Browning called him the little joker, for when he chose he was a sort of dog comedian, doing all sorts of stunts to entertain and cheer up his friends.

The first morning after the adoption of the Browning family into his heart Peter gave an exhibition of dog hilariousness that fairly took his friends' breath away, since he had been so demure for the week

before. He had found a piece of cornstalk in the garden and with one end of it in his mouth he ran about Bird Acre in a way that made his new master and mistress fairly dizzy. He would shake up the cornstalk as though it had been a very lively enemy, then he would throw it over his head and catch it as it came down, next he would spin around and around using the cornstalk as a pivot, and all the time he kept up a pandemonium of barking and growling. All good-natured, of course, just a bit of dog tomfoolery.

Peter early evinced a fondness for the radio. Whenever the master turned it on, he would take up his position on one side of the magic box which held such a strange medley of sounds, both secular and sacred. Peter was always on hand Sunday morning when the family gathered around the radio for church services.

JUST A BIT OF DOG TOMFOOLERY

If, like some other good Christians, he occasionally dozed during the sermon he was very excusable, for he always roused himself when the benediction was pronounced and was ready to listen to the concluding hymn. In this particular he was also like some other sleepy Christians.

As soon as the services were over, he would look out of the window to see if any strange dogs were trespassing on

Bird Acre, or if any of his own particular pals were waiting for him under the pear tree to make a Sunday morning call.

If the casual glance through the window had convinced him that the trespasser was an enemy, he usually took the distance across the study and through the dining-room in about four jumps, when he would leap up and down in front of the back door barking frantically until somebody let him out. If the trespasser were a dog of about his own size, he usually fled before they came to grips, as this bouncing, barking catapult was enough to strike terror into the heart of a much larger dog.

If, on the other hand, the trespasser were a large dog, Peter adopted entirely different tactics. He would pirouette about him, advancing and retreating, snapping and feinting, and barking so

vociferously that the stranger finally concluded that there were two small furies attacking him instead of one, and what normal dog wants to stand off two dogs, even though they are somewhat smaller than he? So the intruder usually retreated after a short running battle.

Then Peter would return to the house all importance and excitement. His whole manner seemed to say: "I hustled that brute off the place in short order. I guess he won't be bothering us again."

Early in his stay at Sunshine Cottage, Peter had noticed that Mr. Browning's eyes were different from those of other people. The large clouded glasses which he wore were quite an enigma to the dog. He would sit upon the floor beside the master, looking up at those strange eyes for fifteen minutes at a time and always with an expression of sympathy and trou-

ble on his face. He had also discovered that the man did not move about as freely from room to room as did the mistress, for he would sometimes bump into the furniture or collide with a door that had been left partly ajar. So Peter began walking behind the master as he moved about the house, keeping his nose against the man's leg and pushing him in the direction he imagined he wanted to go.

With such a helper, Mr. Browning quite frequently was guided into the wrong room when he would have found the right one himself if left alone, but it is the spirit that counts, and the fact that the new dog wanted to help him and had noticed his weakness so touched the man's heart that he permitted this help, and gave Peter the additional name of the little pusher.

During the cold winter months when

Mr. Browning walked on the piazza for exercise, Peter was always on hand. Side by side they would go up and down the piazza, marching like good soldiers and the great pals they were. This would go on for perhaps ten or fifteen minutes, Peter turning at the end of the piazza each time just as the master did, until Peter's bright eyes espied another dog coming on the place. Then soldiering was forgotten, and he would rush off the piazza with a great jump and loud barks to determine whether the intruder were friend or foe.

Later on in the spring when these morning constitutionals were transferred to the sidewalk, Peter was again in line, marching up and down with his master. But now that it was warm and there were so many interesting things in the great out-of-door world to see, he was not so

faithful to the soldiering as he had been on the piazza.

There was another interesting place where Peter and the master spent many happy hours together. This was in the cellar where the master sawed and split kindling for the kitchen stove and the furnace, while Peter hunted rats or entertained his master with a sham battle between a dog and an old shoe. This battle was often so strenuous and hilarious that the man laughed heartily in spite of himself. He finally made this sham battle one of Peter's most astonishing tricks that he performed whenever they had callers. The master would take an old shoe or even a stick and say to Peter, "Now just show the people what you would do to this shoe if it were a woodchuck." With a strong accent on the chuck.

Without any further instructions, the

dog would grab the offending footwear and shake it and worry it until the assembled company were provoked into peals of laughter. This appreciation of his trick greatly pleased the vain Peter, for he was very much of a play actor and enjoyed the plaudits of the crowd as well as any man ever did. In fact, Mr. Browning sometimes called him the little comedian.

There was one habit of Peter's which greatly annoyed the mistress. In the large living-room was an expensive Persian rug several yards square. It was dark-green in color, with an interesting pattern, and it looked very much like the moss carpet in the ancient forest. Peter early discovered that if he rolled over on his back and then, by pushing with his hind legs, wriggled across the carpet it was a great back scratcher and a capital

way of getting fleas and dandruff out of his skin. But it certainly was not good for the carpet.

There were two cat friends at Sunshine Cottage with which Peter soon became on the best of terms. They were Whitey, a large Persian cat, and Twinkles, a good-natured yellow feline that was Peter's favorite of the two. Whitey was too dignified to suit Peter, and, if he got too familiar with him, he had very objectionable splinters in his paws. But Twinkles was a good-natured chap and would allow Peter to haul him around by the scruff of the neck, roll him on the floor, and play rough-house with him generally. Although this play often worried the mistress, yet Peter never seemed to injure either of his two feline friends.

About a month after Peter's coming to Sunshine Cottage the mistress brought

home two small white Persian kittens about two months old. Peter's astonishment on being presented to them was quite ludicrous. After viewing them from every angle and poking them over with his nose, he went to Mr. Browning and made desperate efforts to tell him in dog language that the mistress had brought home a couple of the queerest pups he had ever seen. But in time he also adopted these small bunches of cat fur into his good graces.

Next to courage, Peter's dominant traits were sympathy and love. Few little dogs have ever loved their master and mistress more than he did the Brownings, once he came to know them. If there was trouble in the house, he detected it almost immediately and his hilarious manner ceased until the clouds lifted. If either the master or the mistress were ill, Peter

was so troubled and he became so quiet that one might almost have imagined there was no dog at Sunshine Cottage, yet all the time he was observing with his keen black eyes everything that went on, and when the household finally returned to normal he was the happiest little dog in Shadyville.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE DEFENDER

PETER had not been at Sunshine Cottage a month before he assumed the rôle of the custodian of the place, especially the guarding of the house and the persons of his master and mistress. It took him another month fully to appreciate the fact that he must also guard the premises. He had been born and brought up in the city, and to his urban mind the house itself was his master's boundary line, but he soon learned at Bird Acre that he must guard the whole place, not only from stray hens, but also from children, who might pilfer flowers and fruit. He finally mastered the boundary so well that the neighbors said he knew where it was as well as the

master did. It was surprising to see him rush a stray hen frantically over the boundary line and then not go a yard beyond. In fact, when he had accomplished the expulsion of the trespasser he would turn nonchalantly about and walk back to the house as though he had done his duty and that was the end of the matter.

Peter was especially active and aggressive in guarding his master and mistress. Whenever the front-door bell rang, no matter where he was, he would come out of his place of hiding like a flash, and when the door was finally opened, he was standing erect and alert by the side of his master or mistress. The first eyes that peeked through the crack of the partly opened door were the black, piercing eyes of the fox terrier. Nor did he relax his vigilance and careful scrutiny of the visitor until he had been assured by the

master or mistress that it was all right and the visitor was a friend. Then he would enter the living-room with the rest of the family and participate in the sociability, for he was a very social little chap and loved to fraternize with company because they were always sure to exclaim about the new dog, and this always touched Peter's vanity.

He also had a very fixed idea that when any one was lying down or lounging in the easy-chair, he wished to be protected, and should not be molested. Accordingly, as soon as either the master or mistress lay down on the couch he would plant himself on the rug near by, and if any one came into the room, Peter would growl softly, as much as to say:

"Don't make a noise. Can't you see my master is resting and I am on guard?"

He always took this defensive position

in favor of the one reclining, no matter whether it were the master or the mistress.

I do not think that either man or beast ever stepped a foot on Bird Acre while Peter was custodian of the place without his knowing it. His hearing was astonishing, and he seemed to have the sort of sixth sense and dog perception that some canines have to a remarkable degree. This often told him things which were unknown to his human friends and quite mysterious to them. For instance, he would be lying in the kitchen behind the stove, apparently asleep, when he would jump up and bark excitedly and go to the front door. The mistress would look out of the window and would usually see some strange dog trotting by on the sidewalk. Peter's mysterious telepathic perception had told him of the nearness of this stranger.

HE WAS MOST POLITE TO THE CATS

He was also most polite to the cats, once they became acquainted. He would usually step back from his own dish, no matter how tempting the morsel, and allow them to eat a portion of his own supper. He also considered them as members of the household and under his own protection.

If any workman came to Bird Acre to work on the place or about the house, Peter followed him about to see that he

did no harm to his master's personal property or the premises. He would lie for an hour at a time watching the man who happened to be hoeing in the garden, his dark appraising eyes noting every movement of the stranger.

One day when Peter was visiting a neighbor's dog, a boy came to the house to borrow a wheelbarrow. He was just leaving the yard with it when Peter espied him from across the street. He came bounding across the road with great alacrity and importance and planted himself in front of the wheelbarrow, growling so prodigiously that the boy dropped the handles of the barrow and went into the house for reinforcements. It was not until the mistress came out and explained to Peter that she had loaned the wheelbarrow that he would permit it to be taken from the place.

Each night when Peter was ready to retire he made up his bed in a ridiculous manner. He slept upon a chest under the kitchen window, and he would usually collect on his bed all the things with which he had been playing during the day. It might be an old glove, some sticks, a well-polished bone, or perhaps an old shoe. Just why he did it was not plain, but he seemed to want his treasures where he could guard them during the night.

Peter was the most unselfish little dog that ever came to Sunshine Cottage. Not only would he share his supper with the cats, but he often rushed into the back yard with a dog biscuit in his mouth just because a forlorn stray had come into the yard and looked tired and hungry. On one occasion Mr. Browning complained that the new bag of biscuit was going in an astonishing manner, at least three

pounds a day were disappearing somewhere. So he told Mrs. Browning to watch and see where they went. She, too, was mystified until about the middle of the afternoon when she saw Peter with his mouth fairly bulging with biscuit push open the back door and go out into the yard to feed some of his unfortunate dog neighbors.

"We shall have to put a stop to this," said Mr. Browning. "Peter will be feeding all the dogs in town. I like dogs myself, but we can't run a dog hotel."

So the bag of dog biscuit was hidden away where Peter could not get at it.

Just about this time Mrs. Browning discovered that Peter was not eating his own ration of dog biscuit, but each evening he would carry it out into the yard and disappear behind the hedge. For several days the Brownings did not dis-

cover what he did with the biscuits, although they assumed he ate them. But as Peter himself seemed ravenously hungry, Mrs. Browning followed him one evening and found, to her astonishment, a very forlorn half-starved dog behind the hedge. The stranger was suffering from a badly bruised leg, having been hit by an automobile.

Peter was all excitement on having his new friend discovered, and danced around him, barking gleefully and encouraging his mistress in every way to help the sufferer. Peter's sympathy and love for the unfortunate canine was so genuine, so persistent, that the lame dog was finally brought into the woodshed, where he was nursed back to health and sent on his way rejoicing.

It was not until Peter had been at Sunshine Cottage perhaps two months that

he made his greatest demonstration as a defender, and showed his willingness to stand between those he loved and danger, no matter what the cost.

One evening Mrs. Flanagan, a neighbor who lived five or six houses down the street, came hurrying into the yard gesticulating and showing signs of excitement. The Brownings were rather mystified as to her call until they discovered Peter limping along behind her on three legs and looking a bit disheveled, and as though he had had a hard time of it.

