

THE
STORY OF DOUGLAS

BY
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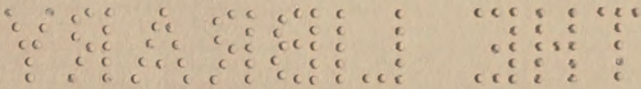
AUTHOR OF "POOR BOYS WHO BECAME FAMOUS," "GIRLS WHO BECAME FAMOUS," "FAMOUS AMERICAN AUTHORS," "FAMOUS AMERICAN STATESMEN," "FAMOUS MEN OF SCIENCE," "FAMOUS EUROPEAN ARTISTS," "FAMOUS TYPES OF WOMANHOOD," "STORIES FROM LIFE," "FROM HEART AND NATURE" (POEMS), "FAMOUS ENGLISH AUTHORS," "FAMOUS ENGLISH STATESMEN," "FAMOUS VOYAGERS," "FAMOUS LEADERS AMONG WOMEN," "FAMOUS LEADERS AMONG MEN," "SOCIAL STUDIES IN ENGLAND," "THE INEVITABLE, AND OTHER POEMS," ETC.

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THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS was a shaggy black puppy, one of a family of eleven, all of them yellow and white but himself. His fur, when you pushed it apart, showed its yellow color near the skin, revealing what he really was, — a St. Bernard.

He was the most gentle of all the puppies, and would not fight his way at the dish when the others clamored for their bread and milk, but stood apart and looked up to his mistress with a beseeching and sometimes aggrieved air. From the first he seemed to hunger for human affection, and would cry to be held in one's lap, or follow one about the house or the grounds like a petted kitten.

When quarrels took place between some members of the large family Douglas never joined, but hastened to tell it by his bark, that the disturbance might be quelled. When finally the puppies went to various homes Douglas became the property of a lady who,

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

not having children, loved him almost as a child.

He followed her up and down stairs and lay at her feet if she read. The house was well furnished, but not too good to be used and enjoyed. Douglas was not put out of doors at night to whine in the rain or sleet, or even into a barn, and wisely, for he saved the house once from very unwelcome intruders.

He gambolled beside his mistress if she walked in the woods, and when she was ill he was constantly at her bedside, refusing to eat, and seeming to suffer in her suffering. When she was unavoidably absent Douglas cried and walked the floor, and if allowed to go out of doors howled and waited on the hillside for her return.

Once when at the sea-shore he followed her without her knowledge, and plunged into the bay after her steamer. He swam till well-nigh exhausted, his agonized owner fearing every minute that he would sink, while she besought the men to stop the boat. Finally he was rescued, and though he could scarcely move the glad look in his eyes and the wag of

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

his tail told as plainly as words the joy of the reunion.

No amount of money could buy the companionable creature. He never wearied one by talk; he never showed anger, perhaps because no one spoke angrily to him. Some persons like to show authority, even over a dog, and talk loud and harsh, but Douglas's owner was too wise and too good for this. Kindness begot kindness, and the puppy who longed for love appreciated it none the less when he was grown, and could protect the woman who loved him.

One autumn day, just before leaving her country home for the city, Miss Benson was obliged to return to town for a half day. "Good-by, dear Douglas," she said in her usual way. "I shall come home soon," and the unwilling creature followed her with his brown eyes, and whined that he could not go also. Later in the afternoon he was let out of doors, and soon disappeared.

When Miss Benson returned her first word was, "Douglas! Douglas!" but there was no response to her call. He had followed her, had

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

lost the trail, and had gone too far to find his way back to his home. In vain she called for her pet. She left the door ajar, hoping at nightfall she should hear the patter of his feet, or his eager bark to come in, but he did not come. She wondered where he slept, if he slept at all; thought a dozen times in the night that she heard him crying at the door; imagined him moaning for her, or, supperless and exhausted, lying down by the roadside, to wait for the sunrise to begin his fruitless journey.

