

CHOICE LITERATURE.

RAB AND HIS FRIENDS.

BY JOHN BROWN, M.D.

Four and thirty years ago, Bob Ainslie and I were coming up Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, from the high school, our heads together, and our arms intertwined, as only lovers and boys know how or why.

When we got to the top of the street, and turned north, we espied a crowd at the Tron church. "A dog fight!" shouted Bob, and was off; and so was I, both of us all but praying that it might not be over before we got up! And is this not boy-nature! and human nature too? and don't we all wish a house on fire not to be out before we see it? Dogs like fighting; old Isaacs say they "delight" in it, and for the best of all reasons; and boys are not cruel because they like to see the fight. They see three of the great cardinal virtues of dog or man—courage, endurance, and skill—in intense action. This is very different from a love of making dogs fight, and enjoying, and aggravating, and making gain by the pluck. A boy—be he ever so fond himself of fighting, if he be a good boy, hates and despises all this, but he would have run off with Bob and me fast enough; it is a natural, and a not wicked interest, that all boys and men have in witnessing intense energy in action.

Does any curious and finely-ignorant woman wish to know how Bob's eye at a glance announced a dog-fight to his brain? He did not, he could not see the dogs fighting; it was a flash of an inference, a rapid induction. The crowd round a couple of dogs fighting, is a crowd masculine mainly, with an occasional active, compassionate woman, fluttering wildly round the outside, and using her tongue and her hands freely upon the men, as so many "brutes;" it is a crowd annular, compact and mobile; a crowd centripetal, having its eyes and its heads all bent downwards and inwards, to one common focus.

Well, Bob and I are up, and find it is not over; a small thoroughbred, white bull-terrier, is busy throttling a large shepherd's dog, unaccustomed to war, but not to be trifled with. They are hard at it; the scientific little fellow doing his work in great style, his pastoral enemy fighting wildly, but with the sharpest of teeth and a great courage. Science and breeding, however, soon had their own; the Game Chicken, as the premature Bob called him, working his way up, took his final grip of poor Yarrow's throat,—and he lay gasping and done for. His master, a brown, handsome, big young shepherd from Tweedsmuir, would have liked to have knocked down any man, would "drink up Esil, or eat a crocodile," for that part, if he had a chance; it was no use kicking the little dog; that would only make him hold the closer. Many were the means shouted out in mouthfuls, of the best possible ways of ending it. "Water!" but there was none near, and many cried for it who might have got it from the well at Blackfriars Wynd. "Bite the tail!" and a large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged man, more desirous than wise, with some struggle got the bushy end of Yarrow's tail into his ample mouth, and bit it with all his might. This was more than enough for the much-enduring, much perspiring shepherd, who, with a gleam of joy over his broad visage, delivered a terrific fencer upon our large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged friend,—who went down like a shot.

Still the Chicken holds; death not far off. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" observed a calm, highly-dressed young buck, with an eye-glass in his eye. "Snuff, indeed!" growled the angry crowd, affronted and glaring. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" again observes the buck, but with more urgency; whereupon were produced several open boxes, and from a mull which may have been at Culloden, he took a pinch, knelt down, and presented it to the nose of the Chicken. The laws of physiology and of snuff take their course; the Chicken sneezes, and Yarrow is free.

The young pastoral giant stalks off with Yarrow in his arms,—comforting him.

But the bull-terrier's blood is up, and his soul unsatisfied; he grips the first dog he meets, and discovering she is not a dog, in Homeric phrase, he makes a brief sort of *amende*, and is off. The boys, with Bob and me at their head, are after him; down Niddry street he goes, bent on mischief; up the Cowgate like an arrow—Bob and I, and our small men, panting behind.

There, under the single arch of the South bridge is a huge mastiff, sauntering down the middle of the causeway, as if with his hands in his pockets: he is old, gray, brindled, as big as a little Highland bull, and has the Shakesperian dewlaps shaking as he goes.

