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CHAPTER I

THE GRAY DOG

THE sun stared brazenly down on a gray farmhouse lying, long and low in the shadow of the Muir Pike; on the ruins of peel-tower and barmkyn, relics of the time of raids, it looked; on ranges of whitewashed outbuildings; on a goodly array of dark-thatched ricks.

In the stack-yard, behind the lengthy range of stables, two men were thatching. One lay sprawling on the crest of the rick, the other stood perched on a ladder at a lower level.

The latter, small, old, with shrewd nut-brown countenance, was Tammias Thornton, who had served the Moores of Kenmuir for more than half a century. The other, on top of the stack, wrapped apparently in gloomy meditation, was Sam'l Todd. A solid Dalesman, he, with huge hands and hairy arms; about his face an uncomely aureole of stiff, red hair; and on his features, deep-seated, an expression of resolute melancholy.

"Ay, the Gray Dogs, bless 'em!" the old man was saying. "Yo' canna beat 'em not nohow. Known 'em ony time this sixty year, I have, and niver knew a bad un yet. Not as

I say, mind ye, as any on 'em cooms up to Rex son o' Rally. Ah, he was a one, was Rex! We's never won Cup since his day."

"Nor niver shall agin, yo' may depend," said the other gloomily.

Tammas clucked irritably.

"G'long, Sam'l Todd!" he cried. "Yo' niver happy onless yo' making' yo'self miser'ble. I niver see sich a chap. Niver win agin? Why, oor young Bob he'll mak' a right un, I tell yo', and I should know. Not as what he'll touch Rex son o' Rally, mark ye! I'm niver saying' so, Sam'l Todd. Ah, he was a one, was Rex! I could tell yo' a tale or two o' Rex. I mind me hoo——"

The big man interposed hurriedly.

"I've heard it afore, Tammas, I welly 'ave," he said.

Tammas paused and looked angrily up.

"Yo've heard it afore, have yo', Sam'l Todd?" he asked sharply. "And what have yo' heard afore?"

"Yo' stories, owd lad—yo' stories o' Rex son o' Rally."

"Which on' em

"All on 'em, Tammas, all on 'em—mony a time. I'm fair sick on 'em, Tammas, I welly am," he pleaded.

The old man gasped. He brought down his mallet with a vicious smack.

"I'll niver tell yo' a tale agin, Sam'l Todd, not if yo' was to go on yo' bended knees for't.

Nay; it bain't no manner o' use talkin'. Niver agin, says I."

"I niver askt yo'," declared honest Sam'l.

"Nor it wouldna ha' bin no manner o' use if yo' had," said the other viciously. "I'll niver tell yo' a tale agin if I was to live to be a hunderd."

"Yo'll not live to be a hunderd, Tammas Thornton, nor near it," said Sam'l brutally.

"I'll live as long as some, I warrant," the old man replied with spirit. "I'll live to see Cup back i' Kenmuir, as I said afore."

"If yo' do," the other declared with emphasis, "Sam'l Todd niver spake a true word. Nay, nay, lad; yo're owd, yo're wambly, your time's near run or I'm the more mistook."

"For mussy's sake hold yo' tongue, Sam'l Todd! It's clack-clack all day——" The old man broke off suddenly, and buckled to his work with suspicious vigor. "Mak' a show yo' bin workin', lad," he whispered. "Here's Master and oor Bob."

As he spoke, a tall gaitered man with weather-beaten face, strong, lean, austere, and the blue-gray eyes of the hill-country, came striding into the yard. And trotting soberly at his heels, with the gravest, saddest eyes ever you saw, a sheep-dog puppy.

A rare dark gray he was, his long coat, dashed here and there with lighter touches, like a stormy sea moonlit. Upon his chest an escutcheon of purest white, and the dome

of his head showered, as it were, with a sprinkling of snow. Perfectly compact, utterly lithe, inimitably graceful with his airy-fairy action; a gentleman every inch, you could not help but stare at him—Owd Bob o' Kenmuir.

At the foot of the ladder the two stopped. And the young dog, placing his forepaws on a lower rung, looked up, slowly waving his silvery brush.

"A proper Gray Dog!" mused Tammas, gazing down into the dark face beneath him. "Small, yet big; light to get about on backs o' his sheep, yet not too light. Wi' a coat hard a-top to keep oot Daleland weather, soft as sealskin beneath. And wi' them sorrerful eyes on him as niver goes but wi' a good un. Amaist he minds me o' Rex son o' Rally."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" groaned Sam'l. But the old man heard him not.

"Did 'Enry Farewether tell yo' hoo he acted this mornin', Master?" he inquired, addressing the man at the foot of the ladder.

"Nay," said the other, his stern eyes lighting.

"Why, 'twas this way, it seems," Tammas continued. "Young bull gets 'isself loose somegate and marches oot into yard, o'erturns milkpail, and prods owd pigs i' ribs. And as he stands lookin' about un, thinking' what he shall be up to next, oor Bob sees un. 'An' what yo' doin' here, Mr. Bull?' he seems

to say, cockin' his ears and trottin' up gaylike. Wi' that bull bloats fit to bust 'isself, lashes wi's tail, waggles his head, and gets agate o' chargin' 'im. But Bob leaps oot o' way, quick as lightnin' yet cool as butter, and when he's done his foolin drives un back agin."

"Who seed all this?" interposed Sam'l, sceptically.

"'Enry Farewether from the loft. So there, Fat'ead!" Tammas replied, and continued his tale. "So they goes on; bull chargin' and Bob drivin' un back and back, hoppin' in and oot agin, quiet as a cowcumber, yet determined. At last Mr. Bull sees it's no manner o' use that gate, so he turns, rares up, and tries to jump wall. Nary a bit. Young dog jumps in on un and nips him by tail. Wi' that, bull tumbles down in a hurry, turns wi' a kind o' groan, and marches back into stall, Bob after un. And then, dang me!"—the old man beat the ladder as he loosed off this last tidbit,—“if he doesna sit' issel' i' door like a sentrynel till 'Enry Farewether coom up. Hoo's that for a tyke not yet a year?"

Even Sam'l Todd was moved by the tale.

"Well done, oor Bob!" he cried.

"Good, lad!" said the Master, laying a hand on the dark head at his knee.