Douglas had become that sad thing, a lost dog. He belonged to nobody now, and both owner and dog were desolate. Miss Benson could scarcely go about her work. She spent days in searching, and hired others to search, but all was useless. For weeks she thought Douglas might possibly come back. If she could know that he was dead, that even would be a consolation; but to fear he was cold and hungry, to realize that the world is all too indifferent to animals, unless perchance they are our own, to imagine he might be in some medical college, the victim of the surgeon's knife, — all this was bitter in the extreme. Weeping

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

and searching did no good, and finally the inevitable had to be accepted, though the sadness in Miss Benson's heart did not fade out.

As is ever the case, those of us who have lost something precious become more tender and helpful in a world full of losses. Miss Benson welcomed and cared for every stray animal that she found, perhaps never quite giving up the hope that she would see gentle, great-hearted Douglas again.

And what of Douglas? He ran fast at first, eager to overtake the one to whom he was passionately devoted. She had been gone so long that he soon lost track of her footsteps, and then with a dazed look he began to howl, hoping that she would hear his voice. He lay down to rest, but it was growing dark and he was hungry.

He stopped at a large house and the servants drove him away. He was unused to this, but he dragged himself along to the next place. Here a kind woman gave him something to eat, and would have made him welcome for the night, but he would not stay after he had eaten. He must needs wander on, hoping to find his

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

home and his beloved mistress. All night long he tramped, lying down now and then by the side of the road to rest a few minutes.

The next day was a hard one. He was beginning to realize that he was lost. He ran more slowly, looked eagerly at every passer-by, and seemed half demented. At night he stopped at a home where the lights had just been lighted, and some pretty children seemed flitting from room to room. He whined at the back door.

A flaxen-haired little girl opened it. "Oh, mamma," said the child, "here is a big black dog, and I know he is hungry! May I feed him?"

"No," replied the woman, "take a whip and send him off. I will have no lean stray dogs about this house."

"But he looks hungry, mother," pleaded little Emma Bascomb, "and I know he won't bite."

Mrs. Bascomb, pity it is to tell it, was a very pious person, never failing to be present at prayer-meetings, always deeply interested in the heathen, and most helpful at sewing soci-

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

eties of the church. She never fed stray cats or dogs, as she did not wish them to stay at her house. She did not remember that God made them, and that He lets not a sparrow fall to the ground without His notice, and she forgot that she was to emulate Him.

Mrs. Bascomb varied her treatment of stray dogs and cats. Sometimes she used a long black whip, sometimes pails of water. On this occasion she threw on Douglas, already weak and hungry, a pail of cold water, and sent him frightened and hurt away from her door. Emma protested. "When I have a home of my own, mamma," she said, "I will never turn away a dog or a cat hungry." The child knew that it was useless to say more, as a stray cat had stayed about the house for a week, and Mrs. Bascomb had refused to feed it, burning up the scraps from the table lest some starving animal might be tempted to remain. And yet the Bascombs had family prayers, and asked God to provide clothes for the needy and food for the hungry!

Douglas was beginning to learn the sorrows of the poor and homeless. He longed to see

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

some familiar face, to hear some familiar voice. He went on and on, and it began to rain. It was almost sleet, and the dog, used to a warm fire, shivered and longed for shelter. Approaching a large rambling house with a shed attached, Douglas ran under it for cover, and crouched down at the side under a bench. A man came out with a lamp. Evidently he had been drinking, for his step was unsteady. He had come out to close the shed door, and espying the dog gave him a kick with his hard boot.

“Get out, you scoundrel! What are you doing here?” he said gruffly, and poor Douglas ran as though a gun had been fired at him.

“Oh, if there were only a home for such lost ones!” he must have thought; but there was none, and again the hungry and wet dog travelled on. A wagon soon passed with two men in it, and Douglas followed, hoping it would lead to a home for him. “Whip him off,” said one of the men to the other. “We’ve got two dogs already, and my wife would never allow a third,” and they brandished the whip in the rear and drove on. Douglas crawled under

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

a tree, and rolling himself as nearly as he could into a round ball for warmth finally fell asleep.