The Chicken makes straight at him, and fastens on his throat. To our astonishment, the great creature does nothing, but stand still, hold himself up, and roar—yes, roar; a long, serious, remonstrative roar. How is this? Bob and I are up to them. *He is muzzled!* The bailies had proclaimed a general muzzling, and his master, studying strength and economy mainly, had encompassed his huge jaws in a home-made apparatus, constructed out of the leather of some ancient *breechin*. His mouth was open as far as it could; his lips curled up in rage—a sort of terrible grin; his teeth gleaming; ready, from out the darkness; the strap across his mouth tense as a bowstring; his whole frame stiff with indignation and surprise; his roar asking us all round, "Did you ever see the like of this?" He looked a statue of anger and astonishment, done in Aberdeen granite.

We soon had a crowd: the Chicken held on. "A knife!" cried Bob; and a cobbler gave him his knife; you know the kind of knife, worn away obliquely to a point, and always keen. I put its edge to the tense leather; it ran before it; and then!—one sudden jerk of that enormous head, a sort of dirty mist about his mouth, no noise,—and the bright and fierce little fellow is dropped, limp, and dead. A solemn pause; this was more than any of us had bargained for. I turned the little fellow over, and saw he was quite dead; the mastiff had taken him by the small of the back, like a rat, and broken it.

He looked down at his victim appeased, ashamed and amazed; snuffed him all over, stared at him, and taking a sudden thought, turned round and trotted off. Bob took the dead dog up, and said, "John, we'll bury him after tea." "Yes," said I, and was off after the mastiff. He made up the cowgate at a rapid swing; he had forgotten some engagement. He turned up the Candlemaker Row, and stopped at the Harrow Inn.

There was a carrier's cart ready to start, and a keen, thin, impatient, black-vised little man, his hand at his gray horse's head, looking about angrily for something. "Rab, ye thief!" said he, aiming a kick at my great friend, who drew cringing up, and avoiding the heavy shoe with more agility than dignity, and watching his master's eye, slunk dismayed under the cart—his ears down, and as much as he had of tail down too.

What a man this must be—thought I—to whom my tremendous hero turns tail! The carrier saw the muzzle hanging, cut and useless, from his neck, and I eagerly told him the story which Bob and I always thought, and still think, Homer, or King David, or Sir Walter, alone were worthy to rehearse. The severe little man was mitigated, and condescended to say, "Rab, ma man, pour Rabbie"—whereupon the stump of a tail rose up, the ears were cocked, the eyes filled, and were comforted; the two friends were reconciled. "Hupp!" and a stroke of the whip were given to Jess; and off went the three.

Bob and I buried the Game Chicken that night (we had not much of a tea) in the back-green of his house in Melville street, No. 17, with considerable gravity and silence; and being at the time in the Iliad, and, like all boys, Trojans, we called him Hector of course.

Six years have passed—a long time for a boy and a dog: Bob Ainslie is off to the wars; I am a medical student, and clerk at Minto House Hospital.

Rab I saw almost every week, on the Wednesday; and we had much pleasant intimacy. I found the way to his heart by frequent scratching of his huge head, and an occasional bone. When I did not notice him he would plant himself straight before me, and stand wagging that bud of a tail, and looking up, with his head a little to the one side. His master I occasionally saw; he used to call me "Maister John," but was laconic as any Spartan.

One fine October afternoon, I was leaving the hospital, when I saw the large gate open, and in walked Rab, with that great and easy saunter of his. He looked as if taking general possession of the place; like the Duke of Wellington entering a subdued city, satiated with victory and peace. After him came Jess, now white from age, with her cart; and in it a woman, carefully wrapped up—the carrier leading the horse anxiously, and looking back. When he saw me, James (for his name was James Noble) made a curt and grotesque "boo," and said, "Maister John, this is the mistress; she's got a trouble in her breast—some kind o' an income we're thinkin'."

By this time I saw the woman's face; she was sitting on a sack filled with straw, her husband's plaid round her, and his big-coat, with its large white metal buttons, over her feet.