"The gritty little dog that he is," began Mrs. Flanagan in her rich brogue. "If it hadn't been for him, me poor, leetle Tootsie would have been in the hands of the undertaker this minute, he would. You know me Tootsie, Mrs. Browning, the little brown Boston bull that I set sech a store by. Him that keeps me

company when Mike has gone to the factory."

"What happened, Mrs. Flanagan?" inquired Mrs. Browning, "and what makes Peter so lame?"

"Well, it was this way. I was a-doing me ironing in the kitchen when I saw a great lubber of a police dog, one of those haythenish wolves you see so many of nowadays, come trotting into the yard. Tootsie was under the grape arbor and I ain't saying that he wa'n't a bit sassy, but no more than a high-spirited dog has a right to be on his own primises. But this miserable wolf swooped down upon him right under me own nose and grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and was shaking the life out of him before I knew what had happened. I was that paralyzed with fear not a word could I get out of me mouth for a minute. But seeing that

HE BANGED INTO THE POLICE DOG

Tootsie was being done for, I let out a yell you could have heard for a mile. I'm thinking the good Lord must have heard me and sent Peter, for immadiately he came galloping into the yard. When he saw his friend, Tootsie, being murdered, he just rushed at the ugly baste like a whirlwind and banged into the police dog so hard he dropped poor Tootsie and he straked into the woodshed like the ould boy was after him.

" But this left poor Peter with this ugly baste on his hands, and him only about a third as big as the haythenish wolf, but he didn't run. He jest laped around like a jack-rabbit, first one side of the ugly baste and then the other, and he kept up such a barking that I thought he was honest goin' to bluff the big brute, but finally he got a savage bite on his rump, and then 'twas that Norah Flanagan came to the rescue. I grabbed me clothes-stick and rushed out into the yard and cracked the police dog over the back and when he faced me I brung it down with all me might on the top of his head. This was enough for Mr. Wolf and he skedaddled, and Peter, the little rascal, would have gone after him if I hadn't called him back and told him it was all right, we had punished him enough. So you see, Mrs. Browning, it is a big debt we owe you,

Tootsie and me. Here's a half a dollar and I want you to take it and buy Peter a big bone every night for a week. He desarves it and a whole lot more, for if it hadn't been for him there would be no Tootsie Flanagan this very minute, I'm thinking."

About a month after the incident in which Peter rescued Tootsie Flanagan he gave another demonstration of his utter fearlessness in the face of danger and his willingness to sacrifice himself to any extent for those he loved. It mattered not whether they were animals or folks.

One afternoon Mrs. Browning was in the back chamber doing some work when, glancing out of the window, she saw two police dogs gallop into the yard, attracted by Whitey, who was chasing a dry leaf. The cat was so engrossed in this play that he did not notice the danger until it was

almost upon him. Then he wheeled and dashed for the rose trellis close to the house, and scratched his way up a post for six or eight feet, but here his progress was at once arrested, for he came in contact with a solid bank of roses and could go no higher. He was not really out of reach of the police dogs, that sprang at him continually. There he hung in a dilemma, with an impenetrable bank of roses above and the two yawning mouths of the police dogs beneath.

Mrs. Browning stuck her head out of the window and uttered a despairing cry, expecting every minute to see her adorable Whitey fall into the jaws of the dogs.

Just where Peter came from or what he had been doing was never known. He had probably been asleep in the orchard, but he came running like a small avenging Nemesis, yelping with rage at every

HE SENT HIM SPRAWLING

jump. When he saw that he had two adversaries instead of one and that each was about three times his own size, he did not hesitate. That made no difference to him. He would have charged just the same if there had been a whole pack of dogs instead of two.

The invaders were so intent on their quarry that they did not notice Peter until he was upon them, or perhaps they did discover him and would not deign to look his way. The first they knew of his coming was when he caught the hind leg of one of the dogs as he sprang into the air, and with a sudden twitch sent him sprawling on his side. He then sprang at the second enemy, and this one was so disconcerted by the sudden attack and the fury of the onslaught that it distracted his attention for a moment from the beleaguered cat. So Whitey slid down

the post to which he had been hanging, and disappeared in safety under the garage door.

Enraged by the fact that they had been thwarted in the pursuit of their quarry, the two marauders turned upon poor little Peter, who, had he tempered his valor with discretion, would have taken refuge in some of the shrubbery in the back yard. But not so this intrepid David, although he had two Goliaths to fight and not one.

Instead of retreating, he sprang at his enemies alternately, first at one and then at the other, disconcerting and amazing them with the agility and rapidity of his movements. When they opened their great mouths for the fox terrier, they got air instead. Several times it seemed that they slashed him cruelly on his little body, but they only drew a few drops of blood. But even Peter with all his valor and his

cunning and courage could not for long keep up so unequal a battle. So gradually his attackers pressed him backward against the rose trellis from which he had so recently rescued his friend. There was but one thing to do. It took fearful courage, but Peter did it. He whirled so quickly that his adversaries could not anticipate his movement and like a flash dove straight through the solid bank of rosebushes and wire netting, which was rather rotten, cutting a clean hole about a foot square as he went. He fell in a sorry little heap on the other side, and when his oppressors rushed at the spot they recoiled with yelps of pain.

At this moment in the mêlée Mrs. Browning appeared on the scene brandishing a poker, and the invaders slowly retreated, having been doubly foiled in their attack on the Browning household.

Mr. Browning then came to the rescue, and after cutting a much larger hole in the rose entanglement, he reached in and carefully lifted out little Peter and carried him into the kitchen where he received first aid at the hands of his beloved mistress. His nose and face were bristling with thorns from the rosebush, one of his soft little ears had been split by the fangs of one of the attackers, there was a savage gash on his rump, and he was battered up quite generally. He stood like a little soldier with gritted teeth while his mistress bathed his wounds with antiseptic and pulled the thorns from his face. Not a whimper did he utter, although this treatment must have hurt him extremely. Instead, he stood defiantly winking his eyes to keep back the tears, and occasionally licking his mistress' hands.

When the dressing of his wounds had

been completed, Peter crawled into his favorite chair and tried to rest and recover his spirit from the terrible mauling he had received.

"You are a brave little chap, Peter boy," said Mr. Browning, stroking his back gently. "If I had as much courage to the pound as you have, I could lick the world."

CHAPTER V

THE EXTRA PASSENGER

If there was one thing more than all else in his small dog world which took the pep out of Peter and seemed for the time being almost to break his courageous dog heart it was to have the car roll out of the yard at Bird Acre and he not in it. The automobile was to his mind a sort of dog paradise, and to be in it was all that he required for heavenly bliss. When the garage door had been left open by mistake he would often go and sit on the running-board or even stand on his hind legs and peek in at the window, looking with covetous eyes at just the spot where he would sit the next time he went to ride. Often the mistress had to wash off dog

paw-prints on the window sill, or the tell-tale marks of an inquisitive nose on the window glass.

Sometimes when the mistress was going to Meadowdale to shop she would remark to Mr. Browning:

"I don't think I can let O. D. go with me to-day. I am in a great hurry and cannot look after him."

O. D. was a contraction for "our dog" which Mr. Browning had invented as a sort of code to be used between himself and the mistress when they wished to speak about Peter in his presence and not have him understand. If they used his name when he was about, he at once became suspicious and it was amazing how much of their conversation he could understand. So when they wanted to talk over his head they referred to him as O. D.

When he was left behind, he would

dance about on the window ledge of the bay window, whimpering pathetically until the car finally disappeared in the distance, then he would jump down from his perch and trot dejectedly into the kitchen where he would leap upon the chest where he always slept at night and throw himself down in utter grief and abandon. If Mr. Browning remained at home with him, he would go out and sit down on the chest beside Peter and try to comfort him.

"Here, Peter boy, it isn't so bad as all that. Don't you see that master is here? He didn't go in the old bus. Come, now, we will have a fine afternoon of it, just you and I together."

He would stroke Peter's head and the dog would lick his hand affectionately, but could rarely be roused from his utter dejection.

"It's no use, master," his whole manner

seemed to say, " don't you see the mistress has gone off and left her dog behind? My whole day is spoiled."

Then Mr. Browning would get a tempting bit of cake and try to entice him to eat it, but he would turn away his head dejectedly saying as plainly as a small dog could:

" Don't you see, master, I am too heartbroken even to eat cake? "

Then the master would try some stratagem to draw Peter out of his dumps. Perhaps he would lie down on the couch and invite him to come and be on guard. Peter would take up his position by the couch, merely as a matter of form and without his usual gusto or seeming importance. He would lie very quietly for five or ten minutes, but would finally get up and say as plainly as he could in dog language:

"There isn't any use in my lying here, master. Don't you see there is nobody in the house to protect you from? I am going back to my chest and my grief. The day is spoiled, and nothing can make it right."

On those joyous occasions when Peter did go with the car he was the most delighted little dog passenger that ever climbed into an automobile. If he had not been out in the car for some time and was on his very best behavior, he would sit up beside the mistress in the front seat as prompt as a drum major, eager and alert, watching her every movement and looking up into her face with adoring eyes. When she honked the horn, he would give a short imperative bark as much as to say, "Out of the way, you folks, don't you see our car is coming!"

On the other hand, if Peter was feeling

hilarious and quite sure of his place in the automobile, he would take possession of about the whole car. He would stand with his hind legs on the back seat and his fore paws resting on the back of the front seat, from which vantage point he could look in all four directions at once. I am positive that no wide-awake boy ever saw more from the windows of a flying car than Peter did on such occasions. His eager little face was turning constantly this way and that, and his black intense eyes were boring holes in the landscape in every direction.

There was scarcely a dog on either side of the road during the entire trip that he did not see. This did not matter so long as they were small dogs, or dogs that he approved of, but if he got his eyes on a police dog close to the car, that was quite another matter. He would then let out

such a yelp of rage that his mistress would almost lose her grip on the steering-wheel. It was several minutes before Mr. Browning, coaxing and pleading, and trying in every way to calm him down, could restore quiet in the car.

The most surprising adventure that Peter ever gave his friends while automobiling occurred one summer day when they were bowling along a pleasant country road. Peter was never so much interested when they went on these excursions into the country, for there were fewer dogs to watch for, and fewer children by the wayside. So when the car went out into the country, he usually got down from his perch on both seats and sat on the front seat with his mistress, or he would even lie down by her side and, if the trip were a long one, take a nap.

On this occasion, a hot summer after-

noon, Mrs. Browning had insisted that the window on Peter's side of the car be left wide open, and, even so, the air was stifling. Peter had been sitting very demurely by his mistress' side, not taking very much notice of the landscape, when of a sudden he espied something by the roadside which was very much to his liking although at the time the other occupants of the car were entirely in the dark as to his sudden frenzied movement, for with an excited bark and without the slightest warning he sprang right through the open window and went rolling over and over in the ditch beside the road, but nothing daunted he was up like a flash and off through the underbrush with excited barking, chasing a gray rabbit that his bright eyes had discovered in the thicket close to the road.

Mrs. Browning brought the car to a

RIGHT THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW

standstill in the shortest possible time, but by the time she had alighted, Peter was fifty yards away chasing the rabbit in wild abandon, yelping at every jump.

"What in the world is the matter with him?" cried the distracted mistress. "He's racing around in the thicket, chasing something, I can't make out what it is. You don't think he's gone mad, do you?"

The master climbed out of the car. "No, I guess not," said the man. "I guess he is chasing something. It must be a rabbit."

For fifteen minutes the man and woman sat on the running-board waiting for the conclusion of the chase. Mr. Browning whistled until his whistle completely dried up and Mrs. Browning called imploringly to Peter whenever the chase came that way, but all to no purpose. Finally the excited barking turned to imploring yelping and whining that seemed to come from one place instead of all over the lot.

"He has holed the rabbit," explained Mr. Browning. "I guess he will come back now, or perhaps we shall have to go after him."

For five minutes they waited for Peter's return, but as he did not put in an appearance Mrs. Browning went after him.

Peter was usually all eagerness to follow his mistress anywhere, but it was fifteen minutes before she could coax him away from the rabbit hole and back into the car.