"Yo' may well say that," cried Tammas in a kind of ecstasy. "A proper Gray Dog, I tell yo'. Wi' the brains of a man and the way of

a woman. Ah, yo' canna beat 'em nohow, the Gray Dogs o' Kenmuir!"

The patter of cheery feet rang out on the plank-bridge over the stream below them. Tammas glanced round.

"Here's David," he said. "Late this mornin' he be."

A fair-haired boy came spurring up the slope, his face all aglow with the speed of his running. Straightway the young dog dashed off to meet him with a fiery speed his sober gait belied. The two raced back together into the yard.

"Poor lad!" said Sam'l gloomily, regarding the newcomer.

"Poor heart!" muttered Tammas. While the Master's face softened visibly. Yet there looked little to pity in this jolly, rocking lad with the tousle of light hair and fresh, rosy countenance.

"G'mornin', Mister Moore! Morn'n, Tammas! Morn'n, Sam'l!" he panted as he passed; and ran on through the hay-carpeted yard, round the corner of the stable, and into the house.

In the kitchen, a long room with red-tiled floor and latticed windows, a woman, white-aproned and frail-faced, was bustling about her morning business. To her skirts clung a sturdy, bare-legged boy; while at the oak table in the centre of the room a girl with brown eyes and straggling hair was seated before a basin of bread and milk.

"So yo've coom at last, David!" the woman cried, as the boy entered; and, bending, greeted him with a tender, motherly salutation, which he returned as affectionately. "I welly thowt yo'd forgot us this mornin'. Noo sit you' doon beside oor Maggie." And soon he, too, was engaged in a task twin to the girl's.

The two children munched away in silence, the little bare-legged boy watching them, the while, critically. Irritated by this prolonged stare, David at length turned on him.

"Weel, little Andrew," he said, speaking in that paternal fashion in which one small boy loves to address another. "Weel, ma little lad, yo'm coomin' along gradely." He leant back in his chair the better to criticise his subject. But Andrew, like all the Moores, slow of speech, reserved a stolid silence, sucking a chubby thumb, and regarding his patron a thought cynically.

David resented the expression on the boy's countenance, and half rose to his feet.

"Yo' put another face on yo', Andrew Moore," he cried threateningly, "or I'll put it for yo'."

Maggie, however, interposed opportunely.

"Did yo' feyther beat yo' last night?" she inquired in a low voice; and there was a shade of anxiety in the soft brown eyes.

"Nay," the boy answered; "he was a-goin' to, but he never did. Drunk," he added in explanation.

"What was he goin' to beat yo' for, David?" asked Mrs. Moore.

"What for? Why, for the fun o't—to see me squiggle," the boy replied, and laughed bitterly.

"Yo' shouldna speak so o' your dad, David," reproved the other as severely as was in her nature.

"Dad! a fine dad! I'd dad him an I'd the chance," the boy muttered beneath his breath. Then, to turn the conversation:

"Us should be startin', Maggie," he said, and going to the door. "Bob! Owd Bob, lad! Ar't coomin' along?" he called.

The gray dog came springing up like an antelope, and the three started off for school together.

Mrs. Moore stood in the doorway, holding Andrew by the hand, and watched the departing trio.

"'Tis a pretty pair, Master, surely," she said softly to her husband, who came up at the moment.

"Ay, he'll be a fine lad if his feyther'll let him," the tall man answered.

"'Tis a shame Mr. M'Adam should lead him such a life," the woman continued indignantly. She laid a hand on her husband's arm, and looked up at him coaxingly.

"Could yo' not say summat to un, Master, think 'ee? Happen he'd 'tend to you," she pleaded. For Mrs. Moore imagined that there could be no one but would gladly heed what

James Moore, Master of Kenmuir, might say to him. "He's not a bad un at bottom, I do believe," she continued. "He never took on so till his missus died. Eh, but he was main fond o' her."

Her husband shook his head

"Nay, mother," he said "'Twould nob' but mak' it worse for t' lad. M'Adam'd listen to no one, let alone me." And, indeed, he was right; for the tenant of the Grange made no secret of his animosity for his straight-going, straight-speaking neighbor.

Owd Bob, in the mean time, had escorted the children to the larch-copse bordering on the lane which leads to the village. Now he crept stealthily back to the yard, and established himself behind the water-butt.

How he played and how he laughed; how he teased old Whitecap till that gray gander all but expired of apoplexy and impotence; how he ran the roan bull-calf, and aroused the bitter wrath of a portly sow, mother of many, is of no account.

At last, in the midst of his merry mischief-making, a stern voice arrested him.

"Bob, lad, I see 'tis time we larned you yo' letters."

So the business of life began for that dog of whom the simple farmer-folk of the Daleland still love to talk,—Bob, son of Battle, last of the Gray Dogs of Kenmuir.

CHAPTER II

A SON OF HAGAR

It is a lonely country, that about the Wastrel-dale.

Parson Leggy Hornbut will tell you that his is the smallest church in the biggest parish north of the Derwent, and that his cure numbers more square miles than parishioners. Of fells and ghylls it consists, of becks and lakes; with here a scattered hamlet and there a solitary hill sheep-farm. It is a country in which sheep are paramount; and every other Dalesman is engaged in that profession which is as old as Abel. And the talk of the men of the land is of wethers and gimmers, of tup-hoggs, ewe tegs in wool, and other things which are but fearsome names to you and me; and always of the doings or misdoings, the intelligence or stupidity, of their adjutants, the sheep-dogs.

Of all the Daleland, the country from the Black Water to Grammoch Pike is the wildest. Above the tiny stone-built village of Wastrel-dale the Muir Pike nods its massive head. Westward, the desolate Mere Marches, from which the Sylvesters' great estate derives its name, reach away in mile on mile of sheep

infested, wind-swept moorland. On the far side of the Marches is that twin dale where flows the gentle Silver Lea. And it is there in the paddocks at the back of the Dalesman's Daughter, that, in the late summer months, the famous sheep-dog Trials of the North are held. There that the battle for the Dale Cup, the world-known Shepherds' Trophy, is fought out.

Past the little inn leads the turnpike road to the market-centre of the district—Grammoch-town. At the bottom of the paddocks at the back of the inn winds the Silver Lea. Just there a plank bridge crosses the stream, and, beyond, the Murk Muir Pass crawls up the sheer side of the Scaur on to the Mere Marches.

