

TAG

OR THE
CHIEN BOULE DOG

BY VALANCE PATRIARCHE

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These pleasantries put the increasing crowd in high good-humor, and from entering to "josh wit' Abe's Ella" they ended by buying the tea, "jest to test de grip." So it went on all afternoon, and by five o'clock the second tea chest was almost empty. Josephine was keeping up bravely, though feeling a little damp inside from the amount of hot water she had imbibed; Bateese had ceased to ask her if she was going to bed because most of her clothes were off, or to worry her, wanting to know if she were not "col' on de laig." He had sunk into a state of apathy, unmindful of the crowd which had at first frightened him, and remembering only that, once before, he had eaten too largely of rich confections and not felt "ver' appy en bas." Cairlo had enjoyed a good dinner, his beloved master was near and he was content. All was thus quiet in the window and Ella was regaling a select group over the counter with an imitation of Bateese's dialect, quite unconscious that it did not differ so very widely from her own language of the Bowery. Her spirited account of the "chain boole dog" was interrupted by the entrance of a tall man who, looking over the heads of her admirers, said, casually:

"Hello, Ella. Doin' a music hall turn?"

The woman paled a little and hesitated for an answer, her eyes held by those of the newcomer. The tall man laughed.

"Where's Abe?" he asked.

"Out," was the laconic reply, scarcely uttered when a thick voice was heard remonstrating, "No, no, I'll not advance one d—cent. It's not worth it I tell youse."

The stranger winked slowly and made his way in the direction of the sound.

Ella became absent-minded, and having failed to rouse her to reply to several sallies, the circle about the counter slowly edged off into the street. As the last one left she locked the shop door after him and hastened to a compartment in the rear. Here, as she expected, she found Abraham in conference with the tall visitor. As she entered her husband was saying in a whining sing-song:

"So de kid's dad got on a jag an' come here an' he says he had no food fer 'em ner room ner nothin', an' I says, jokin', 'Better pawn 'em,' I says. 'I'll advance youse five dollars on 'em, seein' they're healthy,' I says, an' he took me up right off, an' so as I ain't never gone back on me business word yet, I—"

His listener was grinning delightedly when Ella broke in.

"Cut it out, Abe, cut it out! It's Ted Burns. He's on to de racket good an' plenty. Well (turning defiantly to the detective), wat are you goin' to do about it? We ain't hurt de kids none. Dey come up to me so tame dey eat out of me hand inside of fifteen minutes. De boy's so full of cake he can't hardly move, an' de goyle tinks she's de star of de Metropolitan, drawin' a thousand dollars a night—Wat's wrong?"

"Why don't you teach yer dinky husband to quit lying?" asked Mr. Burns. "He don't do it artistic an' he ain't like you. He can't see when the truth is goin' to be best fer his health." He rose lazily and laughed. "Oh, well, Ella, old girl, considering you've put me on to one or two little things in your time, I ain't goin' to git malicious. The kids is well an' happy, so I'll jest ask you to ring down the curtain on the melodrama an' put a few more clothes on the heroine, then I'll restore 'em to anxious relatives and git a blessin'."

Much relieved, Ella flashed a golden smile. "Say, Ted—didn't she look a bloomin' show! A guy on de street yells in to Abe, 'Call off yer chorus lady!' he says. It's been bigger an'

better'n Coney Island, an' me old man's got a lame wrist shovellin' out de celebrated Bull Dog Tea." She went off in great good humor to lower the window blind in the face of a disappointed group of loungers and whisk the children off to prepare them for speedy departure. A few moments later a cab left the door, containing Mr. Burns in charge of a sleepy small boy, phlegmatic dog and wiry little girl, whose floating frizzled hair was all that was left to remind her of the glory of an hour gone by.

CHAPTER VIII.

Before setting out to find the runaways Mr. Burns had endured a bad quarter of an hour. He, his prisoners and the tearful landlady were ranged before the captain's desk, and explanations ensued. The detective grew vehement in his denunciation of the bridegroom, who, pale with wrath, endeavored to preserve his dignity and shield his bride from a scene by haughty silence. In a lull due to the denunciatory's lack of breath, Mrs. Patterson murmured sweetly: "It seems so odd to lose children at a police station, doesn't it?" She sniffed daintily at a bunch of violets in her coat, and the captain's eyes met hers with an answering twinkle. At intervals during Mr. Burns' speech Mrs. Trent had tremulously interjected, "But they were here just a minute ago. I saw them myself." She repeated the remark now with more animation, causing the captain to say, testily, "Yes, ma'am, yes, probably you did see them a minute ago, but the question is, Do—you—see—them—now?" Which retort, thundered at her, reduced her to a state of limp speechlessness.

"Now, see here, Burns" (as that worthy was about to hold forth anew), "I've heard all I want to about this. I know the case an' we've got the parties. You don't want to waste any time chewin' the rag, but get out and hustle. See? The kids are in Noo York an' it's your business to find 'em. You let 'em go, now bring 'em back. I give you five hours to do it in. Shut up now—Go!" And Burns, having had dealings with this particular captain before, lost no time in obeying.