In the morning he started again on his toilsome journey. He was lame now and half sick. Soon the houses were nearer together, and Douglas realized that he was coming into a city. He did not know there was little room for dogs in an overcrowded, fashionable city. There was little green grass to roam over, and the rushing world did not want the bother of animals. Perhaps, however, where there were so many people there would be some kind hearts, he thought.

He crept along and looked into the window of a restaurant. There was a boiled ham in the window, cake, pies, and other attractive things. He wagged his tail a little, and looked into a man's face as he went in, but the man paid no attention. Then a young lady passed, and she said, "Poor dog!" but went on.

Douglas walked away and lay down in front of a store, but a man came and said, "Get out! The ladies will be afraid of you."

Douglas looked no longer the petted, handsome creature of several days before. The dust

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

had settled in his black hair, which looked rough and coarse. He was thin and dejected. An unthinking boy chased him, and threw something at him, and as he was too peaceable to resent it he hurried along an alley and tried to hide up a stairway. A big red-faced man came out of a room at the head of the stairs and kicked him down the steps.

Douglas ran into a shoe-store. Three men cornered him with a broom and a pole, and one man, braver than the others, put a cloth over his head, and then seized him by the hind legs and threw him into the street. Then somebody on the sidewalk said, "That dog acts strangely. He must be mad!"

That was enough to excite the passers-by, who had read in the papers various accounts of supposed cases of rabies. "He is weak," said one person, "and he totters." "He is frothing at the mouth," said another. A boot-black ran after him and threw his box at the thoroughly frightened animal. A crowd gathered, and ran and shouted. "Shoot him! Shoot him!" was the eager cry.

Douglas did indeed froth at the mouth from

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

excessive running. A lady hurried along and said, "Let me have the dog. He is not mad, but has lost his owner. Frothing at the mouth is not a sign of hydrophobia, as the best physicians will tell you."

"No, madam," said a looker-on. "Don't touch the dog. We men will not allow you to be bitten."

A policeman fired his pistol, and the ball entered Douglas's shoulder. Half dead with pain as well as fright, the dog rushed on and finally escaped.

He lay in his hiding-place till midnight, and then when no human eye could see him he crept away from the city. If only Miss Benson could see him now, and dress his wounds, and say the petting words of old that he had so loved to hear!

Towards morning, exhausted, he lay down by the fence in the front yard of a house in the outskirts of the city. The owner of the home was a lawyer, a kind-hearted man, in part because he had a noble mother and wife.

"There's a poor wounded dog on our lawn, Jeannette," Mr. Goodman said to his wife. "Call

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

him in at the back door, and we'll see if we can't help him."

Mrs. Goodman took a basin of warm water and castile soap and carefully washed the wound, the children standing about and anxiously watching the operation. "Nice dog," said Teddy, a boy of five. "He no bite."

"No," said his mother, as Douglas looked pitifully up into her face. "He is a kind dog, and must belong to a good home somewhere."

After she had finished washing the sore and tender place Douglas licked her hand in appreciation. "Have Dr. Thayer come in," — he was the veterinary surgeon, — said Mrs. Goodman to her husband. "We might as well make the care of animals a part of our missionary work in the world. The doctor will find the ball, if it is still there, and save the dog, I hope."

"All right, wife," said Mr. Goodman, as he started for the office.

"I suppose you want some breakfast, doggie," said Mrs. Goodman, and she placed before Douglas a dish of meat and of milk. Douglas was too tired and too full of pain to eat much, but he felt as though a new world

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

had opened to him. After all, there were some good people in the land, and at last he had reached them.

Dr. Thayer came, found the ball in the patient, abused animal, and the wounded shoulder soon began to heal.

When night came Mrs. Goodman made Douglas a warm bed of blankets by the kitchen stove, for she knew that a cold kennel was not a suitable place for him. Later he was washed and dried, by rubbing with cloths, till his coat was silky and black.

Teddy and the dog became inseparable companions. Wherever the child went Douglas was always close behind him, now licking his extended hand, now lying down for the child to clamber over him, or to lay his dark curls against the darker curls of the dog. They shared their food, and they frequently went to sleep together, if it could be called sleep on the part of the dog, whose eyes were usually open that his little charge might be guarded. Douglas never showed an inclination to bite unless some one touched the boy, and then he growled and looked concerned.