At the head of the Pass, before it debouches on to those lonely sheep-walks which divide the two dales, is that hollow, shuddering with gloomy possibilities, aptly called the Devil's Bowl. In its centre the Lone Tarn, weirdly suggestive pool, lifts its still face to the sky. It was beside that black, frozen water, across whose cold surface the storm was swirling in white snow-wraiths, that, many, many years ago (not in this century), old Andrew Moore came upon the mother of the Gray Dogs of Kenmuir.

In the North, every one who has heard of the Muir Pike—and who has not?—has heard of the Gray Dogs of Kenmuir, every one who

has heard of the Shepherd's Trophy—and who has not?—knows their fame. In that country of good dogs and jealous masters the pride of place has long been held unchallenged. Whatever line may claim to follow the Gray Dogs always lead the van. And there is a saying in the land: "Faithfu' as the Moores and their tykes."

On the top dresser to the right of the fireplace in the kitchen of Kenmuir lies the family Bible. At the end you will find a loose sheet—the pedigree of the Gray Dogs; at the beginning, pasted on the inside, an almost similar sheet, long since yellow with age—the family register of the Moores of Kenmuir.

Running your eye down the loose leaf, once, twice, and again it will be caught by a small red cross beneath a name, and under the cross the one word "Cup." Lastly, opposite the name of Rex son of Rally, are two of those proud, tell-tale marks. The cup referred to is the renowned Dale Cup—Champion Challenge Dale Cup, open to the world. Had Rex won it but once again the Shepherds' Trophy, which many men have lived to win, and died still striving after, would have come to rest forever in the little gray house below the Pike.

It was not to be, however. Comparing the two sheets, you read beneath the dog's name a date and a pathetic legend; and on the other sheet, written in his son's boyish hand, beneath

the name of Andrew Moore the same date and the same legend.

From that day James Moore, then but a boy, was master of Kenmuir.

So past Grip and Rex and Rally, and a hundred others, until at the foot of the page you come to that last name—Bob, son of Battle.

From the very first the young dog took to his work in a manner to amaze even James Moore. For a while he watched his mother, Meg, at her business, and with that seemed to have mastered the essentials of sheep tactics.

Rarely had such fiery élan been seen on the sides of the Pike; and with it the young dog combined a strange sobriety, an admirable patience, that justified, indeed, the epithet "Owd." Silent he worked, and resolute; and even in those days had that famous trick of coaxing the sheep to do his wishes;—blending, in short, as Tammas put it, the brains of a man with the way of a woman.

Parson Leggy, who was reckoned the best judge of a sheep or sheep-dog 'twixt Tyne and Tweed, summed him up in the one word "Genius." And James Moore himself, cautious man, was more than pleased.

In the village, the Dalesmen, who took a personal pride in the Gray Dogs of Kenmuir, began to nod sage heads when "oor" Bob was mentioned. Jim Mason, the postman, whose word went as far with the villagers as Parson

Leggy's with the gentry, reckoned he'd never seen a young un as so took his fancy.

That winter it grew quite the recognized thing, when they had gathered of a night round the fire in the Sylvester Arms, with Tammas in the centre, old Jonas Maddox on his right, Rob Saunderson of the Holt on the left, and the others radiating away toward the sides, for some one to begin with:

"Well, and what o' oor Bob, Mr. Thornton?"

To which Tammas would always make reply:

"Oh, yo' ask Sam'l there. He'll tell yo' better'n me,"—and would forthwith plunge, himself, into a yarn.

And the way in which, as the story proceeded, Tupper of Swinsthwaite winked at Ned Hoppin of Fellsgarth, and Long Kirby, the smith, poked Jem Burton, the publican, in the ribs, and Sexton Ross said, "Ma word, lad!" spoke more eloquently than many words.

One man only never joined in the chorus of admiration. Sitting always alone in the background, little M'Adam would listen with an incredulous grin on his sallow face.

"Oh, ma certes! The devil's in the dog! It's no cannie ava!" he would continually exclaim, as Tammas told his tale.

In the Daleland you rarely see a stranger's face. Wandering in the wild country about

the twin dales at the time of this story, you might have met Parson Leggy, striding along with a couple of varmint terriers at his heels, and young Cyril Gilbraith, whom he was teaching to tie flies and fear God, beside him; or Jim Mason, postman by profession, poacher by predilection, honest man and sportsman by nature, hurrying along with the mail-bags on his shoulder, a rabbit in his pocket, and the faithful Betsy a yard behind. Besides these you might have hit upon a quiet shepherd and a wise-faced dog; Squire Sylvester, going his rounds upon a sturdy cob; or, had you been lucky, sweet Lady Eleanour bent upon some errand of mercy to one of the many tenants.

It was while the Squire's lady was driving through the village on a visit* to Tammas's slobbering grandson—it was shortly after Billy Thornton's advent into the world—that little M'Adam, standing in the door of the Sylvester Arms, with a twig in his mouth and a sneer fading from his lips, made his ever-memorable remark:

"Sall!" he said, speaking in low, earnest voice; "'tis a muckle wumman."

*NOTE—It was this visit which figured in the Grammoctown *Argus* (local and radical) under the heading of "Alleged Wholesale Corruption by Tory Agents." And that is why, on the following market day, Herbert Trotter, journalist, erstwhile gentleman, and Secretary of the Dale Trials, found himself trying to swim in the public horse-trough.

"What? What be sayin', mon?" cried old Jonas, startled out of his usual apathy.

M'Adam turned sharply on the old man.

"I said the wumman wears a muckle hat!" he snapped.

Blotted out as it was, the observation still remains—a tribute of honest admiration. Doubtless the Recording Angel did not pass it by. That one statement anent the gentle lady of the manor is the only personal remark ever credited to little M'Adam not born of malice and all uncharitableness. And that is why it is ever memorable.

The little Scotsman with the sardonic face had been the tenant of the Grange these many years; yet he had never grown acclimatized to the land of the Southron. With his shrivelled body and weakly legs he looked among the sturdy, straight-limbed sons of the hill-country like some brown, wrinkled leaf holding its place midst a galaxy of green. And as he differed from them physically, so he did morally.