"The little wretch," panted Mrs. Browning as she climbed back into the car. "I'll know better than to leave your window open again. It is a wonder you didn't break your neck, but I'm so glad to have you back I'll forgive you, Peter," and she cuddled him in her arms while he showered her face with very dirty dog kisses.

Peter's passion for automobiles got him into many ridiculous positions, and two that were most serious. If an automobile parked in the yard at Bird Acre and it was an open car or one door left open, Peter was quite sure to take possession of it. Thus the coal man when he had

unloaded the black diamonds would frequently find a very important erect fox terrier sitting behind the steering-wheel, all ready to start up the car if permission were given him.

Mrs. Browning often remarked that any one could steal Peter as easily as not, provided he offered him a ride in an automobile.

About a year after his coming to Bird Acre, this passion for automobile rides got Peter into an adventure which very nearly proved serious. A clothing man had been calling at the house measuring Mr. Browning for a new suit, and had stopped to talk much longer than he usually did, so when he finally hurried out and jumped into his car, he had considerable time to make up, and this was why he did not notice Peter, curled up, fast asleep, on the floor between the seats.

As soon as the car started, however, Peter aroused from his nap and was very much awake, but since the clothing man had broken his looking-glass the week before and had not replaced it he did not notice the passenger on the back seat until twenty miles had been covered, while all the time Peter had been peering out at the car window, looking for boys, dogs, and other interesting sights by the way. He had not discovered a police dog in all that time, but just as the car emerged from the city of Springtown Peter espied a large member of the hated species trotting arrogantly along the sidewalk close to the car.

The clothing man was amazed by the diabolical shriek of rage that came from the back seat of his car. He stopped it immediately, and was much astonished to see Peter, whose acquaintance he had

made at the Brownings', glaring out of the car window.

"Well," ejaculated the astonished traveling man, "here's a pretty mess of fish. We're twenty miles from Shadyville, and Heaven only knows what I am going to do with you."

He alighted from the car and tried to coax Peter out also, but Peter was pleased with his position on the back seat, and for a long time his new chauffeur could not dislodge him, but finally he got him by the collar and pulled him forth unceremoniously. Not being a very wise person as far as dogs were concerned, he gave Peter a shove and a kick in the direction of home and jumped into his car and speeded away toward New York, leaving Peter very much disgruntled in the middle of the road.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUGITIVE'S RETURN

PETER'S first concern on being left alone in the middle of the road was to look for the police dog that had betrayed him into divulging his presence in the car, but that disagreeable canine had disappeared, which was just as well for Peter.

A boy in his teens under such circumstances might have been greatly nonplussed as to the direction of home or how to get there, but not so Peter. For all the time during the twenty mile drive he had been noting objects by the roadside, and this helped in the return. His sense of orientation, which dogs and horses possess to a marked degree in common with the homing pigeons and seals, also

stood him in good stead, for he pointed his nose straight back into the city of Springtown, and trotted along just as though hiking back home twenty miles were a daily pastime with him.

The main street of Springtown was rather confusing to Peter, and once or twice he missed his way, but he always found it again. He jogged along in that indefatigable dog trot which eats up the English miles in a surprising manner.

In half an hour's time he had left Springtown behind and was on his way to Millville. He was careful to keep well off the macadam road, which was a veritable death trap to any dog that did not have his wits about him and look in every direction. In another hour he had covered the distance between Springtown and Millville. He had seen many diverting scenes by the wayside, but, to tell the

truth, he was a bit worried over his escapade and wondered if the master and mistress would scold him or even punish him when he finally returned to Bird Acre.

Meanwhile the master and mistress were making frantic efforts to locate Peter, as he had never been gone from home so long before. He had occasionally gone away for an hour or two to visit some of his dog friends in the village, but that was the extent of his wanderings. And for this reason his absence was still more alarming.

Mr. Browning had walked up and down the entire length of Shadyville's old historic street, whistling and calling for Peter and asking every one whom he met if they had seen the dog, but all had returned a negative answer. In the mean-

time Mrs. Browning had telephoned to everybody in the village who possessed a dog, asking if Peter were calling there, but no one had seen him. When Mr. Browning finally returned home, he was quite depressed.

"I don't believe he is anywhere on the street," he said; "he would surely have heard me if he had been."

"I've telephoned to every one I could think of," replied his wife, "yet no one has seen him, but I guess he is all right. He will turn up soon."

While she had been speaking the telephone rang, and Mr. Browning hurried to answer it, thinking they might learn something of Peter's whereabouts.

"Hello," said the voice at the other end of the wire, "this is the clothing man. I am very sorry, but after I had gone a mile or two beyond Springtown I discovered

your little dog on the back seat of the car. He had been so quiet I had not noticed him. I am in a great hurry and have got to reach New York to-night, so the only thing I could do was to give him a good shove in the direction of home."

"Why in the world didn't you leave him at some house where they could have telephoned us and we would have gone after him?" inquired Mr. Browning indignantly.

"I should have," replied the traveling man, apologetically. "It was a rash thing to leave him in the middle of the road, but I was in such a hurry and at my wit's end."

"Fool!" exclaimed Mr. Browning as he hung up the receiver with a bang. "Peter climbed into the clothing man's car and he did not discover him until he was below Springtown," explained Mr.

Browning, " and then he dumped him out in the road and left him to find his way home. It will be a wonder if he ever makes it."

The mistress herself was much concerned about Peter, but she tried to reassure Mr. Browning, who worshipped the dog.

" Oh, I guess he will be all right," she said. " If he doesn't come back to-night, we will advertise for him in to-morrow's paper. Somebody will be sure to take him in, he is such an attractive little chap. Everybody likes him, especially boys. I am sure that Peter will get along all right. Don't worry."

After Peter had finally found his way through Millville and pointed his nose toward Meadowdale the number of cars on the road doubled and trebled. It was the rush hour between five and six o'clock.

All the workmen were on their way home and in a great hurry. Cars were honking at Peter on every side, and there seemed no place on the great highway for a lost, homesick little dog.

For a time he tried running in the middle of the road between the two streams of cars, but this caused a great honking and much commotion at his expense, so he finally deserted the highway altogether and trotted along in the fields parallel to it, which was much the wisest thing to do.

He was detained several minutes by a very impudent tomcat that came out and offered to scratch his nose if he would give him a chance. Of course Peter accepted the invitation, and a lively fracas ensued, at the height of which a man appeared with a stone, and Peter narrowly escaped being hit by the flying missile.

PETER ACCEPTED THE INVITATION

Then a police dog detained him for a few minutes, but as the Alsatian shepherd was very polite and rather disdainful of the small dog, the fracas was of short duration and Peter again resumed his journey homeward. By eight o'clock he entered the outskirts of Meadowdale, and then for the first time knew where he was. He had known in a general way the direction of home, but the sight of well-remembered scenes greatly encouraged him.

Some kind Providence that looks out for dumb creatures had prompted Peter to take a back road through Meadowdale, else he might never have reached Shadyville. He had partly skirted the city and was trotting along on a side street when he ran plump into one of his Meadowdale dog friends, Scotty Anderson, a handsome Scotch collie. Much to Peter's surprise he saw that Scotty was wearing a muzzle.

I do not know just how dogs converse, but they most certainly have a language of their own which is very efficient. It may be a sign language, or perhaps it is partly telepathic, but communicate they do.

Peter and Scotty stood for nearly a minute with their noses touching, and during that time Scotty managed to convey to Peter the idea that Meadowdale at that time was a very dangerous place for

a dog without a muzzle, and that he had better reach Shadyville as soon as possible. There was a quarantine on the dogs in the city, and every dog that did not wear a muzzle was shot at sight. Even so, they had barely concluded the excited confab, when without the slightest warning a policeman appeared around the corner. At the sight of Peter, as quick as a flash he drew his revolver and fired in his direction. Peter felt a stinging blow upon his head and for a second or two everything went dark. He felt weak and sick and as though he would collapse, but with great generosity his friend, Scotty, sprang between him and the officer who was about to fire again, and in the three or four seconds while the policeman maneuvered for another position from which to fire, Peter made his escape running at his best pace.

A POLICEMAN APPEARED

His flight was uncertain and rather wavering, and he was not just sure of the direction in which he was going, but the same kind Providence that had caused him to meet with Scotty and get his timely warning held Peter to his course. So after another half-hour, by devious ways which even took him into the great meadows close to the river, he came up to the end of the bridge leading to Shadyville. After reconnoitering the approach to the bridge carefully for several minutes, Peter decided that the coast was clear and made a dash for that much-coveted highway that led to home.

Five minutes later he trotted into the broad historic street of old Shadyville and was in sight of the brown house, which looked better to Peter than it ever had before, and he had always loved his home.

Mr. Browning was sitting before the

radio trying to find something interesting, something that would divert his mind from his terrible premonitions concerning Peter, when he heard a quick, sharp bark at the door. Without even stopping to turn off the radio he hurried through the hall, and a minute later was kneeling on the floor with Peter in his arms.

The master was so overcome at the safe return of his pal that he did not scold Peter but sat there on the floor hugging and petting him until Mrs. Browning joined the happy party.

"My, but this is a relief," said the master. "Do you think he is all right, Betty? Take a look at him."

Mrs. Browning examined Peter from the tip of his inquisitive nose to the end of his rapidly vibrating tail, but did not find anything wrong with him.

Yet when Mr. Browning let him go

and he started toward the kitchen for his supper she noticed that he seemed rather wobbly on his feet, and occasionally bumped into the furniture as though he did not see well.

"He is not just right, Lawrence," she explained to Mr. Browning when Peter had been given the best supper he had ever eaten in his life. "He seems to walk unsteadily, and occasionally bumps into the furniture. I don't understand it."

After Peter had finished his supper Mr. Browning took the dog in his lap and with his sensitive all-seeing fingers felt him over very carefully from head to tail.

"Betty, come here," he said at last to Mrs. Browning, "I think I have found what the trouble is. You just look at Peter's right temple just above the eye and see if you can discover anything."

Mrs. Browning brought a flashlight and examined Peter's head carefully, but could see nothing amiss.

"Just pass your fingers lightly over his temple from the eyebrow in the direction of the ear and see if you feel anything."

Mrs. Browning did as directed but could discern nothing.

"There is a slight groove in his temple bone," said Mr. Browning finally. "It looks to me very much as though he had been shot at, and the bullet had just barely missed braining him.

"Peter, if that bullet had gone an inch lower your master would have been a heartbroken man this night. I do wish that Peter weren't so venturesome. I wish he would show the white feather once in a while and stick his tail between his legs and run. This standing up to every danger is sometimes bad policy. I am

afraid that Peter has much more valor than discretion."

"You forget that he has no tail to stick between his legs," laughed Mrs. Browning. "I guess Peter will take care of himself. He is a pretty wise little dog, aren't you, Peter?" And the fox terrier made answer with a glad bark.

All the same, Mr. Browning was not convinced, and he still wished that Peter would temper his valor with discretion.

"Peter has got the grit of half a dozen common dogs," said Mr. Browning, "but just the same I'd feel safer about him if he were not so willing to sacrifice himself for everybody on the slightest occasion. I'm thinking he would live longer if he would look out for Peter once in a while. You know, he is my little pal, Betty, and I couldn't get along without him."

CHAPTER VII

PETER, THE PAL

PETER had not been at Sunshine Cottage many weeks before he made up his mind that for some reason the master needed a small dog just like himself to look out for him. So he took upon himself this guardianship, and in time became a very great help to Mr. Browning.

The thing about the master that attracted his attention more than anything else was the large clouded glasses which he wore. Peter would sit upon the floor beside the man, looking at these glasses for fifteen minutes at a time with a puzzled, troubled look on his face. Why did the master wear these strange things? Sometimes he would even climb up into

the man's lap and try to peek under the glasses to see if he could discover the mystery.