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

One summer day Teddy and a playmate wandered off with the dog during Mrs. Goodman's absence. They sat down under a tree and all three lunched together. Then they played along the meadow till the banks of a river were reached. Two men were working near by and occasionally watched the children at their play, as they dabbled their hands in the water. Finally they heard a child scream, and before they could reach the place Douglas was dragging Teddy, dripping and frightened, from the river. The men carried the boy home to his awe-struck but overjoyed parents, and Douglas, wet and excited, was praised for his heroic conduct.

A year later, when Teddy went to school, Douglas missed his comrade, and for days whined piteously. He never failed to go, at the regular hour for closing school, to meet his little friend, and always brought home in his teeth the dinner basket of the lad. Sometimes Douglas whined in his sleep, as though he were dreaming of other days, but love for Teddy made him, on the whole, very happy.

When Teddy was seven years old diphtheria

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

raged in the school, and marked him for one of its victims. No love or care could save him.

When conscious, he could not bear Douglas out of his sight or reach. As in the case with his former mistress, Douglas neither ate nor slept. When all was over he disappeared. Where he went nobody knew. Probably he lay upon the grave of the child, and later wandered off, thinking perchance to find again his first love.

The Goodmans had intended to leave their home in the suburbs and move to the city before their boy died, and now Mrs. Goodman was anxious to go away from the place as quickly as possible. A home was soon obtained, and the family moved thither. They deeply regretted that Douglas could not be found to go with them, because they were much attached to him for his own sake, and because he was so dear to their child.

Douglas meantime had hunted far and wide for his lost ones. He had the same bitter experience of neglect and hunger, but a dog's love is his strongest quality, and despite suffering he was seeking his own. Miss Benson he

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

could not find; that was past hope, but Teddy, perhaps, he might see again. Probably Douglas did not know that death has no awakening in this world, and that Teddy could never come to his home, but the dog finally stole back to the porch and yard where they had played together and waited, hoping that the boy would come. The house was vacant. Some neighbors saw him on the steps, but he went away again. Finally a policeman saw him and heard him howl.

“Whose dog is that?” he said to a neighbor.

“It’s a dog that came to the Goodmans and disappeared when their little boy died. I suppose he has come back to find the child,” was the reply.

“Ah!” said the man, “and he has n’t any collar on his neck. He is unlicensed. I will send the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals after him.”

“I’ll see that he does n’t starve,” said the woman. “Will the Society find a home for him?”

“Oh, no, they can’t find homes for so many as they take off the streets! They’ll kill him.”

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

“He is n't to blame for not being licensed. I don't see the use of the license law, because it means the death of so many thousands of animals.”

“Neither do I,” said the kind-hearted policeman. “Poor folks can't always pay the fee. I love my dog, and he's a great comfort to my children. But I don't make the law. I only help to enforce it.”

“What is done with the license money? It makes so much heartache it ought to do great good.”

“I've heard that it is given sometimes to public schools and to libraries to buy books on kindness to animals, and sometimes to the Humane Society so that they can pay men to catch and kill unlicensed dogs. You see, the licensed dogs help to kill the unlicensed and homeless,” said the man.

“I should think a better way would be to provide homes for the really homeless instead of killing them. I think that we have a duty to animals, seeing that they are under our protection.”

The policeman told the S. P. C. A. that a

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

black unlicensed dog was howling on the steps of a vacant house because his little friend had died. Two officers in a big wagon hastened to the spot, caught him, and threw him in with a score of other animals which they had seized on the street.

Douglas cowered in the corner, and wondered what new sorrow had befallen him. The other poor things were as frightened as himself. Two were black and white puppies scarcely bigger than kittens, and two were pretty black-and-tan pets. A large mastiff looked out of her great brown eyes, trembling from head to foot. One shepherd dog was poor and thin, but most looked well cared for, only they had no collars, and their owners had not paid their license fee.