He neither understood them nor attempted to. The North-country character was an unsolved mystery to him, and that after ten years' study. "One-half o' what ye say they doot, and they let ye see it; t'ither half they disbelieve, and they tell ye so," he once said. And that explained his attitude toward them, and consequently theirs toward him.

He stood entirely alone; a son of Hagar,

mocking. His sharp, ill tongue was rarely still, and always bitter. There was hardly a man in the land, from Langholm How to the market-cross in Grammoch-town, but had at one time known its sting, endured it in silence,—for they are slow of speech, these men of the fells and meres,—and was nursing his resentment till a day should bring that chance which always comes. And when at the Sylvester Arms, on one of those rare occasions when M'Adam was not present, Tammas summed up the little man in that historic phrase of his, "When he's drunk he's wi'lent, and when he bain't he's wicious," there was an applause to gratify the blasé heart of even Tammas Thornton.

Yet it had not been till his wife's death that the little man had allowed loose rein to his ill-nature. With her firmly gentle hand no longer on the tiller of his life, it burst into fresh being. And alone in the world with David, the whole venom of his vicious temperament was ever directed against the boy's head. It was as though he saw in his fair-haired son the unconscious cause of his ever-living sorrow. All the more strange this, seeing that, during her life, the boy had been to poor Flora M'Adam as her heart's core. And the lad was growing up the very antithesis of his father. Big and hearty, with never an ache or ill in the whole of his sturdy young body; of frank, open countenance; while

even his speech was slow and burring like any Dale-bred boy's. And the fact of it all, and that the lad was palpably more Englishman than Scot—ay, and gloried in it—exasperated the little man, a patriot before everything, to blows. While, on top of it, David evinced an amazing pertness fit to have tried a better man than Adam M'Adam.

On the death of his wife, kindly Elizabeth Moore had, more than once, offered such help to the lonely little man as a woman only can give in a house that knows no mistress. On the last of these occasions, after crossing the Stony Bottom, which divides the two farms, and toiling up the hill to the Grange, she had met M'Adam in the door.

"Yo' maun let me put yo' bit things straight for yo', mister," she had said shyly; for she feared the little man.

"Thank ye, Mrs. Moore," he had answered with the sour smile the Dalesmen knew so well, "but ye maun think I'm a waefu' cripple." And there he had stood, grinning sardonically, opposing his small bulk in the very centre of the door.

Mrs. Moore had turned down the hill, abashed and hurt at the reception of her offer; and her husband, proud to a fault, had forbidden her to repeat it. Nevertheless her motherly heart went out in a great tenderness for the little orphan David. She knew well the desolateness of his life; his father's

aversion from him, and its inevitable consequences.

It became an institution for the boy to call every morning at Kenmuir, and trot off to the village school with Maggie Moore. And soon the lad came to look on Kenmuir as his true home, and James and Elizabeth Moore as his real parents. His greatest happiness was to be away from the Grange. And the ferret-eyed little man there noted the fact, bitterly resented it, and vented his ill-humor accordingly.

It was this, as he deemed it, uncalled-for trespassing on his authority which was the chief cause of his animosity against James Moore. The Master of Kenmuir it was at whom he was aiming when he remarked one day at the Arms: "Masel', I aye prefaire the good man who does no go to church, to the bad man who does. But then, as ye say, Mr. Burton, I'm peculiar."

The little man's treatment of David, exaggerated as it was by eager credulity, became at length such a scandal to the Dale that Parson Leggy determined to bring him to task on the matter.

Now M'Adam was the parson's pet antipathy. The bluff old minister, with his brusque manner and big heart, would have no truck with the man who never went to church, was perpetually in liquor, and never spoke good of his neighbors. Yet he entered upon the interview fully resolved not to be betrayed

into an unworthy expression of feeling; rather to appeal to the little man's better nature.

The conversation had not been in progress two minutes, however, before he knew that, where he had meant to be calmly persuasive, he was fast become hotly abusive.

"You, Mr. Hornbut, wi' James Moore to help ye, look after the lad's soul, I'll see to his body," the little man was saying.

The parson's thick gray eyebrows lowered threateningly over his eyes.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to talk like that. Which d'you think the more important, soul or body? Oughtn't you, his father, to be the very first to care for the boy's soul? If not, who should? Answer me, sir."

The little man stood smirking and sucking his eternal twig, entirely unmoyed by the other's heat.

"Ye're right, Mr. Hornbut, as ye aye are. But my argiment is this: that I get at his soul best through his leetle carcase."

The honest parson brought down his stick with an angry thud.

"M'Adam, you're a brute—a brute!" he shouted. At which outburst the little man was seized with a spasm of silent merriment.

"A fond dad first, a brute afterward, aiblins—he! he! Ah, Mr. Hornbut! ye 'ford me vast diversion, ye do indeed, 'my loved, my honored, much-respected friend.'"

"If you paid as much heed to your boy's

welfare as you do to the bad poetry of that profligate ploughman——"

An angry gleam shot into the other's eyes.

"D'ye ken what blasphemy is, Mr. Hornbut?" he asked, shouldering a pace forward.

For the first time in the dispute the parson thought he was about to score a point, and was calm accordingly.

"I should do; I fancy I've a specimen of the breed before me now. And d'you know what 'mpertinence is?"

"I should do; I fancy I've—I awd say it's what gentlemen aften are unless their mam-mies whipped 'em as lads."

For a moment the parson looked as if about to seize his opponent and shake him.

"M'Adam," he roared, "I'll not stand your insolences!"

The little man turned, scuttled indoors, and came running back with a chair.

"Permit me!" he said blandly, holding it before him like a haircutter for a customer.

The parson turned away. At the gap in the hedge he paused.

"I'll only say one thing more," he called slowly. "When your wife, whom I think we all loved, lay dying in that room above you, she said to you in my presence——"

It was M'Adam's turn to be angry. He made a step forward with burning face.

"Aince and for a', Mr. Hornbut," he cried passionately, "onderstand I'll not ha' you and

yer likes lay yer tongues on ma wife's memory whenever it suits ye. You can say what ye like about me—lies, sneers, snash—and I'll say naethin'. I dinna ask ye to respect me; I think ye might do sae muckle by her, puir lass. She never harmed ye. Gin ye canna let her bide in peace where she lies doon yonder"—he waved in the direction of the churchyard—"ye'll no come on ma land. Though she is dead she's mine."