He also noticed that when the man moved about the house he went more cautiously than the mistress did, and if a door had been left ajar or a piece of furniture were out of its accustomed place, he was quite apt to bump into it. When such mishaps occurred, Peter was at the master's side instantly, trying to help him. If he were not otherwise employed, the dog frequently tagged at the man's heels when he went from room to room in the house, seeking to guide him. Often Peter himself mistook the man's destination, and this added to the confusion, but since he was trying to help, the master forgave him.

Peter had come to Bird Acre late in the autumn, and during the winter Mr.

Browning spent much of the time in the house, so it was not until the spring birds came back and the family spent more time out of doors that Peter and the master had their finest times together.

The thing about the master that Peter greatly enjoyed was the fact that he would allow him to take liberties which he did not dare take with the mistress. For instance, when the master walked up and down on the lawn Peter would often worry his shoes, barking and snapping at them fiercely, all just in play. His hilariousness and joyousness greatly pleased and diverted the man, so he encouraged this horse play. On the other hand, Mrs. Browning did not like to have her shoes soiled and discolored in this manner. So if Peter wanted a real hilarious time at play, he sought out the master.

Many a wonderful hour the two spent lying on a buffalo robe under the great elm in the south yard. The man would listen to the song birds and the low murmur of the May wind in the tree tops, and Peter would amuse himself in a dozen different ways. Later on in the summer they journeyed farther afield, and often spent a pleasant afternoon down in the meadow where a little brook sang in the willows and bobolinks, meadow larks, and redwings made pleasant music. Here the man would lie in the tall lush grass, drinking in the sweet elixir of nature and luxuriating in the scenes of beauty which were all about him. Often his mind reverted to a day forty years back when he had beheld with boyish eyes this wonderful scene, the great meadows of two thousand acres lying like a green carpet on either side of the broad majestic river

THEY JOURNEYED FARTHER AFIELD

and the twin mountains standing like huge sentinels at the gateway to the sea. The picture was just as plain to him as it had been forty years before, the green pasture land on the lower slopes of the mountains, the darker green of the forest above, and at the very top the cliff-crowned heads of the mountains themselves, and above that the blue ethereal summer sky. Boys might grow to be men, generations might come and go, but these mountains dreaming by the side of the great river were just as they had been half a century before.

But Peter was not interested in distant sky lines nor dreamy mountains. Instead, he preferred to chase butterflies through the meadow or hunt frogs in the little brook that sang by the willows. But, no matter how diverting the scene, he would return to his master every few minutes to

HE PREFERRED TO CHASE BUTTERFLIES

see that he was all right. And as for Mr. Browning, he felt perfectly safe with Peter for a protector.

In the autumn when the yellow sunlight of October was streaming over the landscape, Peter and the master would go to the cornfield out back of the orchard and spend a pleasant afternoon. There is no season of the year more bewitching than this. The promises of summer have all been kept, the fruition of fruit and

grain are seen on every hand. The crows caw a friendly greeting as they wend their way overhead, a jay squalls excitedly in the cornfield, and a woodpecker is pounding away on a hollow tree, fashioning his winter quarters.

On such a day as this, the master loved to sit with his back against a shock of corn, dreaming or thinking out a chapter of the new book while Peter amused himself in many ways. He would bat a puffball to watch it smoke, with a lively dog curiosity, or dig for moles. When he tired of this diversion, he would return to the master. Sometimes he would come running hilariously in great bounds and with a mighty leap would land fairly upon the top of the corn-shock where the master was sitting. Then he would slide down upon the man's head, and the master would give up his book work for a few

minutes and rough-house with Peter. But he was always good-natured, and they both understood that it was just in fun, although Peter often barked and snarled furiously.

In the winter time they had to go to the cellar for such frivolities. This was when the master sawed and split the kindling and did other chores in the basement. When he was tired of work, Peter would put on some ridiculous act of dog tom-foolery which would make his master laugh. When the man had finally laughed in spite of himself, the little comedian was perfectly satisfied. Then he would go and sit on the other end of the chopping-block, under the man's arm, and the two would converse as only a dog and a man who understands dog language can.

When the master rode away in the automobile with another man to go fish-

ing, or perhaps to a baseball or football game, Peter watched the car out of sight and then transferred his affections to the mistress. If she happened to be working in her flower bed, he would lie in the grass, looking at her with adoring eyes until she discovered a bone buried in her pansy bed or among the tulips. Then he was reprimanded severely and ordered to bury the offensive delicacy in another place. But no matter what the time of day, when the master was gone, Peter seemed to be always watching and waiting for his return. He had some sort of dog intuition by which he was able to foretell the time of this. About five minutes before the automobile would finally appear, Peter would take up his position before the front door waiting and listening. When the car finally rolled into the yard, he would bound up and down before the

door like a rubber ball, sometimes even springing to the very top of the door. Then his mistress would let him out and he would rush at the master as he alighted from the car, as though he would eat him up, pirouetting around him, barking and bounding and sometimes even rolling over on the grass in the exuberance of his spirits. If either the master or the mistress were away from the house, Peter never fully settled down for the night until their return. He seemed to think that it was incumbent on him to see that every one was safe at home and all was well before he retired for the night.

Peter's devotion to his master was often noted by the people of Shadyville, who finally nicknamed him Mr. Browning's shadow. No dog ever more perfectly understood what was going on in his master's mind than did Peter. He was so

quick to read the minds of his master and mistress, and so often understood their conversation about him that they were forced to resort to all sorts of code when they wished to keep Peter in the dark as to their conversation.

Peter might be having the finest kind of a game of romp with some neighbor's dog, but if the master appeared he would immediately leave his play to go and sit by the man's side. If Mr. Browning were depressed, he never could hide it from Peter, for he would sidle up to the master's side, stick his nose in the man's hand and try to comfort him. On the other hand, if the master were gay, his manner was immediately reflected in the face and the actions of the dog. Peter was a sort of dog barometer of joy and sorrow in Sunshine Cottage. When it was a question of his own folks, he fulfilled the

Biblical admonition to laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep more fully than do most human beings.

One summer afternoon Mrs. Browning went to Meadowdale to shop and, as she sometimes did, left Mr. Browning and Peter to mind the house. This was no hardship for them, for they always felt perfectly satisfied in each other's company. Peter watched the car disappear down the boulevard to Meadowdale, and then turned to his master with a deep sigh of satisfaction. His whole manner seemed to say:

"There, now that she has gone we will have a great afternoon, just a man and a dog together."

But the mistress had not been gone more than fifteen minutes when a strange and sudden illness came over Mr. Browning. As nearly as he could make out, it

was a heart attack with which he was entirely unable to cope. He managed to grope his way to the couch and fall heavily upon it, and then he became nearly unconscious.

Peter was terrified at this sudden strange behavior of the master. He seemed to understand that something dreadful had happened to him. He licked his hands and whimpered and tried in his dog way to help, even springing upon the couch and rubbing his own small body against that of the man, whimpering and licking his face.

Mr. Browning was just conscious of the ministrations of his little pal, but could make no sign of recognition. Seeing that his entreaties were unavailing, Peter changed his tactics. He seized the master by the coat sleeve and began shaking his arm vigorously, growling in a desperate

attempt to arouse the man, and in some strange way his efforts succeeded. The thought came to Mr. Browning that Peter was trying to shake him out of his lethargy. If this little dog cared so much and could make such a great fight in his behalf, surely he could make an equally heroic effort himself, so he began fighting off the impending unconsciousness through sheer will-power and prayer.

Little by little he struggled out of the spell that had come over him. By degrees his pulse became stronger. As soon as he had vitality enough to do so, he patted Peter's head and told him he was a good little dog to fight so for his master. The dog's joy at this sign of returning life was fairly pathetic. He licked the man's hands and barked joyously, but he did not desert his post on the couch until his master was much improved and could sit

up and talk to him. When finally Mr. Browning went to the kitchen for a drink of water, Peter's hilarity knew no bounds, while, as for the man, his gratitude to his little friend was beyond words to express.

When Mrs. Browning returned, she at once remarked on Mr. Browning's pallor and the black lines under his eyes.

"I had a dreadful attack of indigestion, or heart failure, or something," he said. "I thought for a few minutes I was a goner."

"Did you call a doctor? Did any one help you?" she asked.

"No," he replied, "it came on so suddenly that I didn't have a chance. The only one who helped me was Doctor Peter."

Then he told her in detail how Peter had aroused him from impending uncon-

sciousness, and had shamed him through his own pluck and courage into making a fight for his life.

"I honestly believe, Betty, that if it hadn't been for Peter I should have passed out. He put courage and fight into me when I seemed to have lost it for myself. That dog, Betty, has more courage to the pound than any man who ever lived."

"He has more love, too, than most men or women," replied Mrs. Browning. "Peter, you are a good dog. I am glad you looked out for master so well."

Thus month by month the bond of friendship and love between the man who lived in darkness and the little dog that lived in the world of light and beauty grew strong, until their companionship became the talk of Shadyville, and was remarked upon by people from many miles

around. Never before in the annals of dogdom had a man and a small dog been such intimates.

How beautiful it is, in this old world, where animal love is often unrequited, to behold such a friendship and understanding as that between Peter and his master. When God put all dumb animals under man's dominion, He intended that they should be cared for and protected, instead of abused, as is too often the case.

CHAPTER VIII

KIDNAPPED

About the middle of the second summer of Peter's sojourn at Bird Acre, a city boy came to work on a neighboring tobacco farm. His name was Stephen Belosky, but what his antecedents were, no one seemed to know. He was simply one of the horde of city urchins who go into the country every summer, partly for a change from city life, and also to make money. Twice a day he passed by Sunshine Cottage, going to the post-office for his employer, and his attention was soon attracted by Peter. He tried to make friends with the dog and was quite successful, although Peter usually was very particular as to his friends. But any boy

who was good to him was apt to win his heart. So, little by little, this city urchin inveigled his way into Peter's good graces until the dog would watch for him, morning and night.

One hot evening he even came into the yard and asked Mrs. Browning for a drink of water, all the while making up to Peter.

"That's a fine dog you have, ma'am," remarked the boy as he was about to leave. "I saw him climb into the baker's cart the other day. Does he like automobiles?"

"He's crazy about them," returned Mrs. Browning. "He would go almost anywhere with any one if he offered him an automobile ride."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the boy eagerly and he turned and looked appraisingly at Peter. Mrs. Browning after-

wards remembered the boy's covetous look at the dog and his eagerness at her answer, but at the time she gave the incident little importance.

One evening when Mr. Browning and Peter were sitting on the front steps, Stephen again stopped and remarked about Peter.

"Is that a valuable dog?" he inquired. "How much would you take for him?"

"Oh, about a thousand dollars," replied Mr. Browning jokingly.

Stephen gasped at this assurance and looked even more covetously at Peter.

"I wouldn't sell him at any price," said Mr. Browning finally, divining that Stephen was becoming too much interested in the dog. "He's my little pal, and a man doesn't sell such friends."

"I didn't have any particular reason for asking," said the boy nonchalantly.

"I just thought he looked like a blooded dog."

When the tobacco season was over, Stephen went back to the city and the Brownings saw nothing more of him.

One warm evening late in August when Mr. and Mrs. Browning were sitting on the front porch, Mrs. Flanagan came hurrying into the yard, and she seemed much excited.

"Did youse know that Peter had gone to ride in a strange car?" she inquired. "I seed him myself with me own eyes."