The wagon soon reached a barn-like structure, and the animals were hastily emptied into a pen with sawdust on the floor. What was in store for them they could only guess. After a time they were offered a mixture of meal and meat, but most were too frightened to eat.

All the next day they listened for footsteps, hoping that some friend would come for them. Douglas lay in the corner and expected no-

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

body. Miss Benson did not know where he was, and Teddy had never come back when he howled for him.

There was a large pen adjoining that of Douglas, and this was filled with dogs — fox-terriers, some black like himself, and several yellow ones. Cats, many of them large and handsome, were in cages about the room. Some animals had been brought to the pound, or refuge, by persons who did not or could not take the trouble to find homes for them. An advertisement in the paper saying that a dog had been found and would be given to a good home would in almost every case have met with responses, but this cost a little money and time.

A boy brought in two pretty creatures, one red and the other yellow, which he said he had found without collars. A woman had hired him and other children by paying each a few cents to do this work, which meant almost certain death to animals, believing, probably, that she was doing good.

Late in the afternoon Douglas witnessed a strange, sad sight. Every cat, fifty or more, was thrown into a large cage, and poisonous

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

gas turned in upon them. The terrified creatures huddled together, as though they knew their helplessness in the hands of their destroyers, and died.

Then several men, as soon as the cats were removed, threw the shrinking, crying dogs into the cage, and they too were soon dead, piled upon each other. Douglas and the rest knew that their turn would come soon.

On the second day a lady called at the refuge because her own city contemplated establishing a home (?) where dogs could be killed, the license fees to be used to pay the salaries of the S. P. C. A. agents. Her heart was touched by the appealing looks of the helpless animals. She went away and found homes for two fox-terriers, paid the license fees and fines, and the dogs were released, licking her hands, as though they realized from what they had been saved.

Douglas crept towards the visitor, because he had been used to a woman's voice. He was thin, but his eyes were as beautiful as when he was a puppy and responded to the petting of Miss Benson's gentle hands.

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

“You have been a handsome dog,” the lady said to Douglas, “and somebody has loved you. I know of a place for you. A noble woman who loves dogs has provided a home for the homeless, as far as her means will allow, and is devoting her life to the care of such of God’s creatures as you are. Would you like to go with me?”

Douglas whined, and the other poor animals crowded around as much as to say, “Can you not take us too, and save us from death to-morrow? We cannot pay the license, but we would love and protect anybody who would pay it and take us home.” The lady could not take them all — the city and State, by reason of their wealth and humaneness, instead of license or tax, should provide homes for those committed to their keeping by the Creator. Douglas was let out, and followed the lady with a thankful heart, but with a downcast look, as though life had been so uncertain that he could not be sure of anything good in the future.

The lady hired a cab, and the dog lay at her feet. They were driven to an attractive-looking

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

brick house, with several small buildings adjoining. A young girl came to the door.

“Do you wish to see the matron of the Dogs’ Home?” said the girl.

“Yes, I am a friend of the matron,” said the lady, “and I have taken a fancy to a homeless dog and have brought him here to find a home.”

The matron soon appeared, and, with one wild cry, Douglas sprang into her arms. It was Miss Benson, who, since she had lost Douglas, had been moved to spend her life and her fortune for other dogs who were lost.

“Oh, Douglas! Douglas!” she exclaimed, while the visitor looked on with amazement. “Have you found me and I you at last?” And the dog whined and caressed her till she feared he would die from excess of joy unless she calmed him.

“You and I will never be parted again. You shall live here and help care for other lost and unwanted ones.”

For years Douglas thankfully shared in the care and love of his mistress. She could not bear to see him grow old, but he had suffered

THE STORY OF DOUGLAS.

too much to live to the usual age of St. Bernards. When he died his head was in Miss Benson's lap, and his great brown eyes looked upon her face and whitening hair as the last precious thing to be seen in life. She buried him and laid flowers upon his grave, for was he not her devoted, loyal friend? A neat headstone tells where faithful Douglas sleeps.