Standing in front of his house, with flushed face and big eyes, the little man looked almost noble in his indignation. And the parson, striding away down the hill, was uneasily conscious that with him was not the victory.

CHAPTER III

RED WULL

THE winter came and went; the lambing season was over, and spring already shyly kissing the land. And the back of the year's work broken, and her master well started on a fresh season, M'Adam's old collie, Cuttie Sark, lay down one evening and passed quietly away.

The little black-and-tan lady, Parson Leggy used to say, had been the only thing on earth M'Adam cared for. Certainly the two had been wondrously devoted; and for many a market-day the Dalesmen missed the shrill, chuckling cry which heralded the pair's approach: "Weel done, Cuttie Sark!"

The little man felt his loss acutely, and, according to his wont, vented his ill-feeling on David and the Dalesmen. In return, Tammas, whose forte lay in invective and alliteration, called him behind his back, "A venomous one!" and "A wiralent wiper!" to the applause of tinkling pewters.

A shepherd without his dog is like a ship without a rudder, and M'Adam felt his loss practically as well as otherwise. Especially did he experience this on a day when he had

to take a batch of draft-ewes over to Gram-moch-town. To help him Jem Burton had lent the services of his herring-gutted, herring-hearted, greyhound lurcher, Monkey. But before they had well topped Braithwaite Brow, which leads from the village on to the marches, M'Adam was standing in the track with a rock in his hand, a smile on his face, and the tenderest blandishments in his voice as he coaxed the dog to him. But Master Monkey knew too much for that. However, after gambolling a while longer in the middle of the flock, a boulder, better aimed than its predecessors, smote him on the hinder parts and sent him back to the Sylvester Arms, with a sore tail and a subdued heart.

For the rest, M'Adam would never have won over the sheep-infested marches alone with his convoy had it not been for the help of old Saunderson and Shep, who caught him on the way and aided him.

It was in a very wrathful mood that on his way home he turned into the Dalesman's Daughter in Silverdale.

The only occupants of the tap-room, as he entered, were Teddy Bolstock, the publican, Jim Mason, with the faithful Betsy beneath his chair and the post-bags flung into the corner, and one long-limbed, drover-like man—a stranger.

"And he coom up to Mr. Moore," Teddy was saying, "and says he, 'I'll gie ye twal' pun for

yon gray dog o' yourn.' 'Ah,' says Moore, 'yo' may gie me twal' hunner'd and yet you'll not get ma Bob.'—Eh, Jim?"

"And he did thot," corroborated Jim. " 'Twal' hunner'd,' says he."

"James Moore and his dog agin'" snapped M'Adam. "There's ithers in the warld for bye them twa."

"Ay, but none like 'em," quoth loyal Jim.

"Na, thanks be. Gin there were there'd be no room for Adam M'Adam in this 'melancholy vale.' "

There was silence a moment, and then—:

"You're wantin' a tyke, bain't you, Mr. M'Adam?" Jim asked.

The little man hopped round all in a hurry.

"What!" he cried in well-affected eagerness, scanning the yellow mongrel beneath the chair. "Betsy for sale! Guid life! Where's ma check-book?" Whereat Jim, most easily snubbed of men, collapsed.

M'Adam took off his dripping coat and crossed the room to hang it on a chair-back. The stranger drover followed the meagre, shirt-clad figure with shifty eyes; then he buried his face in his mug.

M'Adam reached out a hand for the chair; and as he did so, a bomb in yellow leapt out from beneath it, and, growling horribly, at tacked his ankles.

"Curse vel!" cried M'Adam, starting back.

"Ye devil, let me alone!" Then turning fiercely on the drover, "Yours, mister?" he asked. The man nodded. "Then call him aff, can't ye? D—n ye!" At which Teddy Bolstock withdrew, sniggering; and Jim Mason slung the post-bags on to his shoulder and plunged out into the rain, the faithful Betsy following, disconsolate.

The cause of the squall, having beaten off the attacking force, had withdrawn again beneath its chair. M'Adam stooped down, still cursing, his wet coat on his arm, and beheld a tiny yellow puppy, crouching defiant in the dark, and glaring out with fiery light eyes. Seeing itself remarked, it bared its little teeth, raised its little bristles, and growled a hideous menace.

A sense of humor is many a man's salvation, and was M'Adam's one redeeming feature. The laughableness of the thing—this ferocious atomy defying him—struck home to the little man. Delighted at such a display of vice in so tender a plant, he fell to chuckling.

"Ye leetle devil!" he laughed. "He! he! ye leetle devil!" and flipped together finger and thumb in vain endeavor to coax the puppy to him.

But it growled, and glared more terribly.

"Stop it, ye little snake, or I'll flatten you!" cried the big drover, and shuffled his feet threateningly. Whereat the puppy, gurgling like hot water in a kettle, made a feint as

though to advance and wipe them out, these two bad men.

M'Adam laughed again, and smote his leg.

"Keep a ceevil tongue and yer distance," says he, "or I'll e'en ha' to mak' ye. Though he is but as big as a man's thumb, a dog's a dog for a' that—he! he! the leetle devil." And he fell to flipping finger and thumb afresh.

"Ye're maybe wantin' a dog?" inquired the stranger. "Yer friend said as much."

"Ma friend lied; it's his way," M'Adam replied.

"I'm willin' to part wi' him," the other pursued.

The little man yawned. "Weel, I'll tak' him to oblige ye," he said indifferently.

The drover rose to his feet.

"It's givin' 'im ye, fair givin' im ye, mind! But I'll do it!"—he smacked a great fist into a hollow palm. "Ye may have the dog for a pun'—I'll only ask *you* a pun'," and he walked away to the window.

M'Adam drew back, the better to scan his would-be benefactor; his lower jaw dropped, and he eyed the stranger with a drolly sarcastic air.

"A poun', man! A poun'—for yon noble dorg!" he pointed a crooked forefinger at the little creature, whose scowling mask peered from beneath the chair. "Man, I couldna do it. Na, na; ma conscience wadna permit me.