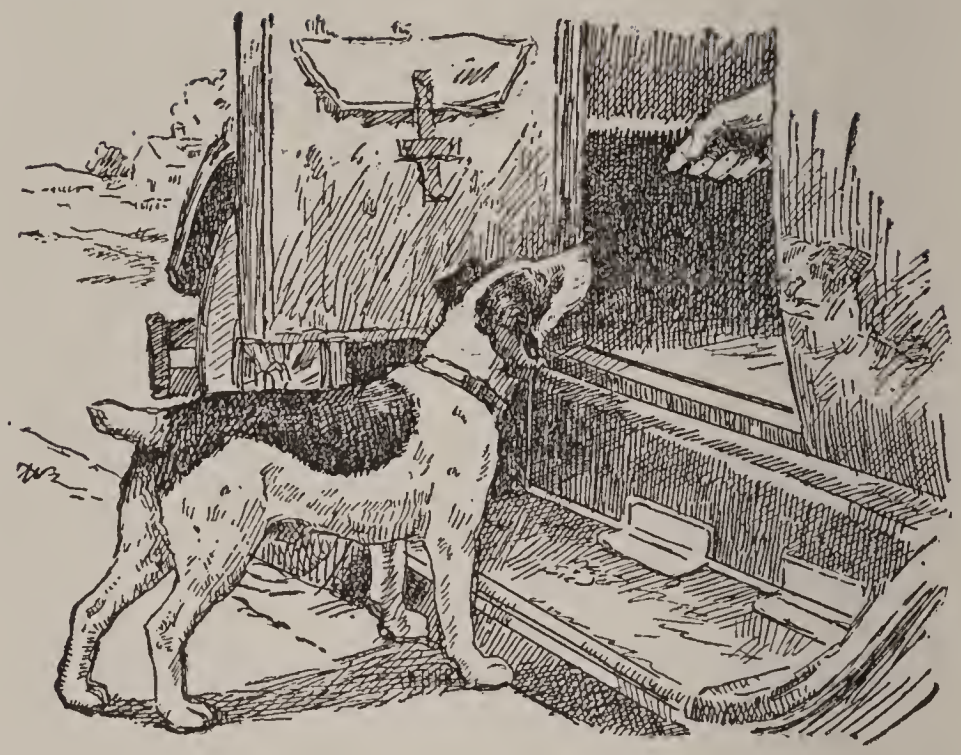
"Gone to ride! In a strange car!" exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Browning in unison. "Why, what do you mean? He was here in the yard fifteen minutes ago."

"Maybe he was," returned Mrs. Flanagan, "but he ain't here now. Hiven only knows where he is. An automobile was dashing along on the main road forninst

Bird Acre and Peter, Hiven keep him, was out in the lot poking around in the grass whin this divil wagon came by and stopped. It was a closed car, and some wan inside opened the door and whistled siveral times. Peter looked up in that pert way he has and thin wint toward the car and finally jumped inside. Then the door was slammed and away the car wint at the divil's own clip. When I saw it, I suspicioned immadiately that something was wrong. Do you know anything about it, Mr. Browning?"

At first the Brownings could not believe this astonishing report of Mrs. Flanagan. So Mr. Browning whistled, and they searched the premises for Peter, but he was nowhere to be found.

"I tell you he ain't here," insisted Mrs. Flanagan. "I saw him with me own eyes jump into the automobile and it driv



SOMETHING WAS WRONG

away like mad. I'm a-thinking that some one has kidnapped Peter, he is such a pert little chap. I am afeered, Mr. Browning, that the dog-snatcher has got him."

The local police and also those of Meadowdale were at once notified of Peter's disappearance and the following morning the local papers carried a description of the dog with the offer of a reward for his

return. Two or three friends in Meadowdale reported that they had met a car going toward the city and that Peter was riding in it, together with a red-headed, freckle-faced boy who seemed to have him in charge. This was all that could be learned and the Browning family settled down to a long and anxious wait, while deepest gloom reigned in Sunshine Cottage.

Meanwhile Peter was having troubles of his own. When the automobile had stopped on the boulevard close to the place where he was playing and the back door of the car had been opened and some one inside had whistled to him, he at once had scented an invitation for an automobile ride, so he advanced to the car with all eagerness. When he discovered that the occupant of the back seat was Stephen,

the friendly boy with whom he had become acquainted the month before, he accepted the whole affair as a bit of good luck and jumped into the car beside the boy. Stephen made the ride still more pleasant to Peter by feeding him with cookies and petting him profusely.

Peter noticed that the car rolled across the bridge over the big river and into Meadowdale. He noted that it then turned south and headed for Millville, thence on to Springtown, but by this time it was nearly dark so he observed no more although the car rolled on through the darkness for two hours longer before it finally stopped in the city of New Brighton in southern Connecticut. The building where the car finally came to a standstill was in the outskirts of this city and was a ramshackle-looking affair. After tying a cord in his collar, Stephen

invited Peter to alight and the dog was finally coaxed up two flights of stairs into a large loft room with but one window. There were five dogs in the room and each was chained, and Peter at once noted they were a forlorn-looking lot.

Stephen led Peter over to one corner of the room and snapped a chain into his collar and left him, while he went downstairs to notify the boss that the new dog had come.

Five minutes later he returned to the room closely followed by a dark sinister-looking German Jew named Isaac Goldstein.

"So dis vas your t'ousand tollar tog, iss it?" inquired Mr. Goldstein derisively.

"Well, Mr. Browning said that he was worth a thousand dollars," returned Stephen stoutly.

"He vas chust choking you. He vas a

good tog, perhaps he might pring fifty or seventy-five tollars, but a t'ousand tollars, bah!"

Peter was glad when the disagreeable man, whom he had hated instinctively at sight, left the room and he was left alone with Stephen and the five other disconsolate dogs.

During that night, through the silent way in which dogs have of communicating with one another, Peter learned many astonishing things of the other five prisoners in this dog jail. He learned that they all had come from happy homes like his own and in an evil hour had been spirited away by the boy, Stephen, and brought to this terrible place just as he had been. But this was not all; they had been so mutilated and changed that even their own friends would not have known them. One had had his ears cut, another

both his ears and tail, and a third that had had a long shaggy coat had been clipped, while a fourth that had formerly been all white was now wearing a large black blanket, also his head and two front paws had been dyed black to match his blanket. One by one the dogs that came to this dog shambles were spirited away and sold to new masters, and their former homes and masters were never seen again.

Peter spent a restless night, and even Stephen, hardened as he was to this nefarious traffic, was smitten with qualms of conscience as he thought of Mr. Browning sitting alone on his piazza at Sunshine Cottage without his little pal. They had been so inseparable that even the careless Stephen had noted it, and now the man would sit alone. He who was lonely at the very best. Why had Stephen ever mentioned the dog to old Goldstein? He

might have known that the old skinflint would have wanted him to steal Peter.

When Goldstein appeared the following morning, he was in a great huff and at once proceeded to vent his wrath on Stephen.

"You fool poy, it vas chust as I t'ink. Dat t'ousand tollar tog of yours iss vorth chust about fifty tollars and you make me send vay up to Massachusetts after him.

"Look at dis letter vich I have chust got from mine friend and partner, Moses Rosenfeld. He has chust sent me a list of all de valuable togs in vestern Massachusetts and dis t'ousand tollar tog iss not even registered."

"How do you know, Mr. Goldstein?" inquired Stephen incredulously. "Where does your partner get all his information?"

"Vhere vould he get it put in the tog-

snatcher's directory? In other vords, the American Kennel Club's register. Dose fool rich mens keep a fine directory for the tog-snatchers."

"Well," said Stephen, "I am sorry, Mr. Goldstein. I thought he was a valuable dog. I know Mr. Browning thought he was."

"Vell, Stephen, the mischief iss done. You put a big black spot on his preast. Den we vill try and sell him."

With these instructions, the manager of this dog prison disappeared, grumbling at his hard luck in not finding Peter registered.

In accordance with Mr. Goldstein's instructions, Stephen brought a pail of dye, and with a brush proceeded to paint a large black spot in the middle of Peter's immaculate bosom shirt, being careful to make this added color correspond in shade

exactly with Peter's own black blanket. When Stephen had finished with him, even the Brownings, at a casual glance, might not have recognized Peter, the new markings so changed his looks. Stephen then put a mask on the dog in order that he might not lick off the dye and left him with the rest of the disconsolate canines, and went to attend to some other business of Mr. Goldstein.

Stephen himself was not a bad boy. He was an orphan, and had drifted into this nefarious business without fully realizing what he was doing. In fact, he was nothing but a tool for the unscrupulous and avaricious Goldstein.

CHAPTER IX

FROM BAD TO WORSE

Stephen had mercy on Peter the second night of his captivity, for he unchained him and allowed him the freedom of the loft, although the rest of the dog prisoners were kept chained. Stephen did this out of remorse, for he could not but remember the kind people at Shadyville and feel sorry for them, especially Mr. Browning.

During the night Stephen had a strange dream. He thought that old Goldstein came into the loft with a large rubber ball about the size of a pumpkin, which he began to bounce up and down on the floor. This noise was so persistent and finally

became so loud that Stephen awoke. As he opened his eyes, he looked up at the one window in the loft and thought for a second that he saw the back of Peter's head clearly silhouetted against the sky outside and a second later heard the resounding bump which had been a part of his dream. He hurriedly secured a flashlight and looked about to see what had awakened him, but old Goldstein and the big ball were not there. Peter, however, was awake and seemed to be wandering around the room, but Stephen thought little of this and so went back to sleep.

Stephen's instantaneous glimpse of Peter's head framed in the window had not been a dream but a reality, for the dog had been bounding up and down before the window, getting an instantaneous view of things outside. He was reconnoitering, as he had often done by jumping up

and looking out of the window in the top of the front door at Sunshine Cottage.

What he had seen of the outer world in these three or four quick glimpses was not promising. Twelve or fifteen feet below was the edge of a roof, and fifteen feet below that the brick pavement.

The following morning when old Goldstein came up to the loft he was noisy and quarrelsome, and Stephen saw at once that he had been drinking again. In such moods he was a bad customer, and the boy shrank from the ordeal of meeting him.

Goldstein at once assailed Stephen. "What you got that Peter tog loose for? You tie him up dis minute. Don't I tell you to keep all the togs tied up all de time?"

"I just let him loose for a minute, Mr. Goldstein," apologized Stephen. "I will tie him up at once."

"I vill tie him up myself," said Goldstein. "You go down to the post-office and get the mail. Here, come here, you Peter tog."

But instead of coming, Peter retired into the farther corner of the loft and stood facing the intoxicated man belligerently. Peter had hated him instinctively ever since the first night of their meeting.

"Vhat! You vill not come. Ve vill see," and he advanced upon Peter with a great show of bluster.

"Don't, Mr. Goldstein," interjected Stephen. "Let me tie him up. It won't take but a minute, and then I will go to the post-office."

"I vill tie him myself. He defies me," exclaimed the Jew growing more wrathful every moment. But when he put out his hand for Peter's collar the dog showed his teeth and growled so savagely that the

bully drew back. But at this sign of rebellion on the dog's part, his anger knew no bounds. Old Goldstein was always that way when he was in his cups.

"Pring me my revolver, Stephen. I vill kill the little cur," said Goldstein in uncontrollable rage.

"Oh, don't, Mr. Goldstein," implored Stephen. "He doesn't belong to us, he belongs to Mr. Browning."

"He pelongs to Mr. Prowning, does he? Vell, vhat did I send a automobile seventy-five miles for, and vhat for did you steal him? I tell you he pelongs to me. If you say another vord, I vill turn you over to the police at vunce as a tog-stealer."

Stephen was in a quandary, so he temporized.

"Mr. Goldstein, if you shoot him, some one will hear the shot and there will be

an investigation. The police will clean out the whole place."

This startling fact arrested the attention of Goldstein for a moment.

"Vell," he said, "I vill take a club," and he took up a stout cudgel which was in a corner near by and started toward poor Peter, still facing him belligerently in his corner.

"Don't," cried Stephen in terror. "He'll yell when you hit him, and that will be just as bad as a shot, to call the police."

But Goldstein's rage was now so great that he threw caution to the wind and advanced upon Peter with the club gripped firmly in both hands.