I never saw a more unforgettable face—pale, serious, *lonely*, delicate, sweet, without being at all what we call fine. She looked sixty, and had on a mutch, white as snow, with its black ribbon; her silvery, smooth hair setting off her dark-gray eyes—eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it: her eyebrows black and delicate, and her mouth firm, patient, and contented, which few mouths ever are.

As I have said, I never saw a more beautiful countenance, or a more subdued or settled quiet. "Allie," said James, "this is Maister John, the young doctor; Rab's friend, ye ken. We often speak about you, doctor." She smiled, and made a movement, but said nothing; and prepared to come down, putting her plaid aside and rising. Had Solomon, in all his glory, been handing down the Queen of Sheba at his palace gate, he could not have done it more daintily, more tenderly, more like a gentleman, than did James the Howgate carrier, when he lifted down Allie, his wife.

The contrast of his small, swarthy, weather-beaten, keen, worldly face to hers—pale, subdued, and beautiful—was something wonderful. Rab looked on concerned and puzzled, but ready for anything that might turn up—were it to strangle the nurse, the porter, or even me. Allie and he seemed great friends.

"As I was sayin', she's got a kind o' trouble in her breast, doctor; wull ye tak' a look at it?" We walked into the consulting-room, all four; Rab grim and comic, willing to be happy and confidential if cause should be shown, willing also to be the reverse on the same terms. Allie sat down, undid her open gown and her lawn handkerchief round her neck, and without a word, showed me her right breast. I looked at it and examined it carefully, she and James watching me, and Rab eyeing all three. What could I say? There it was that had once been so soft, so shapely, so white, so gracious and bountiful, so "full of all blessed conditions"—hard as a stone, a centre of horrid pain, making that pale face, with its gray, lucid, reasonable eyes, and its sweet resolved mouth, express the full measure of suffering overcome. Why was that gentle, modest, sweet woman, clean and lovable, condemned by God to bear such a burden?

I got her away to bed. "May Rab and me abide?" said James. "You may; and Rab, if he will behave himself." "I've warrant he do's that, doctor?" and in slunk the faithful beast. I wish you could have seen him. There are no such dogs now. He belonged to a lost tribe. As I have said, he was brindled, and gray like Rubislaw granite; his hair short, hard, and close like a lion's; his body thick set, like a little bull—a sort of compressed Hercules of a dog. He must have been ninety pounds' weight, at the least; he had a large blunt head; his muzzle black as night, his mouth blacker than any night, a tooth or two—being all he had—gleaming out of his jaws of darkness. His head was scarred with the records of old wounds, a sort of series

* It is not easy giving this look by one word; it was expressive of her being so much of her life alone.

of fields of battle all over it; one eye out, one ear cropped as close as was Archbishop Leighton's father's; and the remaining eye had the power of two; and above it, and in constant communication with it, was a tattered rag of an ear, which was forever unfurling itself, like an old flag; and then that bud of a tail, about one inch long, if it could in any sense be said to be long being as broad as long—the mobility, the instantaneousness of that bud were very funny and surprising, and its expressive twinklings and winkings, the intercommunications between the eye, the ear, and it, were of the oddest and swiftest.

Rab had the dignity and simplicity of great size; and having fought his way all along the road to absolute supremacy, he was as mighty in his own line as Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Wellington, and had the gravity of all great fighters.

You must have often observed the likeness of certain men to certain animals, and of certain dogs to men. Now, I never looked at Rab without thinking of the great Baptist preacher, Andrew Fuller.† The same large, heavy, man-acing, combative, sombre, honest countenance, the same deep inevitable eye, the same look,—as of thunder asleep, but ready—neither a dog nor a man to be trifled with.