He first heard from a street urchin of a "dago and his pianner" followed by a "skinny goyle, fat kid an' a reg'lar bruiser of a dawg," and as the trio were somewhat noticeable, he had little difficulty in finding and following clues. Upon reaching the neighborhood of Abe's emporium all was plain sailing, for the fame of "de show in Abe's window" had travelled fast. He was thus enabled to capture his quarry and return to the police station in four hours and forty minutes. He burst in upon the tired group awaiting him with triumphant bearing, and thrust forward the runaways. They were not received with effusion. Mr. Patterson frankly glared, Mrs. Patterson's expression was one of whimsical resignation, while Mrs. Trent tearfully shook her head over Josephine's flowing locks as betokening further depravity in her household. The wanderers themselves were subdued and silent; even Cairlo appeared dejected, as if weary of this uncertain existence. Mr. Burns alone was all cheerful volubility, his antagonism to the young couple quite forgotten in the success of his mission. His account of the scene in the shop window and subsequent interview with the shop keeper and his wife was graphic in the extreme and proved quite absorbing to most of the party. While the tale was in progress Josephine looked furtively and anxiously about her, the terror of possible imprisonment once more shadowing her young soul, but observing that the owners of the hated blue uniform were grinning in a very human and jovial manner, that Mrs. Patterson

was pink with laughter, and her husband wore a grim, reluctant smile, while Mrs. Trent looked merely depressed and bewildered, she took heart of grace and bobbed her head long and vigorously at Bateese. This was done partly to enjoy the sensation of billowy hair about her face, partly to allay any anxiety her fellow sinner might be experiencing. Her re-assurance was quite unnecessary, however, for the plump Bateese, sitting on a bench with his legs braced on Cairlo's back, was in a state of semi-coma induced by the fatigues and indulgences of the day. He roused once to respond to a ripple of laughter from Patty, with a sleepy chuckle, then sank again into lethargy.

The story being concluded, a silence fell upon the room. The captain shifted some papers and frowned upon the door through which the French father should have entered hours ago. One of the two policemen occasionally rose, opened the door and glanced out, returning softly to his place. Mr. Burns seated himself next Bateese and watched the alleged kidnappers of that young person with keen but puzzled eyes. His inability to come to a decision in their case annoyed him. The recent escapades of the children would appear to be instigated, but that it was such a clumsy affair; two odd-looking youngsters and a bulldog could scarcely escape notice even in New York. Then, too, they seemed impatient, even eager, for the advent of the father, whose testimony would doubtless clear up the mystery and set the seal of guilt upon their brows. And there was always the unanswerable query—why in thunder did an apparently pleasure-loving bridal couple want to saddle themselves with a half-foreign kid and a bulldog? Well, he supposed it would be explained eventually, and meanwhile he fell back upon the usual decision that it was a question of money. The objects of his thoughts stood somewhat apart from the other occupants of the room and leaned on a window-sill, their eyes fixed on a dingy patch of courtyard, their minds busy with the possible outcome of the claiming of their protegee. The Frenchman's late arrival at the station had been the cause of all their woe, and his present tardiness was beginning to get on their nerves. Pat turned suddenly to the captain and was about to make some irritable remark when the door was thrown open with violence and a dishevelled figure of a man stumbled in. He was excited and not over-clean, and stood blinking as if suddenly thrust from sunlight to gloom. The occupants of the room became alert and expectant, all except Bateese, who continued to drowse peacefully. Leaning over his desk, the captain addressed the new arrival with some sharpness, asking his name, age, etc. The Frenchman furnished the information in stammering, broken English, then, gaining confidence, poured forth a torrent of explanations and lamentations regarding the loss of his *petit garcon* and his own subsequent anguish. He was silenced by a peremptory command from the desk to "look about him" and see if he recognized any of those present. As the man's eyes travelled slowly around the room Pat and Patty held their breath in suspense. They were the first to stand the fire of his inspection. He scanned their faces carefully, but his expression underwent no change; evidently their features were not familiar; Mr. Burns he passed over with a careless glance, seemed puzzled at the tearful whiteness of Mrs. Trent's countenance and slightly interested in the sharp eagerness of that of Josephine. Then his eyes reached Bateese and paused. Only the tapping of the captain's pencil on his desk broke the tense stillness. The man stood gazing with dumb stupidity from the small boy to the bulldog, back to the boy again. Where was the joyful outcry? Where the glad rush to gather his son to his yearning bosom? The ecstatic reunion expected by all? Simply the man stood and stared, while Bateese dozed on and Cairlo did not so much as blink an eyelid. Patty shivered a little with nervousness and laid a hand on Pat's arm as he in turn braced himself for the coming outburst of recognition, which he imagined to be merely delayed by the gorgeous attire of Bateese. The seconds dragged on; still no sound from the gaping foreigner, who was motion-

less save for restless glancing from dog to boy. Feeling eyes upon him, Bateese slowly awakened, sat up with a yawn and stretched his little legs. The spell was broken, the Frenchman stepped back muttering, "Wan boule dog! Ma foi! I see wan boule dog go on ze cab." He turned to the captain, who said in sharp interrogation:

(To be continued)

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