Peter could see that the man was in a terrible rage, and he knew full well what the club meant, yet he was not afraid. He steeled his muscles and watched the man's

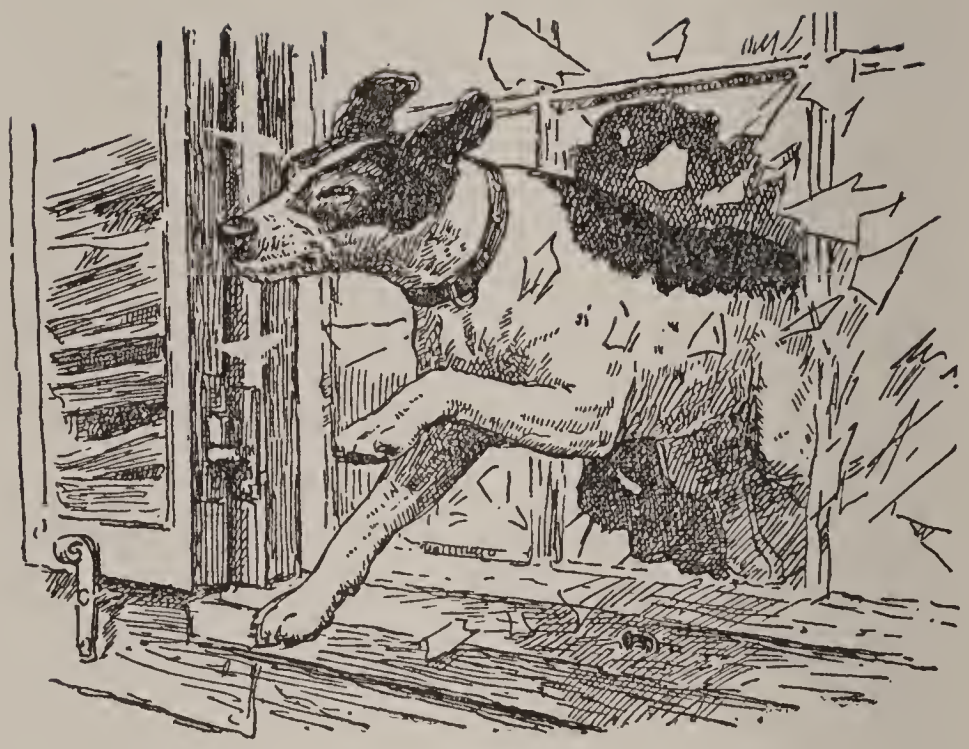
every movement as one boxer watches another.

When Goldstein had come almost within striking distance, quick as a flash, Peter sprang full in his face, even before the man realized what he was going to do.

The first indication of the dog's sudden movement that the infuriated Jew had was when he looked straight into the dog's open mouth about six inches from the end of his nose.

With a cry of rage and fear he dropped his club and reeled backward, tripping over the club as he retreated and falling heavily to the floor. Stephen groaned at the sight. He knew that now it was all up with Peter. Old Goldstein would surely kill the dog after this.

But Peter did not wait to be killed. Instead, he wheeled like a flash and sprang with all his strength straight at



THERE WAS A TERRIBLE CRASH

the one window in the large room. There was a terrible crash of breaking glass and wood and then a heavy thump as the dog struck the piazza roof beneath and after that silence.

"Vhere is he? Vhere is he?" cried Goldstein scrambling to his feet. "Get me my revolver. I vas a fool to use the club on such a little tevil."

"He isn't here, Mr. Goldstein,"

returned Stephen. "If you want to know where he went, look at that window."

"Vhat!" cried the Jew, gazing in astonishment at the broken window where the sash had been carried away as well as the two lower panes. "Vhat, you don't mean to tell me he chumped through that vindow!"

"That's just what he did, Mr. Goldstein," returned Stephen triumphantly.

"Vell, den I von't have to shoot him. You chust go outside, Stevie, and find him and bury him. If any vun says anyt'ing to you, you say he vas hit by an automobile in the street."

Stephen hurried away to do his employer's bidding, but returned after five minutes and reported that Peter was nowhere to be found. He was not on the roof, nor on the pavement beneath, and

had disappeared as though the earth had opened and swallowed him.

When Peter had landed on the piazza roof with a loud thump, it had not jarred him up badly, as the roof was covered with tin and there was just enough spring in it to break his fall. But when he peeked over the roof to the pavement beneath he had some misgivings. It was a good fifteen feet and the pavement was brick and did not look inviting, yet he did not hesitate a minute. This was his only avenue of escape so the small dynamic body went hurtling into the air. When he struck, in spite of himself, he gave a yelp of pain, for there had been a sharp twinge in his shoulder. But this was no time to stop for such things, so pulling himself together he limped away on three legs down the first street that offered, and so escaped from the hideous dog prison.

He made as good time as a small dog on three legs could, so when Stephen had appeared in the yard to look for him he had been three blocks away.

For a time Peter wandered aimlessly about the city trying to get his bearings. Unfortunately he had slept for the last hour of the drive down, so had not noticed the landscape, but gradually his sense of orientation asserted itself. He pointed his nose northward and trotted out of the city on the State road to Windham.

But running on three legs was quite different from going on four, and he had to stop every mile or two and rest his overworked right paw. The left shoulder pained him badly and before he had covered the ten miles to Windham his right paw had raised a stone blister which made traveling very difficult.

When he finally limped into Windham,

as good or ill luck would have it, he ran immediately into a policeman.

The officer noted his pitiable condition and advanced to make friends with him. Ordinarily Peter would have run away at his best pace, but the man seemed kind and he was very lonely and heart-sick, so he advanced to meet the officer, wagging his stub tail and grinning in his most friendly manner.

"Hello, little dog. What is the matter with your paw? Are you lost?" inquired the officer.

Peter was instantly impressed by the friendly voice, and knew he had judged the man correctly, and that he would help him. When the policeman passed his hand lightly over Peter's shoulder, the dog winced in spite of himself.

"I thought so," said Sergeant Martin. "A shoulder sprain. That's too bad, little

chap. Who do you belong to?" And he stooped down to look at the collar.

Peter was delighted to have him look at his collar, for in the past when people had seen the name of his master on the fine double-studded collar that he always wore, they had shown Peter great respect, but that collar at the present time was in a box with a dozen others up in the loft from which Peter had just escaped, while the collar that he now wore was just a plain strap with no name plate on it.

Seeing that Peter was very lame and judging that he was lost, the kind-hearted policeman tied a string in his collar and started with him to headquarters. He would keep him for a day or two and advertise, and if that did not produce an owner for him, he would take him to the Animal Rescue League. That was the best he could do.

When Sergeant Martin came into headquarters with the forlorn-looking three-legged dog in tow the chief looked at him in disgust.

"So you've picked up another mutt, have you, Martin? Well, you make me tired, just as though the city hadn't anything to do but feed all the strange curs that can be found."

"This isn't a mutt, chief," returned Martin; "he is a blooded dog, and is somebody's pet, although he hasn't got much of a collar on. I want to keep him for a day or two and see if I can locate his owner. I will feed him myself, and the city won't be out anything on the proposition."

So Sergeant Martin made Peter as comfortable as he could and went out and bought him a quart of milk and a loaf of bread, while Peter on his part licked the

officer's hands and was as grateful as a little lost dog could well be.

Sergeant Martin advertised in the local papers for Peter's owner and made many inquiries, but all to no purpose. He had about made up his mind that he would have to take him over to the Animal Rescue League when two things happened that made quite a difference. The Sergeant was out on his beat and the chief had a grouch on. Peter always got out of the way when he saw him coming for he did not like this gruff man. He divined instinctively that he was a dog-hater.

It happened this time that, with his lame shoulder, Peter was not quick enough and the chief stumbled over him.

"Here, you, Officer Kelly," he called, "come in here. You take this miserable cur into the lethal chamber and put him to

sleep. I am sick of having him hanging around here and the city hasn't got any money to feed lost mutts with."

"But he is Sergeant Martin's proposition," objected Kelly. "He says he will take him over to the Animal Rescue League in a day or two."

"That won't do," growled the chief. "You do what I tell you, and don't argue about it."

Peter felt instinctively that the harsh words of the disagreeable man had to do with him, yet he did not resist when Officer Kelly took him up and carried him into a back room. He felt intuitively that he was in the clutches of a force that was much stronger than he and to resist was futile. So he did the only thing that he could, and that was to lick the officer's hand in dumb pleading. When Kelly finally thrust Peter into a very tight

box about the size of a dog kennel and slammed the door, a sense of fear overwhelmed the dog's stout little heart that had never quailed before. He had not been afraid when old Goldstein had stood over him with a club, but there was something sinister about this strange box into which he had been thrust so unceremoniously, and his suspicions became frenzy when a choking, numbing odor filled the enclosure. This odor was like nothing he had ever smelled before, and it was taking away his senses and paralyzing him. In a last desperate effort to save himself Peter lifted up his voice in a long desolate howl which was at once a prayer for deliverance and a cry for help. Perhaps his master would hear. If he were only here he would make this dreadful man open the door and release him.

Yet Peter's despairing cry was not in

vain. It had barely died away when Sergeant Martin hurried in, triumphantly waving a copy of the latest edition of the local newspaper.

"Here, Kelly, what are you doing?" he cried. "You aren't chloroforming that little dog, are you?"

"Chief's orders," replied his brother officer apologetically.

"I don't care if it is," returned Martin and he sprang forward and released the dog.

Choking and gasping Peter staggered out into the fresh air. He was so drunk with chloroform that he could scarce stand. He staggered about the room like an intoxicated dog, bumping into the walls and furniture.

"You poor little beggar," said Martin. "I came just in time, but I guess you will be all right. Listen to this, Kelly, it

is among the lost animal ads in my home-town paper.

> "'Have you seen Peter? He is a large fox terrier, black and white, with a tan dot over each eye. If you are in doubt, light a match, and if it is Peter, he will put it out and then eat up the stick. Telephone any information to Meadowdale, 2834, and get your reward.'"

When Peter had fully recovered his senses, Martin called him over to his side and snapping his fingers, said:

"Peter, old boy, how's Peter?"

The effect of these words was amazing, for with a glad bark the forlorn dog sprang into the officer's lap and began licking his face frantically.

"I guess it's Peter, all right," said Martin triumphantly, "but I will try the other test also. Give me a match, Kelly."

Peter watched intently while the officer

lit the match and when it was thrust in front of him he pounced upon the flame like a cat on a mouse and batted it with his paw until it was extinguished. Then, wonder of wonders, he ate up the stick.

"Hurray," cried Martin joyously. "It is Peter, sure as preaching. Now I'm going to telephone to his owner, and I'll bet he will be a happy man to get him back. I have fallen in love with him myself."

Meanwhile sorrow and loneliness reigned at Sunshine Cottage. Mr. Browning had put in most of his time during the week that his little pal had been gone, writing to friends in all parts of New England, scanning the newspapers, and listening for the telephone every hour of the day. Nothing seemed natural in the great house without Peter.

On the seventh day of his absence, about the middle of the afternoon, the telephone rang and Mr. Browning hurried to answer it, hoping, as he had hoped with every ring the past week, that the message would bring him word of his little pal.

"Hello," said the voice at the other end of the wire, "I think I have found your little dog. He is here in the police station at Windham, Connecticut. We are holding him for you."

"How is he marked?" inquired Mr. Browning, and the officer at the other end of the line felt the anxiety in the man's voice.

"He is marked just as you described him in your ad in the Meadowdale paper, but he has a large black patch on his breast, and you did not mention this in your ad."

"I'm afraid it is not Peter," said the

other fearfully. "He had no such markings as that."

"But he answers to the name of Peter and he put out a match just as you described," continued the officer.

"That's very strange," said Mr. Browning. "Could you bring him to the telephone?"

"Sure thing," replied the officer, and a second later he reported that Mr. Dog was waiting to begin the conversation.

"Hello, Peter! Rats!" cried Mr. Browning in an excited voice, shooting the last word into the receiver with a pop like a soda bottle.

There was a sound of joyous barking at the other end of the wire and then a loud bang, and Mr. Browning divined that the telephone had been upset, but presently the conversation was resumed.

"You must excuse me," said the officer,

"but your little dog nearly jumped into the telephone when you spoke to him. It's Peter, all right; there isn't a doubt about it."

"Hurrah," cried Mr. Browning, "you hold right on to his collar tight and I will be down after him in about two hours. See you later. Good-bye."

"Betty," called Mr. Browning joyously, hurrying into the kitchen. "They've found Peter. He is seventy miles away and we have got just two hours to make it."