Next day, my master, the surgeon, examined Allie. There was no doubt it must kill her, and soon. It could be removed—it might never return—it would give her speedy relief—she should have it done. She curtsied, looked at James, and said, "When?" "To-morrow," said the kind surgeon—a man of few words. She and James and Rab and I retired. I noticed that he and she spoke a little, but she seemed to anticipate everything in each other. The following day at noon, the students came in, hurrying up the great stair. At the first landing-place, on a small well-known black board, was a bit of paper fastened by wafers and many remains of old wafers beside it. On the paper were the words,—“An operation to-day. J. B., Clerk.”

Up ran the youths, eager to secure good places; in they crowded, full of interest and talk. "What's the case? Which side is it?"

Don't think them heartless; they are neither better nor worse than you or I; they get over their professional horrors, and into their proper work; and in them pity—as an *emotion*, ending in itself or at best in tears and a long draw-breath, lessens, while pity as a *motive*, is quickened, and gains power and purpose. It is well for poor human nature that it is so.

(To be continued.)

THE CLERICAL PARTY IN THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT.

There have come up for solution during the brief life of the Diet many grave and momentous problems, and the gilded roof of the great hall has often throbbed and shaken under the violence of debate. The most recent of the great combats was that between free trade and protection. Its angry echoes have not yet wholly ceased to resound. But the earliest, the fiercest, and the bloodiest was one which was only renewed, not begun, which the historical reader will easily trace back to the Middle Ages—the great national duel between Kaiser and Pope, between Ghibelline and Guelph, between the just claims of the State and the arrogant pretensions of the Church.

This struggle, resumed ten or fifteen years ago, in form the same, though under conditions different, united the Catholic Deputies into the parliamentary Centre. But it did more than that. Besides a party, it created the leaders of a party, and leaders who for eloquence, audacity, adroitness, are the peers of any men in the House. The first of these, far above all rivals, is Windthorst. Puny in size, almost deformed, ugly as Socrates, he is an antagonist before whose wit the boldest Deputies tremble, and under whose assaults even the great Chancellor loses his coolness and self-command. As a tactician, he is unsurpassed. Starting as the chief of a small and proscribed faction, he has built it up to be the most numerous party in the House, and, holding the balance of power, wields it with a skill which O'Connell made famous in the House of Commons. But he is something besides a mere wit or parliamentary athlete. Short, crisp, pungent retorts are indeed his chief arms of controversy; but he is also a politician of culture and real statesmanlike ability, and can discuss public topics from an elevated intellectual plane. That his success in serious methods and sustained efforts has been less frequently demonstrated may not even be a fact of his own preference, though the habit of his mind suggests such an inference. It may be—and the supposition is reasonable—that the nature of his task, or at least his views of it, has imposed another policy upon him as a tactical necessity; for, cut off as he is by the character and the relations of his party from an active share in creative legislation, he is practically confined to the work of criticism, of mere negative opposition; and this, of course, is best performed, not by sustained and elaborate strategy, but by sudden changes, by brisk and audacious dashes, in every part of the field. Hence, though he makes few periods himself, he effectually prunes those of his enemies, not excluding Bismarck himself. If he makes a parliamentary bargain with the government or another party, he exacts and receives the equivalent in advance. But he seldom enters into such transactions, for, as he himself once said, he has "no wish to be duped." "And he who tries to dupe me," added the little man, with

† A Highland gamekeeper, when asked why a certain terrier, of singular pluck, was so much more solemn than the other dogs, said, "Oh, Sir, life's full o' sairiousness to him—he just never can get enuff o' fechtin'."

‡ Fuller was, in early life, when a farmer-lad at Soham, famous as a boxer; not quarrelsome, but not without "the stern delight" of a man of strength and courage in their exercise. Dr. Charles Stewart, of Durham, whose rare gifts and graces as a physician, a divine, a scholar and a gentleman, live only in the memory of those few who knew and survive him, liked to tell Mr. Fuller used to say, that when he was in the pulpit, and saw a *burdly* man come along the passage, he would instinctively draw himself up, measure his imaginary antagonist, and forecast how he would deal with him, his hands meanwhile condensing into fists, and tending to "square." He must have been a hard biter if he boxed as he preached—what "The Fancy" would call "an ugly customer."