'Twad be fair robbin' ye. Ah, ye Englishmen!" he spoke half to himself, and sadly, as if deploring the unhappy accident of his nationality; "it's yer grand, open-haired generosity that grips a puir Scotsman by the throat. A poun'! and for yon!" He wagged his head mournfully, cocking it sideways the better to scan his subject.

"Take him or leave him," ordered the drover truculently, still gazing out of the window.

"Wi' yer permission I'll leave him," M'Adam answered meekly.

"I'm short o' the ready," the big man pursued, "or I wouldna part with him. Could I bide me time there's many'd be glad to give me a tenner for one o' that bree—" he caught himself up hastily—"for a dog sic as that."

"And yet ye offer him me for a poun'! Noble indeed!"

Nevertheless the little man had pricked his ears at the other's slip and quick correction. Again he approached the puppy, dangling his coat before him to protect his ankles; and again that wee wild beast sprang out, seized the coat in its small jaw, and worried it savagely.

M'Adam stooped quickly and picked up his tiny assailant; and the puppy, suspended by its neck, gurgled and slobbered; then, wriggling desperately round, made its teeth meet

in its adversary's shirt. At which M'Adam shook it gently and laughed. Then he set to examining it.

Apparently some six weeks old; a tawny coat, fiery eyes, a square head with small, cropped ears, and a comparatively immense jaw; the whole giving promise of great strength, if little beauty. And this effect was enhanced by the manner of its docking. For the miserable relic of a tail, yet raw, looked little more than a red button adhering to its wearer's stern.

M'Adam's inspection was as minute as it was apparently absorbing; he omitted nothing from the square muzzle to the lozenge-like scut. And every now and then he threw a quick glance at the man at the window, who was watching the careful scrutiny a thought uneasily.

"Ye've cut him short," he said at length, swinging round on the drover.

"Ay; strengthens their backs," the big man answered with averted gaze.

M'Adam's chin went up in the air; his mouth partly opened and his eyelids partly closed as he eyed his informant.

"Oh, ay," he said.

"Gie him back to me," ordered the drover surlily. He took the puppy and set it on the floor; whereupon it immediately resumed its former fortified position. "Ye're no buyer; I knoo that all along by that face on ye," he said in insulting tones.

"Ye wad ha' bought him yerself', nae doot?"
M'Adam inquired blandly.

"In course; if you says so."

"Or airblins ye bred him?"

"'Appen I did."

"Ye'll no be from these parts?"

"Will I no?" answered the other.

A smile of genuine pleasure stole over M'Adam's face. He laid his hand on the other's arm.

"Man," he said gently, "ye mind me o' hame." Then almost in the same breath: "Ye said ye found him?"

It was the stranger's turn to laugh.

"Ha! ha! Ye teeckle me, little mon. Found 'im? Nay; I was give 'im by a friend. But there's nout amiss wi' his breedin', ye may believe me."

The great fellow advanced to the chair under which the puppy lay. It leapt out like a lion, and fastened on his huge boot.

"A rare bred un, look 'eel a rare game un. Ma word, he's a big-hearted un! Look at the back on him; see the jaws to him; mark the pluck of him!" He shook his booted foot fiercely, tossing his leg to and fro like a tree in a wind. But the little creature, now raised ceiling-ward, now dashed to the ground, held on with incomparable doggedness, till its small jaw was all bloody and muzzle wrinkled with the effort.

"Ay, ay, that'll do," M'Adam interposed, irritably.

The drover ceased his efforts.

"Now, I'll mak' ye a last offer." He thrust his head down to a level with the other's, shooting out his neck. "It's throwin' him at ye, mind. 'Tain't buyin' him ye'll be—don't go for to deceive yourself. Ye may have him for fifteen shillin'. Why do I do it, ye ask? Why, 'cos I think ye'll be kind to him," as the puppy retreated to its chair, leaving a spotted track of red along its route.

"Ay, ye wadna be happy gin ye thocht he'd no a comfortable hame, conseederate man?" M'Adam answered, eyeing the dark track on the floor. Then he put on his coat.

"Na, na, he's no for me. Weel, I'll no detain ye. Good-nicht to ye, mister!" and he made for the door.

"A gran' worker he'll be," called the drover after him.

"Ay; muckle wark he'll mak' amang the sheep wi' sic a jaw and sic a temper. Weel, I maun be steppin'. Good-nicht to ye."

"Ye'll niver have sich anither chanst."

"Nor niver wush to. Na, na; he'll never mak' a sheep-dog"; and the little man turned up the collar of his coat.

"Will he not?" cried the other scornfully. "There niver yet was one o' that line——" he stopped abruptly.

The little man spun round.

"Iss?" he said, as innocent as any child; "ye were sayin'?"

The other turned to the window and watched the rain falling monotonously.

"Ye'll be wantin' wet," he said adroitly.

"Ay, we could do wi' a drappin'. And he'll never mak' a sheep-dog." He shoved his cap down on his head. "Weel, good-nicht to ye!" and he stepped out into the rain.

It was long after dark when the bargain was finally struck.

Adam M'Adam's Red Wull became that little man's property for the following realizable assets: ninepence in cash—three coppers and a doubtful sixpence; a plug of suspicious tobacco in a well-worn pouch; and an old watch.

"It's clean givin' 'im ye," said the stranger bitterly, at the end of the deal.

"It's mair the charity than aught else mak's me sae leebetal," the other answered gently. "I wad not like to see ye pinched."

"Thank ye kindly," the big man replied with some acerbity, and plunged out into the darkness and rain. Nor was that long-limbed drover-man ever again seen in the countryside. And the puppy's previous history—whether he was honestly come by or no, whether he was, indeed, of the famous Red McCulloch* strain, ever remained a mystery in the Daleland.

*N. B.—You may know a Red McCulloch anywhere by the ring of white upon his tail some two inches from the root.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST BLOOD

AFTER that first encounter in the Dalesman's Daughter, Red Wull, for so M'Adam called him, resigned himself complacently to his lot; recognizing, perhaps, his destiny.

Thenceforward the sour little man and the vicious puppy grew, as it were, together. The two were never apart. Where M'Adam was, there was sure to be his tiny attendant, bristling defiance as he kept ludicrous guard over his master.

The little man and his dog were inseparable. M'Adam never left him even at the Grange.