"We can't do it," returned Mrs. Browning. "I have got to wash my face and change my clothes and that will take half an hour."

"Don't bother to do either," returned Mr. Browning pleadingly. "No one will know whether your face is washed or not when Peter gets through with you."

His counsel finally prevailed and ten minutes later the car rolled out of the yard on its way to Windham.

It was a happy family party that motored home on that September evening. Peter was so overjoyed at being with his folks again that he did not care for the landscape or external things, but was perfectly content to cuddle down on the back seat beside the master with his head in the man's lap while Mr. Browning stroked Peter's head and fondled his ears and talked to him in a way that ravished his dog heart.

When Peter had devoted an hour to his master, not to be partial, he crawled over to the front seat and lay with his head in his mistress' lap and she, too, fondled his ears as they rode home to Shadyville.

There was one good thing that resulted from this kidnapping. No matter how

many strange cars came into the yard at Bird Acre or how long they stayed Peter never again tried to steal a ride in any of them. He might look wistfully at the strange car, but that was all. He had learned his lesson well.

CHAPTER X

PETER TO THE RESCUE

After having consulted a dye expert as to Peter's new markings, the master spent half of two days in an endeavor to wash out the objectionable color. He succeeded fairly well, although the dog's bosom shirt did not resume its immaculate white for several days. His fore paws did not matter so much, as they were always more or less dingy.

The next time Peter's folks went to Meadowdale, they took him along and presented him with a brand-new double-studded collar which had not only the master's name and address on the name plate, but Peter's name also. As he rode home that afternoon, standing, as he

usually did, on both seats and looking out of all four windows at once, he was a very proud little dog, yet he seemed to be on his best behavior, for he made no outcry when objectionable dogs were seen by the roadside. His manner seemed to say, "I am dressed up to-day and can't get into scraps."

"I wish," observed Mr. Browning as the car rolled into the yard at Bird Acre, "that Peter would calm down and get over some of his dog heroics. He is too small a canine to always be taking the part of the under dog when a pup is getting chewed up."

"But don't you want Peter to be good to small dogs?" inquired Mrs. Browning.

"Oh, yes," replied Mr. Browning grudgingly. "But there is one small dog that I want him to be especially good to, and that's himself. Somehow he doesn't

ever think of Peter, and I am mightily afraid that some day a police dog will get a strangle-hold on his throat and I won't have my little pal any more. Why, a police dog could break his neck at a single bite if he got just the right chance."

"I don't think you need worry about Peter," returned Mrs. Browning. "If you ever saw him in a scrap with a police dog, you would not. Why, he's all over the place, around the big dog, and over him and under him like a flash. I never yet saw Peter fight with a police dog but that after a minute or two the big dog slunk out of the yard looking very much ashamed of himself, with Peter barking at his heels. The big dog's manner always seems to say, 'You see how it is. I could fight him if he only stayed still, but he is just a jumping-jack, he isn't a dog at all.'"

For an entire month after Peter's return from the harrowing experiences with the kidnappers, everything went so smoothly at Sunshine Cottage that Mr. Browning began to think he had been too anxious about the dog. Mrs. Browning was probably right, Peter could doubtless take care of himself. Well, it was the price one always pays for loving a dog overmuch. There was always the anxiety about him, and if no accident befell, there was always that grim specter of old age for the faithful dog when he would be deaf or perhaps partly blind and would look at one with dumb, pleading eyes, imploring the master to do something to turn back the approaching night. But often the calmest days precede the storm, and so it was in Peter's case. For without the slightest warning he participated in a bit of dog heroics that made him not only

the hero of Shadyville but also of the entire countryside, although it left him much the worse for the combat.

Five houses below Sunshine Cottage on the same side of the broad street which was the main avenue of Shadyville there lived a young farmer named Henry Adams. He and Mrs. Adams had one child, a girl eight years of age, named Elsie. She was very fond of Peter, as she had no dog of her own, and always called him in and made much of him whenever he was passing the house. It happened that on this particular evening she had espied Peter on the sidewalk and had taken him into the orchard for a romp.

As ill luck would have it, Mr. Adams had taken his prize Jersey bull out into the yard for exercise at this particular hour. No one ever knew just how it happened, for the man thought he had the

PETER ADVANCED UPON THE BULL

bull under perfect control. He was leading him by a staff which was fastened into a ring in the bull's nose, but in an evil moment the ring pulled out and at the same instant the vicious animal espied little Elsie coming through the orchard wearing a bright red sweater, with Peter dancing and barking at her side.

From time immemorial, the red cape of the toreador has been provocation for any well-behaved bull to charge, and this prize Jersey of Mr. Adams was no exception to the rule. Before the terrified farmer could know what had happened the bull was bearing down upon his little daughter with deadly intent. But there was a small champion between the girl and the great brute. Peter threw himself into the gap and advanced upon the bull, barking furiously as he came. The infuriated animal was so astonished at this small

adversary that he stopped for a moment to lunge at the dog viciously. Peter sprang to one side, and as he did so the infuriated animal dealt him a savage blow with one of his horns. Two ribs snapped, but that did not daunt him, for again he sprang at the great brute's head, and this time fastened his teeth for a few seconds in the bull's nose. Bellowing with rage and shaking his head furiously, he soon dislodged the dog, for Peter's grip was not that of a bulldog, that might have held on, but, nothing daunted, Peter was up again and at his great adversary. This time he caught him by the fore leg and held on desperately.

The infuriated animal bellowed and stamped with rage. Yet it took him several seconds to dislodge the gritty dog, and in the half-minute that passed during this one-sided battle, little Elsie made her

escape into the barn and up a ladder into the hay-loft.

Meanwhile Mr. Adams had not been idle, but with frantic haste had seized a gun which stood loaded in a back room and just as the bull freed himself from Peter's grip the second time and was about to crush him with one of his big hoofs, the report of a gun rang out along Shadyville's quiet streets and the prize bull fell dead in the orchard grass almost on top of Peter.

It was Mrs. Flanagan as usual who brought the disturbing news. She rushed into the house without ringing, excited and out of breath.

"Sure, Mr. Browning, and did you hear the terrible news? It's Mr. Adams that's bringing Peter in a wheelbarrow. He ain't dead, but he is beat up pretty badly. It was a haythenish bull that did

it. He had on a red sweater and Elsie charged him, I mean it was the bull that charged and Elsie had on the sweater. Here comes Mr. Adams now. I can hear the squaking of the wheelbarrow."

Mr. Browning hurried out to investigate, and found the wheelbarrow with Peter in it at the front door.

"I am awfully sorry about your little dog, Mr. Browning," said Mr. Adams. "I hated to shoot the bull, but I couldn't let him kill Peter after he had saved Elsie."

Under Mr. Browning's instructions Peter was carried into the kitchen and deposited on the cedar chest close to the window while Mr. Browning telephoned the veterinary.

An examination disclosed the fact that the dog had two fractured ribs and a badly crushed paw.

"I guess he will be all right after a week or two," said Doctor Benson, "if there are no internal injuries. I will patch him up the best I can, and you will have to keep him perfectly quiet."

"I don't know who is going to keep Peter perfectly quiet," remarked Mr. Browning ruefully when the veterinary had left. "The first time he sees a police dog come into the yard he'll want to go out and drive him off."

"Oh, I guess he won't," returned Mrs. Browning. "He's so badly damaged that he'll forget about police dogs."

But the following forenoon Mrs. Browning hurried into the study very much excited.

"You will have to come, Lawrence, and calm Peter down," she said. "He has discovered a police dog, and is bouncing up and down in front of the door

enough to smash his good paw. I don't know what I am going to do with him."

Mr. Browning returned Peter to the chest and pulled down the curtain so that he couldn't look out of the window and all was quiet. In two weeks' time the veterinary removed the girdle about Peter's body, which had held the broken ribs in place, and took off the splints. He then pronounced him as good as new, and ready for another fracas.

During that third winter at Sunshine Cottage the fox terrier wriggled his way deeper into the affections of his master and mistress and became more idolized by these two kind-hearted people than he had ever been before.

One evening about the first of April Mrs. Browning reported that Peter would not come in for the night.

"He seems to be watching the hen-

house," she said, " and won't come in from the back piazza."

" Let him stay out if he wants to," said Mr. Browning. " You throw out an old rug on the porch and let him sleep outside if he wishes to. He is a wise little chap and knows what he is about."

Mr. Browning thought no more of the incident until about midnight when he was awakened by a prodigious racket in the vicinity of the henhouse. There was the sharp barking of Peter, interspersed with yelps of rage and occasionally a note of fear from the infuriated fox terrier. Mr. Browning was much astonished by the outcry, and genuinely alarmed, for when had he ever heard a note of fear from Peter?

The mêlée sounded serious, so he sprang out of bed and slipping on his trousers and a sweater hurried through

the hall to the front door. As he turned the key in the lock, he noted that the disturbance had resolved itself into a running fight through the yard, and he now plainly heard the sounds of a man's feet and the squawking of hens in addition to Peter's perpetual outcry.

As the man stepped from the piazza, a revolver shot awoke sinister echoes along the quiet street, and this was followed by an agonized cry from Peter.

Unspeakably appalled by this evidence of a night tragedy, Mr. Browning hurried to the spot where his little pal lay on the grass, his yelps of pain growing fainter and fainter. As he knelt to lift up his faithful friend, he was joined by Mrs. Browning who had also been awakened by the commotion.

"What has happened?" she cried. "What is the matter with Peter?"

"Can't you see?" choked the man. "They have shot him."

"I don't believe he is dead," returned the mistress. "He is wagging his tail, so he can't be."

"Yes, and he is licking my hand," replied Mr. Browning, "but he is almost gone. What is that piece of cloth he has in his mouth, Betty?"

"It is a piece of some one's old pants," replied Mrs. Browning. "Don't you remember, Lawrence, you have always said no one could steal anything on the place when Peter was around and get away with whole trousers."

Mr. Browning groaned. "I was thinking of boys," he said, "and not of thugs. I wish they had taken hens, henhouse, and all and left me Peter. You steady me by the arm, and I will carry him into the house."

NO ONE COULD STEAL ANYTHING

Tenderly the master lifted the limp figure of his little chum and carried him into the kitchen where he laid him gently on the cedar chest and covered him with his blanket. Then he telephoned Doctor Benson.

After a careful examination, the veterinary reported that the dog had been shot through the lungs.

"I don't think he has a ghost of a chance to get well," he said, "but if you

want, I will take him over to the hospital. I have two or three very sick dogs, and my man will be up all night with them. This little fellow will have to have a stimulant every hour if we are going to pull him through."

Ordinarily the Brownings would never have allowed Peter to leave the house. They would have nursed him themselves, but this case was so desperate that they finally consented. So the seemingly lifeless little defender was wrapped up in a warm blanket and taken away to the dog hospital while deepest gloom reigned in Sunshine Cottage, for the light and the life of the place had gone out of it and the chances were that they never would return.

Peter had fallen like a small dog soldier, fighting for his master's rights, and the only country he knew, Bird Acre. To

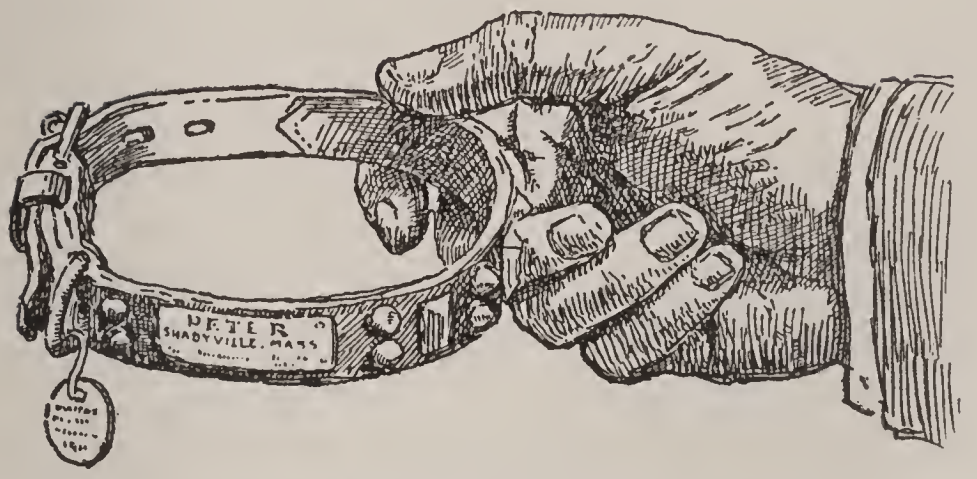
his simple dog mind, Sunshine Cottage was its citadel, and its citizenry, his beloved master and mistress. He had placed his small body between them and danger, and no human soldier could have done more.