"I couldna trust ma Wullie at hame alone wi' the dear lad," was his explanation. "I ken weel I'd come back to find a wee corpse on the floor, and David singin':

'My heart is sair, I daur na tell,
My heart is sair for somebody.'

Ay, and he'd be sair elsewhere by the time I'd done wi' him—he! he!"

The sneer at David's expense was as characteristic as it was unjust. For though the puppy and the boy were already sworn enemies, yet the lad would have scorned to harm so small a foe. And many a tale did David

tell at Kenmuir of Red Wull's viciousness, of his hatred of him (David), and his devotion to his master; how, whether immersed in the pig-bucket or chasing the fleeting rabbit, he would desist at once, and bundle, panting, up at his master's call; how he routed the tom-cat and drove him from the kitchen; and how he clambered on to David's bed and pinned him murderously by the nose.

Of late the relations between M'Adam and James Moore had been unusually strained. Though they were neighbors, communications between the two were of the rarest; and it was for the first time for many a long day that, on an afternoon shortly after Red Wull had come into his possession, M'Adam entered the yard of Kenmuir, bent on girding at the master for an alleged trespass at the Stony Bottom.

"Wi' yer permission, Mr. Moore," said the little man, "I'll wheestle ma dog," and, turning, he whistled a shrill, peculiar note like the cry of a disturbed peewit.

Straightway there came scurrying desperately up, ears back, head down, tongue out, as if the world depended on his speed, a little tawny beetle of a thing, who placed his fore-paws against his master's ankles and looked up into his face; then, catching sight of the strangers, hurriedly he took up his position between them and M'Adam, assuming his natural attitude of grisly defiance. Such a laughable spectacle he made, that martial mite,

standing at bay with bristles up and teeth bared, that even James Moore smiled.

"Ma word! Ha' yo' brought his muzzle, man?" cried old Tammas, the humorist; and, turning, climbed all in a heat on to an up-turned bucket that stood by. Whereat the puppy, emboldened by his foe's retreat, advanced savagely to the attack, buzzing round the slippery pail like a wasp on a window-pane, in vain attempt to reach the old man.

Tammas stood on the top, hitching his trousers and looking down on his assailant, the picture of mortal fear.

"'Elp! Oh, 'elp!" he bawled. "Send for the sogers! fetch the p'lice! For lawk-amussy's sake call him off, man!" Even Sam'l Todd, watching the scene from the cart-shed, was tickled and burst into a loud guffaw, heartily backed by 'Enry and oor Job. While M'Adam remarked: "Ye're fitter for a stage than a stable-bucket, Mr. Thornton."

"How didst coom by him?" asked Tammas, nodding at the puppy.

"Found him," the little man replied, sucking his twig. "Found him in ma stockin' on ma birthday. A present from ma leetle David for his auld dad, I doot."

"So do I," said Tammas, and was seized with sudden spasm of seemingly causeless merriment. For looking up as M'Adam was speaking, he had caught a glimpse of a boy's fair head, peering cautiously round the cow-

shed, and, behind, the flutter of short petticoats. They disappeared as silently as they had come; and two small figures, just returned from school, glided away and sought shelter in the friendly darkness of a coal-hole.

"Coom awa', Maggie, coom awa'! 'Tis th' owd un, 'issel," whispered a disrespectful voice.

M'Adam looked round suspiciously.

"What's that?" he asked sharply.

At the moment, however, Mrs. Moore put her head out of the kitchen window.

"Coom thy ways in, Mister M'Adam, and tak' a soop o' tea," she called hospitably.

"Thank ye kindly, Mrs. Moore, I will," he answered, politely for him. And this one good thing must be allowed of Adam M'Adam: that, if there was only one woman of whom he was ever known to speak well, there was also only one, in the whole course of his life, against whom he ever insinuated evil—and that was years afterward, when men said his brain was sapped. Flouts and jeers he had for every man, but a woman, good or bad, was sacred to him. For the sex that had given him his mother and his wife he had that sentiment of tender reverence which, if a man still preserve, he cannot be altogether bad. As he turned into the house he looked back at Red Wull.

"Ay, we may leave him," he said. "That is, gin ye're no afraid, Mr. Thornton?"

Of what happened while the men were within doors, it is enough to tell two things. First, that Owd Bob was no bully. Second, this: In the code of sheep-dog honor there is written a word in stark black letters; and opposite it another word, writ large in the color of blood. The first is "Sheep-murder"; the second, "Death." It is the one crime only to be wiped away in blood; and to accuse of the crime is to offer the one unpardonable insult. Every sheep-dog knows it, and every shepherd.

That afternoon, as the men still talked, the quiet echoes of the farm rung with a furious animal cry, twice repeated: "Shot for sheep-murder"—"Shot for sheep-murder"; followed by a hollow stillness.

The two men finished their colloquy. The matter was concluded peacefully, mainly owing to the pacifying influence of Mrs. Moore. Together the three went out into the yard; Mrs. Moore seizing the opportunity to shyly speak on David's behalf.

"He's such a good little lad, I do think," she was saying.

"Ye should ken, Mrs. Moore," the little man answered, a thought bitterly; "ye see enough of him."

"Yo' mun be main proud of un, mester," the woman continued, heedless of the sneer: "an' 'im growin' such a gradely lad."

M'Adam shrugged his shoulders.

"I barely ken the lad," he said. "By sight I know him, of course, but barely to speak to. He's but seldom at hame."

"An' hoo proud his mother'd be if she could see him," the woman continued, well aware of his one tender place. "Eh, but she was fond o' him, so she was."

An angry flush stole over the little man's face. Well he understood the implied rebuke; and it hurt him like a knife.

"Ay, ay, Mrs. Moore," he began. Then breaking off, and looking about him—"Where's ma Wullie?" he cried excitedly. "James Moore!" whipping round on the Master, "ma Wullie's gone—gone, I say!"

Elizabeth Moore turned away indignantly.

"I do declar' he tak's more fash after yon little yaller beastie than iver he does after his own flesh," she muttered.

"Wullie, ma we doggie! Wullie, where are ye? James Moore, he's gone—ma Wullie's gone!" cried the little man, running about the yard, searching everywhere.

"Cannot 'a' gotten far," said the Master, reassuringly, looking about him.

"Niver no tellin'," said Sam'l, appearing on the scene, pig-bucket in hand. "I misdoot yo'll iver see your dog agin, mister." He turned sorrowfully to M'Adam.

That little man, all dishevelled, and with the perspiration standing on his face, came

hurrying out of the cow-shed and danced up to the Master.

"It's robbed I am—robbed, I tell ye!" he cried recklessly. "Ma wee Wull's bin stolen while I was ben your hoose, James Moore!"

"Yo' munna say that, ma mon. No robbin' at Kenmuir," the Master answered sternly.

"Then where is he? It's for you to say."

"I've ma own ideo, I 'ave," Sam'l announced opportunely, pig-bucket uplifted.

M'Adam turned on him.

"What, man? What is it?"

"I misdoot yo'll iver see your dog agin, mister," Sam'l repeated, as if he was supplying the key to the mystery.

"Noo, Sam'l, if yo' know owt tell it," ordered his master.

Sam'l grunted sulkily.

"Wheer's oor Bob, then?" he asked.

At that M'Adam turned on the Master.

"'Tis that, nae doot. It's yer gray dog, James Moore, yer—dog. I might ha' kent it,"—and he loosed off a volley of foul words.

"Sweerin' will no find him," said the Master coldly. "Noo, Sam'l."

The big man shifted his feet, and looked mournfully at M'Adam.

"'Twas 'appen 'alf an hour agone, when I sees oor Bob goin' oot o' yard wi' little yaller tyke in his mouth. In a minnit I looks agin—and theer! little yaller 'un was gone, and oor Bob a-sittin' a-lickin' his chops. Gone for-

iver, I do reck'n. Ah, yo' may well take on, Tammas Thornton!" For the old man was rolling about the yard, bent double with merriment.

M'Adam turned on the Master with the resignation of despair.

"Man, Moore," he cried piteously, "it's ye; gray dog has murdered ma wee Wull! Ye have it from yer ain man."

"Nonsense," said the Master encouragingly. "'Tis but yon girt oof."

Sam'l tossed his head and snorted.

"Coom, then, and I'll show yo'," he said, and led the way out of the yard. And there below them on the slope to the stream, sitting like Justice at the Courts of Law, was Owd Bob.

Straightway Sam'l whose humor was something of the calibre of old Ross's, the sexton, burst into horse-merriment. "Why's he sittin' so still, think 'ee? Ho! Ho! See un lickin' his chops—ha! ha!"—and he roared afresh. While from afar you could hear the distant rumbling of 'Enry and oor Job.

At the sight, M Adam burst into a storm of passionate invective, and would have rushed on the dog had not James Moore forcibly restrained him.

"Bob, lad," called the Master, "coom here!"

But even as he spoke, the gray dog cocked his ears, listened a moment, and then shot down the slope. At the same moment Tam-

mas hallooed: "Theer he be! yon's yaller un coomin' oot o' drain! La, Sam'l!" And there, indeed, on the slope below them, a little angry, smutty-faced figure was crawling out of a rabbit-burrow.

"Ye murderin' devil, wad ye duar touch ma Wullie?" yelled M'Adam, and, breaking away, pursued hotly down the hill; for the gray dog had picked up the puppy, like a lancer a tent-peg, and was sweeping on, his captive in his mouth, toward the stream.

Behind, hurried James Moore and Sam'l, wondering what the issue of the comedy would be. After them toddled old Tammas, chuckling. While over the yard-wall was now a little cluster of heads: 'Enry, oor Job, Maggie and David, and Vi'let Thornton, the dairy-maid.

Straight on to the plank-bridge galloped Owd Bob. In the middle he halted, leant over, and dropped his prisoner; who fell with a cool plop into the running water beneath.

Another moment and M'Adam had reached the bank of the stream. In he plunged, splashing and cursing, and seized the struggling puppy; then waded back, the waters surging about his waist, and Red Wull, limp as a wet rag, in his hand. The little man's hair was dripping, for his cap was gone; his clothes clung to him, exposing the miserableness of his figure; and his eyes blazed like hot ashes in his wet face.

He sprang on to the bank, and, beside himself with passion, rushed at Owd Bob.

"Curse ye for a——"

"Stan' back, or yo'll have him at your throat!" shouted the Master, thundering up. "Stan' back, I say, yo' fule!" And, as the little man still came madly on, he reached forth his hand and hurled him back; at the same moment, bending, he buried the other hand deep in Owd Bob's shaggy neck. It was but just in time; for if ever the fierce desire of battle gleamed in gray eyes, it did in the young dog's as M'Adam came down on him.

The little man staggered, tottered, and fell heavily. At the shock, the blood gushed from his nose, and, mixing with the water on his face, ran down in vague red streams, dripping off his chin; while Red Wull, jerked from his grasp, was thrown afar, and lay motionless.

"Curse ye!" M'Adam screamed, his face dead-white save for the running red about his jaw. "Curse ye for a cowardly Englishman!" and, struggling to his feet, he made at the Master.

But Sam'l interposed his great bulk between the two.

"Easy, little mon," he said leisurely, regarding the small fury before him with mournful interest. "Eh, but thee do be a little spit-cat, surely!"

James Moore stood, breathing deep, his hand still buried in Owd Bob's coat.

"If yo'd touched him," he explained, "I couldna ha' stopped him. He'd ha' mauled yo' afore iver I could ha' had him off. They're bad to hold, the Gray Dogs, when they're roosed."

"Ay, ma word, that they are!" corroborated Tammias, speaking from the experience of sixty years. "Once on, yo' canna get 'em off."

The little man turned away.

"Ye're all agin me," he said, and his voice shook. A pitiful figure he made, standing there with the water dripping from him. A red stream was running slowly from his chin; his head was bare, and face working.

James Moore stood eyeing him with some pity and some contempt. Behind was Tammias, enjoying the scene. While Sam'l regarded them all with an impassive melancholy.

M'Adam turned and bent over Red Wull, who still lay like a dead thing. As his master handled him, the button-tail quivered feebly; he opened his eyes, looked about him, snarled faintly, and glared with devilish hate at the gray dog and the group with him.

The little man picked him up, stroking him tenderly. Then he turned away and on to the bridge. Half-way across he stopped. It rattled feverishly beneath him, for he still trembled like a palsied man.

"Man, Moore!" he called, striving to quell the agitation in his voice—"I wad shoot yon dog."