CHAPTER XI

THE EMPTY HOUSE

"It is incredible that the love of one small dog could have filled a great house from garret to cellar," wrote Mr. Browning on the fifth day after the night tragedy, "yet this is so. Heaven only knows how lonely the two people are in the big house. Since Peter went, it is so still that even the ticking of the clock is painful. It is as though some human friend who had tarried with us long had been borne out through the front door, leaving an aching void in every room.

"There is no place either in the house or on the premises where I can go to escape this haunting sorrow. If I sit down in my big easy-chair to rest and



AN ACHING VOID

think, I miss the warm little muzzle that was thrust into my hand, and then if I smiled, the eager little body that bounded into my lap, pressing a warm dog's heart close to my breast, for Peter's heart was as true as steel. He wanted little for himself, but he did love to pour out the pure affection of his loving heart upon his folks.

"When I sat down at the radio, there was formerly a little radio pal that sat in my lap; or if I were too tired to hold him, he would stand with his hind feet on a chest opposite and his fore feet resting on

the radio table, looking up into my face for half an hour at a time.

" Formerly, when I went from room to room, there was a little pusher following behind with his muzzle close to my leg trying to steer me into the room where I wished to go. It did not matter if we sometimes found the wrong place, but the fact that the little dog so loved his master that he wished to help him was the thing that counted.

" In other days, when I sat down at the dinner table, there was a little beggar by my side teasing for pie-crust, but now I have to eat my own pie-crust, and it chokes me because of the lump in my throat. In the good old days when I went down cellar to split kindling, there was a little dog comedian that went along. He would put on all sorts of funny dog stunts, fights between a dog and an old

shoe or a stick of wood, just to amuse his master. Then when I was tired of chopping kindling and stopped to rest, he would come and sit on the opposite end of the chopping-block and snuggle up close and tell me in dog language that he knew it was a hard old world and that perhaps his master was tired and discouraged, but he would do all he could to help with his dumb dog love.

"Formerly, when I walked on the piazza, there was a little dog soldier that marched by my side, keeping step with me, stopping when I stopped, wheeling when I wheeled. When we were tired of marching, we would sit down on the top step and he would snuggle up under my arm and rest his head against my breast and heave a big dog sigh of perfect content. At such times Peter wished for nothing more.

"In days gone by, when I alighted from the automobile at the front of the house, there was a glad rush of joyous feet and a hilarious dog friend bounding into the air as high as my head, barking and rolling over on the ground because he was so glad that master had returned, but now when I alight there is just a sodden silence.

"The mistress misses him as much as I do. When she used to pare potatoes, there was a little chum that sat by her side, begging for just three pieces of raw potatoes, never four nor two, but always three. Peter could certainly count three. When the mistress shook down the furnace fire, there was a little fireman that stood by her side, watching to see that no ember or spark flew out of the grate. If so much as one tiny spark appeared, he was upon it like a flash, putting it out

with his paw, even though he burned himself in the act.

"Many years ago Bobby Burns wrote a remarkable poem about man's inhumanity to man, but it remains for some modern poet to write a still more touching poem on man's inhumanity to dogs."

CHAPTER XII

A DOG'S LOVE

ONE afternoon about a week after the night tragedy reported in a previous chapter, Mr. Browning noticed that his wife was going from window to window with a dish of water and a wash-cloth, and he wondered what she was doing in such a hurried manner.

"What, are you giving the windows a lick and a promise?" he inquired.

"No," replied Mrs. Browning sadly. "I am washing off Peter's little nose-prints on the lower panes. There is hardly a window on the first floor where there are not some of his marks. It makes me feel bad to see them, now that he is not here, so I am washing them off.

I have also put up his rubber ball and the playthings that he used to take to bed with him."

Mr. Browning sighed. "It is just another case of 'the little tin soldier covered with rust,'" he remarked sadly. "I sometimes wonder whether it is 'better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.'"

"We haven't really lost him yet," returned Mrs. Browning, "but I sometimes question whether we ought to try to keep Peter or not."

"I have the same qualms myself," said Mr. Browning. "I spend half of the night making up my mind to call the veterinary in the morning and tell him to send Peter over the great divide, but when morning comes I can't do it. The police headquarters at Meadowdale telephoned me yesterday that they had caught

the chicken thief, if that is any comfort. He will probably get a year for his evil deed. That ought to appease Peter's militant little spirit."

"What do you mean by Peter's militant spirit? Of course I know he always fought for his own rights and ours, too."

"Well," said Mr. Browning, "I don't just know how to tell you what I do mean. Perhaps you will think it is queer, but ever since that wretched night I have seemed to feel Peter standing by my bedside imploring me to punish the man who shot him. Sometimes it seemed as though I could touch him with my hand, and at such times I imagine I can hear those half-stifled sobs that he used to give away down in his throat when he was in pain. Don't you remember, Betty, how when he got chewed up or injured in any way he would always crawl under my bed and

stay there for an hour or two? He seemed to think there was some virtue about the bed that would heal him."

"I guess he just felt it was your bed, and he knew you always wanted to help him," replied Mrs. Browning. "But I can tell you something equally foolish. When I pare potatoes, I always cut off three pieces and lay them aside for a little shadow dog that I imagine is standing by my side. It is strange how these experiences make tracks in our brains which continue to function long after the original cause has been withdrawn."

At this point in the conversation there came a timid knock at the front door, and Mrs. Browning went to answer it.

"Please, ma'am," said a childish voice. "We want to know if we can put flowers on Peter's grave when he dies just as we did on Dannie's. It is awful sad and

thrilly, putting flowers on a friend's grave."

Mrs. Browning beamed down upon the little company of children who crowded around the front door.

"Why, of course you can," she said. "That will please Mr. Browning greatly, but Peter isn't dead yet."

"Please, Mrs. Browning," said another voice, "there is a question we want to ask. We want to know if there is a dog heaven and if Peter will go there when he dies. We asked the minister and he said he didn't think there was one. He said dogs had to stay outside on the grass where they could scratch fleas, and not dirty up the golden streets."

At this question Mrs. Browning became dumfounded and speechless. She opened and closed her mouth several times, but no words came. Finally she managed to

stammer, "Well, well, children, that is a question. I'm sure I don't know. I guess we shall have to ask Mr. Browning; you know, he is an authority on dogs."

"Of course Peter will go to the dog heaven when he dies," said Mr. Browning decidedly, ignoring the first part of the question and bearing down hard on the second. He had been standing in the study door all the time listening to the conversation.

"Please," said another voice, "will Peter be happy in the dog heaven?"

"Certainly he will," returned Mr. Browning decidedly as he advanced into the hall to take a real part in the conversation. "Why, Peter will have the best kennel and the biggest bone in the whole place."

This announcement was greeted by a chorus of deep sighs of satisfaction.

"Please, Mr. Browning, there is another question we want to ask ——"

But Mr. Browning was a true Yankee, so he parried with a question of his own.

"How many of you children are there?" he asked. "Let's count noses."

"Well," said the oldest one of the interlocutors, "there's me, I'm Sally Brown, and my brother Tommy, and there's Mary Baker and Billy Baker, and Henry Jones and little Peter Smith. He had to come along because his name is Peter."

"I has to come 'cause my name is Peter," reiterated the small urchin.

"That's fine," said Mr. Browning, reaching his hand into his pocket and jingling some change with a sound that was most tantalizing to six small pairs of ears. "If I have counted right, there are six of you. Now here is thirty cents

which I will give to Sally. You all go over to the store and Sally will get each one of you an ice-cream cone."

"Oh, oh!" said several voices, but the persistent interrogator continued, "There is one more question I want to ask ——"

"If you run right along," said Mr. Browning ignoring the question, "you will get over to the store before the chocolate is all gone. If you wait, you may have to take some other kind which you don't like as well."

The thought of losing out on chocolate was so appalling that all other questions were forgotten and six pairs of small feet clattered merrily down the walk to the accompaniment of six excited voices.

"Well, we had a close call that time," said Mrs. Browning, shutting the door hurriedly. "Why did you tell them such fibs about the dog heaven?"

ALL OTHER QUESTIONS WERE FORGOTTEN

"I'm not so sure they are fibs," returned Mr. Browning. "I wish you would go and get the Bible on my desk and read me that passage from the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians."

Mrs. Browning brought the Book of books, and seating herself in her easy-chair read the desired passage:

"'And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but

bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.

"'But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

"'All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.'"

"Well," said Mr. Browning after a long pause, "that means that God gave Peter his little body and put into it that great courage, loyalty, and love which we know as Peter. And if He did that much for him, He will look out for him for all time. A human father would do as much, and God is not less just than man."

Further discussion of this point was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone, and Mr. Browning hurried to answer it.

"What," Mrs. Browning heard him say, "are you sure? You're not joking, are you? You don't think there is any

doubt about it, do you? Well, that's great! When can we come over? To-morrow? Indeed we will. Thank you so much for calling. That's a wonderful piece of news. Good-bye." And Mr. Browning hung up the receiver.

"Betty," he cried, "I have just had the most wonderful news. Doc Benson says that Peter is a lot better. He has removed the bullet, and the danger of blood poisoning is past. He said he didn't want to raise our hopes until he was sure. We can go over and see him to-morrow."

"That is too good to be true," said Mrs. Browning, "but if Doc Benson says so, it must be true. I am so glad, Lawrence, you'll have your little Peter back again, he meant so much to you."

"I guess I will go down cellar and split some kindling," said Mr. Browning. "I noticed yesterday the supply was getting

low." And he hurried downstairs to do this daily chore.

But it was some time before Mrs. Browning heard the whack of the ax, for Mr. Browning was sitting on the chopping-block wiping tears of joy from his face. He had hurried to the cellar in order that Mrs. Browning might not see his emotion. If any matter-of-fact man had peeked in at the cellar window at just that time, he would have thought Mr. Browning a sentimental old fool, but the master would not have cared, for Peter was coming home. Presently there was the sound of the whack of the ax on the kindling-wood and Mr. Browning's pleasant baritone floated up to the rooms above as he sang an old dog ditty:

"Vhere, oh, vhere hass my leetle tog gone,
Vhere, oh, vhere might he be,
Mit hiss ears cut short, and hiss tail cut long,
Vhere, oh, vhere might he be?"

Then there was more kindling-splitting and another dog ditty:

"Old dog Tray's ever faithful,
Grief cannot drive him away,
He's gentle, he is kind, I'll never, never find,
A better friend than old dog Tray."

"It is strange," remarked Mr. Browning as he stood by the sink half an hour later washing the perspiration from his face, "that one little dog should make such a great difference in this household. I would not have believed it."

"Yes," returned Mrs. Browning. "I sometimes think that a dog's love and loyalty entirely eclipses our own. Why, sometimes when I see Peter looking up at your eyes with that questioning troubled look on his face, he seems almost human."

"Yes," returned Mr. Browning, "Peter's love humbles me and makes me ashamed of my own. If we loved God as

much as our dogs love us, we should be better Christians than we are. What is more, if we loved our dogs as we ought to, the dumb creatures in this old world would be much happier than they are now. Love is religion, whether it be love for God, man, or the dumb animals, and without love our religion becomes 'as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.' Never were truer words sung than those of Coleridge in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner:*

> "'He prayeth best who loveth best,
> All things both great and small,
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.'"